

God's Tabernacle

John 1:1, 14

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

*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.*

I. Introduction

1. God dwelt among us. This is one of the most amazing ideas or concepts the world had ever witnessed.
2. When you study the first century history, there are numerous credible accounts that remove all doubt that there was an amazing Person who was born and lived in and around the cities of Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Jerusalem, named Jesus of Nazareth.
3. There are a lot of uncertainties about legends and myths, and people speculate about the reality of them. Like were these real characters or just stories written by creative writers?
4. The ancient Greeks had Zeus, Aphrodite, Hercules, Achilles. The Romans had Jupiter and Juno, Romulus and Remus, Saturn and Venus. The Medieval British had King Arthur, Queen Guinevere, Sir Galahad, and Sir Lancelot.
5. Some are more popular than others based on works of Hollywood or Disney.
6. These are all mythical or legendary figures that make for interesting storytelling.
7. And there are some, who not knowing of the solid historical facts surrounding Jesus, wonder if that is what Christianity is—a collection of manmade myths and legends.
8. Well you can be certain of the historical basis of the life of Jesus Christ and His world-changing impact in the first century AD, and on the world ever since.
9. We are going to look carefully at this idea of God coming to earth through this idea of **God's tabernacle**.

II. Handling God

A. John touched God

1. In case there is any doubt in anyone's mind, it is a true statement to say that we can handle God. He is that real. And personal witnesses can testify of that truth.
2. I like the writings of John, one of those first century witnesses, and how he expressed being impacted by seeing and touching Jesus and handling. He shared this very personal story:

1 John 1:1-2

*1 That which was from the beginning, which we have **heard**, which we have **seen** with our eyes, which we have **looked** upon, and our hands have **handled**, of the Word of life;*

*2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that **eternal life**, which was with the Father, and **was manifested unto us**;))*

3. People who come into a close encounter with Jesus are changed! A couple of verses later, John added:

1 John 1:4-5

4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

4. He was saying, to all of you who are living in sorrow and hopelessness, Jesus gave me joy!
 5. For all of you living in gloom and darkness, Jesus gave me Light! And in Him is no darkness at all!
 6. John had history on his side. Jesus was no myth. He had heard, seen, and touched Him and filled his life with joy and light.
- B. God touched me
1. And how about you? How about some of you who have been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.
 2. When you came up out of that water, you had no doubt that Jesus' death on the cross for your sins was true and not a myth.
 3. You literally experienced the reality of the lifting of your sins off your soul.
 4. Now you cannot take a picture of the soul to prove sin's bondage was cleaned away, but the pictures we have of people coming out of that water and the look of joy on their faces testifies that something very real happened inside.
 5. And when you received the Holy Ghost, we could not take a photograph of the Spirit of God descending into and inhabiting your spirit and taking up an abode in your heart, but we can hear you speak in tongues as the Spirit gives the utterance, and the unmistakable smile that reveals a new life has begun.
 6. So, the celebrating of God dwelling among us, and in us, is no myth. The birth of Jesus Christ set off a series of events that have not only changed the world—it has changed me!

III. God in a tent

A. God tabernacling with man in a tent

1. Most of us have experienced God in our flesh by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. And that was God's plan all along.
2. But before God's Spirit could dwell in our flesh, God Himself chose to dwell in a human body Himself – he literally “tabernacled” with man.
3. And we celebrate that event in the month of December when we celebrate the birth of Jesus in the city of Bethlehem.
4. It was God re-doing what He had done in the tabernacle and temple of the Old Testament when God came to dwell in a tent with Israel. But now the tent was a human body:

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

5. **Definition:** The word “dwelt” is from the Greek word, skay – **no** – o, meaning to tent or encamp, to settle in, take up abode, to occupy or to reside as God did in the Tabernacle of old, a symbol of protection and communion.
6. In fact, skaynoo was used in the first known Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, to refer to how God tabernacled with man in the Tabernacle in the Wilderness.
7. It was in that setting that God dwelled in a tent in order to be close to man, to be spiritually present.
8. The idea that God chose to dwell with man was an unknown in the ancient world until God told Moses to built a tabernacle, and the Ark of the Covenant.
9. The tabernacle was a tent measuring 45’ x 15’ **[tabernacle.jpg] [tabernacle2.jpg] [Tabernacle_Ark-of-the-Covenant]**
10. Up to this point, most religions were based on worshiping an idol that someone had carved of stone, wood, or fashioned from silver or gold.
11. But the God of Israel made His presence known by coming into the tabernacle and resting His presence in the tabernacle and on the Ark of the Covenant.

B. Testimony of the enemy of God dwelling with Israel

1. Notice this testimony of one of Israel’s enemies, the Philistines, who were aware of how the God of Israel would come into their camp:

1 Sam 4:5-8

5 And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again.

6 And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp.

*7 And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, **God is come into the camp.** And they said, Woe unto us! for **there hath not been such a thing heretofore.***

8 Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.

2. Israel had visible signs that God was among them by the pillar of fire that settled over the tabernacle by night and the pillar of cloud that settled over the tabernacle by day.
3. Plus they had the obvious historical testimony of God delivering them miraculously out of Egypt through miracles, signs, and plagues.
4. Even the Philistines were aware of that history of God smiting the Egyptians with plagues.
5. So in those days, God dwelled in a tent and spoke to and through Moses, and eventually He spoke through kings like David and prophets like Isaiah and others.
6. And the people were able to sense God’s presence among them in the tabernacle or later in the temple like a holy smoke.

IV. God tabernacling in the flesh

- A. As Jesus
1. But something happened when God decided to dwell among them, not just in a cloud.
 2. God planned to tabernacle among them dwelling **not in a tent made of animal skins, but in a tent made of human skin, human flesh, human bones**. Fully human yet still fully God:
*John 1:14 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.*
 3. I like the way the author of Hebrews put it. Yes, God spoke through the prophets, but now...
Heb 1:1-3
1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,
*2 Hath in these last days **spoken unto us by his Son**, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;*
 4. And in case you are wondering what that means, the “Son of God” is the invisible God taking on a visible image in a human person:
3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;
 5. God spoke by **God in flesh**. This God in flesh was called the **Son of God**—God appearing as the express image of his person. The invisible became visible.
 6. This was not a second person or second god, but the very God in person who came to purge our sins by dying on the cross and then ascending to the right hand of the Majesty on high.
 7. Later in Hebrews, he spoke about how God took the symbolism of Old Testament sacrifices on the altar, and how He Himself, as God in flesh, suffered as that sacrificial animal to take away sin:
Heb 9:26-28
*26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but **now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin** by the sacrifice of himself.*
27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:
*28 So Christ was **once offered to bear the sins of many**; and unto them that look for him **shall he appear the second time** without sin unto salvation.*
- B. Now tabernacling in us
1. The beauty of God’s story is this: God took on human flesh, **tabernacling among us**, to take our sins away so then He could **tabernacle IN US!**
2 Cor 12:9-10
*9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the **power of Christ may rest upon me**.*
 2. The Greek word translated as “may rest” is the same word we read in John 1:14 that said the Word dwelled among them.

3. **God came and tabernacled among them so that He might tabernacle in them!**

4. And Paul continued that thought this way. When God is in me,
10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

5. In my weakness, I rest on the strength of Christ in me.

6. Now this is a powerful take-away from the passages we have considered today.

7. When God is tabernacling inside of you, living inside you, like sharing your tent with you, He becomes the strength in our weakness.

C. Seen through our weakness

1. Here is how that works.

2. God dwells in me by the power of the Holy Ghost.

3. But similar to how Israel of ancient days would get fearful of an attacking enemy, like the Philistines, the Moabites, or the Assyrians, once Israel remembered that God was tabernacling with them in the tent or the temple, and when His people repented from their sins and turned to the God in the tent, God would come to their rescue and pummel the enemy.

4. My favorite story is when King Sennacherib of Assyria came against King Hezekiah of Judah, the dominating world power rose against the small kingdom of Judah, King Hezekiah prayed to God for deliverance.

5. And against all odds, God sent the angel of the Lord to fight their battle:

2 Kings 19:35-36

*35 And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an **hundred fourscore and five thousand [185,000]**: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.*

36 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.

6. Hezekiah's army was tiny in comparison to Sennacherib's army, but the size of the adversary does not matter when God is with you!

*2 Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for **when I am weak, then am I strong.***

7. That is because, when we are trusting in ourselves and our own strength, that is all we have going for us.

8. But when we recognize our weakness and lean on God tabernacling inside of us, **then am I strong!**

V. Conclusion

1. Listen to this—God is manifest among us. We should never be ashamed of that:

2 Tim 1:8-10

*8 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou **partaker of the afflictions** of the gospel according to the power of God;*

*9 Who hath **saved us**, and called us with **an holy calling**, not according to our works, but*

according to **his own purpose** and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

10 But is now **made manifest** by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:

2. God is no longer living in a cloud—He is made manifest, which means to make visible, clear, known!
3. The Holy Ghost in you is nothing to be ashamed of. It is proof that God is tabernacling inside of you, saving you, calling you to a higher calling for His purposes.
4. God is no longer shrouded in invisible mystery. He has appeared:
*Titus 2:11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath **appeared** to all men,*
5. Grace appeared and is showing forth in us and shining through us.
6. Our lives are no longer empty of purpose facing an angry and cruel world alone. No God's kindness and love have appeared:
*Titus 3:4 But **after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,***
*5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to **his mercy he saved us,** by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;*
7. You see, what so many people miss out on by their pursuit of things of this world, it the reality of God dwelling with them and in them.
8. God is tabernacling with me—living in my tent!
9. And yes there is despair, hopelessness, and cruelty in this world. But that is why God appeared. That is why God was manifested. That is why God tabernacles among us.
10. He is looking for someone who will turn to Him in faith, through their weakness, with a humble heart, and with repentance, so He can show Himself strong!
11. So He can pour out His kindness.
12. So He can fill us with His love.
13. So He can save us.
14. So He can wash us of our sins in the waters of baptism in Jesus' name.
15. So he can fill us—renew us with the Holy Ghost.
16. And you think this is good! Wait until heaven really comes down:
Rev 21:2-5
2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
*3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, **the tabernacle of God is with men,** and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*
4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.
5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.