

Text: Exod. 29:38-46

Title: "God dwells with His people"

Time: 11/26/2023 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: I met a couple at a wedding, a couple of Saturdays ago, who are unable to be together much of the work week because the wife works in Keene, where she is a tenured piano teacher at Keene State, and the husband works in Boston, where he is a physicist with a lab at Harvard Medical School. They have a 2-year-old son, who makes the desire they feel to dwell together as a family in one place more acute.

In Exodus 29 we have been studying the consecration ceremony of the priesthood of Israel. *Exodus* means *the way out*, and the book is about how God brought His people, the Israelites, out of the bondage of Egypt to become a nation in their own right as His redeemed people.

The first four chapters of Exodus are about the need for deliverance and the provision of a deliverer, Moses. Chapters 5 through 18 record the miraculous deliverance of Israel from Egypt, culminating in the provision of a slaughtered lamb that would cause the tenth plague against the firstborn of households to pass over God's people while destroying their oppressors. This lamb became known as the Passover lamb.

The rest of the book of Exodus is about the life of a people so delivered by God from bondage. Theirs is a covenantal life, a lawful life, and a worshipping life. It is in that last section about the worshipping life of the redeemed that we find our passage about the consecration ceremony of Israel's priesthood. We have seen a bringing near (vv. 1-9), a qualifying through sacrifice (vv. 10-28), and a providing for priestly succession (vv. 29-37).

As important, we have seen our calling in these truths as God's New Testament priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ"; 2:9, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light"). We are those whom God has chosen to bring Him to men and men to Him. We are His priests.

In our passage the consecration ceremony for the priesthood of Israel climaxes with the Lord's promise to not only be the God of His people, but also to dwell with them (vv. 42-43, 45). He is the God who dwells with His people. The Lord would see to it that He and His redeemed people did not find themselves in the distant circumstances the couple I met have found themselves. This morning I want us to see three things about God's determination to dwell with His people.

I. God's lamb made it possible for Him to dwell with His people (vv. 38-39, 46).

Illustration: We just celebrated Thanksgiving week, and one of the keys to thankfulness is to remember who made the blessings we enjoy possible. We must answer not only what we are thankful for, but also to whom we are thankful. We begin with the Lord, of course, because every good and perfect gift comes from above (Jam. 1:17). He gives us life and breath and all good things (Acts 17:25).

With the Lord's help, the sacrifice and service of members of our church make our local church ministry possible. I owe my dad and mom a debt of gratitude, without whom many of the advantages I have enjoyed in my lifetime would have been impossible. We are thankful when we remember who makes our blessings possible.

Application: As we read about the two lambs of the daily sacrifice of the priesthood, we read about reminders of the fact that the Passover lamb made it possible for God to dwell with His people Israel. The animals referred to in our passage are the same as the animal known as the Passover lamb of chapter 12. These morning and evening sacrifices were designed to remind Israelites of the death of the Passover lamb, which made God's dwelling among them possible.

Two kinds of bondage prevented God from dwelling among His people in this way, when the children of Israel were slaves in Egypt.

The first was the mastery the false gods of Egypt had over the hearts and lives of the children of Israel through the influence of their Egyptian neighbors. Joshua remembered this about the generation that was saved from Egypt: "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord" (Josh. 24:14). The mastery of the false gods of Egypt kept the true God at arms length. He could not dwell among His people.

The second obstacle hindering God from dwelling among His people was the mastery of Pharaoh, which robbed Israel of the freedom of religion. Moses's message from the Lord to the tyrant was a consistent call for religious freedom: "Let My people go that they may serve Me" (Exod. 4:23, 7:16, 8:1, 8:20, 9:1, 9:13, 10:3, 10:26). Only after they were free from political oppression could they meet with the Lord in a way that they never could while enslaved in Egypt.

Meeting with God is the goal of true political freedom. Our Thanksgiving Day pilgrims taught us this truth. When a people no longer want to meet with God, it will not be long before they care little about being free. Even with their freedom secured, the Israelites eventually pined again for their former

lives as slaves in Egypt (Exod. 14:12, "Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness."). They cared about material comfort and ease, and they were willing to be enslaved again to get it. The same holds true for us.

God's solution to the mastery of Egyptian idols and the Egyptian Pharaoh was the Passover lamb. Our New Testaments tell us that the Passover lamb is a picture of Jesus Christ. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). Our Passover Lamb seeks to make us free from both kinds of bondage so that we can meet with God.

In His first coming, our Lamb died for our sins to free us from the mastery of our sin and idols over us. The power of the gospel's salvation enables us to put away the gods that our fathers served and instead fear the Lord and worship Him in sincerity and truth. He saves us this way when we believe He died for our sins and rose from the dead for our life. Do you believe? Have you been saved from your sin and idolatry?

Then someday, at His second coming, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world shall put an end to all the Pharaohs of our day who oppress and persecute those determined to worship Him as they believe He has instructed them to. The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (Rev. 11:15). In the meantime, we cry out with the martyrs of church history, "How long?" (Rev. 6:10), and as we cry we know that we shall have our answer right on time.

The Passover lamb made it possible for God to dwell with His people. That lamb pointed to our Lamb, Jesus Christ. Do we count it a privilege to meet with the God who gave us His Lamb so we could dwell with Him, or do we still miss the bondage of Egypt with its familiar idols and comfortable tyranny?

II. God's Lamb is our meal when God dwells with His people (vv. 40-44).

Illustration: As a church family we take the time to eat together on many Sunday afternoons. We call it our "fellowship meal," and those who prepare dishes for that meal have served us very well. Jesus promised the local church of Laodicea, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Rev. 3:10). The Lord sups with us when we eat together.

Application: The daily sacrifices of Israel were to be accompanied by a fellowship meal for the priesthood in the morning and in the evening (Lev. 2:3). Here, however, the lamb is not an invitee to the meal; it is the meal. This symbolism expands the Lord's message to the church at Laodicea. Our gathering for worship must not only open the door for Christ to sup with us, but also we must nourish ourselves on Him.

Our worship must be centered on Christ. We must not center our worship on ourselves, asking whether or not it has pleased us. We must not center our worship on Mary or Roman Catholic saints. We must not even center our worship on the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God and worthy of worship, but He always points to Christ, not Himself. It is false spirits and their prophets that remove Christ from the center of worship to put themselves there instead (1 John 4:1-3).

As the Lord's New Testament priests, we learn some important details about centering our worship on Christ from these instructions for Israel's priesthood:

- This meal happened twice daily, morning and evening, the bookends of each day (v. 39), so we must seek Christ-centered worship every day; morning and evening.

- The worship designed is multi-generational (v. 42), so generations must seek to feed on Christ together, in the same way from generation to generation.
- Feeding on Christ brings security and peace with God (v. 41, “sweet”), and it prioritizes hearing His Word (v. 42).
- Christ-centered worship is attended by the Lord’s glory (v. 43a), and we must recognize and revere His presence.

Verse 42 mentions the gate of the tent of meeting. What the gate of the tent of meeting was to the Old Testament Israelite, the time and place of the gathering of the local church is to the New Testament Christian. As God’s priests today, we need that daily morning and evening personal feeding on Christ in prayer and Bible reading, and we gather together in His presence each week on the Lord’s Day to worship Him as multiple generations, secure in Christ, hearing His Word, and sanctified by His glorious presence. God’s Lamb is our meal as God dwells with us, His people.

III. God’s Lamb is our Emmanuel, the God Who dwells with His people (vv. 45-46).

Application: *Emmanuel* is one of the Christmas names of the child of Bethlehem (Matt. 1:23, “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”). The angel Gabriel told Joseph that the virgin Mary’s baby would be named *Emmanuel* because her baby was the God of our chapter, who determined to dwell with His people, God in human nature, God with us having become like us.

*Emmanuel* means *God with us*, and we learn from our passage this morning that the *us* belonging to Emmanuel are an abundantly blessed people.

The people of the God who was with Israel were to be never abandoned nor forsaken (v. 45). In the same way, Emmanuel

promised to be with us as He commissioned us to make disciples: “lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). His presence with us brings great contentment: “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5). He is more than enough.

Also, the people of Emmanuel know the God who dwells with them by name, which reminds them of what He has done for them (v. 46). His name is *Jesus*, which means *Yahweh who saves*. He was named *Jesus*, *Yahweh saves*, because He, Yahweh – the Christmas baby, would save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21).

Conclusion: Is the God who dwells with His people your God? Do you know Him? Or is your god a distant inanimate force of nature whom you have never met? Is your god unknown and unknowable? Have you pursued other things instead of Him?

It is the burden of our passage this morning that you know the God who dwells with His people. I know Him. He brought me out of the bondage of my sin by dying for my many sins on the cross of Calvary and by rising again from the dead. He is the One who has given me the freedom to worship Him this morning without political oppression, and when He comes again, He will do that for everyone.

He is the One who nourishes me as I worship Him. He is my daily bread, morning and evening and all the hours in between. He is the One whose glory has sanctified me to serve Him as a priest, in spite of my inglorious failures, and He is the One who is always with me to love me, protect me, forgive me, and satisfy me with joy, peace, and contentment. He is the One whose names I know. His name is *Emmanuel*, God who is with me, and *Jesus*, *Yahweh* who is saving me.

The God who dwells with His people is the One in whose presence we worship this morning as a local church, which He designed for this very purpose. He has given us freedom from our idols and our Pharaohs that we might do so. He is the One whose Word I seek to hear and to help you hear. He is the One my fathers in the faith worshipped in previous generations, just as I do having learned how from them.

Again, I ask, “Is the God who dwells with His people your God?” If not, please understand what He has done to dwell with you. Trust Jesus as your Lamb, come out of your Egypt, your past with its sin, and receive the dwelling presence of the true God into your heart and life.

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*