



Week 7: EXODUS – THE TABERNACLE (Exodus 25 & 26) Discussion Questions

Connecting from last week: Last week we asked: “Which of the commandments could you grow into more this week?” How did you go with this challenge?

1. Who is the most famous person alive today with whom you would love to meet? If the opportunity arose to meet with them, how would you feel and how would you approach it?
2. What do you find most amazing about the intimacy with which we can meet with God? How have you known this to be true in your life? In what way have you struggled with it?

Read Exodus 25:1-10

3. In what way was God coming to dwell with his people such a significant event? How was this part of a promise fulfilled? How does Jesus fully fulfil this?
4. In what way was God’s coming to dwell with his people still limited? Why was this the case?
5. What was to be the role of the Tabernacle in the life of this newly rescued and commissioned Israel? (see Exodus 25:8-9; 29:44-46). Think also of the ark and the role of sacrifice.
6. What was significant about the ark which was contained within the tent?
7. In what way does the Tabernacle point to Jesus coming to dwell with us? How is he ‘God with Us’ and how is this even greater than that of the Tabernacle?
8. What was the significance of the *lid* or *cover* of the ark of the covenant? (see Exodus 25:17-22; 37:6; refer sermon and Leviticus 16:6-17). How is Jesus our atonement cover? (see Romans 3:23-25)
9. How is it that people who fail God (as we do!) can now dwell with him? (see Hebrews 10:19-25)
10. Have you ever neglected your relationship with God? What gets in the way? How can we help one another to grow in intimacy with the Holy Spirit who dwells in us? Share with the group your current habit in terms of drawing close to God so that you might encourage one another to do so more and more!
11. Why is the great hope of knowing God in fullness for eternity so good?
12. How can we enjoy God more? Revel in his presence more? Acknowledge his presence more? Realise his presence more? How can we better live out and give expression to all that God dwelling with us by His Spirit, must surely mean?

For application this week: Think about something challenging in your upcoming week. What difference does it make to know that God is with us in the power of his Spirit and we will be reunited with him one day?

Talk 7/9 (Exodus: The God Who Rescues): 28/08/16

“The Tabernacle” by the Rev’d Adam Lowe

Bible Passage: Exodus 25-26

INTRODUCTION \ GOD’S DESIRE TO MEET WITH US

We’ve been moving through the book of Exodus,
having seen so far that God, is indeed the God who rescues.

- God’s people were enslaved,
he heard their cries,
delivered them out of Egypt,
and gave them ten commandments so that they could live as his people.
- The great realisation of God being their God, and they being his people, is unfolding.
- And so now we come to this large section in Exodus all about the Tabernacle.
- Chapters 25-31 detail everything about how the Tabernacle is to be built and utilised, whilst chapters 35-39 tell us how this was all carried out.
- Tabernacle just means a residence, a dwelling place,
but of course what makes it important, is who dwells in it.

You can think of the structure of the Tabernacle in three concentric circles.

- At the very centre, with the ark of the covenant, is the presence of Yahweh, this is the holiest of holies.
- Next, sheltering that sanctuary, is the holy place, in which the priests would track in and out of.
- Finally, was the outer court, the areas of preparation, in which people would come to seek God's presence, and make continual sacrifices and offerings in response to God's grace.
- And so the instructions for construction are elaborate!
- God is precise in his various specifications and design, not only in the materials, or the measurements, but even in the usage.
- *We can sometimes hear all of this and think, 'isn't this a bit over the top', isn't this a bit too much? What can some elaborate tent in the desert have to do with me?*
- *And if we think that, that's because we've missed the significance of what's happening.*
- Because the Tabernacle, is literally the Holy Place in which God can settle down in their midst and meet with them.
- This is the most amazing opportunity for the people to respond **in worship** to God's desire to dwell with them.

3

- *Remember, that was always the goal: let my people go in order that they may worship the Lord.*

Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will **dwell** among them. (25:8)

- We too readily skip over the significance of God wanting to dwell with his people, **because we take for granted just how amazing this news really is.**
- SO THE BIG IDEA. God establishing the Tabernacle, shows us not only that God wants to meet with his people, but also that he wants to meet with you and me.
- And the Tabernacle points to how that is all made possible through Jesus Christ.

The Tabernacle shows us that...

- **God Meets us IN HIS SON;**
- **God Meets us THROUGH HIS DEATH; and**
- **God Meets us IN OUR HEARTS.**

4

God Meets Us in HIS SON \ GOD WITH US

So first, the Tabernacle shows us that God meets us **in his son**.

- When God says that he wishes to dwell with his people, it's a radical thing.
- We can kind of think in some modern way, that God owes us his company.
- But ancient people just didn't think like that.
- Not only could the idea of God dwelling with them, terrify them because they understood just how much of a difference there is between God and humankind, it just wasn't within their normal understanding of gods.
- It was understood that all of the ancient Egyptian and Greek 'gods' kept their distance from ordinary humankind. *Interacting with mere humans would be below them.*
- *Kind of like monarchs not wanting to speak with mere commoners, but on a cosmic scale.*
- *And so there was distance between their deities and humans.*
- But we see here that the Lord, the true God, desires something altogether different.
- There's a strong relational thread shaping the entire story of God and people.
- But the Tabernacle steps things up, as a shadow of God's dwelling place in heaven.

5

- That's part of the detailed design. It not only to point to the character of God, reflecting his order, glory, beauty, and demonstrating his holiness, but also that the Tabernacle is to reflect the heavenly reality.
- *Not that God lives in a tent in Heaven, but, and perhaps we'll never fully understand...*

They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven... (Hebrews 8:5)

So whilst it shows the truth of God and his splendour, it primarily points to his presence.

- Think about for a moment that this is a portable tent.
*As God moves his people, and they setup camp,
they setup camp around the Tabernacle,
recognising that the Lord is right at the heart of their lives.*
- This is what some people call this God's 'gracious condescension'.
- We we say that people are condescending, we mean that the put people down.
- But what we actually see with God is that even though he is superior,
he lowers himself to us, he condescends himself, in order that we might know him.

So how about us then? How then can we meet with God?

6

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

- The Greek word for *made his dwelling* among us, is the verb of tabernacle. Jesus, is God **tabernacling** with us!
- In Matthew's Gospel Jesus' is "Emmanuel", *meaning* God with us!
- Jesus is dwelling with his people, present, and accessible.
- When Jesus clears the temple and says that he will destroy the temple, *the permanent construction of the Tabernacle*, and raise it in three days, everyone thinks he's mad.
- *It took 46 years to build, it was the place in which Israel met with God.*
- But Jesus is saying, no, now I am that temple. If you want to meet God, meet me.
- It was a completely new idea that God would dwell with his people, but now in Jesus, things go further, because this is God meeting us in flesh! //
- When you would look at the outside of the Tabernacle, it would have been pretty drab.
- But on the inside it was magnificent, shining forth the glory of God.
- And in the same way, in God's humility and kindness he becomes like us.

7

- God in Christ, in the words of Isaiah, "had no form or majesty that we should look at him". He looks like a human yet he is more.
- As the outside of the Tabernacle may not have given many clues that on the inside this was the meeting place of God, on the outside looking at Jesus, people may have been nonplussed about who he was, yet not only in Jesus do we meet God but he is God himself.

In C S Lewis' 'Last Battle', there's a wonderful scene in which people are forced into a barn only to discover that inside there is a whole another world. And one present says:

"Its inside is bigger than its outside." "Yes," said Queen Lucy. "In our world too, a stable once had something inside it that was bigger than our whole world."

We look for spiritual experiences in all sorts of places, but there's only one in whom you will find somewhere truly bigger on the inside than the outside, and that's in Jesus.

- Because it's in Jesus that God meets us.
And it's in Jesus that the fullness of God is pleased to dwell and he with us.

8

God Meets Us in THROUGH HIS DEATH \ ATONEMENT

So the Tabernacle points to God meeting us in Jesus,
but it also points to God meeting us **through his death**.

- Right in the holy of holies, the Lord instructed that the Ark would be placed.
- *If you remember the Ark of the Covenant from Indiana Jones, try to forget that for a moment, and if you have never heard of Indiana Jones then you're probably at an advantage.*
- But we see in 25:10-22 instructions for the construction of both the ark and its lid.
- Inside the box were to go the stone tablets of the ten commandments, a constant reminder of God's covenantal standards for his people.
- But it was the lid too, which had a really important purpose.
- We read in Exodus 25 that it was (vv.17) made of pure gold, with two cherubim at the ends of the cover, with their wings spread upward, overshadowing the cover with them. //
- *When we think of cherubim we usually think of cute cherubs, but that's not what these are!*
- These are images of mighty angels, with outstretched arms...
Cherubim were placed to guard Eden so that no one could force their way in.

9

- This symbolises the Lord's presence, as he says:

22 There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the covenant law, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.

- So here in the holy of holies, the innermost room, separated by a curtain, with the ark inside, the Lord will meet with them.
- There's an inherent tension here.
On one hand this is incredible that God would be present with them, yet there's also a palpable reality of the difference between human sin and God's holiness.
- But God had a plan. Every year, on the day of atonement, the High Priest would go into the holy of holies to atone, for the sins of the people.
- In order for the the High Priest to go in, they would have to go through a whole series of purification rituals. For a week before they went in, they would fast and pray.
- This is the place where mercy could be found.
- And so as a sacrifice was made, *the blood would be sprinkled on the lid, the mercy seat, and as God looks down from heaven, as he sits on the throne, he didn't just see how Israel had broken his commands, he looked down and he saw the blood which covered their sins which he provided for.*

10

- God's judgment is transformed into the mercy seat.
- It shows the triumph of mercy at work, the forgiveness offered, and the work of grace.
- *But the problem was, that this atonement sacrifice had to be made each and every year.*
- *This act of mercy, anticipated fulfilment, which would happen through Jesus' death.*

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement... (Romans 3:23-25)

And the very word used for atonement, is mercy seat.

- This sacrificial system points to Jesus: *the ultimate priest, offering the ultimate sacrifice.*
- God not only comes to meet us, but God in Jesus comes to die for us, so that our sins are not just covered by his blood, but they're completely blown away.
- As the writer Hebrews 10:19, says: "we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus".
- As Jesus died on the cross, and cried his last, the curtain in the temple tore from top to bottom, symbolising that through his death a new way to God was opened.
- *Everything that the atonement sacrifice pointed to, was fulfilled and completed in Jesus.*

11

God Meets Us in OUR HEARTS \ THE HOLY SPIRIT

God meets us in his son, through his death, and finally, in our hearts.

- When Jesus rose and left to be with the Father, he promised to send one like him, the Holy Spirit. He promised that even though he was gone, he would be with us through his Spirit until he returned.
- And where does the Spirit dwell? In the heart of every believer.
- This is so incredibly intimate.
- The tabernacle pointed to God's presence with his people, but because of Jesus, a new level of intimacy is opened up to God. //
- Paul when writing to the Church in Ephesus, offers this prayer:

16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

- When you trust in the Lord Jesus, God dwells in your hearts.
- *Not in a tent. Or a building. But in your heart. Until the end of the age. Until he returns.*

12

- Don't mistake this. That doesn't make us 'gods' or 'goddesses'. It makes us deeply loved children, called into relationship with our God.
- That means that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit!

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?... (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

- That means how we use our whole lives is a living sacrifice to God.
- It means that we must nurture that relationship.
- He dwells in you. Talk to him. Imitate him. It's personal. Immediate.
- *The most precious and important part of any day, is the time we'll spend talking to God, as we seek for our will to bend to the will of the Spirit in us.*
- But we should also note, that when Paul says your body is the temple, it's actually plural - it's your **bodies**.
- So there is something incredibly special about gathering together as the Body of Christ, where two or three are gathered so is Jesus.
- Friends we must never be blasé about meeting with one another!
- It's a great privilege that we have in the Lord.

13

- Just think, if the purpose of the Tabernacle was to gather the people to worship, how good it is for us, the body of Christ, in which the Spirit dwells, to gather to worship and direct all of the glory to God.
- And when we do it, we don't primarily do it for ourselves, or even for others, but to the glory of God.
- *Every time we're gathered, we anticipate that great day when Christ will return, and we will be gathered around him in the new heavens and new earth for all eternity.*

14

CONCLUSION \ \ NEGLECTED INTIMACY?

I'm constantly amazed that when we go out for a meal,
I often see another group of people sitting down,
but instead of chatting with one another, they're all looking down at their phones.

- They have the great privilege of friendship and intimacy right before them, but they've swapped that for something far inferior. Such neglected intimacy! //
- How much foolish is it for us, to ignore the one who sits not just at our table, but through faith in Christ, dwells in our hearts.

Friends, I don't know where you are with God.
*Has God become remote to you? Maybe you've set him at a distance.
Maybe you've drifted away.*

God hasn't.
God doesn't want to be a distant spectator.
God wants to be in relationship with you.
God wants to meet with you.

15

In fact he's done everything to make that happen.
In his son, through his death, and in your heart.

You can turn around that relationship,
You can grow in that relationship beginning today,
simply by turning to him.

16