

## BFF313 Tent of Meeting

**Scott Moore:** Welcome to the "Building Faith Families" podcast with, Steve Demme. I'm your host, Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today. Good morning, Steve. How are you today?

**Steve:** I had a wonderful very full weekend. It started off with our men's time in St. Louis, where I met with 20 other wonderful brothers in Christ from all over the country.

As you know, we get together and reconnect. We listen to each other. We hear each other. We have a format where each person gets 15 minutes to talk and share their heart. If they're new, we get to hear their life story. Then, we ask questions for 15 minutes. It's a wonderful time. We've been doing this since 2009. B

I left that a little bit early because my wife and John were up at our lake house, and Ethan and his kiddos were coming to join us and they arrived Thursday. The kids had never been on a frozen lake before. It was awesome.

Today we're going to talk about the tent of meeting. There's a little bit of confusion about what that means. Before we enter into the TENT OF MEETING, we're going to talk about the tent of meeting. How's that for an introduction?

**Scott:** Sure.

**Steve:** Let's pray. Father, thank You for Your word. Thank You that every word is profitable for teaching and instruction. Thank You that we don't live by bread alone, but by every word. Thank You for this topic, Your word that we're going to be looking at today. There's so much in there that is rich. Yet in one sense, we can read through quickly.

Help us to hear what You would have for us today. Help me to speak well, think well, respond well to the movings of Your spirit. Give us all ears to hear what You're saying today in Jesus' name, amen.

**Scott:** Amen.

**Steve:** I'm going to read a passage, and then we're going to break it down. It's found in Exodus 33:7-11 "Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, a good distance from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought Jehovah would go out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp. And it came about, whenever Moses went out to the tent, that all the people would arise and stand, each at the entrance of his tent, and gaze after Moses until he entered the tent. Whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent; and Jehovah would speak with Moses.

When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would arise and worship, each at the entrance of his tent. Thus Jehovah used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses

returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.”

There's a lot in here. Notice the distinction between the tent of meeting that I just read about and the formal tabernacle, which is being built according to the instructions that Moses was given on the mount, which takes quite a bit of time to build. The first tent of meeting was here. Then it was transferred into the tabernacle. I'm going to call this structure the tent, and the one inside the courtyard that we've been just about to enter into, we're going to call the tabernacle, just to make a distinction. It's the same word in Hebrew, "ohel."

The Hebrew word for meeting is "moad" or "moade." I'm not sure how to say these words. It carries the sense of an appointed time or place. That same word can be used for feasts, for example, which were set apart as the times in the year when the people were to seek God especially.

God met with Moses in this tent, which is also from the root word "yaad," which means to assemble at a designated place. This tent was a special place to seek God. It was outside in the encampment. It was outside all the other tents that were set up all around, with all the different tribes.

It was outside the camp. To make a little application, I think there's value in being within the camp with all of the people, etc., but there's also value in seeking God outside the camp.

As I look back over my life, I have had a lot of special experiences at retreats. When I was in seminary, surrounded by Christian brothers and sisters, we used to have an annual retreat. I can remember the retreats, almost more than I can remember some of my experiences at a seminary because God met us at these retreats.

The idea of the feasts are times when go outside the camp to meet God. These are appointed, designated times to seek God. There's value in taking time to go outside the camp.

When they went outside the camp, the pillar, the column, same word came down. We've studied this before for the courtyard. It comes from the root word "amad," which is to take one stand or to stand. "Amud."

As Moses went out to the tent, the people would arise and stand at the entrance of their tents, and they would gaze. I looked at that word a little bit more because it means to gaze or to look at with regard. A respectful posture.

These people were standing in respect as Moses went to the tent. When Moses got to the tent, then the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent. If I was living at that time, I would want to be awake when Moses went out because I would want to see this column or cloud mass in the shape of a pillar. When that cloud mass came down at the entrance of the tent, the people were standing there who had been watching Moses out of respect, and gazing at him.

The Hebrew word “Yered” means to come down, and it's a reminder that heaven's above, earth beneath. Or every good and perfect gift comes from above. Jesus came from above, when he ascended to the Father, He went up.

"When the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, the people would arise and worship." When Moses entered they would arise and stand out of deference and respect.

When the pillar of cloud, which was God, standing at the entrance of the tent, they would arise and worship, yet the word for worship means to bow down, to be prostrate, to fall down flat.

You and I know though, that there is something respectful about standing. I know it's becoming a lost part of our culture sadly, but it's nice when a woman enters a room for a man to stand.

When I'm meeting someone for lunch, if I'm there first and the man gets there, you stand and you shake their hand, and then you sit down together. It's a sign of respect and deference.

It's also possible to be standing or arising, and in your heart have a bowed-down spirit, a spirit of worship, a spirit of deference. This is what was going on as Moses first approached the tent, and then as God approached the tent.

Then God would speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. I know there's a lot of people, myself included, that when you hear that, you think, "Yeah but He said you can't see Him face to face and then live. He had to put his hand over him as he walked by, so he could only see his back." I don't have a specific answer for that. I do have a couple thoughts.

Let's just think of the fact that when God appeared in the tent, Moses would speak to Him and they would talk to each other as friends. Let me just look a little bit though at that whole idea of face-to-face. The words are "Panim" or "Paneh," which means face. It's from a root word "panah" which means to turn and stand before.

When I'm reading that, and doing a little bit of digging into the Hebrew, I think what it means is they gave each other their full attention. They were in front of each other, they were fully present. Moses wasn't checking his emails, he wasn't looking on social media. They were together, they gave each other their full attention.

In 2012, when I went through my difficult season, and I felt like I had lost everything in a half an hour, I left the room sobbing,, not weeping and wailing, just hurting desperately. I got into my car, looked up through the moon roof, and I knew that God was looking at me. I don't know how else to describe it.

As soon as I did, this verse went through my mind, "To this man will I look, He that has a poor and contrite spirit and that trembles at My word." Isaiah 66:2. I knew that God was looking at me, but I couldn't tell you what His mouth and nose look like. Does that make sense?

I was aware that He was looking at me, but I couldn't see the details. There was another time that year when I was desperate for God's presence and desperate for connection with Him. I woke up one morning, and God felt He was a million miles away, yet the day before He'd been so real.

I remember rolling over in my bed, and I didn't have time to get out my Bible. I just didn't have the energy, and I said, "Do You still love me as much today as You did yesterday?" I had a picture of God standing in the clouds outside a jet.

I could see Jesus was standing in the clouds, and He was laughing and said, "Of course I do. I don't have any baggage." I've unpacked that before in different podcasts, but the thing is, I couldn't tell you the details of His face. I knew that was Jesus, and I knew that He was laughing.

It's possible to be standing face to face giving each other full attention, listening to each other, and maybe not recall all the details of your face. I don't know. Remember in Genesis 32:30, when Jacob had just wrestled with the Angel of God all night. Was it the Angel of God? Or was it the Son of God? Or was it God Himself?

There's a lot of debate on that one, but in the morning, he said, "Jacob named the place Peniel, from "pana" and "punim" , for he said, "I have seen God face to face yet my life has been preserved."

It says in 1 John 3:1-2 "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

That's a promise. We're going to see Him and when we see Him, we're going to be like Him. It is wonderful to be in God's presence or something like being face to face with Him.

It is a special experience to be with each other giving full attention outside the camp that speaks very deeply to my heart, and may God help us to continue to seek Him and to seek His presence.

OK, and then perhaps you noticed the last sentence in the passage from Exodus 33, "When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man would not depart from the tent." Well, you can read through the Old Testament several times, and not catch that one phrase, Joshua was still in the tent. Powerful. Joshua was present listening to conversations between God and Moses. Maybe he thought, "Boy, I don't want to go back to the camp. Moses has responsibilities. I'm just going to hang out, and continue to seek God."

In hindsight, we know that this man, Joshua, was the next leader of Israel. What an apprenticeship. What an internship to be with Moses on the mountain and in the tent, listening to Moses and God converse.

**Scott:** That whole scene reminds me of the Transfiguration of Jesus with Peter, James, and John there. Then Moses and Elijah show up, and with the face-to-face bit. Clearly, Jesus looked different in that moment than He did the rest of the time He was walking around with them.

Maybe the language that we have doesn't quite embrace face to face with God, quite the same as what he means when if you saw His face, you couldn't live? I don't know.

**Steve:** Yeah. I think it's beneficial to chew on. It's worth seeking God about, and maybe some of these things are just something on which we need to continue to ruminate. It's a wonderful thing to be in God's presence. It's a wonderful thing to speak to God face to face, and seek God.

**Scott:** The other thing that hit me is none of this is supposed to seem all that awesome to us because we have the Holy Spirit. That's why we don't have a cloud of God's holy presence appearing in church with us every Sunday.

**Scott:** Because I don't feel like I'm standing there with God in His presence most of the time. Does that make sense? Maybe we're just visual people and we need to see something. I don't know.

**Steve:** My son Johnny, especially, really likes to go to churches that have more visuals. It is helpful when you have incense going up at the front. It reminds us of the prayers of incense going up to God. Well, let me just finish up with this last little observation. We've been reading in Exodus 33 that tent of meeting was right there. Then God calls Moses back up to the mountain because they had just made the abominable calf, so Moses had to come down from the mountain, take care of business, clean things up, and then He gives them the instructions.

Then, Exodus 34:29-35, It came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses' hand as he was coming down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him. So when Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers in the congregation returned to him; and Moses spoke to them.

Afterward all the sons of Israel came near, and he commanded them to do everything that Jehovah had spoken to him on Mount Sinai. When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. But whenever Moses went in before Jehovah to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out; and whenever he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded, the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone. So Moses would replace the veil over his face until he went in to speak with Him."

When Moses is in this tent of meeting, and God is speaking to him, his face changed. We're going to talk about the veil later.

There's a distinction between what I'm going to call the "temporary tent outside the camp", and "the tabernacle", which was built according to the instructions which God gave Moses on the mount, which we've been studying, and we're going to continue to study.

There are three passages that emphasize the importance of this tabernacle.

Deuteronomy 31, at the end of Moses' life, Jehovah said to Moses, "Behold, the time for you to die is near. Call Joshua. Present yourselves at the tent of meeting." When he says that, this is the tabernacle, "That I may commission him."

Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves at the tent of meeting. Jehovah appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud at the doorway of the tent. This is not the first time these two have been together in a tent. It's not the first time they've been in the presence of God who's appearing as a pillar of cloud, but this is different because Joshua is about to receive the mantle. He's about to be the new leader because Moses is going to be taken.

1 Chronicles 6 -- I'm jumping ahead now -- "These are those whom David appointed over the service of song in the house of Jehovah after the ark rested there. They ministered with song before the tabernacle, of the tent of meeting, until Solomon had built the house of Jehovah in Jerusalem. They served in their office according to their order."

We have the tent of meeting outside the camp, which we just studied. Then we have the tabernacle, which you might say is the mobile temple. Then, it's about to be moved to Jerusalem and become the permanent temple..

**Scott:** The other thing that occurred to me in this as I haven't paid enough attention to those minute details in that particular section of scripture, I always assumed that tent of meeting and tabernacle were just interchangeable. I didn't get that there was a tent of meeting with just Moses and Aaron with God. Very cool.

**Steve:** Most of us are the same way. I was. You have to know the context because there's a tent of meeting, and there's a tent of meeting. Now we know the distinction. Father, thank You for this tent. Thank You for what we can learn from it. What affects me is I can go outside. I can leave the encampment, so to speak. I can seek You and You by Your Spirit, as Scott mentioned. You do draw near to us in a special way when we seek You in a special way. Bless us all in our seeking, and in our finding.

Help us to understand more. We simply put it in your lap, what it means, why the distinction between seeing face to face and not seeing face to face. I know that someday we are going to see You face to face.

I pray that You'll increase my appetite for that day. Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord. That's what You're going to hear when You return, and we're going to see you face to face. I worship You today. Bless everybody this listening. Give us all a fresh draft of living water in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Scott:** Amen. That's our show for this week, folks. Thanks for joining us for the "Building Faith Families" podcast with Steve Demme. If you have a question for the show, email Steve at [spdemme@gmail.com](mailto:spdemme@gmail.com). If you have a question for me, you can reach me at [scott@unsocializedmedia.com](mailto:scott@unsocializedmedia.com). Thanks for joining us. Have a great week.