

John – Week 5 – The Living Tabernacle – Bible Study Helps

Title: The Living Tabernacle: God Dwelling Among Us

Sermon Summary:

This sermon explores the profound truth that Jesus Christ is the living fulfillment of the Old Testament tabernacle. The pastor walks through John 1:14, emphasizing how God's eternal plan was to dwell with His people—first in the wilderness tabernacle, then incarnate as Jesus Christ, and ultimately in the new heaven and new earth. The message highlights the unprecedented miracle of the Incarnation: the eternal Word becoming flesh to dwell among humanity. Every element of the Old Testament tabernacle points prophetically to Jesus Christ—from the altar of sacrifice to the bread of life, from the water of cleansing to the light of the world. The sermon calls believers to never lose their wonder at this truth and to live with passion and urgency, recognizing that God Himself dwelt among us in the person of Jesus Christ, full of grace and truth.

Key Points:

- The historical reality of the Incarnation: God literally became a man 2,000 years ago
- Jesus Christ fulfilled Old Testament prophecies perfectly, including Isaiah 7:14 (virgin birth) and Micah 5:2 (birthplace in Bethlehem)
- The humility of Christ is unparalleled—He left heaven to become like us (Philippians 2:5-11)
- The Old Testament tabernacle was an earthly shadow of heavenly realities, with Jesus as the true tabernacle
- Every element of the tabernacle points to Christ: the door, altar of sacrifice, brazen laver, showbread, golden candlestick, altar of incense, and the ark of the covenant
- God's ultimate plan has always been to dwell with His people—from Eden, through the wilderness, in Christ, and ultimately in the New Jerusalem
- John and the disciples had the unprecedented privilege of beholding God's glory in human form
- Jesus is the "only begotten" (monogenes—one of a kind) of the Father, fully God and fully man
- Christ is full of both grace and truth in perfect balance
- Believers today have the privilege and responsibility to share this gospel message with urgency

Scripture Reference:

- John 1:1-14 (primary focus on verse 14: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us")
- Genesis 3:15 (first Messianic prophecy)
- Isaiah 7:14 (virgin birth prophecy)

John – Week 5 – The Living Tabernacle – Bible Study Helps

- Micah 5:2 (Bethlehem prophecy)
- Matthew 1:18-23 (fulfillment of virgin birth)
- Exodus 25:1-9, 40:17-38 (tabernacle instructions and God's glory filling it)
- Hebrews 8:1-5, 9:1-14, 10:1 (Old Testament tabernacle as shadow of heavenly realities)
- Philippians 2:5-11 (Christ's humility in the Incarnation)
- 1 Timothy 3:16 (mystery of godliness—God manifest in flesh)
- Revelation 11:19, 21:1-3 (temple in heaven and God's future dwelling with humanity)
- 1 John 1:1-4 (eyewitness testimony of touching and seeing Jesus)
- 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 (God choosing the weak to confound the wise)

Stories:

- The account of Moses receiving instructions for the tabernacle on Mount Sinai and God showing him a heavenly pattern
- The completion of the tabernacle and God's glory filling it with cloud by day and fire by night (Exodus 40)
- The wise men seeing the star over Bethlehem, parallel to Israel seeing God's presence as a pillar of fire
- John the Baptist's recognition of Jesus as the Lamb of God when the Spirit descended like a dove
- John the beloved disciple laying his head on Jesus' breast at the Last Supper, wanting to be as close to Christ as possible
- The personal testimony of the pastor memorizing 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 during early discipleship after salvation
- The illustration of parents holding their children's hands while walking, compared to the disciples' desire to be close to Jesus

John – Week 5 – The Living Tabernacle – Bible Study Helps

Discipleship Questions

How does understanding Jesus as the 'living tabernacle' change your perspective on God's desire to dwell with His people throughout history?

In what ways might our familiarity with Christmas and the incarnation cause us to lose sight of the miraculous reality that God became man?

The pastor mentions that Christians today are 'hiding under a bushel' despite having the greatest message. What specific fears or distractions keep you from boldly sharing the gospel?

How does recognizing that every detail of the Old Testament tabernacle points to Jesus Christ deepen your appreciation for the unity and intentionality of Scripture?

What does it mean practically for Jesus to be the 'center' of your life, as the tabernacle was in the center of Israel's camp?

John never seemed to get over the privilege of being with Jesus, yet we often lose our passion. What practices could help us maintain that sense of wonder and gratitude?

How does the truth that Jesus is 'full of grace and truth' challenge you to balance these qualities in your own relationships and witness?

The sermon emphasizes that God chose 'the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.' How does this truth affect your confidence in serving God despite your weaknesses?

If the visible presence of God with Israel through the pillar of fire and cloud was meant to be a witness to surrounding nations, how should the indwelling Holy Spirit in believers today serve as a visible witness?

Considering that we are living at the end of church history before the rapture, what specific changes should you make this week to 'walk as children of light' with greater urgency?

Small Group Study Guide: The Living Tabernacle

Based on John 1:14

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Begin by thanking God for His incredible humility in becoming flesh and dwelling among us. Ask the Holy Spirit to open hearts and minds to understand the depth of this truth.

Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

Question: What's something you own or have experienced that you initially took for granted but later came to deeply appreciate?

This helps introduce the concept of familiarity potentially dulling our appreciation for Christ's incarnation.

Key Scripture

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."

Main Takeaways

1. The Historical Reality of the Incarnation

God literally became a man 2,000 years ago. This is not myth or metaphor—it's historical fact.

2. Jesus as the Living Tabernacle

Everything in the Old Testament tabernacle pointed to Jesus Christ. He fulfilled what the earthly tabernacle could only symbolize.

3. God's Desire to Dwell With His People

From the Garden of Eden to the New Jerusalem, God's ultimate desire has always been to dwell with His people.

4. The Humility of Christ

Few things surpass the humility of Jesus Christ leaving heaven to become a man and die for our sins.

Discussion Questions

Section 1: Understanding the Incarnation (15 minutes)

1. The sermon mentioned that Christmas familiarity might reduce the "amazing reality that God became a man." Do you agree? How can we guard against taking the incarnation for granted?
2. Read Philippians 2:5-11. What specific aspects of Christ's humility stand out to you most? Why?
3. Why was it necessary for Jesus to become fully human while remaining fully God? What would be missing if He were only one or the other?

Section 2: The Tabernacle Connection (15 minutes)

4. Before this sermon, how much did you know about the Old Testament tabernacle? How does understanding it help you appreciate Jesus more?
5. The sermon connected various tabernacle elements to Jesus:
 - o The only door → Jesus as the door to heaven
 - o The altar of sacrifice → Jesus as the Lamb of God
 - o The brazen laver (water) → Jesus as living water
 - o The showbread → Jesus as the bread of life
 - o The candlestick → Jesus as the light of the world

Which of these connections is most meaningful to you personally? Why?

6. Read Hebrews 9:1-14. How does understanding that Jesus entered the "true tabernacle" in heaven change your perspective on His sacrifice?

Section 3: Beholding His Glory (15 minutes)

7. John said "we beheld His glory." The sermon explained that "beholding" means more than just seeing—it means fixing your eyes with attention and care. How can we "behold" Jesus today when we can't physically see Him?

John – Week 5 – The Living Tabernacle – Bible Study Helps

8. **Read 1 John 1:1-4. John never seemed to get over the privilege of being with Jesus. What does John say is the result of truly encountering Christ? (Hint: verse 4)**
9. **The sermon mentioned John laying his head on Jesus' breast at the Last Supper. What does this tell us about the kind of relationship Jesus desires with us?**

Section 4: Personal Application (15 minutes)

10. **Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. God chose "foolish," "weak," and "despised" things to accomplish His purposes. How does this encourage you personally?**
11. **The sermon challenged: "The devil has done a number on planet Earth. He has got everybody so busy, so distracted, that we forget that we have this incredible truth to share with the world." What specific distractions are keeping you from living with passion for Christ and sharing the gospel?**
12. **The pastor said, "If God was here, things would be different. And you know what? He is. And that's our problem. He's not only in our midst, He's inside of us." What would change in your daily life if you lived with constant awareness that God dwells within you?**

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose **ONE** of the following to practice this week:

Option 1: Daily Meditation on the Incarnation

- Each morning this week, read John 1:1-14 slowly
- Spend 5 minutes thanking God specifically for becoming flesh
- Journal one new thought or appreciation each day

Option 2: Share the Gospel

- The sermon emphasized we still have time to "save one more soul"
- Identify one person God has placed in your life who needs Jesus
- Pray daily for them and look for an opportunity to share the gospel this week

Option 3: Study the Tabernacle

- Using a Bible dictionary or online resource, study one element of the tabernacle each day
- Write down how it points to Jesus Christ
- Share what you learned with your family or a friend

Option 4: Combat Spiritual Complacency

John – Week 5 – The Living Tabernacle – Bible Study Helps

- Identify one area where you've become complacent in your walk with Christ
- Take one concrete action this week to reignite your passion (examples: start a new Bible reading plan, memorize Scripture, serve someone, give sacrificially)

Memory Verse for the Week

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."

Challenge: Try to memorize this verse as a group and recite it together next week.

Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

Share and Pray:

- Personal prayer requests
- Pray for boldness to share the gospel
- Pray against spiritual complacency and distraction
- Thank God for the incarnation and His desire to dwell with us

Closing Prayer Focus: Pray that group members would never "get over" the miracle of the incarnation and would live with renewed passion for Christ this week.

Preparation for Next Week

Continue reading through John chapter 1 in preparation for the next study.

Leader Notes

- **Be sensitive** to anyone who may not yet be saved. The sermon included a clear gospel presentation—be prepared to answer questions about salvation.
- **Encourage participation** from everyone, but don't force it. Some may need time to process these deep truths.
- **Keep discussions focused** on application, not just information. The goal is transformation, not just education.
- **Follow up** during the week with group members about their chosen practical application.

5-Day Devotional: The Living Tabernacle

Day 1: God's Desire to Dwell With Us

- **Reading:** Exodus 25:1-9; John 1:1-5
- **Devotional:** From the very beginning, God's heart has been to dwell with His people. In the wilderness, He gave Moses detailed instructions for building the tabernacle—not because He needed a dwelling place, but because He desired to be present among His children. Every curtain, every piece of furniture, every measurement pointed forward to something greater. When John declares "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," he's announcing the fulfillment of God's eternal plan. The tabernacle was temporary; Jesus is permanent. God didn't send a message or a prophet—He came Himself. Today, consider this profound truth: the Creator of the universe wants to be with you. He's not distant or disinterested. He became flesh to close the gap sin created. How does knowing God desires your presence change how you approach Him today?

Day 2: The Humility of the Incarnation

- **Reading:** Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 2:14-18
- **Devotional:** Few things surpass the humility of Jesus Christ. The eternal God, who inhabits eternity and spoke galaxies into existence, chose to become like us. He didn't cling to His divine privileges but "made himself of no reputation." He experienced hunger, weariness, temptation, and pain—not because He had to, but because He wanted to identify completely with our human condition. Jesus became what we are so we could become what He is—children of God. This wasn't a disguise or a temporary visit; He truly became flesh. When you face trials today, remember: Jesus knows. He's walked in your shoes. He became the perfect High Priest who can sympathize with your weaknesses. Let this humility shape your own heart. If God Himself humbled Himself for you, how should you respond to others?

Day 3: Jesus—Our Living Sacrifice

- **Reading:** Hebrews 9:1-14; 10:1-10
- **Devotional:** In the Old Testament tabernacle, the first thing you encountered after entering the only door was the altar of sacrifice. Morning and evening, lambs were offered, smoke ascending to heaven—a constant reminder that sin requires death. Year after year, the same sacrifices were repeated because animal blood could never truly remove sin. But when Jesus came, everything changed. He became both the High Priest and the Lamb. His sacrifice was once for all, perfect and complete. No more endless repetition. No more temporary covering. He entered the true Holy of Holies in heaven with His own blood and obtained eternal redemption. The altar is no longer burning because the work is finished. Today, don't live under condemnation or guilt. Jesus' sacrifice was sufficient. Live in the freedom His completed work provides. Let gratitude, not guilt, motivate your obedience.

Day 4: Beholding His Glory

- **Reading:** 1 John 1:1-4; 2 Peter 1:16-19
- **Devotional:** John never got over what he witnessed. Decades after walking with Jesus, he still marveled: "We beheld His glory!" This wasn't casual observation—John fixed his eyes on Jesus, studied Him, touched Him, leaned on His chest at the Last Supper. He saw the Word of Life made flesh. The disciples didn't follow cunningly devised fables; they were eyewitnesses of His majesty. On the Mount of Transfiguration, they saw Jesus unveiled in glory. John's joy was full because of this fellowship with the Father through the Son. Here's the challenge for us: we haven't physically seen Jesus, yet we're called to behold Him through Scripture. Don't let familiarity dull the wonder. When you read God's Word, you're encountering the living Christ. Behold Him with fresh eyes today. Study Him carefully. Let your joy be full through fellowship with Him.

Day 5: The Light Among Us

- **Reading:** John 1:6-14; Revelation 21:1-5
- **Devotional:** The pillar of fire by night and cloud by day marked God's presence with Israel in the wilderness. Everyone could see that God was among His people. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, wise men saw His star—the light of the world had entered human history. Jesus walked among people who didn't recognize their Creator. But those who received Him discovered the true light that enlightens everyone. Today, that same light dwells within every believer. You carry the presence of God wherever you go. The world is watching, looking for evidence that God is real. One day, in the New Jerusalem, God will dwell with us forever—no more separation, no more sin, no more death. Until that day comes, we're called to shine. Don't hide your light under a bushel. Let your life reflect the glory of the One who dwells within you. The world needs to see His light through you.