



## TEACHER DOWNLOAD GOD DWELLING WITH HIS PEOPLE ACTIVITY

One of the many themes that runs through the Bible's story is the theme of God dwelling with his people.

It begins in the opening pages of the Bible where we see Adam and Eve enjoying the presence of God in the Garden of Eden. When this relationship is fractured because of their rebellion, the Bible's storyline follows this theme of God dwelling with his people through the Tabernacle, Temple, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the final pages of Scripture that speak of a New Creation where God will dwell with his people again.

There are a couple of times in the course where this can be explored with the students as a way of helping them to see the significance of the unfolding events of the Bible (around the time that the Tabernacle is built or when Solomon builds the Temple).

The challenge is to find a creative way of helping students see the intentional work that the Bible says God is doing in history to undo the results of the Fall.

The information on the following pages may be useful for you in exploring this topic with your students.

## MORE HELP NEEDED?

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# the significance of the tabernacle in the bible's storyline

The best way to make sense of the place of the Tabernacle in the Bible's story is to step back and see exactly how it fits into God's dramatic work of redemption.

Central to the Bible's story is the work of God to restore the perfect relationship that once existed between God and humanity.

As you read the Bible and follow the development of its teaching about the Tabernacle, (particularly the theme of God dwelling with his people), you follow the progress of God's work of redemption.

## FACT 1

**Israel needed the Tabernacle because of its fractured relationship with God.**

Prior to their rebellion against God, there was nothing to separate Adam and Eve from the glory of God's presence. Unfortunately, that was not the case for very long.

The consequences of the sin of Adam and Eve must be clearly understood to recognise the purpose and significance of the Tabernacle. Adam and Eve and their offspring lost the privilege of living in Eden in God's presence. They were removed from the garden and their sin brought with it the consequence of death.

As we can begin to see, everything in the Bible that follows is the record of God's purposeful and gracious work to bring salvation to the human race.

## GENESIS 3:23

*So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.*

## FACT 2

**God, who had separated himself from sinners, dwelt with his people again in the Tabernacle.**

What main thing distinguished God's covenant people from all the other nations on earth? The Bible says that God redeemed Israel out of slavery in Egypt so he could dwell amongst them.

The Tabernacle stood in the middle of the Israelite camp. God's presence was manifest in the Most Holy Place where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. The Israelites' special privilege came with necessary costs. The people were to be holy and not defile the dwelling place of the living God.

## EXODUS 25:8

*"Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them."*

## OTHER RELEVANT BIBLE PASSAGES:

\* EXODUS 29:45-46; NUMBERS 35:34



**FACT 3**

**The Temple built by King Solomon served the same purpose as the Tabernacle.**

The building of the Temple was not the result of a new theological development in God's relationship with Israel. Building a permanent place of worship signalled Israel's development as a nation and showed other nations that Israel's God was the one and only true and living God. Apart from a few minor additions to the furniture in the Tabernacle, the Temple had the same layout.

**1 CHRONICLES 28:19-20**

*"All this," David said, "I have in writing from the hand of the LORD upon me, and he gave me understanding in all the details of the plan."*

*David also said to Solomon his son, "Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the LORD is finished."*

**FACT 4**

**God was not contained within the structure of the Tabernacle or Temple.**

When Solomon built the Temple, he acknowledged that it could not come close to containing God. In fact, heaven and earth cannot contain him.

In a very real way though, God's presence was manifest at the Tabernacle. It was a specific place where he had placed his name. It was a place God designed for his people to worship him.

**1 KINGS 8:27**

*"But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!"*

**FACT 5**

**The Most Holy Place teaches us how sinners come into God's presence.**

It is important to realise what the Bible teaches about the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle and the Temple.

As we have seen, only the High Priest was allowed into that room, and even then only once a year on the Day of Atonement. In the New Testament the writer to the Hebrews says that God was showing us that the way into his presence was not disclosed because Jesus had not yet come and made atonement for sin.

Until this happened, it was not appropriate for God's people to enter the Most Holy Place.

Most significantly, when Jesus died the Temple curtain that concealed the Most Holy Place was torn from top to bottom. Jesus Christ opened up the way into God's presence for believers. He sacrificed for sin once and for all. In his body and in his life he fulfilled the very theological realities that the Temple had been teaching God's people for centuries.

**HEBREWS 9:24-28**

*For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.*

**OTHER RELEVANT BIBLE PASSAGES:**

★ NUMBERS 7:89; MATTHEW 27:50-51; HEBREWS 9:6-8; LEVITICUS 16:1-3

## FACT 6

**Jesus was God in flesh dwelling among us.**

God who dwelt with his people in the limitations of the Tabernacle and Temple sent his own son, Jesus Christ, to live here on earth.

Jesus referred to his own body as the Temple. On one occasion, he went further saying that he was greater than the Temple. The Bible teaches that in Jesus Christ we have seen the glory of God; we have seen God dwelling on earth in a way far more explicit than what was experienced at the Temple.

### JOHN 1:14

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

### OTHER RELEVANT BIBLE PASSAGES:

\* EZEKIEL 37:27; MATTHEW 12:6; JOHN 2:18-21

## FACT 7

**God now dwells within believers; Christians are temples of the Holy Spirit.**

Now that Jesus Christ has conquered death and ascended into heaven, the Bible teaches that believers are temples of the Holy Spirit.

God's amazing and perfect work of redemption has come to a point where he not only dwells among his people but also within them.

### 1 CORINTHIANS 3:16-17

*Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.*

### OTHER RELEVANT BIBLE PASSAGES:

\* 2 CORINTHIANS 6:16; 1 CORINTHIANS 6:19; EPHESIANS 2:19-22

## FACT 8

**In the future God will live with believers in heaven.**

The Bible gives us a glimpse into the new heaven and earth that awaits God's people in the future. Significantly, the Bible ends with a focus on the 'new' Jerusalem - where God once again dwells with his people. In this 'new' Jerusalem there is no need for a temple; the very one the Temple pointed toward will be there.

### REVELATION 21:1-3

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."*

