

Sabbath Sermon: Take Account of God's Glory

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First Fruits Ministries, an affiliate of Corner Fringe Ministries

Torah Portion: Pekudei (Countings): Exodus 38:21-40:38; 1 Kings 7:51-8:21; Luke 16:1-13; Ephesians 2:13-22; Hebrews 8:1-12: <https://tinyurl.com/4avtwren>.



Shabbat Shalom, brothers and sisters. Let the shalom of the LORD, Yeshua the Messiah be upon you and upon all of us. Please turn to your neighbors and greet them with the love we've been commanded to share with one another, because we love our Messiah who loves us. ...

The LORD speaks so often about all of the elements that go into the making of His tabernacle, and today's Torah Portion literally speaks about the inventory that was counted by Ithamar, son of Aaron the High Priest, just prior to the final assembly of the tent of meeting. Some day, if the LORD wills it, I'd like to study these often repeated images and detail the meaning of everything that Moses and the people of Israel made for God's Tabernacle; the symbology of the materials: the copious gold, silver, bronze, gemstones, fine linens, and animal skins; the symbology of the objects: the ark of the covenant, the mercy seat, the menorah, the table of shewbread, the altar of incense, the basin and the sacrificial altar; and the symbology of the rooms: the holy of holies, the holy place and the courtyard. For today, the LORD has called my attention to one particular theme that only subtly presents itself in our reading, and that is the grand conclusion of Exodus: when the glory of the LORD filled up the tabernacle. But before we get into this, I want to also bring the Torah Portion's name into the equation. The weekly portion is called "Pekudei (פְּקֻדֵּי)," meaning "inventory," "accounting" or "numbering" in the five instances the word is used in this form. My boys and I discussed this word earlier this week in our homeschooling studies. The fact that the inventory of all the tabernacle's components was counted by the hand of Ithamar makes Ithamar an accountant—though instead of the IRS, he had to answer to God Most High. Seriously though, there are literal purposes for all of the implements, and because of this there was a need for a literal accountant to ensure that everything God had commanded was accomplished for His purposes. And we know from the whole of Scripture, we really do want to make sure we get things right when it comes to doing what the LORD has asked of us, and Ithamar played a key role in ensuring Moses was obeying the LORD properly. The Word reports in Exodus 40:16, "Thus Moses did; according to all that the Lord had commanded him, so he did." Ithamar, the accountant, had made sure of it. And so, when you look at the word "counted" in the verse, it's actually the root word in Hebrew for the word "inventory," which is "pikad (פִּקַּד)," meaning to take note of, to visit, to muster (or to assemble for inspection), or even to appoint. All of these tabernacle components were appointed for use in the tabernacle by God, they were assembled for inspection by Ithamar prior to their assembly by Moses and His co-workers. Once everything was completed according to God's design, and everything was assembled properly, God came to dwell in the midst of this great work.

And that leads to the underlying theme that I want to talk about today, which is that this tabernacle and all its elements were "a shadow of the things to come," just like the feasts, the new moons and the Sabbaths in Colossians 2:16-17. As we covered last week, Paul's writing doesn't dismiss the need to keep these holy convocations, but explains that they are memorials of past fulfillments of prophesy as

well as rehearsals for a yet to come eternal kingdom gathering of God's people forever and ever. Thus we should not get nit picky on how we memorialize and rehearse during these periodic holy convocations, because Messiah Yeshua will lead His chosen saints in celebration when these days are ultimately realized, and our hearts' greatest desire ought to focus on that pinnacle event. Similarly, the tabernacle and all its implements were set up as "a copy and a shadow of the heavenly things," as the writer of Hebrews explains in chapter 8. The LORD instructed Moses to build the tabernacle "according to the pattern shown you on the mountain," and Aaron the High Priest was appointed to serve in that tabernacle, to offer sacrifices according to the Torah. But Yeshua has become our new High Priest, an eternal High Priest who sits at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, and he is "a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the LORD erected, and not man." The Messiah, after all, would rebuild the temple; this time in the spiritual realm. According to my belief and interpretation, Yeshua is building this third temple presently. Thus, this earthly tabernacle, the copy and the shadow of God's spiritual tabernacle, was to serve as both a memorial for what God had accomplished for His people, to help them remember Him and enjoy His presence in their wilderness experience, but also to help them rehearse for a time when God would reveal the highest spiritual meaning for what it means for Him to dwell in the midst of His people. That time is both partially realized in the present age and also yet to come in its fullness. There is so much intricacy in all of this, so many questions we all might have, so many ideas we all can discuss, and also, so much for us to disagree about regarding what will be, and this is the road that I want to caution each of us not to go down. The glory of the LORD is dwelling among us, so let us not do anything to quench the Holy Spirit of God (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

The Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 4:29-32 "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Messiah Yeshua forgave you." This is an aside, not the point of today's message, but I want to make it clear. While we have to put away lying and not let anything counter to Scripture be spoken among us, we also have to encourage one another as we share in the Word of God and the grace of our LORD Messiah Yeshua, for His glory endures among us when we become His fellow workers, building onto the temple foundation that He has already laid. We come together for the very purpose of edification, to build into the Holy Spirit we share in one another, to empower one another so we can go and do the work of the LORD throughout our weeks. Like Ithamar, we are to be accountants of all the LORD has given us in His Word to make sure it fits together properly, for when it is put together correctly God's glory can shine. Paul writes again in 1 Corinthians 4:1-2: "Let a man so consider us as servants of Messiah and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful." As faithful stewards of the mysteries of God—faithful accountants of the Word of God—we ought to bring thoughtful and edifying interpretations of God's Word to one another so we can be energized and inspired go out into the world and share God's Truth and the hope we have in Yeshua with others, so that all with ears to hear can be sealed for the day of redemption. Remember, as I also discussed last week and Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:14, "the Holy Spirit is the down payment on our inheritance, which is applied toward our redemption as God's own people, resulting in the honor of God's glory." With this knowledge, it's all the more important that we do not grieve or quench the Holy Spirit of Yeshua, for we want to stand with Him in the final realization of all that has been written about Him, for in doing so we ourselves will be overwhelmed by the glory of God.

Let's back up and look at the grand finale of our Torah reading in Exodus, which points forward to this final realization of prophesy. We read in Exodus 40:33-38: "And [Moses] raised up the court all around the tabernacle and the altar, and hung up the screen of the court gate. So Moses finished the work. Then the cloud 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." Without getting into too much Hebrew etymology, the word "cloud" here represents the prophetic power brought by God through his Holy Spirit, the "fire" represents the spiritual cleansing of God's righteous testimony when there is darkness all around us, and the "glory" of the LORD represents the abundance, the splendor, the honor, the dignity, and the majesty of the LORD's presence among His people. This is highly relevant for us today, but also for us in the age to come, for the prophetic power of God's Holy Spirit dwells among us and even in us today, guiding us according to the will of Messiah, and when we walk in obedience to God's commandments we experience the abundant love of His presence in our midst.

There's three verses in Scripture I want to highlight to give you a Word picture for how these final verses of Exodus fit in with our present experience with Yeshua. First of all—and I'm going to show you this in more detail in just a little bit—as followers of Yeshua who have faith in the grace He has offered us and keep the commandments of God—just as Moses did in this section—, we become the tabernacle of God wherein His Holy Spirit dwells. The LORD Yeshua said in John 14:15-18: "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—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. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." The Holy Spirit will come to dwell with us and actually rest within us, on the throne of our hearts, when we obey the commandments of God because of our love for Yeshua, for what He did for us so we can dwell with Him. Each of us can build this eternal relationship with God that gets more and more intense—as our desire to follow His Ways increases, when our entire being become "a living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1) for the LORD, and when everything we do strives to emulate Yeshua's teaching. And the relationship we can build through the Holy Spirit increases exponentially when two or more of us are intensifying our relationship with Yeshua together. Yeshua said in Matthew 18:19-20, "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." Within the context of this verse, this agreement that we have with one another is not with any particular whim we might fancy, but specifically we are called to cultivate a common agreement with the Father's will for us. Thus, we can come together in the Spirit and tabernacle with God and when we do this and work together in alignment with Yeshua's will, the glory of the LORD will intensify in our midst. The fire covers the tabernacle by night, reminding us that we must walk in the light of righteousness and be children of light, lest we be burned up in the darkness of sin. The cloud covers the tabernacle by day—the Spirit of the LORD hovers over us as we come together and meet with Him together in the light. The purpose of this is twofold: to build one another up and edify one another in our faith and exhort one another to follow the will of God, and also to encourage one another to go out into

the wilderness and reconcile new experiences and new people to a righteous relationship with God. As the cloud of the LORD lifted up from the tabernacle and moved on, so too did the people of God move onward in all their journeys. This is the Spirit's call for us to take what we have learned in discipling one another in Messiah Yeshua and apply it to new experiences in the world. It's the Great Commission, in effect, to make disciples by spreading the good news of Yeshua and teaching the commandments of God, but at the leading of God's Holy Spirit. Remember, He is the vine, and we are the branches, to use another metaphor from John 15:5, and without Him we can do nothing. Thus when He leads us out on a new mission, we ought to move out. Those of us who are born again in the Spirit of Messiah will develop the discernment to listen to the LORD in this way increasingly as our relationship with Him intensifies. In John 3:7-8, Yeshua put it this way: "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." In other words, we should not plan out our next moves with any great specificity, but when the cloud of God lifts up off the tabernacle and moves, we ought to go with Him, wherever He leads.

From what we read this week, it took Israel a whole year upon leaving the bondage of sin in Egypt to the point when the tabernacle was ready. We read in Exodus 40:17, "And it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was raised up." The passage goes on to explain each implement that was added to make it whole, but I find this part from verse 20 among the most relevant: "[Moses] took the Testimony and put it into the ark, inserted the poles through the rings of the ark, and put the mercy seat on top of the ark." The Saints endure by keeping the commandments of God and the faith in Yeshua. We need obedience and grace, the love of God and mercy of God, and this feature is the most holy and central component to the whole arrangement. Again, each component has its symbolic value, but I want to focus on this today. I'm not sure exactly what the passage of a year represents from the crossing of the Sea of Reeds and the reception of the commandments at Mt. Sinai, but I do know that after we are baptized into new life in Messiah Yeshua and begin to be sanctified according to the law that God gave to Moses it takes a little bit of time before our relationship matures to the point where God is leading us out to do His will in the world. There has to be some time for us to put all the pieces together, and certainly not by ourselves, but with the counsel and guidance of trusted brothers and sisters who have the same faith. Perhaps the LORD is telling us it takes a little time to develop a ministry team, or teams that have several ministries. There has to be a period of building up the body before multiplication can come from it. And in that same period, there also has to be some purging of those who did not take their calling and election seriously. Perhaps they experienced the glory of God and even prophesied in His name, cast out demons in His name, but they couldn't escape the lawless draw of Egypt and they looked back on their former lives with more desire than they could look forward to the land of promise (Matthew 7:21-23). We are called to forsake our former ways of life, and draw near to the LORD by making our bodies a living sacrifice to the Way of Yeshua. Paul writes in Romans 12:1-2: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." We have to be careful not to take the Scripture literally in Exodus 40:17 and decide that it takes exactly one year to become mature followers of the LORD, but I think it's safe to conclude that it takes a little time to establish this righteous walk. There are four seasons in a year in New England, and we could meditate on the implications of the year as something that is segmented, but perhaps a more Hebraic look at the year is in order. In Israel there

are two prophetic seasons in a year—the spring feasts and then the fall feasts—and the cycle concludes when the spring feasts come around again bringing a new beginning. Perhaps we can look at this model for each of us as individuals who are called into the faith, but we can also apply this model to our church and our ministries within it. With each new season, and each new beginning, we ought to be responsive to the LORD, for when His cloud lifts and starts to move, those of us who are walking with Him are going to need to follow Him wherever He goes.

Within the context of First Fruits Ministries, I think this has some interesting applications. It's my hope that each of us has a ministry of reconciliation, as Pastor Gary Durham Jr. taught a few weeks ago when he spoke at Corner Fringe in his sermon, "The Peacemaker's War." To have a "ministry of reconciliation" means that we all find ourselves growing into the role of disciple-making disciples of Yeshua, and we come here each Shabbat to improve our skills in this area. I also pray that ultimately the LORD will raise up additional elders and helpers to add depth to the leadership of this church; to run different ministries and add to our impact as kingdom builders in New Hampshire. I don't know what that looks like, but I do know who does, and I trust Yeshua that He is leading us toward this end. Ultimately, I want us as a body going wherever the LORD leads us, and I also want us as individuals to follow His will, even to the ends of the earth if that's where He leads. The tabernacle of God has many different components, and we ought to embrace them all as fellow workers for the glory of God. Paul speaks in similar fashion in 1 Corinthians 12:4-14, which I believe will provide a Word picture for how we ought to grow spiritually as a part of Messiah's body. We read: "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many."

In talking about spiritual gifts, Paul explains how the LORD is outfitting each of us for some role in which we can help one another bring glory to His name. He mentions ministries and also activities, which have endless interpretations. I hesitate to give examples, because it's the LORD's job to lead us out. The important piece here is that we each have a role to play in ministries and activities that the LORD is going to lead us to do together, and we ought to be responsive to these callings and act on them at the appointed time. To some extent, we have to wait on the LORD's timing to execute some of the ideas we're going to come up with, but at the same time, we have to be careful not to misjudge one another's callings and wait when the LORD says to go out. Paul continues with His metaphor in verses 20-26 explaining how we each should pursue our roles as the LORD calls us, within the confines and guidance of His Word, of course. We read: "But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you;' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unrepresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed

the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.” What are some of the things you want to do for the LORD? Let’s talk about it. Should we pair up two-by-two as the apostles of Yeshua did to fulfill some of these activities? Are there ministries that require more than two, or even all of us? Where is God taking us? “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes.” We have been born of the Spirit, and then respond accordingly to the will of the LORD.

Now, I think another piece of our weekly reading from the book of Kings plays into this discussion. Relatedly, you may or may not have heard the saying from the Rambam, a Jewish sage from the middle ages, but it’s highly relevant to today’s message. He said: “I will tell you a rule; go understand it. In all of the following portions about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and this is a significant topic, our Rabbis mentioned briefly and they said, ‘Whatever happened to the fathers is a sign for the sons.’” I believe the Rambam was right about this rule, but it doesn’t just apply to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but also to David, Solomon and beyond—perhaps even to us. In our reading from 1 Kings 8, King Solomon had just completed the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem, and he had just finished putting all of the components into the Temple that the LORD had instructed his father David and him, when we read: “And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.” This is exactly what happened to Moses in the wilderness when he had finished constructing the tabernacle, and now it had happened to Solomon in completing the Temple. Doesn’t it also happen to us? Is there a lesson for us in this? When the prophetic power of the LORD fills us with awe, particularly when we come together in our congregation and rest in the LORD, how can we go on ministering at that moment? Do we not have to wait until the LORD moves before we also can move? Don’t we have to wait for His guidance and leadership before we can go out and fulfill His command? He is the vine, we are the branches, and apart from Him we can do nothing. Yes, when the power of God is teaching us something new or training us up in the way we should go, we have to wait on Him before we can go out and do His work. In itself, this Biblical miracle has a realization in our lives.

However, I want to show you another takeaway from this miraculous time in Solomon’s ministry and apply Rambam’s lesson to this passage. After Solomon observed the LORD enter the temple he had built, he turned to the people of Israel, to the congregation, and he said in 1 Kings 8:15-20: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth to my father David, and with His hand has fulfilled it, saying, ‘Since the day that I brought My people Israel out of Egypt, I have chosen no city from any tribe of Israel in which to build a house, that My name might be there; but I chose David to be over My people Israel.’ Now it was in the heart of my father David to build a temple for the name of the Lord God of Israel. But the Lord said to my father David, ‘Whereas it was in your heart to build a temple for My name, you did well that it was in your heart. Nevertheless you shall not build the temple, but your son who will come from your body, he shall build the temple for My name.’ So the Lord has fulfilled His word which He spoke...” Now don’t mishear me when I ask the question, Did the LORD actually fulfill the word that he spoke to David at that time? Of course the answer is “yes,” because the glory of the LORD and the cloud of God filled the temple. This was a fulfillment of prophecy, but was it the final fulfillment of what the LORD told David? I don’t believe it was. Whatever happened to the fathers, in this case Solomon, is a sign for the sons. You see, when the LORD said, “Whereas it was in your heart to build a

temple for My name, you did well that it was in your heart,” I believe the LORD is speaking rather directly about the spiritual reality that we have come to fully understand as followers of Yeshua. We do well when we build a temple for the LORD within our hearts. Paul asks followers of Yeshua in 1 Corinthians 3:16, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” More directly to the overall theme of today’s message, Paul writes a few passages earlier in verse 9: “we are God’s fellow workers ... you are God’s building.” Together, we are the tabernacle of God, the temple of God, and the Spirit of the living God dwells within us when we have faith in Yeshua and keep His commandments. And if this is so, then the spirit of God’s prophetic power dwells within us for His glory when we come together to read His Word and study its interpretation, as faithful stewards or accountants of His Truth. When God’s fire burns in the night, it cleanses us of our sins and lights up the darkness. And when God’s Spirit moves, we ought to move with it.

And so, as we consider this longer-term fulfillment of Solomon’s words here in 1 Kings 8, we again ought to recognize that yes, Solomon was a son of David who fulfilled the Word of the LORD, who sat on David’s throne and built a temple for the Spirit of the LORD, and there was much glory in that Temple, but David would also have another son who would fulfill this Word to a greater extent. Yeshua the Messiah, the Son of David and the Son of God, according to multiple references in Scripture, would build a new temple for the LORD. And this temple would bring even greater glory to the LORD. And while we consider the building of this third temple, we also have to ask whether it was fully built? Just like we read in the example of Solomon, it is and it isn’t. Allow me to explain through several passages of Scripture that explain.

First of all, a prophesy from Zechariah 6:12-13 speaks about the Messiah Himself building the temple of God. There we read: “Thus says the Lord of hosts, saying: ‘Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, and He shall build the temple of the Lord; Yes, He shall build the temple of the Lord. He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne; so He shall be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.’” We know that our risen LORD now sits on the throne in Heaven as both King of kings and High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, and the Book of Hebrews describes this dual role of Messiah Yeshua quite eloquently. That’s beside today’s point. Consider that this prophesy explains that our Messiah will, from His place, build the temple of the LORD and also from His place He will branch out. From my reading, this describes a multi-stage process. He will both build a Temple, but will also expand it after its foundation is laid. As we move into the New Testament, we see that Yeshua Himself prophesied this very thing, and then His apostles described it in significant detail. I’m going to dive into a handful of passages here to really get this point across. First, let’s look at John 2:19-22. When the Jewish leaders asked Yeshua for a sign concerning His identity as the Messiah, the Son of David, our LORD said this while standing inside the second temple in Jerusalem: ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ When He said this, Yeshua was referring to the second temple, built during the reign of Darius I, which was later rededicated by the Maccabees after its desecration by Antiochus IV, and then expanded by King Herod. After making such a bold statement about the massive structure that took the Jews 46 years to build, John explains: “[Yeshua] was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Yeshua had said.” And while Yeshua in Himself became the temple of God, replacing the temple that had been built by man, He was also the cornerstone of a larger temple that He was just beginning to build, one that will not be complete until the Last Day.

Peter speaks about this in 1 Peter 2:1-6, even quoting from the Scriptures that John only referenced. There we read: "Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Messiah Yeshua. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.'" Peter clearly establishes the LORD Yeshua as the foundation of a new spiritual house—a new spiritual Temple—and anyone who wants to be built on top of His foundational layer has to put off sin and its fruits and instead become doers of the Word of God because of the grace Yeshua provided all believers through His sacrifice on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. Now, as Paul wrote in Romans 12:1-2, believers in Yeshua must become "living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God," through our "reasonable service." We have to "prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" in our lives in order to become part of the structure. In other words, as literal building blocks in the third temple of God, a living, spiritual tabernacle, we reflect the glory of God in our lives and participate in the prophetic power of God, which is still being realized. We also follow Yeshua wherever He might lead, doing His will in our lives.

Ephesians 2, which is included in our weekly reading material, refers to Jews and Gentiles becoming one people through the death and resurrection of Messiah Yeshua. In describing this marriage of two peoples on account of Yeshua's actions, the Apostle Paul added to the third temple symbology in the New Testament. Importantly, though He explained how the construction of the third temple is an ongoing project that will continue until the LORD returns. Paul concludes in Ephesians 2:19-22: "Now, therefore, [through the blood of Yeshua] you [Gentiles] are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of [Israel,] the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Messiah Yeshua Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." We are being built together, grammar that indicates a project that is not yet complete. However, there is also an indication that the not yet third temple still provides a dwelling place for God's Holy Spirit, even now. As fellow workers with Messiah Yeshua, following Him in all of His ways, we are adding to the structure that will one day be complete.

In 1 Corinthians 3, a passage I've quoted from a few times so far in preview, Paul describes the day of completion. There we read: "For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Messiah Yeshua. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are." Within the wider context of the passage, Paul explained how Yeshua the Messiah is the foundation of the third temple,

and all works added to the temple would be tested on the Last Day when Yeshua returns. Those whose faith is built on the solid basis of trust in Yeshua and obedience to God's commandments will be preserved, even if their works weren't as solid as they could have been, provided they maintain the structure of their faith. We have one of many supports to this idea in Psalm 19:9-10, which reads: "The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold;" Though some of our works may fall short of the glory of God, and be burned up as straw or hay, we may still be preserved if we have not defiled the temple, something that happens when we sin presumptuously—in other words, when we "practice lawlessness." Those people who defile the temple, by working against Messiah Yeshua or disbelieving in Him as the foundation, will be destroyed.

I want to present one more illustration of how the faithful followers of Yeshua are being built into the final dwelling place of God, which will endure into eternity. You will see that the prophetic power of God, the fiery righteousness of God, and the moving Holy Spirit of the LORD will all dwell together with the saints forever in this model. This will take a little set-up, and I want to precede this section by making it clear that this interpretation is not the only possible understanding, but it is an interpretation that encourages me personally, and so I hope it also encourages you. It aligns quite nicely with the image we started with, with the tabernacle in the wilderness and all of its symbology as a "copy and a shadow of the heavenly things." And so, let's start with 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, where we read: "For this we say to you by the Word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the LORD will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the LORD Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Messiah will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the LORD in the air. And thus we shall always be with the LORD." I think it's important to note that this passage describes the Last Day, when the LORD will come to raise the living and the dead; when His kingdom will come upon us and endure forever. There are many, many passages about this time, but this one is probably the most clear. What's interesting is that this passage indicates we will be caught up in the air with the LORD, and that we will remain with Him forever, but it doesn't say we will remain in the heavens forever. In fact, if we examine the whole of Scripture, it's clear that the Kingdom of God that endures will be right here on Earth. So what happens next?

Perhaps we'll explore this in more detail at some point in the future, but for now, allow me to propose that Revelation 21 explains what will happen next. Starting in verse 1, we read: "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.'" Note: Right within this passage, the prophet explains that "the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people." Is this the authentic tabernacle that Moses made a model of in the wilderness, or is it something else? In a very peculiar verse that might help answer that question, note that the apostle John wrote a little further down the page: "Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." Remember the Word we read in Ephesians 2? Paul wrote, that Gentile believers who were grafted-in to Israel through

Messiah Yeshua would become “fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Messiah Yeshua Himself being the chief cornerstone...” Is this the same building that’s being described? It is my opinion that it is. It’s now a city, and not a temple, because of the massive size of all of the people from the beginning of creation to the end who will be counted among the saints and the household of God. The city itself is a people set apart for God, and not an actual building. The descriptions of the city and its size are all symbolic, just like the description of the tabernacle and all its implements in Torah.

When we read a little further in verses 19-21, we should also note that “The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst...” The breastplate of righteousness described as a garment worn by Aaron the High Priest was made up of 12 precious stones very similar to these ones. Exodus 39:14 explains, “There were twelve stones according to the names of the sons of Israel: according to their names, engraved like a signet, each one with its own name according to the twelve tribes.” Now I have not taken the time to cross check this, but I will assert that whether the stones are identical in the two passages is not entirely important; what is important is how the imagery shows both the apostles and the prophets are serving as the foundation of this city’s walls, just as the Apostle Paul described for the temple that Messiah Yeshua had begun building upon His resurrection. This city is one in the same as the temple of God that is made of believers like you and me.

Revelation 21:22 may put a wrinkle in this interpretation on the surface, but when the passage that follows this verse is analyzed, as well as the rest of the passages we’ve looked at so far, I think that wrinkle irons out nicely: We read in verse 22: “But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.” First of all, let’s look again at Ephesians 2, where the foundation being built for God’s holy temple is the apostles and prophets, but also, the chief cornerstone is Yeshua Himself, and the whole building is fit together in the LORD for a dwelling place of God’s Spirit. Perhaps John saw no temple in it, because the entire city, the entire New Jerusalem, is the temple of God, and it is made up of the saints of God and God Himself who descend to the Earth to dwell together forever. 1 Corinthians 12:12 seems to back up this idea well. There Paul writes, “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Messiah.” In His prayer recorded in John 17, Yeshua gives us a compelling piece to the puzzle that I believe brings the whole concept home. There we read: “I do not pray for these alone,” speaking about His apostles, “but also for those who will believe in Me through their Word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me” (John 17:20-23). I find it highly significant that Yeshua is saying that all believers who adhere to the Word of God will become one, and in their oneness the Father’s glory, the Son’s glory as well as the glory of the saints who will come after the Apostles and the household of God will shine together and be perfect as one body.

When we read the rest of the passage in Revelation 21:22-27, this same exact imagery appears to be portrayed: “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). And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.” As we read this passage, it becomes clear that it’s not just the glory of the LORD in His complex unity as Father and Son that lights up the city, but also the glory of the kings of the earth and all of the people of nations who were saved by the blood of the lamb. The New Jerusalem is literally the tabernacle of God that will descend onto the Earth; it will be made up of God Himself, the Messiah, the apostles, the tribes of Israel and all of the saved Gentiles who have given their lives to Yeshua, and we will all be one. The glory of the LORD will literally fill the tabernacle, which will be the entirety of everything that there is, described as a holy city, God and His people as one. This is a place you and I are going to want to be, but in order to get there, it is imperative that our names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. Nothing that defiles or causes an abomination or rebels against the Truth of God is going to be a part of this Holy City, but all such things will be burned up in the same way that anything defiling God’s holiness was burned up as Israel sojourned in the wilderness. The tabernacle in Israel’s wilderness experience was a model in every way of the eternal city that is to come, just like the writer of Hebrews explained.

If you read on into Revelation 22, you’ll note that the LORD juxtaposes this unified New Jerusalem descending from Heaven onto the Earth with another image of God’s people living among Him in the midst of a perfect garden, just like at the beginning of creation. Just like the creation story in Genesis, which has at least two different layers of meaning describing how God brought things into being, so does the re-creation story in Revelation have multiple layers of descriptive writing that offers us a glimpse of what eternal life will be from several different prophetic perspectives. The cloud that hovered over the tabernacle in the wilderness now hovers over our minds, showing us these truths in God’s Word, and the fire that lit up the darkness and reminded Israel that God would never leave them nor forsake them still divides the soul and spirit, joints and marrow and discerns the thoughts and intents of our hearts, calling on us to repent. The Spirit still leads us wherever we need to go, and if we will follow without looking back, never considering any other aspect of our lives more important as we wander around in the wilderness following after the LORD, then Messiah Yeshua will bring us into the Promised Land. Paul’s exhortation in 2 Thessalonians 1 is really a fitting ending for today’s message, for it presents the choice we all have now that we know the life promised to us in Messiah. He calls for us to endure in our faith and ever-increase our love toward God and one another amidst many trials and tribulations, for the LORD will be glorified in His saints and admired among all those who believe, but He will bring flaming vengeance on all who don’t know Him or obey His Word. We read in verses 11-12: "Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah." Amein. Shabbat shalom.