



# Family Bible Lessons

## Biblical Themes Lesson 4: Temple

### Review and Introduction

In Lesson 1, we looked at Image of God. We are all made in His image but have failed to reflect his image due to our sin. Jesus is the perfect image of God, who transforms our hearts so we can once again bear his image.

In Lesson 2, we looked at the personal commitments God made to different people in the Bible called covenants. All of them lead us to God's new covenant that he has made through Jesus in his life, death, and resurrection to all who would receive it.

In Lesson 3, we learned about God's provision of sacrifice and atonement that would make sure both his justice for sin and his mercy for sinners was carried out. Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice and atonement for our sin.

In this lesson, we are going to look at the Temple in ancient Israel. You might think of it as just a building, but the theme of the Temple is everywhere in the Bible. Let's jump in and learn together!

### Video: Temple

Watch Temple (4.5 minutes) - <https://youtu.be/wTnq6l3vUbU>

### What Is a Temple?

The Oxford English Dictionary defines it this way: a building devoted to the worship, or regarded as the dwelling place, of a god or gods. There were buildings like this all over the ancient world, and most of them included statues of gods so that people could come to worship them. But Israel's temple was different. There were no images of Yahweh in their building. It actually was his dwelling place. That theme of God's dwelling place is where we want to focus our attention in this lesson. And it goes all the way back to the beginning.

### The Garden Temple

As the video showed, the Bible doesn't just tell us that God is in heaven and humans are on earth. God's personal space is shown to overlap with the human's space on earth. The first glimpse we get of this is the Garden of Eden in Genesis 1-2. God gave Adam and Eve this beautiful space to tend and keep, and he would come to walk in the garden with them. The garden itself was a sort of temple, a dwelling place of God where humans could enjoy his presence. But we know the story: they disobeyed God so they could decide for themselves what is right and wrong. They were exiled from the garden temple. They no longer had access to God's dwelling place. But God had a plan to dwell with his people again.

### The Mobile Temple

Centuries and centuries later, God delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt. All they had known for 400 years was slavery. Yahweh was bringing them into a new story. He led them to Mt. Sinai in the wilderness, where they spent an entire year. While God gave them good and righteous commands, he also gave Moses a blueprint for a tent called the Tabernacle in Exodus 25-31. This would be a mobile temple that Israel would set up wherever they went as a dwelling place for Yahweh. In Exodus 35 and following, Moses shares the instructions

with the people so they can put the Tabernacle and all its utensils together. Yahweh was inviting the people to prepare a space for him to dwell with them. At the end of Exodus, after they finished the work, God comes to dwell with them.

Read Exodus 40:34-38 (ESV):

*“Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.”*

This is a significant moment in the story. God’s dwelling presence came into the Tabernacle just like it had in the Garden of Eden. It came after the people of Israel had broken the covenant and sinned. This was a statement: Yahweh still wanted to dwell with humans, even when they broke his heart with their sin.

### **The Jerusalem Temple**

Centuries later in the story, after Israel had become a nation, God chose David to become king over Israel. In 2 Samuel 7, David looked around at his palace and thought that it wasn’t right that he was living in a house and God was dwelling in a tent. But God told him that his son would be the one to build a permanent temple for Yahweh. In 1 Kings 6-7, we learn that King Solomon spent 7 years preparing and building the Temple in Jerusalem. And just like with the Tabernacle when it was finished, the glory of God filled the place. Solomon was overwhelmed and prayed to God, “The heavens themselves cannot contain you; how much less this small house I have built!” He finishes the prayer by addressing the people.

Read 1 Kings 8:54-58 (ESV):

*Now as Solomon finished offering all this prayer and plea to the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, where he had knelt with hands outstretched toward heaven. And he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, saying, “Blessed be the LORD who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised. Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant. The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers. May he not leave us or forsake us, that he may incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his rules, which he commanded our fathers.*

Notice that he prayed that the LORD would be with them and never leave them. In other words, may God always *dwell* with us. Why? So that he would turn the hearts of the people to him, to follow him, to dwell with him themselves. It’s a beautiful picture of what humans were always meant to experience in God’s presence.

### **The Corrupted Temple**

Unfortunately, the very king who prayed this prayer abandoned him for other gods. The kingdom of Israel split in two after Solomon’s death, and most of the kings in both kingdoms abandoned God like Solomon did.

The northern kingdom made their own temples to worship other gods. The southern kingdom, where the Jerusalem temple was, also gave into false worship. The entire nation of Israel abandoned the covenant with their God.

Years later, a prophet named Ezekiel was taken captive by the Babylonian Empire and brought into exile hundreds of miles away from Jerusalem. While he was there, God gave him a vision of what the Jerusalem temple had become:

Read Ezekiel 8:16-17 (ESV):

*And he brought me into the inner court of the house of the LORD. And behold, at the entrance of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men, with their backs to the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east, worshiping the sun toward the east. Then he said to me, "Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it too light a thing for the house of Judah to commit the abominations that they commit here, that they should fill the land with violence and provoke me still further to anger?"*

The people of Israel no longer considered their God worthy of worship. They turned their back on his dwelling place. They worshipped creation rather than the Creator. They gave themselves to violence, greed, and injustice. In another vision, Ezekiel sees the glory of Yahweh's presence leaving this corrupted temple. Israel no longer desired his presence, so he left his dwelling place in Jerusalem. Without his presence and protection, Israel was exiled from Jerusalem and its temple, just like Adam and Eve were exiled from the Garden temple. They were taken to foreign lands, their lives destroyed. It felt like God abandoned Israel.

### **The Promised Temple**

But while God abandoned the temple, he didn't abandon his people. Ezekiel was given another vision, a vision of a future temple.

Read Ezekiel 43:1-5 (ESV):

*Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing east. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east. And the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with his glory...And I fell on my face. As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple.*

One day, God promised, there would again be a temple in Jerusalem, and his glory would once again fill it. Israel eventually returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple. But it wasn't like the one in Ezekiel's vision. And it didn't change the people's hearts. This promised temple was still to come. Centuries later, it came in a way that no one could have imagined.

### **Jesus, the Perfect Temple**

We turn to the New Testament. The apostle John gives a beautiful poetic description of Jesus in John 1. In the middle of this writing, he says something we might miss, if we haven't been paying attention:

Read John 1:14 (ESV):

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

John describes Jesus as the Word. What did the Word do? He became flesh and *dwelt* among us. John is describing Jesus as a Tabernacle, a mobile temple. John also tells us we have seen his *glory*. The glory of Yahweh filled the Tabernacle and Temple, and it is no different with Jesus. Jesus is God's dwelling place with humans. He is God become human. We often remember this time of the year one of Jesus' names promised at his birth – Emmanuel which means "God with us." That moment in Bethlehem when Jesus was born and laid in the manger, God once again became present with humans, this time as a human himself.

On at least one occasion, Jesus visited the temple in Jerusalem and got angry at what he saw. The building and the space around it were supposed to be set apart for the quiet worship of Yahweh by both Jews and non-Jews. Instead, it had become a noisy marketplace to sell animals for the sacrifices. Jesus drove the money changers and the sellers out. The religious leaders challenged him.

Read John 2:18-21 (ESV):

*So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.*

Jesus states it plainly. He is the temple of God, the holy dwelling place of Yahweh with humans. When Jesus died and rose again 3 days later, he fulfilled this promise he made. He destroyed the sin that exiles humans from all the previous temples. God and humans could dwell together again at last because of the sacrificial love of Jesus. He is the perfect temple of God.

### **Christians, the Living Temple**

But Jesus ascended back into heaven. So, did God's personal presence leave with him? No! Jesus had told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until his Holy Spirit, the Helper, came to be with them. What happens next is incredible.

Read Acts 2:1-4 (ESV):

*When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

Do you notice the words used? "It filled the entire house..." "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit..." Just as God's glory and presence filled the ancient temple, God was now filling humans with his Spirit and presence. Just as Jesus was God's temple, now all his followers had become living mini temples where the personal

presence of Yahweh dwelled. The apostle Paul saw it this way in 1 Corinthians 3:16: *Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?*

If you are a follower of Jesus, God has given you the gift of His Spirit. He has made you his dwelling place. There isn't a moment of any day that you are alone. The Creator of the universe who walked in the garden temple is with you forever. He is at work to transform you and set you apart. He wants to draw others to himself by dwelling in you.

### **New Heavens and New Earth, the Eternal Temple**

A lot of Christians talk about going to heaven when they die. It is true that when followers of Jesus die, they are immediately in his presence. But this isn't the end of the story. The end of the story of the Bible is surprising: rather than all Christians going to heaven, we find heaven coming to earth.

Read Revelation 21:1-3 (ESV):

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."*

Here at the end of the story, the beginning of the new story, God makes it clear that he wants to *dwell* with humans. Jesus is coming again one day to reign as king and fill the earth with his presence, his goodness, and his love. Do you see it? The entire story of the Bible declares that God wants to be with us!

Will there be a temple in this new Jerusalem? John tells us in Revelation 21:22: *"And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb."* God Himself and His Son Jesus Christ are the temple that fills this new city, this new earth. We will have the full joy of God's presence with us for all eternity.

### **Response**

Many celebrate Christmas this month, but many in the church also keep another sacred event called Advent. It is a time to remember the past, that Jesus came to dwell with us. It is a time to experience the present, that his Spirit is dwelling with us now. It is a time to look to the future, that Jesus is coming again to dwell with us forever. As you reflect on the theme of the Temple in the Bible, take time to praise God for his eternal love and desire to dwell with you and in you. As the Christmas hymn writer Charles Wesley once wrote: *Pleased as man with man to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel. Hark! the herald angels sing: "Glory to the newborn King!"*

### **Review Questions with Your Family**

*These are designed to help children ages 8-18 to review before taking their individual Google quizzes.*

1. According to the video and lesson, where is the first place we see a glimpse of God's temple in the Bible? *The Garden of Eden*
2. Where did God give Moses and the children of Israel the blueprints for the Tabernacle? *Mt. Sinai*
3. According to Exodus 40:34-38, what filled the Tabernacle when it was finished? *The glory of the LORD*

4. Which king of Israel built a permanent temple for Yahweh? *Solomon*
5. In which city did he build that temple? *Jerusalem*
6. To which prophet of Israel did God give visions of the temple while in exile? *Ezekiel*
7. What name in the Bible given to Jesus means “God with us”? *Emmanuel*
8. Jesus told the religious leaders “Destroy this temple and I will raise it again in \_\_\_\_ days.” *Three*
9. According to Acts 2:1-4, on what day or festival did God send the Holy Spirit to fill the followers of Jesus? *Pentecost*
10. What is the ancient church celebration that takes place in December called? *Advent*

### **Praying the Scriptures**

One of the joys of reading the Bible is praying its words back to its Author. We encourage you to read the Bible passage below and make it your prayer.

Read Ephesians 3:15-19 (ESV):

*That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

Prayer:

*O God, thank you for sending Jesus to be Emmanuel – God with us. Even though we have sinned against you, you still desire to dwell with us and in us. Like the ancient temple, fill us with your glory, your Spirit, and your presence. May Christ dwell in our hearts. May he root us and ground us in his love. Help us to see how big his love for us is. Fill us with all of your fullness. Amen.*

### **Google Quiz**

- Children in your family who are ages 8-18 can now take their Google quiz for this lesson.
- Parents, you should receive an email when each child completes their quiz, so you know it has been completed.
- Take the Google Quiz: <https://forms.gle/u83bMxNanTdpEWCJ6>