

SHEKINAH!

Overview

They're practicing. God bless them for that. Wonderful people.

Gifted. I can't... Did you hear Tim today? I love what you did. All those little... I love that.

It's like sitting in the presence of Johnny Cash and Waylon Jennings. I love it. I love the sound of it. I love it. Love it. Love it. Makes me wish I'd learned to play the guitar, the piano, the trombone. Yeah. Praise God. Let's put up the first slide, helpers. I'm going to introduce you to a new word. For many of you, it's not new at all.

You've heard this. The word is Shekinah. You should say that out loud with me right now.

It's a good word. Shekinah. Shekinah is not a biblical word.

You won't find it in Holy Writ. It's a word that the rabbis, the rabbis conjured up. Let me read for you what is up there on the screen.

The term Shekinah does not appear in the Bible, but originates with the rabbinic literature, the rabbi's literature. It refers to the dwelling or the manifesting presence of God. The Hebrew word Shekinah means to dwell, is its root.

In the Bible, this concept is represented by the glory of the Lord. It's described through symbols like the pillar of cloud and fire. Remember the Israelites in the wanderings in the desert? At night, there was a pillar of fire.

In the day was a cloud. We would say, oh good, a cloud. That cloud was his presence.

It wasn't just a cloud. That fire at night, that was his presence. The cloud over the tabernacle.

That's a good word, the tabernacle. Tabernacle is a word that means tent, or again, it means dwelling. So this Shekinah is speaking of the brilliant glory that also filled Solomon's temple.

If you're not familiar with this terminology, don't worry about it. Your eternal life does not depend on your knowledge of such things. I want to talk today about the presence of God, and I also want to talk today, my point is that when Jesus comes back, not to take out his church.

Remember, there's two comings. One is he's coming for his bride, the church, and I've gone to great lengths in times past reflecting on the traditional Jewish wedding, where there's an agreement among the family, the two families, and they have food together, and they consummate the decision. They're consummate on the agreement for their two children to be married, the two families, and they consummate it by drinking wine together.

When they drink that wine, that's the seal of their covenant, and from that moment, that young girl and fellow are considered married, although it's not consummated as of yet, and it won't be consummated yet for upwards to a year, and during that year, the future husband goes back with his father to the house, and in his house, there may be many rooms. I quoted this a few minutes ago. Jesus said, in my father's house, so the groom would go back with his father to the homestead, and although there may have been many rooms in that house, there has to be a special room for this bride, and this soon groom, and the son would be responsible to add a portion onto the father's house, and the father would determine when that room was adequately finished and up to snuff, and then he would say to his son, I'm proud of what you've done.

You've crafted this place for your bride. Now you go and get your bride. Jesus was asked, when are you coming for us? When are you coming to get us? We know you're going to be with us.

When are you coming to get us? He said, nobody knows when the groom comes for the bride. It's up to the father. Not even the son knows.

The father determines it. So the Hebrew, the Jewish wedding is a beautiful picture of Jesus coming for us, but when he does come for us, the church, that's the first coming, known as the rapture, his feet do not touch the ground. When the groom comes to get his bride, he doesn't go all the way to the town in her in her living place, but as he's coming, all of his friends are bringing stainless steel pots and pans, and they're banging on them, and tambourines, and blowing horns, and carrying on like a bunch of revelers.

And that's a message. The groom is coming for his bride. The word resounds through the town.

Everybody's excited. Everybody knows what it's about. And so the bride then, with her friends, emerges from the house, and she runs to greet him out there, you know, in the field on the way.

And the word of God says, the Lord himself will descend with a shout, and with a trumpet sound, the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain, we run to meet him. We're lifted up.

That's why it's called the rapture. The word rapture means to catch away. So Jesus' feet do not touch the ground.

We go to meet him in the air. That's what the scripture says. And so we shall ever be with the Lord.

So all of that is about the church, and what God is going to do for us going forward. But until then, we, God's people, crave to be aware of the Lord's presence. And there's a unique story, you've likely read it in the book of Exodus, where Moses goes up in the mountain, and he receives the ten commandments as we know them.

And the word says that the people, watching the lightning, seeing the fire, thunderings, and the voice of the Lord, they begged Moses, said, look, we want to know what God wants to say to us, but we can't handle his voice. They feared that his presence would kill them. They feared that his presence would annihilate them.

So they said, look, you clearly have a good protective covering. You're wearing an asbestos suit when you meet him, so you're protected. You've got your hard hat on and your steel-toed shoes, but we can't.

Moses, somehow you can handle the presence, we can't. So you get God to tell you, and then you can tell us. They actually requested that.

In Exodus 25, the Lord says to Moses, tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give. These are the offerings you are to receive from them, gold, silver, bronze, blue, purple, scarlet yarn, fine lemon, goat hair, ram skins dyed red, and another type of durable leather, acacia wood, olive oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for fragrant incense, onyx stones, and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and the breastplate of the priest.

Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Just a few chapters earlier, they said, Moses, you and God, we're going to trust you. We're afraid of him.

Tell him to stay away. Keep his distance. Exodus 25, the Lord says, I'm going to get nearer than ever, and I want you to prepare it.

I want you to prepare a dwelling place for me. I want the people to experience my presence. I will dwell among them.

God says, they mustn't be afraid. I'm not here to hurt them. They've got to trust me, and I've chosen.

I want to live among them. Make this tent, tabernacle, and all of its furnishings exactly like the pattern that I will show you. I want to drop this little hint for a moment now, just a little sidebar here.

That pattern of the tabernacle in the wilderness is duplicated when Solomon built his temple. Not in terms of the materials, the tabernacle in the wilderness was made of skins. You just heard all ram skins, all these skins, because it had to be taken down and moved.

Because when the cloud moved, mentioned about the cloud, when his glory started to move, they had to follow the cloud. Follow my presence. When you see the cloud move, fold up.

I'm moving. I'm moving away from the tabernacle. You bring the tabernacle.

So they'd have to tear it all down, mount it on camels and donkeys and on their backs, and carry it to a new location, set it up again. God said, I want to be with you. When Israel was rested and David started preparing the elements for building a temple for the Lord, the pattern was to be basically the same as the floor layout of the tent in the wilderness.

That pattern will never change, and there's going to be a temple built in Jerusalem on the Temple Mount, where now is the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the dome, the big gold dome. You see pictures of the big gold dome? That's not the Jewish people's dome, an Al-Aqsa Mosque. That's not, that's what the Muslims did when they took over Israel and Jerusalem.

The temple to the Muslims is a war word, and they get majorly upset when they hear that the Jews want to build their temple. They say, in your dreams, but it's going to happen, because when Jesus comes back on that second time, he comes to us to get the church, and seven years later, he comes back. Seven years, and when he comes back, he's going to go through a gate that the Muslims have sealed up.

That gate's going to be open, called the Eastern Gate. He's going to go through that gate. That's the same gate he went through on a donkey, Hosanna, Hosanna, Palm Sunday.

He's going through that gate. He's going to come in to Israel, and he's going to the temple. There is no temple.

There's going to be one. It's coming. Make this tabernacle and its furnishings just like I tell you exactly.

So, God was saying, I want to come, and I want to be close to my people. You see, Moses felt the presence when he was confronted by a burning bush, and so that became a wonderful story that would be passed on for generations to come, and people would have surely thought, wow, what would it have been like? Did he feel anything else? He saw fire. Did he feel heat from it? You get all these questions, and then the question would also go on.

Okay, he saw something, a flame. He might have felt the heat. Did he feel anything else because God was there confronting? Did he sense God's presence? We don't know what he felt, and we're not going to get into conjecture that gets us nowhere, but Moses had that experience.

Abraham had experiences with God, and in those cases, it appears to us when God came to him in Iraq because he was of that tribe. He was Iraqi or he was Persian. We don't know exactly what, but he had an experience with God.

Abraham did so much so that he knew exactly what God was asking him to do. I want you to leave. It's called Ur of the Chaldees.

I want you to leave there and go to a land that I will show you, Israel, and I'm going to give it to you, and nobody's going to take it away from you. So Abraham had an experience where not only did God visit him in some form that didn't frighten him, but then the Lord said, I want you to go to this land, and there I'm going to reveal myself to you and to your entire family. So here now we have a fulfillment of this where the Lord says, you're going to the promised land.

I got you out of Egypt. You've got this tent where I will meet with you, but this is a temporary fulfillment of my desire to live among you. The tabernacle, the tent is temporary.

So the people are going to have this privilege of God living among them. Every Jewish person alive today is aware of the story that I just told you. Many of them, about, I think it's 85% of all Jewish people that live in Israel today are not religiously inclined.

Out of historic, it's kind of like there are probably a couple of million people in Canada who were raised in Sunday school with grandma or mom and dad, and they're not following it anymore. That's Jewish people today. Taught it in schools, taught it with grandpa, celebrated the festivities, all the festivities that come all through the year.

They're a part of it, but they don't follow it. They're not committed to it. So when they hear about, let's, we've got to reestablish the temple for the non-conformists, the non-religious people of Israel, they say, you know, we've moved on from that.

We don't need that anymore. No, we don't keep the Sabbath anymore. Like let's go to Walmart on Sundays.

Like what's the big deal? No, we're going to live however we want to. We're glad that our forefathers were committed to the Lord God, but you know, that's old hat. And the Bible, can we really trust it? And they're talking just like everybody else.

They become very worldly conscious. And then there's this 15% who say, no, we've got to have the temple. The 85% who don't believe have never experienced the presence of God.

The 15% who say they've got to have a temple are saying so because we want God to dwell among us. Why, why are the red heifers being stored somewhere near Bethlehem right now? Because red heifers slain and offered as a burnt offering will be absolutely essential for the erection of the new temple. They're sizing up.

They've got architectural plans. They're working behind the scenes. They're going to build the temple.

Why, why, why, why? Well, I was reflecting on this this morning with my shuttle driver. You know him, G.I. Joe. And I just felt like I'm so full of my message.

I got to talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, get enough caffeine in me. You'll get the sermon way ahead of time. And I said, what is it? What is it that's driving the Jewish people? The temple, the temple, the temple.

And you see back in this 25, he said, I want to live among you. So put up a tabernacle. Then later when Israel rested from war and David said, I'm going to build God a permanent house.

God said, you don't get to do it. You're a man of war, but your son Solomon will do it. So David went to great lengths to assemble all the stuff that was needed.

He went to a country called Tyre to the king there. I think his name was Cyrus. And he said, look, I need cedars.

I need this and that. And from Lebanon and lumber was all hauled in. David assembled all the parts, but it was Solomon who built the temple.

And it was built according to the layout of the plan of the tabernacle. And when they dedicated that temple, do you know the festivities for that? It took seven years to build it. 14 years, 14 years.

I'm getting my numbers mixed up. It doesn't matter. It took a lot of years to build it.

And the festivities for dedicating it, I think they went on for something like, yeah, 14. There's the 14 days with sacrifices and festivities and food and whatever. And then there was a prayer offered by Solomon, an offer of repentance and calling on God.

We want you to live among us. We built this temple. We need your presence, O God.

And suddenly the board of God says, the Shekinah glory, greater than what Moses experienced, greater than anything. The glory of God, the Shekinah presence, so palpable was the presence of God. The priests literally ran for their lives.

They felt the presence of God. How can we describe what that feels like? They ran and Israel celebrated. It's recorded in the Holy Scripture.

What a moment it was when the presence of God came into that temple. They were comforted by knowing God's here. And it was a message to the whole world.

Don't mess with Israel. Their God lives among them. See that temple over there? They meet God in that place.

The temple as it was built by Solomon became the centrifugal force and the power of Israel. If there was any war, anything, anything in it, the temple was a place of prayer. It was a sacred place.

And it was where God said, I will meet you. It had several compartments. I think there were a total of three.

There was an entry place, almost like a vestibule, an entry place, like a place of shelter. It wasn't enclosed. Then there was called the Holy Place, which was a big room on the inside where sacrifices were made.

And then there was the Holy of Holies. You remember the story that when Jesus died on the cross and said, it is finished, that there was a great curtain in the temple on that day, a great curtain that if you'd put a team of oxen on either side of it and fastened them somehow to that curtain, those oxen could not have torn it apart. But gently and beautifully, when Jesus said it's finished, that curtain was torn from top to bottom.

And that was a message. You see, until that time, only the priest could go into the Holy of Holies, and he could only go in there for about two hours every 365 days. And it was such a fearsome thing to go in there that if he was not clothed properly, if he had not bathed himself in lye, if he'd not scrubbed his body with Brillo, he had to go in as ceremonially clean as possible for weeks leading up to the Day of Atonement.

He was careful about what he ate. He was careful about what he touched. It was an incredible thing, because if God didn't like the presence of the priest in the Holy of Holies, God would strike him dead.

When he went in there, they always tied a rope to his ankle. If he dies, who's going to go in and get his body? I'm not going in there. But on that day, when Jesus died on the cross, that curtain was torn from top to bottom, and it was a message.

Come unto me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden, come into the Holy of Holies. That was the message. And 70 years later, the temple that was supposed to be the place where God would meet the people was totally destroyed.

I've been to Israel, and I've seen the rocks. The Romans did—we don't know how long it took them. They put an army together, an army of thousands, to pull the rocks, the stones of the temple down.

Jesus said—Matthew, is it 28? 24. Thank you, sir. Don't you ever leave this church.

We're all in trouble. I just got a correction. That's good.

That's good for you. I don't mind it. Who is that masked man? The disciples were totally taken.

On that particular day, they said to Jesus, stop, stop. Look at this temple. Jesus, isn't this magnificent? And they were just—they'd seen it many times.

But for some reason that day, they were just—you know, the sky's always there. The stars are always there at night. And then you walk out some night, and something strikes you, and you look up, and you say, wow, I've seen it a thousand times.

I've seen it many thousands of times. But tonight, it looks more beautiful than ever. Come and look at the stars.

You've always seen it, but tonight you're—the disciples had seen the temple many, many times. It's unique. They said, Jesus, let's just stop and look.

Look at the size of the stones. The stones had been quarried from underneath the city, and they had rolled the stones on rock. They weighed as much as 30 tons per rock, and it was chiseled to perfection underneath the city of Jerusalem.

Chiseled to perfection. Rolled up on logs to the surface. And when those stones were put in place, the only sound that was made—no chisel.

If it didn't fit, back down it goes. It has to be perfect. Perfect.

It has to—every stone has to align with the cornerstone. Perfect. And the only sound that you would have heard, if you'd been there that day, you would not hear the sound of a hammer.

You would not hear the sound of a chisel. The only sound you would hear is the groaning of the men who are lifting and pushing with all their might to move the stones in place. The apostle Peter says, we're now the temple.

The word says, don't you know you're now the temple? The temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. Every rock was torn apart. The gold, they melted everything. They destroyed.

They burned all the cedars of Lebanon. They destroyed it all. Why? Because God wasn't there anymore.

Anyhow, the people had deserted God. The temple was torn down. It was a picture.

Israel was a picture. Israel failed. God has departed.

Ezekiel prophesied it would take place. What a story. The Jewish people say we've got to get a temple, 15 percent of them.

Fifteen percent say we've got to get a temple because we need God. We need God. Back to Peter, he says, and we are, he says, Jesus is the cornerstone that Israel rejected.

John chapter one, he came to his own, his own rejected him. He was the cornerstone of the new church, the new temple. He was rejected, but selected by God.

And now it says he's the cornerstone, and it says we are a living stone. Years ago, I pastored a church out in Alberta. I love the name of that church.

It was called Living Stones because the apostle says he's the cornerstone. We're the living stones that are planted. And the chiseling, the quarry, were each of us being a stone chosen by God to be placed in this God fabricating a temple for his residence.

The chiseling of your heart and life, the chiseling away of that which does not belong to a child of God, the chiseling to make you as a living stone fit perfectly in place. That quarrying took place on a hill called Golgotha. There, the sound of a hammer and the nails went into his hands and into his feet.

My God, my God, has thou forsaken me? So the only sound when you got saved, when God put you into this new temple reserved for his presence, the only sound was the groaning of your heart and life, crying out, Jesus, I know I'm a sinner. Please forgive me. That's the only sound that's made when God puts a new stone in his new temple.

We sang a song this morning when we came into this place. We felt his presence. I did.

I was meeting some of you before this service. I met somebody's mama today. While I was shaking your hand, in my heart I was saying, I don't know who this lady is.

I just know that she's proud of her son. I know she's a family with a broken heart because your daughter-in-law was taken to be with Jesus in the month of May and you're still hurting. My prayer was that today you would sense the presence of Jesus because his presence is a healing.

It's a healing bomb. And while I gestured with you and made fun of you, I accused this guy with a red coat at the front. I said, this guy was on his way to the beach and thought he'd stop off at church in the way.

So I gestured with you and then I gave you a hug. But while that was going on, my prayer was, dear Jesus, may your presence touch Nick. When I shook your hand, Erica, and said, we need more people like you, Erica.

She told me something that's happening with the Ukrainian church today, a special thing. They're having a celebration at two o'clock in this room. She's telling me about it.

And while we were chatting, Erica, about those things. And when I talked to it, I said, Viola, today, my prayer is that when I go to see Ron today, that somehow I have this way of being a vehicle to take his presence there. You have the option of taking his presence with you wherever you go.

You've met Christian people that you've been awestruck by then. You almost feel like you're in the presence of an angel. You've met people like that.

They just have this something about them. They carry his presence with them. We need that presence.

People who live, who make a habit of cherishing and pursuing the presence of God. If that's you, you are a life changer for others around you. It's hard for people near you to not feel your sanctified something.

They sense the godliness about you. It's hard for them to cuss and curse. It's hard for them to act like the devil in your presence because you are a living stone and his presence goes with you.

What a privilege. Al, come on. I want us to sing that.

Come on, Linda. And come, Waylon Jennings. Come on up here and play your fancy guitar because I want us to sing that.

When I came into this house, I felt your presence. That one. I probably sang it wrong.

No, no. When I came into, yeah, of course. It started.

When I came into this house, I felt your presence. You're not arguing with me, are you? I've got the bully pulpit right here. You see, is it okay if I just, I didn't just chase away the presence of, you can't chase away the presence of God.

Not with a little bit of jesting. I feel his presence here. Do you? You can remain seated, but I want to stand.

You be comfortable because we're going to finish up our little service. Oh, and by the way, I brought this little thing up here. It says Club Italia.

I was a part. I helped Heaven's Gates, House Flames, Minister April and I took it to all over Africa. We did it.

I did it in London with our friend, our Brit friends. I did this in Peru and in Argentina. I took this drum all over the world.

This is powerful. And yeah, we did it together in Brazil. How many people are over 30,000 people there? Al and I and our wife, we put on Heaven's Gate.

We saw thousands get saved. That's still going on. And they're having a fundraising banquet.

They do it every year. The tickets are free. The meal's phenomenal.

If you'd like to go, it's coming up on the 28th. It's a Sunday evening, Sunday afternoon. The tickets are on the table.

Pick one up and then phone the number at the bottom to say, I picked up a ticket and my wife and I are coming so that they know how many people are going to feed. How's that? You take the ticket, it's free, but there will be an offering at the end and it's a wonderful experience. Consider doing it.

Let's stand or let's sit and let's endure another few moments of his presence. His presence. Let us pray.

Sing the verse. When I came. This is holy ground.

When I came in. This is holy ground. We're standing on holy ground.

For the Lord is here and where he is is holy. This is holy ground, we're standing on holy ground, for the Lord is here, and where he is, is holy. I want us to just take a moment, help me Linda, like we chatted, just take a moment now, in this service, because maybe there's somebody, I don't know everyone here, but maybe there's somebody in this house, who says, David, I've never heard anything like this before, and I sense something happening.

Would you like to surrender your heart and your life to Jesus today? Pastor, I don't even know what that means, I don't know how you do that, but that's why I'm here. I want to pray for you, right where you are, and I'll stay where I am. This is not a means of embarrassing anyone.

If you've not surrendered your heart and life to Jesus, this is a golden opportunity, to say, I don't understand any of it, but whatever Jesus has to offer, I think I'm a candidate. If anybody feels like that right today, and you say, David, I'm lifting my hand right now to give you permission to, without mentioning my name, pray for me today. Who are you? Just lift up your hand right now and say, David, here's my hand.

I see a hand. God bless you, sir. Is there anybody else? Just lift a hand and say, David, I believe I'm a candidate today.

Is there anyone else? I'm just pausing for a moment. Yes, sir, God bless you. Thank you.

Is there anyone else today who says, I believe I'm a candidate for what God wants to do? Gracious Father, I want to pray just now, as I promised, for as many in this house are being convinced by you, not by me, convinced by you, in their heart of hearts, that they need Jesus. I have no doubt, Lord, that those who raise their hands today already had somebody praying for them somehow or other, and may not even been aware of it. They're responding to you today because somebody loves them with the love of Jesus, and they've been praying.

So, Lord, I'm praying for those people today, that they will totally surrender their heart and their life to Jesus. Not membership in this church, membership in your family, to say, I've decided to follow Jesus. Lord, we acknowledge today that every one of us have failed you.

The Word of God calls us sinners. That's an uncomfortable word, but that's what you call us. We have failed you.

But that's why Jesus died on the cross. So, we commit our lives to Jesus, and we say, Jesus, thank you for paying the supreme price for my failure. Come into my heart, my life today, and change my life to be like you.

In Jesus' name, amen.