

“The Word Dwelt Among Us” – Jesus and the Tabernacle

Sermon Outline; 7/17/2016; Tri City church of Christ

A lot of the information used in designing this sermon was from a lecture by Phil Roberts entitled “The Story of the Tabernacle” from the 1988 Florida College Lectures book “Hebrews for Every Man.” I’d encourage you to look into getting a copy for yourself and studying the various lectures from that year. It’s been an incredible resource for me, not only in my preparation for this meeting, but in growing in the knowledge of the scriptures in general.

- I. History of the Tabernacle
 - a. The word tabernacle means “dwelling place”. It could be used as a noun and a verb in the Hebrew language.
 - i. It could refer to a place where people dwelled, usually in reference to a tent-like structure
 - ii. It also could be used as a verb, meaning “to dwell”. Usually the word is often translated as “dwelt” in the Bible.
 - b. Introduced in the Garden of Eden
 - i. Although the word “tabernacle” isn’t used in the Garden, we know that the Garden of Eden was a place where Adam and Eve dwelt with God.
 - ii. Their relationship with God wasn’t affected by sin until chapter 3, so in Genesis 1 and 2, they dwelled with God, without any separation from sin.
 - iii. This was the whole concept behind the tabernacle. You could easily argue that the first tabernacle we see in the Bible is the Garden of Eden.
 - iv. Gen. 3:24 / Exodus 36:35 – Here you can see that both the Garden of Eden and the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle both were guarded by cherubim. Similarly, we’re told in Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4 that there are living creatures surrounding God’s throne in Heaven
 - v. Just as the Jerusalem temple was on Mount Zion, the Garden of Eden was also on a mountain (Ezekiel 28:13-14)
 - vi. This, along with so much more evidence we could provide, shows us that the Garden of Eden was a Paradise, a Heaven on Earth where man and God had perfect fellowship together. This was ruined by sin (Isaiah 59:1-2).
 - vii. The rest of the Bible focuses on God’s eternal plan to deliver us from the bondage of sin and to give us an inheritance of perfect fellowship with Him in Heaven

- viii. That sin progressed into a deeper alienation from God; from Cain killing Abel, to the entire earth having evil thoughts continually (6:5). And even after the flood, sin returns leading us to the tower of Babel.
- c. Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9)
 - i. One thing I had never considered before was the idea that the Tower of Babel likely stemmed from man's remembrance of Eden
 - ii. Eden was a tabernacle, a dwelling place between God and man. The memory of Eden is likely what influenced the people to want to make a tower reaching for the heavens. They likely wanted to have the same fellowship Adam and Eve had in the garden.
 - iii. The reason this was displeasing to God, I believe, is because man became prideful in thinking they could restore that fellowship with God on their own, trusting in their own work and not submitting to God. They believed their ways were higher than God's ways (no pun intended)
- d. The Promises to Abraham
 - i. God's curse after Adam and Eve's sin brought separation between man and God, and Adam and Eve were kicked out of the garden.
 - ii. When God promises that the nations of the earth would be blessed through Abraham, he is implying that one day God and man would dwell together again. The curse meant separation, the blessing meant being reunited.
- e. The nation of Israel after the Exodus from Egypt
 - i. After Israel becomes a nation due to the covenant of Exodus 24, God instructs Israel to build a dwelling place (25:8), the instructions for which he would give throughout the rest of the book.
 - ii. The purpose of this Exodus was that God might dwell with Israel (Exodus 29:45-46)
 - iii. This was accomplished in Exodus 40:33-35. God was reunited with man, and though man failed in trying to regain fellowship with them on their own (Tower of Babel), he came down to us to dwell with us, by His will, not the will of man.
 - iv. However, only the High Priest was able to enter into the Most Holy Place, and only once a year. This wasn't a fellowship like the fellowship of the Garden, but it was the beginning of God's eternal plan.
 - v. Just as we discussed the sacrifices of the Old Testament being a shadow of the Sacrifice of Jesus, the fellowship between God and man in Israel was a shadow of the fellowship we would find with God through Christ.
 - vi. This was only a temporary solution for the fellowship between God and man; one that would be perfected in Christ.
- f. The Temple
 - i. The Temple was a more permanent structure of the tabernacle, the tent in which God dwelled.

- ii. David wanted to build a house for God because he felt it wasn't right for him to live in a mansion while God dwelled in a tent (2 Samuel 7:2)
 - iii. One negative aspect of the temple is that, since it was a permanent structure unlike the tabernacle, it would be easy for the Israelites to assume God's presence and His fellowship with them were permanent and to take advantage of that confident assumption. (Jeremiah 7:1-15) They still had to remain faithful to God to keep fellowship with Him, despite the permanent structure of the temple.
 - iv. Solomon completed the building of the temple in 2 Chronicles 5, and the glory of God filled the temple (v. 1, 13-14)
 - v. At this time, men were still offering sacrifices that could not atone for sin as the blood of Jesus could, so there was not perfect and complete fellowship with God (2 Chronicles 6:18), but nonetheless, the Temple was a dwelling place on earth that shadowed the more perfect dwelling place of Heaven.
- g. Temple was destroyed
 - i. As we discussed this morning, the nation of Israel eventually became so evil that they were sent into captivity and the Temple was destroyed (2 Kings 25:8-9)
 - ii. The Destruction of the Temple probably took the Israelites by surprise because they assumed God's presence was permanent and the city would be protected. But as Ezekiel tells us, the LORD departed from the Temple because of their unfaithfulness.
- h. A new covenant and dwelling place was promised (Ezekiel 37:24-28)
 - i. This covenant was reliant on the perfect Christ, who was and is
 - 1. The key to our Exodus
 - 2. The hope for our eternal rest
 - 3. One sacrifice for sins forever
 - 4. The one who fulfills the promises of God
 - 5. The one who restores us from captivity
 - ii. Christ was a permanent solution, perfecting the problems of the Old Covenant and bringing forth forgiveness in the New Covenant that could permanently and effectively restore our fellowship with God.
- i. Zerubbabel's Temple
 - i. After the return from captivity, the Jews almost immediately began to build another temple (Hag. 2)
 - 1. This temple wasn't anywhere near the splendor of Solomon's temple (v. 3)
 - 2. The Lord encouraged them to keep building by telling them...
 - a. The glory of the temple would be greater than the former glory.

- b. The temple would bring peace.
 - ii. This temple was completed in Ezra 6, but God's presence never entered the temple. The Old Testament finishes with the absence of God's presence and glory, and an eager anticipation of God's presence
 - j. The Temple of Herod
 - i. Herod remodeled the temple of Zerubbabel and made it His own before right before the beginning of the New Testament, and though it was seen as magnificent, it was not a dwelling place for God.
 - ii. Herod was not religious and did not welcome Jesus into his temple, which is quite ironic. Because Jesus was God in the flesh.
 - k. Jesus: the Fulfillment of the Tabernacle/Temple
 - i. John 1:1, 14 – The word for “dwelt” in 14 is the word “tabernacle.” Jesus “tabernacled” with us.
 - ii. God, in a sense, was in His temple. But His temple was not a structural temple, it was Jesus Christ himself (John 2:20, 22)
 - iii. But Christ's mission was not to remain on earth as the permanent dwelling place of God, but to give us a chance to spend eternity in Heaven with God, the perfect dwelling place. He came so that we, His church, might also fulfill the story of the tabernacle. He made that possible for us through his sacrifice for sins forever.
 - l. The Church
 - i. We are the dwelling place of God (Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Corinthians 3:16)
 - ii. Just as the Jews needed to offer a sacrifice on the altar outside of the tabernacle to enter the dwelling place of God, our fellowship with God is determined by Jesus' sacrifice
 - iii. As Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2:9, we are a “royal priesthood,” which is why we are able to dwell with God.
 - iv. As God's presence was conditional in the tabernacle, our fellowship with Him today is also conditional. If we choose to turn against Him in sin, we will lose fellowship with Him as the Jews did during the time of the captivity. Sin separates us from God.
 - v. The church is not the ultimate fulfillment of the tabernacle, but rather the continuation of the tabernacle; the ultimate fulfillment will be in Heaven, when we are joined with God in all of His glory, not weakened by the flesh.
- II. Do you want to enter into that glory?
- a. In order to be a temple of our God and to enter the only true permanent dwelling place of Heaven, you must obey the gospel. (2 Thessalonians 1:8)
 - b. You must believe Jesus is the son of God and confess this with your mouth. (Romans 10:9-10)
 - c. You must repent and turn away from your sins. (Luke 13:3)

- d. You must join in Christ's sacrifice, put your life of sin to death, be buried with him and rise to walk in newness of life through baptism (Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, Galatians 3:26-27, 1 Peter 3:21)
- e. You must also remain faithful unto him so you don't lose fellowship with Him.