

Dwell in the House of the Lord Forever

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Date: 10 August 2025

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- [0 : 0 0] This is a sermon from King's Church West London. Hey, everybody. Well done.! I'm so impressed with how you've all learnt Psalm 23 over the last few weeks.
- ! It's such an amazing Psalm. You will do so well to commit it into your mind and dwell on it and think about it over a lifetime. So well done. Keep it in there. Now, this is the last talk we're going to do in Psalm 23.
- And this last talk will be the last line. Okay, and I'm going to put someone in the spot. Who can remember the last line of Psalm 23? I'm going to ask for a hands up, so I won't ask you.
- Can you remember the last line, Maximus? You've forgotten. That's okay. Ellen? You remember it? No? Go on then, Dan. I will dwell in the house of the Lord. I will dwell in the house of the Lord. Well done, Dan. Very good.
- I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Now, I want... Here's a question for you. From whose perspective is Psalm 23 spoken?
- [1 : 0 3] Give you a clue. It's got four legs and it's a bit woolly. It's spoken from the perspective of a sheep, isn't it? The Lord is my shepherd. So you've got to imagine yourself as a sheep. So just to kick us off, I want you to imagine that you are, in fact, a sheep.
- Okay? If you want, you can close your eyes. You can picture it in your head, if you like. You might... You're in there, in the field, maybe with your sheepy mate. You're chewing the grass. And you say to your sheep friend, Do you know what?
- Isn't our shepherd great? Isn't he fantastic? You know, he guides us by into green pastures. He leads us beside still waters. You know, even when he hits me with his rod and he's got his staff, it comforts me.
- And you go through all these things which are so wonderful about the good shepherd, how he lays a table before you, how he anoints your head with oil. But then you say something at the end. And do you know what?
- You say to your sheepy friend, Do you know what? I'm going to go and live in the shepherd's house forever. And the other sheep looks at you as if you've gone completely balmy.
- [2 : 0 8] Because, of course, sheep don't live in human houses, do they? No. Well, actually, that's not quite true. I met a sheep recently called, and this is absolutely true, Hannibal was his name.
- And he was owned by a person who lives in our neighborhood, and he was walking his sheep in the park. And I was so surprised by this, I asked him all about it, and it turns out that he does, in fact, live in his house.
- So with the exception of Hannibal, no sheep live in human houses. So for a sheep to imagine living in a human house must be really, really difficult, mustn't it?
- And I think it's also just as difficult for us to imagine what it must be like to dwell in the house of the Lord.

So that's what I'm going to try and explain to us. And so with your help, we'll do that today. So the first thought you might have would be, well, dwelling in the house of the Lord forever, that means going to heaven when you die, doesn't it?

[3 : 12] Isn't that what it means? And up to a point, yes, it does. But it's a little bit more complicated than that. What most people imagine going to heaven means is that at some point, you keel over and you leave this mortal coil and your soul floats up to heaven to live there.

Leave your body behind and up you go. Yeah, is that what, maybe you think that, maybe you don't think that, but you can understand lots of people do think that's what going to heaven means. Yeah, is that okay?

Can I guess that much? So you die, your soul floats up and you leave your nasty old body behind and go and dwell on some clouds, maybe shoot some bow and arrows with some angels, that kind of thing.

Yeah, got that? That's what most people think it means. But the Bible actually shows something slightly different. You see, there is a problem with thinking this way that your soul leaves your body.

And it's this. It kind of gives the impression that God isn't really interested in physical things. He's interested in our soul, but he's not really that bothered about our body.

[4 : 22] And he just wants to extract our soul so that we can go and dwell with him forever. And that isn't really what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches, in fact, something quite different. It teaches that God sent Jesus because he so loved the world, the actual physical world that he gave his only son.

It also teaches that the earth is the Lord's and everything in it. He doesn't want to just extract our souls as if that's the only good bit of us and leave our body behind as if that was dirty and nasty and physical.

And he doesn't like it. It's not like that at all. God is, in fact, very, very interested in this physical earth. I want to show you why.

So if you give me, I think if you get this, I know it's a little bit complicated to get. I understand that. But I think if you can get this, I think it can potentially transform the way that you live your Christian life from just wanting to kind of get through this however long God gives you on earth to floating off to heaven, but to teach you that everything that you do on this world and the here and now really, really matters.

Okay? So can you give me, I reckon I can do that in five minutes. Can you give me five minutes? Yeah? Excellent. Thanks, guys. So firstly, Jesus, the Son of God, came from heaven to earth.

[5 : 48] And do you know what? In the Gospel of Matthew, it says his message was. It says, the kingdom of heaven is near. He wasn't saying your souls can go off to heaven.

He was saying the kingdom of heaven has come down here. And he went around doing amazing things. He went around healing the sick, raising the dead, driving out demons.

And do you know why the kingdom of heaven was near? It's because Jesus was near. And wherever Jesus went, so went the kingdom of heaven.

Wherever he was, the kingdom of heaven was. And you might think, well, that's just Jesus. I mean, Jesus was special, wasn't he? Okay, Jesus was special. But after Jesus had done this for a little while, so the next thing he did was, he gathered 12 disciples and he sent them out, telling them to proclaim the Gospel of the kingdom of heaven.

And to heal the sick and raise the dead and to drive out demons. He did that with his 12 special apostles. Then do you know what he did after that?

[6 : 57] He gathered 72 of his followers. We don't know any of their names. And he told them to preach the kingdom of heaven. Heal the sick.

Raise the dead. Drive out demons. He told them to go and proclaim that the kingdom of heaven was coming to earth. Now what does this mean? It means that our job as followers of Jesus, whether we're in the 12 or the 72 or much further beyond, is to spend our lives living out the fact that the kingdom of heaven has come near, and it comes through God's power in us.

God doesn't want us just to wait till we keel over and die and go off to heaven. God wants us to make the most of every single minute he has given us on this earth.

Here's what Jesus said. In John chapter 5 it was recorded, Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has, See not has, not will have, but has eternal life.

Will live forever. Because he has already crossed over from death to life. If you are following Jesus, friends, you have already crossed over from death to life.

[8 : 29] The kingdom of heaven is working through you. Death is already working backwards through you. But somebody might object, somebody might say this to me.

Ah, but we know, we know that we are going to die. So how could we have already crossed over from death to life?

And that is an extremely good point. Each one of us, this body of ours, will in fact die. But of course, so, did Jesus.

Jesus, even though he was the heavenly man, the kingdom man, the one through whom death was working backwards, he did, of course, die on the cross.

And like Jesus, you will die. But, here's the amazing news, is that like Jesus, if you believe in him, if you walk with him, if you follow him, you, like Jesus, will also rise again to eternal life.

[9 : 38] Jesus has already died, he has already risen again, and anybody who follows him receives the promise that we can follow him through death into eternal life.

When Jesus said we've crossed over from death to life, he says this, he doesn't say we're going to float off to heaven, our souls will float off to heaven, here's what he says, a time is coming when all who are in their graves, who are buried in their graves, have already died, will hear his voice and come out.

Those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. Here's what he's saying to us, he's saying, if you're following me, there is coming a day when you will come back to life, and then, if you have followed me, if you have walked with me all your days, then you will follow me into eternal life in heaven.

And what will that heaven look like? It won't look like it's floating off to the skies, heaven itself will come down to earth to create a new heavens and a new earth right here where we are.

Isn't that exciting, folks? Doesn't that change kind of how you view getting up in the morning? You get up in the morning, oh, not another day have to get through it.

[11 : 04] Every day is a day where we get to be kingdom people, we get to be heavenly people on this earth. We get to bring the house of the Lord right here, right now.

So, when it says, I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever, we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever, but forever starts now.

If you're in Christ, you are dwelling in the house of the Lord and it starts today. Why don't we just finish with prayer? Guys, can we pray together? Would that be okay? We pray together?

I want to say a quick prayer and I want you to pray, if you want to pray along with me, I'm just going to ask God to show us what it means to dwell with him and maybe even we would want to make that step today of saying, God, I want to dwell in your house today.

Lord Jesus, I want to thank you that you went through death and into life so that we might cross over from death to life and that we might dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

[12 : 08] I pray for my friends, I pray that we would understand this and grasp this if we've been doing this for years, maybe for somebody who's never understood this or never said, Lord, I want to dwell in your house.

We say today, Lord, I want to dwell with you, I want to come into your kingdom so that I might be a kingdom person on this earth and want that great day when Jesus comes back that we will meet with you and you will bring us into eternal life.

Hallelujah. Thank you.