

The Fourth Tabernacle



David Wilkerson July 28, 2014

In Scripture, the word *tabernacle* speaks of a place where God resides. It is his home on earth where his glorious presence dwells. Through the centuries, God visited his people and made his presence known to them, but he didn't have a tabernacle where his presence could dwell on the earth.

Noah heard God's voice, but the Lord didn't dwell daily with him. Abraham spent his days looking for the city whose builder and maker is God. Jacob was visited by God, but only on occasion. He didn't know God's presence dwelling in his midst daily.

The first tabernacle that served as a dwelling place for God's presence was raised up by Moses. It was designed by God himself. The Lord declared, "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.... And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat" (Exodus 25:8, 22).

The structure, known as the wilderness tabernacle, served as God's dwelling place prior to Israel's move into Canaan. His awesome presence was manifested there daily, by a cloud in the daytime and a pillar of fire at night. And the tabernacle stood as an illustrated sermon: From the holy of holies, to the altar, to the golden candlesticks, it all reflected an aspect of the Christ to come: his power, his authority, his sacrifice.

The wilderness tabernacle lasted for about 480 years before it passed away. Then a second tabernacle was raised up, completed under Solomon, who followed through faithfully with a vision given to his father, David. This tabernacle became renowned throughout the world for its majesty and grandeur, yet what made it glorious was the manifest presence of God: "It came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord" (1 Kings 8:10).

Every Israelite knew God's presence dwelled there. Indeed, if an Israelite was anywhere in the world, he prayed toward the temple in Jerusalem because he knew that's where God's presence was. Yet, like the wilderness tabernacle, this second temple also passed away after standing for about five hundred years.

The third tabernacle was Jesus Christ himself. When God's Son became incarnate, he served as the Father's dwelling place on earth. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9). "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). The Greek word for "dwelt" here means, literally, "tabernacled." In short, Jesus tabernacled among us.

At the Cross, Christ raised up the fourth tabernacle.

This fourth tabernacle is the church of Jesus Christ—his corporate body, consisting of a people worldwide whose bodies are his temple: "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you" (1 Corinthians 6:19).

With the first three tabernacles, there was a certain confining aspect. The wilderness tabernacle was confined to a single place, where Israel camped. The same was true of Solomon's temple; it was situated in Jerusalem. Even Jesus, the third tabernacle, was confined to a specific place; to meet him you had to go to Israel. Now, as the hour

of the Crucifixion approached, Christ anticipated the fourth tabernacle—one in which everyone who believed him would be gathered up in a single place: in him.

We see a glimpse of Jesus' joy over this when he met the Samaritan woman at the well. She said to him, "Ye [Jews] say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship" (John 4:20). Jesus answered her, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.... 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" (4:21, 23-24).

Jesus was prophesying of the fourth tabernacle, the one that all the prophets longed to see. It was the temple that Abraham rejoiced over, the one that Moses anticipated. They all envisioned it, but they could never enjoy it because they weren't able to enter into the fullness of its glory. Paul writes:

"That he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.... And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:16-17, 20-22).

Jesus tells us, "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). The word for "abode" here means residence, place of dwelling. What a mind-boggling truth: God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost have made us their home! Paul speaks of "our earthly house of this tabernacle" (2 Corinthians 5:1).

Our "earthen vessels" house a heavenly treasure. Indeed, the earthly body of every believer belongs to Jesus. Hebrews states, "Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Hebrews 3:6). It doesn't matter how frail or unworthy we may feel as God's temple. The writer states very clearly, "We are his house, if we hold fast our confidence to the end."

We all began with Adam's sin nature.

The day we were born, Satan laid claim to our bodies. We came out of the womb with tendencies of self-love, selfish ambition, self-praise and self-pleasing. In short, the devil claim-jumped us, taking the deed to our house. He came in and took up residence, and day after day, our sins became a mounting mortgage debt.

Then came the Cross, by which Christ purchased the deed to our house. His blood at Calvary paid all our debts, the full price for our redemption, and he had the legal right to evict Satan from the house, never to return.

This all reminds me of a man I knew. He was a highly paid executive and lived in a beautiful, million-dollar home. I witnessed Christ to this man on occasion, but over time he became an alcoholic and eventually lost his job. After that, he lost his wife, his career and his dignity. In this man's mind, all he had left was his house. He had designed and built it, and he vowed never to leave it. So now he stayed at home all day drinking. But he couldn't keep up his mortgage payments, and eventually he lost ownership. Someone else bought the house and paid off the mortgage company. A new deed was drawn up, the deal was closed, and the deed was registered in court.

But the alcoholic man refused to leave. He told himself, "I don't care what the law says. This is still my house, and I'm not leaving." But the law eventually forced him out. A deputy came and removed him bodily. As soon as the man was gone, the new owner renovated the place and moved his family in.

For days, the previous owner drove up and down the street in front of the house, proclaiming, "It's my home, it's still my place." But he was no longer the legal owner. Eventually, the new owner obtained a restraining order to keep him away.

Do you see the parallels? You have been purchased by Christ's blood. So your body is now legally his, the home of his Spirit, and all your debts of sin have been paid off. The previous owner, the devil, has been forced out and can never return because the deed is now in Christ's name. The Lord holds the title, and it has been registered in the highest court there is.

Yet the devil never leaves the house quietly. We have to call on the law to remove him. He'll shout, "I furnished this house. I spent all these years decorating it. Everything here reflects my tastes. It's all still mine." But God's deputy, the Holy Ghost, has laid hold of the devil and evicted him: "Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Colossians 2:15). You may see the devil pacing back and forth in front of the house, claiming he still owns you. But the law will never allow him to reenter.

"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).

It doesn't matter how broken down or dilapidated you may feel as God's dwelling place. He has declared, "You are my house. I dwell in you." And the Holy Ghost is his fixer-upper. He is continually at work on the home. The devil can lie all he wants; you are still the Lord's home, his dwelling place: "Christ...whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Hebrews 3:6).

At Windsor Castle in England, a flag flies atop the flagpole each time the queen is in residence. The same is true at our King's residence. Isaiah tells us, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19). God's flag of ownership flies above us continually. It is both a declaration of his presence in us and a warning to the enemy.

Beloved, we are not to live in fear of Satan anymore. Rather, we are to rejoice, walking in confidence and the joy of the Lord. God has removed all judgments against us. And he has hoisted his standard above us, declaring, "The King is at home. He is in residence here."

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