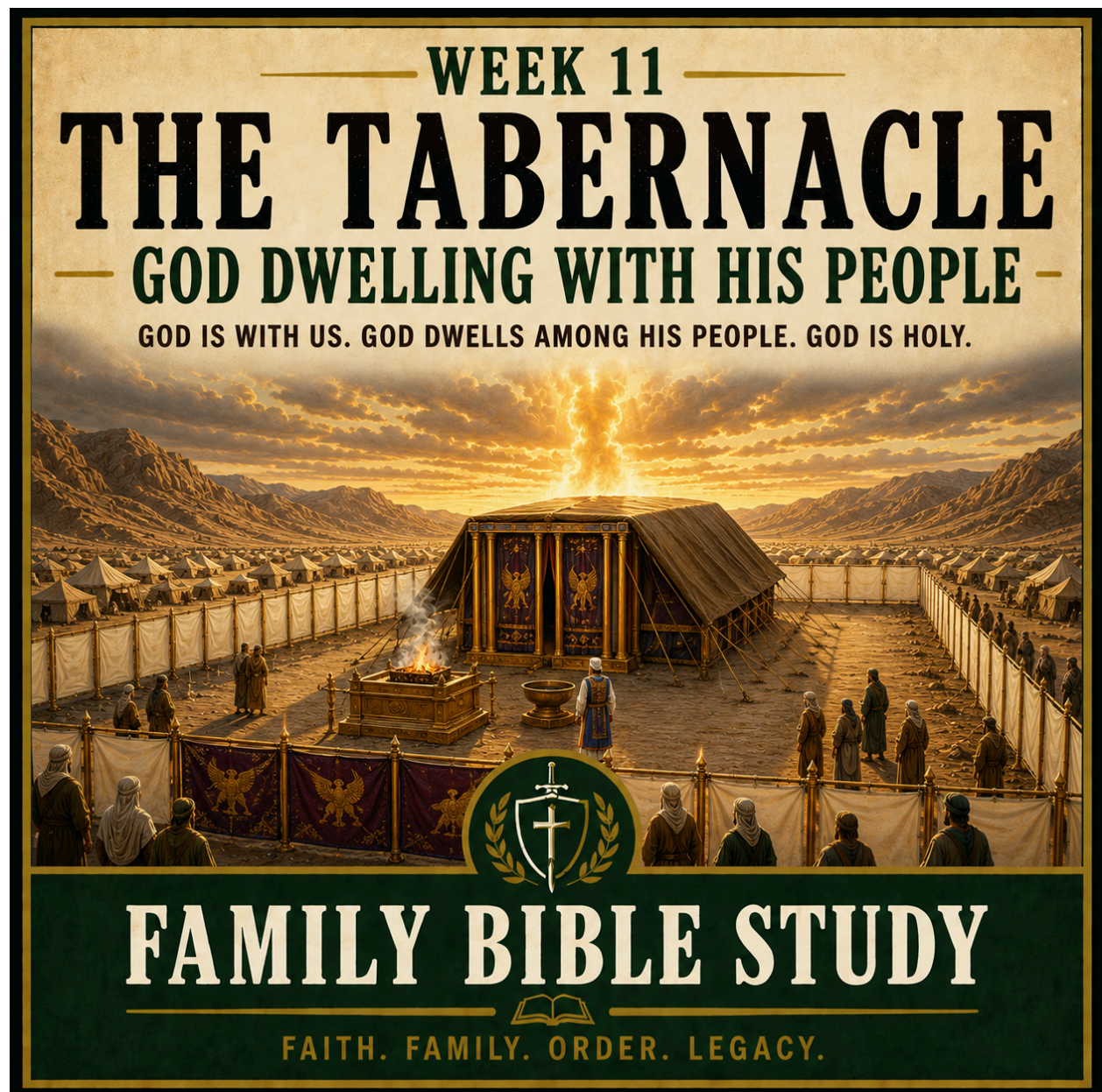




Week 11: The Tabernacle - God Dwelling with His People

A Sabbath Family Bible Study

 Introduction

The Tabernacle was the place God chose to dwell among His covenant people. After delivering Israel from Egypt and bringing them to Himself, the Lord gave Moses detailed instructions for constructing a sanctuary where His presence would dwell in the midst of the nation. Every curtain, altar, furnishing, sacrifice, and priestly duty taught Israel something about the holiness of God and man's need for reconciliation with Him.

The Tabernacle revealed both the nearness and holiness of God. The Lord desired to dwell among His people, yet sinful man could not approach His holy presence. The veil, priesthood, sacrifices, and Most Holy Place demonstrated that access to a holy God required cleansing, sacrifice, and a mediator. God's presence was a tremendous blessing, but it was never to be treated lightly.

The Tabernacle also pointed forward to Jesus Christ. Its sacrifices, priesthood, and sacred places were shadows of the greater redemption that would ultimately be accomplished through Him. Christ is our perfect High Priest and the One through whom God's people are brought into fellowship with their Creator.

This week, we will see that God's desire has always been to dwell among His people. From the Tabernacle in the wilderness to Christ dwelling among men, and ultimately to God's eternal dwelling with His redeemed people, Scripture tells one continuing story: **God making a way for His people to live in His presence.**



Scripture Reading:

(Exodus 25:1–9; Exodus 26:30–33; Exodus 29:42–46; Exodus 40:33–38; Hebrews 9:1–12, John 1:14, Psalm 84:1–12)

With Commentary Throughout

Exodus 25:1–9

1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

2 Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.

3 And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass,

4 And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair,

5 And rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood,

6 Oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense,

7 Onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate.

8 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.

9 According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.

Commentary

God commanded Israel to build the Tabernacle through willing offerings from His people. Gold, silver, precious stones, fine fabrics, and other valuable materials were gathered for one great purpose: *“that I may dwell among them.”* The God who had delivered Israel from Egypt now desired to remain in the midst of their camp.

God also instructed Moses to construct everything according to the pattern He provided. Israel was not free to worship God however they pleased; they were to approach Him according to His commands. We are reminded that God's presence is both a wonderful privilege and a call to obedience. He desires to dwell with His people, and He alone determines how He is to be worshipped.

Exodus 26:30–33

30 And thou shalt rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which was shewed thee in the mount.

31 And thou shalt make a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made:

32 And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold: their hooks shall be of gold, upon the four sockets of silver.

33 And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony: and the vail shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy.

Commentary

God commanded that a veil separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, where the Ark of the Covenant would rest. This separation taught Israel that: God desired to dwell among His people, but His holiness could not be approached casually. Sinful man needed a way to enter His presence.

The veil also points forward to Christ. At Jesus' death, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom, showing that through His sacrifice the barrier had been removed. Families are reminded

that access to God is an extraordinary privilege made possible not by our own goodness, but only through Jesus Christ.

Exodus 29:42–46

42 This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee.

43 And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory.

44 And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office.

45 And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God.

46 And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the LORD their God.

Commentary

These verses reveal the purpose of the Tabernacle: God intended to dwell among His people. The Lord who delivered Israel from Egypt did not simply set them free and send them on their way. He brought them out of bondage so that they could become His people and live in His presence.

God also established the altar, sacrifices, and priesthood as part of the way Israel approached Him. His presence made the Tabernacle holy, reminding Israel that fellowship with God was both a tremendous blessing and a sacred responsibility. We are reminded that God's deliverance has a purpose, we are rescued not merely *from* bondage, but *for* a life of worship, obedience, and fellowship with Him.

Exodus 40:33–38

33 And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work.

34 Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

35 And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

36 And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys:

37 But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up.

38 For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

Commentary

After Moses completed the Tabernacle according to God's instructions, the glory of the LORD filled it. God's presence was so powerful that even Moses could not enter. What Israel had constructed in obedience became the dwelling place of God in the midst of His people.

The cloud and fire also directed Israel's journey. When God moved, they moved; when He remained, they remained. His presence was something to follow. Families are reminded that obedience means allowing God to determine both our direction and our timing. His presence should remain at the center of the household, guiding where we go, how we live, and when we act.

Hebrews 9:1–12

1 Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.

2 For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary.

3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;

4 Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

5 And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.

7 But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

9 Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

10 Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

Commentary

Hebrews explains that the Tabernacle was not simply an ancient place of worship, but a picture pointing forward to Christ. Its sanctuary, veil, priesthood, sacrifices, and Most Holy Place all taught that sinful man needed a mediator and sacrifice in order to approach a holy God.

Under the old system, the high priest entered the Most Holy Place only once each year and always with sacrificial blood. But Christ became the perfect High Priest and entered by His own blood, obtaining eternal redemption for His people. What the Tabernacle demonstrated temporarily, Jesus accomplished permanently. We are reminded that God's desire to dwell with His people reaches its fulfillment through Christ, who provides the way for us to come into the presence of God.

John 1:14

14 "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

Commentary:

The Greek word for "dwelt" literally means "tabernacled." Jesus is the fulfillment of the tabernacle, God in human flesh, dwelling with His people. The Old Testament tabernacle was a shadow; Christ is the substance.



Discussion Questions for All Ages

Young Children:

- What was the tabernacle?
- Why did God want to live with His people?
- What kinds of things happened in the tabernacle?

Older Children & Teens:

- Why did God require the people to build the tabernacle exactly as He said?
- How was the tabernacle different from other buildings?
- How is Jesus like the tabernacle?

Adults:

- What does the tabernacle teach us about God's desire to dwell with us?
- How can our homes become places where God dwells?
- What role does reverence play in preparing a place for the Lord?



Psalm Reading

Psalm 84:1–12

1 How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!

2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

3 Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.

4 Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

5 Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.

6 Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.

7 They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.

8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.

9 Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.

10 For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

12 O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

Commentary

The psalmist longed for the presence of God, even envying the birds that nested near the tabernacle. This reveals the beauty and joy of dwelling with the Lord, something we should cultivate in our hearts and homes. *“a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.”* Being near the Lord was worth more than all the comforts the world could offer.

This beautifully reinforces the purpose of the Tabernacle. God's greatest gift to Israel was His presence among them. Families are reminded that the same should be true in our homes: God's presence, worship, and ways should be treasured above worldly comfort or success. *“Blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.”*

Hymn: “O Thou in Whose Presence”

By Joseph Swain (1791)

1.

O Thou in whose presence my soul takes delight,
On whom in affliction I call,
My comfort by day and my song in the night,
My hope, my salvation, my all.

2.

Where dost Thou, dear Shepherd, resort with Thy sheep,
To feed them in pastures of love?
Say, why in the valley of death should I weep,
Or alone in the wilderness rove?

3.

O why should I wander an alien from Thee,
Or cry in the desert for bread?
Thy foes will rejoice when my sorrows they see,
And smile at the tears I have shed.

4.

He looks! and ten thousands of angels rejoice,
And myriads wait for His word;
He speaks! and eternity, filled with His voice,
Re-echoes the praise of the Lord.

5.

Dear Shepherd! I hear, and will follow Thy call;
I know the sweet sound of Thy voice;
Restore and defend me, for Thou art my all,
And in Thee I will ever rejoice.



Family Application Points

1. **Center Your Home on God's Presence:**

Just as the tabernacle was the center of Israel's camp, make worship, prayer, and Scripture the center of your household. Build rhythms around God's Word.

2. **Practice Reverence and Order:**

Teach children that God is holy. As the tabernacle had precise order and rituals, our homes should reflect order, beauty, and reverence as fitting for places where God is welcomed.

3. **Offer Willing Participation:**

Just as God called for freewill offerings, encourage every family member to contribute, through song, prayer, service, and giving, to the life of worship in the home.

4. **Point to Christ, the True Tabernacle:**

Reaffirm that the tabernacle was a picture of Christ, who now dwells in us. Let your children see that our lives and homes are now living sanctuaries.



A Sabbath Feast Prayer (Used later when the Sabbath Meal is Ready)

"Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your Sabbath - a holy day of rest, joy, and renewal. As we partake in this meal, may our hearts be lifted in gratitude for Your provision and peace. Let this table reflect the peace of Your Kingdom and the love that binds our household together in Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen."



Closing Prayer

O LORD our God, You are holy, and yet You desire to dwell among us. Thank You for the tabernacle, where You first made Your presence known in the midst of Israel. Thank You even more for Jesus Christ, the true Tabernacle, who came to dwell among us and now lives within us by the Holy Spirit. Let our home be a place where You are honored, where prayer and praise are offered continually, and where Your presence is felt. Cleanse us, teach us, and draw near to us, that we may live as Your people and glorify You in all we do. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.