

THE HEAVENLY TEMPLE

A SERMON

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“The temple.” Ezekiel 41:1

THE scene and state of things described by Ezekiel from his 40th chapter to the end of the book is that that was never realized by the Jews on their return from Babylonish captivity. Some therefore think that this scene of things here described is to be realized by the Jews as a nation at some future period. And this looks very feasible indeed: But then, when we come to the Epistle to the Hebrews, and there hear what the apostle by the Holy Ghost says of Jewish ceremony and dispensation, we there see that this scene of things is never to be realized by the Jews, for the apostle there says in the 7th chapter, “If perfection”, and perfection there must be of holiness and of righteousness and of everything else, in order to be accepted of God, “if perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek?” Then again, the apostle says, “For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof;” and that if those sacrifices could have taken away sin, then would they not have ceased to be offered. And then again, the apostle, contrasting that dispensation with the present, says, “In that he says, A new covenant, he has made the first old. Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish away.” And then, in the Colossians, the same apostle tells us concerning that dispensation that Christ has blotted out “the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.” Now all this goes clearly to show that we must understand this vision of Ezekiel in the figurative, the spiritual, and the Christian sense; for this vision of Ezekiel is nothing else but a second edition of the ceremonial dispensation, with those emendations and alterations that should more strikingly set forth spiritual and eternal things, And perhaps it would be difficult to find anything said in this vision that is not commented upon in the New Testament. Thus, then, I take the whole vision, from first to last, to have a Christian meaning. That is the way in which I have dealt with it, and shall deal with it, and I believe that that is the mind of the holy and eternal Spirit.

The Temple of the Lord is also, as you are aware, a figure to set forth spiritual and eternal things, and the idea of the temple is used in a five-fold sense in the Scriptures. First, to denote the church in its corporate capacity; it is called the temple in which the Lord dwells. Second, to denote the people of God individually; each member his very body a temple of the Holy Ghost. Thirdly, to

set forth the Savior; he is the temple, the meeting-place. Fourthly, to set forth heaven itself; that is the ultimate temple, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Fifthly, to set forth God himself. "I saw," said John, "no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Thus, you see the variety of meanings which this one temple conveys to our minds. But it is not in that path that I mean this morning to travel. I shall in the first place, then, in considering this temple, notice *its place*. Secondly, *its forms and fashions*. Thirdly, *its fullness*. Fourth and lastly, if time permit, *its surroundings*.

First, then, we notice *the place of this temple*. You find in the 43rd chapter that this temple was placed on a mountain, and it is explained in this way, "This is the law of the house. Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house." We have recently touched upon a kindred idea, but it will bear a few more remarks. First, then, this temple was on the top of a mountain. This is a figurative form of speech, to denote that Christ's holiness exalts us above all that we are as sinners; that Christ's righteousness, for "in your righteousness shall they be exalted", exalts us above all condemnation. Hence sometimes the plural is used, namely, mountains, and then it means God's love lifting us up above wrath; it means his choice lifting us up above rejection; it means his decree of mercy lifting us up above the sentence of the law; and, as we have said, it means the Savior's righteousness lifting us up into the light of God's countenance; and it means the Savior's atonement lifting us up not only above sin and everything against us, but lifting us up for ever. "Feed your people and lift them up forever." Hence you observe the same is contained in the 4th of Micah, "It shall come to pass in the last days", the first days of the Christian dispensation were the last days of the Jewish dispensation; the last days therefore there mean the closing days of the Jewish dispensation, "it shall come to pass in the last days;" of the Jewish dispensation, "that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains and it shall be exalted above the hills;" and then it goes on to describe the blessedness thereof. But we will come more closely to this matter. Now this temple, representing the church of God, is again, again, and again called a holy temple; in a word, as it is there said, "This is the law of the house, Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy." And here is the emphatic repetition, "Behold", take notice that, "this is the law of the house." Here, then, it is that the precious blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin; here it is God dwells in this temple, dwells with the people by bringing them up into the perfection, the completeness, that is in Christ Jesus the Lord. Here every sin, every spot, every wrinkle, every blemish, every law charge, is completely banished. We shall never live happy in our religion, and we shall never live happy with God, if we ever lose sight of that completeness we have in Christ. There is the exaltation. And if you ask what it is that has established the law of holiness, how it is that this law is established, the apostle will tell you, that while Aaron was a priest after the law of a carnal commandment (for those sacrifices, for reasons we have recently stated, could not take away sin), Jesus Christ is a priest after the order of Melchizedek; he has put away sin, and established the law of holiness. And this law of holiness derives its strength from Christ's eternal priesthood; so that my holiness that I have in him will fail when his priesthood shall fail. My failings, my rebellions, my unbelief, and my infirmities, do not touch me for a moment as I stand there. You are always the same there. And the law of holiness can fail when Christ's priesthood shall fail, but not before; our justification, our peace with God, and God's approbation of us and dwelling with us, will cease when Christ's righteousness shall fail, but not before; and when the Savior can be conquered, but not before. But then, you will say, Suppose our faith should fail. But then, if we are real children of God, our faith will not fatally fail. If we are

real children of God, all the downward and trying experiences we have, so far from separating us from this Mount Zion, this height of Zion, this glorious mountain, so far from doing this, it will go on to endear it. I have never known a man yet, nor a woman either, die in that happiness that I can believe was of God except by faith in the completeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. See, then, how the church, the temple, is thus consecrated to God. "He shall reconcile the house;" as this house was reconciled or consecrated to God by sacrifices, in order to teach us that our consecration to God is entirely by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Can we then be at a loss to know what is meant by the pastures being on high mountains? Can we be at a loss to know what is meant by the mountain of the house of the Lord being established in the tops of the mountains? It means those exaltations summed up in a few words by the prophet Isaiah, when he says of the people of God that "they shall dwell on high; their place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given them, their waters shall be sure." Such, then, is the position, and such is the temple of the Lord. As you go on, you will find out more and more, more and more, of what you are, and one will see and feel that there can be no exaltation, no fellowship with God, no acceptance with God, no standing holy, no standing righteous before God, and things so settled that you can be saved, and have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but simply by faith in the completeness of the Savior's work. Such was the position of the temple. And the prophet here says, "He brought me to the temple;" as though he should say, If I had not been brought to it, I should never have come to this high mountain. But that must suffice at present.

I notice, secondly, *the forms and fashions of the house*. The Lord said to Ezekiel, "If they be ashamed of all that they have done," if they are not still priding themselves in their own fasting twice a week, in giving tithes of all they possess; if that be their state they will not listen to you; but if they are ashamed of all that they are, and brought to see and feel that their righteousness's are as filthy rags, then "show them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them." Now all this appears very ambiguous; but I am going to show you the form of the house, and the fashion, and the outgoings, and the laws, and the forms thereof, and the ordinances and the forms thereof, and the laws, and the forms thereof. "And write it in their sight" so they shall have eyes to see, "that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them." First, let us see if we can find out the form; and if it is a form that you approve, I shall be very glad of it, because it will prove that you are as ashamed of all your own doings, renounce the whole, and that you fall in by faith, and understanding, and love, with what the Lord has done. I go to the first chapter of the Hebrews, and there I get the form. Jesus Christ is the form of the house; he is the form to which ever thing must be conformed; he is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image" or form "of his person and upholding all things by the word of his power; who, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." This is the form we are to be conformed to this. Jesus Christ is the pattern, he is the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of his person; and by his putting away our sins by the sacrifice of himself, mind that, and bringing us to receive him in what he has done, we are thereby conformed to his image. If he be holy, then faith in him makes us holy; if he be righteous, faith in him makes us righteous; if he be pleasing in the sight of God, faith in him makes us pleasing in the sight of God; for "without faith it is impossible to please God;" and if he be a Son, then faith in him makes us manifestly sons of God; for "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to

them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Here, then, is the form of the house; but it is to be shown to none but those that are ashamed of themselves. The man that has a little goodness of his own, he cannot understand this form of things; he does not appreciate what Jesus Christ has done. Jesus Christ, “who was in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” Here, then, it is that God has predestinated a people to be conformed unto the image of his dear Son. What think you of this mediatorial form, this sacrificial form, this form of everlasting life, this form of mercy, this form of grace, this form of truth? Can you say that your soul falls in with it? If so, then you are a part of this temple. “Growing into a holy temple” where? in yourselves? No, “in the Lord; fitly framed together in him for a habitation of God through the Spirit.” There is the form. “Show them the form of the house.” And you know the Savior assures us in the seventeenth of John, that the people are loved with the same love that he was loved with, and that he was loved from before the foundation of the world; and so were the people, otherwise they would not have been so blessed. That is the form of the house. Ezekiel had this form before him; for Jesus Christ had been and was then in vision revealed to him.

But then there is the fashion, “Show them the fashion.” Well, I will now notice the fashion. It is a good fashion that I am going to name, a fashion that is very much gone out now in the professing world, but it is a gospel fashion; it is a fashion that will never change while time shall last. What is the fashion? We must go to the 2nd of Mark to get at what the fashion of this house is, that is, what God’s manner of dealing with men is; that is the meaning of the fashion. There was a man that, for aught I know, had brought himself, perhaps he did, into the palsied, dreadful condition he was in. It is very likely he had been a notorious character, so far so that when he heard of Jesus Christ, the man does not seem to have been able to believe that Jesus Christ ever could be a Savior sent from God to save such a sinner as he was, could not believe it. So, these four men, that knew more than the poor man did, took him up and carried him, and brought him to where Jesus was. And “when Jesus saw their faith;” so it is a good thing to have faith for one another sometimes when we have none for ourselves. I often meet with a Christian who seems to have no faith for himself; and where I can discover those downward convictions that show to me that he is sensible of his need of mercy, there I can have faith for him. So “when Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, your sins be forgiven you.” Not, I will forgive your sins by and by if you behave pretty well; if you say pretty well; if you do your part pretty well; if you live down all the badness you have done. No; the savior speaks in the past tense, “Your sins be forgiven you.” They were forgiven in the lofty counsels of heaven before they were committed; they shall be forgiven in my blood, by the testimony of the Holy Spirit, and you shall realize to all eternity the delightful truth, your sins are forgiven. The people murmured; and the Savior said, “Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Your sins be forgiven you, or to any, Arise, and take up your bed, and walk?” So, he commanded him to arise. Away went the palsied man, arose and walked; and the people “glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.” There is the fashion. “Show them the fashion.” Why, the great truth of God saving sinners by grace was gone quite out of fashion with the Pharisees. They had changed the fashion altogether. Their fashion was to get rid of the very things by which a sinner is saved. “We never saw it on this fashion.” Now, my hearer, can you say you love this fashion? It is a good fashion. I know it is a fashion that will make you very singular. People will say, Dear me, that man is very singular in his fashion. As John Bunyan somewhere says of his pilgrims, “They wore a foreign robe that this world knew nothing of; therefore, the people stared, and thought they were very singular in their fashion and in their

taste.” But so it is. “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” Such is the fashion. Solomon, in his prayer, speaks of the stranger, the poor Gentile stranger, or whoever he might be, that might come unto God’s holy temple and call unto him: such was the fashion there, that there was a sacrifice for sin; there was a mercy-seat, and there was a God that delighted in mercy. So, then, show them the form, and show them the fashion also. What say you to this fashion? I know it will be my fashion to all eternity. David was delighted with it. He said, “Is this your manner with men, O Lord God of hosts?” Ah, Lord, not only have you taken me up, forgiven me, washed me, justified me, and saved me, but you have also spoken of your servant’s house for a great while to come. Show them the form and show them the fashion. And also, to show them “the goings out, and the comings in, and all the forms thereof;” that is, the manner. Is it not something remarkable that the goings out are named before the comings in? We read in one place of going in at the south and coming out at the north gate; that I shall pass by, as not being the point here intended. “Show them the going out and the comings in.” The goings out first, goings out and the comings in. You will see how the New Testament, when we have a word upon it presently, will clear this up for us. The high Priest, on the great day of atonement, was to go into the holy of holies; and if everything without had been done by the high priest according to law, and the sacrifice was accepted, then the high priest came out, there is the going out, and brought the people in. How did he bring them in? The going out was on the ground of accepted sacrifice, and the comings in were on the ground of accepted sacrifice. The high priest went out from the Lord, and said, “The Lord bless you”, that brings us in, “and keep you”, that brings us in, the Lord make his face shine upon you”, that brings us in; “and be gracious unto you”, that brings us in; “the Lord lift up his countenance upon you”, that brings us in, “and give you peace”, that brings us in. “And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them. There is the coming out of the priest, and there is the going in. Now the New Testament. How did Jesus Christ enter heaven? It is “not by the blood of calves and of goats, but by his own blood, he entered once, into heaven itself, having obtained eternal redemption for us. I read that it was through the blood of the everlasting covenant that Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, was brought again from the dead. This is clear, then, that he entered into heaven by his own blood, by his own sacrifice. Now for the going out. On what ground did he come to thousands on the day of Pentecost? Says Peter, “This same Jesus, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, and set at his own right hand, has shed forth this, which you now see and hear.” He entered by his own blood, and his atonement being accepted, he is entitled now to come by his Spirit and gather all in that the Father has given to him. “You have given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as you have given him.” “And the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And does he not very beautifully speak of his going out in order to bring about the coming in? “I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again,” there is the coming out, “and receive you unto myself,” there is the coming in, “that where I am, there you may be also.” But we are to have not only these comings out and goings in by our great High Priest coming to us, but he it is that brings us to God by his Spirit. “He died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.” Some of you little ones, if you could but see what a beautiful order of things the God of mercy has established, you would indeed cease to fear. Like our poor little sister, only eighteen years old, who departed last evening. I visited her, and found her, as I often find myself, dark, trembling, and fearful; but the end proved that she had no occasion to have one fear. Happier in her death, poor girl, than ever she was in her life. Bless the Lord for these manifestations of real religion at the Surrey Tabernacle. May the Lord increase them here and increase them everywhere else where his truth and where his people are. Oh, my hearer, religion, religion:

“Religion! what treasures untold
Reside in that heavenly word!
More precious than silver and gold,
Or all that this earth can afford.”

We seem hardly able to weep, except for joy, at the departure of our friends, when they are enabled in the very midst of the valley of the shadow of death to bear such a testimony of the luminous, soul strengthening, and soul refreshing presence of the everlasting, the blessed God. Thus, then, Jesus Christ comes out to fetch us in. Does he not now very often come out, as it were, in open manifestation to our souls? And whenever he does so, does he not bring us into light, and peace, and strength, and comfort, and joy? Is it not said of Jesus that he shuts, and none can open, that he opens, and none can shut? At the last great day, when Jesus Christ shall come out of heaven, and will raise his people from the dead, immortalize them all, and present them before the Judge eternal unblameable, unproveable in his sight, what a coming in there will be then by his coming out to fetch us! “Come, you blessed,” I am come out to bring you in, “inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Yet we must not read Ezekiel! Nobody is to meddle with Ezekiel! So, it is publicly announced. It always has the same effect upon me, such language as that, as what Michal said had upon David. She despised David for dancing before the ark of the Lord. You will only make me worse; you had better be quiet, depend upon it. You see what she got by it; she had to board herself after that; I should think she had; at least, it would have served her right if she had.

But the prophet was to show not only the going out and the coming in, but the form thereof; that is, the manner. And that is a very important part to show. After what manner does Christ come? Not after a human, free-will manner; not after a duty-faith manner; not after an uncertain manner; he comes with certainty and infallibility. He describes the manner of his coming thus, “Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring.” And what was the manner of his going in? It was by a most solemn, laborious life of suffering; it was by a most solemn death of agony. And then the manner of the people being brought in. This was what the man that came to the wedding feast did not understand. He thought he was going the right way and coming in aright; but alas! he had not the wedding garment. “Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.” Show them, therefore, not only Christ’s coming out to bring the people in, but the manner of his coming, and the manner in which he brings the people in. Hence, on the day of Pentecost all that were brought in were pricked in the heart. It was heart-work with them, as they showed by their practice afterwards.

And also show them “the ordinances thereof, and the forms thereof.” One ordinance, if I may call it an ordinance, is that of preaching the gospel. What is to be the form of that? After what manner is the Gospel to be preached? The Savior describes it. “The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things.” You choose our minister with a freedom of will that belongs to you. Why do you hear such a man? I hear him for two reasons. First, because I believe him to be a servant of God; and secondly, because the Lord has made him a blessing to my soul. Those will be your two reasons. Because if you did not believe he was a servant of God, you could not hear him; and if he were not made a blessing to you, then you would fall off. That is all the reason, I want no other. I have nothing to do with who approves him or who does not. In can see God’s

approbation with him, and see the Lord is with him, and the Lord by his means has made the word a blessing to my soul, I have nothing to do with anything else. The Lord is my witness I have no vengeful feeling towards any of those brethren that so maliciously set upon me; I freely forgive them all. So, what a mercy for us, then, that in the form of service we are to be perfect in freedom. Let the minister be free, the people free, and all free altogether; and I am sure none that have any real experience of their own will go far wrong in anything. "All the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof." Show them the ordinance of baptism, that the form thereof is immersion, or else it is no baptism at all. And we are to show them the form of the Lord's Supper, that there is nothing in it but the bread and the wine; that it is simply intended as a memorial of the wondrous death of the Lord Jesus Christ, a sign that he will be to us as the bread of life, as the wine of joy, and that for ever and ever. "That they may keep the whole form thereof." "Hold fast the form of sound words;" wrapped up in the one truth given to us in the 65th of Isaiah and many other scriptures, "Incline your ear;" and if you lay hold of that, and keep to that, that will keep you right all the way; "incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." There is included the whole of the form of the gospel, the whole of the order of the gospel, the whole of the glory of eternal salvation.

Just a word upon *the fullness of the house*, and then I close, for I shall not be able to reach *the surroundings* this morning. Now there are some very striking and instructive scriptures upon this fullness, the church of God, being filled with the glory of the Lord. Take first the 6th of Isaiah. The prophet says. "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." Try this by the New Testament, and if you are not pleased with it, I am mistaken. He saw the Lord, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, for the New Testament says that Isaiah saw his, Christ's, glory, and spoke of it. "High and lifted up; and his train filled the temple." Now Jesus Christ died, and God highly exalted him; and by Christ's death and by his exaltation there came in a train of promises and a train of blessings, blessing after blessing, until the whole temple is filled with blessing. Every Christian shall thus be filled with blessing. That is the train, the train of promises and the train of blessings that follow the Savior's humiliation and exaltation. And has it not been so, is it not so, and will it not be so? Hence you recollect in one place, "Blessed is the man whom you choose to approach unto you," that is, Christ Jesus; "that he may dwell in your courts," that is, Christ Jesus; "we," by his so doing, "shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, even of the holy temple." Thus then, the fullness flows from the humiliation and exaltation of the Savior. And their great theme was, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord;" thrice holy; because they here saw the end of the curse, the end of sin, the fullness of blessing. Who can despair that is blessed with saving faith in such a gospel as this, such a God as this, such a Christ as this? Then in the 43rd of Ezekiel you will find the same things repeated. Ezekiel says, "The glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east." Now the east was the place of the sun rising; we will read it so; "The glory of the Lord came from the way of the sun rising." And so, the glory of the Lord comes into the house by the resurrection of Christ. "If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain, and you are yet in your sins; if Christ be not risen, then they that are fallen asleep in Jesus are perished. But now is Christ risen." And that is the way the glory came. "With great power bare they witness of the resurrection of Christ, and great grace was upon them all." "And his voice," in coming in, "was like a noise of many waters." Is not that a beautiful description? What can you have to equal it? Was not the voice of God by the apostles as the voice of many waters? Take the many waters to represent the mercies, the blessings, of the everlasting gospel. "Many waters;" so it is many mercies, many blessings. "And the earth shined with his glory." Was it not so? Did not the Lord

command the light to shine into the souls of men? He gave them the hearing ear, to hear these many waters, the sound of abundance of rain, the sound of those mercies; and then light came to show them the way to these living waters; they drank, lived, and shall live forever. "And the house was filled with the glory of the Lord, the presence of the Lord. One more scripture, the 15th of the Revelation. "The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power." That does not sound pleasant, smoke. Well, it does not, but let your humble servant take away the unpleasantness. That is part of a minister's business, you know, to take unpleasantness away, and to bring something pleasant into its place. Notice, this smoke was from the glory of the Lord, that is, from the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, from Christ's mediatorial work. So, this smoke was the smoke of the incense, the fragrance of his name. Therefore, the meaning is that the temple was filled with the fragrance of his name. What a happy place is every assembly when it is filled with the fragrance of his name, from the glory of the Lord, from the glory of our great High Priest! He offers much incense with the prayers of the saints. The house was filled with the fragrance of his blessed name, "from the glory of God, and his power." Jesus exercised omnipotent power when he wrought salvation, casting the enemy out, and bringing his glory in. Oh, what a little I have said! not one quarter of what I enjoyed yesterday. I was up into heaven several times yesterday, in the presence of the Lord. Those are wonderful things, wonderful. But one more word. "No man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled." It is only for the sake of you strangers and little ones that I throw out a hint upon this just before I close. The Surrey Tabernacle people, you know them, and they will tell you in a moment what the meaning is. They will tell you that the seven plagues mean the complete curse of the law, declared by the ministers of God, there called seven angels, as in the beginning of the Revelation ministers are called angels; and that no man can enter into the church until he receive that Jesus Christ by whom the plagues were finished. He took the plagues, he took the curse, till there was no more to take; and so, by him we enter into the temple of the Lord, the presence of the Lord, there to dwell forever.

But your time is gone, and I must say no more.