

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

"...FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE..." ~ EPHESIANS 4:12

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GOD DWELLING WITH MAN

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The Bible is full of themes which unify the whole. One of these themes is that of God dwelling with man. As we read through the various books of the Bible it is obvious that God desires to dwell with mankind, yet mankind refuses God's efforts.

The Garden of Eden

The theme of God dwelling with man begins in the Bible's first few chapters. Following the creation, **"the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it"** (Gen 2:15). When everything is said and done, Adam and Eve are given a home (the garden of Eden), a work (to keep the garden), and a law (not to eat of the tree of knowledge, vv. 16–17). In this condition humanity lives in fellowship with God.

As the story progresses, however, Adam and Eve fall into sin (Gen 3). Because of their sin **"the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden... He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life"** (Gen 3:23–24). God could no longer dwell with man. Despite God's efforts to have a relationship with His creation, man turned against the law of God.

The Tabernacle and Temple

As we continue reading through our Bibles we find God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen 12; 26; 27–28). It wasn't long until the children of promise became slaves in Egypt (Exo 1:8–14). At this point, God intervened through Moses and brought His people out of Egypt. Exodus 25–30 gives the design of a special structure God commanded the children of Israel to build: *the tabernacle*.

At its most basic level the tabernacle was a tent that could be moved at any moment. This was not, however, a common tent. The Lord commanded Moses, **“Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them”** (Exo 25:8). God desired to dwell among His people and have fellowship with them.

As the book of Exodus comes to a close we read a majestic picture of the presence of God flooding the tabernacle: **“the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle... The cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel”** (Exo 40:17, 33–38). At this point, God is undoubtedly dwelling among His people day and night, and they see His glorious presence.

Some time after the promised land was received (Josh 23:14) the Israelites built a permanent tabernacle: *the temple* (2 Sam 7:1–7). After the Temple's completion the Lord showed His acceptance and presence among His people: **“Now when Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the**

sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the house. The priests could not enter into the house of the Lord because the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's house" (2 Chron 7:1–2).

Unfortunately, just as in the garden of Eden, this fellowship would not last. It was not long until the people rebelled against God and His patience wore thin. **"Then the glory of the Lord departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim... and they stood still at the entrance of the east gate of the Lord's house, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered over them"** (Ezek 10:18–19). What a sad picture when compared to the glory that formerly came into the Temple. It is no coincidence that God stationed cherubim to the east of the vacant Temple in the same way that he placed the cherubim at the east of the vacant garden of Eden (Gen 3:24). Once again, God could not dwell with His people.

Jesus Christ

The Old Testament foretold the Christ, but His glorious coming surpassed even what the Prophets thought (1 Pet 1:10–12). John opens his gospel with these words, **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God ... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth"** (John 1:1–2, 14). It is worth pointing out that the Greek word translated **"dwelt"** means, *"tabernacled, fixed, or had His tabernacle"* (Vincent, Word Studies in the NT, 2.51–52). A translation could accurately read, **"And the Word became flesh, and did tabernacle among us"** (John 1:14, YLT). In the same way that the Lord

dwelt among His people in the wilderness, the Christ came and dwelt with His creation. In the same way that the people of Israel could physically see the glory of God, John said, **“We saw His glory.”** The glory of the Lord filled the tent of a human (cf. 2 Cor 5:1).

Even though God chose to dwell with man through His only begotten son, again, man rejected God. Each of the four gospels recount the murder of Jesus. After His resurrection **“He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight”** (Acts 1:9). Just as the fellowship was broken in the garden, and just as the glory of the Lord left the temple, Jesus was taken back into heaven.

Conclusion

This has been a very brief survey of a very deep Biblical theme. The theme of God dwelling with man does not end here, however. It reaches its ultimate end when God gathers His people to dwell with Him in eternity forever (cf. Rev 21:22). What a blessed hope we have!

NOTES: _____

AM LESSON: The Baptism of John	PM LESSON: A Question About Divorce (Mark 10:1–16)
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“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES...”
(MATTHEW 28:19-20)