

Opening prayer... here is a popular prayer one can say before studying God's word... or say your own special one... ☺

These are two verses from the longest chapter in the Bible, a chapter that is filled with detail about God's word, Psalm 119v18 and 105, "Open my eyes so I can truly see the marvellous things in your Law... as... Your Word is a lamp to walk by, and a light to illumine my path. Amen." (NET)

God's Word is just so exciting, it overflows with life applications, symbolism, descriptions of God, God's plans, God's purposes, etc., etc. ☺ **What do we know about Heaven? Are we interested in the Temple of the Holy Spirit? What happened in Jerusalem ~AD30? What is the Tabernacle? What was the Garden of Eden really like?**

As we travel through time, what is the connection with all these locations? Well, one specific connection is that they are five locations where God specifically chooses to be... where God dwells! **Did you spot yourself in the list?**

"Do you not know that you are God's Temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" (1 Corinthians 3v16) Wherever we go, wherever we are, whether alone or in a crowd, whether in Lockdown or worshipping God in a wonderful Christian celebration, whether enjoying fellowship with a fellow believer or sharing our faith with someone who does not believe... God is with us, God dwells in us... **Emmanuel**, which means "**God with us**"! (Matthew 1v21–25)

So, looking at these dwelling places of God, what can we learn together about God's dwelling in us that might help us in our walk with, and for, God; especially in the context of Lockdown. The people of Israel were God's people—journeying through the wilderness, far from the only home they had known in Egypt. They had left their lives of slavery in Egypt to follow God's promise to give them a new land, a promised land that they could call home. God had shown them that He was with them, when He delivered them out of Pharaoh's grip... but would God still be with them as they travelled for years through the desert? On this journey, the people were frightened, they doubted, they grumbled, and at times they sinned gravely. Yet God provided for their needs, both physical and spiritual; minute-by-minute, hour-by-hour, day-by-day, year-by-year... way past Day 10,000! He was always with them.



Spiritually: TVP "Day 100" Lockdown or Israel "Day 10,000" Exodus?

As a visible, tangible reminder that He dwelt among His people wherever they went, God commanded them to build a sanctuary. This was no ordinary worship centre; it was God's holy sanctuary or Tabernacle. Situated in the middle of their camp, the Tabernacle was a constant reminder to everyone that God dwelt among them. The people of earth could commune with...

...the God of heaven!

Please read **Exodus 25v1–9** **What stood out most that you may not have realised or noticed before?** Perhaps take a moment to think on that thought... and what it means to you for your walk with God... ☺

What stands out will be different for each of us... for me it was the echo of the Lord's Prayer that our positive involvement is our Lord's desire... in Exodus 25v2 we read "...from every person motivated by a willing heart..." This reminded me of a recent minister's sermon from just before the COVID-19 Lockdown—how perfect is the Lord's timing in inspiring Dale with those reflections—where he shared thought-provoking pointers on our motivations when we do favours or errands for the people we love; such as our spouse, parents, children, friends, neighbours... do we act out of a sense of **duty**—like a soldier... or a sense of **begudgingly** having to—Mr or Ms Grumpy... or a sense of **privilege**—an honour... or a sense of **joy and delight**—was that a skip in your step? ☺

Ok... so, **from those four options... which is most like the way I, or you, usually serve our Lord? Is that love?** When the children of Israel gave to the Lord there was too much! Moses had to restrain them (Exodus 36v3–7).

Please read **John 1v1–14** **What struck you most this time?** I'm sure you've read it, or had it read to you, many times... it is such an inspirational passage, and, as it is His Living Word, then He can inspire us anew every time... ☺

Let's think about... when Jesus (the Word) "...became flesh and dwelt among us..." (John 1v14). During COVID-19 many have self-isolated, and have significant concerns about leaving that isolation when the time comes. We can all empathise with that, the first few weeks of Lockdown were especially alarming. We didn't want to leave the **security** and **safety** of **isolation** in our **home** environment. So, let's think about what Jesus did. For the sake of those (*me and you: John 1v10—did not recognise*) who would revile, reject, and crucify Him, He left the **security** and **safety** of the Father's presence (*for isolation from the Father: John 1v18—in closest fellowship with the Father, cf. Matt 27v46*) in Heaven (*an awe-inspiring home: Revelation 5v11–14*)! **Wow! What did Jesus leave for me... for you... ?**

Amazing ... what Jesus did is incomprehensible to me. It is astounding! That is worthy of our Praise and adoration!

In John 1v14, the word “...dwelt” is from the Greek word *eskenosen*, which literally means “...pitch a tent” ☺ Later Paul adds the link from Jerusalem ~AD30 to us, “I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” (Eph. 3v16–17a) Now Paul was a tentmaker (Acts 18v2–3) ...which is a thought-provoking idea... ☺ When we speak of God—evangelise—we are helping to make a new dwelling place/tent for God—we’re spiritual tentmakers—that’s a new insight to me! It’s like some see a daddy long-legs, when actually it’s a crane fly. Some see a wasp, when actually it’s a hoverfly. Some see a dragonfly, when actually it’s a damselfly/dancer. **AMD & BYS & CPR...** ☺ **So... how’s your spiritual tent-making?**

“Let them make for me a sanctuary, so that I may live with them.” Exodus 25v8, cf. Ephesians 3v16–19 and Revelation 3v20. God does not *need* a dwelling place, but we *need* God to dwell with us or... we will perish... Deuteronomy 28v1–20, Isaiah 1v28; cf. Psalm 5v4, which actually flips things... evil people CANNOT *dwell* with God.

When have you sensed God’s presence *most*, or *least*, in your life? What were those experiences like?

The Tabernacle was an expression of God’s presence, guidance, and protection. **What are some practical ways that you can help others to understand that God’s presence can make a significant positive difference in their lives?**

Meanwhile... back at the Tabernacle... ☺ Let’s note five important aspects that apply to us: it was God’s **sanctuary**, it was a **testimony** of God’s holiness, it was a place of **forgiveness** through sacrifice, it was a place of **prayer** pointing to Heaven, it was a prophecy of the future **restoration** of God’s relationship with His people... so, there’s **The big challenge** for me... and for you... as a Temple of the Holy Spirit **are those five aspects seen in me... and/or you?**

“According to all that I am showing you—the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings—you must make it exactly so.” Exodus 25v9 Wow! The creator of the universe and all life everywhere, who designed every molecule from the double-helix DNA to even its constituent sub-atomic particles, is here describing the architecture of His dwelling place amongst His people; complete with room layout, furnishings, artefacts, and even how it can be moved... isn’t this amazing! It follows that just as our brain and heart and legs and eyes are perfectly positioned in us—and for a reason—this is true for all God the designer’s dwelling places... both the Tabernacle... and us! ☺

The Tabernacle had three sections—“three” plays a symbolic role in this dwelling place for the Trinity:

- the **Courtyard** (Exodus 27v9–19) had three significant features:
 - the special entrance through which the people could bring their offerings (Exodus 27v16),
 - the large bronze-overlaid acacia wood altar for the burnt offerings (Exodus 27v1–8),
 - the bronze laver (*basin*) for the priests to wash their hands and feet (Exodus 30v17–21); before entering...
- the **Holy Place** that could *only* be entered by priests, who had daily duties with three artefacts:
 - the seven-light Lampstand (*Menorah*), there is only one source of perfect light (Exodus 25v31–40),
 - the table for the Bread of Presence, twelve weekly loaves one from each tribe (Exodus 25v23–30),
 - the Altar of Incense, a mini-version altar for the sweet incense cloud before *the Curtain* (Exodus 30v1–10);
- the **Most Holy Place**, *aka* the Holy of Holies, could *only* be entered by the High Priest once a year. It contained the Ark of the Covenant (Ex.25v10–22) whose lid formed the Mercy Seat/Throne for the presence of God (Ex.25v22 & Hebrews 9v5). The Ark contained 3 objects (Hebrews 9v4), with Old & New Covenant significance:
 - the two stone Tablets of the Law (Exodus 34v1[**TABLETS**], 25v16[**LOCATION**], 20v1–17[**LAW**] & Matthew 5v17–18),
 - the Jar of Manna that contained the only manna that never decayed (Exodus 16v32–34 & John 6v48–51),
 - Aaron’s Rod, which was the only one out of each rod presented by the twelve tribes that miraculously budded (Numbers 17v1–10—Aaron chosen as the first High Priest mediator of the Old Covenant—and Hebrews 9v1–28—Jesus chosen as the once for all perfect High Priest mediator of the New Covenant).

This study’s detail only scratches the surface of God’s dwellings. For example, the Tabernacle, like the Garden of Eden, was God’s dwelling place among His people, and the Tabernacle details suggest parallels with Eden, including:

- the east-facing entrance guarded by cherubim (Eden – Genesis 3v24, Tabernacle – Exodus 26v1)
- the gold (Eden – Genesis 2v11–12, Tabernacle – Exodus 25v3)
- the Tree of Life (*Lampstand/Light*) (Eden – Genesis 2v9, Tabernacle – Exodus 25v37)
- the Tree of Knowledge (*the Law/Testimony*) (Eden – Genesis 2v9, Tabernacle – Exodus 25v16).

So, God’s dwelling in the Tabernacle was a step toward the restoration of paradise. From God’s presence with His people in the Exodus Tabernacle, to the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ centred on Jerusalem, to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in any believer (Rev. 3v20), and completed in the new Heaven and Earth (Revelation 21-22). Praise God for God’s redemptive plan for God’s people from Genesis to Revelation... **Emmanuel ...Maranatha!**

Closing prayer... THANK YOU LORD for opening our eyes, so that we have seen marvellous things in your Law... as... Your Word is a lamp to walk by and a light to illumine our path. Amen **HALLELUJAH!**