

## **The Tabernacle, the Temple, Jesus, and YOU! #11**

**Series: Epic Journey: From Where We Are to Where God Wants Us**

**Exodus 25-31; 35-40**

The whole book of Exodus is a journey from slavery to freedom...from Egypt to the Promised Land. And along that journey, you will find that God gave three very important things through Moses as part of God's plan.

***First***, He had to show them what it meant to be holy. He did this by giving them the 10 Commandments. They are God's Perfect Law and must be obeyed fully before man could claim holiness. But the Law only showed that man had no hope of deliverance, apart from God.

***Secondly***, God gave Moses the Civil and Religious Laws that were meant to show the way to living a sacred life within the realm of their new community.

It seems at this point they should be ready to enter the Promised Land. But something is still missing. And the thing that's still missing is God's presence.

God is omnipresent. There's no place in the universe where God is not. But this is about something more. In Exodus 33, Moses talks about the presence of God, and the word he uses for "presence" is the Hebrew word for "face."

If you know somebody, and you want to communicate with them, where do you look? Most people look at their phone, because often, they are texting. But the most personal part of a person is their face. That's what makes them, them. The most personal conversations take place face to face.

So even though God's chosen people had all the commands of God, they weren't ready to move forward until they were experiencing God's personal presence. So, in the last 16 chapters of Exodus, God lays out a way for them to experience and enjoy His presence.

***The third part*** of God's revelation for His plan of redemption was the detailed instructions for building a dwelling place for God, the tabernacle.

**This is so relevant for us! Because, you can have all the rules, and memorize all the commands of God, but if you're not experiencing His presence,**

your spiritual life will feel empty, and you will never move forward spiritually.  
We desperately need the presence of God!

The title of my message today is, **The Tabernacle, the Temple, Jesus, and YOU!**

Turn with me to Exodus 25, verses 1 through 9.

*“The Lord said to Moses, 2“Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give. 3These are the offerings you are to receive from them: gold, silver and bronze; 4blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; 5ram skins dyed red and another type of durable leather; acacia wood; 6olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; 7and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece.*

*8“Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. 9Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you. God says, "Have them make this tabernacle for me, and I will dwell among them." (NIV)*

Starting with this passage, let's talk about three things today: **God Among Us, God With Us, and God In Us.**

**What you're going to see is the building of the tabernacle sets into motion a process of increasing intimacy with God.**

Isn't that what we want with our loved ones and especially with God...increasing intimacy? Not just knowing about God but knowing Him.

We will see where God lives among his people, where God lives with us through Jesus, Immanuel, and then, where God live in us by the Holy Spirit. **God among us, God with us, and God in us.**

## I. God Among Us.

If you go all the way back to the beginning of the Bible, in Genesis, you find that Adam and Eve were originally designed to experience the presence of God. But they rebelled, and Genesis 3:23-24 says, *“...the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. 24After he drove the man out; He placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim*

***and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.” (NIV)***

Ever since that time, people have felt a longing to reconnect with God. God's way of making that happen was the tabernacle.

If you read Exodus chapters 25-31, you would see that God gives a specific list of materials to collect: gold, silver, bronze, goat hair, ram skins, wood, and olive oil. He specifies the kinds of specialists needed to construct the tabernacle: designers, craftsmen, and weavers. He explicitly describes how every individual piece should be built.

And then if you read chapters 35-40, you find the people of Israel carrying out God's specific instructions and building the tabernacle.

**Bottom Line:** The Holy Spirit Inspired Moses to Write Everything Down That God's People Would Need in Order to Know How God Wanted to Be Approached And Worshipped.

And when it was all done, it looked something like this... **(show picture)**.

The whole thing was about 50 yards long, and 25 yards wide. Keep in mind that it was designed to be carried on their journey through the wilderness.

The nation of Israel consisted of 12 tribes at the time of construction of the Tabernacle. These 12 tribes were divided into four groups, and each group of three Tribes had their own place around the Tabernacle where they camped.

On the EAST side under the symbol of the LION were positioned the Tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. These armies totaled 186,000 individuals and comprised the largest of the groups:

On the WEST side under the symbol of the OX were the three tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin. This was the smallest group of tribes involving 108,100 people:

On the NORTH side under the symbol of the EAGLE were the Tribes of Dan, Asher, and Naphtali. This camp was comprised of 157,000 individuals.

On the SOUTH side under the symbol of the MAN were the tribes of Rueben, Simeon, and Gad. The total number of people in this group was 151,450.

The Tribes arranged on the NORTH, SOUTH, EAST, WEST with the Tabernacle in the middle formed a heavenly view of a CROSS.

The Tabernacle of Moses was a portable tent with various curtains and coverings over a wooden structure. It had three compartments.

The Holiest of All contained: The Ark of the Covenant

The Holy Place contained: The Golden Altar of Incense; The Table of Shewbread; The Golden Candlestick

The Outer Court contained: The Brazen Altar and the Brazen Laver

The message of the tabernacle can be illustrated with two simple words - **The WAY**. As man comes to God, he must begin at the Gate, accept the Blood sacrifice. From there he progresses step by step, until he comes to the full of Glory of God as seen in the Most Holy Place.

**From the Brazen Altar to the Ark of the Covenant - Man's Approach is by Faith.**

**From the Ark of the Covenant to the Brazen Altar - God's Approach is by Grace.**

At the very center, guarded by a thick curtain, or veil, was a room called 'The Most Holy Place.' And in that room was a wooden, gold-covered box called the Ark of the Covenant. And on top of that were two huge, golden angel wings.

And God said, "That's the spot where I'll show up. My glory...my presence...will manifest itself there, and that's where I'll meet with you." **So, God made a way that He could live among his people.**

If you look at Exodus 40, verse 34-35, it says: ***"Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. 35Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle."* (NIV)**

For the people of Israel, it meant there was now a way to connect with God!

A crucial requirement was you had to bring a sacrifice. **Why?** Do you remember what guarded the entrance back into the Garden of Eden? The flaming sword. Because God's holiness is so pure, and sin is a violation of God's holiness, to be in God's presence, something must go under the sword.

God's judgment must be carried out. So that's what they did, year after year, as they traveled through the wilderness. And then...years later, after they had settled down in the Promised Land, Solomon built a permanent dwelling place for God. The Tabernacle was replaced with the Temple.

And for many more years, the temple was the place where God dwelled among His people. It was really an awesome thing! You think, 'Great! Everything was good!' But it wasn't perfect. It made people dependent on the priests.

And any time there's a heavy emphasis on ritual and ceremony, people start focusing on the ritual, instead of the meaning behind the ritual. And it became more and more common for people to show up at the temple, **and instead of encountering God, they would just go through the motions.** Sound familiar?

One Bible scholar says this about the Tabernacles' relationship to you and I as Believers.

**The Body** can be compared to the OUTER COURT; it is the outer and visible part of our personality.

**The Soul** can be compared to the HOLY PLACE; it's the part of our personality that enjoys fellowship with other believers, worships, and interceding in prayer.

**The Spirit** can be compared to the HOLIES OF HOLIES; it's the believer's inner being, where we commune with God. It is the place of spiritual victory.

**The Tabernacle had 2 main purposes.** 1) It was to be God's sanctuary in Israel, and 2) It was designed to force God's people to look for the coming Messiah, the One who would fulfill all the symbols of the Tabernacle.

As time went by, there was a growing sense that something better was needed. And that leads to our second point...

## II. God With Us.

About 1,400 years later, John 1:14 says, ... ***"The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*** (NIV)

That phrase "the Word" is talking about Jesus, and when it says he "made his dwelling" among us, that's the Greek form of...guess what? **Tabernacle**. The eternal Son of God took on flesh and "tabernacled" or camped out among us.

The Message translation says, ***'The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.'***

By the way, this is the fulfillment of Isaiah's promise that when the Messiah is born, one of his names will be ***"Immanuel,"*** which means...***God with us***. Not just among us, but with us, in a much more personal way.

Early in Jesus' ministry, He was standing in the Jerusalem temple, and said: ***"Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."*** And the religious leaders became furious. In fact, they used those words as evidence against Him when he was put on trial. Because they thought Jesus was threatening to knock down the Temple! John 2 verse 21, clarifies for us: ***21But the temple he had spoken of was his body.*** (NIV)

Here's the amazing truth: Jesus replaced the temple! In Matthew 12:6, Jesus says, ***"Something greater than the temple is here."*** He was talking about himself. Jesus replaced the temple! So now, if you wanted to experience the presence of God, the face of God, you no longer needed to go to that physical structure; you just needed to go to Jesus.

And sure enough, many people who felt unwelcome or unqualified to go to the temple felt welcomed by Jesus! And as they spent time with Him, they experienced the presence of God. Way better than the tabernacle or temple!

But let's go further. Jesus wasn't just claiming to be the temple. He claimed to fulfill every aspect of what temple worship meant!

Every element in the tabernacle and later in the temple represented different things you had to do to experience God's presence.

For instance, there was special bread; there were lamps; there were priests. And Jesus said, "I am the bread; I am the light; I am the Great High Priest." Everything they were intended to represent, Jesus fulfilled, but infinitely better.

And most importantly, Jesus fulfilled the sacrifices of the temple. Look at Hebrews 9, verses 11-12: ***"But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are***

***now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. 12He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.” (NIV)***

When Jesus went to the cross, he willingly went under the sword in our place. The moment Jesus died, the curtain of the temple, that blocked the way into the Most Holy Place, was torn in two from top to bottom, meaning God did it. Every barrier has been taken out of the way, and the door to God's presence has been flung open.

So, everything the tabernacle and temple were intended to accomplish, Jesus accomplished in the flesh. He exceeded it. He replaced it.

Which means...the longing you have, to connect with God in a personal way can be fulfilled through Jesus.

**If you've been disillusioned by a religious system that put way too much emphasis on rituals, sacred places, sacred days, and sacred objects, or that made you way too dependent on religious leaders, just turn to Jesus.**

Look at what he did for you on the cross, put your faith in him, and he will take you all the way in...to the very presence of God.

Do you see the trajectory? How God has been allowing people to experience His presence in increasingly intimate ways? Through the tabernacle and temple, it was God among us; then through Jesus, it was God with us. But there's one more step to even greater intimacy.

### III. God In Us.

Shortly before Jesus was about to leave the earth, He gathered His followers together and He made this promise in John 14, beginning in verse 16:

***“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— 17the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.” (NIV)***

After the death and resurrection of Jesus, He ascended into heaven. His followers gathered in an upper room, and Acts 2 says, ***“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire (remember the fire in the burning bush? Remember the pillar of fire in the wilderness, referring to the presence of God!) that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”***

**The glory of God filled the tabernacle and lived among us. The Word became flesh and became Immanuel, God with us. And now the fire God's Spirit lives in us. Isn't that amazing?**

Different churches tend to emphasize the Holy Spirit in different ways. Charismatic and Pentecostal churches focus on his power, evangelicals tend to emphasize the Spirit's work in bringing attention to Jesus Christ, and Catholics focus on the Spirit's working through the church hierarchy.

Someone said, “You might think of God the Father as God ***for us***, God the Son as God ***with us***, and God the Holy Spirit as God ***in us***.”

It is from God the Father that we gain our ***sense of belonging***. It is from Christ the Son that we gain our ***sense of worth***. How can we measure how valuable we are, but by the cross of Jesus Christ? And it is from the Spirit of God we gain our sense of ***purpose***, what God created us to be and to do in terms of our belongingness and worth.

Moses had an experience with God before he received the Ten Commandments. Paul had an experience with God on the Damascus Road before he discerned the relationship between law to grace. **God wants us to have an experience with Him; and if it's a genuine experience from God, it will always line up with the scripture.**

In Genesis 1:2 we are told that the earth was formless and empty. Darkness was over the surface of the deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. **That is a powerful description of the fact that the Spirit of God wants to bring created order out of chaos.**



In Matthew 1:20, Joseph is told by the angel *“What is conceived in Mary is from the Holy Spirit.”*

The angel Gabriel tells Mary in Luke 1:35 *“The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you so the holy one who will be born, will be called the Son of God.”* In a spiritual realm the Holy Spirit is seeking to reduplicate in us what he did physically in the womb of Mary. The Spirit is seeking spiritually to birth Jesus into our life.

**So here is a theological question for you: When were the disciples saved?** Some would say the disciples were first saved when they began to follow Jesus. Others will say, they had to be saved sometime in their walk with Christ because the Lord told them when they came back from ministering, to rejoice that their names were written in the lamb’s book of life. Others will say the disciples came to a saving faith in Christ when at Caesarea-Philippi, when Peter and the others confessed that Jesus is Messiah! Others will say they did not become Christians until Acts 2, when there were baptized in the Spirit.

**I believe the key is in John 20:22.** Jesus appears to his disciples in the first evening of His resurrection, and *said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’ And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’”*

The fact is that until Christ’s resurrection the faith of the disciples was like the faith of Old Testament saints. It was anticipatory of what the Messiah would do. **How could they have the full saving faith when the work of Jesus was not finished. He had not yet died for their sins, and he had not yet risen from the dead.**

Saving faith in the Old Testament sense was believing Messiah will come and looking forward prophetically to what Christ would do. **Saving faith in the New Testament sense is looking on what the Lord has done and having the benefit of His finished work that can be applied to our lives.**

**The disciples in that upper room on that evening are in the position for the first time to have the resurrected life of Christ imputed and implanted into their lives. That life comes through the Spirit of God who is life.**

In fact, it could not have been done up until this time because salvation according to Romans 10:8-9 is ***whoever believes in his heart that Jesus is raised and confesses with his lips shall be saved.***

**They could not make that confession until this moment when Jesus appears to them for the first time after His resurrection.**

In fact, what Jesus says to them is intricately linked with what he does. The scriptures say he breathed on them and says, ***“Receive ye the Spirit.”*** What Jesus is doing in breathing upon them is saying, now I have by virtue of my resurrection, a new life to give to you, witnessed in the person of the Spirit. It is the Spirit alone which gives life.

Breath is the universal symbol of life. It can only be given by God.

**What do we do with this increasing intimacy? Four Take-Aways...**

***First, Seek the Baptism in the Holy Spirit***

After the event of John 20:22; Acts 1:4-5 says, ***“Do not leave Jerusalem but wait for the gift my Father promised which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”***

Go with me to another room, an upper room, where 120 are gathered on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit descends upon them, and they are all filled with the Spirit. Acts 2:1-4 says, ***“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues[a] as the Spirit enabled them.”***

**We receive the Spirit at conversion. But what is going on here?**

In John 20:22 Jesus breathes on them, and they receive the Spirit. In Acts 2:4 they were filled with the Spirit. Does this mean that they had never received the Spirit? No, it just means that the Spirit is coming to them in power.

In Acts 8:15-17 Peter and John are sent to Samaria, where believers have already received the regenerative Spirit, yet on that occasion Peter and John come down so that they might receive the Holy Spirit in the Acts 2:4 sense.

Later Paul comes to the Ephesians and says, ***“Having believed did you receive the Holy Spirit?”*** He is talking about Pentecostal baptism.

Some of you come from a Pentecostal background, and you probably came into an experience of the Spirit before you came into a doctrinal knowledge of the Spirit. In fact, Pentecostals or charismatics are often criticized by non-charismatic Christians, who say, “You guys have an experience then look in the scripture to justify it.”

When we establish the doctrine of the baptism in the Spirit, we go to Acts 2 and 8 and 10 and 11, Acts 9 and 19. We build our case of baptism in the Spirit off these five instances in the book of Acts.

Many people today in our culture are distressed, distracted, and depressed. **What an antidote the Holy Spirit is to that.** Nobody is depressed on the day of Pentecost. They are so filled with joy that people think they are drunk at 9:00 in the morning.

Paul writing in Ephesians 5:19-20 says ***“Do not be drunk with wine wherein is excess. But be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things under God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”***

What Paul is teaching here is that there is a work of the Spirit in our experience that is every moment, of every day and it manifests itself in several ways. A life of praise, a life of thanksgiving, and a life lived with the right relationships. He goes on to talk in Ephesians 5 about the relationship of wives to husbands, and husbands to wives, parents to children and vice versa and employees to employers. All that comes out of the stream of the Spirit, which is available and operative in our life all the time.

Concerning the baptism in the Spirit, John said ***“When He comes, He will baptize you with the Spirit.”*** That means Jesus is the agent of the baptism. And when does this happen?

In Acts 10 at Cornelius' house, it happens with his conversion. In Acts 2 it happens after conversion. In Acts 19 it happens with conversion. In Acts 8 it happens after conversion. In Acts 9 with Paul, it happens after conversion.

What is being suggested therefore by the term "baptism in the Spirit," is that Jesus is the one baptizing us or immersing us distinctly in the life of the Spirit.

For example, when Jesus begins his earthly ministry at the age of 30, the bible says, "***The Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove.***"

Did that mean that the Spirit had been absent from his life up to that point? No, not at all. But it meant that at the beginning of his public ministry the Spirit came upon him in power. The Spirit filled those people in the upper room to have power to witness.

**The baptism in the Spirit is real. Seek it out...ask God for this wonderful gift!**

### **Second, Practice His Presence.**

God told Moses, "Take off your shoes, for the place you're standing is holy ground." Because God's presence is in us, every place you go is holy ground! That means we need to constantly remind ourselves that God is right there, with us, wherever we are.

There was a monk named Brother Lawrence who lived back in the 1600s, and he wrote a book called The Practice of the Presence of God. He was a dish washer in the monastery, so he trained himself to be consciously aware of God's presence while he scrubbed pots and plates. He said you can become increasingly aware of God's presence.

### **Third, Confess Your Sins.**

When you read about the Jewish tabernacle and temple, there's a huge emphasis on making atonement for sins. But now, because Jesus made the final and perfect sacrifice at the cross, all we have to do is confess. The Greek word for "confess" is *homologeo*- "to say the same." So confessing is just calling sin what God calls sin. It's coming clean before God.

1 John 1:9 says ***“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”***

Listen to this quote by Dane Ortlund:

**“We all tend to have some small pocket of our life where we have difficulty believing the forgiveness of God reaches...But God's forgiving, redeeming, restoring touch reaches down into the darkest crevices of our souls, those places where we are most ashamed, most defeated.”**

Satan is called "The Accuser." He loves it when we wallow in our sin and keep our distance from God. Don't believe his lies. I don't care what the sin is; confess it to God and receive His forgiveness. His mercies are new every day.

***Lastly, Honor God with Your Body.***

During the first century, nobody thought very highly of the human body. It was considered much less important than the human spirit. You could do whatever you wanted with your body. But then Christianity came along and said, "God cares a lot about our bodies.

1 Cor. 6:19-20... ***“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.”***

In other words, your body is not something to be trashed and abused. It's sacred. You are the temple of God! So, treat your body with honor. Eat right, avoid sexual immorality, live healthy and wholesome lives.

**Because Jesus lost the face of the Father as he hung on the cross, and said, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” We get to experience God's presence forever.**