



“Holiness to the Lord”

Show Notes & Transcripts

Podcast General Description:

Follow Him: A *Come, Follow Me* Podcast with Hank Smith & John Bytheway

Do you ever feel that preparing for your weekly *Come, Follow Me* lesson falls short? Join hosts Hank Smith and John Bytheway as they interview experts to make your study for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ *Come, Follow Me* course not only enjoyable but original and educational. If you are looking for resources to make your study fresh, faithful, and fun--no matter your age--then join us every Friday and Saturday.

Watch the podcast on YouTube to see the images referenced:

Part 1: <https://youtu.be/SRDR1OvgckU>

Part 2: <https://youtu.be/ncssDUAed5Y>

Podcast Episode Descriptions:

Part 1:

Where do ancient Near East and modern Western culture meet? Dr. Matthew Grey explores how knowledge and origins of the ancient Israelite temple worship help inform our modern temple language by helping us learn the language of temple worship.

Part 2:

Dr. Matthew Grey returns and continues to discuss the sacred rituals, clothing, and the priestly system of the ancient Israelite temple worship.

Timecodes:

Part 1

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- 04:12 Foundational material for later Israelite temple worship
- 07:14 Latter-day Saint temple relationship, building temple literacy through temple preparation
- 09:22 Comparing temple preparation to learning a language
- 13:29 Compare similarities as well as differences between ancient and modern temples
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- 25:04 Artistic depiction and description of the tabernacle
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- 36:30 Metaphoric language used in the book of Hebrews to understand the role of Jesus Christ
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Part 2

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- 03:37 Generally how animal sacrifices were performed as described in Leviticus
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- 11:15 The laver or basin of water used by the priest for washing

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- 32:42 Isaiah's prophetic call and vision, cherubim vs. seraphim
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- 38:59 Nephite perspective of the ancient rituals were Messianic, early Christians looking back and finding symbolism to help explain the death of Christ
- 49:00 Joseph Smith, the Kirtland temple and Latter-day modern temple tradition
- 54:29 Dr. Grey shares his conversion journey combining faith and study
- 1:00:00 End of Part II

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Biographical Information:



Dr. Matthew Grey is an associate professor of ancient scripture and an affiliate faculty member of the ancient Near Eastern studies program at Brigham Young University. He was born and raised in the Chicago area, served as a full-time missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the California Santa Rosa Mission (1995–1997), and attended Brigham Young University where he received a B.A. in Near Eastern studies (1999–2003). Following his undergraduate work, he received an M.A. in archaeology and the history of antiquity from Andrews University (2003–2005), an M.St. in Jewish studies (with an emphasis on Judaism in the Greco-Roman world) from the University of Oxford (2005–2006), and a Ph.D. in ancient Mediterranean religions (with a major emphasis on archaeology and the history of early Judaism and a minor emphasis on New Testament studies) from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2006–2011).

Before being hired in BYU's Department of Ancient Scripture, Dr. Grey taught Latter-day Saint Institute of Religion courses at the University of Notre Dame, the University of Oxford, and UNC-Chapel Hill/Duke University. Since being hired at BYU, he has taught courses on the New Testament gospels, the second half of the New Testament, Jesus in his Jewish context, and the archaeology of New Testament Palestine. For the 2017–2018 academic year he was also assigned to teach Near Eastern history and archaeology courses at the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies.

For almost twenty years, Dr. Grey has been actively involved in archaeological research and publication relating to the world of the Bible in Israel, Jordan, and Italy. Since 2011 he has supervised excavations at the Roman-era village and synagogue at Huqoq (in Israel's Galilee region); he has been an associate research fellow at the William F. Albright Institute for Archaeological Research in Jerusalem; and he is a founding co-chair of the Archaeology of Roman Palestine program unit of the Society of Biblical Literature.

Dr. Grey and his wife Mary have three children (Priscilla, Hannah, and John) and currently live in Springville, Utah.

Research Interests: Jesus and his Jewish Setting; Daily Life in Roman Galilee; Sacred Space, Ritual, and Priesthood in Early Judaism; Dead Sea Scrolls and Early Jewish Sectarianism; Judeans and Jesus Followers in the Roman World; Jesus in Film; Joseph Smith's Study and Uses of Hebrew

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Hank Smith:	00:00:01	Welcome to FollowHIM, a weekly podcast dedicated to helping individuals and families with their Come Follow Me Study. I'm Hank Smith.
John Bytheway:	00:00:09	I'm John Bytheway.
Hank Smith:	00:00:10	We love to learn.
John Bytheway:	00:00:11	We love to laugh.
Hank Smith:	00:00:13	We want to learn and laugh with you.
John Bytheway:	00:00:15	As together, we follow him.
Hank Smith:	00:00:20	Hello, my friends. Welcome to another episode of FollowHIM. My name is Hank Smith, and I am your host. I'm here with my co-host. Now, listen closely here because this is important for our lesson today. He's an ancient tabernacle, and his name is John Bytheway. John, you are, and I mean that in the holiest sense. He is an ancient tabernacle, John Bytheway. John, welcome. We're excited this week to be studying the, I bet you can't guess, the ancient tabernacle here in Exodus and Leviticus, and we have an expert with us. Tell everyone who's going to join us.
John Bytheway:	00:00:58	Yes. We are excited to have Dr. Matthew Grey with us today, and he is an Associate Professor of Ancient Scripture and an affiliate faculty member of the Ancient Near Eastern Studies Program at BYU. He was born and raised in Chicago, served a full-time mission in the California Santa Rosa mission and attended BYU where he received a BA in Near Eastern Studies, and then received an MA in Archeology and the History of Antiquity from Andrews University, PhD in Mediterranean Religions with a major emphasis on archeology and history of early Judaism and a minor emphasis on New Testament Studies from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

John Bytheway: 00:01:42 Before being hired by BYU in the Department of Ancient Scripture, Dr. Grey taught Institute of Religion at the University of Notre Dame at Oxford and also at UNC Chapel Hill and Duke, and since being hired at BYU, he's taught courses in the New Testament gospel, second half of the New Testament, Jesus in his Jewish context, and the archeology of New Testament Palestine.

John Bytheway: 00:02:05 For almost 20 years, he's been actively involved in archeological research and publication relating to the world of the Bible in Israel, Jordan, and Italy, and since 2011 has supervised excavations in the Roman era village and synagogue at Huqoq in Israel's Galilee region. He's been an associate research fellow at the William F. Albright Institute for Archeological Research in Jerusalem and is a founding co-chair of the Archeology of Roman Palestine Program Unit of the Society of Biblical Literature.

John Bytheway: 00:02:37 Dr. Gray and his wife, Mary, have three children, Priscilla, Hannah, and John. Currently live in Springville, Utah. Hank, I'm continually amazed at the people that we bring on here and how they've been everywhere in so many different areas where he's been. So excited to have Matthew Grey with us today. Welcome to the podcast today, Matthew.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:02:56 Thank you very much. It's great to be here with both of you.

Hank Smith: 00:02:58 John, just on a personal note, there's just nobody like Dr. Grey. I consider him a close friend, teach together at BYU. If I ever have a question, I know who I can ask. If it has anything to do with the Bible, I can go to my friend Matt Grey and he's going to give me the answers. It's like having an encyclopedia just available at any time with a fun personality.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:03:20 Well, that's very kind of you, Hank. I'm not sure what kind of answer you get in those questions, but it's always great to have those conversations with you.

Hank Smith: 00:03:25 I've been looking forward to this for quite a while, just having Matt on, and I'm just really excited to share him with the rest of the world.

John Bytheway: 00:03:32 We're grateful that you're here because I think when people encounter these chapters, there's a great tendency to go, "I just don't get this, and it's this really old ancient stuff, and what do I do with it?" So hopefully, some people will really get some answers today and myself included. I'm ready to take notes.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:03:48 That's great. Well, thank you both. You're very kind for having me on. Thank you.

Hank Smith: 00:03:51 Well, Matt, we want to hand over the reins to you and say, how do you want to approach the ancient tabernacle here? Both we have chapters in Exodus and Leviticus, and as John and I read through them all, we've learned how to sacrifice animals.

John Bytheway: 00:04:05 Move blood around.

Hank Smith: 00:04:07 Let's turn this over to an expert and say, how would you approach this section of Come Follow Me?

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:04:12 Great. Yeah. Thank you. So we'll do our best. As you said, this is very technical, complicated material. The block of material that we're looking at today, of course, is Exodus chapters 35 through 40, Leviticus 1, 16, and 19, and the material around it is equally as helpful. So in total, we're looking at about 30 chapters' worth of materials that's extremely complex. It's very technical, dealing with the ancient tabernacle in the wilderness, the ancient Levitical priesthood, the sacrificial rituals of ancient Israel that they would perform in this tabernacle or temple space. All of which is the foundational material for later Israelite temple worship.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:04:52 So I think what we might do is start with just a few background observations first. Let's set up the context a little bit. Let's talk about the challenges of studying this material along with the advantages, the reasons why we would want to study this material, and then I think what we might do is just go thematically through it. This is one of those blocks of scriptural texts that is very difficult to go through chapter for chapter with the cubits and the measurements and the sacrificial codes and procedures.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:05:19 So I think in this particular case, taking a step back and seeing bigger pictures and making larger observations might be a useful approach so that later as you're doing personal study or studying in your Sunday school, you're then able to plug in the specific chapters into that larger picture. So if that works for you guys, maybe we'll start with some background context.

Hank Smith: 00:05:37 Even move forward.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:05:37 This is taking place right after Israel had their major experience with God at Mount Sinai, which happened in the first part of Exodus, the experience where God appeared on the mountain,

the Israelites were at the base of Mount Sinai. Moses served as a mediating figure to go back and forth, and as part of that theophany or experience that they had with God, of course, came the revelation of the Torah itself according to the narrative and all of the laws that sometimes looking back we call the law of Moses.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:06:06 As part of that law of Moses' instruction that was given at Mount Sinai and the narrative comes these several chapters dealing with the logistics of the ancient tabernacle, the ancient priesthood, the ancient sacrificial rituals, and so forth. As I said before, all of this ends up having a very close relationship to the later temple that would exist in Jerusalem.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:06:27 We've already spoke into this, but I'll just mention again briefly that this is challenging stuff for modern readers, especially with all the measurements and the sacrificial details and so forth. I was once told that you're a true biblical scholar when you not only know this material, but you're actually really excited about it.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:06:43 So just to articulate why we would want to be interested in this material and why we should be excited, the value of studying this block of text is I think twofold. First is simply a scriptural literacy issue. If you just do the math and count how many chapters of the Torah is included in this block, if you take not only the assigned scripture blocks for the Come Follow Me lesson, but also the material around it, again, we're talking about 30 chapters of the Pentateuch or of the Torah. That's a significant amount that the writer and inspired editors of this text included.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:07:14 So clearly, this was extremely important to them, and even though as modern audiences we tend not to easily connect with some of this detail for a scriptural literacy sake, clearly, the writers of scripture and the editors of scripture wanted us to get to know this well. So I think there's a scriptural literacy reason why we would want to study this, but as Latter-day Saints, I think we have an additional reason why this material in particular can be extremely valuable to know, and it has to do with the fact that as modern Latter-day Saints, we have a living temple tradition. I think this makes us fairly unique in the larger Christian world that we have buildings set apart that we designate as temples, that we attend to perform sacred rituals called the endowment, where we do very symbolic things, wear symbolic clothing, and do symbolic ritual gestures and move within symbolic space to have covenant experiences.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:08:05 So as Latter-day Saints for whom the temple is central to our religious experience, we have an interesting relationship with the temple. Unfortunately, though, a lot of young Latter-day Saints in particular find the temple a challenging experience. So what's supposed to be the center of their religious life ends up becoming a little bit challenging sometimes because when they go to the temple, the types of rituals that they experience there are so foreign to what they're used to from their regular church routine and their daily religious life that when they experience sacred clothing or sacred gestures or sacred space, it just becomes really foreign to them.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:08:40 A lot of Latter-day Saints, a lot of them don't know how to easily process that, and they have an experience that sometimes it takes them time to come to terms with and to wrap their head around. I'm hearing students talk about phrase, temple anxiety. Sometimes they have anxiety going to the temple because they know that it's special, they know that it's central to our religious life, but they often just don't know what to make of it and how to learn about it and understand what they're doing there.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:09:02 So I think that one of the most important things that we can do for not only young Latter-day Saints but also anyone going to our modern Latter-day Saint temples is to develop a temple literacy. Just like we would with a scriptural literacy, getting to know our scriptural texts better, I think we can develop a temple literacy that comes from a lot better preparation than we sometimes offer.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:09:22 I'm really grateful to know that church leaders in recent past, President Nelson, Elder Bednar, Elder Packer before him, had all encouraged a more robust form of temple preparation. So I like to think about temple preparation for Latter-day Saints like learning a language. If you do not spend the time to learn the grammar and vocabulary of a certain language with let's say German, and you don't know that language, but yet you find yourself in Munich and now you're just surrounded by German language and German culture, you can enjoy aspects of that, for sure, but when people start talking to you, it's going to feel like a very foreign experience and there's going to be a lot of confusion, a lot of misunderstanding, a lot of frustration.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:09:59 Going to the temple, I think, can be a lot like that, where if you do not know the language of the temple, the language of ritual and symbolism, and yet you immerse yourself in this foreign environment, it's going to feel very confusing, somewhat frustrating even, and that often is not conducive to any kind of spiritual experience.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:10:15 So using that language metaphor then, if learning the language of ritual and symbolism, the type of things that we would encounter in a temple space, if that is like learning a normal language, that means that we need to pay a certain price to learn the vocabulary. We need to learn the grammar. We need to learn how sentence structure works, and if we pay the price to learn that language and then go to that space, what was once a very frustrating and confusing experience can now become a very communicative experience where now all of a sudden you not only know what's going on, but it is meaningful to you, and it's revealing things to you. Whereas before, it felt like things were being concealed from you.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:10:53 So I like to think of temple preparation for Latter-day Saints as learning a language, something we need to do. We need to open the grammar books and start learning how sacred ritual and sacred symbolism works. In the terms of temple worship broadly throughout ancient and modern history, I don't know if there's a better place to go than to this block in the book of Exodus and Leviticus.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:11:15 So I really think that, again, just to finalize our learning a language metaphor, I think that this material in Exodus in a lot of ways should be the primer. It should be temple 101. It's just simply the origins of ancient Israelite temple worship, how it functioned, how that sacred space worked, and if we can spend time really getting to know this material, it will be like learning the vocabulary and grammar of this language that will significantly inform our own modern temple experience.

Hank Smith: 00:11:44 Beautiful. That's so important. As you and I were talking about this earlier, I remember you saying you don't have to know everything when you first get started, but, man, if you know a little bit, if you're going to go to Munich and you know a little bit of German, you're going to have a much better experience than if you know nothing.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:11:58 Exactly right.

Hank Smith: 00:11:59 You're going to be able to find the bathroom and be able to find a good restaurant and just the little tiny things, and it doesn't take a lot to get started into temple language, and then the more often you go, I think the more you learn the language. One thing I've been surprised with in the last few years at BYU is as I've studied the Old Testament, how much more I've understood our temple experience, our modern temple experience. There's been aha moments as you study the Old

Testament and even the new and go, "Oh, oh. I'm seeing it now. I'm seeing it more."

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:12:30 We're the ones who I think sometimes separate out the intellectual learning process from the spiritual experience process, and I think it's really important to note that Joseph Smith, for example, did not see that false dichotomy. He said that, for him, learning was part of the spiritual experience. So it doesn't come cheaply, but if we can pay the price to learn this language, it makes all the difference in the world to facilitate profound spiritual experience in that temple space.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:12:54 Having said that, I do want to make a few nuanced comments about that, though, because I think it's really important to note that temple literacy for modern Latter-day Saints definitely includes looking at the similarities between the ancient temple within the book of Exodus and Leviticus and the modern temple, but I think it's just as important to recognize the differences. I think that temple literacy means that we understand those points of contact and those points of shared conceptual vocabulary between the ancient temple of Israel and the modern Latter-day Saint temple experience, but also the significant differences because it really is not exactly a one-to-one comparison.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:13:29 Sometimes we just automatically assume that everything we would do in a temple today is exactly what happened anciently, and that's actually not the case. I think there's some really key differences that we also need to know because those are extremely instructive. I think that there are cultural differences when talking about these two different temple systems, ancient Israel and the modern Latter-day Saint endowment. We're talking about one that is literally part of the ancient Middle East and the other that is part of the modern Western world. Those are two very different cultural settings.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:13:58 I've always appreciated restoration scripture emphasizing that God, in fact, works with different people of different times and speaks to them according to their language and cultural understanding. So that's something that we see both in the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants has that teaching as well. So I think that's observation number one to point out in terms of the differences. There will definitely be cultural differences. Ideas of sacrificial animal slaughter and incense burning resonates with the spiritual and religious sensitivities of ancient peoples in a way that it doesn't today, and there are going to be those cultural differences to be sure.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:14:31 I think there's also what we might call dispensational differences for lack of a better word. We need to remember with the ancient temple, we are talking about a time when an ancient Israelite community is living a Torah-centered community life, with a Pentateuch-centered religious system as opposed to modern Latter-day Saints who live very much in a Christian setting.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:14:51 So we're both coming at this from different maybe dispensational perspectives. I think that's really important to note, especially in light of some of the things that Joseph Smith revealed. Section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants talks about how the ancient Aaronic priesthood system looks different than the modern Melchizedek priesthood system. So I think that there are those dispensational differences that we need to be aware of.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:15:13 Then finally, I think that it's important just to note that when we're talking about the modern temple experience, how many of Joseph Smith's revelations dealing with the temple include language like, "I'm about to reveal things to you that have not been known since the foundations of the world"? So in other words, Joseph Smith himself is setting up an expectation that there are things that are part of the modern temples that were not part of temples in antiquity.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:15:35 So I think that those differences are really important to note, and to keep our eye on that is just a responsible way to study. Having noted those cultural dispensational and revelatory differences, though, I will say that there is some really key shared conceptual vocabulary that we can learn by studying how the ancient Israelite temple functioned in its context, in its time, and in its place. We can learn things like how sacred space operates, how sacred space can be partitioned out and go from zone to zone, how sacred clothing works for priests functioning in that sacred set apart space, how ritual gestures and certain ritual actions can work, and that is the basic vocabulary for later development in various religious communities, not just Latter-day Saint communities but a Catholic mass, a Greek Orthodox service. All of which draw upon that great tradition of ritual and symbolism that's really to start in this block of material from the book of Exodus.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:16:31 So again, just to plug that idea of temple literacy, focusing on both the similarities and the differences between biblical and restoration temples, as well as the important cultural context of each, I think those are just some really important nuanced observations to make before we proceed.

John Bytheway: 00:16:46 Matt, you've used just a couple of phrases that I'd love our listeners to make sure that we're on the same page. When you say Pentateuch, I mean, we say this one a lot, but if you could just explain the idea of sacred space. I love that in what we're looking at, you could move that, the tabernacle. We don't have mobile temples now, but if you could talk about sacred space, and the Pentateuch, and the Torah, just quick definitions?

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:17:08 Yeah, sure. So the words Torah and Pentateuch in some ways can be interchangeable. Both are references to the first five books of Moses in the Hebrew Bible or what Christians call the Old Testament. Pentateuch is just a Greek term for the five books, and Torah is the word for the law or the way or the teaching. So those are just two different technical terms that are often used for Genesis through Deuteronomy. Of course, in our conversation today, we're right in the middle of that material.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:17:35 So when we talk about Torah-based or Pentateuchal material, that's what we're talking about. So we're going to be focusing on those passages from Exodus, really frankly from Exodus 25 through 40, and then Leviticus 1 through 16, and even though technically our lesson is a little bit slimmer than that, really, it's that entire block from Exodus 25 through Leviticus 16 that we'll be talking about today.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:17:58 So everything we're going to be discussing in our overviews of this material comes from that block of scriptural text from the Torah or the Pentateuch, and we'll get to sacred space in just one moment. I'll just say again that's a lot to cover. So clearly, we won't be able to do everything in exhaustive detail today. So I would strongly encourage everybody to do what Elder Holland suggested recently in an interview and get a good study Bible and some good study resources and reference materials and just work your way through this. I think that's extremely important. Elder Ballard also recently taught that we need to consult experts and expert materials in terms of supplemental resources, and I think it's just extremely valuable to get both Latter-day Saint and non-Latter-day Saint perspectives as we're working through it.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:18:38 I just want to say one more thing before we get to your really important question, John, about the nature of sacred space, and that is, how do we interpret this very technical as we go from the different courtyards of the tabernacle? We're going to talk about the priestly system and clothing. I think the idea of how to interpret this is also a final observation we want to make

upfront because there are a lot of different interpretations from a lot of different faith communities.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:19:00 Every time you go online to look and to research on the tabernacle, you inevitably come across a lot of different and very enthusiastic interpretations. We as Latter-day Saints are not the only ones to be perhaps overly enthusiastic about our search for hidden meanings and so forth. From a Christian perspective, a lot of Christian communities will look back on this material and see references to Jesus or hidden gestures towards the death of Jesus.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:19:24 As Latter-day Saints, I noticed that a lot of people within our community do a similar approach and then sometimes we'll even overlay that with trying to find meanings for the Latter-day Saint plan of salvation hidden in here. I think those are all really interesting exercises and projects, but I do want to keep in mind that in the context of ancient Israel, those were probably not the primary ways to view this material.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:19:46 So what we're going to do here, at least as I walk us through this overview, is not pay attention as much to some of these very different and very enthusiastic interpretations of potential meanings. What I want to do is really focus on the text itself, what does the text say about this space and about these rituals, and try to understand it in its ancient Israelite context, which is an ancient Middle Eastern setting.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:20:09 So there are going to be some differences to how we might see that today, but I think if we can wrap our head around that first and spend most of our time with that today, that historically contextualized and scripturally focused approach, then listeners or viewers can proceed how they feel best in terms of other meanings that they find important or significant or that resonate within their modern faith tradition. So I just wanted to make that final observation about how we might interpret this material. So let's go ahead and talk about it in terms of its ancient biblical and ancient Israelite cultural setting.

Hank Smith: 00:20:41 Matt, John, before we jump into the actual text itself and the details, let me ask you something. As a father and as a religion teacher, I want to help my students and my children be better prepared for temple experience, something they've looked forward to their entire lives, something they've sung about, thought about, been taught about, they've had pictures of the temple in their room, and yet, that first day in the temple, they can come away confused or disappointed, and that's heartbreaking. So how do you think this material could help us

as parents and grandparents better prepare our teenagers to become more temple literate?

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:21:22 I think that in Latter-day Saint culture broadly, there is a real reticence to talk about the temple in any way outside of the temple. I remember when I was young and getting ready to go to the temple, temple preparation basically consisted of someone telling me that the temple is a symbolic place, it's sacred, and I'm not sure if I can say anything else so I won't say anything else.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:21:41 Obviously, I didn't go in very well-prepared or very well-informed, but the reality is just by even studying this canonized material within the scriptural text, we are given all sorts of ways to understand sacred space, sacred clothing, sacred rituals, and just by spending time as parents or grandparents, as teachers of ancient scripture at BYU, helping our students to become more familiar with this ancient ritual space and these ancient ritual actions and gestures, that in and of itself is preparing people to go into the modern Latter-day Saint temple experience just with a framework and to better process what they're going to experience when they see sacred clothing or sacred rituals or hand gestures or spaces.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:22:23 So I feel like one of the best resources that we have for temple preparation has always been right under our nose, but it's our reticence to say too much that keeps us from really engaging with this material in a way that could provide robust and exciting temple preparation for young Latter-day Saints rather than the throw them into the deep end and let them figure it out one day. So I'm a big advocate of integrating a responsible and contextualized study of the ancient temple into our modern temple preparation. Recognizing the similarities and the differences, both are really instructive as we prepare.

John Bytheway: 00:22:55 I think I probably could have done a better job of preparing my kids and other people when I was a bishop. I do remember telling people, "Look, you're going to walk into about 3,000 BC, which is great, and this is a restored church and there's things that have always been part of the gospel that are restored now, but what I want you to do is look for Christ in every way you can while you're there." I hope that helped them. I think today I learned some things that maybe I could have done even better, but I always felt like you're going into a world of symbolism, and it was a different way of teaching and doing things back then, and just knowing that hopefully will help you see, "Oh, we're going to be taught by symbols today instead of just by words," but look for Christ in those symbols. That's how I used to try to

prepare people, but I think what we're doing today could be even more specific. I'm excited to hear, Matt, how you take some of the language in these chapters and prepare people for hearing similar things in our modern temple experience.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:23:59 Okay. So the first observations that I think we should make about the ancient Israelite tabernacle is, first of all, the nature of tabernacle space. I think it's really instructive. I just wanted highlight three main aspects of this. The first one is, John, what you had asked about earlier, the idea of sacred space. What is sacred space? So the word sacred or holy in ancient Hebrew is kodesh, and the word means literally something that is set apart or different from all of its surroundings.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:24:26 So if something or someone or some day is holy or sacred, it literally means it's set apart from everything around it. The image that we're bringing up on the screen here is a wonderful artistic reconstruction of the way in which the tabernacle is described in the book of Exodus. This is done by an archeological illustrator named Balogh Balage, who's a Hungarian artist who does wonderful artistic reconstructions of all sorts of archeological discoveries from the biblical world. His website is called archeologyillustrated.com, some wonderful images. We're going to use a few of his images today just to help to visually make sense of what we're describing here.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:25:04 If you look at this first image, which is an artistic reconstruction of the tabernacle in its space out there in the Sinai desert, you'll notice that this space is physically set apart by a series of outer curtains. All the tents in the background, that's where the Israelites will live in these desert wanderings in the narrative. That's their daily what's called profane or secular space, right? That's where they're cooking their meals, that's where they're living their lives, but by these outer tent curtains, this is taking certain space and setting it apart, making it holy, dedicated to the God of Israel, and this space is now the sacred space of God's dwelling. So that's observation number one is sacred space is set apart space.
- Hank Smith: 00:25:45 For those who are listening, you can come to our YouTube channel, look up FollowHIM on YouTube, and you can see our interview here or you could also come to our website, followhim.co, followhim.co. Okay. Matt, let's get back to what we were describing here.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:25:58 So just two or three more observations about the nature of this tabernacle space first, and then we'll talk about a little bit of its functionality. So once we've identified this as sacred or set apart

space, holy, set apart to the God of Israel, the next observation is that the way that the book of Exodus describes this space is that it's God's dwelling. As we know, this is going to be the portable version of the later stationary temples that will be built in Jerusalem in the later biblical periods as proto temple space or sacred space. This was seen in ancient Israel as God's dwelling. This is his tent.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:26:35 So if Israelites dwell in their tents in the desert, God dwells among his people by living in his tent or his house. Later on, the stationary permanent temple in Jerusalem will be referred to as the house of the God of Israel. So this is God's dwelling place. So there's going to be a lot of language in these Exodus and Leviticus chapters about God dwelling with his people in his tent, "I will dwell among you. I will be your God. You will be my people." This is all very central to the covenantal language of ancient Israel.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:27:06 So in addition to seeing this as God's house would've been seen in ancient Israel, sometimes we also can see images here of the original garden. There's a lot of similarities in the way that the tabernacle will be decorated and the way the garden of Eden is described in the narratives of Genesis chapters two and three. So that combined idea of this being God's house, God's dwelling place, and that God's house or dwelling place is very much adorn like the garden of the book of Genesis. I think those are two really important observations to make about the nature of this sacred space as seen through the eyes of ancient Israel.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:27:42 Then finally, the last thing I'll say about the nature of this space is that if this place is seen as God's house or God's tent or God's dwelling among the larger community of Israel, that makes this sacred or set apart space the meeting place between the heavenly realm and the earthly realm. So this idea of seeing temple space as the meeting of heaven and earth, this is where Israel comes to commune with the God of Israel. This is the one place on earth that you can enter, and in its sacred nature, it's set apart to allow you to commune with the heavenly realm.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:28:16 So between the ideas of being God's house and God's dwelling place, a lot of garden imagery here, but also the idea of the temple or the tabernacle space as being the meeting place between heaven and earth, and that way, by the way, it functions like the mountain narratives of a lot of the earlier Genesis stories where patriarchs would go to mountains, build altars, but it's that same idea of where heaven and earth meet.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:28:39 So I think that all of those observations would feel very at home in ancient Israel. Certainly, there's a lot of those concepts that would still resonate with modern Latter-day Saints going to the temple today as God's house, as holy space, as the meeting place between heaven and earth, and as the place where you can go to commune with the God of your community.
- Hank Smith: 00:28:56 I've heard it said before, Matt, that you've got these two circles, heaven and earth, and in the garden before the fall, they're overlapping, and then you have the fall and they separate, and then you can bring them back together, and where they touch, where they're starting to come back together and they overlap, you could call that little area, the two circles, the temple. I've seen that on the Bible Project.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:29:18 So certainly, the creation stories and the Garden of Eden stories from the book of Genesis definitely have a lot of imagery that resonates with the ways in which these writers describe the sacred space of the tabernacle. So there's definitely a connection between tabernacle space and creation and Edenic space in the Hebrew Bible. Frankly, a lot of the tabernacle design and description was itself patterned after Israel's experience at Mount Sinai, this place where they would come to meet God. God was at the top of the mountain. They were at the bottom of the mountain. In that story of Exodus 19 through 24, there's basically three zones of sacred space on that mountain. There's Israel at the bottom where they would offer the sacrifices. There's the place in the middle where certain individuals like Aaron and some of the elders would go, and then there's the highest part of that mountain, which is where Moses would encounter the God of Israel to facilitate that theophany and that covenant making experience.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:30:12 In a lot of ways, that cosmic mountain experience that Israel had at Mount Sinai will itself be replicated in this tabernacle temple space. It's like the tabernacle allows the Sinai experience to continue to be a living, ever-present reality among Israel going forward to keep them connected with the God that appeared to them on Mount Sinai. So yeah, a lot of temple, a lot of mountain, garden imagery, heaven and earth meeting. It's a lot of really powerful imagery here, both for ancient Israel and I also think for modern Latter-day Saints as well.
- John Bytheway: 00:30:40 I don't mean to jump ahead here, but so then think about the temple then in Jesus' day. Wasn't one of the courts called the Court of Gentiles? I mean, is there also a three-part division there then in Solomon's temple?

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:30:52 Yeah. That's a great question. So in later temples as built in Jerusalem, there would be additional courtyards that were added to the original three courtyards of the tabernacle space. So by the time you get to the temple in the days of Jesus in the first century, the Temple of Herod, in that case, still had the tripartite or threefold spaces of the ancient Israelite temple. They were still the outer court of sacrifice, the inner court with the Menorah and the table of showbread, and then the holy of holies. Of course, the arc of the covenant was gone by then, but beyond those three main sacred zones of Herod's temple then were also added additional courtyards that did not exist in the earlier Israelite period like the Court of Women or the Court of the Gentiles, and it's all part of Herod's attempt to expand the temple complex in ways that included much more of the social and economic dynamics of Jerusalem, but the same threefold sacred zones of the ancient Israelite temple were still very much in place at the center of Herod's temple complex.

John Bytheway: 00:31:51 I love what you said. Sacred means set apart means kodesh. This is some set apart space. I think I've often heard it explained this was like a portable temple, a portable sacred space as they moved around in the wilderness until they could find a permanent home type of a thing.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:32:08 Yeah. This is the house of God dwelling with them in his tent as the Israelites are living in their tent, and as they get settled into the promised land and start building their own permanent homes, then God gets his own permanent home in the space of the Jerusalem temple.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:32:20 Pick up maybe where we left off then, so we had just gone through a few preliminary observations about the nature of tabernacle space, the idea of sacred space, God's dwelling and the meeting place of heaven and earth. So this next image, again, produced by Balage Balogh, who does a great artistic reconstruction of aspects of the outer court of the ancient tabernacle, this gives us an opportunity to make a few preliminary observations about the functionality of this tabernacle space. What actually happened here? What was the purpose of the rituals that would be performed in this space?

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:32:53 For here, I think it's useful to mention basically three general observations. Number one, because this is seen in its ancient Near Eastern context as the house of God or the dwelling tent of God and it's his house, a lot of the rituals of this space were viewed by the ancient Israelites as rituals that were designed to maintain God's presence. We want to do things that will not

only allow God to be comfortable living among us, but that will encourage him to be living among us.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:33:20 One of the differences between an ancient Israelite mindset and probably a modern Christian or a Latter-day Saint mindset would be that in this ancient setting, one of the ways in which you attract the God of Israel to keep him in his house is by offering certain things that provide a sweet savor or a pleasing odor. There's a lot of that language that the book of Exodus uses to describe the smell of the barbecuing meat or the smell of the incense rising from the incense altar. All of which were used to maintain the presence of the God of Israel in this space. It's a very common idea in the ancient Middle East.
- Hank Smith: 00:33:53 The actual smell you're talking about.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:33:55 Exactly. Yeah. It was very common in the ancient Near East to imagine the community living in God's house, but if it's his house, he needs a table and he needs food and he needs things that will keep him wanting to come back. So as part of that ancient Middle Eastern culture, the Israelites were very attuned to that sensitivity, which is if this is God's house, we need to keep him happy. We need to make sure that he's constantly smelling the barbecue and smelling the incense. So anytime in the book of Exodus or Leviticus you read language of the pleasing odor or a sweet savor, that's very common ancient Near Eastern language for maintaining the presence of the deity in that space. So that's one observation. They needed to maintain God's presence.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:34:34 The second functionality of this space, meaning the purpose of the ritual activities in the space, was to provide sacrifices or to offer sacrifices that would provide Israel with the necessary purification to be in God's presence. The holiness concepts, the idea of a ritual purity are very important to these ancient Israelite communities, and the idea that to maintain God's presence among us, we need to be ritually pure and maintain those standards of holiness.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:35:00 So these sacrificial rituals that would be performed in the outer court of the tabernacle were often designed to provide purity or sanctification or even languages of reconciliation and atonement. Out of all the biblical material, both Old and New Testaments, Exodus and Leviticus have by far the most references to ideas of atonement and reconciliation, all in the concept of the sacrificial rituals that would occur in this temple space. So that's functionality number two.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:35:28 Then functionality number three is this is also going to be the space of priestly mediation. What I mean by that is in ancient Israel, not everybody within the community could enter the sacred space of God's house and perform certain rituals in this ancient Israelite setting. There was one group of priests that were set apart based on their lineage, and this set apart group of Levites or Aaronic or Aaronide priests were set apart to be mediators between Israel and God, their intercessors.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:36:00 So the idea being that the rituals of this space were designed to be facilitated by these priestly mediators who would represent Israel through some ritual actions, they would represent Israel to God, but then through other ritual actions, they would represent God to Israel. So there's this mediating link between Israel and God, between heaven and earth, and this set apart priesthood system of Exodus and Leviticus is designed to have these priests as that mediating link.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:36:30 As you could probably imagine, centuries later in the context of early Christianity, looking back on this material, you can imagine New Testament writers finding both in the sacrificial rights of atonement and in the idea of priestly mediation, some really great metaphoric vocabulary to help understand the death of Jesus, right? Jesus is our great mediator or our great high priest. He's the great intercessor between the community and God, between heaven and earth or Jesus' death is like the great atoning sacrifice. He's like that animal only it's in some bigger eternal sense. That's going to be the language that New Testament writers will use looking back on this space and using the functionality of this tabernacle space to provide them with all sorts of rich vocabulary to try to make sense of Jesus' death and his role in a post-crucifixion and post-resurrection world.
- Hank Smith: 00:37:23 I've noticed that in the book of Hebrews that the writer of the book of Hebrews is very much interested in making those connections between the ancient tabernacle and Jesus. Is that right?
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:37:32 That's exactly right. Yeah. Yeah. The book of Hebrews is the New Testament version of what we're reading today. So Hebrews, again, centuries later in a post-crucifixion context, will look back on this tabernacle material, the rituals of sacrificial atonement and the rituals of priestly mediation, and will use those aspects of the ancient tabernacle to describe Jesus. So Jesus is our great high priest or he's our great atoning sacrifice, and Hebrews is great example of a New Testament commentary on the tabernacle material we're reading today.

John Bytheway: 00:38:04 I love this idea of the priest mediating not only representing Israel to God, but sometimes representing God to Israel. I don't know. It just sent me to Alma 13. You remember this verse? "The priests were ordained after the order of his Son in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption."

John Bytheway: 00:38:27 Whenever I've read Alma 13, and this is talking about Melchizedek, though, Melchizedek priesthood, but it sounds like if you watch what the priests do, you will learn something about what Jesus does. Is that a fair interpretation of that do you think?

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:38:40 Yeah, I think so. So I think Alma 13 is playing very much in the same rhetorical space as the book of Hebrews, right? In fact, it's drawing a lot of language, a lot of similar language between Hebrews and Alma 13, a lot of the order of Melchizedek as opposed to the order of Aaron, the idea of a great mediating high priest rather than the earthly shadow of that ultimate priest. So there's a lot of language there in Alma 13 that resonates very well with what we see in Hebrews as a Christian commentary on this space.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:39:11 How about what we do now is walk through both the priestly mediation part in a little bit more detail and then shift over to the sacrificial rituals themselves as we walk through the different courtyards. If that sounds like a good plan, let's go ahead and start.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:39:25 Let's look at the priests a little more carefully. When we're talking about the priesthood that functioned within this ancient tabernacle space, we need to remember that there are a few key differences between how ancient Israel viewed its priestly system and how modern Latter-day saints would view priesthood today.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:39:40 One of those key differences is that in ancient Israel, priesthood was based on lineage rather than issues of morality or ethics or righteousness or even feeling called to certain priesthood offices. We're talking about a group of Levites and priests that were set apart based on lineage.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:40:00 To understand this ancient priestly system, we have to remember that out of all the 12 tribes of Israel, the Torah separated one of those tribes, the tribe of Levi, as the group that would be the priestly mediators for the rest of the community. I think it's helpful to imagine it as three concentric circles. If you imagine the outer circle being the larger tribe of

Levi, if you were born into the tribe of Levi, you were, by definition, a Levite, and among all those Levites, they would be the temple servants, right? So the Levites would be the ones who would set up and take down the tabernacle accoutrements, and they would be the ones who would mop up the courtyard floors at the end of the day. In later Israelite history, they would be the ones to sing hymns, to accompany the various sacrifices. Those were all the ways in which Levites were the temple servants.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:40:50 Now, within the larger tribe of Levi, those Levites who were descended from Aaron were called the Aaronic or Aaronide priests. They were the ones who were set apart to be the ritual specialists. So if the larger Levite tribe would be the temple servants, the Aaronic or Aaronide priests within that tribe would be the ritual specialists who would help facilitate sacrifice, who would help facilitate the incense burning, and who would actually perform the rituals that mediated between Israel and God. So that's the difference between the Levites and the Aaronic priests.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:41:27 Within that Aaronic priestly circle would be one final circle in the middle of the first born of Aaron. That line was designated as the line of high priests. This is a phrase that to modern Latter-day Saints calls to mind ideas of Melchizedek priesthood office. That's not what we're talking about here. When the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible talks about Aaronic high priests, what they're referring to is the presiding Aaronic priest, and that presiding Aaronic priest was typically taken or at least ideally drawn from the line of Aaron's firstborn, and that Aaronic high priest or presiding Aaronic priest would be the one who would function as the ultimate mediator between Israel and God. He would be the one who once a year would go through the veil into the holy of holies to make atonement or intercession or purification for all the community of Israel. Those are your three concentric circles to understand how the ancient Israelite priesthood functioned.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:42:27 Some similar vocabulary to what we might use today, but in terms of how it actually functions, it does look quite different. So just as a quick review then, so we have the Levites in the outer circle as the temple servants. Among those Levites, the Aaronic priests as the ritual specialists, actually performing the ceremonies on behalf of Israel, then the presiding Aaronic priest or Aaronic high priest as being the ultimate mediator of this lineage-based system.

Hank Smith: 00:42:52 Matt, if I'm of the tribe of Ephraim or Manasseh or something, I don't work in the temple.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:42:58 That's right.

Hank Smith: 00:42:59 Would I come over? Would I come over and look inside? What would I be doing?

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:43:04 So in just a minute, we'll shift over to how do these actual spaces work, how does the outer court work and the inner court, and then at that point, we'll see how non-Levites, among the Israelite community, how they would interact with the space, but within the space itself, it's the Levites, the priests, and the high priest who will be doing all of the work of intercession or mediation between the community and the God of Israel.

Hank Smith: 00:43:26 They wore different clothes. Correct?

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:43:28 They did. Yeah. So that's the final observation I want to make about the Levitical or Aaronic priests is the way in which they were set apart in the Pentateuch or in the Torah in Leviticus chapters eight and nine and in Exodus 28, 29, and 39, and 40. So there's actually about six whole chapters here. If you want to learn more about the ancient priesthood and how they were ordained and how they were consecrated, how they were set apart, Exodus 28, 29, 39 through 40 and Leviticus eight through nine is the material where that will be all summarized.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:44:02 So the way in which Aaronic priests and Aaronic high priests were set apart or consecrated actually had a really interesting series of rituals starting with a washing in water. So to set them apart, they would be washed with water. Then they would be clothed in sacred clothing. Again, sacred meaning set apart clothing, clothing that will look different than anyone else in the community. We'll talk more about that clothing in just a moment.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:44:28 Then finally, after they were washed with water and dressed in sacred clothing, they were then finally anointed with consecrated oil, and then there would be a whole series of sacrifices that would be performed after that, but it was that series of rituals that would set them apart to function.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:44:44 Now, they were naturally born into a priestly system, but before they began their ministry within the tabernacle space, they would have to go through those set apart rituals of being

washed, clothed, anointed, and then offer certain sacrifices, and once they've gone through that process, they are now formally sanctified or ordained to be able to function in this tabernacle space.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:45:04 So what I want to do, though, as having mentioned the general rituals of setting these priests apart, I do want to take just a minute and look at the clothing that set them apart. So after they were washed and before they were anointed, they would be dressed in sacred clothing that is described in Exodus and Leviticus. This is another one of those moments where it's not exactly the same as what we would do in the temple today, but there's a lot of shared conceptual vocabulary in how these ancient priests were dressed for this temple space and how sacred clothing in a modern Latter-day Saint temple might work as well.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:45:35 So let me just give you a few quick examples. Let's start with the Aaronic priests. For those who are being set apart to be the ritual specialist or the Aaronic or Aaronide priests, they would be dressed in the following items, and this is all directly from Exodus 28 and 29. They would be dressed first in a white robe, a long white robe that would physically set them apart from anyone else, and I think it's important to point out that that is different than how most people would dress.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:46:00 I know we're used in our Bible art and especially in our Jesus art, we're used to seeing Jesus walking around in a long white robe. That's just not historically accurate. Most people would've worn other types of clothing. The only people in Israelite or Jewish antiquity that you would see walking around in long white robes are the priests functioning in the temple. So that set them apart because it was different. Most people did not wear long white robes, but the priests did.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:46:25 So they were given long white robes of priesthood. Then they were given a cap to go on their heads and you can see, by the way, I've highlighted two of the figures, a priest and a high priest, from that earlier Balage painting of the tabernacle courtyard. So I've enlarged those just so we can envision how each one are dressed. We're now talking about the one on the left, of course, the Aaronic priest. So after dressing them in the long white robe of priesthood, they were then given a cap or sometimes you can translate it as a turban or a bonnet, but it's a cap that would go on their head. Then the third piece of clothing would be a sash that would go around their waist.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:47:01 So the three main items of clothing would be the white robe, the white cap, and the white sash, and other than that, the priest would be barefoot because the space in which they're functioning is sacred space, holy, set apart space, very much like Moses at the burning bush, right? You might remember at the burning bush Moses was told, "Take off your sandals because the ground on which you're standing is holy, sacred ground," and a temple or a tabernacle space was seen as holy sacred ground as well. So just like Moses at the burning bush, these Aaronic or Aaronide priests would function barefoot on sacred space.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:47:35 Then the final piece of clothing that the Aaronic priests would wear is what I think the King James calls it linen breeches, which is basically something that, again, is very unique in the ancient world, and that is underwear. Most people in the ancient world did not have underwear. That's a very modern article of clothing, but in ancient Israel, the priests did wear underwear. Like I said, the texts sometimes call them linen breeches or linen undergarments. The idea was that they went from the waist down to about the knees.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:48:02 The reason why priests were unique in wearing this underwear, this undergarment, linen breeches from their waist to their knees, is because as part of their duties in the outer court, they would often ascend a ramp that would bring the sacrificial meat up to the altar. As you can imagine, if you're gathered in the temple courtyard and you're seeing this priest walking up a ramp, there is a very real potential that you could see more than you wanted to see in that particular setting. So the language is to cover their nakedness. They were given linen breeches so that they could minister the altar without any concern about being exposed in a way that most people probably just didn't want to experience that day when they went to the temple.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:48:40 So those are the main items of clothing, the robe, the cap, the sash, barefoot, and then the linen breeches. That's the clothing that set priests apart to function in the space of the temple. So if you were an Israelite going to the tabernacle space and you wanted to interact with the priest for a sacrifice, that's how you would know. To get their attention is based on how they were dressed.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:49:00 Now, the high priest had additional items of clothing to set him apart in his particular role. You'll notice from the image on the right, and again, this is all from Exodus 28 and 29 and 39 and 40, that the high priest or the presiding Aaronic priest had the exact

same clothing as the regular priest. He also had the long white robe, the white cap. He was barefoot. He had the linen breeches on underneath as well, but he would have additional clothing to further set him apart, and the text describes the following.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:49:29 Number one, he was given a blue coat to go over his white robe. Okay? At the hem of that blue coat would be sewn in miniature pomegranates and bells that would rotate all around the hems of his garments. Pomegranates, of course, is a very powerful fertility image in the ancient world. You pop it open, lots of seeds in there. So the idea of fertility and bounty is definitely inherent in the pomegranates that are on the robe. Other images that could deal with fertility in the ancient biblical world, of course, would be fig leaves or those types of things, but in this case, it's a pomegranate because of the seeds that are inside. So it's a fertility symbol, and the bells, of course, so you can constantly hear the high priest no matter where he is functioning within the tabernacle space, making that slight noise there.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:50:14 In addition to that blue robe with the pomegranates and bells at the hems, the high priest also had item of clothing that the text calls an ephod. An ephod, it's basically an apron. It's a piece of cloth that wraps around your front, and in this particular case, the ephod had various colors woven in and out. So it's this ephod or apron that would wrap around the front of the high priest. It would be over everything else, and the ephod was connected to a couple items.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:50:42 Number one, it was connected to a breast plate. So the breast plate would be fastened onto the ephod or this apron that he would wrap around himself had a breastplate that had 12 stones, precious stones, set into plate, and each one of the stones has an inscription naming one of the tribes of Israel. Similarly, on the shoulder pieces of the ephod were stones that were set that also had inscribed the names of the tribes of Israel, only with six on one shoulder and six on the other. So between the inscribed stones on the breastplate and the inscribed stones on the shoulder, the high priest bore the names of Israel into his tabernacle rituals, right? So again, it's the idea that he represents Israel to God as shown by these inscribed stones. So I think that's a really interesting observation about this particular item of clothing.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:51:31 Of course, also, Latter-day Saints are often interested to note that it's also a pouch underneath the breast plate that contains two other stones called the Urim and Thummim. So the high

priest would have access to these two stones. It's really hard from the text of the Bible to know exactly how these functioned, but they do seem to have performed some kind of divinatory role. I mean, they somehow indicated God's will to the high priest in certain ways. We don't know if they were little pebbles or they were dice.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:51:56 Later, Jewish tradition indicated that they would light up and offer revelations in some interesting ways. So there's a lot of interesting later legendary explanations for how the Urim and Thummim worked. So we don't know for sure from the text of Exodus, but all we know is that there are these divinatory stones that are placed within the pouch under the breastplate that somehow gave the high priest access to ascertain the will of God in various circumstances. So those are the main items that are associated with the ephod, the apron, the breastplate, the shoulder stones inscribed with the names of the tribes of Israel.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:52:27 I'll just point out one other thing about the ephod before we finish this segment, and that is I know it's really easy as modern readers to read through the coloring and the fabrics and all these kind of things, but in this case, it's actually an important observation to make to read those details because if you read the details carefully, you'll notice that the coloring and fabric of the ephod matches exactly the coloring and fabric of the temple veil inside the holy place.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:52:52 So it seems like the high priest's garments themselves signified that he had special access to the temple veil. So it's almost like the ephod, the garments of the high priest, and the temple veil match in both the color and material suggesting that the high priest will have access to that space at least once a year on the day of atonement.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:53:10 Beyond those items of clothing then, the final items I will mention is high priests did have the white cap as well, but the high priest had a gold plate that would go on the front of the cap, and it was that gold plate that was inscribed Kodesh L'Yahweh or Kodesh L'Adonai, a holiness to the Lord, and the idea being that not only does he bear the names of Israel on him through the breastplate and the shoulder stone, so he represents Israel to God, but he has the name of God sealed on his forehead. So he also represents God to Israel as well. So he's that ultimate mediator and the names of both Israel and the God of Israel are inscribed on his person in the form of his sacred clothing.

Hank Smith: 00:53:49 These were clothes to be worn, Matt, do we know in the temple space only or did they wear this around camp?

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:53:56 No. As far as we can tell, the text doesn't go into great detail about this, but certainly in later Judaism, this would be clothing that would only be worn in the sacred space of the temple. So we don't know how this would work in the tabernacle, but in later temple structures like Solomon's temple and Herod's temple, there were actually adjacent storage rooms where the priest would go and remove their sacred clothing, put on their street clothing, and then go back into society, back into the community. So as far as we could tell, it probably would've been the same assumption in the book of Exodus that the priests and high priest had their own tents and had their own street clothes that they would've lived in, but when they functioned as priests or as the high priest, it's this clothing that would've set them apart to facilitate the rituals in that sacred space.

John Bytheway: 00:54:37 I like this idea. It's set apart clothing for a set apart place.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:54:41 That's right.

John Bytheway: 00:54:42 That's appropriate to that place. It's set apart. I like that idea. I just wanted to point out to our listeners that there's a similar graphic to the one that you're showing on page 85 in the Come Follow Me manual that shows there's three priests that are outside that are all in white, and the one that is inside, the inner part of the tent is the picture that you have on the right with the darker blue, the breast plate. So what did you call them? The presiding high priest?

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:55:14 Yeah. Those wearing white are the Aaronic or Aaronide priests, and the one individual who's dressed in the additional garments would be the presiding Aaronic priest, what we sometimes call the high priest.

John Bytheway: 00:55:24 Yeah. So not meaning an office in the Melchizedek priesthood the way we use it today, but the presiding Aaronic priest is called the high priest.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:55:31 Yeah. I think that's a better way to understand the function of this particular individual within that Israelite priestly system.

Hank Smith: 00:55:37 This seems like he's decked to the nines. I mean, is that what I'm supposed to see here? This is nice stuff. He's got gold thread and purple dye that I know was difficult to get in that time. So he looks good.

John Bytheway: 00:55:54 I love that everything means something. All of those stones represent a tribe.

Hank Smith: 00:55:59 Is Aaron our first high priest then?

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:56:02 According to the narrative in Exodus, yeah, Aaron's the first high priest who is set apart. He's the first one to be washed, to be dressed in these clothing, these items of clothing to then be anointed, and then perform a series of sacrifices to initiate his high priesthood. The way that Exodus and Leviticus described the continuous nature of that high priesthood is that it was meant to be Aaron's first born son who would then continue in that office.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:56:24 In later Israelite and early Jewish history, of course, this was always a very contested office. It didn't always pass down from eldest to eldest as originally intended. There were certain moments where it was the second born of that firstborn line or even later, the intertestamental period, occasionally, this would become a position of political appointment. So in the later biblical world, the office of a high priest could be very contested and become even the object of a lot of sectarian disagreement over who was the legitimate high priest. Those are all things that feed into the conversations of Jewish sectarianism in the time of Jesus. So maybe during New Testament year, we can revisit that conversation and talk about the nature of this priestly system in the New Testament period, but at least in the book of Exodus and Leviticus, this is the ideal of how this system is supposed to function.

Hank Smith: 00:57:08 This is great. It's such an interesting thing. I mean, here they are, they're brought out of Egypt, and the Lord says, "We're going to build this structure with these clothes, and this is how I am going to teach you and communicate with you."

John Bytheway: 00:57:25 I love the idea of set apart clothes because why do we have to dress up for church? If somebody walked in in a T-shirt and flip flops, which happened on my mission all the time, we would love them and welcome them in, of course, but if you can, it's nice to have set apart clothing for a set apart experience. I love that idea here.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:57:48 I think the holiness concept is so important in so many ways. I mean, there's so much about our life as Latter-day Saints, which, by the way, the word saint means the holy ones. It means the set aparted ones, and holiness, sacredness, and sanctification, that's all the same word in Hebrew and in Greek, by the way. So all of those words indicate a set apartedness.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:58:06 So whether it be a set apart day or a set apart space or a set apart people, I mean, that's the whole idea of holiness, holiness to the Lord or keeping a day holy or whatever. Yeah. I think it's a really important concept to recognize. Frankly, I think it's a concept that helps us to realize why so much of the mosaic law feels so arbitrary, the whole dietary law. Why do you keep kosher? It's not because there's anything eternally significant about not eating pork products, it's because they needed something to set them apart. Don't eat pig because everyone else around you does.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:58:35 I think that we have a lot of those holiness laws today as well. Frankly, I don't know if you guys would agree with this or not, I wonder if the word of wisdom is basically a holiness law. I mean, there's nothing eternally significant about not drinking wine. Jesus drank it. Section 27 says we get to drink it again at the second coming, but the idea is that we need something to set us apart, something to make us different from everything around us.

Hank Smith: 00:58:55 Everybody drinks coffee.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:58:56 Exactly. If that's something, it's a holiness law.

John Bytheway: 00:58:58 Something I can use to teach my children, why do we dress up? Because this is different. This is the Sabbath day. It's different. It is set apart from the rest of the week, and now we're going to go to church and it's set apart from the other places we go during the week like the grocery store and America First Credit Union. It is set apart. So everything we're doing is a little different and we can show our sign to God as President Nelson has reminded us at Ezekiel 20:20.

Hank Smith: 00:59:26 Matt, let me ask you one thing. Is this anything they've seen before? Is this anything out of Egypt? I mean, is this all just so brand new that they're going, "What are we doing?"

John Bytheway: 00:59:38 Because Egyptians had temple endowment stuff, right?

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:59:41 That's right. Yeah. That's right. Yeah. That's a great question. It's unique. There's certain things about it that's unique, but not entirely unique. So in the larger ancient Near Eastern culture that they're living in, Mesopotamians had temples, Canaanites had altar space, Egyptians had temples, and all of these had priestly officiants who ministered in these sacred spaces.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:59:58 So the idea of sacred space, God dwelling here, we need to perform rituals to keep his attention, and we have certain people set apart in their clothing to perform ritual, none of that is unique. That is the ancient Middle Eastern world that Israelites are part of. This is just now focusing on let's now make this into the cult of the God of Israel and, of course, not cult in the modern negative sense, but just in the ritual system sense. If you're studying ancient Near Eastern studies, a lot of this is going to sound very familiar in many cultures.

Hank Smith: 01:00:22 He's speaking to them in their language, in the way they would understand. I just wonder if this was all and they're going, "What are we doing?"

Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:00:28 Yeah. Now, this would've been very, very comfortable to them, I think. All right. So now that we've discussed the Levitical priesthood and how the Levites and Aaronic priests and high priests are set apart and how they function, what I think we'll do now is now let's turn to the tabernacle space itself. In this case, this gives us an opportunity to look at how the space is laid out and how the different zones of this space work.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:00:53 Again, going back to that idea that we've been discussing of holiness or set apart space, as you can see from this artistic reconstruction, the tabernacle is going to be set apart space that itself will be divided up into three zones, this demarcation of sacred space. There's going to be an outer court, which is outside the inner sanctuary. Then within the tent sanctuary is going to be an inner court or a holy place, and then beyond that on the furthest inside is going to be the holy of holies, and each one of these spaces increase in degrees of holiness, right?

Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:01:26 So these are zones of sacrality or zones of holiness that become increasingly strict the closer you get to the holy of holies, which, again, represents the presence of God. It's just another brief reminder that this space that we're not looking at is meant to represent God's presence, and that the rituals in this space are meant to maintain that presence and to maintain the holiness that the God of Israel emanates. So it needs to be a place of ritual purity, ritual purification, and holiness as rituals proceed further and further into the space called the holy of holies.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:02:00 So again, as modern Latter-day Saints, again, just to keep our eyes on the similarities and the differences, there's a lot of differences here between this ancient Israelite setting and our modern Latter-day Saint temples, but there's also a lot of shared conceptual vocabulary, the idea of sacred space that itself is partitioned off into certain zones. You actually move

space to space, and each space you pass through a curtain or a veil or a partition that gets you into the next space, and then it gets you into the next space until you finally get into the throne room of God, the presence of the deity in the holy of holies. So I think there's a lot about just the nature of the space taking a step back into seeing how it functions and seeing how it operates that itself is instructive, both biblically and in the restoration.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:02:42 What I thought we'd do now is let's just go space by space. I thought we would do a quick overview of what's the furniture and main activities of the outer court, then we'll go to the inner court, and then we'll go to the holy of holies just to get a feel for how these particular spaces worked.
- John Bytheway: 01:03:00 Please join us for part two of this podcast.



- John Bytheway: 00:00:02 Welcome to part two of this week's podcast.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:00:07 So let's go ahead and just journey through this. I think, Hank, you had asked earlier about, what do the average Israelites do? How do members of other tribes interact with this sacred space? That kind of speaks to how these different spaces were used. So going to draw heavily upon a 3D digital reconstruction of the tabernacle that was recently done by a friend of mine named Daniel Smith. He's been very gracious to let us use these images to help visually facilitate our conversation here. He has a YouTube channel. It's called the Messages of Christ, where he has several videos posted on ancient Israelite institutions, including a recent video series on the ancient tabernacle. And the ways in which he walks you through it, I think you'll find very interesting. They might be a slightly different approach and represent a different perspective than what we'll try to do here.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:00:49 I think these videos will do a lot with looking back on this system and how can we, as later Christians, find resonance from a Christian perspective. What we're going to try to do here is just try to understand how these spaces functioned in the context of ancient Israel first. So let's go ahead and walk through the spaces then. So let's start with that outer courtyard. How does the outer courtyard work? Well, if you are an Israelite, who needs to go to the temple to provide any kind of sacrificial offering, based on what you'll do is you'll appear at the front of the tabernacle space. So the outside curtain will have curtains that themselves will be accessible by average Israelites.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:01:25 So the way that ritual activity in the temple works is that an Israelite coming to the temple will first themselves have to go through a process of ritual purification. So they'll need to become ritually pure through certain washings and allowing certain time to pass. And once they are ritually clean through their washings, they can now enter this sacred space, go through with their offering, whether it be a goat or a lamb or a bird or some of the various offerings that are described in the

Book of Leviticus. They would take that offering, they would go through this first curtain and they would now find themselves in the outer court.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:02:00 Now in the outer court, we have two main items of furniture that are listed in the Book of Exodus. The first one is what's called the altar of burnt offerings. And then the second item is called the brass laver. It's a basin of water. Now that you're in the outer courtyard, you need to find a priest to help facilitate your sacrificial ritual. And of course, you know who the priests are because they're set apart by their clothing.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:02:21 So if you see an Aaronic priest walking around in his white robe, his cap and his sash, and he is barefoot,
- Hank Smith: 00:02:26 That's your guy.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:02:27 Yeah. You can track him down and say, I've got an offering here and together you will now proceed through the sacrificial offerings. Now for these sacrificial offerings, there's a lot of detail in the Book of Leviticus. Leviticus chapters one through seven is basically a handbook for how priests should be offering these sacrifices. And as we're reading in on their handbook of sacrificial procedure, we're able to learn a lot about the different types of sacrifices that were offered. There are so many details. We probably don't have time to go into here, but there's different sacrifices and offerings for different occasions and different needs. There's what are called burnt offerings or whole offerings. There's peace offerings or wellbeing offerings. There's grain offerings, there's guilt or reconciliation offerings, reparation offerings.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:03:11 So many different types of offerings. We probably won't be able to distinguish all of those here, but if you want more detail again, get a good study Bible, read through those first chapters of Leviticus and learn about the types of offerings and the procedure. Pretty fascinating stuff to see what constituted the religious experience of ancient Israel in this temple space. So let's walk through some of those. Again, there'll be variation depending on the different types of sacrifices, but generally speaking here is how the process worked.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:03:37 If you brought your sacrifice, let's say you have a lamb or a goat, you'll sign down a priest and you and the priest together will proceed to the north side of the altar to begin the sacrifice itself. The sacrifice doesn't actually take place on the altar. The sacrifice takes place to the north of the altar. And what you'll do is first you as an offerer will lay your hand upon the head of the

animal and designate it that this is an offering to the God of Israel. And once you've done that together, you and the priest will hold the animal down and will slaughter the animal by slitting its throat. And the priest will catch the blood in a bowl.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:04:12 You're then somehow going to hang the carcass up in the later Jerusalem temple, there will actually be meat hooks set up there, so you can hang the carcass up on the hook, drain the rest of the blood, so the priest will be catching the blood. And then what you'll do is start slitting the body of the animal, slit the hide. You'll open it up and you'll start pulling out the different fat, the kidneys. Book of Leviticus describes in great detail all the different inside internal bits of the animal. You'll actually remove the animal hide. Depending on the sacrifice, either the priest will take that home as a priestly gift, or sometimes you will take that home as an offerer.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:04:47 And now the priest basically functions as a butcher. I mean, this whole area is like a butcher shop at this point, because you now have got the different animal pieces on the table. He would have already tossed the blood at the altar, maybe dubbed the blood on the horns of the altar or tossed it out at the base of the altar. But after disposing of the blood at the altar, the priest will take the meat of the animal and will ascend the ramp and will put the meat on top of the altar. So the altar itself is basically a barbecue pit. It's described as having a brass grate up on top, and there's a fire that's underneath it. So the altar is not where you kill the animal, it's off to the side. The altar is where you roast the meat of the animal.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:05:26 And depending on the sacrifices you might burn all of it up, the burnt offering or the whole offering is where you'll take the different animal parts and you'll burn it all on the altar. It's one big roast that goes all the way up. And the whole thing goes up to God. And so the idea of a whole or a burnt offering is that it's all offered up to God. And the whole thing just burns up. Other sacrifices though, like the shelamim or the peace or the wellbeing offerings, for example, Leviticus describes those as not being completely consumed, but by being roasted, it's like you're cooking the meat, and once it's done on one side, the priest turns it over and it's done on the other side. And at that point, the priest will divide up the roasted meat and you'll actually eat it.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:06:07 And the book of Leviticus described some of those consumed sacrifices as being divided, where the priest gets the right hand shoulder of the animal. And so the priest will eat the meat from the right shoulder of the animal, and the one who's coming to

make the offering will eat the left portion of the animal. And so right there in this sacred space, the priest will eat some meat, you will eat some meat. And I know again from a modern Christian or modern Latter-day Saint perspective, this just really seems like an odd way to have a spiritual experience, but this was a significant religious ritual in the ancient near east, including in ancient Israel. And the idea is you and God's representative, the priest, together are consuming the flesh of the sacrificial animal that is providing you with atonement or reconciliation. And that as a concept, the idea of eating the meat of the sacrificed animal with God's representative, the priest, itself will have long reaching impacts into later Christian liturgy and later Christian ritual in a Christian context, of course the bloodless version of this is the Eucharist or what Latter-day Saints often call the sacrament.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:07:21 This idea of taking a sacrifice and eating the flesh of that sacrifice along with God's representative and together partaking of the sacrificial meat of the animal that died to provide you reconciliation is a pretty significant ritual of communion. And which is why in a Christian context, the Eucharist or the communion or the sacrament still performs those same gestures only it's a bloodless version of it, because looking backwards, Christians would say that the blood was shed by Jesus on the cross, but we still perform the outlines of that ritual through Eucharist or sacrament or whatever.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:07:54 So the concept of eating the sacrificial meat is not as foreign to modern Christians or modern Latter-day Saints as we might sometimes think, but in ancient Israel, it was a very physical experience where you're eating this meat. And then once you finish eating the meat, whatever's left, either the priest will wrap it up and take it home, or the worshiper will take that animal hide maybe, and wrap it up and take it home and finish the meat there. But in any case, the meat is to be consumed in many of these sacrifices. And I'll just say, because as an archeologist, we haven't been able to talk about archeology a lot in this lesson because this conversation is mostly textual based. We're just looking at the description of the ancient Torah text. But as an archeologist, I think it's very exciting and fascinating that when we do find archeological sites where this type of ritual was performed, so for example, if you go up to Northern Israel today, the site of Tel Dan where an ancient Israelite sanctuary was built in later centuries, long after the tabernacle narratives, the Northern kingdom of Israel built a temple to the God of Israel at the site of Tel Dan and that's been excavated.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:08:54 And in the outer courtyard of the Tel Dan sanctuary, you can see the altar very much like what would've existed in Solomon's temple, but in the rooms off to the side, when they discovered the bones of animals that had been sacrificed on the altar, they noticed that in certain rooms, the bones were only the right hand portions of the animals, meaning there'd be certain spaces where the priest would consume the animal portions that were belonging to them based on Pentateuchal legislation. And so it's fun to see archeological remains of this type of ritual experience, where you can imagine you eating some of the meat, the priest eating some of the meat and then discarding the bones somewhere in the courtyard there. And archeologists later came along and discovered that at least in other sanctuary settings, but there's nothing of course to find from the tabernacle because it was so temporary, it's fun to see that reflected in the material culture. That's how the sacrifice itself would be conducted. I don't know if you guys have any thoughts on any things you want to unpack there before we proceed, because we're just now getting started in the ritual system. But any thoughts so far?
- John Bytheway: 00:09:49 This was one of the questions that I had wondered as a kid was if you just sacrificed it, do you eat it? Do you eat part of it? And I think you helped answer that. Some of them you said are fully consumed, but some you eat and then I love how you connected that to perhaps before the first Passover, maybe where they ate the lamb, even to the sacrament where you take part of that sacrifice.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:10:14 Yeah. That's the later Christian version of what we are seeing here in ancient Israel.
- John Bytheway: 00:10:17 Yeah. Which helps because now you're connecting things that might seem strange to something we're familiar with, the idea of taking that sacrifice, making it part of us by putting it inside.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:10:27 There's one more set of rituals that would've occurred in the outer courtyard as the average non priestly Israelite worshiper, your job is now done. You've done your part. You've brought the animal, you and the priest have sacrificed it together. The priest has roasted the meat. You've maybe eaten the meat depending on the specific type of sacrifice, but at this point, the priest will continue some of his ritual activities moving closer to the sanctuary itself. So you remember that the next item of furniture within that outer court space is a basin of water. As you could probably imagine, after that sacrificial ritual, the priest is going to have a lot of blood on his hands and maybe even on his garments as well. And so before that priest can

proceed into the next sacred space, through that curtain, into the holy place, the priest will need to go to this basin of water and wash the sacrificial blood from his hands.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:11:15 So this basin of water in the temple courtyard, there's no indication it has anything to do with ritual immersion or baptism. Those are certainly later Christian ideas that could resonate with a water feature like this. But in ancient Israel, this washing basin seemed to be mostly for the washing of the priests, their hands and their feet. And Leviticus says even their garments, if any blood had gotten on them, they can wash themselves clean of the sacrificial blood at this basin of water. And that basin of water then also allows them to perform the necessary ritual purification washings that would allow them to now enter the next zone of sacredness, which is the holy place, which is just on the other side of the curtain that you see here in this picture for those two activities of ritual sacrifice and then ritual, washing both the two main activities that would've occurred in the outer court.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:12:04 That's another great image from Balage, that he actually shows us a lot of what we just described. In fact, this might give us a fun chance to just summarize this. So you'll notice here that you'd see in the reconstruction, you can see the high priests walking around in his garments and you can see the other Aaronic priests walking around in their robes and caps and sashes. You can see here on the left, in the left corner, you can see the artist put in some tables, right? That would be the idea that would be where some of the butcher activity would occur. The slaughtering of the animal, the processing of it. But then you can see over here on the altar, you could see the priest reaching over and putting the meat on the alter. You can see the fire being kindled underneath it.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:12:36 So there he is, roasting the meat. And then if you go beyond that closer to the sanctuary, you can see a basin of water. You can see the priest washing the blood from his hands, becoming ritually purified through that basin of water. And then once he's been purified, you see another priest parting that curtain, and now going into the holy place, which is the inner court of the actual tent sanctuary. So it's in this space that now only the Aaronic priests can access. So remember each zone becomes increasingly holy and also increasingly restrictive. Israelites could be in the outer court with the priests, but once you pass through that initial curtain, now you're into the holy place. And now only the priests can minister on behalf of Israel in that space, the closer we get to God's presence. This is Daniel

Smith's digital reconstruction of what that interior space would look like.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:13:23 In the holy place or inner court of the temple, the book of Exodus describes three main items of furniture. There is on the south side, the menorah, which is a seven branched golden candlestick. The description of the text seems to indicate that the menorah is like a tree. There's a lot of speculation is this meant to be like the tree of life. We mentioned earlier, there's a lot of garden imagery here that connects the tabernacle space with the paradise of God and the garden of Eden, Genesis: 2-3. So there's some potential connections here with Genesis. But in addition to this tree imagery, the seven branches of this golden candlestick or menorah all support oil lamps. So there's oil lamps on top. And these lamps were meant to be lit by the Aaronic priests every morning and every evening. So they keep it burning throughout the day. And again, it, what does it mean? What does it symbolize?
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:14:09 In an ancient Israelite setting? It probably just has to do with representing the divine presence. It's the divine light. It's representing God's house that we're maintaining and we're maintaining his presence in it. So the menorah is a really important item of furniture in the holy place. If we then turned around at a 180 and we're now on the north side of the interior space, we have the table of show bread. Here, we have 12 loaves of unleavened bread, along with vessels of wine and probably some cups of incense as well. And again, this is going to be the table of the Lord. If this is God's house, this is the dining place of the house. Again, in ancient, near Eastern cultures, it was very common to have food in the house of the deity as a way to maintain the presence of the deity.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:14:50 And that's an idea that might not resonate with our modern Western thinking as much, but in the ancient middle Eastern context of early Israel, this idea of maintaining God's presence in his house by setting out a feast where symbolically he and Israel can dine together is pretty significant. And so every Sabbath, every Saturday, the priest would come and replace these 12 unleavened loaves, and probably eat the previous ones and drink the wine and replace it and keep that table furnished before the Lord. So between the menorah and the table of show bread, those are two aspects of God's house that the priests are tending to on behalf of Israel.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:15:23 And then finally, the last item of furniture in the holy place is going to be the altar of incense. So this will be the second altar of the tabernacle, but this altar is not a sacrificial altar. This altar

is the altar that's placed right in front of the final veil. And final veil of course, leading into the Holy of Holies. But before you get into the Holy of Holies, this altar of incense stands right before the curtain, and it seems to be an altar of prayer. As the Israeli priest, the Aaronic priest would come into this space and would take incense in their hand, they'd put the incense on this altar, which itself has a grate and a fire underneath it and would burn the incense. God's throne room is just on the other side. As the incense is going up, the priest will raise his hands above his head, that's the ancient gesture of prayer that all ancient cultures used, and as the smoke went up, the hands of the priest would go up and the priest would utter prayer on behalf of Israel, that means he's representing Israel to God.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:16:17

So as you can imagine, the smoke rising, the Israelite priest raising his hands above his head, offering prayer on behalf of the community of Israel, that's going to be the main ritual activity of this particular feature. And for this feature, I actually should take a step back and notice that in Exodus 29, and Leviticus 9, we are told about what's called the daily offering. So in addition to all the different ritual activities that's occurring with the different sacrifices in the courtyard, the different lamp tending and table setting of the holy place, the Pentateuch legislates that twice a day, a communal ritual would be offered by the priest on behalf of Israel, it's called the daily offering. It would happen every morning, around 9:00 AM and every afternoon around 3:00 PM. And every day a lamb would be offered for Israel in the outer court on behalf of the entire community, the nation of Israel. And then the priest would come into the holy place and offer incense as the smoke rises, his hands are above his head. He's offering prayer on behalf of Israel to God. That ritual sequence of sacrifice and prayer at the incense altar would've happened every morning and every afternoon. And it would conclude by the priest having just represented Israel to God through the hand raised prayer, the priest will now turn around and represent God to Israel by emerging from the sanctuary.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:17:41

So he's now back into the outer court, he'll raise his hands above his head again, and now pronounce the priestly blessing of God upon Israel. So he's represented Israel to God through the prayer, but now he's going to represent God to Israel through the blessing. And so when he is out in the outer courtyard, he will raise his hands and bless Israel after the prayer, bless Israel with the language of Numbers 6, "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord's face shine upon you and give you peace." And that twice a day, communal ceremony, meaning community based ceremony will occur

every morning and every afternoon, and will include the sacrifice, the prayer and the blessing. So it's kind of fascinating to see the daily operations of the temple, both as individuals, but also as kind of the community prayer service. So it's like, thanks for coming to the temple this morning. We'll see you this afternoon. That's the general function of this incense altar. It's a prayer altar that's set before the final veil on our journey into the presence of God.

- Hank Smith: 00:18:33 This is really fun stuff. I mean, I've seen pictures like this before, and I've understood a little bit about Yom Kippur, but just to hear about the daily rituals, it's really fascinating. If I have my Latter-day Saint lens on, I can see a lot of overlay with the altar right in front of the veil.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:18:50 Exactly. So with all the differences and the similarities, I mean together, I think this is how we work through temple literacy. We understand how this worked in antiquity. We understand the shared conceptual vocabulary and note the differences. And I think all of those steps are really important. Temple preparation and temple education or biblical and modern people's.
- John Bytheway: 00:19:08 Speaking of shared vocabulary. So what did you call it, the basin of water?
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:19:14 Brass laver, I think is what the King James calls it the brazen laver.
- John Bytheway: 00:19:18 And they would wash their hands before going into the holy place.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:19:22 That's right.
- John Bytheway: 00:19:22 So what came to mind was that oft quoted scripture mastery, Psalms 24: 3-4, "Who shall ascend to the hill of the Lord? Who shall go to the holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart." This was literally clean hands. Today we can compare that to clean hands, doing good things, not staining yourself with sin and pure heart, pure intent. So I'm hearing that and I'm going, hey, that's the Psalm right there, clean hands before going to the holy place and the hill of the Lord, which is the temple.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:19:55 Which is the temple, exactly. That's a great reminder by the way that, in later Israelite temple worship, so in other words, as this system developed over the centuries within the ancient Israelite

community, the ceremonies themselves came to become more elaborate. Eventually you had priestly choirs and priestly musicians who would perform, who would chant the Psalms, or specific Psalms in the outer courtyard while the sacrifices were happening. And so one of the Psalms, these are basically temple hymns, many of the Psalms are the temple hymns sung by the Levitical choirs in the outer courtyard to accompany the sacrificial activities. And so several of these hymns actually contain language that you can easily imagine describing the sacrifices or describing the ritual purifications, the one that you gave John as a great example of Psalm 24. It seems to be a bit of a call and response hymn. "Who shall ascend to the mountain of the Lord?" Is one chant. Then the other chant is, "He that has clean hands and a pure heart." So there almost might have been a call and response baked into the hymn.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:20:56 But of course these aren't hymns in the modern Protestant four part harmony sense. These are ancient middle Eastern chants, but chanting the words of the Psalms that accompany the sacrifice. That's a reminder that the temple experience of ancient Israel within this tabernacle and later Solomon's temple space was just an immersive sensory experience. And what I mean by that is, if you can imagine everything we just described, imagine physically taking that in. So you go in, there's the butcher shop component here. There's the barbecue smell coming off the altar here, literally like roast lamb meat. Then you have the incense wafting out from the sanctuary. And the whole thing is being accompanied by Levitical choirs chanting the Psalms.
- Hank Smith: 00:21:36 And the clothing as well.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:21:38 You could just imagine, the sensory...
- John Bytheway: 00:21:40 You're seeing, you're hearing it, you're smelling it.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:21:43 It is taking you to a different place. And again, that speaks to this idea that the temple is the meeting place between our earthly existence and the heavenly realm, and everything about the sensory experience of this ancient Israelite temple space, it's just taking you away. It's taking you into the realm of God. And you can smell it, you can see it, you can hear it. And the cacophony of senses that were engaged in ancient Israelite temple worship is pretty remarkable. The only thing that I've ever seen that has come close to this is, if you ever go to a Greek Orthodox service. I have a lot of holy envy for our Greek Orthodox friends. They absorbed in Greek Orthodox or Eastern Orthodox liturgy, more broadly, have absorbed a lot of this

temple imagery. And so if you go to a Greek or Eastern Orthodox service, you'll also see the chanting, you'll see the iconography, you'll smell the incense, and you'll see the liturgical furniture laid out, bringing you closer and closer to the space of God.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:22:32 So a lot of this material that we're studying here from the book of Exodus can also not just inform Latter-day Saint temple practice, this can inform Catholic mass experience or the experience of Eastern Orthodox service because this temple material from the old Testament is the foundation of later Jewish and Christian religious worship in various communities. And so literacy with this material benefits a lot of different communities today just to understand where their forms of worship come from.

Hank Smith: 00:22:58 Do we know how often an average Israelite would go to the temple or even a Levite? How often is he going to work in the temple?

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:23:06 Those are really great questions. The book of Exodus and Leviticus, they don't address that directly, but from other sources and other later Jewish history, we can pull together a basic picture of this. It seems like for the most part, you would probably only go to the temple a few times in your life, depending on where you lived, of course. If you were in Jerusalem, maybe you went much more often. We read about in the New Testament, for example, individuals who went to the temple daily. So there are clearly people who lived nearby, who would attend the temple frequently, but for who lived in Galilee or part of the larger Mediterranean world, these were pilgrimage events, maybe once or twice a year, if you could afford that, you'd go to the temple for a pilgrimage festival. Maybe people couldn't afford even that. So we don't really know exactly how often people would've gone, probably depended on their proximity to the temple, how often they would've wanted to make that journey down to the temple, especially the farther away you live.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:23:52 If you are a Levite or a priest, by the time you get to the later Old Testament writings, and certainly by the time of the New Testament, the Levites and priests themselves had multiplied exceedingly. There are priests and Levites living in so many different communities. So they arranged a system where they would come on rotation during the year. So any given Levite or priestly family living in whatever village would probably have two to five weeks a year. And so these rotating courses, and sometimes called the 24 priestly courses, each had their

designated time during the year where they would come, service the temple in these ways, and then they would go back home for the rest of the year where they would live in these villages. The New Testament example of a lot of these stories of course is the father of John the Baptist, Zechariah.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:24:37 So Zechariah lives in a village outside of Jerusalem, but he's of a priestly course whose rotation is up. And they come to the temple for their week or two rotation, and the lot falls to him, Hey, while you're here, by the way, lucky you, you get to be the one to burn incense at the daily offering. And so the whole story of Zechariah as a priest at the altar of incense, of course, this is in Herod's temple later on, but at the altar of incense, raising his hands above his head, the smoke is going up. He's offering the prayer on behalf of Israel, during that daily service, and that's when Gabriel appears, in that moment of the offering.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:25:06 And when he comes out, you'll notice he tries to give the priestly blessing. He gestures towards it, but he can't do it because he has been struck dumb. And so that whole story of Zechariah serving in the temple is the story of a priest on rotation, facilitating these rituals, having the opportunity to be the incense offerer or the prayer offerer in a daily sacrifice and coming out to give the blessing, but he can't because he was struck dumb as a result of the exchange with Gabriel. So that whole story is very much part of this temple system only in a first century version.
- John Bytheway: 00:25:34 I love it too, because it tells us of what priesthood he would've had and John the Baptist.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:25:41 Yeah. So Luke 1, infers that John the Baptist is born into a priestly family. He's not only of the tribe of Levi, but within that tribe, he's an Aaronic priest. So he is of the line that has that Aaronic or Aaronide priesthood. So he would've served at the altar or he would've helped facilitate the sacrifices. John's father Zechariah did those very things when his course was on rotation.
- John Bytheway: 00:26:02 And what is it? The Course of Abia it says?
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:26:04 Yeah, Abia.
- John Bytheway: 00:26:07 I need you to be my pronouncing gadget here.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:26:10 Yeah, it's fun. So in any case, I hope this has been helpful and we're not quite finished yet, but as we're just going space to

space, kind of understanding how this space functioned, how it operated, trying to get a sense of the experience that an ancient Israelite would've had in this space as described by the text. There's one more space of course, that we want to explore. And that will be the space of the Holy of Holies. Hank you'd mentioned earlier that even though we're mostly now talking about the daily routine of the temple, there was also an annual ritual called the Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement ritual. And this was the one time a year when the high priest would part that final veil and go into the Holy of Holies, which is the holiest and most sacred zone within the space of the ancient tabernacle or ancient temple.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:26:53 Let me make a few observations about the Holy of Holies itself, and then we will kind of conclude here in just a few minutes. So the Holy of Holies has one item of furniture in it, it's called the Ark of the Covenant. Of course, this is an item that is described by the book of Exodus and Leviticus. There are lots of early narratives in Hebrew Bible that deal with the Ark of the Covenant. Eventually it disappears. It is no longer part of later Jewish temples, but at least in this early Israeli period, the Ark of the Covenant was the main item of furniture that existed in the Holy of Holies, because the Holy of Holies was viewed as God's throne room. So if the temple or the tabernacle is God's house, or is his tent, the Holy of Holies is his throne room. Just like a palace of an ancient near Eastern monarch would have a palace with a throne, well, this is God's palace and his throne room.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:27:37 So this is a very common idea in ancient near Eastern Temple's broadly and in ancient Israel God had a throne room and it was the Holy of Holies. The Ark of the Covenant is covered by an item called the Mercy Seat. And it's a Mercy Seat because it is a throne. It is God's throne. It's where God sits, and the Ark of the Covenant is his foot stool. And the throne of God, where God sits, the Mercy Seat, where God dispenses his mercy to his people, on the day of atonement, when the high priest parts that final veil and goes into the Holy of Holies, it's going to be this item of furniture, God's throne, where God's grace and mercy will be dispensed to his people, to Israel and where the high priest will make the final purification rituals for the year to purify himself and the sanctuary and the whole community.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:28:25 It's kind of the annual purging or cleansing of all impurities and all sin that exists just to have a once in a year house cleaning ritual. And in that ritual, the high priest will go to the Ark of the Covenant with the Mercy Seat on it and we'll offer certain incense and blood gestures here as well. But before we leave

the Ark of the Covenant, though, I do want to point out that the Ark itself comprises of the box, which is the foot stool. Inside the box are some of Israel's sacred relics. The lid or the Mercy Seat, the throne of God, where He sits to dispense his mercy to his community. And on top of the Mercy Seat are going to be two cherubim. Now, cherubim are these creatures that are fairly common in ancient near Eastern iconography. They're composite creatures. They have the bodies of one creature and maybe the wings of an Eagle or something like that.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:29:13 These are very common in ancient near Eastern iconography as guardians of the divine throne. So in any context, whether it be Mesopotamian or Egyptian or Israelite, the throne of the deity is guarded by these angelic creatures. And to get into the throne, you have to pass through these creatures. In fact, it's these same angelic guardian figures, these cherubim that guard God's throne on the Mercy Seat or on the Ark of the Covenant. You'll notice that according to Exodus and Leviticus, those very same images are embroidered on the temple veil. Because again, once you're passing through that final temple veil into the Holy of Holies, you are entering God's throne room. That's where he sits, that's where he lives.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:29:55 And very common in the ancient near east was to have these guardian figures with eagle wings or lion bodies or whatever, these cherubim figures guarding the way. And so the priest has to go through the veil, passing these guardian figures to get into the presence of God, which itself is a throne room flanked by the cherubim. So again, a lot of really important cultural differences today in Christian and Latter-day Saint communities. We don't tend to resonate with the cherubim images. We have our own versions of this idea of angelic sentinels at the throne of God or the presence of God. You need to pass the angels who stand as sentinels to get into God's presence. The ancient middle Eastern or ancient Israelite version of that are cherubim. These guardian figures around God's throne that you need to pass in order to get into God's presence.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:30:41 And so on the day of atonement, the high priest who, by the way, is now dressed down on the day of atonement. This is all from Leviticus 16. If you want that full annual ritual described. The high priest will dress down. He'll remove his blue robe and some of the other items, the Ephod is gone, but he'll just be in his priestly white robe, white cap and sash. And he will bring in incense and blood through that veil, passing those guardian creatures into the presence of God, will offer the incense, the Holy of Holies is now filled with the incense smoke, again, signifying the divine presence. The book of Exodus says that

when the high priest approaches the Ark of the Covenant, I will meet you there. In other words, that's where I will talk with you, that's where I will appear to you. And so, because God's presence was often seen as so holy, the high priest would fill the whole room with incense.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:31:26 So it's, again, you're kind of clouding God's presence a little bit, or maybe even protecting himself from the power of God's holiness or the power of God's presence. But in any case, he's got the incense, he dabs the blood on the Ark of the Covenant, and then proceeds out of the Holy of Holies back into the outer court where he'll perform a series of other rituals, the scapegoat rituals, and other rituals that would ritually purify the tabernacle, himself, the community of Israel. And that once a year liturgical experience is the only time of the year that the Holy of Holies would've been accessed only by that high priest.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:31:57 So what we've just done then is, we've just walked through the major spaces of the ancient tabernacle, the outer court, the inner court or holy place, and the Holy of Holies just to get a sense of what's in these places. How do these places function on a daily basis, or even sometimes on an annual basis with a larger community ritual, like the day of atonement? And I hope that's just been a helpful journey through this experience. I think by taking a step back and looking at the big picture, seeing how it's all laid out, trying to understand it in its original context, that makes reading these chapters a lot easier, because now you're able to go chapter for chapter and read, "Oh, this is the sacrificial process for this offering." Or, "Oh, this is the priestly clothing for that moment," or whatever. And now you're able to plug it into the bigger picture.

John Bytheway: 00:32:42 Oh, this is great. I have a couple of questions. You use the word cherubim and I know this, sometimes the Old Testament, I'm thinking particularly of like the call of Isaiah in Isaiah 6 talks about seraphim. Are cherubim and seraphim angelic beings both, right? Are they the same?

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:33:02 I think they're similar, but they are slightly different. So in Isaiah 6, this of course, Isaiah is living in the day when there was a permanent temple in Jerusalem. So everything that we've just seen here in a portable temporary tent based condition, of course, is later standardized in the Jerusalem temple. Solomon's temple will be constructed. And it's during the later century or two of Solomon's temple that we get Isaiah. And Isaiah 6, is his prophetic call narrative. It's his moment where he's called by the God of Israel and given this message. And he experiences a vision. It's really hard to know from the text, is he actually in the

temple? Is Isaiah a priest who's actually in Solomon's temple and experiencing this physically? Or is he having a vision? It's really hard to say. If it's a visionary experience that might tap into later Jewish ideas of there being a heavenly temple.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:33:53 So meaning the earthly temple is simply the earthly shadow of heavenly reality, which is the temple in heaven. In which case, several Old Testament, early Jewish writers will have visionary experiences where they go to the heavenly temple, which the earthly temple is simply a counterpart. It's possible that Isaiah might be having an early vision of the heavenly temple in which case he's brought up and he sees the heavenly version of this. He sees God actually on his throne, in the heavenly Holy of Holies dressed in similar temple robes, by the way, his robes fill the temple. And surrounding God's throne room are seraphim, which are angelic creatures. They don't necessarily need to look exactly like the cherubim, the lion body and the eagle wings, but they are angel figures who are on fire, because the word seraph in Hebrew means to be on fire. So the seraphim are the fiery angels around God's throne.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:34:46 So it's like the cherubim guarding the Ark of the Covenant, but only it's the fiery creatures surrounding God's throne. And they're singing hymns. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. They're singing these hymns in the heavenly throne room or the heavenly Holy of Holies. And in Isaiah's call narrative, it's one of those seraphim, the fiery guardians of God's throne who goes to the incense altar, in front of that final veil and takes some of the burning coals of the incense and places it on Isaiah's lips and purifies Isaiah's lips and gives him that empowerment that now allows Isaiah to go preach his message. So the prophetic call narrative of Isaiah is very much in a temple setting, either the earthly temple in Jerusalem or a visionary experience in the heavenly temple, but he is commissioned in a temple setting to begin his prophetic work.

John Bytheway: 00:35:34 Yeah. That's what this kept reminding me of. The Book of Mormon wants us to know about Isaiah's call too. And because it's in there in the Book of Mormon, it calls them seraphim because it's plural, the I-M in Hebrew. But in the Old Testament, King James, it calls them seraphims. It puts an S at the end of it.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:35:53 That's kind of funny. See the quirkiness of translation come out there.

John Bytheway: 00:35:57 Yeah. I tell my students that's like saying geeses. But the other thing I wanted to mention was that we hear some of our own hymns in some of the things we've talked about. I had the hymn

of, I Stand all Amazed going through in my mind, I will praise and adore at the Mercy Seat. You've taught us the Mercy Seat was the top of the Ark of the Covenant where the Lord sat, right?

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:36:21 That's right. It's the throne of God.
- John Bytheway: 00:36:23 Yeah. So cool. So when people sing that hymn, they can think of what we've just talked about. I will praise and adore at the Mercy Seat. At his glorified throne, I kneel at his feet.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:36:33 Just to kind of wrap up our survey then of this material, in Exodus 40, and maybe part of Leviticus 9, we get a description of how this entire system was constructed, and then finally dedicated, literally sanctified or handed over to the Lord to be his dwelling place. And in Exodus 40, we are told that this is going to be the moment of dedication. The whole structure is anointed. The priests are anointed with oil. And with this, the divine presence becomes manifest as a cloud coming down from heaven, and as fire coming down from the sky. And following this remarkable dedication, which itself is a theophany, it's a manifestation of the God of Israel among his people, we now get this image of God dwelling among his people as a pillar of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:37:22 So both of those images appear in the dedication narrative of the tabernacle in Exodus and maybe a little bit in Leviticus 9 as well. And after that, the cloud of smoke and the pillar of fire became very important images to early Israel, to within early Judaism, and even within later Christian and Latter-day Saint circles of the notion of the presence of God dwelling among you, all coming from that dedicatory moment of the tabernacle, an event that was replicated in some ways with the dedication of Solomon's temple as well. So it's a fascinating way to conclude the narrative, having now just described all the details of the measurements and the different types of fabrics and the clothing and the sacrificial rituals to set it all up to anoint it, to dedicate it to God, make it a holy space. And then as part of that dedication, God enters his house as symbolized by the pillar of smoke and the pillar of fire is a pretty powerful symbol that reminded Israel that God was with them.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:38:16 Well, I hope that this has been a helpful overview of the ancient tabernacle system and the ancient priesthood system. To conclude then, I just wanted to make a few final observations that I hope will be helpful going forward. As I mentioned at the very beginning, there's lots of different ways that modern faith communities can interpret the significance of these features,

that can see meaning in these features, from where they are standing. The way that we've tried to approach it here is by trying to stay close to what's in the text of Exodus and Leviticus. Like what's actually in the text of the Torah, and then try to situate that within its original ancient near Eastern context. What would this stuff have looked like and been experienced by ancient Israel themselves, within their cultural setting.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:38:59 Having said that though, obviously later communities and other communities will look back on this material and find other ways to make sense of it or other layers of significance to them. So for example, in the Book of Mormon, we have Jacob who from his Nephite perspective, he looked at this material as being very Messianic. So in the Book of Mormon, you get it, this idea that the rituals of the ancient temple were Messiah focused. And so in Jacob's writings, he talks about how we felt that these things pointed our minds to the future Messiah who would come and save us. And that's a really powerful lens for some communities to look at this material. I do want to point out it's probably not the lens that the ancient Israelites themselves had on most naturally or most easily. There's just not a lot of direct evidence in the Torah, in the Pentateuch or in other early Jewish writings that when Israelites or early Jews would go to the temple, go through the sacrificial rituals, that they saw a messianic significance.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:39:59 They are seeing rituals of purification. They're seeing rituals of reconciliation. They're seeing rituals that would allow the God of Israel to continue to dwell among them. And those are very powerful concepts within their time and place. But other communities can take off that lens or maybe keep that lens on, but put on a different lens, and that is the lens of Jesus. So in later communities, not necessarily the Old Testament, at least as far as we have record of, as far as we know it, we don't know how many Israelites went to the ancient temple and saw Messianic meaning there, but within the Nephi community, they definitely did. So Jacob tells us that the lens that he had on was a lens of Christ. So he would say, Jacob, a Book of Mormon writer on another part of the world, another part of the planet, would say that through their understanding, through their revelations, they would see some of this as pointing their souls to Jesus.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:40:48 But even within Nephite rhetoric, we're pretty regularly reminded that most people probably didn't see it that way. when Lehi talks about a Messiah in 1st Nephi 1 and 2, most people in Jerusalem had no idea what he's even talking about. What do you even mean by that? So that gives the impression

that most of those people going to Solomon's temple were not thinking Messianically, but Lehi was and Nephi was, and Jacob was. And so that's one community who their interpretive approach to this tabernacle was Messianic. And having said that, the strongest biblical parallel to seeing this material in a Messianic way is going to be by early Christians. So if we fast forward to the time of the New Testament, that is where we have a group of followers of Jesus. Jesus, the Messiah who has now died on a cross and was resurrected.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:41:37 And that group of early Jesus followers has to find a way to make sense of why Jesus had to die. And more than that, they've got to find ways to tell others why Jesus' death has meaning. And so for those early Christians looking back onto the tabernacle, they found an enormous amount of riches, of metaphorical language that they could use to describe Jesus. They could use to find meaning in Jesus' death. So how do we understand Jesus' death? Why does that matter? Well, it's like in the Old Testament temple, it's like in the Jerusalem temple or the ancient tabernacle. You know how they would perform rituals of sacrifice to provide reconciliation or purification, well Jesus' death is like that. And next thing you know, you start to get really great early Christian imagery of Jesus as our ultimate atoning sacrifice, using language drawn from this ancient temple system, but then applying it to Jesus, and the same thing with the idea of a mediating priest.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:42:36 So not only did early Christians look back on the tabernacle and see imagery of sacrificial atonement that could help inform the way they view Jesus's death, but they could also look back on the rituals of priestly mediation and say, well, Jesus is like that. Just like the ancient high priest mediated between Israel and God or between heaven and earth, well, that's what Jesus is. He's like our great high priest. And he's like the ultimate version of that. And so I just wanted to help us become a little more sensitive to the ways that we're interpreting this material. Restoration scripture acknowledges that God can speak to different peoples in different times and places, according to their cultural understanding. So I don't think we need to manipulate the original significance of this tabernacle system to appreciate the ways in which it could also apply to other faith traditions.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:43:28 We can easily find ourselves looking back on this and saying, wow, there's a lot about that that resonates with me as I try to make sense of the death of Jesus. Or as I try to articulate why Jesus had to die, well, it's like a sacrificial atonement. What is Jesus doing right now? Well, it's like he's a high priest mediating

for us at the throne of God. And I think the best early Christian example of this, is the letter to the Hebrews. Hebrews is by far the most extensive New Testament treatment of a Christ centered reading of this tabernacle material. So for example, Hebrews 4-7, takes all of this mediating high priest imagery, and Jesus is the ultimate high priest. So if in a Christian or a modern Latter-day Saint setting, you've ever heard Jesus referred to as your great high priest.

- Hank Smith: 00:44:16 High priest of good things to come, yeah.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:44:19 Exactly. That's quoting the letter to the Hebrews, which basically says, look, the high priest of the Jerusalem temple or the high priest of the ancient tabernacle was simply the earthly shadow of the ultimate heavenly reality, which is Jesus. So Hebrews 4-7, envisions there being a heavenly temple playing with the old Platonic notions of types and shadows. So the idea that the real temple is in heaven and the real mediating high priest is Jesus, and what we just saw here on the earth was the earthly of the heavenly reality.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:44:53 So for the letter to the Hebrews, for that author, the priestly system of the tabernacle was a way to make sense of Jesus only that is as an earthly shadow of the heavenly reality. So Jesus is our great high priest. So any of that language of Jesus as your great mediator or your great intercessor or Jesus standing at God's throne making intercession for you as we speak, thus allowing us to with boldness and confidence approach the throne of God and receive that grace in time of need. All of that language is taken from the tabernacle material of Exodus, but it's the letter to the Hebrews saying that from his perspective, Jesus was the ultimate version of that.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:45:31 And similarly, Hebrews 8-10, does the same thing only now with the sacrifices. So this whole idea of Jesus' death as being our ultimate atoning sacrifice, that's Hebrew's way of saying that the earthly sacrifices of the ancient temple system or the ancient tabernacle system were simply the earthly shadows of the heavenly reality, the ultimate heavenly reality was Jesus's death. Everything on earth was just a shadow of it. And so I just wanted to point that out because a lot of times as modern Christians or as modern Latter-day Saints, we want to just jump right into this ancient material and just start imposing our own symbolic worldview onto it.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:46:11 And that has meaning. There's a reason why we so naturally feel that impulse. But I just wanted to help us be a little bit more sensitive, a little more nuanced in the way we approach this.

We do not need to erode the ancient Israelite meaning of this material by imposing our interpretation. I think we should appreciate both, both what it meant to ancient Israelites in their time and place and culture and what it can mean to us. So I just wanted us to be careful in the way that we interpret a lot of these things that we can both appreciate original context and modern resonance.

- Hank Smith: 00:46:43 This is just good scripture study skills. The idea of, let's see it, in its original place, in its original form as clearly as we can. And then if we want to put a Christian lens or a Latter-day Saint lens on it, we can, we just need to realize we're doing it. I noticed when Matthew records the Savior yielded up the ghost in Matthew 27:50, he immediately goes to the veil of the temple. He says the veil of the temple was rent in two, from the top to the bottom. So he's connecting the death of Christ to the temple, to the tabernacle. Probably the idea that the Holy of Holies is now more open than it was before.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:47:22 Open to God. Yeah. That's a fascinating example of... So Hebrews is the one who does this most extensively, but throughout other early Christian or New Testament writings, you have other Christian writers who are also exploring some of these connections between Jesus' death and the sacrifice. You get a lot of that in John. Jesus' death is like the sacrificial lamb.
- Hank Smith: 00:47:42 The Lamb of God.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:47:43 He dies for your sin. So there's a lot of that imagery in the gospel of John, again, going back to this system. But in the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Matthew, in particular, as you said, that is a fascinating example of how it might be exploring the connection of Jesus and the priest. Because remember the daily sacrifice was every 9:00 AM and 3:00 PM at which times the priest would be at the incense altar before the veil, with his hands upraised, offering his prayer. The synoptic tradition, Matthew, Mark and Luke place Jesus on the cross at 3:00 PM. At the very moment when the priest would've been at the altar of incense offering that hands raised prayer, just like Jesus on the cross. And then when Jesus just utters his final prayer, Matthew describes it, the veil of the temple rents.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:48:26 Matthew clearly is exploring that connection, that symbolic connection between what Jesus' death just accomplished in opening up the way to the presence of God for humanity. And so he doesn't come out and explicitly say, thus, Jesus is our great high priest. Hebrews does that. But Matthew and a few other texts certainly seem to be exploring connections early on,

as those early Christians themselves are trying to make sense of his death. And this tabernacle temple priesthood setting just gave them so much language to work with to try to understand why did Jesus have to die? And what does that mean for us?

Hank Smith: 00:49:00

Do you have a few minutes to tell us about what you see in the restoration with Joseph Smith, reaching back and pulling some of these things forward because even in the Kirtland Temple, don't you see some of this idea of there's a courtyard. Do you think that's meant to be there? You enter the Kirtland Temple, there's that little 10 foot space before you enter another area and then they could curtain off another area.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:49:23

Yeah, exactly. With the curtains in between. Absolutely. And this is maybe a really great point to end on. I'm assuming we have a predominantly Latter-day Saint audience for this podcast, although I hope that others could be listening and enjoy this conversation because I think there's so much about this ancient temple material that could inform a Catholic experience or an Eastern Orthodox experience or even other types of faith experiences. But from Latter-day Saints, we have a modern temple tradition. It's at the center of our religious life. I think you're absolutely right. Part of our temple literacy, arching back to our opening segment, part of our temple literacy is understanding how this ancient temple worked, how the similarities, the shared conceptual vocabulary can inform a Latter-day Saint temple experience, but also looking at the differences.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:50:02

So for Joseph Smith, as he is trying to create a temple centered community in 19th century America, I think we have several sources of inspiration for him. I think he himself is obviously living in a post Jesus era. He's Christian, so he's going to see a lot of Christological imagery in ancient temple practices. And he wants to try to incorporate some of that into the Latter-day Saint temple experience. I think that in later periods, especially when he gets to Nauvoo and others, he's got the book of Abraham and other cultural interactions that he's having that are definitely informing the way he's going to construct the ultimate endowment that Latter-day Saints will today experience. I think lots of sources of inspiration are flowing into that. A lot of those sources of course, indicating some of the differences between modern and ancient temple. Those are just as important to know as the similarities. But in terms of this biblical material in particular, I think it's pretty clear that from an early stage in Joseph Smith's own temple thinking and his own temple revelations, that this biblical material plays a really key role.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:51:01 So in Kirtland, the first time Joseph has the community build an actual temple, you'll notice it's probably not a coincidence that he was studying Hebrew with Joshua Seixas and he's reading through a lot of Old Testament in Hebrew. And at that very time in 1835 into early 1836, the very time that Kirtland Temple is being built and eventually dedicated, they start performing ritual washings and anointings, drawing upon the exact language from Exodus 28 and 29 and Leviticus 8 and 9. So Joseph Smith very much saw himself as bringing back some of those ancient priestly rituals from the Old Testament temple, incorporating them into a Latter-day Saint context, and then that of course also will influence his use of sacred space. I think Hank, you just mentioned that the way he developed the Kirtland Temple, it's fascinating because on its exterior, it's very, very 19th century America, in the exterior of the Kirtland Temple.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:51:52 In its interior use of space, it's very Protestant, in that it's benches are meant for preaching and listening, but he also divides it into three zones, and each zone is separated by a curtain that can be moved at various times. And at various sacred moments, the curtains are set up to make the back part, essentially a Holy of Holies, just like the ancient biblical temple. And it's course it's behind that curtain that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery have some of their most sacred revelatory experiences encountering Jesus and other divine beings. And it's very much the sacred space of theophany behind the curtain, that's all the conceptual idea that's drawn right from Old Testament. So even though he never does bring in the blood sacrifices, of course he as a Christian would see that as being done away within Jesus, he definitely brings in a lot of the priestly language. Although Joseph Smith will build upon Aaronic or Levitical priesthood language and say, well, now let's add to that a higher order of priesthood that did not exist in antiquity, at least in Jewish antiquity, this idea, the order of Melchizedek.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:52:51 So Joseph's definitely expanding upon those concepts, but at the end of the day, when temple endowment experiences revealed to him in Nauvoo, there's going to be a lot of similar forms. He will dress up, not only the men, but also the women in robes and caps and sashes. In other words, one of the key differences is that Joseph will take that concept of priesthood, and even this concept of sacred priesthood clothing to be used in sacred space and he'll apply it very much to the Nauvoo Temple endowment, but he'll expand upon it. Now he sees it in a Melchizedek priesthood framework, a fullness of the gospel framework from his perspective. And that is a framework in

which, which not only do hereditary, Aaronic men wear these sacred vestments, but all women and men of faith are washed, anointed, dressed in the robes of priesthood.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:53:35 And so Joseph is definitely building upon a biblical foundation. The biblical text is clearly informing his temple thinking and his temple revelations, but the final product that Joseph Smith reveals to us as a Latter-day Saint community is very much expanded with a Jesus centered, a Melchizedek priesthood framed version of what we saw in the Old Testament, which again, that just speaks to the need to understand the similarities, but also the differences. And it's in both that we come to increase our temple literacy as Bible readers, but also as modern temple going Latter-day Saints.

Hank Smith: 00:54:05 Matt, this has been fantastic. And I think I like this idea of we are becoming more temple literate, especially when it comes to the Old Testament tabernacle. Here you are a Bible scholar and a Latter-day Saint, I think our listeners would be interested in just your journey about those two worlds that you've experienced here for the last couple decades.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:54:29 So for me, the journey of both faith and scholarship, I think really began when I became active in the church when I was in high school. I had gone to church when I was younger. My family had been members of the church, but for me, kind of the moment of conversion that convinced me to be a believing practicing Latter-day Saint actually came through the process of study. As a junior or senior in high school, I started really studying scripture for the first time, started studying church history for the first time. And for me it was the process of learning that became itself a defining spiritual experience. And so when I went on my mission and one of my favorite things to do was not only to talk about the gospel message with others, but to study. We read a lot as missionaries. This was back in an earlier day when you had a little more flexibility there, perhaps.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:55:16 So I read a ton and studied a ton as a missionary. And for me, the process of study is not a dichotomy. Sometimes we're the ones to dichotomize that, where we say, well, you can be intellectual and learn stuff over here, but we really want to feel the spirit over here. I just think for Joseph Smith, that was a totally false dichotomy. And so for Joseph Smith, who we have this prophetic figure, who's having visions and revelations, and as part of that visionary and revelatory experience, he hires a Jewish scholar of Hebrew to come teach him Hebrew verbs and Hebrew grammar, because he felt that learning through the best books as he put it would actually make him a better

prophet. So for Joseph there never seems to have been any dichotomy between feeling the spirit and learning in an academic or an intellectual way as he's going through his work on the Bible.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:56:04 He seems to be reading biblical commentaries and learning from the scholars of his day and learning languages, all of which he's incorporating into his spiritual experience. And so, I say early on and all the way through my time as a missionary and as an undergraduate, I always really resonated with that dual approach of, I guess, what Elder Maxwell called being a disciple scholar. Once I got off my mission, I wanted to keep studying the world of scripture. I ended up landing mostly in the world of the Bible, although I'm still fascinated by early church history. I still love the early days of the Restoration, and trying to keep up with some of the great work that our Joseph Smith papers colleagues have done there and other great historians. But I just kind of find myself gravitating more and more to the world of the Bible.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:56:41 I spent some time in the holy land as an undergraduate, went to the BYU Jerusalem Center. So I came out of that experience convinced I wanted to go into biblical studies eventually with a focus in archeology and the social history of early Judaism. So I went off to graduate school. I spent eight years in graduate school. Two years at Andrews, one year at Oxford and five years at Chapel Hill, working through two Masters and a PhD. And through the process, of course, naturally you're being taught how to think critically and how to read texts critically and how to critically analyze faith traditions of the past. And it's inevitable that you're going to take those skills that you're learning and start looking at your own faith tradition with those skills. And all of a sudden you start reading your own scripture a little more deeply in your own religious experience, a little more analytically.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:57:23 And to be sure, that process can be a lot of wrestling, can include a lot of wrestling. A lot of previous assumptions that I had had all of a sudden are very challenged and I have to think through that. So there are definitely some moments of wrestle and challenge. I think those are necessary moments. I don't think that the process of becoming a disciple scholar comes easily or cheaply. It comes through a lot of soul searching and a lot of wrestling and a lot of needing to process new information. So as I come to realize, oh, the biblical text is more complicated than I once thought. Or maybe these authorship issues are a little more nuanced than I once thought, or a hundred of those types of questions.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:57:58 Definitely, there's a lot of challenge to previous assumptions, but I think in the process, at least from my experience and I recognize that different people have different experiences. My experience was that process of wrestling and working through the faith and the scholarship issues, the moments of strength, but also the moments of tension, at the end of the day, I think produced a much more mature and pliable faith for me than what I had as a missionary. As a missionary, probably most of us, we're very black and white in our thinking, and there's definitely truth. We affirm truth, but at the same time, I think a mature pliable faith is what helps us to navigate the complexities of scholarship. And I think the end result is someone who is an informed disciple scholar, someone who can be all in on their faith and their discipleship and who can also be responsible with the scholarship, be informed in scholarship, be maybe more nuanced sometimes in the way we approach certain scriptural passages or certain traditions.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:58:55 And I think that that is exactly the type of process that we need to go through in order to be effective teachers in the church and teachers in God's kingdom, to have an informed faith, an informed discipleship. So for me, that's been something that's kind-of been developing from the time I started becoming active as a Latter-day Saint and has just continued to grow with a lot of struggles, a lot of wrestle ups and downs. But I think that the end results, and I'm not a final product by any means, none of us are finished products, we're still in process, but I have thoroughly been enriched by the challenges of combining faith and scholarship and hope to continue to do both in the years ahead.
- Hank Smith: 00:59:30 John, what a great day we've had today with Dr. Grey. What a blessing to better understand the ancient tabernacle. I feel like I could walk around the tabernacle and know my way around a little bit more. Know who's doing what and why.
- John Bytheway: 00:59:46 And I feel more complimented that you referred to me as an ancient tabernacle at the beginning.
- Hank Smith: 00:59:50 Yeah, that's why, because I knew we were going to walk away with such a great feeling about it. Dr. Grey, thank you so much for being with us. We want to thank all of our listeners. We want to thank our executive producers, Steve and Shannon Sorensen and our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen. And we hope all of you will join us next week on our next episode of FollowHIM.