

The Dwelling Place

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YHWH, Jesus Christ, and God the Father **dwelt in “eternity”** – a different “dimension” in which the entire unfathomable physical universe is just an object which they can hold in a hand. **We CANNOT properly wrap our minds around this**; yet, God’s intention from the beginning is also to **dwelt with persons “of a contrite and lowly spirit”**. God’s plan is to have a family who will eventually inhabit eternity with him, but until then **God is willing to dwell with us as we exist** (Isaiah 33:5, 57:15, 2 Chronicles 30:27).

Immediately after the agreement to the Sinai covenant, God began to discuss **the Tabernacle, the Dwelling Place**. During the theophany on the mountain, **Moses saw a vision of “the true tabernacle in eternity”** (Exodus 25:1-2a, 8-9). The most important Hebrew words for the Tabernacle are:

- מִשְׁכָּן - **mish*kan** which means “dwelling place”, “tabernacle”
- סֻכָּה - **sukkah** which means “covert”, “booth”

Symbolism of the Tabernacle: Old Testament, see for example Psalm 15:1-3 and Psalm 27:4-6; New Testament, see for example Hebrews 9:1-15. **“The age then present”** was the time of the Old Covenant – the time of the physical nation of Israel, represented by the physical Tabernacle. **With Jesus’ sacrifice**, the Old Covenant ended – God was no longer dealing with a physical nation. The **Church is spiritual Israel** with which God has been working ever since – the Church is **“the greater more perfect tabernacle”**. The New Testament Church is the “dwelling place”, the Tabernacle, of Jesus Christ, the head, and the members of the Church, the body, who comprise the Family of God. Hebrews 9:10 makes reference to **“regulations ... imposed until the time of reformation”** – this **“time of reformation”** began with the work of Jesus in the First Advent, but it looks to the inauguration of the Kingdom of God at the Second Advent (Acts 3:20-21a).

The Feast of Tabernacles: Because the Israelites were going into the land of Canaan where agriculture was very different from what they had known in Egypt, **God initially focused the meaning of the feasts on agriculture** (Exodus 23:16, 34:22-24). The Gezer Calendar contains a brief “poem” which outlines the activities of the agricultural year (see Thomas, D.W., editor, Documents from Old Testament Times, Harper & Row, New York, 1958, page 201). The Feast was intended as a celebration of the beneficence of YHWH, a time to rejoice; but also, there were **object lessons: “that your generations may know”** (Leviticus 23:39-43, Deuteronomy 16:13-15). **The Feast was intended to teach the Israelites to look forward to the unfolding Plan of God.**

The World Tomorrow: Isaiah uses allusions to the Tabernacle to foreshadow the Messianic Kingdom (Isaiah 4:2-6). **“The Branch”** is a common prophetic symbol for the Messiah – this prophecy looks to the Second Advent, when the Messiah is glorified. The **“cloud”** and **“fire”** are a direct **allusion to the pillar of smoke and fire associated with the original Tabernacle**. The **“booth (sukkah) for shade”** is the presence of the King of kings. **The prophecy in Isaiah 33:17-22** relates to the time period around 705BC when Hezekiah has withheld tribute from Assyria. There are strong factions in Jerusalem – some support open rebellion with promised support from Egypt; some look to a strengthening Babylon for help; **Isaiah warns that the only hope is trusting in YHWH**. **These were dark times** – Sennacherib would soon invade and reduce Hezekiah to “a bird in a cage”. **Isaiah looks beyond the contemporary trouble, beyond all the intervening centuries, beyond the destruction at the close of the age, to the arrival of the King of kings – as we must now**. **This prophecy is a promise** to those human beings who have lived over the millennia; who have been called by God and have remained faithful in their calling; to whom God will see fit to grant the gift of eternal life at the first resurrection. Isaiah says to these people **“Your eyes will behold the king in his beauty”** – the glorified Jesus Christ as depicted in the Transfiguration.

The Plan of God: God sees the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:9b-10). The Plan of God has been intact from the beginning; the Book of Numbers chapter 24 contains one of the earliest, and also one of the most enigmatic, prophecies of the unfolding of the Plan of God from the mouth of Bile’am (Numbers 24:3-9, 14, 17-19). **The “star” from Jacob is generally recognized as a Messianic prophecy**. The references to **Edom** and **Moab** have many implications for the relationship of Israel with those nations over the centuries. But, in an end-time context, those nations are **symbolic of the world system**, the conglomerate nations of the world under the sway of Satan, in opposition to the way of God. Jesus Christ will defeat the armies of these nations at his second coming, then, **through the spread of the gospel**, they will be “spiritually defeated”, and **brought into the Family of God**. It is fitting that the **Book of Revelation closes out the description of the Plan of God** with references to the “Tabernacle”. John sees the same vision that Moses saw: **the Tabernacle in eternity** (Revelation 15:5-8). **Finally, all living will dwell with God** (Revelation 21:1-4).

This sermon is based on the paper “*The Transfiguration and the Tabernacle*” located at: <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>