



# Geography of Salvation

## *Preaching the Map*

A Bible Study with Stan Key

### MOUNT SINAI (PART II)—A HOUSE FOR GOD

Exodus 25–31, 34–40

#### I. Sacred Space

##### A. A guided tour of Chartres Cathedral.

“Welcome! When Chartres was built, few people were literate. The architects intended this church would be **read** by all who entered. Follow me as we read the building. Notice that the church is built in shape of a **cross**... Up high there to our right is a stained-glass window of the tree of Jesse....”

##### B. Every culture finds the need for making certain locations special. Our need for **sacred space** in deeply engrained in our human psyche.

1. Muslims (the Kaaba in Mecca), Hindus (Ganges River), Jews (the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem), Druids (Stonehenge), Catholics (Lourdes), Methodists (Wesley’s Chapel, London), Asburians (Hughes Auditorium), etc.
2. Even secularists and atheists feel this need: Cooperstown, Graceland, Lenin’s Tomb, the Lincoln Memorial, Omaha Beach, Rupp Arena, etc.

##### C. Why do we need sacred space? What does this need tell us about ourselves?

- We are made to **worship**; we are incurably religious.
- We need to **connect** with the “other” world.
- We need locations that help me know **who I am**.
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##### D. Christianity and sacred space.

Although the Bible teaches that God is **everywhere** (omnipresent), Jewish worship gave favored status to Jerusalem and the Temple/Tabernacle. The coming of Jesus made a profound change in the way Christians think about sacred space but it did not remove our need for a special place(s) to meet God.

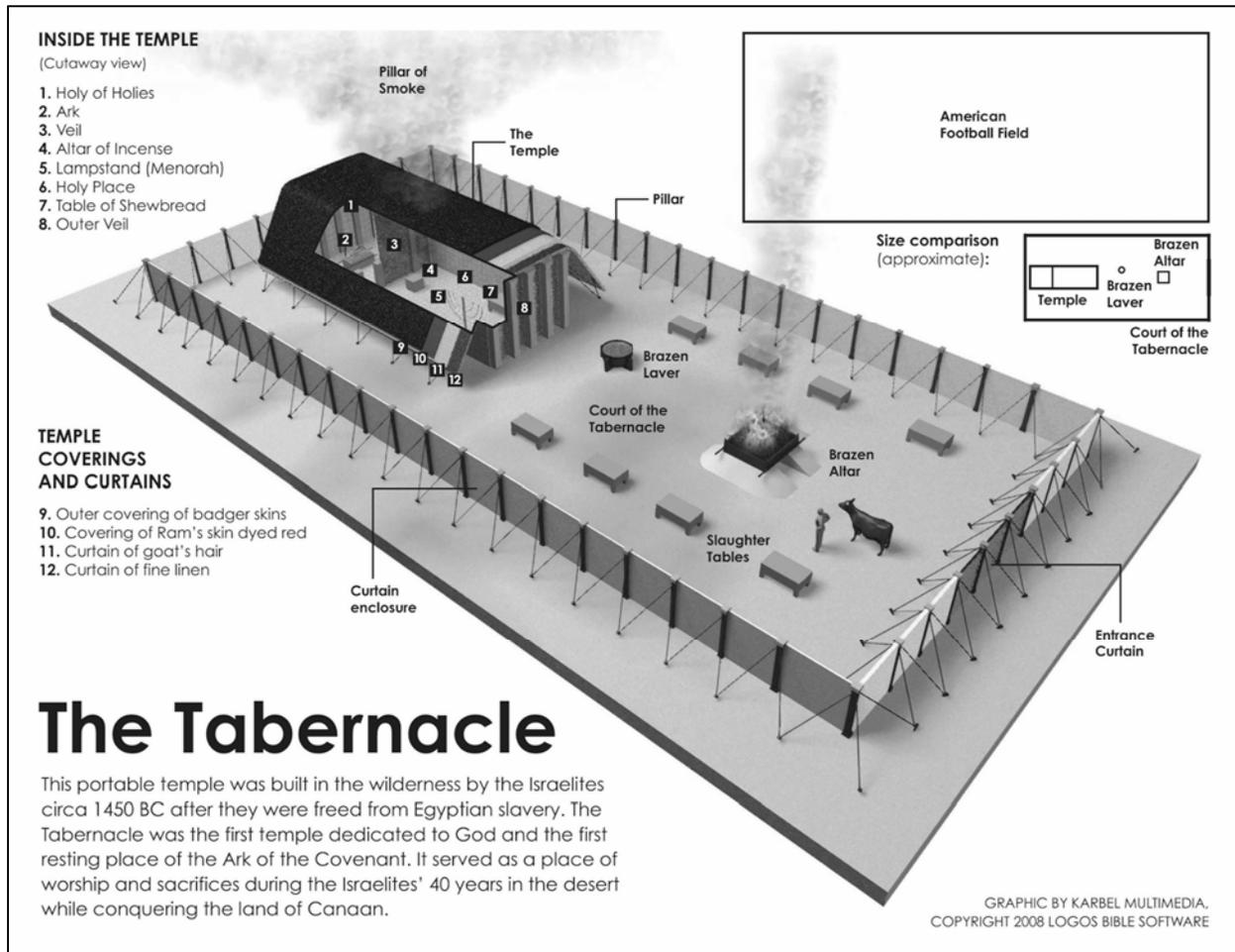
#### II. The Tabernacle (Ex 25–31, 34–40).

##### A. You can learn a lot about someone by visiting their **home**: Louis XIV (Versailles), Theodore Roosevelt (Sagamore Hill, Long Island), Abraham Lincoln (Hodgenville, KY), Thomas Jefferson (Monticello), Claude Monet (Giverny), Albert Schweitzer (Lambaréné), etc.

##### B. At the burning bush, God told Moses that he was standing on “**holy ground**” (Ex 3:5). Though this land was not part of the designated “Holy Land,” it was sacred space because God was there.

##### C. Once the marriage covenant was ratified (Ex 19–24), work was begun on a house where God could live with his bride. The purpose of redemption is not just getting out of bondage and moving on to the blessings of Canaan. The real purpose is **intimacy** with God. God’s **presence** (Hebrew, face) matters more than his presents (Ex 33:14).

- D. Only two chapters in the Bible are devoted to the creation of the universe. But over **30** chapters<sup>1</sup> are devoted to the construction of the Tabernacle/Temple.



### III. A survey of what Exodus tells us about the Tabernacle.

#### A. General instructions (Ex 25:1–9):

1. The materials for construction are given by **the people** (Ex 25:1–7).
2. The purpose for building is that God may “dwell in their midst” (Ex 25:8).
3. The **blueprint** for the tabernacle comes from God himself (Ex 25:9; see Ex. 25:40; Heb 8:5; 9:23–24).

#### B. Plans, furnishings, instructions, workers, materials, etc.

1. The ark of the covenant (Ex 25:10–22; 37:1–9). “There I will **meet with you**, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim ... I will speak with you...” (Ex 25:22). Blood on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement made it possible to live with God.
2. The table for bread (Ex 25:23–30; 37:10–16). A symbolic meal. **Sustenance**.
3. The golden lampstand (Ex 25:31–40; 37:17–24). **Illumination**.

<sup>1</sup> See the following passages that describe the planning and building of first the Tabernacle in the wilderness and then the Temple in Jerusalem. Exodus 25–40; I Kings 5–8; II Chronicles 2–7; Ezekiel 40–48.

4. The Tabernacle (Ex 26:1–36). Curtains, frames, the veil, etc.
  5. The bronze altar (Ex 27 :1–8 ; 38 :1–7). A **blood sacrifice** was needed to deal with sin and make forgiveness possible.
  6. The court (Ex 27:9–19 ; 38:9–20). Notice it has only **one door**.
  7. Oil for the lamp (Ex 27 :20–21).
  8. Garments for the priests (Ex 28:1–43; 39:1–43). The ephod and breast piece for Aaron are given special attention: “Aaron shall **bear** the names of the sons of Israel in the breast piece of judgment on his heart, when he goes into the Holy Place, to bring them to regular remembrance before the Lord.” (Ex 28:29).
  9. The altar of incense (Ex 30:1–10; 37:25–29). The sweet aroma rising to heaven was a picture of **prayer**.
  10. The bronze basin (Ex 30:17–21; 38:8). This was made from the **mirrors** of the women (Ex 38:8). It was for **cleansing**.
  11. The anointing oil and incense (Ex 30:22–38).
  12. The workmen: Bezalel and Oholiab (Ex 31:1–11; 35:30–36:2). They are “**filled with the Spirit** of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship...” (Ex 31:3).
  13. Sabbath observance (Ex 31:12–18; 35:1–2). “Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this a **sign** between me and you... that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you...” (Ex 31:13).
  14. The freewill offering (Ex 35:4–36:7). The people brought more than enough so that they had to be **restrained** from giving (Ex 36:5–7)!
- C. Conclusion (Ex 40:1–38).
1. The work is finished... just as God had instructed.
  2. The glory of the Lord **fills** the tabernacle (Ex 40:34–38).
- IV. What does it mean?
- A. The architecture and the ceremonies **teach us** how to approach God. We create space that then creates us!
1. There is one door (contrast with the Baha'i Temple in Wilmette, Illinois which has **nine** doors!). Jesus said, “I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved...” (Jn 10:9).
  2. On entering the courtyard, you first meet the **altar** (blood sacrifice, forgiveness; justification).
  3. Then you meet the **laver** for washing (sanctification).
  4. Then the **holy place** (bread, light, incense) and finally the curtain that leads to the **most holy** place.
  5. The entire structure is **portable**.
- B. Though there is no image of God (Ex 20:4–6), there are many powerful **symbols** and **rituals** to help us know how to live with a Holy God.
- C. Beauty and **art** are important in worship.
1. Bezalel and Oholiab are master craftsmen. They are the first persons in the Bible said to be filled with the Spirit.

2. The people give their **best**; they give **generously**. “None shall appear before me empty-handed” (Ex 23:15).
- D. The purpose of sacred space: encountering the **face of God**. This relationship then prepares us for the **journey** ahead.
- E. Even the Old Testament recognizes that God’s presence cannot be contained in a building!

*Thus says the Lord: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? 2 All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the Lord. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is **humble** and contrite in spirit and **trembles** at my word. (Isaiah 66:1–2)*

F. What Jesus does to the Temple (Tabernacle).

1. He replaces it with himself.

- “The word became flesh and **dwelt** (literally, *tabernacled*) among us...” (Jn 1:14).
- “So the Jews said to him, ‘What sign do you show us for doing these things?’ Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ The Jews then said, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?’ But he was speaking about the temple of **his body**” (Jn 2:18–21).
- “I tell you, something **greater** than the temple is here” (Mt 12:6).
- ““Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.... But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in **spirit and truth**, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (Jn 4:20–24).
- “And I 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 the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place (tabernacle) of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God....’ And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb” (Rev 21:2–3, 22).

2. He replaces it with you... and me.

- “Do you not know that **you (plural)** are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and you (plural) are that temple” (I Cor 3:16–17).
- “Or do you not know that your **body** is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (I Cor 6:19–20).

G. Four questions to ask to evaluate worship.

Since Jesus came and fulfilled the meaning of the Tabernacle, the veil has been torn in two, and access into the very presence of God is possible (Heb 4:14–16). Worship

is meant to take one through the door, to the altar, the laver, the holy place, and then into the throne room of God. These four questions can help each one of us to better know if he or she has truly experienced worship:

- Did I encounter God in his **holiness**?
- Did I see **myself** in my sinfulness?
- Did I experience **grace** in its amazing vastness?
- Did I surrender my **will** to the Lordship of Jesus?

### TABLE TALK

1. Are there spaces (places, locations, buildings, etc.) that for you have sacred meaning? How do you use these spaces? How has this lesson affected your thinking about these places?
2. Think about the architecture of your church and especially about the space where you worship. How does the space contribute to authentic worship? How does it detract?
3. The Tabernacle/Temple made God both present (in our midst) yet hidden (behind the veil). How can God be both revealed and concealed at the same time? Is this still true in worship today?
4. Think about worship time in your church. How is like worship in Moses' day? How is it different? If you could change the way your church worships, what would you change? Explain your answer.
5. In Moses' day, God's people are forbidden to make an image of him but they are encouraged to build a beautiful building and fill it with meaningful symbols that help in worship. What principles should we draw from this reality?
6. If God is omnipresent and we are to worship him in Spirit and truth, why bother with sacred space at all? Since there will be no temple in heaven, why should we have one here?
7. Your body is the temple of God. Spend time meditating on what this means and then share with your group what God is asking you to do.

## **I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord**

By Timothy Dwight (1800)

*I love thy kingdom, Lord,  
the house of thine abode,  
the church our blest Redeemer saved  
with his own precious blood.*

*I love thy church, O God.  
Her walls before thee stand,  
dear as the apple of thine eye,  
and graven on thy hand.*

*For her my tears shall fall;  
for her my prayers ascend;  
to her my cares and toils be given,  
till toils and cares shall end.*

*Beyond my highest joy  
I prize her heavenly ways:  
her sweet communion, solemn vows,  
her hymns of love and praise.*

*Sure as thy truth shall last,  
to Zion shall be given  
the brightest glories earth can yield,  
and brighter bliss of heaven.*