

I saw no temple therein

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Principal John L. Mackay

[0 : 0 0] Find my text this evening in the chapter we read, the 21st chapter of Revelation, and verse 22. And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

I saw no temple therein. Now tonight I want to talk particularly to those whose citizenship is in heaven.

I want to talk to those who are united to Jesus Christ by faith, and who have been granted citizen status in heaven. And what I want to talk about is the nature of the inheritance that has been graciously granted to you, to the Lord's people.

But if you are here and you are saying in your heart tonight, well that means I can stop listening, because that doesn't apply to me. I don't want you to think that way.

Because although you may be here tonight, and you may not be making any claim to be one of the Lord's people, I want you to listen and to listen closely to what is told us here of the nature of the inheritance that the covenant God has promised to his people and has prepared for them.

[1 : 3 0] And I want you to listen carefully so that the greatness of God's goodness might provoke you to jealousy. That you might be stirred up within yourself to see the nature of what it is that is being lost to you.

If you remain indifferent, if you remain unconcerned, if you remain satisfied with a little interest in the things that pertain to eternity, but not sufficient commitment to stand and say, I am on the Lord's side.

Because we all need one who will answer for us in the day of reckoning. And there is only one who can answer effectively, effectively and acceptably to God in the day when we are all called to account, and that is the Lord himself.

But my theme tonight goes beyond the day of final reckoning. What I want you to consider with me tonight is not the solemnity of the day of judgment, but the glory of heaven thereafter.

I want you to consider what it is that the word of God brings before us here, so that its description may give us some idea, some measure of understanding, regarding the provision that God has made for his people in their final inheritance.

[3 : 0 2] Now of course, as we read that chapter, it was obvious that the description that's given here is a symbolic description.

That tells us that we're being presented with realities here, whose fullness we can't really grasp as yet.

They are realities that go beyond us. Our capacity to understand them is very much limited. We haven't got the spiritual insight.

We haven't got the spiritual capacity to enter fully into what shall be hereafter. Our imaginations are being stretched by what is being told us in this portion of God's word.

And so it is that in many places in that chapter, the description proceeds by way of negatives. Just as so very often we learn about God by learning what he is not, so too in this chapter we learn a great deal about heaven by learning what it is not.

[4 : 21] We know very well what prevails here on earth. The circumstances of this life are daily impressed upon us.

And so to give us some understanding of what awaits us in heaven, the Holy Spirit led John in this chapter to teach us to blank out, to erase many features of what we now know of life and of living on earth, so that we can begin to gain some understanding of what shall be hereafter.

The negatives of heaven, the grand affirmations of what shall not be there. We have one there in verse 4. How much human history is written in terms of sorrow?

How many pages of the annals of human experience are stained with tears? The former things, the things that pertain to this world, are things that are stained with the tears of disappointment, the tears of frustration, of grief, of sorrow, of fear, tears also of sympathy with others who are in agony.

None are exempt from knowing this on earth. Nowhere in scripture do we find it remotely suggested that the people of God will not know anguish and sorrow and crying in this world.

[6 : 23] Our Lord himself wept in his days on earth. His apostles knew misery and grief. They too wept. And so grief and sorrow remain still for us here below.

But in heaven they are banished. That whole area of human experience, that portion of human emotion that is so predominant, that is so much a part of living now, no longer exists.

Because there is no cause for it, it is the sorrow and the crying and the tears are quite out of place in a heavenly environment. No tears, for there will be no more sorrow.

The sorrows of the failures and disappointments of this life don't exist in heaven. The sorrow of bereavement and the death of loved ones no longer touches God's people eternally in heaven.

sorrow for sin too is something forgotten. Our lives are no longer barren and warped. We will no longer know that strange lukewarmness that so often comes over us in the things that pertain to our eternal good.

[7 : 44] None of these things will be there in heaven to cast their shadows over the enjoyment, over the felicity, over the blessedness that God has laid up in store for those who are His.

We find mentioned amongst the heavenly negatives also there in verse 25, there shall be no night there. Heaven is a place that does not know the change of day and night.

There is no night, there is no blackness, the joy of the risen Savior and the glory of the Lamb of God fill heaven, fill the new Jerusalem.

The light of the countenance of the Son of God has put to flight darkness and all the powers of evil and there is no tiring of the saints' enjoyment of what God provides for them.

There is no need of a time of rest, a time of relief, there is no night, there is no break in their endless enjoyment perpetually of what God has in store for those who are His.

[8 : 58] There is no night where glory shadeless shineth in Emmanuel's land. Can you not see the blessedness of this portion that is so often that has to be expressed now negatively when we realize how dark has been the midnight of our experience here on earth and we realize that the day spring is at hand and glory, glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land, dwells there uninterruptedly, continuously, and perfectly.

May we not then have within us joy and gratitude to the covenant God who has made such a grand provision for those who will put their trust in Him.

The covenant God of all faithfulness who will not fall short in one iota of all that He has promised, all that He has set before us here in His word of truth.

But there is another heavenly negative that John uses in this chapter.

It's the one that we find in verse 22. I saw no temple therein. The holy city, the new Jerusalem, the new Jerusalem that John describes as coming down from God out of heaven as being the place provided for His people to dwell in and to enjoy God in, is one without a temple.

[10 : 45] And that would have been a description and a feature of the new Jerusalem that would have sounded utterly shocking to Jewish ears. Jerusalem and all that it involved was so very much tied up with the temple.

Jerusalem and all that it symbolized and all that it promised for the future of God's people was so intricately linked with the existence of the temple, the house of God, that it was that that made Jerusalem the choicest and the fairest city in the whole world.

And here, John has what would have sounded to Jewish ears an utterly shocking heavenly negative.

Perhaps we can begin to enter a little bit into the impact of this statement if we were to substitute the word church.

if I were to say there's no church in heaven. There's no church building there. Because so often in our earthly experience, a church building symbolizes the hope of the gospel.

[12 : 05] So often the presence of a church is a symbol of light, indicates the opportunity for fellowship with God's people is a haven of rest in a troubled existence.

The weary life, the life that is weary of this world's cares and is looking for inner spiritual solace, so often sees the church and the very church building itself as symbolizing the opportunity and the availability of spiritual refreshment.

And how often it is that the displaced traveller in a strange place sees the church building as the opportunity for having fellowship with the Lord's people.

We look round the world that we know, the land that we know, and countryside and towns so often are dominated by churches, by their towers and by their spires.

So often you hear their bells ringing, reminders, symbols, pointing us away from this life, pointing us upwards, drawing us away to God himself, reminding us of God's claims, and providing us with the opportunity for serving God.

[13 : 25] And yet it said, in heaven, there's no church there, there's no temple there. It almost sounds as if it was saying that there's godlessness in heaven.

If I were to come and tell you I've been away on holiday and I've been in a place and no matter how hard I looked there, I couldn't find a church to worship him, you would very readily conclude that the place I'd been was some very godless spot.

Surely you'd think it was very deprived if there was no place where people were wont to gather to worship God. And is it not a sign of the spiritual indifference, the spiritual carelessness of our own land in these days, that there are so many church buildings discarded, left to the vandals, turned into warehouses.

There's a modern fashion for converting churches into flats. Or if you were down in Edinburgh just now, you'd see many a church with banners proclaiming this or that theatrical production.

A sign of the godlessness of our age, a sign of our apathy and our deadness in spiritual matters. No temple there.

[14 : 40] It almost seems to spell out the triumph of darkness. You could almost say it's a mark of hell, but there's no temple there.

And so it is. This is one thing that heaven and hell have in common. There's no temple in either of them.

Not for the same reason. In hell, it's the sign of supreme God abandonment that there is no temple there.

Because hell is not just where those who have rebelled against God are to be found. Hell is not just for those who will not give God a place in their lives who would banish him from having any authority over them.

That's not a unique description of hell. It's true also of many in this world. But more fundamentally, it would make what is characteristic of hell depend upon man's perverted desire, upon man's perverted counsel.

[16 : 04] There is no temple in hell because temple was the place of sacrifice, temple was the place of fellowship, it was the place of God's presence.

The temple was the symbol of fellowship and provided through the gracious acceptance of the sacrifice offered. and there is no fellowship with God in hell.

There is no grace in hell. The hardened and eternally impenitent are judicially abandoned by God to hell.

It is the fact that he withdraws every last vestige of his grace, not only the offer of the gospel but even that grace that is common whereby our Father in heaven, distributes his natural blessings upon the just and the unjust.

That day is finished at the day of reckoning and there is no possibility of having any building that would present the message of God's fellowship renewed for sinners through the offering of an acceptable sacrifice.

[17 : 17] It is God's will that determines the situation of those who shall be punished with everlasting fire away from the presence of the Lord.

That is the mark of hell. Away from the presence of the Lord. And the presence of the Lord was that very thing that was symbolized that was there in reality in the temple and from the glory of his.

the temple. But there is heaven and there is no temple there either but all for so very different reasons.

What a very different situation prevails in the highest heavens. There is no temple there not because there is no desire, not because there is no room, but because there is no longer any need.

No need for a sanctuary where sacrifices may be properly offered because the last sacrifice has already been finally and perfectly and completely offered and all the inhabitants of heaven taken from among mankind are there because that sacrifice has been perfectly given and offered by the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

[18 : 47] And there is the lamb in the midst of the throne in the very center of the new Jerusalem. There is the lamb a perpetual reminder of the sacrifice that he has made and that has been accepted because the Lord has raised him from the dead and our Lord in his glorified humanity is to be found there amidst his people.

There is no need for a temple in heaven in so far as temple worship was connected with the sacrifices of types and shadows for they have all passed away.

The glory this foundation of heaven has been finally and completely established in what our Lord Jesus Christ has offered. There is grace consummated in heavenly glory just as grace is utterly withdrawn in hell.

But it is not nearly sacrifice that the temple was involved in. The temple was distinguished by this of the glory.

That there was the cloud of God's presence. That there in that one spot was the place where God was pleased to reveal himself to sinful men and to show that he was the God who would come and draw near to them.

[20 : 21] Not in judgment but in grace. the temple of old Jerusalem has vanished. The transient appearances of God's glory in old times have gone.

And in heaven all what we have is an eternal presence. A presence of eternal and unvarying perpetuity. there is no need of a temple because the Lord is there in his fullness.

It is in heaven that the words will be verified in their completest meaning. I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice and your joy shall no man take from you.

There is no need for a special place to remember God in heaven. There is no need for a particular gathering appointed on the Lord's day to approach him in stated worship.

There will be an eternal Sabbath. There is total temple. Not a special building but all temple. For there will be none in heaven who will not be aware of the presence of the God the Father and of the Lamb in it.

[21 : 49] the servants of the Lord will all be there in glory. Their hearts will have been made perfectly pure so that they may claim and enjoy the blessing of those who are pure in heart for they shall see God.

Just now we see through a glass darkly. just now we see enigmatically these things are a puzzle to us. But the day is coming for each one of the Lord's people when the days of puzzlement, when the days of trying to discern through the negatives of heaven and through the symbolic descriptions will pass away.

In the temple of old there was a veil. There was a veil over the entrance into the Holy of Holies.

And within the Holy of Holies all was hidden and concealed. It was not permitted for any save the high priest to enter in there.

Although God was present in the tabernacle and although God was pleased to presence himself on occasions on the temple, it was not a presence that was to be enjoyed by all his people, even within Israel in those days.

[23 : 23] There was an element of concealment, there was an element of imperfection that necessarily pertained to the circumstances that then prevailed. But there's no outer court in heaven in which the saints are kept away from the presence of God.

We shall be like him. We shall be like our Savior and shall see him even as he is in the glory of his exalted humanity.

We shall see him and there will be no eye, there will be no saint that will be blinded at the sight of the Lord God.

In heaven. How glorious it will be to look upon the face of him who loved us and gave himself for us. Of him who is making intercession for us even now before his father.

How glorious it will be to see him who was pure and without sin and who died on the cross. The one who had many a battle to endure and to emerge the victor through them all.

[24 : 40] How great it will be to contemplate the love of Jesus Christ our Lord eternally in the heavenly places.

That's the inheritance of the saints in light. No temple because all temple. No special time because all the time.

No particular times of remembrance of spiritual festivities because one ongoing and perpetual marriage supper of the lamb and his bride.

That's what awaits the people of God. But right here and now we're not at that destination. It awaits us.

It gives us joy. It gives us hope. It motivates us and it keeps us going on. But right here and now the children of the new age have not yet arrived at their father's house.

[25 : 45] The children of the new age have not yet entered into the heavenly kingdom of glory. And the Lord is right now dealing with us in this situation in which he has been pleased to put us.

He's dealing with us according to our condition here and now. And as we now are, we need avenues of approach.

We need means of grace. We need foretastes of what it will be like in heaven hereafter to revive our drooping spirits, to give us courage, to give us strength to go on in the spiritual battle that awaits us in this life day by day.

And the question that remains for us here and now is concerned with whether our hearts truly yearn for the heavenly reality.

If we don't like the foretaste, if we have no true desire for the sample that God is pleased to give to his people now, how do you think you are going to survive on an eternal diet of praising God and of being present at the marriage supper of the lamb and his wife?

[27 : 15] God is teaching us, God is training us, God is leading us on now. And he's doing it not in a different way from what will be hereafter, but with a measure of what is to come in the future.

And if we're holding back, if we find ourselves recoiling, if there is something within us that does not join in hearty accord with the provision that God is making for us now, how do you think you will be able to enjoy the full provision, the unending provision, that God makes hereafter?

I'm putting it to you this evening. I've mentioned in some measure, I've tried to show you something of what God has provided for his people hereafter, their felicity and their bliss.

Is it true of you that you are saying within your heart, my soul thirsts for these things, my soul thirsts for God, the living God, when shall I come and appear before him?

Appear before him eternally and appear before him now in the pathway that he has appointed to the eternal home for his people? Do you have a true desire to worship him, to approach him, to delight in him, to seek his face, to meditate on all that he is and all that he has done?

[28 : 47] Truly my soul waits for the Lord, from him cometh my salvation, my soul thirsts for God, my flesh longs in a dry parched land where there is no water.

You see that there is no water, that there is no spiritual nourishment in this world's provision. Can you reject the spiritual nourishment that your heavenly father would give you till the day when you come to his house and enjoy it eternally?

And that's true especially at a communion season. At a communion season we should be knowing within ourselves a greater delight and a greater desire.

You see it's a mark of our present condition, of the weakness of our flesh, of the spiritual battle that's going on within us that our desires do fluctuate.

we are spiritually variable. There are times when we are on the peak and there are times when we are in the valley.

[30 : 08] But when we hear that the Lord has an appointed meeting with his people and a special meeting around his table when he would provide for their souls, then there should be stirred up within as if we are truly his, an earnest desire, an increased desire and delight to be found where the Lord has appointed the place of meeting.

Oh, the day is coming when we will no longer need avenues of approach. The day is coming when the means of grace will be obsolete because we will have arrived at the Father's house and we'll have the full reality.

But don't on that account suppose that you can with impunity do away with what the Lord has appointed. It is crass folly on the part of any man to suppose that God has provided what is unnecessary, what can be dispensed with at the whim of any human being.

We are not to despise what the Lord gives, we are rather to treasure all that the Lord has provided because we worship the God of covenant blessing.

We worship the God who has made the promise that he will dwell with his people. He has made the promise, the threefold promise, I will be their God, they shall be my people and I will dwell with them.

[31 : 49] There is fellowship, there is communion, there is intimacy, there is drawing near. And that is valued, treasured, earnestly desired for by the Lord's people.

You are deceiving yourself. if you think that you can desire heaven and despise the foretastes of heaven, they go together in the appointment of the covenant God who will truly and surely fulfill all his promises.

And that's really where this text comes together especially with the Lord's supper at this communion season. We're going, the Lord's people are going where there's no temple.

They're going where there's no temple and that is because of two things, the sacrifice having already been offered and accepted and perpetual fellowship and enjoyment of God.

And those are the same two things that we are reminded of at the Lord's table. We are reminded of the sacrifice offered and accepted and it is the table of fellowship, it is the table, it is the Lord's table.

[33 : 15] He is there at the head of it. He is there dispensing the blessing to the hearts of those who come in faith. And so this night, as we consider the heavenly reality, it applies to our situation in view of a coming Lord's day and the remembrance of his death at his table.

It applies because it is the same emotion, it is the same realities, it is part of the same ongoing leading that is involved.

And as our hearts desire and look forward to the heavenly reality, as we call him the God of my salvation and trust in him to provide for us eternally, so too we ought not to despise his provision now.

We ought to rejoice in it, we ought to see it as part of his strengthening and sustaining to lead us on and to bring us to himself eternally.

let us pray. O Lord, our God, we are those who so often deceive ourselves.

[34 : 43] Our thoughts are twisted away from the standard of thy truth and our desires and our thinking are all mixed up within us.

We pray thee that at this time thou wouldst enable us to have the opportunity to withdraw from the things of this world and from the normal intercourse with family and friends and to be alone with thee, that we might consider our standing before thee, that we might have a sure understanding of where it is that we are in relation to thee and Jesus Christ, the man of thine appointing.

O Lord, we ask that thou wouldst feed with food convenient to their spiritual circumstances all those who would draw close and gather round the table of the Lord.

We pray that thou wouldst be with those who are seeking his face, those who as yet have made no public profession but yet know within themselves a desire to acknowledge the one who died for them, who bought them with his blood.

We pray that thou wouldst strengthen those who are fearful, that thou wouldst draw out those who are reluctant. But above all, O Lord, our God, do thou look in thy mercy upon those who are careless and indifferent.

[36 : 19] Those gathered with us this night and those who are a burden in our souls, known to us, O Lord, our God, do thou grant that the services of thy truth and the message of Jesus Christ will be blessed to their souls and to thine eternal glory.

Hear us, provide for us, and receive us in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.