

Psalm 15

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Christmas is a celebration of God sending His son to dwell/live among us. During this time of year, we sing songs and read scriptures that praise the coming of Christ, our Immanuel, God with us. As we contemplate what it means for God to dwell/live among us and for us to be in the presence of the Lord, I want to encourage you to start by reading Psalm 15.

This Psalm, which is credited to David, begins with two questions. At their core, they both seek to answer the same question, “Who can dwell/live in the presence of the Lord?” The words “dwell” and “live” are important as they help us understand that this is not a brief encounter with God or merely an observing of God from afar. Rather, it is remaining with Him on His holy mountain and residing with Him in His tent. The idea is that we are in the presence of the Lord continually. To further explain what this means, let’s look at the descriptions of God’s holy mountain and His tent from the Old Testament book of Exodus.

Shortly after God called His people out of Egypt, He brought them to meet with Him at Mount Sinai. Exodus 19 tells us that there on Mount Sinai, God came down in thick smoke, fire, and thunder. The whole mountain shook, and the people were afraid. God warned Moses to instruct the people not to approach the mountain or touch its base because they would be put to death. Before they were allowed to approach the mountain, they had to consecrate themselves and only on the third day were they then allowed to approach the foot of the mountain.

Following Israel’s meeting with God at Mount Sinai, God instructed Moses to build the Tabernacle. Exodus 25-26 tells us that the Tabernacle (or Tent of Meeting) was a large tent and was a sanctuary for God. The Tabernacle was the place where God would dwell among His people. Inside the Tabernacle, the Lord’s presence would reside in the innermost part, called the Holy of Holies, along with the Ark of the Covenant. In this way, God was present with His people, but since God is holy, He would be set apart from them. Only once a year was the High Priest allowed to enter the Holy of Holies and be in the presence of the Lord to make atonement for the sins of the people.

Reading what it took to be in the presence of God at Mount Sinai or in the Tabernacle may make you wonder, “How can it be possible for anyone to live with God on His holy mountain or dwell with Him in His tent?” The answer to this question is only found in the needed promise of Jesus Christ. It is only through faith in Jesus that we can receive forgiveness of our sins. We can only be “one who lives blamelessly, practices righteousness, and acknowledges the truth in his heart” (Psalm 15:2) when we have Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. When we do, we will rejoice as we celebrate Christmas and the coming of our Immanuel and we will dwell/live confidently in the presence of the Lord.