

Jehovah Shammah - Study 14

Jehovah Shammah reveals a God who is there. This comes from the vision of the New Temple and New Jerusalem by Ezekiel, in the last verse of the book that takes his name. After prophesying great tribulation, Ezekiel finishes up his prophesy with a description of the New city of God, and declares that its name will forever be *Jehovah Shammah* - The Lord is There (**Ezek 48:35**). This is important in the context of Ezekiel's prophesies, as Ezekiel was witness to the Spirit of God (Shekinah glory) leaving the temple. To his audience, He declares God's faithfulness and desire to dwell once more with His people albeit He appears to have left.

However, 'The Lord is There' can be misinterpreted in its translation into English. A more accurate rendering of the term might be '**The Lord is Here**' or '**The Lord is With Us**'. It is closely associated with Jesus in the term, Immanuel – 'God with us'. (**see Isa 7:14, Matt 1:23**) The inference of Jehovah Shammah is that God is amongst His people, as opposed to somewhere over there! For those outside Jerusalem (the unGodly) they may well have said (& say again) of the city, That God is **There**, however, for those of us who are His, He is here, He dwells among us, and as we have seen through Jehovah Mikkadesh, He dwells within us.

For Ezekiel, and indeed for the Israelites from the time of Moses, to the time of the Shekinah glory leaving the temple, the presence of God was most often experienced in either the tabernacle or the temple, in the Holy of Holies. (Upon the Ark of the Covenant). With only a few Old Testament exceptions, being in the presence of God meant a trip to Jerusalem, and even then entry into God's presence was not permitted by the average citizen. This was reserved only for the High Priest, once a year and only after observing strict guidelines relating to a sacrifice, washing and clothing.

But as we have seen over the previous weeks, Christ has become our sacrifice, washing us in His blood, and clothing us with His righteousness. For the New Testament believer, access to God is now personal and full, and has paved the way for the Holy Spirit to dwell within the Christian. This was represented in the mysterious tearing of the veil, or curtain, in the Temple at Jesus' death, symbolic of there being no barrier between God and man. That all can now enter into His presence through the Cross of Christ. (**see Matt 27:51, Mk 15:38, Lk 23:45**)

Jesus spoke often about this precious gift of God's presence, the coming of the Holy Spirit. To His disciples, just prior to His death, he told them that:

"I will not leave you as orphans..."

(Jn 14:18a)

Throughout chapters 14, 15 and 16 of John's gospel, Jesus is explaining that, without Him going to the cross, then there could be no payment for the sin in mankind's lives, and therefore access to the Father (and in particular the indwelling of His Spirit) could not be facilitated. He told them that although they might mourn His death, that at His resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit, that their *"grief will turn to joy."* (**Jn 16:20b**)

Jesus fulfils God's promise that He *"will never leave you nor forsake you."* (**see Dt 31:46 & Jos 1:5**) We have God here, with us, in us, for us! What a privilege it is to know that we are never left alone! Our prayers to God, our conversations with Him, our requests need never be sent through someone else. He is HERE! He dwells within, He speaks to our hearts! He is our comforter in distress (**Jn 14:26 {AMP}**), counsellor in our time of decision (**Jn 14:16**), our strength in our weakness (**Eph 3:16**), reveals deep truths and wisdom that we might believe (**Eph 1:17**), brings unity to the church (**Phil 2:1**), is a teacher and guide when we are lost (**Jn 16:13**), and empowers us in prayer, worship, wisdom and service.

For us, blessed to be under the New Covenant, God is always here! We are never alone. God's presence goes with us into every situation, every challenge, every disappointment and every success. His help and guidance is never far away. How easy it is to forget this at times. In the midst of troubles we can feel alone and abandoned, like God is somehow far off, or must be sought somewhere else. We forget that He is Jehovah Shammah – He is there, waiting for us to involve Him, seek Him.

It is important that we come to realise that the Holy Spirit *is* the Spirit of Jesus with us. His indwelling fulfils Christ's promise prior to his ascension into heaven that *"surely I am with you, to the very end of the age."* (**Matt 28:20**) However, as with everything God does for mankind, access is free, but the choice to seek and to heed rests with man alone. The promises of God *are* true, Jesus' presence *is* with us, the Holy Spirit *dwells* within, but God will never force His will. The counsel, comfort, guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit must be sought.

Jehovah Shammah is simply the truth of who God is, however acknowledging and seeking Him is a prerequisite of the benefits of this character of God to the believer. Just as we can stifle the guidance of the Holy Spirit by ignoring His counsel, so too, by ignoring His presence and our need to rely on Him for discernment and revelation, we can limit His voice and therefore His effectiveness and power in our lives. It is in this context that James writes,

*“Come near to God and He will come near to you...
And he will lift you up.”*

(Jam 4:8a & 10b)

Paul told Timothy to guard all that had been entrusted to him with the *‘help of the Holy Spirit who lives in you.’* **(1Tim 1:14)** To the church in Corinth, he writes:

*“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple
and that God’s Spirit lives in you?”*

(1Cor 3:16)

To the Athenians, Paul preached how God had moved in the past and declares that, *“God did this so that men might seek Him...though He is not far from each one of us”* **(Acts 17:27)**

How amazing that the God of the universe, Creator, Saviour, Holy, Righteous Lord of all has given to us open access to His presence. Not only access, but that He actually dwells within us and longs for us to speak, seek and spend time with Him. How awesome that through Christ we have the resources of all heaven at our fingertips. That nothing that this life throws at us need overwhelm us, if we seek His Spirit that is here with us!

Finally, in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells us that,

“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”
(Matt 18:20)

At first glance this Scripture might seem to contradict the theme of Jehovah Shammah, the Lord here with us as individuals. Certainly, there is no doubt that there is a special anointing of Christ’s Spirit when there is unity of believers. As **Psalms 133** states, the Lord bestows His blessing when brothers dwell in unity. But this does not negate the promise of God’s Spirit dwelling and being ready to bring counsel, comfort and guidance to the individual. When all of Scripture is lined up, especially in the New Testament, we see that Jesus’ promise is for Him to never leave us, forsake us, or leave us as orphans.

I like to think about Matthew 18:20 like this. When I come to Jesus, having sought the Holy Spirit’s counsel in my heart, and I am in His will, then we go to Jesus the Son together in unity. Therefore the two of us do come together in Jesus’ name, and there He meets us.

What a privilege, what an honour, what a God! Jehovah Shammah, the Lord is there, with you!

1. In the Old Testament, God’s presence was often signified by smoke, thunder, fire or a mysterious light (Shekinah). Have you ever seen or felt God’s presence in a meeting or in your life/circumstance?

2. **Read Isaiah 7:14 & Matt 1:20-23.** How can we be sure God is still with us and always will be? Use Scriptures / experiences.

3. Have you ever been in a situation where you have struggled initially to seek the Holy Spirit’s counsel, or at least were so distressed, that you did not?

4. Find an Old Testament example of God’s presence among His people. What was happening at the time? Did someone specifically seek God?

5. Think of an incident where you know that the Holy Spirit has counselled or guided you in ‘right paths.’ Discuss the situation and the results

6. Some people say that *“God is only as far away as you choose Him to be”*. Comment on this statement.

7. What has God revealed to you through this study?