

THE PRESENCE OF GOD



*Tracing the presence of God
throughout history...*

A series by David Legge

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Contents

- 1. In The Garden - 3**
- 2. In The Tabernacle And Temple – 15**
- 3. In Immanuel – 27**
- 4. In Pentecost - 41**
- 5. In The New Jerusalem - 53**

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The Presence Of God - Chapter 1

"In The Garden"

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Let's bow again in another word of prayer, and I ask you to pray with me that the Lord will bless us and really meet with us tonight. Father, we come again - we keep coming, Lord, because we have great need. We long, Lord, to meet You like the Psalmist, 'As the deer pants after the water brook, so pants my soul after Thee, O God'. We long that we should appear before You in the temple, in Your meeting place - and so, Lord, we invoke the name of the Lord Jesus, Your meeting place with men, and we ask in His name, and on the merits of His precious blood, that You will meet with us tonight. O God, we long for You, we just long for You, Lord - and we pray that You will not disappoint us tonight, but that You will come, and that, Lord, we will have liberty in the Spirit to linger on in Your presence if You should come. We're trusting You, and believing You, that You are going to come and bless us tonight and meet with us. O God, we pray that You will break whatever bondage may be in each of our lives that might prevent or clog up the communication from Yourself. Lord, we pray that we will do business with God tonight, and that we will be conscious that we are hearing the very voice of the Almighty. Lord, we pray that everyone gathered here would know what it is for the Holy Spirit to come upon them. O God, we pray that they will be given fresh visions of Christ in all His glory. Lord, we long for that, we long to see Jesus, and we long to know what it is to commune with Him, to dine with Him, to sup with Him and He with us. So Lord, we open the door and we invite Him in - and, O Lord, we pray by the power of the Holy Spirit that His manifest presence will be revealed to everyone here tonight. So Lord, hear us we pray, in Jesus' name we ask it, Amen.

I want you to turn with me please to Genesis chapter 2. If you received one of the cards about the meetings, you will know that we're going to look at 'The Presence of God' these nights, and we're going to trace it through the Bible effectively, from Genesis to Revelation, some of the highlights of when the presence of God was manifest. Tonight we're looking at the presence of God 'In the Garden', and that is the Garden of Eden, of course. Now we're not going to do an initial reading just at the beginning, but I want to do a general introduction first of all concerning 'The Presence of God'.

Before I do that, let me just say that there's not really much of a format to these meetings, I think, other than we have a hymn and a prayer and then launch into the Word - but what I felt led, at least, that we should do (I've spoken to Bertie about this and he was actually led independently, and was going to mention this to me) is that after we deliver the message, that if you feel exercised - and there's no pressure on anyone, I know there are commitments, and people have to go home and do certain things and you can't get out of those things - but if you should feel moved of God to just wait in the presence of the Lord (and I believe the presence of the Lord is going

to be here after each of these messages in a very definite sense, we will be conscious of that), if you want to linger on, and certainly that's what I like to do when God shows up, is to linger on in His presence and enjoy that, and allow the Holy Spirit to minister to my heart and life and see what He's going to do. Well, you're at liberty to do that - and, in fact, we would encourage you to do that - don't feel under pressure, but do wait behind if you can.

Now there is more written in Scripture about God's desire to dwell with His people than there is about man's desire to be with God. Let me repeat that: there is more written in Scripture about God's desire to dwell with His people than there is about man's desire to be with God - and that is profound when you consider the whole of Scripture. The great passion of God heart, as He has revealed it to us from Genesis to Revelation, is to dwell in the midst of His people - not just to dwell, but to have a manifest presence among His people. Now that has always been His heart's passion, it is presently His heart's desire, and it always will be into the eternals: to dwell with His people, but to manifest, to manifest His revealed presence among them. This is a predominant theme from Genesis to Revelation, and that's why I've taken the headings that I have this week: 'The Presence of God in the Garden'; 'The Presence of God in the Tabernacle and the Temple'; and this is the pinnacle of God's revelation of Himself 'The Presence of God in Immanuel', God With Us; 'The Presence of God in Pentecost', or alternatively in the Holy Spirit and His work, His person, and His ministries; and then Friday night, God willing, we're going to look at His manifest presence 'In the New Jerusalem', in the eternal state. All of that, I suppose each of them anyway, are just examples of how generally this is the gamut and weight of the message of the Bible: God wants to dwell with people, and He wants to visibly dwell with them.

Now, if that is the predominant theme of the word of God, surely then it follows that this must and ought to be the pre-eminent focus of our personal Christian experience? God's presence, and God's manifest presence - to know the presence of God in our personal lives. So let me ask you right at the outset of this series: how much of the presence of God do you know? Or how much of the manifest presence of God do you know? Now, some will say: 'Well, surely God is omnipresent?' - and you know what that means, don't you? He is all-present, He is everywhere present - and, of course, that is true. Psalm 139 is often used to prove that, and rightly so: 'Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?', the Psalmist says, 'If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me'. You can't escape the presence of God, He is everywhere - but if that is the case, and it is, surely then that applies to unbelievers as well as believers? Does it not? If He is beside us in His omnipresence, He is beside them wherever they may be tonight in all sorts of places, even immoral places, God must be there in the same sense as He is with us in His omnipresence - but here's the great question: do they know His presence? Of course they don't.

Then some will say: 'Well, there's the omnipresence of God, and then there is the

presence of Christ within His church'. There is the oft quoted verse in Matthew chapter 18 and verse 20: 'Where two or three are gathered together', Jesus said, 'There am I in the midst' - and it's in the context of where the Lord was talking about church discipline, but nevertheless I think there is a broader principle there that the Lord Jesus is the sole and only Head of the church, and when we gather together as a church we gather to Him, unto His name and His presence in the midst. So Christ is present wherever two or three believers are gathered - He is there - and yet, though we believe that He has fulfilled His promise, yet we read in the book of Revelation of a church called Laodicea, and we read that it was His church, 'to the seven churches', it's called a church, Christ is addressing it as His church, as the Head of the church, as the Judge-Priest moving among the candlesticks of His churches, His local assemblies in Asia Minor - and yet Christ's presence, in some form, is shut out of that church. So, it has to be the case that Christ's promise is fulfilled - where two or three are gathered together there He is in the midst - but there is another sense in which the presence of Christ, manifest, revealed in power, was shut outside; and that's why He said: 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him', or dine with him, 'and he with me'. They were not enjoying the full extent of God's intent that we should know in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, and we'll not look at this passage in any detail, you know that He threatened to spew Laodicea out of His mouth because they were neither hot nor cold, but they were lukewarm. Yet He hasn't, at this moment, spewed them out of His mouth yet; and yet Christ is still outside the door. He hadn't spewed them out, but they had shut Him out.

Now, how then are we to understand the presence of God? Well, let me compare it with the work of the Holy Spirit for a moment. When you're born-again you receive the Holy Spirit as a gift, you can't be born-again without the Holy Spirit and receiving Him as a gift. Romans 8 verse 9 says: 'Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His' - and that, in a sense, is a bit like the omnipresence of God, or indeed the presence of Christ in the church. What I mean by that is: when we're born-again the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our lives, He is there, He is resident. But that is not the self-same thing as having the whole character of the Holy Spirit manifest in our lives, and indeed His holy persuasion in our everyday experience, which the New Testament in Ephesians 5 verse 18 speaks of as 'the fullness of the Holy Spirit', where the Holy Spirit becomes President of our lives. So when we're saved He becomes resident, He's there; but when we're filled with the Holy Spirit, He becomes President, He's in control - in other words, we are aware of His all-pervading presence in our lives, and other people become aware of that as well. Now that is very similar to what I'm talking about: there is the omnipresence of God, we know He is everywhere, and He is everywhere even adjacent to unbelievers this very evening, but they are not knowledgeable of it, they are not in the experience of it. We know He has promised to be in the midst of His church as the Head, and even operative in dead churches, pruning them - and yet what we are speaking of here is a personal and conscious knowledge of God's presence. Let me go further to say: even an intense experiential knowledge of God's presence over and above the mere acceptance of facts.

Evangelicalism is plagued, particularly conservative fundamental evangelicalism, is plagued with facts. It was Vance Havner who once said: 'Evangelicalism has all the facts, but makes the wrong conclusions'. He is right in this regard: we believe in the omnipresence of God, we believe Christ is present where two or three are gathered in His name, but we must not conclude that that means that we are experiencing everything of the presence of God that God intended for us - because we're not! We ought not to be kidding ourselves that we are, irrespective of what our theology may tell us!

Now sometimes this is a characteristic of revival: God manifests His presence very definitely. I have heard people express this in the record of revival: 'God was everywhere' - what must that be like? Brian Edwards has a wonderful book, a synopsis of revival, and it's entitled 'Revival: A People Saturated With God' - that's really what we're hitting at tonight. So you may call this 'The Revival Presence of God', but that's not really where I want to go because my emphasis tonight and in these meetings is not just something that happens like a flash in the pan when there is a great awakening or revival of God's people, but I would rather call this presence of God 'His Abiding Presence'. Someone once said, 'In revival God comes down, but we want a God who stays' - I think that's a profound statement. It's not that we despise what God does in revival, but the great blessing that we ought to have in our everyday - what ought to be a normal Christian experience - is the abiding presence of God with us, and I mean by that a conscious, perceived sense of God that must be practised and has to be preserved, and I believe it is one of the blessings of what John speaks of in 1 John as 'fellowship', and what John speaks of quoting our Lord Jesus Christ in John 15, the gospel, 'abiding in Him', the vine.

I hope I'm narrowing this down for you, and you're understanding now what we're getting at when we're speaking of, in these meetings, the presence of God. But let me go a bit further and say to you that this is more than just knowing God. Let me illustrate it to you like this: imagine you have a friend from childhood, you've known them all your life up to now, and one day you're in the centre of Moy, or Armagh, or Portadown, or wherever. It's a stormy day, the wind is blowing and there is blinding rain, and you're all wrapped up with your hat, or your scarf, or your hood up, and you bump into that friend, walking along the street you bump into them - but you don't recognise them. Now do you still know that friend? Yes, you still know them, you've had knowledge of them from your childhood, but the benefit of their presence has eluded you simply for the reason that you failed to recognise them. Do you understand? You know them, you've always known them, but that day you did not recognise them. Now, you can know the presence of God, and you can even know it is there, and you can even experience it intensely at certain times of your life - but what we're speaking of in this series of meetings is perceiving God's presence, and the secret of perceiving God's presence is recognition. It's alright to understand what it is intellectually, and to have experienced it from time to time in your life, but if you're going to know that abiding presence of God every moment of every day, you're going to have to recognise it - and I would vouch to say that most believers today don't recognise the presence of God. One of the reasons why I know this is: whenever I, at times, move about, and God's presence comes, and I sense God's presence in a

meeting, people just get up at times and blabber about the weather, the football scores, the politics, the finances, everything - and they're not conscious one iota that God is there. That's why I like to encourage people to sit still at the end of meetings, I find myself more and more disposing of closing hymns, because sometimes the closing hymn is the bird of the air that snatches away the seed of the word of God and the presence of Christ.

Recognition: do you recognise? Hebrews 11 verse 6 says: 'He that comes to God must believe that He is', and you've got to believe that God is here, God is here! If you're going to experience an intense manifestation of His presence, you've got to first of all believe He's here - then you'll be expecting it, then you'll be seeking to recognise it. Such perception of the presence of God comes, therefore, by faith: 'He that comes to God must believe that He is, and is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him'. Faith is the evidence of things not seen. We can't see Him, but we must have faith. It says in that same chapter, Hebrews 11 and verse 27, of Moses that 'he endured as seeing Him who is invisible'. Are you getting it? God is omnipresent, Christ is there where two or three are gathered in His name, there is a sense of the revival presence of God that comes at very special times, but what we are speaking of is the abiding presence of God and Christ that we can know moment by moment, and it is almost tangible by faith when we recognise God in the midst of the church and in our everyday lives and we seek Him.

Now, the first record of man experiencing the Divine presence is in the Garden of Eden, Genesis chapter 2 and chapter 3. In verse 8, and I'll not be reading a whole long reading, we'll just be jumping in from place to place, in verse 8 we read these words: 'The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed'. Now, it seems that there was a special Garden in the vicinity of a place called Eden, not just Eden itself but a locality called Eden, and in Eden somewhere there is a garden. In Ezekiel 28 we read that Eden is the garden of God, so that simply means that this is a garden made by God for man - Adam. Now there is much speculation about the geographical location of where Eden was, but of much greater importance is the meaning - what does 'Eden' signify? 'Eden' may be related to a Hebrew verb which simply means 'to luxuriate', or 'to delight' - alright? Now that gives us an idea of what Eden is all about. In fact, the Psalmist put it like this in Psalm 16: 'You will show me the path of life', and you remember there was a Tree of Life in Eden, 'and in Your presence is fullness of joy; and at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore'. If ever there was a definition of the garden that was in Eden, it is that: 'to luxuriate', 'to delight' in God's presence.

It actually stands parallel with a description of what is called 'The Garden of Jehovah' or 'Yahweh' in Isaiah 51 verse 3. You don't need to turn to it, I'll quote it to you: 'For the LORD will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden', and this is what it is to be like Eden, 'And her desert like the garden of the LORD; Joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of melody' - that's what Eden is like, 'Joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of melody'. Now it is obvious, right from the very beginning of the record of God, that Eden, this garden idyllic paradise in the midst of

the locality of Eden, was a trysting place for God with man, for Adam to meet God. It was a personal and private retreat where Adam the first man, and Eve the first woman, could rendezvous with their Lord. It's no surprise, therefore, that the name is given perennially to it as 'Paradise'.

Can I ask you before we go on any further: do you have a paradise? Do you have a retreat? Do you have a personal private rendezvous with the Lord? Do you have an Eden? Do you know what it is to draw to the right hand of God and know fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore? Do you know what it is to go down the path of life? Do you know what it is to have joy and gladness, thanksgiving and the voice of melody? That's what God intended from the very beginning.

In chapter 3 of Genesis we're given a more intimate indication of how this fellowship may have developed. If you look at verse 8 of chapter 3 this time - and of course this is after the fall, but nevertheless it gives us a clue or two into the relationship with God - it says in verse 8: 'And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden'. Now this tells us a little bit of how this fellowship with God developed between the first man and the first woman. It appears from verse 8 that they heard God approaching - that's what it says: 'they heard the sound', or the voice, 'of the LORD God walking in the garden'. The implication is that when they heard God approaching their direction they instinctively knew that God wanted to be with them. That is the way it was from the very beginning: God approaching them - and we have got this concept, don't we, rightly or wrongly, of us always coming to God? Here it is: God was coming to them continually. They would hear, if it was, His footsteps, and they would know: God wants to meet.

Now, of course, they had sinned now - and it's very interesting to me, and I only saw this earlier today, look where they hid themselves. At the end of verse 8 it says that they hid themselves 'among the trees of the garden'. So it appears that when they heard God approaching, they used the provisions of God that He had given them in the garden to hide themselves from the presence of God. Now think about that for a moment: in Eden, the trysting place for private and personal intercession and communion with the Almighty, the gifts that He had given them to feed them and sustain them, they actually use those good gifts, perfect gifts, to hide themselves from the presence of God. I can tell you: that's what a lot of Christians are doing today! They're using church as a substitute for experiencing the abiding presence of God. They're using their doctrine - some of them right, some of them not so right, but it doesn't matter - substituting with doctrine a real living presence of God in their lives. You can see this in many people who have hobbyhorses, doctrinal hobbyhorses, it's all they ever talk about - it's substituting a living vital relationship with God in His presence.

It's fascinating to me that they actually used the things that God had given them. I hear people talking about 'quiet time', and I don't talk about 'quiet time' any more because people have a conception that if you read a couple of chapters for the day, and you pray down your shopping list of prayer, that you've met with God. The Bible

is from God and prayer is from God, but you're using the gifts of God to hide yourself from the presence of God if that's the superficial level of your walk with God.

Now, this verse 8 seems to indicate, even before the fall I believe, how the Lord fellowshiped with Adam and Eve. You can see that it's very natural, isn't it? 'They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day' - it's close fellowship. Leopold, the commentator, says: 'The almost casual way in which this is remarked indicates that this did not occur for the first time just then. There is extreme likelihood that the Almighty assumed some form analogous to the human form, which was made in His image'. There's anthropomorphism here, that simply means references to human faculties concerning the Divine: He's walking, His voice is heard - and I believe that this is a pre-incarnate manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, who was with God and was God from the very beginning. Now this is beautiful: Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden, in this private personal trysting place of joy, gladness, fellowship and life, walked with the pre-incarnate Christ - and yet now we find them hiding from His presence.

It's 'the cool of the day' - in the margin of your reference Bible it might show you that that simply means 'the breeze of the day'. From Hebrew geography and culture, we hazard a guess that this is probably late afternoon in the day. I want you to think about this, this is painting a picture: late afternoon, Adam has worked a day - there's nothing sinful in work, that was before the fall! - he had worked a full day's work, the blood is pumping through his veins, his muscles are smarting. He comes in and he sits down in his trysting place with God and, I hazard a guess, here late in the afternoon he rests in God's presence - does he have a meal with God? There's a lot about us dining with God and dining with Christ, isn't there? That's fellowship, isn't it? I don't know, but it's a wonderful picture, isn't it? Certainly Adam knew what it was to say:

'I come to the garden alone,
And the voice I hear falling on my ear
The Son of God discloses.
He walks with me, and He talks with me,
He tells me I am His own;
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known'.

The presence of God in the garden. Here's something more we know, back to chapter 2 and verse 9. There were many trees in the garden, chapter 2 and verse 9, 'out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food' - there are two trees in particular that seemed important in God's original creation, 'The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil'. One tree of life, and the other of the knowledge of good and evil. Now without getting bogged down in things that are not relevant to our subject, let me just say this much: the message that God was sending out right at the beginning - and there are great questions over the problem of evil, and why did God put the knowledge of good and evil before Adam and Eve and all the rest, we're not getting into that tonight, but I'll tell you this much - at the beginning, what God was

giving mankind was the choice between His presence and self. That's why these two trees are in the garden: the choice between communion and intimacy with the Godhead, and there was a test in the Garden of Eden right at the very beginning - God wanted man to choose freely Himself over self. Can I say to you: that is always the choice. Every day of our waking lives that is the choice. The test in the Garden of Eden has always been the test: will I be God's, or will I be my own? Please note also that the first sin was that very choice that was made in the presence of God, the first sin was a choice made in the presence of God - and every decision that takes us out of God's presence is sin.

Adam made this grave mistake, and can I say to you also that this trend was repeated in his son's life, Cain. Look at chapter 4 verse 13: 'And Cain said to the LORD, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear! Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me''. Then verse 16, now look at this: 'Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod', look where he sojourned, 'on the east of Eden'. Now here are two lessons, very simple: one, we must make the choice to be in God's presence - is that the choice you're making? Two, it will be a choice of disobedience that will take you out of God's presence. It's very simple, isn't it, but profound? Every day of your life, every moment of every day of your life, you make a choice to be in God's abiding presence or outside it - and that will determine how much of God's manifest presence you're experiencing. Equally so, it will be a choice of disobedience that will take you out of God's presence. Look at verse 15 of chapter 2 for a moment, with the choice, and this is a choice, there is great responsibility - verse 15 of chapter 2, now this is before the fall: 'The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend it', to dress it, to cultivate it, 'and keep it' - that's simply what 'dress it' means, to tend it, to cultivate it and keep it. Now we, when we commune with God, are in a gracious, merciful relationship - and it is a free gift, but it's got to be cultivated, it's got to be worked at. So this garden - this is before the fall - when God gave him this trysting place, he had to work at it, he had to keep it.

So, with the choice to be in God's presence, there is a responsibility - but something else: Eden was not just a responsibility and a privilege, but it was something that benefited others. If you look at verse 10 of chapter 2, out of this communion with God we see blessing flowing, benefiting others - verse 10 of chapter 2: 'Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads'. Do you see it? A river flowing from the midst of Eden, and the picture is that outflowing this trysting relationship and communion of God with mankind came a life-giving, a fertilising river that blessed the whole of creation. Now that's literal, but it's also a spiritual picture of what the Psalmist said in Psalm 46: 'There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High'. We'll see this on Friday as you go to Revelation 22 and verse 1, and we go to the New Jerusalem, John was shown 'a pure river of water of life, as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb'. I'll tell you better than that: now, presently, in the life of the believer, we are to know rivers of blessing outflowing from our inner being. Jesus said in John 7: 'On the last day, that great day of the

feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water'.

You see, there are great blessings - this is basic stuff, really basic stuff: God made us to meet with Him, God's desire has always been to dwell in the midst of His people, a greater desire than we have ever had to be in His presence. When we are with Him, it's a responsibility, you've got to work at it, it's a choice that's made every day and every moment of every day to abide in His presence, in a million choices that are facing us every single moment of our lives. Yet, if we are in that place of paradise, rivers of blessing will outflow from our lives that will fertilise and bring life to many!

But, of course, this story doesn't have a happy ending. In verse 10 of chapter 3 we see the tragic consequences of Adam's choice. He made the choice, and in verse 10 of chapter 3 he said: 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself'. Now, I hope you question the word of God - I don't mean you question it from the point of view of authenticity, but you ask questions when they arise. Don't just skirt over things and try to say, 'Well, it's the Bible and it must be true'. We know it's true, but we've got to try and reconcile many of the things within the word of God. One thing that pops up at me when I read that statement in verse 10 where Adam says 'I was naked', is that he senses a shamefulness in his nakedness. In verse 7 we see this: 'Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings'. There was a shamefulness in the nakedness, but to me that just grates a wee bit with something we read in chapter 1 and verse 25, if you look at it, it says - now this is before the fall into sin: 'They were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed'. Now I can't be dogmatic in this, and I want to reiterate that - I'm not saying that you can prove this from Scripture - but there seems to be something has happened here. They're naked in chapter 2, and they're naked in chapter 3, but all of a sudden they feel shame about their nakedness. Now I know that the depraved and fallen mind has a lot to do with that, and the connotation of what their nakedness now meant to them in their depravity - and there's still nothing wrong with nakedness, He formed the body, God did, and it is pure and perfect, it's what our minds and our hearts do when we see that form - but I think there may be something else here.

You don't need to do it, but if you turn to Psalm 104 verses 1 and 2, you read there these words: 'God covers Himself with light as with a garment' - God covers Himself with light as with a garment. When you go to the Transfiguration account in Matthew chapter 17 and verse 2, when the glory of the Lord Jesus came forth to the three on the Mount, it says: 'He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light'. Now, what am I trying to say through this? Well, the Bible definitely does suggest that light can be a garment for the righteous, 'Lucifer' means 'light bearer', and it was his responsibility before he fell into sin to reflect God's glory. Now, that was man's reason for being created, created in the image of God to glorify God, to do what Lucifer failed to do. I'm only suggesting that perhaps one of the ways man did this in the beginning, as Lucifer did, was being

clothed with God's bright glory light. So he was naked, he was naked, but he was clothed, perhaps, with a bright glory shining forth, reflecting the glory of God that he bathed in in his communion with the Almighty. I'm not being dogmatic, but when you think about it, it seems strange to me that the birds of the air should have feathers, the beasts of the field should have fur, and the pinnacle of God's creation and reflector of His glory should be running around stark naked, or at least without a covering of some kind. It's only a suggestion. Donald Gray Barnhouse says: 'It is more than probable that they were clothed in light before the fall and, when they sinned, the light went out'. Well, one thing is certain, when they sinned, whatever light there was, it went out. The glory departed.

Look at verse 24 of chapter 3, the tragic consequences of Adam's choice: 'So He drove out the man', what a statement! 'He drove out the man'. I wonder did that mean that Adam went reluctantly, perhaps fearing that that was the last time he ever would be in the presence of God in that trysting place of Eden? 'He drove out the man', and then what did He do? 'He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life'. Now, as you scour through the whole of the word of God, you will discover that cherubim are always associated with the presence and the glory of God. I could give you a number of examples: Isaiah 6 is a very well-known one. But do you see in Scripture, whenever cherubim (which are angelic creatures, if you don't know that) are represented as being on Earth, sometimes we see them in Scripture as being in heaven, but whenever they are represented as being on Earth the significance is - like the Tabernacle, and the Temple, and so on, like Isaiah 6 with the cherubim in the Temple - they're indicating, they're marking God's meeting place with man, that's always the significance. When you see cherubim on Earth it's signifying God's meeting place with man - and that's why there are cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant in the Temple and the Tabernacle, we'll maybe look at that tomorrow night. But we see here in verse 24 the phrase: 'He placed cherubim', and the phrase 'and He placed', has the same root in Hebrew as the word 'Shekinah' which means 'the dwellingplace of God'. We're going to look at this as we go through the week: the Shekinah glory of God is the manifest dwelling of the presence of God when it takes visible form - and sometimes it takes visible form as flame, or as cloud, and there are other ways, as darkness. But here you see God now driving the man out of that trysting place, that Eden in Paradise - and what does He do? With the cherubim signifying now on Earth God's meeting place with man, He puts a demonstration of His Shekinah glory, His visible presence.

Now, I don't know about you, but it seems to me that when man fell God did not destroy Eden. Is that not interesting? He didn't destroy it. He still marked it as a meeting place with man with the cherubim. His Shekinah glory was there, but man was separated from His presence, and would be forever separated from that intimacy unless a redemption price could be paid. But I want you to notice this: God didn't destroy Eden, what He did was He left it to the effects of the curse of sin. So I want you to think of it like this: God didn't shut down Eden, Eden deteriorated because of neglect. How Eden is deteriorating today because of the neglect of God's people among whom He wishes to dwell! The great theme of the Gospel is: this is why Jesus

came; this is why the Christ of God came; this is why the One, perhaps, whom Adam and Eve walked with in the cool breeze, the breath of the late evening, whom they talked with and dined with, why He took upon Him permanently human flesh - and He said it Himself, John 17 and verse 3: 'This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent' - that's eternal life. It's not pie-in-the-sky-when-you-die, it's not just getting saved and knowing you're getting through the pearly gates. Praise God for our salvation! Praise God for deliverance from hell! But my friend: this great redemption plan that God has purposed has always been in His heart, that we should know Him and know Him through His Word, through His Son, and through Christ, and through the Gospel that we have had imparted to us by grace in the Spirit - Paradise is restored! More than that: we have redemption! We have something that Adam never knew! Isaac Watts put it like this:

'In Christ the tribes of Adam boast
More blessings than their father lost'.

I want you to grasp this: we can know God better than Adam ever did or ever could! Do you believe that? Do you really believe it? We've seen how God met with him. We've seen the relationship, the intimacy, the casual, natural way that they would hear God walking toward them, and they would know that He wanted to be with them. All because the Lord Jesus Christ, this same One - and this is profound - He wept in a garden, John 19 says He was crucified in a garden, and we read that He was laid in a garden tomb; and He broke the bands of death, hell, the grave, and sin in a garden to reverse everything that was done in that original garden - that we again might know the Paradise of God in our everyday life. Where is Paradise now? Well, it's in the third heaven. Some people are erroneously teaching that when the child of God dies today, that they go into 'soul sleep' - that is not biblical. We go to the third heaven, where Paul was taken. He says he was taken and he was shown things that were unutterable, he couldn't share them. It says that he went to the Paradise of God.

We will see on Friday night that this Paradise of God is found in the New Jerusalem, and we read that the Tree of Life is there. Can I say something to you: I believe that the Tree of Life is available now to sustain every believer spiritually, His people. Let me show you how, turn with me - and we're almost finished - to Revelation chapter 2. We start at verse 1, and we're not going to read the passage, where the Lord Jesus now - this same One who wishes to fellowship intimately with His people, this has always been His objective - and He's writing now to what we know is the loveless church of Ephesus. He commends them, in verse 2 He says: 'I know your works, your labour, your patience' - they are very active in great labours for the kingdom of God, and that's not a bad thing. Also He commends them for their doctrinal orthodoxy: 'You cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars' - doctrinally true, right, correct. But we know that their problem in verse 4 is: 'I have this against you, that you have left your first love' - they are the loveless church. They have lost their trysting place with God, they have lost their communion, they have lost their intimacy, they have lost the abiding presence of Christ in their everyday life in the midst of the gifts that God has given them: works, service and doctrine - the trees of the garden - they have lost the

presence of God! Imagine it!

In verse 7, now mark this, He says to this church and to us: 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes', who overcomes the conditions that prevail in this church of Ephesus, 'To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God'. Now I believe that that has a future application as well, but I also believe with all my heart that wherever God is is Paradise! If you're experiencing this abiding presence of God and Christ - indeed the thrice holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit - you will know what it is to eat of the very Tree of Life, of the Hidden Manna; you will know what it is to feed on Christ who is your life, the glorified, risen, exalted, High Priest seated at the right hand of the Father.

So, how is your Eden? How is your Eden? Is it deteriorating because of neglect? Well, may this place tonight be someone's Eden. We're just going to wait on in the presence of God. If you sense and discern His presence, then you're at liberty to wait. You can pray, you can sing, but please be aware of whose presence we are in - and if you're going to say anything or sing anything, may His presence and His fear be before your eyes. If you need to do business with Him, if you even need to do public business with Him, there's no greater place than when you're in His presence.

Father, we feel ashamed that Adam seemed to know more about intimacy with You than we, Your own redeemed people, who are joined to Christ, Your Son, in a way that Adam never was. We who have eaten of the Tree of Life, and tasted of heavenly things - Lord, that we should live for this world and all the filth, and the filthy lucre, setting our affections on things that are down here - O God, Lord help us, help us. How could we not run to You? How could we not throw ourselves at Your feet? How could we not just spend our days basking in the presence of Your love? How could we not be taken up with Christ, that this Earth would become nothing to us? Lord, help us. There are people struggling here tonight, and I struggle too, Lord, with the love of other things. Lord, I struggle with so much in time, and even these trees of the garden, gifts that You have given and we get taken up with them and we miss the Paradise. Lord, we don't want anything tonight to be contrived or engineered, far from it - but, Lord, we believe that You have come and You have met with us. We believe that You have spoken to us, and we pray that, as we linger on, that You will intensify Your presence in our midst - and that we might know that we are being invaded by Divinity. O Lord Jesus Christ, we seek Your face. O, we pray tonight that, like Adam, we will hear Your footprints coming toward us, declaring that You would meet with us. Whatever we need to do, Lord Jesus, to let You in that we might dine with You, help us to do it now - for Your glory we pray, Amen.

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The Presence Of God - Chapter 2

"In The Tabernacle And Temple"

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Let us pray: Father, we have entered Your gates with thanksgiving, and into Your courts with praise. We have sought, Lord, in our song to reverence You and Your presence. We have sought to enter into a more definite realisation that God is in our midst. Lord, we want now, as we come to Your truth, to see beyond the sacred page - for we seek Thee Lord. Our spirit pants for Thee, the Living Word. So Lord, we cry to You tonight: Lift the veil, if veil there be. Whatever is preventing us seeing the Lord high and lifted up, His train filling the temple; Lord, whatever is clogging our spiritual sight, or dulling our spiritual hearing - O God, by the power of the resurrected Christ, through the Holy Spirit we pray: may we see the Lord, may we hear His voice, may we have a sensitivity to His presence! Lord, we long for You. Deep cries unto deep, and so Lord we wait upon You, and we believe that we are not going to be disappointed, we believe that we have already sensed Your presence in this place among us. We pray now that as we look into Your word that, Lord, You will meet with us now. We need Your help, without You we can do nothing, and so Lord we wait upon You now in Jesus' name, Amen.

Now, as I've said, you're very welcome to this evening's meeting as we're looking at 'The Presence of God in the Tabernacle and Temple'. Last evening, if you were here, we were looking at 'The Presence of God in the Garden' - do make your way in there are plenty of seats at the front here, there's more seats here - come on ahead! We're looking tomorrow night at 'The Presence of God in Immanuel', and then we're looking on Thursday night at 'The Presence of God in Pentecost' or the Holy Spirit, and then on Friday night 'The Presence of God in the New Jerusalem'. There are some cards advertising the meetings and the subjects, and if you can use them we would appreciate that.

Perhaps if you want to turn to a passage of Scripture you could turn to Exodus chapter 29. While you're doing that, let me just explain something of the format of these meetings - not too different than your average ministry meeting, save to say that we will not be ending the meeting each night with a closing hymn, but what we will be doing is: after we finish preaching the word we will be just going to a time of waiting upon God. Now that is not a time of prayer per se, it is not a time really of praise or singing per se - it might involve singing and it might involve prayer, but our primary focus is upon the Lord. We want to practice and preserve His presence as He comes into our midst by the Holy Spirit. We want to learn this week - and some of us, we believe, learned last night, and some perhaps even confess for the first time, what it was to just wait in the presence of God. So do not feel obliged to hang on, and no one will think any the less of you if you have to go - some people have commitments and some people are under various pressures, and we realise that and understand it - so don't feel that your arm is up your back that you have to stay and if you go people

will think you're very unspiritual! But if you are disposed to stay and at liberty to do so, you're welcome to do that, and you're welcome to just bask in the presence of the Lord.

Now I said last evening, and I will repeat it, that there is more in Scripture said about God's desire to dwell in the midst of His people than there is about human beings desiring to be with God. It has always been the passion of the Divine heart to dwell in the midst of His people. It continues to be His passion, and it always will be, as we will see to the end of this series. It's a predominant theme in the book, this Bible that we have, from Genesis right through to Revelation. I have tried to encapsulate that, very briefly it has to be said, in five nights going from the beginning right to the end. We looked last night at the Garden of Eden, we will look tonight at the Tabernacle and the Temple, we will look tomorrow night at Immanuel, Thursday night at Pentecost, the work of the Holy Spirit, and then the New Jerusalem and the eternal state which is yet to be. But we also said that if that is the weight of the emphasis of the word of God, surely it therefore must be a major and pre-eminent focus of our personal Christian experience? To know the presence of God in our individual lives.

The question I asked at the outset of last night's meeting, I ask again tonight: how much of the presence of God do you know in your personal life? Now, I'm sorry to repeat myself for anyone who was here last night, but I think it's important to say this much: when we're talking these evenings about the presence of God, we are not meaning simply the omnipresence of God - that is, that God is everywhere. We talked about that last evening, and you can get the recording perhaps. That's not what we're talking about, neither are we simply referring to the fact that Christ has promised to be where two or three are gathered in His name in the midst. As Head of the church, and the One we gather to, He is in our midst in a sense - but that's not what we're talking about. We saw last evening that we're speaking about something over and above that: a conscious sense of the presence of God in our midst, something that can be recognised, something that is manifest, something that is revealed, and something - essentially - that can be practised in our lives, and whenever we perceive it and recognise it we can preserve it. Whether it is in our individual walk or corporately as groups of God's people, the presence of God, when it is discerned - and there's so much talk these days about discernment, particularly in relation to discerning false doctrine - but one of the greatest gifts of discernment you can have is to discern the presence of God. I think that it's best described as 'the abiding presence'.

Now, one of the major ways God manifested His presence and dwelt with His people in the Old Testament was in the Tabernacle and in the Temple. Now I brought a slide, because I don't want to take anything for granted - because we assume that everybody knows what the Tabernacle is and what the Tabernacle looked like. Now we're not going to go into an extensive study of the Tabernacle tonight - that would be utterly impossible - but just to give you an idea. Essentially the Tabernacle was a tent, and God had given divine instructions of how it should be built, how it should be erected. As the children of Israel moved around the desert, the wilderness, for 40 years, this was the focal point of God's presence.

The purpose of the Tabernacle is given in this portion I asked you to turn to in Exodus 29, we're beginning to read at verse 42, God says: *"This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet you to speak with you. And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by My glory. So I will consecrate the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. I will also consecrate both Aaron and his sons to minister to Me as priests. I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I am the LORD their God"*. Now look at verse 43: 'There I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by My glory'. Now God's glory that He's speaking of there, I referred to last evening without too much comment as 'Shekinah' glory. There are several ways you can spell it - and I'm not going to spell any of them! - but the Shekinah glory of God is very simply...well, let me explain it by telling you where that word is derived from. It's derived from the Hebrew for 'to dwell', 'shakan'. It's not a word that you'll find in the Bible as such, but you will find the root 'to dwell' in the Bible. So 'Shekinah' is the manifest presence of God - or you could put it like this: the visible manifestation of the presence of the invisible God. So, whenever God reveals Himself visibly, though He Himself is invisible, He often does it by Shekinah glory.

In the Old Testament, most of these visible manifestations took various forms such as light, fire, smoke or cloud, or even a combination of two or three of those manifestations. Now, when we come to the New Testament, as we will see tomorrow night, the Shekinah takes a new form: the incarnate Word - the Word becomes flesh and dwells among us. Here in the Old Testament at this particular juncture we see in verse 45 that the Tabernacle was for the purpose that God should dwell with the children of Israel in His Shekinah glory - verse 45: 'I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God'. The Hebrew for 'I will dwell' in verse 45 has the same root as 'Shekinah glory'. Now, once the Tabernacle was finished according to the specifications that God gave to Moses on the Mount, the Shekinah glory of God, the visible manifestation of the invisible God, took up residence within the tent.

Now let me show you where this happened - turn with me to chapter 40 of Exodus. Verse 34 of chapter 40 of Exodus: 'Then the cloud', the Shekinah, 'covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would go onward in all their journeys. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys'. Now verse 34 describes how the cloud covered the Tabernacle, and then the glory of the Lord, the glory of Jehovah, His Shekinah visible manifestation filled the whole house. Now, incidentally, the Hebrew word for 'tabernacle', the tent of meeting, is actually the Hebrew word 'mishkan' (sp?) - and again the root of that word has the same root as 'Shekinah', 'shakan', which means 'to dwell'. So you could translate the word

Tabernacle: 'The dwellingplace of the Shekinah'. The tabernacle, therefore, was the earthly dwellingplace of the visible manifestation of the invisible God.

In verse 35 we see that the cloud took its abode within Israel, and the word 'abode' is used in verse 35, or the word 'rested' is also used - and it's simply a translation again of the Hebrew word 'shakan', the same root for this term 'Shekinah glory'. Then finally in verses 36 through to 38 we see that the cloud, as it covered the whole tabernacle and the whole congregation, it was the visible presence of the invisible God that led the children of Israel through their wilderness experience. Now I'm not going to dwell on this tonight, but this is a vital principle of guidance in our Christian pilgrimage: that we are to follow God, we are to find out where His presence is, we are to look for where He is moving. Even the Lord Jesus said: 'I do the works that I see My Father do'. So when Jesus, if you'll excuse the expression, got up in the morning: He didn't ask God to bless what He was going to do, He asked His Father what He wanted Him to do, what He was doing, and He did those works. Now that's a vital principle of guidance in our Christian lives, and even in our churches. We need to ask the question: where is God working today? Where is God moving? Where is God blessing? What is God owning? What is God honouring? We will find that a lot of the things that we fiddle about with, God has nothing to do with them!

But that's a digression. Now when we look at the Tabernacle here, and if we were to see a model of it, even a life-size model of it, you would see that there is no external beauty to behold in this edifice. It was covered - you can't really make it out in this picture - by weatherbeaten skins of animals. The reason why it was so non-descript and underwhelming - there was an anti-climax when you saw what this Tabernacle was - the focal point was to be the Shekinah, the glory of God. The tabernacle was like the offset, the black backdrop to set off the diamond of this great shining glory of Jehovah. Now, if you were to go in through the gate - you couldn't do it of course - but if you were to go in through the gate, and through the court, and in the front entrance to the Holy Place which is the first section of the Tabernacle here which was the biggest section. It ended about here - when you entered there, there was artificial light, there was a candlestick, a menorah as you would see it in Israel - you maybe even have got one as a souvenir, but this was a life-size one. There was a table of shewbread, and then there was an altar of incense. We'll not go into the significance of those tonight - but there was artificial light there in that Holy Place, but when you entered into the Holiest Place of All, or The Holy of Holies, this cube box at the very end, there was no window and there was no artificial light. All there was was a piece of furniture called 'The Ark of the Covenant'. You might ask the question - and you ought to be thinking - how could the High Priest, once a year, perform his services and duties in complete and absolute blackness? The answer to that question very simply is that he had light: he had a manifestation, a visible manifestation of the invisible God through the shining of the Shekinah glory.

Now we're told - and this is only an artist's impression of course - that where the cherubim, these angelic figures, where their wings met on top of the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant - this box of God of acacia wood, overlaid inside and outside by gold - the Shekinah dwelt there between the Mercy Seat and the cherubim, and

there was light. Not natural light, but the light of God coming to rest upon the Ark, on this lid under the cherubim. Do you remember last night, I told you from the experience of Eden that whenever cherubim are mentioned on Earth it always signifies the meeting place of God with men? Here's cherubim on the top of the Ark of the Covenant, and here is the High Priest and the Shekinah glory - and it's resting upon this lid of the Ark of the Covenant. Now this lid is called the 'Mercy Seat'. The reason why it is called 'a seat' is because it is considered that the Lord was seated there on the Mercy Seat, and that's why the Shekinah glory is there. The Lord is seen to be enthroned under the two cherubim. It's called the 'Mercy' seat because once a year the High Priest - as you see him here - with his finger he sprinkled blood to make an atonement for Israel's sins, sprinkling for mercy the Mercy Seat by the blood of bulls and goats.

Now, I could enter in tonight - and it would be very profitable - to talk about how this is such a wonderful typical picture of our Lord Jesus Christ, His great redemptive plan before the ages were, and how this Ark in particular is a picture and portrait of the Lord Jesus: fully man, yet fully God. Fully man, just as this box is made of acacia wood; and yet Divine, overlaid and inside laid with gold - the Lord Jesus Christ's two natures. We could talk about how He is spoken of as our propitiation, and the great sacrifice that He made. He didn't have to make it once a year, He doesn't have to keep making it - it is made once and for all, by the shedding of His blood there is remission of sins. But the main point that I want to dwell on tonight is the fact that He still is the meeting place between God and men - Christ Jesus. He is the One who will bring us into God's presence.

Now we think of these terms often in relation to our redemption, and our salvation, and eternal life, and to our standing before God - but I want us to think about this in relation to our present-day experiential knowledge of the manifestation of the presence of God in our life. You've got to understand Christ, and you've got to value Christ, and you've got to cherish Christ - not just as the crucified One who was buried, but as the risen, glorified Great High Priest who is your life! He is the One to bring us into the presence of God!

Now, we're skipping out a lot of time here as far as history is concerned, but during the period of the Judges - which was a very long period of time in the Bible, Joshua and Judges - the people of God took the presence of God for granted. Now that seems a staggering statement when you think about it. These people were able to look out of their tent door at night and see a flaming pillar of Shekinah glory. They were able to look out of their tent in the daytime and see a pillar of cloud, smoke, Shekinah glory. Now and again it would move off, and they would lift their tents and move with it - yet this people took for granted the visible presence of the invisible God in their midst. It was demonstrated in their behaviour towards, in particular, the Ark of the Covenant, which was the focal point of God's presence. Just as Christ is the focal point of God's presence today, the Ark of the Covenant was the focal point of His presence then - we saw the Shekinah hovering over it. Do you know how they treated the Ark? As a kind of talisman, as a good luck charm. We see an incident of this whenever they were getting into trouble in battle, their backs were against the wall and they were losing,

and they cried: 'Bring the Ark to the scene!'. They thought: 'If we bring the Ark on the field, it's as if we're bringing God behind us!'.

Essentially what they were doing was: they were using and abusing the presence of God. Now, believer, before you point the finger and start standing in judgement over the ancient Israelites, ask yourself the question: do you do this in your own personal experience? When your back is against the wall, you call God in! 'Where is the presence of God? Where is my help?' - and so often we use and abuse His presence. Rather what they should have been doing is what we are exhorting you to do in these meetings: they should have recognised the presence of God in their midst and, having recognised it, revered it. But because they neither recognised nor revered it, the ultimate happening was: they lost it! What a lesson!

The story goes in the Judges time that the Ark was captured by the Philistines. You remember that Eli's daughter-in-law had a child at that time, and she named him 'Ichabod', which means 'the glory is departed' - 1 Samuel 4. The lesson is - and we could preach a whole series of sermons on that alone - but the lesson is: if you do not covet the presence of God, if you do not recognise the presence of God, if you do not reverence the presence of God if and when you have it, you will lose it! Eventually, the story goes that Israel recovered the Ark - and though that child was called 'Ichabod', the glory didn't depart at that particular time. But during the time of Samuel the prophet, the Ark of the Covenant was not restored to its rightful place in the Tabernacle - I have a hunch that Samuel believed that it didn't have the rightful place that it ought to have had in the hearts of the people. But eventually a king came along after God's own heart, whose name was David, and David had a passion - his passion was the passion and the heartbeat of the Almighty, and that is: that God should again dwell in a revered, recognised place in the midst of His people! David wanted the Ark of the Covenant to be back in a place of prominence among the people. You can read this in his Psalms and in other parts of the historical record of this event, how his heart grieved and broke, and how he mourned because there was no place in Israel for God's glory to rest.

Believer: is that the passion of your heart? That there is no place in the church, there is no place in our lives for a visible manifestation of the invisible God? Well, of course, David, though it was in his heart and God honoured him for it, he himself was not allowed to build the Temple. That privilege would be given to his son, Solomon - and that Temple he built, of course, became known as 'Solomon's Temple'. We'll not go into the details of this, you can read about it in 1 Kings chapter 8 and in 2 Chronicles 5 right through to chapter 7 - but the Shekinah glory that had previously been in the Tabernacle, in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle, then at the dedication of Solomon's Temple was transferred to the Holiest Place of All, the Holy of Holies, over the Ark of the Covenant again in the Temple. We read that a very similar thing happened when Solomon was praying - just as it happened to Moses in the tent - as Solomon was praying the Shekinah glory, the great cloud of God's visible presence, filled the whole house.

Now, I will get you to turn to 1 Kings chapter 8 for a moment to that account for the

purposes of looking at one verse - 1 Kings chapter 8 verse 13, and this is in the prayer that Solomon makes at the dedication of the Temple. He says this, verse 12: 'Then Solomon spoke: 'The LORD said He would dwell in the dark cloud', Shekinah, "I have surely built You an exalted house, and a place for You to dwell in forever". Now that was a prayer, and that was a spiritual prayer, and it was a prayer in the will of God - but it was a prayer that would not be fulfilled in Solomon's Temple. Let me show you the reason why, and for this we have to go to the book of Ezekiel. Turn with me then to the great prophet Ezekiel - Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, if you can find that - and in Ezekiel we have the story of the departure of the Shekinah glory from the Temple. This happened in four stages, and the reason why this happened, the reason why the Shekinah glory departed from Solomon's Temple was simply because of the sin of the children of Israel. We read here that God left reluctantly in four stages.

Now can I just remind you, if you were here last night, that I said that Adam and Eve in the Garden, they heard the footsteps of God - I believe it was a pre-incarnate form of the Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ in the Garden, I believe that that's how they fellowshiped with God Almighty. They dined with the Lord Jesus Christ in the cool of the day at late afternoon, but they heard Him approaching - and that is always the emphasis of Scripture: that God is wanting fellowship with us. Haven't we said it? God wants to dwell with us more than we want to dwell with Him. Here we see it again, because though God's Shekinah is departing from the Temple in Solomon's Temple, He is doing it reluctantly - and that is demonstrated in the four stage pull-out of God's Shekinah. He doesn't want to move, but He is evicted by His own people's sin! If you read Ezekiel's prophecy, you will find out that the particular sin that evicted the presence of God was that of idolatry. The people of God had got to such an idolatrous state that they had erected an idol which was called 'The Image of Jealousy' at the Northgate of the Temple, an image to a false god in the house of God! What a lesson!

You remember I said last night that this abiding presence of God that we're emphasising is something akin to what John 15 talks about as 'abiding', but what John then talks about in 1st John, 2nd and 3rd John, as 'fellowship'. Can you remember what the last verse in the first Epistle of John is? 'Little children, keep yourselves from idols' - it's interesting, isn't it? Idolatry robs us of the visible presence of the invisible God manifest in our lives, this abiding presence. Where there are two Gods in the Temple, one will have to move - for this God Jehovah, the true and living God, will not share His glory with another. Therefore it is better for all of us to remove any false presence, or false idol or deity, rather than to lose the true One, rather than the true presence depart.

In this instance it was sin that caused God to evacuate His own house...and I believe that God has evacuated His own house today. Now, you can argue with me all you like about the omnipresence of God, and where two or three are gathered...I think I've dealt with that enough. What I'm talking about is this visible, conscious, manifest, definitely aware, almost tangible, sensitive presence of God that we can experience and know as individuals and collectively when we're met together - God has evacuated, in that sense, primarily because of the sin of His people - and most of our sin is idolatry!

Now let's look at this four stage pull-out of God's presence. If you turn to chapter 9 of Ezekiel, in verse 3 we see the first stage of the departure of the Shekinah from the Temple. This first stage was from the Holy of Holies to the threshold of the door of the Temple, a very short journey - God is reluctant as He pulls out. Verse 3, the first part of verse 3 of chapter 9: 'Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple'. We read the same in chapter 10 verse 4: 'Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub, and paused over the threshold of the temple; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory'. It moves from the cherubim at the Ark's lid, the Mercy Seat, and to the threshold of the door of the Temple, and pauses there - the first stage. He's not wanting to move, but He's being put out by another god.

The second stage, we find it in chapter 10 also, and this second stage - verses 18 through to 19 - is from the threshold of the door of the Temple to the Eastern gate. Verse 18: 'Then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim. And the cherubim lifted their wings', these angelic creatures carried this presence, 'and mounted up from the earth in my sight. When they went out, the wheels were beside them; and they stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them'. The first stage from The Holiest Place of All above the cherubim and the Ark of the Covenant, and the presence moves to the door of the Temple. Then the presence moves from the door of the temple to the Eastern gate of the Temple.

Look at the third stage, chapter 11 this time, verse 22. This stage is from the Eastern gate moving out, right out of the city jurisdiction, to the Mount of Olives - outside city limits. Verse 22 of chapter 11: 'So the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel was high above them. And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain, which is on the east side of the city' - that is, the Mount of Olives. Now, do you know what that means? The city is now doomed. Jehovah, their God, Lord, Covenant Keeper and Protector, has vacated the holy city.

Now, my friend, I really want you to grasp these truths tonight. I would love to have time - and we don't - to go into the second and third chapter of Revelation and see how Christ assumes the position of the Judge Priest, the Head of His church, and how He comes to certain local assemblies in Asia Minor and He threatens them if they do not repent, that He will come and take away their candlestick. Taking away their candlestick was not taking away their light, it was not taking away their testimony, it was meaning they are doomed, they're finished! This is serious stuff!

The fourth stage is when the presence moves - and it's inferred of course in this book and its conclusion, and the rest of the Old Testament Scripture - the fourth stage is when it moves from the Mount of Olives, and leaves Israel completely and disappears from Jewish history. Now here's a lesson if ever there was one: the visible manifestation of the presence of the invisible God, when it departs, departs in stages.

It can take 5 years, 10 years, 20 years, 50 years. In rabbinic tradition, it's not biblical, but the rabbis believed that the Shekinah glory, when it went to the Mount of Olives in this third stage of departure, that it hovered there, it waited there for three and a half years before it finally went away - in order that Israel might repent and again receive the presence of God.

Now think about this, the significance of this is incredible, because it was from this very spot on the Mount of Olives that our Lord ascended to glory after three and a half year's ministry in Israel. More than that: after His ascension in A.D. 70, the Temple would be destroyed, and our Lord pronounced that their house would be left desolate to them because they rejected the very presence of God, the greatest manifestation of God's presence that has ever been - Immanuel. It will be to the same spot that the Shekinah glory in His greatest revelation will reappear again at the second coming of our Lord Jesus. Remember, He said himself in Matthew 16: 'The Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father', that's the Shekinah glory!

So you see how this all transpires: in the Tabernacle God gives them a place to meet with Him and share and enjoy His presence. They take it for granted, they lose it. They regain it. It lies dormant for a long time, and then eventually a man after God's own heart with a passion for God's presence puts it in its rightful place, along with his son. The people of God again turn to their idolatry and their wickedness, and God reluctantly starts to move away - four stages, think of it! Then, perhaps for three and a half years, hovers over the Mount of Olives, not wanting to go, waiting on His people to repent! But He has to go.

But that's not where the story ends either, because you will know - if you know your Old Testament history - that Solomon's Temple was not the last Temple that was ever built, there is the second Temple, Zerubbabel's Temple. But there is a marked distinction and contrast between Zerubbabel's Temple and Solomon's Temple - do you know what it is? The Shekinah glory was not in it. Let me show you this, turn with me to Haggai - go to the end of your Old Testament and come back a couple of books and you will come to Haggai. Chapter 2 verse 3, the children of Judah have now come out of exile in Babylon, and they are now starting to rebuild the Temple as God instructed them to do. It has taken them a while to get their act together, but they're now doing it - but the old men start to weep, because this new Temple pales into insignificance in comparison to the old one. In verse 3 of chapter 2 we read: 'Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing?'. Now, how could they say it was in their eyes as nothing? Simply because the thing that made it anything, the thing that made it something was the manifest visible presence of God, this great Shekinah, this light and fire and cloud.

Now, of course, there's a promise in this chapter, and it's found in verse 9 - a hard one to work out when you think that the Shekinah was not in this second Temple - Haggai says: "The glory of this latter temple", the second Temple, "shall be greater than the former", that is, Solomon's, "says the LORD of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the LORD of hosts". What a promise! What God is saying is: this

second Temple is going to contain in a greater measure, some day, the Shekinah glory of God. Did it ever? Well, one day a poor teenage mother and a carpenter father carried a bundle of Divine flesh into this temple - Immanuel, God with Us! One day this Messiah, as a Man, walked into this Temple - many days He walked into it - but one day He walked into it and He cleansed it! Then He walked out of it, and He walked up the Mount of Olives, and He wept over it!

He's going to come back to the Temple one day, but unlike the Tabernacle and the first Temple of Solomon's, the second Temple did not begin with a manifestation of the Shekinah glory of God - but rather it ended with that manifestation when Jesus stood, in Matthew chapter 12, and said: 'I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple'. Wonderful!

My friend, what am I getting at? Well, let's tie this together with last night as we bring all this to a close. There is a sense in which the Tabernacle and the Temple actually represent Eden. I don't know whether you've ever heard this before, but Eden after the fall was barred to man. Now we noted last night that God did not destroy Eden when man fell into sin, what He did was: He marked it as the place of His presence by putting those cherubim there, and also a flaming sword which is Shekinah glory, and He marked it as still the meeting place that we can have with God - but there had to be a sacrifice, there had to be a redemption, there had to be a price paid, there had to be a way back. We found out, didn't we, that we can even enter that Eden now by the Spirit - and we saw that to the church at Ephesus, that we can come if we overcome, we can eat of the Tree of Life in the Paradise of God. One day that will be completely realised in the New Jerusalem, and we will see that on Friday night. But we noted that Eden was not destroyed because of sin, it was destroyed because of neglect, it deteriorated. It has always been God's all-consuming desire to keep coming, to keep coming, keep coming to His people to meet with them. But He's got a problem, and His problem is sin, but He's continually overcoming the problem to meet with His people!

So do you see how the Tabernacle is so like Eden after the fall? It's fenced off, you saw it didn't you? Fenced off, and you're not allowed into it, no Jew was allowed even into the court other than the priestly class. The death penalty was upon you if you even approached the presence of God like that. Eden, barred - God wants to meet, and He devises this whole ritualistic priestly system to let His people come to Him, and allow Him to dwell in the midst of His people. We all know it's pointing forward to that great sacrifice. Let's go to that sacrifice, turn with me to Hebrews chapter 10 please, verse 19 - now this is for you: 'Therefore, brethren, having boldness', or confidence, 'to enter the Holiest', the Holy of Holies, no one ever entered there only the High Priest once a year, 'Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter', confidence to enter, 'the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near' - let us draw near! - 'with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water'.

Now listen: I said last night that we can know God better than Adam and Eve knew God in idyllic Eden, the Paradise of God, before the fall of man into sin! We can know Him better now through Christ! I asked you: do you believe that? But tonight we're looking at the Tabernacle and the Temple, and I'm saying to you again: we can know the presence of God in a greater way than the whole congregation of Israel did in the desert around the Tabernacle pitched there! We can know God in a greater way than those who entered the Temple, even than the priestly class, even than the High Priest who entered the Holiest of All once a year and saw the Shekinah with his own eyes! Do you believe that? Do you believe you can - now listen to what I'm saying, and I'm not saying it lightly - you can experience God in a way that they never did?

Why else would the writer to the Hebrews say: 'Let us come boldly' - they couldn't come boldly, they came in fear and trepidation! The High Priest was under fear of his life, but we can come boldly! He could go in once a year, we can come in every moment of every day! Boldly! With confidence! In and out and find pasture! Go in and out and dine with Him and He with us! What do we know of this? What do we know of this? This is our privilege, and yet we waste it, we don't avail of it! Most of us, if we're honest, know nothing about it - and it's the very thing that God envisaged from His heart before the fall, after the fall, and in Calvary and the resurrection, and everything that He's ever done at any time in eternal history and the plan of redemption - it's all been for this: that He might meet with us, dwell with us, and that we might - listen, using the term advisedly - experience God Almighty.

Vance Havner said: 'Nothing is scarier today in Christians and churches than the absence of the presence of God' - and I agree with him! He goes on to say: 'Moses asked, 'How shall we know that we are Thy people? Is it not that Thou goest with us?', He continues, 'The devil will do anything to destroy the awareness of God's presence. One of his favourite tools is annoying circumstances'. Vance Havner goes on to tell this anecdote of a preacher he knew called 'Old Bud Robinson', and he went to hold a series of meetings in what he called 'a spiritually dead church'. He was staying in the pastor's house, and he said that one evening he was in the room praying rather loudly - he could have been heard a mile away - and the pastor poked his head around the door, and looked in and said: 'Bud, dear brother, God's not deaf you know'. Bud turned to him, still on his knees, and he said: 'I know He's not deaf, but He's a long way from this place!'.

Is God a long way from your place? In Israel there was an impediment to the sense of the presence of God, an impediment that shut out a sense of God's presence. Now listen carefully to what I'm saying: the reason why we lack a sense of the presence of God in our churches is simply because it's not in our individual lives. This isn't rocket science: if you're filled with the Holy Spirit, and you have a tangible manifestation of God in an abiding presence every day of your life, and you get half a dozen people like that and put them in a room the presence of God will be overwhelming! The presence of the risen Christ will be almost overbearing. This is what we need - and let me say this to you: without it we have nothing! We have nothing.

A. J. Gordon, I don't know whether you've heard of him or not but he lived in 1836

through to 1895. He was converted at the age of 15 and he was a Baptist minister, the author of several books, for years a pastor of Clarendon Street Baptist Church in Boston. The secret of his powerful ministry is described in a book he wrote, 'When Christ Came to Church'. It's a hard one to get your hands on, but in the book he relates a dream that he had early in his Christian ministry when he was at Clarendon Street Baptist Church. In the dream, he dreamt he came to his pulpit and he stood there at the start of the service. He began the service as per usual, and the door opened at the back and the usher admitted a very fine looking gentleman - that's how he described him. The usher brought him down the aisle and showed him his seat. He says in the book: 'The man had a very refined face, there was something very elegant about it'. Through the whole service Gordon said he couldn't take his eyes off the man, he couldn't help noticing him and wondering who he was. After the service, when the people had gone home, Gordon sought out the usher and asked him about the man: 'Who is that gentleman that you ushered into his seat tonight?'. 'Oh', came the reply from the usher, 'didn't you know? That was Jesus Christ. He came into the service and asked that he might sit there - didn't you realise that?'. Didn't you realise that?

Gordon suddenly awoke from his dream, but from that moment on his ministry was turned upside down. The next time he went into his pulpit he seemed transformed, refreshed, renewed and revived - why? Because he was aware of the presence of Jesus there, he was aware that Jesus was in the pew, that Jesus was in the aisle, that Jesus was in the pulpit with him, that Jesus was at the door, that Jesus was there. Oh, let those words of that usher in that dream echo in your soul tonight - 'Didn't you realise?'. Didn't you realise who is here? Maybe the question is rather: don't you recognise?

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The Presence Of God - Chapter 3

"In Immanuel"

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You may be seated. Let's pray together, please, and ask the Lord's blessing on our time tonight. You're very welcome, and do remember the rest of the meetings throughout the week as we think of the presence of the Lord. We want to know that presence tonight again, and in the remainder of the evenings, so do remember these meetings in your prayers at home as well. But as we come to the Lord, do unite with me in heart and ask Him that He will again be pleased to meet with us.

Our Father, the song of our heart tonight is: 'O come, O come Immanuel, and ransom captive Israel'. Father, we know that certainly Your people today, the church - Father, we, the church, need a fresh vision of Immanuel. We need, in the Spirit, to encounter again, with the eyes of faith, the beauty, the wonder, the splendour, the majesty, the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. We come to You tonight in prayer through Him. We thank You that, as we have sung, it's within the veil that we enter. We thank You for the blood-sprinkled pathway that brings us into Your immediate presence. Lord, we so often take this for granted, we so often misuse and abuse the privileges that we have, or just neglect them. Lord, we come to You tonight and we want more than just the mundane and average experience that we've been used to. Lord, we want tonight that our capacity to conceive of the revelation of Christ will be increased. Lord, we want our vision to be broadened, we want our focus to be sharpened, we want our spirits to be opened - and, as it were, to ascend into heaven itself, and to behold the King in all His glory. We know Isaiah had that experience of seeing Christ uplifted in the Temple, high and lifted up, and the cherubim and the seraphim crying: 'Holy, Holy, Holy'. Lord, if Isaiah could have such a vision under the old covenant, O Lord we pray, O dear God give us eyes to see, give us hearts to receive such a vision of Christ. Lord, I don't know the circumstances of everyone gathered here tonight. I know my own, and I know that so many things in life can distract us from turning our eyes on Jesus. Lord, I pray tonight, by the power of the Spirit, the One who came upon the Lord Jesus in His baptism as a dove, Lord that He again will own the Christ of God and descend in mighty power. O Lord, we need the Holy Spirit, the One who would come to testify of Christ, to witness to Christ and conform us to His image. We need the Holy Spirit, Lord, we cannot operate without Him, we will not see Jesus without Him. So Lord, we ask now that the Holy Spirit will come. Lord, we are not here for numbers, we're not here for a meeting, we're here to encounter the Living God. O Lord, hear us, and meet with us tonight, Lord Jesus Christ, Master, Rabboni - come into our midst, Lord of the church. Come, we open the door to You, come and feed our hearts, our thirsty hearts, our parched souls. Come and feed us with the Hidden Manna, the Bread of God, Lord Jesus Christ who came down from heaven, feed us, feed us till we want no more. Amen.

Now, I think you could turn with me now to Hebrews chapter 1, though we will not read it immediately. Let me just say while you're turning to that portion of Scripture, maybe it's your first night here: you're very welcome, but you may not be familiar with the format of these meetings. Well, they're a bit different in this sense, that we don't end the meeting each night with a hymn, sometimes not even a prayer - but we just, as we are thinking about 'The Presence of God' and the Lord has, I believe, visited us with His presence in previous evenings, we have sought to linger in the presence. That's all we want to do, we just want to sit on in stillness, it's not essentially a prayer meeting although people have been praying, it's not a praise meeting although people have been praising, but it's just an opportunity to bathe and bask in the presence of God. People have been testifying that they have been learning, for the first time, to do that - and that is profound, because if we don't learn to linger in the presence of God, we will miss, constantly miss the presence of God in our own personal lives and in our church gatherings. So if you are at liberty tonight, don't feel under pressure, you can stay on - if you have to go, some people have to go, folk have commitments and things that they need to see to, and don't feel in anyway inhibited in having to get up and go at whatever time you have to, even at the end of my preaching. But if you're able to stay, there were folk stayed here last night until about 11:30 in the presence of God, and it was a mighty time.

Now, we have been saying these nights, and let me just reiterate for the benefit of anyone who hasn't been here before, that there is more written in Scripture, the revelation of God, the Bible, about God desiring to dwell with people than there is about people wanting to be with God. Indeed, we have noted, and will continue to note each night, that the great passion of God's heart is that He dwell with His people. He longs to manifest His presence - so it's not just a cerebral knowledge that He wants His people to have, that they know intellectually that God is around. We touched on this, we're not talking now primarily, when we speak of the presence of God in these contexts, of the omnipresence of God, that He's everywhere. We're not talking about the presence of Christ in the church, where two or three are gathered in His name. What we're talking about is a very definite, conscious manifest presence of God, where we become aware of His presence, and we learn to reverence His presence, we actually protect His presence, we conserve His presence in our lives and in our midst.

We looked at this in the Garden of Eden, we looked last night at the Tabernacle and the Temple, and we saw even then that all of these were pointing. In Eden we saw that Adam, it was his wont to meet with God in the cool of the day - that is, probably late afternoon after a hard day's work, before the fall - it seems to be his practice to have met with God late afternoon. This is indicated in how God approached him, after the fall of course, when it says they heard the voice, or the sound, of God walking in the garden. He was approaching them, and they always knew that when God approached them He wanted to meet with them. We believe that that was a pre-incarnate form of the Lord Jesus Christ, and so it is pointing towards our Saviour, the greatest manifestation of the presence of God ever.

Last night we looked at the Tabernacle and the Temple, and we're not going to enter

into the typology of that that we didn't go into in detail - but we saw the wonderful picture that the Tabernacle and the Temple, particularly the Holy of Holies and the Ark of the Covenant, is of our Lord Jesus Christ. All of God's meeting places with men in the Old Testament are all pointing towards the greatest ever visible manifestation of God's presence, Immanuel, God with Us. Now tomorrow night, God willing, we will look at how His presence is revealed in Pentecost, or in the Holy Spirit, the ministry of the Holy Spirit - and I have to say to you, tomorrow night might be the most important night for some of you for obvious reasons, but particularly because the Holy Spirit and the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost is the 'how' to knowing Immanuel's presence realised presently in your own personal life. So we're going to set up and enshrine Him this evening as the pinnacle of God's manifestation, but if you want to know how to experience that conscious manifest presence in your life, you're going to have to come tomorrow night to find out about the ministry of Pentecost in our lives.

On Friday night we'll look at the New Jerusalem, and how this presence of Immanuel will be eternally enjoyed for aeons upon aeons - you see, it's the whole message of God really. So we're coming to the pinnacle of God's revelation of Himself, Hebrews chapter 1 verse 1: *"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high"* - He is the image of God's person, or you could render it like this: the exact expression of God's character.

Ultimately the reason why Jesus came into the world was to give us a complete revelation of God, and He said it many, many times. One very definite indication of that was when He said to the disciples: 'He who has seen Me has seen the Father'. So in other words - there is a great debate goes on in the religious world: 'What is God like?'. If you want to know what God is like, you just look at Jesus, because Jesus is the heart of God revealed to mankind. Jesus is the Father, in His divine nature, revealed in the person of His Son. Colossians chapter 1 and verse 19 also shows us the extent of this, if you care to turn to it, if not I'll just quote it to you. Colossians 1 and verse 19, Paul says: 'For it pleased the Father that in Him', in Christ, 'all the fullness should dwell'. So in Immanuel, God With Us, we have all the fullness of Deity dwelling - and in fact in chapter 2 of Colossians verse 9, the ESV puts it like this: 'For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily', the whole fullness of what it is to be God, all of God, divinity, dwelt in bodily form in Jesus Christ.

Now, if Immanuel is God's greatest revelation of Himself, surely He deserves all our attention as we seek to realise the Divine presence in our own personal lives? If He is the crescendo, the climax, the pinnacle of God's revelation of Himself, and we want to know God - and that is the heartbeat of humanity, even in its fallen depravity, that is why most of the world is not atheistic, they worship something because they have an innate impulse that is God-given to look for something outside of themselves. If this is the case, and it is, that Christ is the ultimate, and we want to know God, we've got to know Christ! John the intimate, the one who leaned on Jesus' breast, the one who

spoke in his Gospel so much about 'abiding' - the abiding presence of God in our lives, John 15, that's what we're talking about - the one who talked in 1 John, we've highlighted it as well, of 'fellowship'. Jesus Himself said, quoted again by John, 'This is eternal life, that we may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent' - that is what eternal life is all about, fellowship. Well, here is where God meets men, and John the intimate hits it from the very beginning of his Gospel - turn with me to John chapter 1 then, verse 14: 'The Word', and 'The Word' is an expression of the mind and the heart, and the 'Logos', the Word of God, is the expression of the mind and heart of the Almighty, 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth'.

Now, if you look at verse 14, you will see that it says 'He dwelt among us', and that could be translated 'He tabernacled among us'. We saw last night that the Tabernacle literally could be translated as 'the dwelling place of the Shekinah glory of God'. So what we are seeing here is that the dwelling place of the Shekinah glory of God was coming in human flesh as the Tabernacle of Immanuel, God with Us. Verse 18 bears this out again: 'No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him'.

Now we've been talking these nights about 'Shekinah', and maybe if it's your first night here you don't know what this is. Well, it's a word, a term that is derived from the Hebrew word 'to dwell', 'shakan'. It has come to be a term that refers to the dwelling place of God when He manifests Himself, His Divine presence. Or, to put it another way, it is a visible manifestation of the invisible God. John has just told us that no man has seen God at any time, so to show God is around He shows particular signs. In the Old Testament this often took the form of light, or fire, or a cloud of smoke, or a combination of any of those - signs that the invisible God was showing up. Now we saw that in Eden, we saw it in the Tabernacle and the Temple. In Eden it was, after the fall, the cherubim - who are always associated with the Shekinah and God's dwelling on the Earth - standing at the gate of Eden, and the fiery sword which again is Shekinah. In the Tabernacle it was the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day, it was the manifestation of God's glory over the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies underneath the cherubim.

But there is more than that, and I don't want you think that because we have jumped from Eden to the Tabernacle and then from the Tabernacle to Immanuel that those are the only times that Shekinah is found in the word of God - far from it. If you go to Genesis chapter 15, you have there the cutting of the Abrahamic Covenant. Abraham made an agreement with God, and he cut certain animals, which was the way they signed a deal in those days, and God made a covenant - God made it with Abraham, and signified it by moving down the two lanes, if you like, of blood and flesh of sacrifice. We read that there went a burning torch and a flame between the sacrificed animals, a smoking furnace and a flaming torch - that was Shekinah, God was showing Himself, that He was taking this covenant with Israel. Then of course Moses, in the backside of the Midianite Desert, he sees a bush that is burning and not consumed. Now, that is not natural fire, that is supernatural fire, that is Shekinah

glory - and God revealed Himself in a new name to Moses in a way that He had never been known before.

We can go on with other examples: Sinai, when the Law was given, the Commandments, there was thunder, lightning, cloud, and the descending of fire that signified that God came down and met with Moses and gave His law. There were special manifestations that were given to Moses of the Shekinah glory, one of the most famous is in Exodus 33, where Moses pleaded with God: 'Show me Your glory' - and God said, 'I will make all My goodness pass before you'. But we read in that account that Moses did not see the face of God, for no man has seen the face of God and lived - and so God allowed him, the Bible says, to see His back parts, not His face. I'm led to believe that 'back parts' could be translated 'afterglow' - Moses saw God pass by in some shape or form, but he only saw the train of His Shekinah glory as He went away. In Exodus 34 we read of another encounter Moses had with God, and we read there that it left his face shining - when he came down from the Mount - with Shekinah glory, and he had to cover it up.

The majority of Israel's history, of course, was that the Shekinah glory dwelt at the Tabernacle and the Temple until, of course, as we saw last night, in Ezekiel's day the Shekinah departed. You remember that God was reluctant in pulling out of Solomon's Temple in Ezekiel's day, and He had a four step departure - reluctant, waiting on God's people to repent. He even, the rabbis believe, hung over the Mount of Olives for three and a half years before He departed from Israelite history. Then we come to the New Testament, and there is a new form of the Shekinah glory of God, the incarnate Word - a fulfilment of Haggai 2 and verse 9 that we read last night. Do you remember what happened? Haggai was instructed to tell the people to build the second Temple after they came out of captivity in Babylon. Solomon's temple had been destroyed by the Babylonians, and once they saw this edifice being erected those old men and women who remembered the former Temple wept, because it paled into insignificance. But the reason why they wept, primarily, was that this second Temple didn't have the glory of God, it didn't have the Shekinah - it had departed in Ezekiel's day. But there was a promise given in Haggai 2:9 that the glory of the latter house would be greater than that of the former, in other words the glory of the second Temple would be greater than the first. How could it be, when there was no Shekinah glory? The reason: Christ came to Zerubbabel's Temple.

We saw that He was brought in as a bundle of babe and put into Simeon's arms and dedicated. Of course, we know that He went in at times and He sat down as a Rabbi and taught in the Temple compound. We read those wonderful accounts of how He came in and cleansed the Temple of the moneychangers, and we know that He came to the Temple to celebrate the feasts of Passover and Tabernacle - there was a greater than the Temple in the Temple! The Shekinah glory of God revealed in flesh, Immanuel, this new form, this New Testament form, unique form, permanent form of God's manifest presence among men. That's what John was getting at when he said in verse 14 of chapter 1: 'The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth'. The fulfilment of another Old Testament prophecy, Isaiah 9 and verse 2: 'The

people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined'.

But, you know, Shekinah wasn't just inside Jesus, in a sense. Even at His birth Shekinah manifest and declared who He was - have you ever considered that? The shepherds had the angelic annunciation, and in Luke chapter 2 we read that 'the glory of the Lord appeared', that was Shekinah, 'and shone round about them'. For the Magi there was a star, and it wasn't an ordinary star - which is evident from the behaviour - it appears and then disappears, and it travels in all sorts of different directions. The Greek word for 'star' simply means 'radiance' or 'brilliance' - and so Jesus had His own star, which was the Shekinah glory of God, to manifest His birth into this world to Gentile kings. But He Himself was the new, more permanent form of God's manifest presence among men - Messiah dwelling with His people, Israel, abiding with them; the visible manifestation of God's presence in a completely unique form, unsurpassed, and the greatest demonstration of Shekinah glory.

Now, what I want you to do tonight is to turn with me to Luke chapter 9, for here we have the greatest occurrence of the Shekinah glory manifest in the person of Christ, which is the Transfiguration. Now understand: the glory was veiled in Christ by human flesh, but it shone through His body on the Mount of Transfiguration. Now, understand before we read and study this account for a little while: if you are going to know the personal presence of God in your life, manifest, actually sensible, knowable, discernible, taste-able, you're going to have to get a fresh vision of the glory of Christ. There is no other way! You can run to meetings and look for this blessing and the other blessing, and I believe in many blessings - but let me tell you this: you cannot bypass Christ to get them, for Christ is the way to God, all that God has, all the promises of God, all the blessings are Yes and Amen in Him. I hope that through this study tonight you will get a fresh glimpse of Him.

Luke chapter 9 and verse 27, let's read down to verse 36: "But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God", and this was the Kingdom of God in embryo, a prophetic picture of what was going to happen in the Kingdom in a future day that is yet to be. 'Now it came to pass', verse 28, 'about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, that Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'; not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!'. When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen'.

Verse 20 it shows us what I call 'the inner circle of intimacy', Peter, James and John. Now like every mountain, the Mount of Transfiguration hadn't got a crowd at the top of it, there were only three. Do you know something? If you're going to be intimate with Christ and know the presence of God in your life, you're going to have to take time - it's as simple as that. There is no substitute for time, and in verse 29 Luke is unique in the record of the Transfiguration, in that he tells us that as the Lord Jesus was transfigured He was in the act of praying, as He prayed He was transfigured. The place of communion is where we experience the presence of God. Not just banal saying of prayers, but communion with God, deep spiritual calling unto deep spiritual in the Divine. Oliver Holden said in the 1700s:

'Those who seek the Throne of Grace
Find that Throne in every place.
If we live a life of prayer,
God is present everywhere'.

To realise the presence of God, we need to have a life of communion with God - that is part of this abiding in Christ, part of this fellowship with the Divine, the Father and the Son. Is it any wonder, therefore, in Luke's Gospel incidentally, chapter 11 and verse 1, the disciples come to the Lord Jesus and say, 'Master, teach us to pray'? Look at what they saw happened when He prayed! He was transfigured, and they had a manifestation of the Divine presence in Shekinah glory! Now, let me say to you tonight that that is the fellowship I'm interested in. There are so many 'fellowships' around today, and I'm not talking about assemblies, I'm talking about organisations, 'the fellowship of this, that and the other'. They group together at times because of certain doctrinal niceties that they all agree with, maybe it's prophetic, maybe it's to do with your understanding of salvation - whatever, I don't care - the fellowship that I am interested in is the fellowship with the Father and with the Son, and this deep intimate communion and inner circle of intimacy with the Divine, that's all that matters! A.W. Tozer said this, I found this quote recently, he said: 'I refuse to fight over theories, but I am looking for the fellowship of the burning heart. I am looking for men and women who are lost in worship, those who love God until He is the sweetheart of the soul' - that is the fellowship that we need!

Now we see the Shekinah manifest as this fellowship is engaged in - verse 29: 'As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white', there's that light, 'and glistening'. Down to verse 34, we see Shekinah again: 'While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them', the cloud, 'and they were fearful as they entered the cloud' - the cloud encompassed them. God was manifesting His presence, He was owning Christ! Now in Matthew's account of this he adds to this by saying - Matthew 17 verse 2, I'll read it to you - that: 'His face shone like the sun'. Imagine that! 'His clothes became as white as light'. In verse 5 of Matthew 17 he also says, 'A bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice', that's another manifestation of Shekinah glory, a voice, 'spoke out of it'. Now that is identical to what happened on Mount Sinai when the Law was given, the only difference is that when Moses came down from the Mount his face shone, like the moon shines, as a reflection of the Divine glory - but on the Mount of Transfiguration Christ's face shone like the sun! He

was the source of it all! Jesus was the light.

What does Mark say about this manifestation? In Mark 9 verse 3 he again identifies Shekinah glory: 'His clothes became shining', exceedingly white like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. You see, these men, they were grasping at metaphors and similes and descriptions to try to convey this great brightness and glory that they saw - there was nothing they knew, conceivably, that could match it! Later in his life Peter contemplates this great moment on the Mount, turn with me to 2 Peter chapter 1. Remember he saw this with his own eyes, 2 Peter chapter 1 and verse 16, he says: 'For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'. And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have a more sure word of prophecy', better translated, 'And so we have the prophetic word confirmed' - it's not a cunningly devised fable, we have seen it, it was confirmed to us - 'which you do well to heed as a light', there it is again, 'a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts'.

Peter says: 'We saw His majestic glory burst forth!'. Now, let me ask you, believer: have you ever seen it? Have you ever seen the majestic excellence of the glory of God in Immanuel, Jesus Christ? Do you know what our problem is? There are so many distractions. This, incredibly, was the problem for the intimate circle of Peter, James and John on the Mount. If you look at chapter 9 of Luke again - now please grasp the import of this: they are in His presence, they are in His presence, and even in His presence there are distractions. Luke chapter 9 verse 32: 'But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep' - can you imagine this? It's almost beyond imagination: the greatest manifestation of the Shekinah glory of God that has ever been is appearing here, and Peter is dozing, and the others are dozing too! While Christ was glorified His inner circle were asleep! What a picture of the church today! Christ glorified, and the church slumbers! They don't realise what they have in Jesus, but look at verse 32: 'And when they were fully awake, they saw His glory' - and that's what we need to have happen! We need to get fully awakened to the glory of God in Christ!

More distractions, verse 33: 'Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, that Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'; not knowing what he said'. Peter: He will not share His glory with another. Peter: were you here last night? Did you hear what happened when the children of Israel brought other gods into the temple? Do you not remember what Ezekiel saw? Do you not remember how the presence of God departed from Israel because of it and became Ichabod? Let me ask you a question: why is it that men who have enjoyed God's presence for themselves always try to better it? Why can we not just enjoy Him for Himself? We ought to, and this was the message which God gave with great booming voice from the heavens in verse 35 - a voice came out, the Shekinah cloud came and took them into it, and

they're terrified in verse 35. 'A voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!' - hear Him! You know what the other Gospels record Him to have said: 'This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased', or in whom is all my delight or pleasure.

This is really what God was saying, and this came to me today so clearly: 'I don't need any more than Him!' - and neither do you, Peter! God, in His grace, is bringing us into this great fellowship of eternal love in the Godhead...and we need other things. He isn't enough for many of us, and it's not because we don't know about Him, it's not even because we don't know Him, it's because we have never seen His glory. Look what had to happen in verse 36: 'When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone'. God took all the other distractions away. My friend, I am very careful and cautious about what I'm about to say, because I don't want God to do it to me - but what if He should take your distractions away? Would it not be better that you took them away? The dearest idol you have known, what'er that idol be, tear it from His throne and worship only He. God took them away, and we read that when they lifted up their eyes - Matthew records it - when they lifted up their eyes they saw no one but Jesus only. The result of truly seeing His glory and having the Divine presence manifest to them in the face of the Son, and the shining brightness and whiteness of the light of the cloud that encompassed them, of the booming voice of thunder that spoke to them, was that all other distractions were taken away and they were completely encapsulated exclusively and entirely by Christ and His glory! One hymn writer put it like this:

'I've seen the face of Jesus,
He smiled in love on me;
It filled my heart with rapture,
My soul with ecstasy.
The scars of deepest anguish
Were lost in glory bright;
I've seen the face of Jesus,
It was a wondrous sight!'

She goes on:

'And since I've seen His beauty
All else I count but loss.
The world, its fame and pleasure
Is now to me but dross:
His light dispelled my darkness
His smile was Oh! so sweet.
I've seen the face of Jesus
I can but kiss His feet'.

Peter says: 'Let's make a tabernacle, a memorial to Elijah and to Moses' - and God is saying, 'Let them go! Let Elijah and Moses go, for My Son has fulfilled the law and the prophets, let them both go, Christ is all! Hear Him!'. I repeat myself: these

distractions were in the Divine presence. Now let me ask you who your Moses and Elijah is. Holy men, the great lawgiver and the greatest prophet of the old covenant - who is your Moses and Elijah? Who is your distraction in the presence of God? Do you remember Monday night, Adam and Eve? It was the trees of the garden, in Eden, in that paradise, that idyllic trysting place with their God - it was in the gifts that God had given them, the trees, that they hid themselves from God's presence. We can use these things that God has given to us to hide us from His presence. Israel, we saw the Tabernacle and the Temple, they used holy objects, they used the Ark of God, and the Temple, and the ritual, and the sacrifice, and the services, and the priesthood - that was what hid them from the very presence of God! My dear friend: who is your Moses and your Elijah? For some it's their denomination, for some it's some Christian preacher or theologian, for some it's some practice, some ordinance, some way of doing things. Now my friend, don't misunderstand me, I'm not saying that those things are unimportant - but I know this much: that the tempter, the accuser of the brethren, Satan, knows that he cannot dupe and distract good men and women by immorality. So what he does is, he comes along their path and he distracts them with holy things - Moses and Elijahs! He gets them taken up with 'its' rather than Him - and God's voice has always said, and always will say: Jesus only!

Corinth was rife with disunity and sectarianism, we read that right away in chapter 1. Some said they were of Apollos, some of Paul, some of Cephas, and some of Christ - they were divided into at least four factions. Some followed Paul because probably they appreciated his forensic mind and his legal argument, he was a deep man of God. Others liked Apollos because he was more of a dynamic preacher, a gifted orator. Some liked Cephas, that's Peter, because he was a man of the people, a passionate man for the people. Some, the very spiritual crowd, 'the Lord's people', they followed Christ - they said: 'We don't follow men, we are followers of Christ', but they allowed that to divide them from other followers of Christ. Corinth was also rife with Greek philosophy and human wisdom, and Paul comes in and he tells them: 'Your sectarianism, and your human wisdom, and your pride, has caused you to take your eyes off Christ. You have fastened them upon men, men's reputations, men's intellect and human speculation'. Then when you come into second Corinthians, some of them were following false apostles and prophets, and Paul says: 'I have this great fear for you, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ'. Jesus only, Corinthians! 'This is My beloved Son in whom is all My delight! Hear Him!'. The NASB puts that statement in 2 Corinthians 11:3 like this, that he feared lest their: 'minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ'. The simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ!

What's your 'it'? What's your 'it'? It could be a form of doctrine. I have to be careful what I say here, but you can't really beat about the bush: it could be an understanding of the Lord's return - and I have mine. It could be a version of the Scriptures. It could be a mode of dress. I'm not saying what's right and what's wrong, that's not the point - you're missing the point. Elijah and Moses weren't wrong, they were men of God, God ordained to have them appear beside His Son - but they had to fade, and Christ had to be seen. He had to be the focus, He had to be the One that

they were taken up with:

'All in all forever,
Jesus will I sing;
Everything in Jesus,
And Jesus everything'.

There was the distraction of self. Not long after seeing Jesus only, do you know what happened? The 'J-e-s' fell off and became 'us' only - that's right, the disciples. If you look at verse 46 down the chapter: 'Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest'. Can you believe this? Well, let me tell you a home truth: we wouldn't have been any different. You see, we will not know this presence of God in our lives, we will not have this manifestation of Christ in all His glory and appreciate it until we know the victory of the cross in our lives. In verse 31 we see that Elijah and Moses appeared in glory with Jesus 'and spoke of His decease', or His death, 'which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem'. Men talk about what they're interested in, and this revelation of Elijah and Moses with Christ - and they're talking about Calvary - was to show that this is the centre of God's plan to restore His fellowship with people. We know, John tells us in John 17, John 21, that Christ would be glorified in Calvary, and He would glorify the Father in Calvary - how? By revealing the love and the grace of Almighty God in restoring fellowship, that He might dwell with men again, and men might be His people.

If you are to see the glory of Christ, your self will have to undergo the death of crucifixion. Look at verse 23, before the Transfiguration: 'He said to them all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels''.

Almost finished, but I imagine some of you have been asking these nights - and you should be asking it even more tonight, tomorrow night, and Friday night - how is the Shekinah glory of God, the visible manifestation of the invisible presence of God, how is it seen today? It's alright talking about Eden, it's alright talking about the Tabernacle and Temple, it's alright me throwing out this remark that we can know God in an even more intimate way today - but you're crying out, and you're asking 'Well, how? I don't seem to! How?'

Turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 5 of 2 Corinthians chapter 4: 'For we do not preach ourselves' - hallelujah! Paul was a man delivered from self, delivered from reputation - 'but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'. The knowledge of the glory of God is still outshining from the face of Jesus Christ, for He is alive, He has risen, He is exalted and ascended to glory! It's

still Jesus only! But note something in chapter 3 please, that's not where it's to end, 2 Corinthians 3 verse 12: 'Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech; unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away', the old manifestation of God's glory there in Tabernacle and Temple and Law. 'But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ' - they are blind to this revelation of God in Jesus, in Immanuel. 'But even to this day', verse 15, 'when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart', the Jews. 'Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty', there is freedom. Now mark this, verse 18: 'But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord'.

Now stay with me, whatever you do. We are to reflect the glory of God manifest in the face of Jesus Christ in the abiding presence of God with us every day in our lives. When we come under the lordship, the entire lordship, of Jesus Christ, when we surrender to the Holy Spirit and His lordship in our life through the administration of the Spirit, that is equal to seeing face-to-face Jesus Christ the Son of God. And I'll tell you this, a man prayed in the prayer meeting last night that he remembered a day when there was a shining light in his heart and he could feel it burning - well God has shone into our hearts in the face of Jesus Christ, and when we completely surrender to Him, I'll tell you: you'll feel it burning. It's more of a spiritual light. We'll talk about it more tomorrow night, but Paul said to the Ephesian believers that they were meant to be to the praise of God's glory, they were meant to reflect the glory of Christ in their lives - but if you're going to do that, you're going to have to see the glory of Christ first. It's when we behold, verse 18, His glory in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, we are then transformed into that same image from glory to glory. This is going to be consummated when we get to the eternal state and resurrected form, but it's a process that ought to be started now - but we need to see His glory first. Verse 16: we need to turn to the Lord that the veil would be taken away, and that happens by faith! You turn to Him by faith!

You say: 'David, how can I know this manifestation, a visible manifestation in my life of the invisible God? How can I shine forth the image of Christ and His glory in my life?'. Well, you've got to take it by faith, you've got to surrender yourself completely, your sin, your self, everything that you are. You've got to become a Temple, a Tabernacle of the Holy Ghost of God, you've got to give it all over to Him, and you've got to take it by faith! Some of you have surrendered, but you've never taken it by faith - and it's just by faith. But to do that, you're going to have to want it - and can I say something? You'll never want it until you see Him as He really is. You see, that's why believers today, generally, don't want to go through with God. It's not because they don't know about Him. It's not because they don't know Him personally. It's because they have never seen His glory.

Do you want to see His glory? Do you want to see what He's like now? Turn with me quickly to Revelation 1 - now listen, this is how your Lord is now: 'Then I turned',

verse 12, 'to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp twoedged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead'. This was John, who once was familiar enough to put his head on the bosom of Jesus - but when he saw the glory of Christ, he fell as a dead man and the Lord put His hand on him.

Do you know what happened in Matthew's account of the Transfiguration? The Lord put His hand on them, the human touch of the Divine Saviour - but what I want you to see is: 'Lo, He sets in blood no more'. The outward appearance of Jesus is now comparable to the sun, that's what John says. His physical body no longer veils the shining brightness of this divine Shekinah glory, but just constantly emits it. This is the One who is your life, the glorified Immanuel in heaven! This is your Lord, the One who says 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age'. If you're going to live in the good of that, and you're going to experience His divine presence in your life, you're going to have to take that by faith and believe it!

Tozer said: 'The practice of the presence of God consists not of projecting an imaginary object from within your own mind, and then seeking to realise its presence. It is rather to recognise the real presence of the One whom all sound theology declares to be already there' - this is a fact! He is glorified in heaven, see Him there by faith, and in your heart there will be an explosion of divine glory! You've got to take it by faith.

Let me finish by quoting to you from a hymn writer who had seen the glory, and when I finish this quotation we will linger on in the presence of Immanuel. Ray Palmer wrote:

'Jesus, these eyes have never seen
That radiant form of Thine;
The veil of sense hangs dark between
Thy blessed face and mine.

I see Thee not, I hear Thee not,
Yet Thou art oft with me;
And earth hath ne'er so dear a spot
As where I meet with Thee.

Like some bright dream that comes unsought
When slumbers o'er me roll,
Thine image ever fills my thought,
And charms my ravished soul.

Yet though I have not seen, and still
Must rest in faith alone;
I love Thee, dearest Lord, and will,
Unseen, but not unknown.

When death these mortal eyes shall seal,
And still this throbbing heart,
The rending veil shall Thee reveal,
All glorious as Thou art'.

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The Presence Of God - Chapter 4

"In Pentecost"

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by David Legge

Let's bow together in a word of prayer once again: O Father, we thank You that we have a reason to sing, we thank You that we have a song in our mouth, even praise unto our God. We thank You that You are great, and greatly to be praised. Father, we thank You that the song we believe that we will sing for all eternity is the song of the Lamb that was slain, and has redeemed us to God by His blood out of every tribe, tongue, people and nation. Lord we want to join that song now, we don't want to wait until the eternal state - we want to be in the Spirit, and praising in heaven itself with our spirits. We want, Lord, to know what it is to see Christ exalted high and lifted up, his train filling the Temple. Lord, we want to have a fresh vision of the glorified Lord, and we want to gain a new appreciation of who He is and all that He has done for us - Lord, that He would mean more to us, and we would reflect more of Him in our lives. O God, we just hunger for You tonight. Lord, we were meditating upon that Psalm today about how we hunger and thirst after the Lord. Lord, we believe the Lord is on our side, we believe that You are for us and nothing can be against us. We believe it is better to trust in the Lord than put confidence in man. We believe the Lord is our strength and our song, and has become our salvation. We say to You, Lord, 'Open to me the gates of righteousness, and I will go through them, and I will praise the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord, through which the righteous shall enter'. Lord, let this be a Bethel tonight, let this be a ladder to heaven and a gate to look into eternity. O God, we want to see Jesus - but more than seeing Him, we want to experience His presence with us tonight. O God, we wait upon You now. We're going to speak from Your word about the Holy Spirit, and how He reveals Jesus to us - but Lord, we want to know the Holy Spirit's ministry tonight. O God, deliver us from the travesty and the sacrilege of speaking His name without knowing His power. Let us know His presence here tonight, in the name of the Lord Jesus we pray, Amen.

Now let me welcome you - and we do mean that, we're very glad to have you with us. If it's your first night - I know for some of you it may well be - we're especially glad to have you here. Do remember that these meetings continue on tomorrow evening, there is no meeting on Saturday of course, but on the Lord's Day - God willing - I'll be ministering God's word in the morning here in the Lifeboat at 11 o'clock, and then preaching the Gospel at 7 in the evening. We value your prayers for tomorrow night, and if you can join us we would love to see you, and if you can bring anyone else along I'm sure, and hope, that they would appreciate the meetings. These meetings are quite unconventional in some respects, in that at the end of the message on some nights we've been closing in a word of prayer, other nights we haven't - but what we have been doing is, we've been lingering on in the presence of God. The Lord has visited us, we believe, and some folk have been here very late into the evening, almost into the next day, as we've been waiting on God and as we've been bathing and basking in His presence. Now we want more of that, and we believe there is more

of that - but let me say that some of you may have to go at the end of the meeting, and we understand that completely, and we're not putting pressure on anyone. If you have to go as soon as the message is over, please do go and don't feel inhibited in any way about doing that - no one will think the worse of you. But if you are at liberty to stay, please do - it's not a prayer meeting as such, it's not praise meeting, although there is praise and prayer - it's a time, really, to wait on God and to enjoy His presence, and to learn what it is to be still and know He is God, to wait in His presence. So please, if you can stay, do stay.

Now tonight we're looking at 'The Presence of God in Pentecost'. Now let me just give a couple of words of introduction to remind those who have been here - and for the sake of those who haven't - of what we've been doing these nights. We've been outlining the fact that there is more written in Scripture about God's desire to be with men, than there is about men's desire to be with God. God's great passion throughout the whole of human history is to dwell in the midst of His people. But we have seen that it's more than that, it's not just to dwell but to be seen to dwell, and to have a manifestation of His presence with His people - that they might know that He is there. Of course these nights, we looked on Monday night at how God met with man, the first man and woman, in the Garden of Eden - that idyllic paradise that was their trysting place, where God came to them in the cool of the day, the late afternoon, and met with them after a day's work, before the fall, and how they enjoyed fellowship - perhaps even an afternoon or early evening meal with the Lord. We believe the pre-incarnate form of the Lord Jesus Christ walked in the Garden in the cool of the day and met with Adam and Eve.

Then we saw the Tabernacle and the Temple, how God's Shekinah glory dwelt in the Holy of Holies over the Ark of the Covenant, and how the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night led them. But we saw last evening, and this is really what we've been leading up to, what really is the crescendo and the pinnacle of Scripture: that the great demonstration and revelation of God's presence came in Christ. Every type and picture and rite and ritual has been pointing towards Him, the greatest ever visible manifestation of God's presence - Immanuel, God With Us.

Now we also noted each night that the signs of God's invisible presence, visible signs of His invisible presence, are called 'Shekinah' - the Shekinah glory of God. That word 'Shekinah' is derived from the Hebrew word 'to dwell', 'shakan'. Really all 'Shekinah' is, is the visible manifestation of the invisible God. We saw it at the gate of Eden whenever man was barred after the fall, cherubim often accompany Shekinah, and there the cherubim were there with a flaming sword - fire, Shekinah. We saw it in the Tabernacle and the Temple, the fire that was there, the pillar of fire, the pillar of cloud. In the Old Testament Shekinah took various forms: light, fire, cloud, and sometimes a combination of those. But last night we saw - and I hope it rejoiced your heart, and lifted your spirit high in the heavenlies to see that the greatest manifestation of the Shekinah glory of God is when we come into the New Testament, and the Shekinah glory of God comes in a new form: the incarnate Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, Immanuel - the greatest demonstration of Shekinah glory.

We saw the greatest demonstration of this Divine glory in the life and person of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. We looked at several passages of Scripture, and we saw the glory of the Lord Jesus, that glory that was veiled by human flesh in a body shone through that day on the Mount to that intimate inner circle of Peter, James and John. We saw last evening that the Shekinah glory of God still shines forth through Jesus. As we've been going through these nights, you may have been asking the question: 'Where is the Shekinah glory of God today?'. We looked, and it wouldn't do any harm to turn to it, to 2 Corinthians chapter 4 - it is still only in the face of Jesus Christ that we see God's glory. Second Corinthians 4 verse 6: 'For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'. So the light, Shekinah, of the knowledge of the glory, Shekinah, of God is found in the face of Jesus Christ still to this day. So we need eyes of faith to see the glorified Christ if we're going to know His personal presence in our individual lives. This is what our desire has been. Surely if the gamut and weight of the emphasis of Scripture is God's glory and God's desire and passion to dwell in the midst of His people, surely that should be our greatest desire and our pre-eminent purpose in life: to know, experientially, the dwelling presence of God with us. How do we know that? We must look to Christ with the eyes of faith. We must look into His face, for there is the knowledge of the glory of God - in the face of Jesus Christ.

We're not only to know this with the eyes of faith, but we saw last evening that we are to reflect that glory and carry it, this abiding presence, with us wherever we go and whatever we do. Turn to the previous chapter, chapter 3 of 2 Corinthians, and here we see the source of the glorious presence of God is again the face of Jesus Christ. We see also in verse 16 that the means of beholding that face is faith: 'Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord', that is faith, 'the veil is taken away'. The veil that has hidden the glory of God is taken away when we turn to the Lord. 'Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty', verse 18, 'But we all' - here is the power that enables us to receive this glory in our lives - 'we all with unveiled face', through faith, 'beholding', the source of this glory, the face of the Lord Jesus, 'as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord'.

Where is this Shekinah glory to be found today? In the face of Jesus Christ. How do we see the glorified face of Jesus Christ? By faith, and the veil is taken away - but how, what is the means and the power that enables us to experience from glory to glory a transformation into the image of Christ, into His glory? The answer is in verse 18: 'by the Spirit of the Lord' - Pentecost. Pentecost is the 'how' that Immanuel's presence can be realised now in our individual lives and in the church of Jesus Christ. The 'Who' was last night, the greatest demonstration of God's glory in the Gospels and right to today is the resurrected and ascended Lord in glory now, and we've got to get our eyes on Him if we're going to be taken up with this glory and know it personally - but if we're going to experience it in our lives, we're going to have to have the instrumentality of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Now tomorrow night we're going to look at the New Jerusalem, and how this presence

of God will be eternally enjoyed. But we want to look now at how Immanuel's presence is realised now in your life, in this church, or whatever church you belong to. This is a vital night, I think it's probably the most important night - because when we receive ministry like we have over these nights, many people are left asking that very question: 'How? How?'. Well, what we need to do is: go to our Lord and His promise of Pentecost. So turn with me to John chapter 16 please, verse 7 - now try and put yourselves in the shoes of the disciples. They have been almost three and a half years with the Lord Jesus in His ministry, and now He's pronouncing to them that He's going away - and in verse 7 He says: 'Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is expedient', or it is to your advantage, 'that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper', Comforter, Encourager, Strengthener, 'will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you'.

Now this is remarkable: the Lord Jesus Christ, whom they knew was their King, their Messiah, was now telling them 'I'm going away'. They are devastated, some of them have left everything - their family and their careers - behind them, and He's saying: 'I'm going to go, but it's going to be better for you, it's going to be advantageous for you that I go'. Now they couldn't, for the life of them, see how that could be possible - but He explains: 'If I don't go, the Helper cannot come to you'. The Greek word for 'Helper' there is 'Paracletos', and it simply means 'a person summoned to one's aid'. It was used, perhaps, of people like lawyers who gave legal defence, or a mediator that came in between two warring factions. The Lord Jesus was saying: 'I'm going, but I'm going to send someone else to come alongside you to aid you, to help you, to strengthen you, to give you a spiritual life infusion'.

In chapter 14 He told them something else about this Helper, if you turn back there, in verse 16 the Lord Jesus said: 'I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter', or another Helper, 'that He may abide with you forever'. Now that word 'another' means, in the Greek language, 'another of the same kind' - 'I will send you a Helper of the same kind'. That means not a different kind, and obviously the Holy Spirit is Divine in the sense that our Lord Jesus is Divine, but that is not everything that He meant when He said 'another Helper of the same kind'. He was meaning: 'Just as I have shown the nature of the Father to you' - and if you were to read verses 7 through to 11 you would see that He came to reveal the Father, 'He who has seen me has seen the Father' - 'Just as I have come to reveal the nature of the Father to you, the Holy Spirit will come and reveal My nature to you, will bring My', Christ's, 'nature to you in My absence'.

We see that that is clearly the meaning in verse 18: 'I will not leave you comfortless', or orphans, 'I will come to you'. So this is a Helper of the same kind. He's not just sending another person, but He's sending another person who will bring His very person and nature and presence to them - it's amazing. He says: 'I will come to you'. The Holy Spirit will bring Jesus to us. Do you have knowledge, personal knowledge, of the Holy Spirit bringing the presence and nature of Jesus to you? Can I tell you that if you don't - and most don't - you will feel like an orphan. It is not God's intention that we should be helpless, or comfortless, or orphans. It is God's divine intention, eternally so, that we should know this Paracletos coming alongside and actually

bringing Jesus into our personal lives. What the Lord Jesus is saying when He says to the disciples, 'I will come to you', is 'You need not ever be devoid of the Divine presence'. You may have the Divine presence always with you!

In verse 17 He says: 'The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you'. This Spirit will not just reveal Christ to them, but will form Christ in them - changing them from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord. Now at this time the Holy Spirit dwelt with the disciples, but at Pentecost He would come to indwell the disciples. This is why Jesus said in chapter 16: 'It's advantageous that I go'. Now we must understand that He meant what He said - it's better that Jesus went! Do you believe that? When you compare the ministry of Christ to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, you realise why this is the case: because Christ's ministry, generally speaking, generally speaking now, was external as He moved around Israel in His body. He didn't even leave the principality, His own country. Yet now that the Holy Spirit has come, bringing the presence of Jesus to His people, His ministry is internal! He comes to take up residence in the lives of His people! Aren't you glad He went?

People say to me: 'I would love to have been around when Jesus was around'. Well, I understand what you mean, but I wouldn't. Robert Hall Glover said these remarkable words: 'By Christ's ascension and the Holy Spirit's descent, Christ exchanged His bodily presence with His then disciples in Jerusalem for His spiritual omnipresence with His disciples everywhere'. Can I repeat that? He exchanged his bodily presence with His then disciples in Jerusalem for His spiritual omnipresence with His disciples everywhere. Christ's ministry in Palestine was local, now His ministry through His Spirit is universal! Some have suggested, and I agree with them, that the Lord's post-resurrection appearances, if you study them, you will see that when He appears to His Apostles, He appears suddenly and then He disappears. He arrives and then He departs, and it has been suggested that this was His way of weaning them from depending upon His physical presence, and introducing them to the nature of His omnipresence, His spiritual presence everywhere that they could know He was with them always, even unto the end of the age. But in order for these disciples to appreciate it, they had to walk by faith and not by sight - this was the lesson. We've been hearing a lot about visible manifestations of the Divine presence, and I believe those may still happen at times, but generally speaking we are now into a spiritual realm where we can know even deeper and greater things in the Spirit when we, by faith, see Christ in all His glory even in His bodily absence.

Thomas had to learn that lesson, didn't he, in one of those post-resurrection appearances? Jesus said to him: 'Thomas, because you have seen Me, you believe. Blessed are those who have not seen, yet have believed'. In John 14 verse 15 we see - and this is vital, and we will come back to this again and again tonight - that obedience is the environment for a clearer, fuller revelation of the glory of Jesus Christ. This is how He started out this whole discourse on the Holy Spirit. Verse 15: 'If you love Me, keep My commandments'. In verse 16 we see that, because He is now glorified and our Great High Priest, He petitions the Father that we should have this Helper, this Paracletos, to abide with us forever: 'I will pray the Father', that was

future tense then, now it has been realised, 'and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever'. Now that is something that Christ could not do in His body, He could not abide with everyone forever. So it is expedient that He went, so that He may do that now. Now imagine this: we now know the eternal presence of God with us forever! At least we're meant to know it, and recognise it.

In verses 19 through to 24 He then speaks about this great mystery of the Triune Godhead, of the indwelling of the Father and the Son. He makes this remarkable statement in verse 19: 'A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also'. Now what He's saying in verse 19 is: no unbeliever saw the Lord after His burial. No unbeliever saw the Lord after His burial. He was dead, as far as they were concerned, finished. After He was raised in resurrection power, it was only those who loved Him who saw Him. But note this: after His ascension, when He went to glory, His disciples continued to see Him - not literally and physically, but spiritually by faith. This is doubtless the meaning of what John is saying here, quoting the Lord Jesus, verse 19: 'But you will see Me'. Now Christ is asking you tonight: 'Do you see Me now? Do you see Me now?'.

In verse 20 Jesus said: 'At that day' - what day? The day when the Holy Spirit would come to indwell them. What was that day? That was Pentecost. 'At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you' - you in Me, and I in you. Let that wash over you just for a moment: 'You in Me, and I in you', Jesus said. Someone has illustrated that like the poker that is in the fire, and the fire is in the poker: you in Me, and I in you. But I think it means more than that, it means 'you in Me', your standing. Now we're in Christ, and Christ is in God, and everything that is Christ's is ours. We are joint heirs with Him, our standing. So often we get taken up with our standing, but here is something else: 'You in Me, but I in you' - that's your strength. 'I in you', by the Holy Spirit, the Paracletos, the Helper, 'I am going to strengthen you'.

Now you may know you're in Christ tonight, but do you know Christ is in you? Or, at least, is Christ filling you so that you might know that He is in you - are you filled by the Holy Spirit? Are you filled with the fullness of Christ? How can you be? How can you know this strength? How can you know this power manifest in your life, this glory to be reflected? Well, one step, and we've already looked at it in verse 15, Jesus reiterates it in verse 21: 'He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him'. Loving obedience. Look at the verse: loving obedience will incur the special love of the Father and Jesus. Now I believe God loves everyone, but there is a special love to be lavished upon those who obey His commandments, and keep His word, and see His glory, and are filled with the Spirit.

Look at it again: then Christ will be manifest, will reveal Himself - 'I will love him and manifest', reveal, 'Myself to him'. Obedience is the way that we have Christ revealed to us. Now do you understand this? I'm trying to make it plain and clear, but do you know anything about this? This is what the eternal plan of God has been for from the very beginning. Now Judas, well, he didn't understand it. If you look at verse 22 - this

isn't Judas Iscariot, that's clarified for us in verse 22: 'Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, 'Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?'. Now, no doubt Judas was thinking that He was talking about coming as conquering King, 'I will come to you'. He couldn't understand, 'How will You not reveal Yourself to the world, if You're coming as conquering King, because You're going to conquer the world, the Gentile nations?'. Jesus wasn't talking about coming as conquering King, He's talking about coming in the Holy Spirit. He's speaking about manifesting Himself spiritually. Can I say to you very tenderly but quite, well, let's say forcibly and candidly: there's a lot of people in our nation can tell you when exactly and where the Lord Jesus is going to come again, but they can't tell you how He comes now!

Many don't understand anything about this, like Judas. Do you understand this? How Jesus comes to you? Someone put it like this, and this is remarkable, please listen carefully to this statement: 'By the Spirit of God we can actually know Christ better today than the disciples knew Him when He was on the Earth'. Now some of you are struggling with that: by the Spirit of God we can actually know Christ better today than the disciples knew Him when He was on the Earth. He elaborates by saying: 'When He was here, those in the front of the crowd were closer to Him than those at the rear; but today, by faith, each of us can enjoy the closest fellowship with Him - everyone, everywhere, anywhere on this globe'. It's wonderful! Does this not bowl you over? I have felt, from last week starting to look at this, and again today meditating upon it once more, I'll be honest with you: I felt the very presence of Jesus in the study with me. There was one point at which I had to fall on my face, to think that Jesus will reveal Himself, if I am obedient, He will reveal Himself to me in a way that the disciples never knew.

In verse 23 we have it reiterated again, in case you think that we are reading something into these verses. Can I say that, as far as I'm concerned, this is the greatest verse in the Bible: 'Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come', We will come, 'to him and make Our abode', make Our home, 'with him''. Now listen, in verse 1 and verse 2 of chapter 14 Jesus was saying, 'Don't be troubled, I'm going to prepare a place'. He was going to the Father's house to prepare many dwelling places for those who believed in Him, but now in verse 23 He's saying that He simultaneously, in the Spirit, joins the Father - and that shows, implicitly, His equality with the Father. He now, with the Father, is coming spiritually and making many dwelling places with believers here on the Earth! Do you know anything about this? In the Spirit, both the Father and the Son, look at it: 'We will come to him and make Our home with him' - the Father and the Son will come to the one who loves Jesus, and the one who keeps His word.

Now let me tease this out for you, because it is remarkable. He says: 'We will come to him', that is the Greek word 'pros'. The Greek word 'pros' literally means 'face-to-face'. If you turn with me to chapter 1, please, and verse 1 to this famous verse, John 1 verse 1 - you read again of the Lord Jesus, the Logos: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God', and that literally is 'pros ton theon', 'the Word was face-to-face with God'. The pre-incarnate Christ was face-to-face with God, and

what John is getting at is: that's the closest possible fellowship that anyone can have, because He was not just with Him, He was God. But see what He's saying now back in chapter 14 verse 23 - that this is the closest possible fellowship that we can have. We are now entering into the fellowship, eternally, of the Godhead, between Father and Son - we can know Him face-to-face. Jesus says: 'We', Father and Son, 'will come to him', face-to-face!

Then He says: 'We will make Our abode with him', with him, make Our home with him. That word 'with' in Greek is the word 'para', it means 'side-by-side'. So, Father and Son will come and be face-to-face with the one who loves Jesus and keeps His word, and the presence of God will make His home beside that one, will take up residence beside them. Now I don't know whether anyone last night had a problem with me saying that God's intention is that we ought to experience Him - but I think you have to agree with me that this verse teaches nothing if it does not teach that Jesus promises that the Christian will experience God, and it's not just the Christ of God, it's the Father, and it's the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We will experience this God, He will come and make His abode with us - and an 'abode' means an eternal dwelling place, He's going to make us His home! Now! 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, My Father will love him, and We will come to him face-to-face and make Our abode with, along beside, him'.

Do you know something? This is not just meant to be the individual Christian's experience, it's meant to be the experience of the church: 'with him'. Now we have made the distinction in the New Testament, in the sense that the disciples, the Holy Spirit was with them, but at Pentecost He would come to indwell them. But let's not lose the import of what it means even now to know Jesus saying that the Father and Son will come and be with us. One biblical commentator called Lang says: 'Not merely in him who loves Jesus and obeys His commands, but God, Father and Son, will be found in a community, a place where the Triune God manifests Himself, and which forms a contrast to the world. The Spirit is not only in the faithful, the Spirit is with them as well. He forms a fellowship of believers, the church, with them', and this is how he ends this comment, 'This is the real Shekinah!' That's it! How is the Shekinah glory declared today? It is declared in the face of Jesus Christ, but it is manifest to people as we reflect that glory in our lives, seeing Him glorified with the eyes of faith and allowing the Spirit to conform us to His image. As we collectively come together in that condition, the power and Shekinah of God, Father and Son, will be manifest by the Spirit.

What's the Shekinah glory of God today? It is the presence of Jesus in the Christian, it is the presence of Jesus in the church, it is the presence of Jesus in the Christian and in the church manifest by the ministry of the Holy Spirit - the Holy Spirit in His Person, the Holy Spirit in His character, spiritual character - that's how God manifests His glory. The spiritual character is found in Galatians 5, the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering etc - that's how God manifests His glory. Spiritual gifts, gifts that the Holy Spirit has given to the church to manifest not just His character, but His power - and these came to abide eternally with us.

The evidence is found on the Day of Pentecost, for we have only been looking at the promise. So let's look at Acts chapter 2 please. Now you have been taught these nights how to recognise Shekinah glory - you read this now as if it was the first time, and look out for the signs: 'When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place', they were waiting. 'And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them cloven tongues', divided tongues, 'as of fire' - there's the motif of Shekinah, fire - 'and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance'.

So there was this sight - what must it have been like? - of cloven tongues of fire parting asunder, resting on their heads. 'Like fire', manifestations of the Shekinah glory of God. Now, why was that there? What is Shekinah? It is a visible manifestation of the invisible God in His presence, it's a sign to show that the God who you cannot see is around. What is this other than evidence and proof to herald that the presence of God is now to dwell with men in a new way, through the indwelling Holy Spirit? This presence was promised and sent, that the Lord Jesus Christ in His own presence should be among us. This presence was sent in the Holy Spirit so that the Lord of the church might rule among us.

That's evidenced, for if you were to turn to Revelation chapter 1, you remember we saw a great glorified picture of the Lord - how He is now - last night in Revelation chapter 1. But in the introduction to that Epistle we read: 'John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne'. There is only one Holy Spirit, but the seven speaks of the perfection of the Holy Spirit in His ministry - but where is the Holy Spirit situated? 'Before the throne', and anyone before the throne, a courtier, is one who administrates the rule of the sovereign. The One who administrates the rule of the Lord and Head of the church, Christ, is the Holy Spirit in the church, the Vicar of Christ on the Earth. All you have to do is read the Acts of the Apostles and you will see - you could call it the 'Acts of the Holy Spirit', as the Holy Spirit directs operations - but ultimately it is Christ on His throne, glorified and risen, directing operations in His church on the Earth via the Holy Spirit. You read Acts, and you'll see it.

All that the saints had to do was to surrender. All they had to do was conform to the word. All they had to do was wait for direction - and listen we are light years away from this today. All you have to do is look at how decisions are made in most of our churches. I have experienced this. Overseers and elders will have meetings upon meetings upon meetings to drink tea and talk nonsense, but very few gatherings for prayer. What we need to be doing is praying and fasting, and being on our face before God and saying: 'Lord, what do we do? What do You want us to do? Where do You want us to go?'. This is how God moved in the early church, by their surrendering, conforming, and waiting upon Him. The conditions are still the same - but here's the thing: you have to know you need this. Most of conservative evangelicalism neither knows their need of this, nor wants it! They think this is for the wacky charismatics on

the cable television. The devil has done such a number on Christians to be afraid of the Holy Spirit of God! Now I'm sure that you disagree with me on many a thing, and I'm sure I'll disagree with you on quite a few, but I'll tell you: let's not get bogged down with terms - baptism of the Spirit, fullness of the Spirit, sealing of the Spirit - whatever you want to call it! My friend, let's move away from this, and even the theology of the whole matter, and see that whatever we can argue about the Holy Spirit none of us could argue that His presence and His power, the power of Jesus, is presently being manifested in believers' lives, and in the actions and work of the churches! You cannot argue that with me! We need the Holy Spirit in all His power, in all His fullness, in all His fruit, in all His gifts - we need Him! We're in the state we're in because we haven't got Him.

The condition, again, to have His fullness - go back to chapter 14 of John please - the condition, again, is loving obedience: 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word'. Loving obedience to the word of God will result in the coming and abiding of the Father and the Son. Now it's not just what's said in verse 15, 'obey My commandments', but 'obey My word' - and that's a greater meaning. It means obeying the whole gamut and body of the teachings of Christ. If you could put it like this: it's not just obeying the letter of the law of what He said, isolated commandments, but it's obeying the spirit of everything that He is and everything He has taught. When we do that, Jesus will be manifested in our hearts and in our lives. Now listen carefully to this, my friend, for if you miss this you miss everything it is to be a Christian: Jesus will only be manifested to hearts that love Him, and hearts that obey Him! You will never have this if you know nothing of constant repentance. You will not have this if there are things in your life that are not surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. You will never have this if you do not empty yourself of sin and self, and just come to the cross broken, and by faith claim the fullness of the Holy Spirit. You will never know this.

This truth is illustrated in the experience of Abraham and Lot in Genesis 18 and 19. Jesus came to them, and I believe it was a pre-incarnate form of the Lord Jesus, and He brought two angels with Him. He visited Abraham's tent, and when He visited Abraham's tent He felt right at home there. So much so that He enjoyed a meal with Abraham, and the Lord Jesus even had a private talk with him - but He didn't go to Lot's house. When there was a message to be carried to Sodom, the Lord Jesus stayed at home and sent two angels because He didn't feel at home in Lot's home. He couldn't make His abode there, instead He sent two angels, but He didn't come.

Paul said to the Ephesians that 'Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith', that simply means 'make His home in your heart'. Does Christ feel at home in your heart tonight? What's in your heart? Some of you have got bitterness in your heart. Some of you have got jealousy in your heart. Some of you have got all-consuming lust in your heart. Some of you have got pride, covetousness, deception - O, the list is endless! What do you know of His abiding presence? A. W. Tozer said: 'When I was a young man, I happened to get into the company of an elderly woman. God bless her memory. She did not have too much theology. But she believed that the way to get filled by the Holy Spirit was to get down on your knees and die out and open your

heart. Not having very much theology either, at the time, I thank God, I obeyed. The result was an old-fashioned mighty invasion of my nature by the Holy Spirit'.

Has that ever happened to you? I'm not talking about bright lights. I'm not talking about the hairs on the back of your neck going up. It mightn't happen that way, for some it may, for others it doesn't - but you know when God takes up residence in your heart when you've no argument with the Almighty, when you and Jesus aren't fighting or quarrelling! Then when that happens, you've got to preserve and practice this abiding presence - do you know what that's about? Oh I read a wonderful story about an old lady called Jacqueline, let me share it with you. She knew what it was to have this abiding Shekinah presence in her life, she was an elderly woman. She lived to take care of her disabled daughter, and when her daughter died Jacqueline not only lost her purpose for living, she lost her living companion. She was all alone in her cottage in the country, and it seemed just like an empty eggshell to her. Occasionally a friend would call in, or throw a note through the door, but most of the time she spent in an oppressive, ongoing, solitude and silence. Her health didn't allow her to circulate much, and her best friends were all in heaven. One day Jacqueline was reading her Bible, she opened at Philippians 4 and verse 5, which reads - four words - 'The Lord is near'. 'The Lord is near? If so', she thought, 'I should be aware of it. Lord', she said, 'I'm going to pretend You're here all the time. No, forgive me for using that word 'pretend', there is no pretending to be done. Help me ever remind myself of the reality of Your nearness'.

That evening as she retired, she said: 'I'm going on to bed now, Lord, will You please watch over me as I sleep?'. The next morning on awakening she said: 'Good morning, Lord, this is the day that You have made'. Sitting down with her hot tea, she read through the book of Philippians again, underlining once more verse 5 of chapter 4. Then she prayed aloud for an unusually long time. At noon she said: 'Now, Lord, let's watch the news on television, so that You can show me the things in the world I can pray for' - and Jacqueline and the Lord watched the news together. Then she prayed for flood victims in the Delta, a newly installed president in an African country, and for a man sentenced to life imprisonment. At supper she bowed her head and thanked the Lord for her food, but she then realised that she didn't feel her prayers were travelling up to heaven. She felt, instead, that she was talking to someone sitting across the table from her. Gradually her attitude transformed, the loneliness lessened, the joy increased, the fears diminished, and she never afterwards felt as alone as she had done in her house previously - because Jacqueline was learning how to abide in the presence.

We don't know much about Alfred Lord Tennyson, and all that we know about his spiritual life we get from his niece. She tells us that this man had a very rich communion with the Lord. She tells us in one instance that they were walking one day together down the beautiful downs of the Isle of Wight, and the sea was sounding in their ears, and the beautiful pastures were round about them, and the bright skies of heaven were above. Tennyson said to his niece: 'God is with us now on this down, just as truly as Christ was with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. We cannot see Him, but the Father, the Saviour, the Spirit are nearer, perhaps, now than then;

and with all who yearn for Him. Surely the love of God takes away', he said, 'and makes us forget all our fears'. Tennyson went on to remark, listen to this: 'I should be sorely afraid to live my life without God's presence, but to feel that He is by my side now, just as much as you are, is the very joy of my heart'. His niece said that at that moment she looked at Tennyson's face, and the glory of God rested on his face. She said: 'I felt that the presence of God overshadowed him there'. Such presence can be known, and can be felt. Do you know it? Have you felt it?

Let us pray, and after this prayer we will go into our time of waiting on God - if you have to go don't be afraid to do so: O Father, we hardly know what to say when we think that Your eternal plan has always been to dwell with us, to be with us. How we run from You. How we hide from You. We even use Your gifts to do it, O God. Lord, we've got to believe this whole book or none of it. If You have said, Lord Jesus, that if anyone loves You and keeps Your word that the Father will love them, and You, Lord Jesus, and the Heavenly Father will come to them and make Your home with them - O Lord, if never before tonight, if never before tonight, if never anywhere here, if never anyone, me, Lord! Make Your abode with me, make Your home with me. O Lord, come and dwell with us, come this very evening, Lord Jesus. We saw You in Your glory, but Lord let us see You in this place, in the Spirit in our lives. Lord, may people be filled with the Holy Spirit tonight, may people know what it is to be fully, completely indwelt by the Spirit of God. May orphans, spiritual orphans, who have never known the companionship of the Divine, may they come face-to-face with the Godhead tonight and know that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have come to abide beside them.

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The Presence Of God - Chapter 5

"In The New Jerusalem"

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Let's pray together - and do pray with me that the Lord will meet with us now. Father, we have been learning these nights what it is to still ourselves in Your presence. Lord, it was even testified in this place last evening in prayer very late on that the very Spirit of Jesus came into our midst, and it was distinguishable and discernible that the risen Christ was here. Lord, we covet that again. We thank You for what we learned last evening, and we pray that You will make it real to us - Lord Jesus, that You will come to us; Father, that You will come with the Son, and make Your abode with us, face-to-face. In anticipation of what is yet to be, truly we can say: 'How lovely is Your Tabernacle, Your dwellingplace, O Lord of Hosts'. Our soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord. Our heart and our flesh cry out for the Living God, for a day in Your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. We would rather be doorkeepers standing at the door in the house of God, than to dwell in tents of wickedness. So, Lord, the Lord God who is a sun and a shield, we pray that You will give grace and glory tonight. We know that no good thing will You withhold from those who walk upright. So we pray, Lord, come and give us a vision like John had of the glorified, risen Christ in the New Jerusalem. In whose name we pray, Amen.

Now, before we say anything let me just remind you - it may be that it's your first night here - the meeting is somewhat unconventional in respect to the fact that we don't really close it, the Lord closes it. We haven't closed in prayer as such, we don't sing a hymn to finish, and we've been learning what it is to preserve and conserve God's presence as He comes into our midst - and we have felt Him already tonight, and I believe He's going to come very close to us. But if you're at liberty, and you've nothing to get home for, and I know it's icy and snowy, but what better thing could you do than just stay all night here till the thaw comes in the morning! Well, I don't know whether that will be the case or not, but you're very welcome to hang on if you can. Don't feel in anyway inhibited if you have to go, just go quietly - but we want you to have the opportunity to enjoy the presence of God. It has been wonderful. We don't want it to stop, and there's no reason why it should stop, and we don't have to have meetings for it to continue. We can know this every moment of every day of our lives, and that's the wonderful truth of this.

We have been teaching each night that the word of God declares that God has a longing to dwell with people, and there is more in the word of God about God desiring to be with people than there is about people wanting to be with God. God's great passion is to dwell in the midst of His people, but we have seen these evenings that it's not just to be there, but to have a manifest presence. He wants to be seen to be there. He wants to give us the assurance that He is in our midst. We started on Monday night looking in the Garden of Eden at how, before the fall, Adam and Eve

had this very intimate relationship with who we believe is the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ, the Word before He became flesh. We looked at how in the late afternoon, after a day's work, Adam would come and, in this idyllic paradise that was a trysting place for him and God, he would meet with God - and maybe even have an evening meal, for dining is a thing of fellowship in the word of God; and God does invite us to dine with Him, and the Lord Jesus invites us to open the door and allow Him to come in and dine with us and we with Him. He walked toward them, and they heard Him walking toward them to fellowship.

Then we saw the Tabernacle and the Temple, and how God dwelt there over the Ark of the Covenant in particular, under the cherubim - the Shekinah glory was manifest. All of these things were pointing towards the greatest manifestation ever of God's power and presence, the Lord Jesus Christ, Immanuel. We saw that Immanuel, He declared and manifested this glory most particularly at the Transfiguration before Peter, James and John. The glory that was veiled in His human flesh shone through that day. We learned, and it's vital that we keep coming back to this, we learned: how does the Shekinah glory of God - the visible manifestation of the invisible God that we often see in the Old Testament through fire, through light, through cloud and a combination of those - how is that Shekinah manifest in this present-day? The answer is: the same way as it was at the Mount of Transfiguration. Let me remind you of what we looked at on Wednesday night and last night, 2 Corinthians 4:6, I'll quote it to you: '[God] has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'. The source of God's glorious presence, where the Shekinah glory of God, the visible manifestation of the invisible God, is to be found today is in the face of Jesus Christ.

We see that face by faith. We need - if we're going to have the personal presence of God in our lives, we have seen this very clearly - we're going to have to get a fresh vision of the glorified Lord as He is in all His manifest glory in heaven at this very moment. But we also reflected on the fact that that's not where it stops: we are to, ourselves, we are to reflect that glory and carry it with us. It is to abide with us as the presence of God in our lives in everything that we are and all that we do. But last night was a very important evening, because last night we looked at the presence of God in Pentecost. In looking at that we found out the 'how' this happens. We read in 2 Corinthians 3 and verse 18: 'We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord'. The power that enables us to receive this presence, this abiding, into our lives - this manifest, visible presence of God - is the power and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost is the 'how' that Immanuel's presence is realised now with us personally and as the church.

We saw last evening that now the Shekinah presence of God is found in the presence of Jesus, His Son, in the life of the Christian through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. That is chiefly manifest, I believe, by spiritual character: the fruit of the Spirit. You can read it in Galatians chapter 5: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness and so on. But also we see that this Shekinah is to be manifested in the church, God's Temple today. It's to be manifest in the church by spiritual power. We

saw an evidence of this in Acts chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost, the sight of cloven, parting tongues of fire on the heads of the early disciples. That, we saw, was a motif, a sign of Shekinah, saying that the visible presence of the invisible God had come to that moment where the church was being birthed, in order to herald that this was the new way that God's presence had come: through the indwelling of the church by the Holy Spirit.

Now all of this, all of it - from Eden, Tabernacle, Temple, Immanuel, Pentecost - all is preparing us for the New Jerusalem where the visible manifest presence and Shekinah of God will be experienced by the Christian and the church eternally. Now, for this I want you to turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 13 please, and beginning to read at verse 8: *"Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known"* - and we end our reading there at verse 12.

Now in verse 8 we see: where there are prophecies they will fail, where there are tongues they will cease - when? Well, what the clear context of the passage teaches is that the gifts of the Holy Spirit will be overtaken by the actual presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory, the physical presence of the Lord Jesus, when that which is perfect is come. Paul is saying: 'Now we see Him in part', and we see Him partly in the manifestation of the Shekinah glory that God is around in the church, by the spiritual character of believers and the spiritual gifts that He has imparted to the church. But that is only a poor reflection of the real image of the Christ of God, and there is going to come a day when the reality of His physical presence will overtake prophesying, tongues, and all these other gifts of the Spirit.

Now, in the ancient world a mirror was not like the mirrors that we have. Mirrors were made of polished metals, and the image was often unclear and somewhat distorted. Incidentally, Corinth was famous for producing some of the best mirrors in the world: bronze polished mirrors. Paul is saying to these folk who are familiar with these type of mirrors, even the best ones, that even your mirrors can't give you a true reflection of yourself. Even the great power of God in Shekinah that we were talking about last night, manifest in the New Testament church as it ought to be manifest - which it is not today as it should be - even when it is, it's only a dim reflection of the reality of what it will be to actually see the glorified Lord. Amazing. We see Jesus now only in a dim, unclear way - but one day we will see Him with perfect clarity.

How does Paul put it? Verse 12: 'face-to-face'. Can I remind you what we read last night in John chapter 14 verse 23, what I said I believe is the greatest verse in the Bible: 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him' - and we saw that 'come to him', the word 'to' is the Greek word 'pros', which means 'face-to-face'. We will come to be

face-to-face with Him. We saw from John 1 and verse 1, where it says: 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God', that the word 'with' there is 'pros', which says that the Word, Jesus, was face-to-face with God - that means there can be no more closer fellowship than that, between Father and the Son. When we love Him, when we keep His word, He will come and meet us face-to-face.

But, you see, what we were talking about last night, that close fellowship, was knowing Christ spiritually face-to-face - and we can, praise God. But what Paul is now talking about in 1 Corinthians 13 is when faith gives way to sight, and we will see Him not just face-to-face spiritually with the eyes of our heart, but we will see Him with the eyes of our head - and glorified heads at that, in glorified bodies, that will be able to take in and just absorb the wonder of His blessed Person. We will experience Christ actually. Paul is using this term 'face-to-face' to teach us that we will have an actual, complete, unhindered fellowship with God. How would you like that? Unhindered fellowship with God. If you're honest, now, you know what it's like: sometimes our times in prayer can be like holding our breath beneath the water - but what will it be to have unhindered face-to-face actual communion with the Son of the Living God.

A wonderful illustration of this is found in Moses, in Numbers chapter 12 and verse 8 we read that God says: 'I speak to him', to Moses, 'face to face' - so it actually says 'face-to-face' - 'Even plainly, and not in dark sayings'. 'I will speak to Moses face-to-face' - now that was a figure of speech, it wasn't literal. It was speaking of intimacy, that Moses would speak with God in intimate fashion; but he did not see God face-to-face. He had open and direct communication with the Living God, but we know that he did not see Him face-to-face. Yet we read in Exodus 33:11 that the Lord spoke to Moses face-to-face, as a man speaks with his friend - what intimacy! He spoke to God like a man speaks to a friend! Now can I tell you something, from what we learned last night: we can have more intimacy with the Living God than Moses ever had, by the Spirit!

'What a Friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear.
What a privilege to carry
Everything to Him in prayer'.

But what Paul is speaking of here now, future, is even greater than all that. It's not just a spiritual intimacy that we have even now in Christ, but it is being with Christ really face-to-face.

'Oh, glorious face of beauty, Oh gentle touch of care;
If here it is so blessed, what will it be up there?'

John the intimate, one of this intimate circle that was taken up the Mount of Transfiguration, the one who in his Gospel talks about 'abiding in Christ' - that's what this presence is - talks about, in 1 John, 'fellowship with Christ', that's what eternal life is, fellowship with the Father and Jesus Christ His Son. He comes to Revelation and gives us the Book of the Lamb, and gives us what it will be like in the eternal

state in the New Jerusalem. What is it that John says in his Epistle, 1 John 3:2? 'We shall see Him as He is' - and miracle of all miracles, we shall be like Him!

No more barriers in our relationship with God. Then Paul puts this phrase in at the end of verse 12: 'I will know just as I also am known' - now this is profound, 'I will now just as I also am known'. How are you known? Have you ever read Psalm 139, how God knows you? He knew you when you were being knit in your mother's womb. At the moment of conception He knew you, He knew you before you were even born. God knows everything there is to know about you - and as perfectly as He knows everything about me, I will know Him as perfectly as I can. As sure as He knows everything about you, you will know Him as perfectly as you can. The reason why I say 'as perfectly as you can', it's different than knowing Him perfectly, because you cannot know the eternal God perfectly for you would be all-knowing as He. But what I mean by saying that you will know Him as perfectly as you can is, you'll never exhaust the knowledge of God, but you will learn more and more - and what you will gain is more of a capacity to increase the knowledge you have. But whatever capacity you have initially when you get to heaven, and as it increases, you will continually have that capacity filled perfectly with the knowledge of God as far as you can at that given moment. I believe that for all the aeons of eternity, we will be learning more and more and more about God and His marvellous grace and His Son - that's what Paul says in Ephesians. All that you can take in in your glorified state, you will perfectly conceive of what you know up to that period, your capacity.

This will happen when that which is perfect is come - and I can't conceive of that being anything other than being face-to-face with our Lord Jesus Christ, it sure isn't perfection down here now, that's obvious. Then at that moment, when that which is perfect is come, the Shekinah will be transferred from the indwelling Spirit in the church on the Earth, the Temple, to the New Jerusalem in Heaven where it says there will be no need for a Temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its Temple.

Now, I have to say, I'm skipping out about a thousand years here as far as the Shekinah glory of God is concerned, because the Shekinah will be displayed in Jerusalem after our Lord Jesus returns. He will set up a thousand year reign on this earth, the Messianic Kingdom - and we know from Ezekiel chapter 44, remember I told you on Wednesday evening from Ezekiel how God's Shekinah presence pulled out of Israel because of their idolatry and left them. Well, we read in Ezekiel 44 that the Shekinah glory will return via the same gate that it left - the Eastern Gate of the Temple. After it returns, in the person of Christ I believe, the door will be shut behind that presence for the thousand years. In other words, that presence will reside in Jerusalem, in the Holy of Holies in the Millennial Temple, for a thousand years. We read in Isaiah chapter 4 that the Shekinah glory of God will cover the whole of Mount Zion in a cloud. We read in Zechariah 2 that the rest of the Shekinah will be over the whole Jerusalem area and, we read in Isaiah again, Jesus Himself, in His own risen, exalted, returned Person, will manifest the Shekinah glory of God - Isaiah chapter 40 verse 5: 'The glory of the LORD', Jehovah, 'shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken'.

So we're skipping over a bit of time here, prophetically speaking, but we're wanting to get to the great climax of God's plan. You remember I've been saying that this has been God's heartbeat from the very inception of creation, and before, even when He was planning this, before the foundation of the world His desire has always been that a people would come into a redemptive relationship with Him whereby they could enjoy that love relationship in the Godhead itself. He wants to dwell in the midst of His people - and God's great climax is the New Heaven and the New Earth, wherein dwells righteousness.

In Genesis we saw Paradise lost, in Revelation we see Paradise regained. At the centre of that restored Paradise is the New Jerusalem, so let us read about that. We're turning to Revelation chapter 21 and verse 1: *"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away'"*.

In verse 2 we read that this New Jerusalem is like a bride - what could be more beautiful, or more pure, than a bride? Now, imagine this for a moment, this is the new city of Jerusalem - imagine a city without sin! Cities are usually cesspools of sin, but here is a city without sin. Now note: this is not possible to achieve this with politics. It is not even possible to achieve this in the present moment where the Shekinah glory of God is manifest in the New Testament church. Even revival, though it can cleanse and can sanctify whole communities, it cannot eradicate sin. This must come down out of heaven! God has to do this - and He directly intervenes in human history to do it!

This is the new presence of God, in verse 3 we see it: 'The tabernacle of God'. Do you remember what 'the tabernacle' means? The Shekinah of Jehovah, 'the tabernacle with God is with men, and He will dwell' - and again there's that word 'dwell', and 'Shekinah', of course, is derived from the Hebrew verb 'to dwell', 'shakan'. God's going to dwell, to tabernacle, this has always been His passion - and this city where He dwells now and stays with His people, it will manifest the Shekinah light and glory of God. Look at verse 10: 'And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal'. Imagine this!

Look at the result of this Shekinah glory in verse 22: 'But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there

shall be no night there)'. There's no artificial lights, that's for sure, but there aren't even any natural lights - the sun is no longer there, the moon is no longer there - but there is the spiritual, pure light of God. God and the Lamb are the light thereof! And the saved of the nations shall walk in that light!

I can understand why Thomas Binney wrote his hymn: 'Eternal Light'. He felt his terrible sinfulness, and this is what happens when you encounter the presence of God - you feel your wickedness. It happened to Isaiah in Isaiah chapter 6, when he saw Jesus, the Lord, high and lifted up in the Temple, and he said: 'Woe is me, for I am undone! I am a man of unclean lips' - and he was a prophet of God, yet he considered his lips unclean. Peter, when he saw the Lord in His power, said: 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man'. John fell as he was dead, Daniel fell as if he was dead, Ezekiel fell as if he was dead - this is what happens. You might ask the question: 'How could I, a filthy sinner, walk in this New Jerusalem with such perfection and light?'. Thomas Binney put it like this:

'O how shall I, whose native sphere
Is dark, whose mind is dim,
Before the Ineffable appear,
And on my naked spirit bear
That uncreated beam?

There is a way for man to rise
To that sublime abode:
An offering and a sacrifice,
A Holy Spirit's energies,
An Advocate with God'.

We've read that this is a city without sin, and the people in it have no sin. We could look down and see how nothing that defiles shall enter into that holy, holy place - but the reason why sin is no more in this city, and sin is no more in the saved, is because of the Lamb who was slain and has redeemed us to God by His blood, and who has loosed us from our sins in His own blood! Let me ask you tonight: are you loosed from your sins in the blood of Jesus? For if you're not, you'll never walk on the streets paved with gold, you'll never see the New Jerusalem, you'll never bask in the Shekinah glory of the risen, glorified Jesus. But is it any wonder that the song in heaven is: 'Blessing and honour, glory and power, be unto Him that sits on the Throne and to the Lamb forever and ever, Amen'.

It's hard to take this in, isn't it, when we live in the world that we do? All the heartache and trial, let alone the wickedness, the depravity and the immorality. Joseph Seiss, in his commentary, remarked: 'Man comes into the world with a cry; and goes out of it with a groan, and all between is more or less intoned with helpless wailing. But the Hallelujahs of the renewed world will drown out the voice of woe forever' - hallelujah! The hallelujahs of the renewed world will drown out the voice of woe forever! Any wonder, I ask it again, that the song is: 'Blessing and honour, glory and power, be unto Him who sits on the Throne and to the Lamb'. This is the Book of

the Lamb, and it's filled with praise, it's filled with hallelujahs - and so should our lives be when we realise what we've been redeemed from, and what we're being redeemed to! Think of it!

But let's see more in chapter 22, and John says: 'He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations'. Now think of this, even if you want to close your eyes and try to imagine it: a pure crystal river of water of life flowing from the throne of God and from the throne of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the New Jerusalem. We read of the Garden of Eden that there were four rivers flowing out of it, but there's only one river in this heavenly city. We read in the book of Ezekiel that there is a purifying river that flows from the Temple in the millennial scene in Ezekiel 47 - but this river is not flowing from the Temple, this river is not flowing from Eden, this river is flowing from the very Throne of God, directly from where the Almighty is seated and the Lamb! He is the source of this river and all purity!

On either side of this river grows the tree of life, and it's hard to imagine just one tree - but it may well be a type of tree that is growing up the banks of this river, and may even meet overhead in a sort of arch. It has twelve kinds of fruit, and the fruit of the tree of life will no longer be forbidden! We will be able to eat of it in the paradise of God! It speaks of constant provision, we will have want no more and the leaves of that tree are for the healing of the nations - that means we will have perpetual health.

But verse 4 is really where I want to get to tonight: 'They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads'. You remember I told you that this was the privilege denied Moses. Turn with me just to see this, to remind you, keep your finger in Revelation of course - Exodus 33. Now Moses has asked the Lord that he might see His glory - what a prayer! Is that a prayer of yours? It's a prayer that God couldn't answer, well, not in perfection for Moses - but He's going to answer it in perfection for us and Moses in this state, this eternal state, the New Jerusalem. But God said in verse 20 of Exodus 33: 'You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live'. 'And the LORD said, 'Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by'', He had to protect Moses from His glory, "Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen". Moses, the man of God, was not permitted to look at the face of God - but in this city all heaven will see His face!

Now what does this mean practically? What does it actually mean to see His face? Well, what it means is: we will see Christ in all His glory, and we'll be able to look at Him. No man has seen God in His glory and lived, but we will be able to look at Him. You see, we couldn't handle this now - because if we saw the glorified Lord in all of His manifest glory, the way it's going to be manifest in the New Jerusalem, we would see our awful sinfulness to such an extent that we would despair of ourselves and probably expire. Even the fear of the glorious sight of His manifest Shekinah would

frighten us to death! We are in an unresurrected body, but in the New Jerusalem, after the Lord has come, we will have resurrected bodies - we will be like Him because we shall see Him as He is. But the only way we can see Him as He is, is in our resurrection body, because our own flesh that we are in now would just melt before His light, which Paul said to Timothy is 'unapproachable'.

So what does it mean to see Him? We'll be able to see Him and behold the glory of God in Christ, the full, unrestrained, unrestricted Shekinah of the Almighty God in Christ - we'll be able to see it and behold it! Is it any wonder the hymn says 'That will be glory for me, when by His grace I shall look at His face'. You know, He's going to show us God the Father, I believe - what I mean is in the glory, in His glory. He came into this world to reveal the character and nature of God the Father, but I believe in heaven - you may differ with me on this one - but I believe in heaven He's going to show us the glory of God the Father, because He's always the One who reveals the Father. He's going to show us God the Father in His glory, and Himself in His glory, something that has never been seen before - no man has ever seen God, or could see God, but we will see God! 'In my flesh', Job said, 'I shall see God'.

But it doesn't just mean we will see Him physically, I believe it means we will see Him spiritually - and I mean by that, well, Spurgeon puts it better than I could; he said: 'Our mental faculties shall be enlarged, so that they shall be enabled to look into the very heart, and soul, and character of Christ, so as to understand Him, His work, His love, His all in all, as they never understood Him before'. You're going to be able to look into the glorified Christ and understand something of Him! He went on to say on another occasion, Spurgeon, that a baby or a young adult that has trusted Christ and dies and is admitted to heaven discovers more of Christ in a single hour than is known by all the divines of the assemblies of the church on earth!

What does heaven mean for you? Now I believe we will know one another in heaven - what I thought! - and I believe that we will meet our loved ones again in heaven, and I believe we will talk with the saints in heaven. You know everybody wants to talk to Moses and Elijah, and Thomas and Peter! But what does heaven mean for you? Is it the splendour, pearly gates, whatever that means? The streets of gold, is that what it is? Spurgeon said: 'It is the chief blessing of heaven, the cream of heaven, the heaven of heaven, that the saints shall there see Jesus'.

'And when at last we see the face of Jesus,
Before whose image other loves all flee.
And when they crown him Lord of all I'll be there,
Now this is just what Heaven means to me'.

Is this what heaven means to you? You say: 'Well, we've a bit of a while to wait, don't we?' - well, you do. We will see somewhat of the glory of Christ when we go to be with Him, but not to the extent of this in the New Jerusalem - I believe this is a future state that comes after the Lord returns to the Earth, the thousand year reign, and then the eternal state is ushered in. But my friend, this is the whole point of these meetings, and in particular last night: we can know Him spiritually to a certain extent

now, you certainly can know Him a lot more than you have known Him hitherto through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Do you know what Paul says in Ephesians that the Holy Spirit is in His blessed Person dwelling in our hearts? He is a down payment of heaven! He's a little bit of heaven put in our heart! O, has heaven come down, and glory filled your soul? We can know this.

Several years ago I did a series on heaven, and at the end of it we had a question time night. There were questions submitted, and one of the questions - some very interesting questions - but one of the questions was: 'Will we have the opportunity to spend one-to-one time with our Heavenly Father, Saviour, and Holy Spirit, either collectively or separately? Just to sit alone and commune with Them?'. My answer to that question was: you've got that opportunity now. We will have then, as Paul says, face-to-face, literally. We do have now, as John says, face-to-face, spiritually - but there are conditions. That great verse, John 14:23, let me reiterate it again: 'If anyone loves Me', Jesus says, 'He will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him' - but you've got to love Christ, and He said, 'If you love Me, you'll keep My commandments, you'll keep My word'. We saw last night: that's not just keeping the little isolated, legalistic principles, but keeping the whole weight and body of everything that He is, and everything He ever taught - it's the spirit and letter of the word. That's the condition to know a manifestation now, in anticipation of then seeing His face.

What did He say in the Beatitudes? Matthew 5 and verse 8: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God'. I believe He's talking about now. The pure in heart shall see God, spiritually, face-to-face - the glory of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ, when the heart is pure. Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? Who shall stand on His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart. Hebrews 12 and 14 is not a very popular text for preachers, do you know that one? Turn with me to it please, Hebrews 12, here's another of the conditions - it's really the same thing - Hebrews 12:14: 'Pursue peace with all people', boy, that's some verse for the people of Ulster, 'Pursue peace with all people'. Don't say that's just for believers, you can't do that with the Bible, you're not allowed to do that. 'Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord'.

Now, what does that mean? Well, it might mean some things to do with the millennium, but I'll not go into that tonight. But what I think it definitely means is this chapter, chapter 12 of Hebrews, is all about discipline that we have as sons and daughters of God. Verse 10 shows us the reason for this discipline: 'For they indeed', that is, our earthly parents, 'for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He', that is, our Heavenly Father, 'for our profit', disciplines us, 'that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless', here's the purpose, 'afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it'. Now what this writer is saying is: without practical in-wrought holiness that comes through the disciplining afflictions of God, no man will see the Lord. Certainly what that means in a spiritual sense - because seeing the Lord is talking about fellowship, isn't it - is that we often have to be put through the mill in order to get to a position where we can truly see the Lord

and fellowship with Him.

Some of you dear folk know exactly what I'm talking about. Some of you have been brought through a valley to get to these meetings. Some of you have had excruciating physical, emotional, mental, spiritual circumstances in your life, and pain. But so often, as believers, what we do is, we resist all those things that come across our path - I'm not saying we have to like them, we don't like them, there is something wrong with you if you did like them - but we don't understand the purpose of God in it all: that we may, through discipline, see the Lord; because He's purifying us in the furnace, in the crucible of life's vicissitudes in order that we should, in some way, have a pure heart in order to see God. He's taking away the distractions in order to see Him. He's wanting us to lose sight of other things, maybe other idols or other gods who have been taking His place, the trees of the garden, the Elijah and Moses, all these other things. Do you believe me about this?

Let me tell you: Job was a righteous man, and even the devil couldn't point the finger at him - now you remember that, Job hadn't any sin to get rid of, his accusers thought he maybe did, those who said they were his friends, but he didn't. But what he did need to have happen to him, because he was a sinner like the rest of us, he needed to be broken - and boy, did God break him. I wonder is God breaking you tonight? Has God been breaking you? Don't let the devil tell you, necessarily, that you've done something wrong. We all need chastening, there's no such a thing as an unchastened son or daughter - we need it! We need it that holiness might come forth. We need it to get rid of the things that hold us back, and the sins that so easily beset us. We need it from a loving Father that we might see God. Do you remember what happened? When Job, who was answering God and questioning God, when he came out of that whirlwind where God revealed Himself and all His character, and said: 'Where were you when I laid the foundations of the Earth?' - do you remember what Job said? 'I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You'.

Is that what God's been trying to do to you? O, we've heard a lot about Him - God help us, some of us are sick hearing about Him - but we need to see Him! He knows that if we're going to see Him, other things that we're holding too close to our chest that are in the way, and in His sights, have to be removed. My friend, let Him do it. Let Him do it! However He wants to do it, let Him do it! John Paton, the missionary, never forgot his father's deeply ingrained habits of devotional life and waiting on God. Day after day, as a child, he would hear his father praying in the next room in the little cottage where he lived. Even as a boy of six, he testifies to having noticed the bright countenance that his father perpetually wore. He later said that while the outside world might not understand the light of his father's face, he said, and I'm quoting him: 'We children knew that it was a reflection of the Divine presence in which his life was lived'. John Paton recalled, I'm quoting again: 'Never in the temple or cathedral, on mountain or in glen, can I hope to feel that the Lord God is more near, more visibly walking and talking with men, than under that humble cottage roof of thatch and oaken wattles. Though everything else in religion were by some unthinkable catastrophe to be swept out of memory, my soul would wander back to those early scenes, and would shut itself up once again in that Sanctuary Closet, and,

hearing still the echoes of those cries to God, would hurl back all doubt with the victorious appeal, 'He walked with God, why may not I?' - his father!

Later in life John Paton, as a missionary, experienced great difficulties and breathtaking dangers in the South Pacific. This is what he said: 'Without the abiding consciousness of the presence and power of my Lord and Saviour, nothing in the world could have preserved me from losing my reason and perishing miserably'. Some of you are on the brink of losing your reason, because of your circumstances. You need to get His presence. He went on to say: 'His words 'Lo I am with you always, even unto the end', became so real that it would not' - listen to this! - 'it would not have startled me to behold Him, as Stephen did, gazing down upon the scene' - it would not have startled me to have beheld Him as Stephen did! 'It is the sober truth', he went on, listen, 'I had my nearest and most intimate glimpses of the presence of my Lord in those dread moments when musket, club or spear was being levelled at my life'.

Samuel Rutherford was imprisoned in Aberdeen four centuries ago, persecuted for his faith. He wrote his famous letters in that prison cell, and to his parishioners he ended one of them with this sentence: 'Jesus Christ came into my prison cell last night, and every stone in it glowed like a ruby'. Jesus Christ can come into your prison cell tonight, and the things that have captivated you and imprisoned you can actually shine with His glory. One day we're going to see Him as He is - but, my friend, this pilgrimage is preparation. John Owen said, the Puritan, in his book 'The Glory of Christ': 'No man shall ever behold the glory of Christ by sight in heaven, who does not in some measure behold it by faith in this world'.

As I close this message tonight, and this series of meetings, let me ask you: do you see the Lord face-to-face? Let us pray.

Father, we thank You for the Lord Jesus, the Son in the bosom of the Father, who has declared You, the brightness of Your glory, the express image of Your Person. We worship Him tonight, we praise Him, we want to feel that we are experiencing heaven on earth. We want to feel that we are joining that great throng around the glassy sea, worshipping the Lamb, on their faces. O Lord, we want to be lifted up to that plain, that celestial existence. O Lord, in spirit and in heart let us have eyes of faith to see Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. O God, we need to see Him. There are dear ones here tonight and they needed to get a glimpse of what heaven will be like, what the New Jerusalem will be like - but they need to understand why they're going through the mill now: because You want them to get all the distractions out of the road that they might see the Lord now. O God, may that happen for some here tonight. Bless us now, as we wait on in Your presence may the very fragrance of the Son of God fill this place as we gaze on His glory. Amen.

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