

*DAY 7 BRIAN GIBBS*

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As we come to the final and closing day of our “Living Sanctuary” fast, I want to speak to you about God’s ongoing and active quest of dwelling with man. I want to thank all those who brought us fantastic devotionals throughout this week—Bren, Debbie, Kodi, Shane and Nate. May the love of God pour through this final devotional together as we have prepared our lives to be an abiding place of His presence.

The Lord Jesus is pursuing an intimate loving relationship with each and every one of us. This is an active pursuit, and it will not end until He has accomplished His eternal purpose in your life. From Genesis to Revelation, we can see God progressively moving closer and closer to the heart of man. We hear God walking with Adam in the cool of the day in Genesis. He walked with Enoch and talked with his beloved friend, Abraham. He communed with Moses and the prophets. All this came to an epic crescendo in how God communed with His own beloved Son and then sent His Spirit to us to make us a living sanctuary of His presence.

In the book of Exodus, chapters 25-40, there is a massive portion of Scripture given to the details and plans of the Sanctuary. The space devoted to the creation and details of the Tabernacle in scripture are massive. Every detail that God revealed to Moses is a revelation pointing us to Christ Himself. The New Testament makes many figurative and revelatory references to the Tabernacle and its furnishings. Jesus himself also gave prophetic teaching concerning his own identity revealed in the secrets of the Tabernacle. The Epistle of Hebrews cannot be understood without a knowledge and understanding of the books of Exodus and Leviticus. The book of Hebrews is actually the greatest revelatory commentary of Leviticus.

In the Tabernacle, we discover God dwelling among His chosen people. “And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it” (Exodus 25:8-9 NKJV).

The Tabernacle symbolized the dwelling place of God in the midst of His people. “There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in the commandments for the sons of Israel” (Exodus 25:22 NKJV).

The Tabernacle was a symbol of God's dwelling place where there was a sanctuary and special residence and manifestation of the glorious presence of God. The Tabernacle was a temporary place of worship—a humble tent of meeting. It was used in the wilderness during Israel's wandering. Set in the midst of the tribes, the people knew and understood that God had chosen to dwell among them—specifically between the Cherubim, on the mercy seat of the ark. Inside the holy of holies, God manifested His Presence in the Shekinah glory and extended His grace to them upon the mercy seat through blood—for the forgiveness of sin.

The holy of holies found its ultimate revelation in the person of the Holy One of God, His beloved Son, Jesus Christ. His glory was seen on the Mount of Transfiguration. The apostles said, “we beheld His glory.” Jesus, our High Priest, is the meeting place between a Holy God and sinful man. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6 NKJV).

The apostle Peter said, “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12 NKJV).

There is only one true Mediator between God and men—The God Man, Jesus Christ (see 1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus spanned the great gap between the Holy and sinful humanity, because He was both God and Man. The scripture says, “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself...” (2 Corinthians 5:19 NKJV). “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9 NKJV).

The Tabernacle was the way in which a sinner might approach the holiness of the One true Living God. It reminded all men that sin separated us from His glory. God, in the person of His Son, came from heaven to earth, suffering and dying the most unjust, brutal and horrific death “that He might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18 ESV).

The Tabernacle was the evidence that God, in His loving grace and mercy, brought the redeemed people into a place of nearness to Himself. We were far from His presence because of sin, but brought near through the precious blood of Jesus (see Ephesians 2:13).

The Tabernacle moved throughout the wilderness with the Children of Israel. God was willing to come in glory, but also in humility, and dwell within a tent among the pilgrim tent dwellers. The Tent of Meeting symbolized God in the midst of His people dwelling among them—leading, guiding, providing and protecting his beloved.

Moses tells us, “The cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of Lord filled the tabernacle” (Exodus 40:34-35 NKJV).

This Tabernacle in the wilderness was a copy of the original in Heaven. Moses was told seven times to make the Sanctuary after the heavenly pattern which was shown upon Mount Sinai. (See Exodus 25:9 and 40, Exodus 26:30, Exodus 27:8, Numbers 8:4, Acts 7:44, Hebrews 8:5). There was absolutely nothing left to chance or to human ingenuity. The construction was according to a divine model gave to Moses. “Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another...” (Hebrews 9:23-25 NKJV).

In Solomon's Temple, God came and dwelt in the permanent dwelling place with His people in the Promised Land. "It happened that when the priests came from the holy place, the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priest could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord" (1 Kings 8:11-12 NKJV). However, when the people of Israel turned to idols and false gods, the Lord brought destruction upon Solomon's Temple and gave His people over to Babylonian captivity for seventy years. King Nebuchadnezzar was only an instrument of judgment in the hands of Yahweh.

The Temple was rebuilt under Zerubbabel (see Ezra 3:12, 6:15 and 16). In reality, when reading the Scriptures, we discover that God did not really dwell with Herod's Temple that replaces Zerubbabel's. There was no Ark of the Covenant and Shekinah glory in it. At the time when Jesus arrived on the scene, this Temple had become a den of thieves and a place that grieved the Spirit of God. After Jesus prophesied this soon coming destruction of this Temple from the mount of Olives, the Romans came under General Titus in AD70 and leveled it, burning it to the ground, desecrating this sacred ground with killing more than 1 million Jewish men, women and children on the Temple Mount. Let me now turn the page from the historic perspective and point to the Person of Jesus Christ.

The key to understanding the Tabernacle is Jesus. It was a symbol, picture and prophesy of the Man in whom God would become incarnate and dwell in His people. He would be the final and eternal dwelling place (see Hebrews 2:14-18). The book of Hebrews contrasts the pattern in heaven and the copy in Jerusalem. The apostle Paul writes in Hebrews: "Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man" (Hebrews 8:1-2 NKJV).

Ultimately, God came even nearer to man in the Person of His Son—Jesus Christ. The apostle John describes God coming near in these words: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, the glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth...no one has seen God at any time...He has made Him known" (see John 1:14 & 18 ESV). The apostle Paul wrote, "For in Him all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9 NKJV).

Jesus began his ministry by cleansing Herod's Temple, and the religious leaders demanded an explanation. Jesus answered and said to them: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." "Then the Jews said, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?' But He was speaking of the temple of His body" (John 2:19-21 NKJV). The Lord God tabernacled Himself in the person of His Son Jesus Christ to reconcile the world to Himself (see 2 Corinthians 5:19). The earthly tabernacle was to bring Israel into communion with God, but in Christ, we have the perfect and eternal fulfillment.

The Tabernacle was the place where sacrifice was made for the atonement of sin until the perfect sacrifice would come once and for all through Jesus—the Lamb of God, slain from the foundations of the world (see Revelation 13:8).

This Lamb was destined to shed His blood for redemption of all mankind to all who would believe upon the Son of God. But this Lamb was also destined to rise from the dead by His Heavenly Father. Jesus rose victoriously, so that He could send His Spirit to abide in us to make us a living sanctuary of this holy Presence.

The apostle Paul writes: "the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:26-27 NKJV). Wow! Christ in us. God making His habitation within the new creations. And speaking directly to this new living sanctuary, Paul writes: "in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:21-22 NKJV).

You and I are the temple of the Living God! From the moment you placed your faith and trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, He came to dwell within your spirit and heart. God has made His home within us. This revelation is beyond magnificent. The word "dwell" means to settle down and to dwell firmly in a place—to take up permanent residence.

"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? <sup>17</sup> If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are."  
(1 Corinthians 3:16-17 NKJV)

The earthly tabernacles and temples had their day. They had a beginning and an ending. Yet there is an Eternal Temple that will not be corrupted by death—it is eternal—“a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1 ESV).

God came down and met with His people in the Shekinah glory over the Temple. Now he dwells in the new temple, a living sanctuary, spiritually constructed in the lives of regenerated believers in Christ Jesus our Lord. The Holy Spirit dwells in each and every believer who is His temple. (see John 14:17; Romans 5:5, Romans 8:9&11).

In closing, the book of Revelation gives us this picture of a new heaven, a new earth and a New Jerusalem. The Apostle John writes: “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.” (Revelation 21:1-3 NKJV)

John goes on to write: “But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.” (Revelation 21:22-23 NKJV)

There’s coming a glorious day, I believe very soon, when the trumpet of God shall sound and we will be gathered into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and God forevermore!

Maranatha! The Spirit and the Bride say, Come Lord Jesus!