



Lesson 16 ~ Yahweh SHAMMAH

The LORD Is There

Ezekiel 48:35; 36:24-38

♥ Heart Talk

Share with your small group something you experienced in doing the "obedience check" from Lesson 15 or your continuing to recite Psalm 23. Have you noticed any changes of heart, mind or attitude toward God, yourself or others? Are you continuing to practice silence before God? What results do you see?

Introduction

If someone asked you to sum up the whole Bible in one main theme or message, what would you say? Perhaps you might say that the Bible records the history of the human race, from beginning to end, or that the Bible reveals to us who God is, or that it is a guidebook on how to live life, or that its main message is to show us how to be saved from the consequences of sin.

One way to discover the main theme of God's Word is to look at how the Bible begins and ends. In the beginning, God creates a beautiful environment for humans to live in so that they can share life with God, in union with him. The Bible ends with a description of God and humans living together in another beautiful environment, also in union, a union that will never end.

In between the first and last pages of Scripture, is the story of God systematically and progressively working toward a *re-union* of himself with his human creation after a tragic separation caused by disobedience and sin. So, it seems that on the basis of these facts, we could say that the main theme of the Bible is the message that, more than anything, God desires be *with us*.

Strictly speaking, *Yahweh Shammah* (SHAM-mah) is a name of a city rather than a title for God. But it is so closely associated with God's *presence* and *glory* that it is also seen as a name of God. This name for God is found in the very last verse of the book of Ezekiel. As we will see, the name *Yahweh Shammah* speaks to the glorious *presence of God* and his desire to always *be with* the crowning glory of his creation, human beings.

♥ Heart Preparation

Jesus' Encouraging Words to You . . .

As you turn your attention to Me, feel the Light of My Presence shining upon you. Open your mind and heart to receive My heavenly smile of approval. Let My gold-tinged Love wash over you and soak into the depths of your being. As you are increasingly filled with My Being, you experience joyous union with Me: I in you, and you in Me. Your Joy-in-Me and my Joy-in-you become intertwined and inseparable. I suffuse your soul with Joy in My Presence; at My right hand there are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11).

Jesus Calling, (October 24) by Sarah Young

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently before him . . . Psalm 37:7. Continue to practice **sitting quietly before God, in silence, for 5 minutes** in order to prepare your heart to receive from God. As you sit quietly, letting your body and mind relax, imagine the peace of God creeping down over your head, your shoulders, arms, hands, legs and feet. Keep your mind fixed on Jesus and let the peace of God fill you completely.

A Prayer to Help Prepare Your Heart

*In Your Presence, that's where I am strong
In Your Presence, O Lord my God
In Your Presence, that's where I belong
Seeking Your Face, touching Your Grace
In the cleft of the Rock
In Your Presence, O God*

Questions

Historical Background - In **Lesson 15**, we saw the prophet **Jeremiah** announcing to God's people that because of their refusal to repent of their rebellion against God and their continuing sins of *idolatry, immorality* and *injustice*, God was going to pass judgment on them and their nation in order to purify them. Their judgment consisted of the complete destruction of their land, including the city of Jerusalem and the beautiful temple that King Solomon had built, where God's *glory* and *Presence* resided in the holy of holies. Except for a small, poor group of people who were left behind (Jeremiah among them), the entire population of Judah was taken to live in captivity, in Babylon, for 70 years. For the first time since children of Israel were delivered from slavery in Egypt, **Yahweh** no longer lived with his people; with the destruction of the temple, his *Presence* and *glory* were withdrawn.

While **Jeremiah** was prophesying in Jerusalem, the prophet **Ezekiel** was giving the same message of judgment to the captives who were beginning to arrive in Babylon. As their years of captivity wore on, the people did become repentant; they were sorry for their sins and they grieved the loss and destruction of their homeland, the holy city of Jerusalem and its beautiful temple. But, just as God foretold, their captivity continued. However, to assure his people that he had not forgotten them and that his judgment would not last forever, God gave Ezekiel prophecies of **renewal, hope** and **restoration**. A day was coming, said **Yahweh**, when he would restore to his people their land, their nation and their worship. And most of all, they could look forward to a brand new relationship with their God.

1. One of the ways God encouraged his exiled people was to give Ezekiel a stunning and mysterious vision of a future, beautiful temple where God would return with his glory (**Ezekiel 40-48**) and a new holy city where his people would live (**Ezekiel 48:15-35**). What is the name of this new city (**Ezekiel 48:35**) and what do you think is the significance of this name to the exiles in Babylonia?

- ♥ *The Lord is There* is **Yahweh Shammah** in Hebrew and it speaks of **God's presence with his people**. Would you say that God's presence is with you? How so? Has God's presence always been with you? If God's presence is with you, what are some ways that you are most aware of his Presence?

Read **Ezekiel 36:24-28**. The "I" in these verses is **Yahweh**. He is speaking to his people through Ezekiel.

2. List all the specific promises Yahweh makes to his people who are in captivity in Babylon.

- ♥ If you were an exile, in captivity, away from home, experiencing a loss of God's presence because of disobedience, which of these promises would be most comforting to you? Why?
 - ♥ Which of God's promises in these verses have you experienced? 1) Cleansing? 2) Stony heart transplant? 3) Power to obey? 4) Returning "home" after wandering away? How did it happen? Which of these would you like to see happen now? Why?
 - ♥ What does the phrase, "*You will be my people and I will be your God*" (**36:28**) imply? Variations of this phrase are found throughout the Bible. Is this phrase true for everyone? Is it true for you? If so, what difference does it make in your life? What is the connection between this phrase and God's presence?
3. **Galatians 3:29** (along with other Scriptures) tells us that if we belong to Christ, we are the true children of Abraham and heirs of all the promises of God given to his chosen people. Of the promises God gave the exiles in **36:24-28**, which have already been fulfilled, which are partially fulfilled and which promises are we still waiting to be fulfilled? *(Write answer on next page.)*

- ♥ Someone has said, "*The heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart.*" What do you think the saying means? What is God's solution for the human heart (36:26)? How does God do this "heart surgery" (Romans 2:29)? When did you have "heart surgery" (John 3:5-7)?
- ♥ What shape is your heart in right now: 1) Like a piece of granite? 2) Being broken up by some hard blows? 3) Being softened by the steady "rain" of the Spirit? 4) Other? How would describe the difference between a *hard heart* and a *soft heart*? How can you tell what kind of heart you have?
- ♥ What does Yahweh promise in 36:25? 1 John 1:9 tells us that if we confess our sins (own up to what we have done and make no excuses), God promises to *forgive* our sins and *cleanse* (purify) us from all unrighteousness. What is the difference between forgiveness and cleaning? Why are both important?

The name *Yahweh Shammah* is a promise of God's presence. In the Old Testament, God's glory resided in the temple in Israel and individuals could know, through prayer and worship, God's protection, care and guidance. The Holy Spirit, however, did not live in the hearts of individuals and only came upon a person temporarily at special times, enabling them for special tasks. New Testament believers, however, can experience God in much more personal and intimate ways because of the Incarnation of Jesus – *Immanuel*, God *with us* – and the gift of the Holy Spirit who was given at Pentecost (Acts 2) to *dwell* in individual hearts.

4. Read the following Scriptures and note anything you learn about *God's presence with us*.

John 14:2-3, 16-17, 26 –

- ♥ What are some ways you experience or recognize the Holy Spirit in your life? How aware are you of his constant presence? What can you do to become more aware of his presence?
- ♥ What does it mean to you that the Holy Spirit will be with you forever, living with you and never leaving? Do you sense his presence in some way or do you just accept it by faith? How so?

John 14:18-20; 15:4-5 –

- ♥ How do you "see" Jesus (14:18) as you live life? What do you do to remain (abide) in him (15:4-5)? When are you most likely to do something with Jesus (15:5)? Without Jesus? What fruit do you see in your life because of Christ's presence with you?
- ♥ Try to visualize **John 14:20**. What comes to mind? Share a time when you were vividly aware of God's presence with you. How would your life be different if you were constantly aware of God's presence?
- ♥ What practical difference does it make in your life that God is always with you? What would be different if he wasn't always with you – either "coming and going" or just "viewing you" from heaven?

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 –

- ♥ What does the word temple suggest (6:19)? How does it make you feel to know that you do not belong to yourself, but belong to God? What implications does this have in your life?
- ♥ How at home are the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in your life? Are they more like owners or temporary guests? How can you honor God with your body? How important is this to you? Why?

Ephesians 2:19-22; Matthew 18:20 –

- ♥ What is the significance of the word "household" or "family" in **Ephesians 2:19**? What do these verses say to you about the importance of gathering with other believers? Have you experienced Jesus' presence when you have been with other believers? If so, how?
- ♥ Imagine one day of your life without God in it. What specific blessings would be withdrawn if he was not with you? How can you become more aware of his presence with you?
- 5. Ezekiel's vision of a future city named *Yahweh Shammah* – *The LORD Is There* was the model of another city that another prophet of God saw in a vision hundreds of years later. Read **Revelation 21:1-4, 22-27** and **Revelation 22:1-5** which is a description of the *new Jerusalem* where the bride of Christ will live with God forever. In the space below make a note of anything having to do with *God's presence with his people in this new city*.

- ♥ How does it make you feel that God wants to be with you, not only in this life, but for all eternity?
- ♥ If you belong to Jesus (**21:27**), how does it make you feel to know that this is the place that Jesus has gone to prepare for you (**John 14:2**)? What, in this description is most meaningful to you? Why?
- ♥ What do you think it means that the *Lord God Almighty and the Lamb* are the temple of this city (**21:22**)? Where do you see the presence of the Holy Spirit in this city?
- ♥ What do you think the *new earth* will be like (**21:1**)? How might you serve and reign in this new earth (**22:3, 5**)? What are the implications of seeing Jesus' face (**22:4; 1 Corinthians 13:12; 1 John 3:2**)?

♥ Heart Therapy

PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Practicing the presence of God is an exercise that helps us **become more aware of God's continual presence in our lives**. We **all** live in the presence of God **all** the time; in fact, we cannot *not* live in his presence. But, we can live *unaware* of his presence. This spiritual exercise of is often credited to the seventeenth-century French monk Brother Lawrence whose brief booklet, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, was published soon after his death in 1691 and has since become a classic in Christian devotional reading. Brother Lawrence's goal was to *maintain on ongoing conversation with God no matter what he was doing*.

To *practice the presence of God* means that we intentionally do things to stay connected with God during our day. *Practicing the presence* is an invitation to see and experience every moment as a gift of God as we develop a rhythm of living that brings God to mind throughout your day. It includes doing "little exercises" that will help us stay connected with God by keeping company with him all day long. Below are some suggestions that may help you *experience God's presence* throughout you day.

- ♥ Devote some task you are going to do to the Lord. Talk to him about the task before you begin and again when you are done and see him with you as you do the task. Did this make you aware of God?
- ♥ Decide to stop several times throughout your day to pay attention to God. Set a clock to remind you. Spend *just a few moments* to pray, read a Scripture, or just be silent, spending a little time with Jesus.
- ♥ Carry with you and place around your home symbols (a piece of jewelry, a piece of art, a cross, a written verse of Scripture, etc.) the remind you of Christ's presence with you.
- ♥ Develop some *short* sentence prayers to help you be alert to God. For example, have a *waking-up prayer* (or verse), an *in-the-shower prayer*, a *getting dressed prayer*, a *cooking prayer*, a *driving prayer*, etc. Let these short prayers or verses said during the day help keep you mindful of God's presence with you.