

WCCC 2014

Minister of the True Tabernacle 2

Brother Dana Congdon

We gathered together these days to meditate on the tabernacle. And it turns out the Lord has been giving us a feast together; as if it was the feast of the tabernacle. Our Brother Wong shows us from the old testament tabernacle the cross that marks its definition. This afternoon Brother Peng shows us the different furnishings of the old testament tabernacle and how they all speak of Christ. We gathered together to fellowship on this matter of the tabernacle. The very principle behind the tabernacle is for God to have fellowship together with us. We want to read some scriptures tonight regarding the true tabernacle which is in heaven.

We want to read from Hebrews 7 the verses in the Scripture that precede our topic in chapter 8.

Hebrews 7:23 – 8: 2 'The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus on the other hand, because He continues forever, hold His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever. Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.'

Hebrews 9: 11 – 14 'But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation;

and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?’

Hebrews 9: 23 - 28 ‘Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not His own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

Hebrews 10: 11 – 14 ‘Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onwards until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified’.

Let us pray:

Our Father we come to You in the name of our great high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. And we ask You to open our eyes to see that we have such a great high priest. He is glorious and He is excellent in every way. And He is Your servant and Your Son. We stand in awe as we hear of His ministry in the true tabernacle. And we desire to live in the good of all He has accomplished. Open our eyes to see. And from the heavenlies burn brightly the lampstand in our midst. Revive Thy work. Recover Thy earthly tabernacle. We pray in Jesus precious name. Amen.

The Lord is recovering His tabernacle upon earth because He desires to fellowship with men even upon this earth. To tabernacle among men is a great concession on God's part. As our brother shared this morning, the Lord wants to fellowship with us, but we cannot bear His presence. And so He must provide some place of a covering. Indeed He must in a sense hide Himself to some measure and then provide a very careful way that we can enter into His fellowship. And so through the years that the Israelites went through the desert, the tabernacle was always in the center. They could see the fire and the cloud. They knew His presence was there. But they were fearful to enter in.

Now the writer's burden is for Jewish believers. These saints have been saved. They knew the Lord Jesus as their Savior and as their Messiah. But at a point of crisis they were afraid to enter in. And they were hindered from entering into the Holy of Holies with their great High Priest because they were still holding onto outward things. They still were confused and they were still trusting in the temple, trusting in the law and trusting in the Levitical priesthood. But now all of those external things were being shaken. What was necessary for them? It was faith; faith that sees the unseen reality. The writer bids this people to look away to Jesus where He is in the Holy of Holies. They were to draw nigh to Him and to let go of these outward things. When I taught my boys to ride the bicycle, I ran along my son as fast as he could paddle, but he had to let go of my arm before he found that he could ride a bicycle. The little girl learning how to swim has to learn to lift her feet off the ground before she discovers that she can swim. And so these Christians have to come to this faith of the unseen. The writer listed many of the old covenant people who saw something unseen. And that became the basis of their life and their hope. Faith is the substance of things hope for, the conviction of things not seen. Now this experience for these people were much more crucial than riding a bicycle or swimming. Their whole outward economy was going to be thrown into disarray by the Roman army.

And so the writer said *'now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest who taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man'*. As we gather together these days, my

burden is to share about the true tabernacle. How are these words spoken to the Jewish believers relevant to us? The Spirit of God is trying to press us on to maturity and perfection. But our temptation is often to put our trust in outward things. This may sound incredible but there are many Christians who put a lot of trust in the building that they have for their meeting. Now the enemy can snatch away that building and destroy it in a moment. And when people are brought to a sudden crisis, they once again realize that they are pilgrims in this world there is no abiding home. Some of us are trusting in the servants of God; some of us are trusting in organization; some of us are trusting in our various programs. All these things will pass away. But what is done in the true tabernacle by the ministry of our faithful High Priest will last. And as we come together we want to build this tabernacle on earth with wisdom. And the only way we can build with wisdom is that we can see and believe in unseen things. If we are to build the church, we cannot base this building on outward patterns, shadows or copies. If it is going to correspond to something that the Lord can dwell in, it has to be a copy of the true tabernacle.

Now in our days, we have many who talked about building a church according to the New Testament pattern. It is fashionable today in many of God's people not to call them apostles but to call them church planters. And they are all planting according to the New Testament pattern. There are books being written as to how to build a church according to the New Testament pattern. Now actually some of these books do not talk about the New Testament pattern; rather, they destroy all the patterns that exist until there is no tent left. For me, I was very greatly helped. While I was preparing for my mission, someone gave me a copy of the book 'Concerning Our Mission' by Brother Nee. I happened to be taking a course at that time on the life and ministry of the apostle Paul. I had a very dignified Baptist professor at the school. I was so excited about the book I asked him in class some questions about the book 'Concerning Our Mission'. I said 'Have you read this book? It is amazing. There are apostles and prophets'. And he said 'There are no apostles'. And I said 'According to the scriptures you do not have a one man pastor in the church'. And He said 'No, no that is wrong. You know those angels in the Book of Revelation in each church, they are the pastors'. Well in the end I believe 'Concerning Our Mission' and I did not believe the professor. This is such a tremendous book. It is so helpful to see how the Lord moves as you

go out and the Lord begins to build His church. If you read the introduction of the book, Brother Nee said not use this book as a handbook or the blueprint. He said 'I pray this will help coworkers who are serious about building God's church'. Brothers and sisters, I know that it has caught your attention that in the entire New Testament, there is no pattern of the church. You think that if God wants us to do this and that, or not to do this or that, He will spell it all out in 3 Corinthians. But there is no pattern. And yet through the New Testament, you can see Jesus tabernacled among His people in many places. The day after the Pentecost, those three thousand Christians did not have a conference on the tabernacle. But what did they know? They knew the Lord's name was there; the Lord's presence was there; the Lord's voice was there. It was a living tabernacle. The Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Christians and He had created a living tabernacle with the Lord in it. There is no blueprint but when the Lord is the head of His church and He is sitting on His throne in the Holy of Holies, there is a lot of life among God's people.

And so as we talk about this matter of the tabernacle, we want to start again by this passage's warning to us. If we try to construct the tabernacle according to a pattern, a human copy, or some denominational strategy, we will ultimately fail. Now why do I say that? It is because the church is a reflexive reality when the Lord's life is in the midst. To put it more clearly, the Lord is like the sun, the church is like the moon. The moon reflects the glory of the sun. The church is a tabernacle but it is the Lord's life that is its life. And the problem is when we set our attention and concentration on the church, the earth eclipses the sun. When men get hold of this tabernacle, they have the genius for adding things to it and changing the things in it. Take Herod's temple for example. Humanly speaking there was no more glorious temple than Herod's temple. Solomon's temple could not compare. Herod added all kinds of gold ornaments. He added extra doors and rooms, huge candles and all kinds of things. Herod said 'I am going to build the greatest temple'. And even Jesus' disciples said 'look, how beautiful the temple is'. But I have one question. Did the glory of God ever come down on Herod's temple? No, the Lord does not come down on men's addition and complications.

Now today the Lord wants one tabernacle. I know it is hard for us to grasp this fact but He is recovering one tabernacle on this earth. Our assembly can be a testimony of the tabernacle where Jesus can be seen

if we gather the right way before the Lord. It is true if you gather before in a tabernacle and you are as true to the scripture as you understand, and if those leaders have a Christ like character, there is no doubt that the Lord blesses His people. I am sure you know of some of the assemblies in your place where there are godly people who preach the gospel of God, and people who truly love the Lord and they are blessed. And they see some light and they bear fruits. We know this is true. The Lord loves all His people. But still He looks for a tabernacle where He can be at home. In His true tabernacle in heaven He is at home. There is a kind of glory and a holy atmosphere and there is light. Sometimes the Lord in His mercy brings revival to His people. In the church, by His mercy He lightens the lampstand and we see where we are and we repent and the Lord brings refreshing and revival to His church. And history bears records that the Lord did bring this kind of revival to His church out of His mercy. But inevitably when the revival begins to fade and there are human structures in that church, it hinders God's purpose in that place.

And so we want to come again to the main point in Hebrews chapter 8. The only way we can dwell together in a reality that corresponds to heaven is by the ministry of our great High Priest. As we read these scriptures tonight, time and time again it reinforces that the Lord once and for all has made His perfect sacrifice for us in His tabernacle. And of course, the author of Hebrew was speaking to these Jewish believers. He was trying to show them that Jesus Christ by His one sacrifice has removed all the sins. But they had two problems: their conscience and they felt guilty. You know in the United States if you are raised by a Jewish mother you will have a guilty conscience. These Jewish Christians could not go into the Holy of Holies in the presence of Jesus because of their guilty conscience. But we read in chapter 9:14, *'how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?'* Now they knew they are Christians. But what happens when one sins again. And so again we are brought to look at the work of this High Priest in chapter 9:26 *'Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifest to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.'* That is His finished work. He has put away sins. It is under the blood.

We confess our sins and He is faithful to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Now all of us, brothers and sisters, we need to be very clear about the absolute perfection of this finished work by Christ. If there is any kind of loophole in your life or any doubt about this thing, the enemy will get in there and corrode your standing before the Lord. So you can imagine for the Jews, when the time was rough, they began to think about that they should make an offering to God. The writer said 'No, look away unto Jesus, He is the author and finisher of your faith'.

But that is not the main point that the writer is presenting to these Christians. His purpose is for these Christians to go on to perfection. It is important for them to see how this road of sanctification works out in their life. We read here in chapter 10: 14 *'For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified'*. And when we go back to chapter 7, what did the writer said? He said that Jesus is able to save to the uttermost those who come to Him. They are saved to the uttermost. The intercession of Jesus saves us to the uttermost. Now, this has personal application of course. But we want to make a corporate application as it applies to the tabernacle, the house of God. All the time the starting position for us Christians is to start with that which is finished and go from there. Do you understand what I mean? How do we work out our salvation? What is our starting point? We must start with this: we are already perfectly saved; and now work out your salvation. Paul said in Galatians chapter 5 to crucify the deeds of the flesh. How can we crucify the deeds of the flesh? We have to start with Galatians 2:20 that I have been crucified; then I can crucify the deeds of the flesh. Now when it comes to spiritual warfare, do we just start wrestling with principalities and powers? No we have to start from the top of the hill of victory and work our way to victory in that spiritual conflict.

And so we come to this matter of how we are going to build this tabernacle in a way that is pleasing to God. We got to start with the realization that the tabernacle is already perfected in heaven. We cannot build something here on earth unless we see that it is already done. Can you say it is already done when you look around at the church today? Do not start by looking at your brothers and sisters. Let us start with the fact. Our Lord Jesus did a perfect work. And when He gets up to the true tabernacle, He sat down. It is done. It is finished. We start there. Does that sound strange to you? The writer to the

Hebrews is saying if we see our Lord Jesus and the grandeur of His work, we enter the rest of faith. Now what is that rest of faith? He said you must enter that rest. Cease from your work as He ceased from His. Now what is that rest of faith? Do you say, well God will do it, I quit? No, God has already finished His perfect work; now I need to be involved in that work. For the saints who get hold of this reality, their life is marked with a certain rest. I love the way the writer said in chapter 12 that you have already come to Mount Zion. Now we sing we are marching to Zion. And we say one day we are going to get to Zion. Unless you see you are already in Zion, then you can never climb Zion. Faith lays hold of an unseen reality that is finished and done and then works from there.

So how can we take part in this? Now I get you all looking at heaven, but God wants that testimony here on earth. Some people are so spiritual they say, yeah, what is done is done. They never gather with anyone else. They are lonely people. It is just Jesus and me. That does not build the house of God. How can we cooperate in this? Let me ask you, do you believe that the Lord already built His perfect church? It is already done. But now here we are in time, not in eternity. And here there are vital things that laid hold as the tabernacle is fitted and ordered for His presence. I only want to mention two things: the two things that Lord has sent from His true tabernacle to this earth that will guarantee His finished work.

What are those two things? Our great High Priest only needs two tools and He can produce a glorious church. What are those tools? When He died on the cross and rose again for us, He gave us from heaven life: Zoë life, eternal life, uncreated life. Do you remember up in the tabernacle those four Zoë things flying around? Now our Lord Jesus said, now I have come to give you Zoë life, and to give it to you abundantly. This Zoë that is in you and me is the same Zoë that is in heaven. John tells us in His first letter that Zoë fellowship with the Father and the Son and we have entered into this Zoë life. He is the word of Zoë. That is the life in you and me. It comes from heaven and it will take us to heaven. It cannot be defeated; it cannot die. It will find its end. God has purposed by this Zoë that we should be gathered together under Christ. It is hard for us to believe we have this life. But it is there. I like this portion here in Hebrews chapter 7 that talks about our Lord Himself, because it shows us some of the character of Zoë life. Verse 26 of chapter 7 *'For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy,*

innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens'. Do you believe you have a holy life in you? Do you believe you have an innocent life in you? It is a life that is separated from sin. Now this life has to be formed and developed in us. But it is there and it will grow. It will be shaped into the likeness of Christ, our great High Priest. Now this must seem incredible to you when you look at me to think that this life can be shaped into the likeness of Christ. You might think maybe it is more possible to shape in you than to shape in me. But in the scriptures we see so many amazing things that the Lord has done by His life. I was thinking this afternoon about Judah from whose line Jesus was born. This son of Jacob; he was a mess. He did things wrong. He had children by harlot. He sold his brother into slavery in Egypt. Whoever could believe he could develop into a character of praise and be a lion. Only God can do such a thing. Then I thought about those people who came into the cave when David was hiding from King Saul. Did you read the lives of these men? They were wanted by the law. They did not pay their taxes. They were misfits. They were gangsters. They came together in the cave with David and they came out mighty men. Such were the influence of this David. Jesus is your high priest. He is interceding for you day and night. He is standing in your life to build that Zoë into something that has godly shape.

This brings us to the second thing that the Lord provided from heaven for us to make sure we can come into this glorious tabernacle. What is that? It is the Holy Spirit. What a wonderful intercessor we have in the Holy Spirit. I like this passage in Romans 8. A lot of this working and shaping is being done by the Holy Spirit within us. Verses 26 - 26 say, *'In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God'*. The Holy Spirit is sent upon us, the church, to make a bride.

And He is working out our circumstances in order to present us perfect. We are praying in one language and He is praying in another language. We said, Lord get us out of this mess and the Holy Spirit said, pour it on. He knows just how to reinterpret our prayers according to the will of God. The Holy Spirit also found a perfect environment for your perfection, the church. All those people that you gather with

are perfecting you. They are helping you, and they are shaping you in patience and long suffering. They are teaching you to look at unseen things instead of looking at them. The Lord is doing a great thing. In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul was talking about the building of the church and how important it is to build with gold and silver and precious stones. We usually interpret verse 16 as talking about us individually. But because it is in the plural, it is talking about us corporately. *'Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?'* Brothers and sisters, we need to look past what we can see because when we gather together the Holy Spirit is in charge of this tabernacle. He is pressing us for oneness, for holiness, for life, for light. It is because of the High Priest's continuous intercession for us. You know when we gather together in the Lord and He begins to bless us and pour His mercy on us, we all marvel at the great things that God has done. But when we go through problems and there are frictions among us or we go through some definite persecutions, the Holy Spirit is using these things too. Now there are some Christians who, because of their carnality, only want to be happy Christians. But the Holy Spirit will make us joyful Christians. Only the Holy Spirit can speak to us God's words, 'counted all joy when you enter into diverse trials'.

Brothers and sisters, I spent enough time telling these stories. Because we are in the last days, we will experience pressure and it is unto perfection. Everything that the Spirit does in our life, every shaping is for that life to come into conformity with Christ. None of that is in vain. It all ends up in the new Jerusalem. When you end up a precious stone, glorious, transparent and full of Christ in the new Jerusalem, you will praise God for both blessings and problems. He is working on us. Even on this earthly tabernacle He wants Christ to be seen in us. Here is what the main point is. How is this tabernacle going to be ordered, fitted and made whole for His presence? What is the main point? We have such a high priest. That is our point. I do not think you can be a worker for God and faithfully serve God without being discouraged if you just look at the things on this earth. Now cast your eyes upon Jesus, our Lord and High Priest. Listen to Him say it is finished; I have sanctified. And then in eternity He has already glorified. We read tonight the eternal work came because Jesus brought eternal redemption. Let us look away unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. Hebrews 12:2 *'Who for the*

joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God'. I do not know what to tell you about the time. We are far from perfect but we are nearly ready. Be faithful. See Him who is unseen. See His perfect work. Let us live out of that reality. May the Lord help us.

Prayer

Lord, this is what we pray: for Your life in the midst of Your tabernacle, for Your throne and presence among us. We do not need to know facts but we need Your presence, Your administration, Your intercession, Your sanctifying work. Stand in the midst of us as the high priest, light the lampstand, help us see reality for the sake of our great High Priest. Amen.