

**Sunday, February 21, 2021**

## **Temple Mount: Ark of the Covenant**

**Exodus 25:10-22:** <sup>10</sup>They shall make an ark of acacia wood; it shall be two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. <sup>11</sup>You shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and outside you shall overlay it, and you shall make a molding of gold upon it all around. <sup>12</sup>You shall cast four rings of gold for it and put them on its four feet, two rings on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side. <sup>13</sup>You shall make poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. <sup>14</sup>And you shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, by which to carry the ark. <sup>15</sup>The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it. <sup>16</sup>You shall put into the ark the covenant that I shall give you.

<sup>17</sup>Then you shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two cubits and a half shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its width. <sup>18</sup>You shall make two cherubim of gold; you shall make them of hammered work, at the two ends of the mercy seat. <sup>19</sup>Make one cherub at the one end, and one cherub at the other; of one piece with the mercy seat you shall make the cherubim at its two ends. <sup>20</sup>The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings. They shall face one to another; the faces of the cherubim shall be turned toward the mercy seat. <sup>21</sup>You shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark; and in the ark you shall put the covenant that I shall give you. <sup>22</sup>There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the covenant, I will deliver to you all my commands for the Israelites.

**Reflection:** Many centuries have gone by, and people are still searching for the Ark. Depending on where—and if—it is found, it will give credence to and establish the ownership of the land. That is, at least, what some people believe. Somehow, I think it is more complicated than that. For us, not living in the land, seeking God is not a matter of digging around in the earth, but looking for God's presence in our lives in other places. We want to keep God, not in a physical box of wood and gold, but in a compartment that doesn't interfere with what we want in our lives. However, we can't keep God in a box. God is out and about, guiding us, challenging us, loving us, and always being present in our messy lives.

***“O Good and Gracious God, we thank you for your presence with us, help us see your activity in our lives, and appreciate your patience with us. Amen.”***

**Video:** Your Virtual Israel Tour Day 13: Ark of the Covenant

Link: <https://youtu.be/zt1EyxKx03A>

**Monday, February 22, 2021**

## **Shiloh: The Promised Land**

**Exodus 25:1-9:** <sup>1</sup>The LORD said to Moses: <sup>2</sup>Tell the Israelites to take for me an offering; from all whose hearts prompt them to give you shall receive the offering for me. <sup>3</sup>This is the offering that you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze, <sup>4</sup>blue, purple, and crimson yarns and fine linen, goats' hair, <sup>5</sup>tanned rams' skins, fine leather, acacia wood, <sup>6</sup>oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, <sup>7</sup>onyx stones and gems to be set in the ephod and for the breastpiece. <sup>8</sup>And have them make me a sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them. <sup>9</sup>In accordance with all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.

**Reflection:** “*So I may dwell among them...*” God wants to be a part of our lives. In this passage, God is very specific about how the tabernacle—the place God resides—should look. We think of churches as THE place where God resides. We make them beautiful and decorate them in honor of what God is doing in our communities. It is a fine gesture that shows that we think God is important in our lives, echoing passages such as this one from Joshua's book. We also know that God resides with us, whether in our houses, tents or in the cardboard box that shelters the homeless in our city streets. God is never more than a heartbeat away.

*“O God, help us feel and honor your presence in our lives by reflecting the love you have for us and the desire you have to be among us. Amen.”*

**Video:** Virtual Israel Tour Day 5: Digging Ancient Shiloh

**Link:** <https://youtu.be/QVPswKOBRCe>

**Tuesday, February 23, 2021**

### **Hezekiah's Tunnel: Need for Water**

**2 Chronicles 32:1-8:** <sup>1</sup>After these things and these acts of faithfulness, King Sennacherib of Assyria came and invaded Judah and encamped against the fortified cities, thinking to win them for himself. <sup>2</sup>When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and intended to fight against Jerusalem, <sup>3</sup>he planned with his officers and his warriors to stop the flow of the springs that were outside the city; and they helped him. <sup>4</sup>A great many people were gathered, and they stopped all the springs and the wadi that flowed through the land, saying, “Why should the Assyrian kings come and find water in abundance?” <sup>5</sup>Hezekiah set to work resolutely and built up the entire wall that was broken down, and raised towers on it, and outside it he built another wall; he also strengthened the Millo in the city of David, and made weapons and shields in abundance. <sup>6</sup>He appointed combat commanders over the people, and gathered them together to him in the square at the gate of the city and spoke encouragingly to them, saying, <sup>7</sup>Be strong and of good courage. Do not be afraid or dismayed before the king of Assyria and all the horde that is with him; for there is one greater with us than with him. <sup>8</sup>With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles.” The people were encouraged by the words of King Hezekiah of Judah.

**Reflection:** Hezekiah's tunnel is an impressive architectural wonder. Digging from both directions without modern-day instruments, they were only off by 6 feet when the parties met in the middle. Visitors can tour the tunnel for a small price. Clay and I walked the tunnel in about 12 to 18 inches of water. Due to a delay, we were the last ones in before the tunnel's entry was closed for the day. Our group was far ahead of us. It was pitch black. Clay had to walk in a crouched position with only his small flashlight to light the way. It was terrifying! I recited some Psalms and the Lord's prayer again and again. We rejoiced when the tunnel opened into the pool of Siloam, the place of healing.



Pool of Siloam

Water is healing. It is essential to life. Hezekiah knew that water access would be necessary for his people, and the lack of water would be a deterrent to the forthcoming enemy and a means to hold them off. The King gathered his people together to allay their fears and to remind them that God was with them. How often do we need to hear words like this? Often.

*“O God, thank you for helping us fight the battles that life presents; help us hear the words of assurance you utter in your Word and feel the waters of Baptism cover us. Amen.”*

**Video:** City of David and Hezekiah's Tunnel in Jerusalem

**Link:** <https://youtu.be/10AEQJqMWrw>

**Wednesday, February 24, 2021**

### **Ancient Israel: Hezekiah's Arch**

**2 Kings 18:4:** <sup>4</sup>He [King Hezekiah] removed the high places, broke down the pillars, and cut down the sacred pole. He broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it; it was called Nehushtan.

**Reflection:** When God said that God did not want us to have other gods before God, God was not kidding. Throughout biblical history, the Hebrew Kings were judged by how they followed God's Law, their worship, and cared for their people. God was emphatic that people do not worship other gods. Hezekiah was in favor with God because he tore down the altars of idol worship and was faithful to God's desire for God's people. How would we fair when using these standards? Lent is a period of self-examination. If we were to take stock and look around, what idols can we cut out of our lives?

*"Holy God, there is no other; assist us to identify and rid our lives of those things we tend to put before you. Amen."*

**Video:** Virtual Israel Tour Day 99: Hezekiah's Arch

Link: [https://youtu.be/yP\\_AtqAZB-4](https://youtu.be/yP_AtqAZB-4)

**Thursday, February 25, 2021**

### **Elisha's House: A Prophet's Message**

**2 Kings 5:1-15:** <sup>1</sup>Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy. <sup>2</sup>Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. <sup>3</sup>She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." <sup>4</sup>So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. <sup>5</sup>And the king of Aram said, "Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel."

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. <sup>6</sup>He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy." <sup>7</sup>When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me."

<sup>8</sup>But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel." <sup>9</sup>So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. <sup>10</sup>Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean." <sup>11</sup>But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy! <sup>12</sup>Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage. <sup>13</sup>But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?" <sup>14</sup>So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

<sup>15</sup>Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel; please accept a present from your servant."

**Reflection:** To what lengths would we go to be cured? It is an interesting question to contemplate, especially during a pandemic. Naaman couldn't imagine something so simple would take away such a devastating disease. Sometimes the obvious answer is right in front of us, but we are so busy making things more complicated by heaping our ideas into the mix that we miss the point entirely. So, Naaman wasn't alone in his thought process. I think we do this more often than we realize. Naaman thankfully listened to his servants. Who do we have to talk us into reason? To point us onto a path to good health and well-being,



spiritually? Fortunately, we have Jesus, the greatest physician on call. Ask him what to do. You may be surprised how simple this can be.

***“Jesus, our great healer, hear my questions today, guide me to the answers I desperately seek. Amen.”***

Video: Virtual Israel Tour Day 7: Elisha’s House

Link: [https://youtu.be/iTAgU\\_a0bE4](https://youtu.be/iTAgU_a0bE4)

**Friday, February 26, 2021**

## **Solomon’s Wall: A House Built**

**1 Kings 6:1-7:** <sup>1</sup>In the four hundred eightieth year after the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the house of the LORD. <sup>2</sup>The house that King Solomon built for the LORD was sixty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high. <sup>3</sup>The vestibule in front of the nave of the house was twenty cubits wide, across the width of the house. Its depth was ten cubits in front of the house. <sup>4</sup>For the house he made windows with recessed frames. <sup>5</sup>He also built a structure against the wall of the house, running around the walls of the house, both the nave and the inner sanctuary; and he made side chambers all around. <sup>6</sup>The lowest story was five cubits wide, the middle one was six cubits wide, and the third was seven cubits wide; for around the outside of the house he made offsets on the wall in order that the supporting beams should not be inserted into the walls of the house.

<sup>7</sup>The house was built with stone finished at the quarry, so that neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron was heard in the temple while it was being built.

**Reflection:** Dr. Eilat Mazar, an archaeologist in Jerusalem, calls descriptions of the Temple and Wall of ancient Jerusalem found in the Bible: “accurate descriptions of reality.” The Bible is a fascinating book. It is a collection of books and writing sandwiched between covers of leather, cardboard, and heavy stock paper. My mother’s family Bible was very old with a wooden cover and pages glued and strung together with leather strips. No matter what it looks like, the Bible contains historical accounts, dreams, poetry, hymns, stories, analogies, letters, theological description, prophecies, law, and much more. It all is God’s Word. Solomon, son of King David, was a man of great wisdom and more incredible wealth, which he used to build God’s Temple. It was the house where God was worshipped and revered.

Today, there is tangible evidence that what was described in the above passage exists in reality. As we read the accounts and watch the videos of places on our pilgrimage, we are reminded that what we read is real. God comes to us in the reality of our lives each and every day. What does the house we build for God look like? How will our story read?

***“O God of the ages, you touch our lives in small and profound ways. Help us today tell the story of your presence by building a house worthy of your worship and praise. Amen.”***

Video: Virtual Israel Tour Day 20: Solomon’s Wall

Link: <https://youtu.be/g2kW8x6G8Kc>



Western Wall Excavation Marker



Western Wall Excavation



Pastor Kris & Clay at the Western Wall

Saturday, February 27, 2021

## Jezreel: Ultimate Battle

**2 Kings 23:29-30:** <sup>29</sup>In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. King Josiah went to meet him; but when Pharaoh Neco met him at Megiddo, he killed him. <sup>30</sup>His servants carried him dead in a chariot from Megiddo, brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own tomb. The people of the land took Jehoahaz son of Josiah, anointed him, and made him king in place of his father.

**Reflection:** When you visit Megiddo, the first thing you notice is its position overlooking a rich valley. Megiddo is massive, and when walking around, it seems impossible that it was built 1,300 years before Christ. It also reminds us that war and conflict occur throughout our human history because Megiddo was built for war. This fortress is mentioned in several places in the Old Testament as well as in the book of Revelation. According to the vision John records, it is where the ultimate battle between good and evil takes place and when Christ conquers all.

We confront battles in each of our lives. Some of these are small and inconsequential, others much larger and painful. These clashes are not fought on a battlefield, nor do we have a fortress in which to launch the fight. Instead, our hearts and minds and sometimes our bodies are where conflict tries to overcome the peace God intends for us. Perhaps, the words Jesus uttered in love to his disciples before his arrest can remind us of God's intention for us individually and humankind as a whole. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

***"O God of might, you charge into to battle with us and help us fight off the things that take us from you. Help us find peace in all that we experience today. Amen."***

**Video:** Megiddo & Armageddon Episode 8 - Season 1 The Holy Land

Link: <https://youtu.be/VcuX0jiso04>



Megiddo



Megiddo



Megiddo Water System



Megiddo Water System  
Tunnel



Pastor Kris & Clay at Megiddo