

THE TRUE TABERNACLE OF GOD

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Some time ago, a certain friend wrote to me, in order that I might rejoice with her due to the fact that she experienced a time of renewal and spiritual refreshing in her life. This came about as a result of her return to a serious study of God's Word. As Jesus mentioned in the Parable of the Sower, sometimes we unwisely become caught up in the thorns and the brambles -- that is, in the cares and the concerns of this present life -- which causes us to drift away from the Lord, and to neglect His Word. When this occurs, we find ourselves in a rather spiritually dry place, where we not only feel alienated from the Lord, but where nothing seems to work out to our favor. In that particular Parable, the Lord said the following:

"And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to

perfection."

Luke 8:14, KJV

As Jesus also said in the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel of John, it is only when we abide in the Vine that we can truly lead productive lives for Him, and bear lasting fruit for the Kingdom of God. In fact, I will take this a step further and add that it is only when we stay close to the Lord, and dwell continually upon His Word, that we can also manifest the Fruits of the Spirit in our lives. Because unless we are well lubricated by the Oil of the Spirit -- which is poured out upon us as we read His Word -- we will not have the love, the patience, or the mercy to deal with the circumstances, people and problems which may be a part of our particular microcosm. Instead, we will be harsh, impatient, unmerciful and unforgiving. Consider the following verses:

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."

John 15:4, KJV

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

Galatians 5:22-23, KJV

"But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness."

1 Timothy 6:11, KJV

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity."

2 Peter 1:5-7, KJV

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Ephesians 4:32, KJV

So as I emphasize in articles such as "Star Wars: The Real Battle Wages On!", we must make sure that our lives remain centered around the Lord and His Word. We must remain within

the gravitational field of His Love, and obedient to His Will, lest we go spinning off into the dark spiritual void of alienation and confusion. If we do this, then we will not only be warmed by the Son of His Love, but we will reflect His same Love and Light to others as well, instead of the dark, evil nature of our old man which dwells within.

Returning to my aforementioned friend, at that particular time, she had initiated an in-depth Bible study concerning the Tabernacle of the Old Testament period, and she was wondering if I had written any specific articles regarding the subject. While I had not written one particular article dedicated to this topic, upon scanning my master database, which contains everything I have ever written, I discovered that I do mention the Tabernacle in a number of my articles. Being as this information is scattered throughout my many writings, the purpose of this article is to consolidate some of the information which is contained in some of the others.

Rather than delve into the history and the construction of the Tabernacle, which is clearly described for us in great detail in the Books of the Old Testament, at this point in time, I believe that what is most important to the modern Christian of our present day, is to understand the profound symbolism which is associated with the Tabernacle. The main point which we need to remember, is that the Old Testament Tabernacle -- which was later replaced during the reign of King Solomon with an actual Temple -- was meant to serve as an archetype, symbol or foreshadow, of greater truths to be revealed.

In other words, the Tabernacle of the Old Testament period was a symbolic forerunner of the true spiritual Tabernacle, or Temple, which would not be built with poles and cloth, or out of brick and mortar, but which would be founded upon the one true Spiritual Rock; that is, Jesus Christ Himself. Thus, while the Israelites of old sojourned in the land of promise, carrying the Tabernacle with them wherever they traveled, the Apostle Paul makes it rather clear to us that this was merely a physical representation of the Lord who sojourned with them as well. Consider the following verses:

"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in

the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

1 Corinthians 10:1-4, KJV

As you may know, the Tabernacle of Old Testament times housed the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the Tablets of Stone and the Books of Moses which comprised the Law, Aaron's rod which budded, and the sample of manna. It was the place where God's Spirit descended upon the Mercy Seat in the Holy Place which was located behind the veil. It was also where the Lord descended in a cloud and communed face to face with Moses, in order to give him instructions regarding how he was supposed to lead His people.

In similar fashion, Jesus Himself became the foundation of the new Tabernacle, or the new Temple, of the New Testament period as well. This is because upon taking human form, the Scriptures inform us that Jesus was likewise filled with the Spirit of God without measure; and He spoke the Laws of God to the people; just as Moses had done in the Old Testament. In short, Jesus was the manifestation or revelation of God to the people of the First Century. He was essentially the Living Tabernacle, or the Living Temple, dwelling among men. Consider the following verses:

"For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him."

John 3:34, KJV

"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Colossians 2:9, KJV

"Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"

John 14:9, KJV

Even Jesus' own Disciples had a difficult time understanding that God's Living Tabernacle, and the Foundation Stone or Chief Cornerstone of His Living Temple, was already dwelling in their midst. It is for this reason that the Lord had to chide them lightly in Matthew chapter twenty-four when they

began to marvel at the beauty of the Temple in Jerusalem. In fact, please notice carefully what Jesus said to His Jewish persecutors as well on one particular occasion:

"And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."
Matthew 24:1-2, KJV

"Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body."
John 2:18-21, KJV

Thus, as I point out in articles such as "Is Jesus the Only Begotten Son of God?", as well as in "The Blood Atonement: In Jesus' Own Words", not only did Jesus become the perfect and final offering for sin, but He is also the Foundation Stone or Chief Cornerstone of God's new spiritual Temple. In fact, by merit of being the perfect Sacrifice, He has also become the eternal High Priest of the same. In essence, He is both High Priest, the final Sacrifice, and the Foundation Stone of God the Father's new Temple. Consider the following verses which are found in Hebrews chapter nine:

"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

Hebrews 9:11-15, KJV

As Jesus explained to the woman of Samaria in John chapter four, and as Stephen would later say right before his cruel martyrdom by the unbelieving Jewish elders, God desires for us to become His living tabernacles of flesh, His living temples, wherein His Spirit dwells. Furthermore, as I point out in the series "Dead to the Law: God's Laws Written on Our Hearts", God desires that His holy Laws be written upon our very hearts, just as the Tablets of Stone were placed in the Ark of the Covenant within the Holy of Holies, of both the Old Testament Tabernacle, and the Temple of Solomon. Consider the following verses:

". . . Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

John 4:21-24, KJV

"But Solomon built him an house. Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?"

Acts 7:47-50, KJV

"Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)"

Romans 2:15, KJV

"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:"

Hebrews 8:10, KJV

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;"

Hebrews 10:16, KJV

In addition to the previous verses, as I explain in articles such as "The Born-Again Experience: Now Or Later?" and "A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: God's Promise of the Spirit", the Apostle Paul tells us that our current tabernacle of the flesh, our current earthen vessel, house, building -- that is to say, our body of flesh -- which houses the treasure of God's Spirit, will someday be replaced by a more permanent, eternal tabernacle -- or spiritual body -- just as Jesus' flesh tabernacle was likewise transformed and replaced with an eternal spiritual body. Consider the following group of verses which verify these points:

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

1 Corinthians 6:19-20, KJV

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

2 Corinthians 4:7, KJV

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him."

2 Corinthians 5:1-9, KJV

"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. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

2 Corinthians 6:16-18, KJV

The Apostle Peter also goes into detail regarding this very same topic; and specifically tells us that our human body is the temporary, fleshly tabernacle of God's Spirit; just like the ancient Tabernacle -- or tent -- of the Old Testament era; and just like the Temple of stone and mortar which King Solomon later built. Peter compares us to living stones in a spiritual house, and he reminds us that Jesus Christ is the Chief Cornerstone of said spiritual house. Consider this set of verses:

"Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me."

2 Peter 1:13-14, KJV

"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:"

1 Peter 2:5-9, KJV

So as you can see, collectively-speaking, we all form a part of God's greater spiritual Tabernacle, or Temple, in whom His Spirit dwells. And, as I have explained a few times now, Jesus Christ is both the Foundation Stone -- or Cornerstone -- of that Temple, as well as the Final Sacrifice, and God's appointed High Priest, who now fulfills all the intercessory

functions associated with it. Following are some more verses which describe Christ's function as our Intercessor and High Priest:

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Romans 8:34, KJV

"Wherefore he [Jesus] is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Hebrews 7:25, KJV

"For verily he [Jesus] took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

Hebrews 2:16-17, KJV

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;"

Hebrews 3:1, KJV

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

Hebrews 4:14-15, KJV

"So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; Called of God an high priest after the order of

Melchisedec."

Hebrews 5:5-10, KJV

"Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

Hebrews 6:20, KJV

"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;"

Hebrews 8:1, KJV

"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;"

Hebrews 9:11, KJV

Between the Old Testament and the New Testament, it appears that God carried out His plan to transfer His Holy Spirit, and His Word -- that is, the Law -- from a physically dead structure -- that is, from the cloth Tabernacle, and then the Temple -- into the living bodies of our flesh. Consider, for example, the following verses which are found in the New Testament, where we are specifically told that God desires for the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of Christ -- which we can loosely interpret as meaning "the anointed Spirit of God", being as the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of God -- to dwell within us:

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

Luke 11:13, KJV

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

Romans 8:9-11, KJV

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom;

teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

Colossians 3:16, KJV

"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."

John 14:23, KJV

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Revelation 3:20, KJV

While we are told that certain of the Prophets and holy men of the Old Testament were endowed with, and moved by, God's Holy Spirit, it seems that perhaps it was not actually until New Testament times when God's Holy Spirit began to fully indwell people, beginning with John the Baptist, then Jesus, and then His very own Disciples on the Day of Pentecost. However, perhaps it is wise to leave this point in the area of personal speculation for now.

Following are some additional verses which explain how when we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior, we indeed become the spiritual tabernacles, or temples, of God. In other words, we become the living, human receptacles of God's Spirit, which during Old Testament times, descended upon the Tabernacle, and filled the Holy of Holies of both the cloth Tabernacle, and later the actual stone Temple. By their own words, both John the Baptist and Jesus tell us that God is in essence a type of "stone mason". In other words, Jesus came to build the spiritual Temple for His Father, and we are the spiritual stones He is using to accomplish this task. I don't believe that either of them was referring to physical stones on the ground. They were speaking of the people who surrounded them as they spoke. Let us also not forget Peter's words as well, which I shared a moment ago regarding Believers being lively stones in God's spiritual house:

"Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

Luke 3:8, KJV

"And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."

Luke 19:40, KJV

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."

Revelation 3:12, KJV

"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."

Revelation 21:22, KJV

From the previous verses, we are given the impression that while we are in fact living members of the true Tabernacle or true Temple of God, because we will dwell with Him, and He with us, yet at the same time, we are likewise told that all of this would be manifested in a very real way as well in the form of the Heavenly City -- New Jerusalem -- which descends from Heaven to the New Earth, so that God truly abides among men. Consider the following verses:

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

John 14:2-3, KJV

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. 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."

Hebrews 11:13-16, KJV

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 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."

Revelation 21:2-3, KJV

"And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;"

Revelation 21:10-11, KJV

Please notice how we are told "the tabernacle of God is with men". This then is the true significance of the Tabernacle, as well as of the Temple, of the Old and New Testaments. As we have now seen, they were only foreshadows of even greater truths which would be revealed in the times to come. This has indeed come to pass -- at least partially -- because when we accept Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit dwells within our very own bodies, and we become His temples. As I explain in "The Born-Again Experience: Now or Later?", at this current time, we can only experience a small foretaste of these things. As I mentioned a moment ago, the Lord tells us in the Book of Revelation, that through the Holy Spirit, we can enter into spiritual union, communion, and fellowship with Him and His Father, now. Consider the following verse:

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Revelation 3:20, KJV

As we saw in earlier verses, Paul referred to this precious Gift as the "earnest of the Spirit". Yet as both Paul and the Apostle John also wrote, we have hardly begun to experience the full realities of the Spirit World. What we have now is merely a small down payment of what is yet to come; and we can hardly imagine what we will experience once we shed our temporary house or building of the flesh. Consider this set of verses and be encouraged, because someday, we shall be just like Him, and we shall see Him as He truly is:

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

1 Corinthians 2:9, KJV

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

Romans 8:29, KJV

"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Philippians 3:21, KJV

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

1 John 3:2, KJV

With those wonderful verses, I am going to bring another article to a close. I trust that it has been instructive, and an inspiration and a blessing in your life. Are you a living stone in God's true Tabernacle of the Spirit. I certainly hope so. If not, please accept Jesus today!

If you have enjoyed reading this article, please consider sharing its URL with your online friends. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter, Google+ or with any other social network, I would also appreciate if you would take the time to click on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information and further study, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were also mentioned in this article, or which contain topics that are related to this article. All of them are also located on the Bill's Bible Basics web server:

A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: God's Promise of the Spirit
Dead to the Law: God's Laws Written on Our Hearts
Is Jesus the Only Begotten Son of God?
Star Wars: The Real Battle Wages On!

The Blood Atonement: In Jesus' Own Words"
The Born-Again Experience: Now or Later?

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