

Revelation 21:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Analysis

Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them (ἵσκηνή τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων)—the Greek skēnē (tabernacle) evokes the wilderness Tabernacle where God's glory dwelt (Exodus 40:34-35). This is the ultimate fulfillment of Immanuel—"God with us" (Matthew 1:23). The verb skēnoō (to dwell/tabernacle) recalls John 1:14: "The Word became flesh and dwelt [tabernacled] among us."

They shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them—this is the consummation of the covenant formula repeated throughout Scripture (Leviticus 26:12; Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 37:27; 2 Corinthians 6:16). What began in Eden, was interrupted by sin, promised to Abraham, pictured in the Tabernacle, violated by Israel, and inaugurated through Christ's incarnation now reaches its eternal perfection. The phrase "God himself" (αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς) emphasizes the unmediated presence—no temple, no veil, no priesthood needed (Revelation 21:22).

This verse is the theological climax of redemptive history: God dwelling directly with His redeemed people in perfect covenant relationship forever. Every previous "dwelling"—Eden, Tabernacle, Temple, Incarnation—was a shadow of this reality.

Historical Context

Written circa AD 95-96 during Domitian's persecution, John's vision provided hope to suffering Asian churches. The imagery of God's tabernacle with humanity would resonate powerfully with Jewish Christians who understood the Temple's destruction (AD 70) as catastrophic loss of God's dwelling place. John announces something greater: the eternal Temple is not a building but God Himself dwelling with His people in the new creation. The covenant formula ("they shall be his people") had been violated repeatedly in Israel's history—exile proved covenant failure. Revelation 21:3 promises the New Covenant's consummation: unbreakable, eternal fellowship with God secured by the Lamb's blood (Revelation 21:27).

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does this verse fulfill every "God with us" promise from Genesis through the Gospels, and what does this reveal about God's ultimate purpose in creation and redemption?
2. What makes this dwelling different from Eden, the Tabernacle, and even Christ's incarnation—and how should the promise of unmediated divine presence transform your longing for heaven?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἤκουσα φωνῆς μεγάλης ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λεγούσης
And I heard voice a great out of G3588 heaven saying
G2532 G191 G5456 G3173 G1537 G3772 G3004

Ἰδού, ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ θεός μετ' τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ
Behold G3588 the tabernacle G3588 God is with G3588 men And
G2400 G4633 G2316 G3326 G444 G2532

σκηνώσει μετ' αὐτῶν καὶ αὐτῶν λαοὶ αὐτῶν
he will dwell is with and be their And and be their people and be their
G4637 G3326 G846 G2532 G846 G2992 G846

ἔσται καὶ αὐτῶν ὁ θεός εἶσται μετ' αὐτῶν θεός
shall be And and be their G3588 God shall be is with and be their God
G2071 G2532 G846 G2316 G2071 G3326 G846 G2316

αὐτῶν
and be their
G846

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 6:16 (Temple): And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Ezekiel 37:27 (Temple): My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

John 14:23 (Parallel theme): Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

Zechariah 8:8 (References God): And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.

Hebrews 8:10 (References God): For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

Jeremiah 31:33 (References God): But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Zechariah 13:9 (References God): And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.

Hebrews 11:16 (References God): But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

Jeremiah 32:38 (References God): And they shall be my people, and I will be their God:

Revelation 7:15 (Temple): Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.