

E X O D U S

v o l u m e 3

Tabernacle (Exodus 25-27)

Bottom Line: An increased awareness of the presence of God in our lives comes when we pursue purity and holiness.

Where (as in a physical place) do you like to spend most of your time? What qualities about that place make you want to spend time there?

The three chapters of Exodus that this lesson is devoted to, chapters 25-27, are wholly devoted to the design and the construction of the tabernacle. The tabernacle was a portable sanctuary (or “holy place”) that was used by the Israelites to function as the epicenter for all of their religious duties, rituals, and customs. In a similar way, it was like their church. The notion is common among Christians today that the tabernacle, the rituals, the sacrifices, etc. were only tedious practices that can just be dismissed by us today. But the most important thing to understand about the tabernacle was that it was more than just a place of worship for them. It was literally the place where God Himself would manifest His presence and dwell with His people. These rules, rituals, and sacrifices that took place in the temple were truly the means by which God and his people “connected.”

What are some commands or expectations that the Bible puts on us that we feel at times can be tedious and relatively unimportant? Why do we feel that way?

Read Exodus 25:8. Most translations say “sanctuary”, but literally it means “holy place.” Understanding that, what does this verse tell us about God? What implications did this have for the Israelites if He were going to be with them?

There were extensive restrictions placed upon the nation of Israel that prevented them from experiencing the fullness of God’s presence. All of the demands and requirements that needed to be met in order to enter the Most Holy Place and see God were only able to be fulfilled by one person every year on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest, who had to engage in a 40-day purification ritual leading up to the moment. Everybody else had to rely on other people’s testimonies. You can imagine how difficult this may have become over time, serving and worshiping God in such a strict fashion that you had no hope of ever really *experiencing* in a real way. Today, many Christians feel this way about their walk with the Lord, as if they are doing doing doing but never really feeling fulfilled or satisfied that they are experiencing all of what God has for them.

Reflecting on the requirements that God required in order for His people to experience Him, why do you think many people today feel unfulfilled in their spiritual lives?

At the coming of Jesus Christ, an incredible shift happened in the way that God interacted with His people. John 1:14 says that “the Word (that is, Jesus) became flesh and *dwelt among us.*” The word for “dwelt” used here literally means “to tabernacle.” John is making a direct connection between the person of Jesus and the tabernacle in the Old Testament. He is saying that God’s presence is not confined to the Most Holy Place and reserved to only the Most Holy People anymore. When Jesus Christ came to Earth, because He Himself was God (John 1:1), the presence of God was made

EXODUS

v o l u m e 3

available to all who were near Him. This is why Jesus Christ referred to His own body as “the temple” in John 2:19. We understand that Christ is no longer presently with us on Earth, but His presence, however, has not left us because He has sent His Spirit to abide with us. In fact, He abides *in* us.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:16-17.

This is not just a way of saying that the church is “special” to God, it’s much more astounding than that. Paul is saying that the church has now become God’s holy dwelling, God’s temple. God has taken up residence in *you* if you have been saved. Paul clearly explains this again in 1 Corinthians 6:19: “do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.”

Now let’s connect the dots. If it is true that God Himself, through His Spirit, has taken up residence within us, what does that say about *us*? How have we become a suitable dwelling place for God? How does this affect the way that we view other people? How does this affect the way we view our Sunday morning gatherings? Our small group gatherings?

If this is true, then what are some possible reasons for why we may feel “distant” from God at times? What are some practices or habits (rituals, even) that we can develop to help us experience more of God? After discussing these questions, does the “Bottom Line” make more sense?

Reflection: Read these aloud, using your discretion about which questions should be pondered and which questions should be discussed.

Of course, this concept of “experiencing” or “feeling” the presence of God will not make any sense to you if indeed God, through His Holy Spirit, has not indwelt you. The gift of the Holy Spirit is only reserved for those who have repented of their sin and placed their faith in Christ for their salvation. If this entire concept is foreign to you, why do you think that is? Could it be that you don’t know what the presence of the Spirit feels like because you have never received Him?

Do you feel the need for an increased awareness of the Spirit in your life? Or are you just content with where you are? Do you have any aspirations for your life that will require an increased amount of spiritual fervor and power? If not, why not? If you do, how will you cultivate a deeper reliance upon the Spirit in your everyday life?

Purity and holiness were requirements in order for God’s presence to dwell in the tabernacle. Now WE are the tabernacle, and things are no different. What area of your life are you not pursuing holiness or purity? What sins are you shrugging your shoulders at? What fights are you giving up on? Is the presence of these sins or indulgences more desirable and precious to you than the presence of the Spirit in your life? What do you need to do to rid your life of these temptations? How can you better fight against these sins?