

John 1:14b "Glory in the Tabernacle"

JOH 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."

Last week when we came to verse fourteen of our text we noted a number of things regarding the Word becoming flesh, not the least of which is the truth that God became man.

And with that statement we also saw how the very creator God of this universe was the One who existed for all of eternity, but had chosen to take on a second nature; that of a man. And so, we can now refer to the eternal Son of God as the God/man; fully God and fully man.

This God/man, this word become flesh, is none other than the Savior we know as Jesus Christ. He is the eternal God. And this is why He could not have come into existence at His birth since He always was. He simply assumed a second nature at conception by the Holy Spirit; that of man.

He assumed this nature with the express purpose of dying for the penalty which was given to man by God after man sinned in the garden. This was the Lord's mission; to redeem a people whom He loved with an everlasting love and to reestablish that fellowship He enjoyed with man prior to his rebellion.

This fulfilled the promise given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden when He spoke these words to Satan: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (GEN 3:15)

The woman's offspring was meant to express her physical offspring as well as spiritual offspring. The physical offspring meant the physical birth of the One who would crush or destroy the work of Satan and the results of his tempting Eve and Adam; the penalty of sin which is death. The prophet Isaiah addresses this.

ISA 7:14 "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."

But there is also that spiritual aspect of the offspring of Adam and Eve in that all men who embrace this promise from God by faith,

as Adam and Eve did, would enjoy this reuniting back to their God and Savior.

And Paul addresses this spiritual aspect of being offspring of the promise when referring to Abraham's faith in God's promise of redemption.

ROM 4:16 "Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring - not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all."

Paul further clarifies what he means by saying that we are Abraham's offspring or children, if we have believed as did Abraham.

GAL 3:7 "Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham."

And so, in this sense we have received the promise given to Adam and Eve that the crushing of Satan's seed or destructive influence and penalty, is now a reality in our lives as we embrace the seed of the woman who ultimately is the One born into this world to take our penalty.

This is what Paul meant when describing the seed who came through God's chosen instrument, Abraham.

GAL 3:16 "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ."

This is the Word become flesh we spoke of last week. But verse fourteen is also very instructive in describing what this Word did when He took on flesh and that is, He made His dwelling among us.

This is an amazing truth as it describes the mission of the Son of God which again is pointed out in the passage we just read in Isaiah where this seed of the woman would be called Immanuel, God with us.

This essentially sums up what it is that God desires to accomplish in His Son and that is to make the way for God to be able to be

with us, and we with Him, in a peaceful, loving relationship forever.

But what Jesus did in coming into this world some 2,000 years ago was foretold long before in the desert journey Israel experienced between Egypt and the promised land as they spent 40 years wandering as God led them.

You see the word we have in our text describing the Word "dwelling" among us is the Greek word *skenoo* which means to tabernacle among men, or to put it in more modern vernacular, to pitch your tent among men.

This is the precise terminology which was used of God as He dwelt among Israel in the desert. In fact, this was the reason for Moses being instructed by God to make the tabernacle in the desert.

God instructed the Israelites to bring an offering to the Lord of costly stones and precious metals, along with colored fabrics which all were to be used to make the tabernacle.

EXO 25:8-9 "Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. 9 Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you."

This tabernacle was designed by God to show the Israelites how He would be in their midst as He protected and guided them. And the relationship between this tabernacle in Israel as they wandered in the desert is amazingly similar to the way in which the Son of God tabernacled among men when He became flesh.

In fact, Arthur W. Pink in his commentary on the gospel of John points out some amazing things regarding this tabernacle in the desert and how it relates to Jesus Christ.

One of the first things he points out is that the tabernacle was a temporary dwelling which differed from the Temple Solomon built for the Lord. The Temple was a permanent structure. It wasn't meant to be mobile like the tabernacle.

The tabernacle was essentially a tent where the different articles God instructed to be built were housed. You had the Ark of the Covenant placed inside this tent which was meant to illustrate God's very presence in the life of Israel.

This tabernacle was used primarily in the wilderness. And the wilderness foreshadowed the conditions in which the eternal Son of God tabernacled, or dwelt among men at His first coming.

And so, we have this tabernacle "foreshadowing the manger and cradle where Christ lay, the carpenter bench he worked at with Joseph, his earthly, though not biological, father, the "nowhere" for the Son of Man to lay his head, the borrowed tomb for His grave."
(Pink)

There was nothing in the tabernacle in the desert to give us the impression that it was anything like the Temple in all its glory. The tabernacle was essentially plain and utilitarian. It was useful, but there was no comparative glory in the materials it was made of when placed beside the Temple of Solomon.

And the same is true of the incarnation, the Word becoming flesh and tabernacling among men. "The Divine majesty of our Lord Jesus was hidden beneath a veil of flesh." He was like any other Jewish child in Israel who was born poor and without pomp and splendor.

And this too the prophet Isaiah wrote about as he described this seed who would be born of a woman who, though very special, was nothing to get excited about in appearance.

ISA 53:1-4 "Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 2 He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. 3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted."

This was the tabernacle which came into this world and dwelled among us and yet was not recognized by the world partly because He didn't come in full glory. And isn't this what John has already said earlier in this gospel?

JOH 1:10 "He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him."

Of course, simply because the Son of God was clothed in common, though sinless flesh, was not the primary reason the world did not

recognize Him as we discussed last week, the real reason being hearts that are darkened by sin and the curse.

And yet, this tabernacle was God's dwelling place. In Israel as they wandered in the desert God was in their midst as He took up residence among the Jews as was demonstrated in the Ark of the Covenant which was housed in the tabernacle, or tent.

And because God dwelled among Israel in the desert through the tabernacle it was the place at which God met with men. This is why it was referred to as the tent of meeting.

"If [Moses] desired to draw near unto Jehovah [on behalf of Israel] he had to come to the door of the tabernacle. When giving instructions to Moses concerning the making of the tabernacle and its furniture, God said, "Place the cover on top of the ark and put in the ark the Testimony, which I will give you. There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites." (EXO 25:21-22) (Pink)

Jesus Christ is now the meeting-place between God and men. We no longer have to go through a priest or another representative to come into the presence of God. When Jesus came into this world to tabernacle among men He made the way to God through Himself after His death and resurrection.

1TI 2:5-6 "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all men - the testimony given in its proper time."

"He is the One who spans the gulf between deity and humanity, because He is Himself both God and man." (Pink)

When we look at the life of Israel in the desert we see that the tabernacle was always at the center of Israel's camp. All of the people knew where to look to view the place where the presence of the Lord was represented. They could trust that when they went to bed at night or when they got up in the morning the tabernacle would be at the exact same place.

They could trust that the Lord would always be there with them and that nothing would move Him from their presence. And if the Lord moved, the camp went with Him. Nothing could separate Israel from the love of the Lord, just like nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

"The tabernacle in Israel's presence was the great gathering center." (Pink) And in the same way the tabernacle which has come into the world to dwell among men in Christ Jesus is our great gathering center. This morning we have come to gather around our tabernacle, the presence of the Lord.

What are we told?

MAT 18:20 "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

Even now, we are in the presence of our Lord. He is with us this morning. He is tabernacling among His people. And where He tabernacles He guides and protects and feeds His people as the bread of life who came down from heaven.

And so, appropriately, the tabernacle was the place of worship among the Israelites. From its door the voice of the Lord was heard. Within its courts the priests ministered in their sacred service. It was from this tabernacle that the people of Israel could approach their God in reverence and fear and stand before the Lord in holy awe.

This is the God we come to this morning who became flesh and tabernacles among us and desires that we come into His presence with praise and adoration and worship. He has made the way. He is our mediator. He is our Savior and He is coming again.

And this marks the distinction between the tabernacle and the Temple. The tabernacle as I mentioned earlier was a temporary state. It was a place where the Lord made a way for men to come into His presence in a limited way. Only Moses and the priests were allowed to approach the inside of the tabernacle where the presence of the Lord was.

When the temple was built by Solomon that didn't change, but the splendor of the Temple spoke of the permanence and full glory of God's presence among His people. It spoke of a future time in which God would dwell among us forever as we surround His throne.

And so, in that sense the tabernacle foreshadowed Christ in His first coming into this world as He took on flesh; the temple looks forward to Christ at His second coming as we literally gather in His presence.

REV 7:15-17 "Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. 16 Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. 17 For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

This is the hope we look forward to. But, today we still can see the glory of the One who took on flesh and died and rose from the dead for our salvation even as did the disciples of Christ's day. It may be veiled in a sense, but His presence in our lives is no less real. This is what John goes on to say in our text.

JOH 1:14 "... We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

The apostle John was an eye witness of the Lord Jesus along with the rest of the disciples, and though the glory of God was hid from their eyes in its full manifestation they still recognized that what they saw and experienced was none other than the tabernacle of God dwelling among men.

They saw His glory as He performed miracles, as He taught with one who had power and authority, as He demonstrated perfection in His life, as He loved people who despised Him, and ultimately as that love took Him to the cross to fulfill that promise made to Adam and Eve as the seed of the woman was about to crush the seed of Satan.

Christ's victory was at the cross, but His glory was seen in His resurrection as He defeated sin and death. This is what John beheld. The glory of the One and only who came from the Father full of grace and truth.

This is the One who dwelled among Israel in the desert and in the Promised Land. They had a glimpse of the glory of God and the promise of being with Him forever by faith.

"In the tabernacle, in the holy of holies, Jehovah made His throne upon the mercy seat, and the evidence of His presence was the Shekinah glory, frequently termed "the cloud." When the tabernacle had been completed, and Jehovah took possession of it, we read, "then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." (Exo. 40:34) [Pink]

"It was the same at the completion of Solomon's temple: "The cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord." (2KIN 8:10) [Pink]

"Here the cloud and the glory are clearly identified. The Shekinah glory, then, was the standing sign of God's presence in the midst of Israel." [Pink]

And yet, Israel would turn away from their God and we are told that the Lord would turn away from them. He did not ultimately abandon them, but they would no longer enjoy His presence as they did in days gone by. Ezekiel was told about this.

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EZE 8:6 "And he said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing - the utterly detestable things the house of Israel is doing here, things that will drive me far from my sanctuary? But you will see things that are even more detestable."

EZE 11:23 "The glory of the LORD went up from within the city and stopped above the mountain east of it."

The glory of the Lord did not rest upon Israel for many years. They were taken into captivity by the Assyrians and the Babylonians. And even when they were able to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls and the temple it was a mere shadow of its former glory days.

HAG 2:1-3 "On the twenty-first day of the seventh month, the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: 2 "Speak to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people. Ask them, 3 "Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing?"

The glory was gone. But in the Word becoming flesh the glory was back in Israel as the Lord was once again tabernacling among men. But, the sad fact is that even in tabernacling among His people Israel, and having His glory being revealed, though through a veil, they did not recognize Him.

JOH 1:4-5 "In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it."

How the Lord longed to have His people once again come into His presence and enjoy His fellowship as they did, though under harsh circumstances in the desert, as the glory of the Lord was manifest and they recognized Him as God and Savior.

When the tabernacle was back in Israel as Jesus came to them and dwelled among them, He longed for them to love Him once again.

MAT 23:37-39 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. 38 Look, your house is left to you desolate. 39 For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

He had come from the Father to gather them and yet they pushed Him away. He came from His throne of glory and entered into this world as a man to be their Shepherd and lead them back to life and light, but they preferred to walk in darkness. They would not recognize His glory as He demonstrated grace and truth.

But in His grace and truth He has revealed His glory in our hearts as we beheld Him and have embraced this tabernacle which dwells among men and who has redeemed us with His blood and has resurrected from the dead and has been restored to all His glory as He is seated at the right hand of the Father.

It is this glory that we long for as we will one day be reunited with Him face to face. His glorious resurrection life has been given to us and we will one day be like Him with our resurrected bodies and so we will be with the Lord forever.

1CO 15:42-44 "So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body."

We ought to encourage each other with these words, but we must live to the glory of God on a daily basis. We must shine forth to this world the glory that has been given to us in the promise of Christ, and the future glory we look to as did Paul.

ROM 8:18 "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."

COL 3:4-5 "When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. 5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature:"

We long and look forward to that day of glory we will all share in Christ, but when all is said and done the glory we long for is to lift up our Lord and Savior because He is worthy to receive honor and glory. All praise should go to Him. And so, whatever we do or say, should be done with the idea of bringing glory to Him.

Jesus Christ is He who came into this world to dwell among men, and yet there is a sense in which we are now the tabernacle, the tent, in which He lives and has taken up residence. He has indwelt us with His Spirit and He is pleased to dwell among us through His Spirit who fills us and empowers us for the work of bringing glory to the One who deserves it; our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

May we be the kind of dwelling places for our Lord that shine for Him like the face of Moses as He entered into the presence of God. May our love for Him grow more and more each day as we consider the salvation which our God has given us and may that move us to love and serve Him with all our hearts, souls and minds.

As Peter says...

1PE 4:11 "If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen."