

A Better Covenant (Part 1)

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In this conference I was arranged to speak the last. It seems that other brothers have shared everything. By the grace of the Lord I am going to share with you what I received from the Lord. The theme of this conference is “Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with Men”. My burden is to share upon “a Better Covenant”. Some brothers and sisters may think that this topic is outside of the theme. What is the covenant that God made with men to do with the tabernacle? Tonight we would like to see the relationship between the covenant and the tabernacle from the Old Testament. First, I would like brothers and sisters to read some God’s words.

Exodus 19:1-6

In the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. When they set out from Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai and camped in the wilderness; and there Israel camped in front of the mountain. Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.”

Exodus 19:16-20

So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole

mountain quaked violently. When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder. The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

Exodus 19:24-25

Then the LORD said to him, "Go down and come up again, you and Aaron with you; but do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the LORD, or He will break forth upon them." So Moses went down to the people and told them.

Exodus 20:1 - *Then God spoke all these words, saying. We know that the Ten Commandments follow this verse.*

Exodus 21:1 - *Now these are the ordinances which you are to set before them*

Exodus 25:10 - *They shall construct an ark of acacia wood two and a half cubits long, and one and a half cubits wide, and one and a half cubits high.*

Exodus 25:16 - *You shall put into the ark the testimony which I shall give you.*

Exodus 25:21 - *You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you.*

Exodus 40:1-3

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. You shall place the ark of the testimony there, and you shall screen the ark with the veil."

Exodus 40:20 - *Then he took the testimony and put it into the ark, and attached the poles to the ark, and put the mercy seat on top of the ark.*

Exodus 40:34 - *Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.*

Deuteronomy 7:7-12

“The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments; but repays those who hate Him to their faces, to destroy them; He will not delay with him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face. Therefore, you shall keep the commandment and the statutes and the judgments which I am commanding you today, to do them. “Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your forefathers.”

Hebrews 8:5-7

Who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, “SEE,” He says, “THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN.” But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second.

As we read from the words of the Lord, we can see there is a close relationship between God’s covenant with His people and the tabernacle. We can also say that the purpose of the tabernacle is to put the covenant He made with His people into practice. From the Book of Exodus, and particularly from chapter 19 onwards, we can see that on Mount Sinai God made a complete revelation. This is a complete revelation since the foundation of the world. God led the people of Israel out of Egypt through Moses, and three months later they came to the foot of Mount Sinai. God made a very important declaration here. God let Moses tell the people of Israel that it was like God bore them on eagles’ wings and brought them to Himself. God asked them to obey Him and keep His covenant. Then they could be His people, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. This is a very important declaration by God. God then let Moses go up to the mountain and He continued to reveal to Moses. I think that the process of this revelation is very important. The revelation was made according to a sequential order.

Firstly, decrees and ordinances were given to Moses. In the Book of Exodus from chapter 19 to 24 God gave the Law to His people. We know that the Law is the written covenant God made with His people. Prior to this, God made a covenant with Noah. God also made another covenant with Abraham. However, those were oral covenants. At this moment at Mount Sinai God made this written covenant with the house of Israel. In our daily life experience, if we truly trust a person, or we are good friends, we shall not write it down when making a covenant. We just make it orally. If he is a stranger or someone we don't trust, it is better to write it down. God knew the people of Israel were not trustworthy, and yet God loved them. God made a covenant with them so that they might trust God. On Mount Sinai, God first gave the Law to them. It was important that God gave the Law to them.

God then called Moses to the mountain again. For forty days and nights, God revealed the pattern of the tabernacle to Moses. That is the famous "Pattern on the Mount". Moses remembered every detail of the pattern revealed by God. Moses then came down from the mountain. He led the people of Israel faithfully to build the tabernacle. When the building of the tabernacle was completed, God made Moses put the two tablets carefully into the ark, and put the ark into the Holy of Holies. This ark is the "Ark of the Covenant". This is the most important object in the tabernacle. It tells us the importance of the covenant God made with His people. We can say that God used the tabernacle to protect the ark and used the ark to protect these two tablets.

God also established the priestly system. Although the people of Israel worshiped the golden calf and frustrated the plan of God, God chose the Levites and Aaron's descendants to serve Him. What was the purpose that God established this priestly system? It was for them to carry out the covenant in the tabernacle, putting God's Law into practice.

In the Law there were decrees, ordinances, and commands. In the Pentateuch there is an important book. It is the Book of Leviticus. The entire Book of Leviticus is law. There are many regulations, decrees, and commands. When the priests served the Lord in the tabernacle, they had to serve according to these regulations, decrees, and commands. In other words, they carried out the covenant of God in the tabernacle. Not only did they carry out the covenant of God in the tabernacle, but they also taught God's people to follow and obey God. In the Book of Exodus, when Moses faithfully finished building up the tabernacle according to the pattern on the mountain and the priests finished preparing themselves according to God's commands, they came to the

tabernacle. For the first time in human history, God's glory descended from heaven. God's glory filled the tabernacle and even Moses could not enter the tabernacle. That's the first time in human history God's heart was fully satisfied. God found His dwelling place on earth. There was a place where He could reign. When all things are according to God's requirements, God's glory is inaugurated. Although in the Old Testament time this complete revelation was just a shadow, yet it clearly depicted God's will. We really thank God; even today God uses His words to reveal His glorious will to us. In the Book of Exodus, we can see this complete picture. We can see that it is such an important matter that God makes covenant with His people.

When we look backward, we may ask why God made covenant with the people of Israel and why He made covenant with men. We know that God created men. God really loves men and likes to bless them. He gave many promises to men. We can see that the entire Bible is a book of promises of God. Some people say that there are over 7,000 promises in the Bible. Some people say that there are over 32,000 promises. You can see that God loves us so much. Let's see the blessings of these promises. First of all, God lets the people of Israel to be His people. God wants to be their God and God wants to dwell with men. Then God would like to establish His throne among His people to be their protection. Then God would like to pour out all blessings. In the Pentateuch, God said, "I would increase your numbers, I would provide all your material needs and you would be greater than all nations." We can see that God really loves the people He created. He loves His chosen people. Therefore, He would love to give them the promises of blessings. And yet often time it is hard for men to believe this.

Therefore, God makes covenants with men to assure all the promises will be fulfilled. God is mindful of men's weaknesses; so He made covenants with men. He is mindful of our doubts for it is hard for us to believe. Even today it is also true for us. When we read the words of God today, we feel that these promises are far away from us. We wonder how they can be fulfilled in us, how we can experience it. Brothers and sisters, do you have that kind of doubts? God knew us, so He made covenants with us. In the Old Testament time, God used the blood of bulls and goats as evidence. Why were there sacrificial offerings in the Old Testament time? That was the surety for God's promise. We know that a covenant is two-sided. From God's perspective, He does not need to make a covenant. It is because whatever God says it is done. God never changes. And yet God knows we do change and that we also have doubt if He would change. Therefore, God makes

covenants with men. Not only does God keep the covenant, but He desires us to keep the covenant as well. Brothers and sisters, on Mount Sinai God gave the Law. God made this written covenant with them. This is a very meaningful matter.

When we read the epistles by the apostle Paul, we may be surprised that in Romans 5:20 and Galatian 3:19, he mentioned twice that the Law was added. Often time we don't quite understand why Paul said so. It seems that giving the Law was not God's original will. God wants to bless men, not to condemn men. However, when the Law was given, the people of Israel were living under condemnation. Therefore the apostle Paul told us that the Law was added. In the Book of Acts chapter 7, Stephen told us the Law was not directly given by God, but by the angel, and certainly it was under God's permission. We can see that God gave the Law to the people of Israel, but it was not His original intent. Why did God give the Law to men? When the Law was given to men, men had the sense of condemnation. Is there anything wrong with the Law? The apostle Paul told us that the Law was spiritual and holy. There is nothing wrong with the Law. Therefore, in the gospel according to Matthew, the Lord also says, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law." Therefore, there is nothing wrong with the Law itself. It is very important for us today to know what the Law of God is. This evening I shall try to explain it. Hopefully we shall have some understanding concerning the Law of God.

Before understanding the Law of God, we have to know what a law is. There are all kinds of laws in this universe. What is a law? It is intangible, but with authoritative power, and nothing can go against it. As people in the modern time we know this. If we fight against a law, the result may be disastrous. If you know the law and apply it, then you'll benefit from it. For example, in God's creation God sets the law of nature. Therefore, there are principles relating to physics and operating rules for life. In the universe the revolving of planets is governed by some kinds of law. The rotation of the earth and seasons are also under certain laws. We also find that all kinds of creatures are under all kinds of laws. Birds are flying in the sky, fish is swimming in water, and men are living on earth. All kinds of creatures are governed by different kinds of laws. This is the common knowledge that we have today. A law is intangible, but it is with authoritative power. You have to follow the law to live.

In spiritual matters, in our spiritual experience, and even in the New Testament there are different kinds of laws. These laws govern our spiritual living. For example, there are law of conscience, law of our mind, law of members, law of the Spirit of life. Concerning our ministry, there are law of faith, law of work, and law of sin and death. Brothers and sisters, whatever law that we are under, we are governed by that law. If we live under a good law, there will be good consequence. A bad law will lead to a sad consequence.

Among all the laws, the law of God's life is the highest. Brothers and sisters, the Law, the Ten Commandments are from the law of God's life. The Book of Hebrews chapter 9 tells us there are three important items in the ark: the golden jar of manna, the two stone tablets, and the budded staff of Aaron. They are very meaningful in spiritual perspective. The golden jar of manna refers to the bread from heaven, provision of life. The stone tablets refer to the principles of life, the nature of life. The budded staff refers to the power of resurrection. All these three items are related to life. All of them are in the ark. This reminds us the words in the gospel according to John 1:4, it says "In Him was life", just like these items are in the ark. Brothers and sisters, these two tablets recorded the Law of God. The Law tells us the nature of God's life. On Mount Sinai, God's life could not be upon men because Lord Jesus had not come to the earth to complete salvation. God's original intent was to give His life to men. Before His life was given to men, He displayed the characteristics of His life through the Law. Therefore, we can see that the Law given on Mount Sinai was from the highest law of God's life.

The word "law" in Hebrew is "Torah". This word has two meanings: flow of water and teaching. In Greek, this word is "nomos". It talks about practice, custom, rule or principle. Brothers and sisters, now you can see "law" is a very important thing. In the Chinese bible, the term "law" is used instead of "legislation". It implies that God introduces laws first, legislation comes next. In other words, legislation comes from laws. For example, the Bible mentioned statues, ordinances, regulations and commandments. All of them come from laws. They are from the natural habits of life. Therefore, God's Law needs not be changed because it comes from God's life and characters.

However it is a different story in this world. In this world, there are many sets of legislation or regulations. Every country has different regulations. How do regulations come about? They come about to rule according to men's practice. Rules are used to regulate men's behaviours to maintain an order of the society. People have to behave in an orderly manner. Therefore, we can say that we

are living under the governance of regulations, and there are all kinds of regulations. However, we know that corrupted humanity is very complex. Regulations of each country are different. Besides it is hard for men to keep regulations due to the fallen human nature. Sometimes regulations are not legislated in a reasonable way. Therefore, we can see that legislative institutions of many countries continue to amend their regulations. No regulation can be kept unchanged forever. Also in our daily living we often violate all kinds of regulations. We cannot even keep some very minor rules.

We have to thank God. The Law of God is ordinances derived from His life, but men made a lot of rules based on observation. We know that it is hard for fallen men to keep rules and regulations. Why did God give the Law on Mount Sinai? We can understand this from the Bible. Firstly, the Law revealed what kind of God He is. It revealed the nature of His life; He is holy, righteous, and good. And yet in the Old Testament time, the revelation of His nature was like consuming fire to the people of Israel. He was absolute holiness, absolute righteousness, and absolute goodness. That's the level that men cannot reach. The Law of God, in one aspect, revealed what kind of God we believe in. Secondly, the Law was a severe judgement to the enemy. In the Bible, Satan is called the lawless one. The devil was the first one against the law of God. He fell under curses because he was against the law of God. His end will be tragic. We said that a law could not be against, and particularly the law of God. Satan was against God's law; therefore, he was called the lawless one. He was lawless and he brought men into lawlessness. But we thank God, He did not forsake men. When the Law was given on the mountain, men had glorious hope. God foretold His highest will concerning men. One day God will bring men into this state. God is doing His work of restoration, His will is not changing. Therefore, in this preview God showed the nature of His life to men.

In the Book of Galatians the apostle Paul says, "Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions". We can truly see that we are sinners, but we are also waiting for the promised Seed, the coming of Christ. In the Old Testament time, the Law had the function of guarding. The Law was also a teacher to lead men to Christ. In the Old Testament time, the salvation was not yet completed. Therefore, the Book of Hebrews tells us the covenant God made with men in the Old Testament time had a fault. The fault is not of the Law itself. The fault is because of men's problem. Men cannot even keep human regulations. It is even harder for men to keep God's Law which is in such a high standard. Our life is very low, after men fell our life is even more

corrupted. And yet God's life is so superb. It is impossible for our lowly life to keep the law of such superb life. Therefore, the covenant God made with the people of Israel in the Old Testament time was with fault. Therefore, in the Old Testament time, the people of Israel could not keep even a simple request from God. After men fell, we are filled with rebellious nature. We don't like to be under constraint. This is not only true for young people, this is also true for older people. We like freedom, and it is hard for us to follow rules and regulations. Therefore, the covenant in the Old Testament time was with fault for us who are fallen men.

And yet in the Old Testament time, God still desired His people to keep His covenant. Therefore, God revealed Himself to them and told them that He was their God, the faithful God who would keep the covenant and have mercy. What's the meaning of "keep"? On one hand God will never violate His own law. When God says so, He will keep His covenant. There is no problem with that. There is another side of the "keep", for we also need to conduct ourselves according to God's principles. If we go beyond the boundary of God's covenant, God cannot pour out His mercy. Brothers and sisters, this is the story in the Old Testament. We can see that when the people of Israel could not keep God's covenant and His words, they fell under the curse of God. God did not show mercy to them. We can see that God's hand was heavy on the gentiles in the Old Testament. Sometimes we are terrified as we read it. Please note that not only did God deal with gentiles in this way, when the people of Israel went outside the covenant, the consequence was also tragic. Brothers and sisters, it is very important to keep the covenant of God. It has a close relationship with the entire tabernacle. The purpose of God establishing the tabernacle was for God to dwell among men. And yet history proves that whenever the people of Israel broke the covenant, the tabernacle lost its meaning. The tabernacle was still there, but the blessings of God were gone.

Brothers and sisters are very familiar with the stories in the Old Testament. Whenever the people of God sinned, they worshiped idols, they inter-married with gentiles, they conformed themselves into the lifestyle of gentiles, they broke the covenant, they disobeyed God, then God was forced to leave them. God did not want to leave them, but the people of God forced Him to leave. In the Book of Ezekiel, there is a detailed recording about this. When the people of God were worshipping idols, eating food that had been sacrificed to idols, sinning against God, the glory of God departed from the ark to the door, and then from the door of the tabernacle to the outer court. From there, the glory of God ascended to the mountain. One brother described well. He said that God was reluctant

to leave His people, for each step He took, He turned around to look at His people. The people of God broke the covenant and forced God to leave. God was reluctant to leave. At the end God did not return to heaven, He was waiting on the mountain top. At any moment when the covenant is broken, the presence of God will be lost.

We can see the story in the Book of 1 Samuel. When the condition of the people of Israel was desolated, the people were disobedient to God. The Scripture says the lamp of God had not yet gone out, but the word of God was rare. God did not speak much in those days. Consequently the people of Israel lost protection. It is such a sad story. When Eli was the priest and when they fought with the Philistines, they were defeated. They thought that if they brought the ark to the battlefield, they would win the battle. They did not realize that God had already left them. Bringing the material ark to the battlefield was useless. They did not win the battle, and even the ark was captured by the Philistines.

Brothers and sisters, all these stories are recorded vividly in the Bible. It tells us when the people of Israel disobeyed God and broke the covenant, the entire tabernacle lost its meaning even though all kinds of items were still in it. We know that God does not desire outward things. The most important thing for God to establish the tabernacle is to carry out the covenant of God. Whenever the covenant is firmly established, the tabernacle has its true meaning. God dwells among them, God's strength is among them, God's blessings are among them and God's words are richly among them. Brothers and sisters, it is such an important matter. We can see that there is a close relationship between the covenant and the tabernacle. We can even put in this way, if the tabernacle is the house of God, then the Law is the rules of the house. Chinese says that there are laws for a nation and rules for a house. There are certain rules for the house of God too. Whenever you break these rules, God does not want to dwell in it. Today, God is building up the church to be His house. There are rules for the house of God. Whenever we break these rules, the church is no longer the house of God. This is a very important reminder.

In the Old Testament time, there were pious people, who loved God. They knew the importance of making covenant with God. In the history of Israel, when good leaders rose up, they would lead the people to re-make covenant with God, as if they were telling God that they were willing to keep God's Law from then on, to be obedient and to keep the covenant. Brothers and sisters, today among God's people, God also desires to gain people who are pious and love Him. This morning,

our elderly brother mentioned the story of Israelites returned from captivity. That portion of history is very important, particularly for the saints in the last days. This is a very important reminder. The Israelites did not obey God, they broke the covenant, and as a result they were captured to Babylon for seventy years. When the time came, King Cyrus allowed the Israelites to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. We know that only a few returned. The first group of people were led by Zerubbabel to return. They rebuilt the temple in a very difficult situation. When we read that part of history, we can see the great difficulties and troubles they went through. And yet God praised them. Although the temple they rebuilt could not compare with the one in Solomon's time, they pleased God's heart. It was because they built the temple to be the house of God.

After seventy years had passed, many Israelites did not know the words of God and they did not know how to serve God. They had this building but did not know what to do. Therefore the second group of people returned, and they were led by Ezra. The king of Persia was gracious to Ezra. The king allowed them to return and beautify the temple. God prepared a very important vessel, Ezra, for them. Ezra was a scribe of the Law of the God of heaven. In those years in Babylon, Ezra carefully studied the covenant God made with His people. He understood God's words very well. Today for us, we need to spend time studying God's words in order to understand the covenant of God. In that difficult time, Ezra received much light from the words of God through studying. According to the Book of Nehemiah chapter 8, Nehemiah asked Ezra to read the Law of God to the people. The Bible recorded that they stood on a podium and read the Law of God clearly to the people of God. Today in the church we need to clearly know the words of God. If we don't have a clear understanding of God's words, our life will be in a mess. Therefore, we need to know God's words clearly, and then we'll know how to live before God. As Ezra read the Law of God, many people were weeping. The Bible says they were trembling at the words of God. Not only were they moved but also these words came into their hearts. They were shaken by these words. Brothers and sisters, today we need to pray, so that the words of God can come into the depth of our hearts. Not only do we long for His words but also tremble at His words. In that era it was full of failures, Ezra brought back the Law. He brought back the rules of the house of God.

However, the people returning from captivity started to fail again shortly. They started to intermarry with the local people. The Book of Ezra chapter 10 recorded a long list of people who intermarried with the local people. On one hand we can understand the weakness of humanity. The

number of Israelites was few, and they were surrounded by many enemies. They thought of a good idea - to inter-marry with the local people. They would then become relatives, and relatives would not fight with each other, and they would live in peace. However, they did not know that they violated the Law of God. They broke the covenant. Today, among God's people we also have this mentality. We think that if we compromise a little bit then everybody will be in peace. We don't have to follow God absolutely. If we do, we will be disliked by many. Therefore, we compromise this and that. Brothers and sisters, if we do in this way, very likely we'll break the covenant of God.

Therefore, when Ezra heard what had happened, he was in much trembling and fear. He wept before God, pulled his beard, tore his garment. He knew this was a great matter because they were against the Law. He knew this would bring in unthinkable curses and tragedies. Captivity for seventy years was a painful experience. The people just had this experience, but they forgot it so easily. God so loved His people, but the people of Israel forced God to a point that He allowed them to be in captivity. God wanted to discipline them, to remove idols among them. God wanted them to be a holy people. After such a severe discipline, the people of Israel had such a great failure. Therefore Ezra was in great fear that he wept bitterly. A few children were moved by him, and yet adults were not moved. These children were pure in hearts, and they wept with Ezra. Now this caused all the remnants to weep, and at the same time rain poured down heavily. This scene was really touching. Finally, the leaders arose and told Ezra they were willing to obey God. Ezra then led the people to make covenant again with God.

Brothers and sisters, we need to know that the price of making this covenant was very great. (Our Brother Dana mentioned that today we have to prepare to pay a price in order to follow the will of God. We should prepare to pay a price.) The price is recorded in the Book of Ezra chapter 10. Firstly, they had to send away all their gentile wives. Secondly, they had to send away their children. This was not easy. To send away their wives seemed to be easy and to send away their children would be very difficult. Brothers and sisters, we know that this is the principle.

What is marriage? Marriage is a union. When they had a union with gentiles, it was an abnormal union. Today in our service, we often make the same mistake. We make union with these abnormal things. We feel these things are profitable, they will benefit us, and they will bring fruits

to our work. Therefore, we make union with these abnormal things. God says this kind of union has to be separated. You have to put them away.

Now, what's the meaning of having children? It means this kind of abnormal union has become a reality, even a child is born. What can you do with that? Then we'll ask God to have a bigger capacity to bear with us. We would confess that we have made a mistake and we would not have another child. Brothers and sisters, even that has become a reality, you have to put that away. Concerning our spiritual experience today, this cost is very high. Often time we come to a situation like this. We feel that the situation can no longer be changed. We have made many mistakes and they are a reality. One time there was a senior pastor who knew that his condition was not right and he sadly said, "There is no other way for me. Yet I hope you, young people, don't walk in the same way as I did." This is so sad. We thank God. These remnants did not lose their sense. They came out from Babylon, and they had already paid a great price. When the words of the Lord came to them, they trembled before the words of the Lord. Therefore, they made a covenant again with God. No matter what their past mistakes were, they were willing to put them away.

Brothers and sisters, today in this end times, this is the severe calling from God. Do we desire to build up the tabernacle of God? If we do not keep the rules of the tabernacle, if we do not keep the rules of the house of God, it is impossible for us to build the house of God. We must have this absolute attitude. No matter what kind of union we had, no matter what kind of mistakes we made, let us be like the remnants to rise up and make covenant again with God. We tell God that we are willing to keep His covenant. I believe God has spoken to us in this conference. May the Lord have mercy on us. May the Spirit of God move our hearts, so that we tremble before the words of God. Dear brothers and sisters, let us rise up and obey the words of God. We become the people of God's covenant again. That's our hope today. Therefore, Ezra led them to make covenant with God again. There was a revival in that land. Although in the Old Testament time the covenant between God and men was with fault, God still desired His people to keep His covenant. It is because there is a close relationship between the covenant and His house. Only when we keep the covenant, it will bring meaning to the tabernacle of God.

Brothers and sisters, although this story in the Old Testament time was just a shadow, the principle does not change. Our God is forever the faithful God keeping covenant and mercy. May we have mercy before Him today. We can become His people who are obedient. We can become His

people who keep His covenant. In this way, the condition of the true tabernacle can be established in local assemblies. How much do we desire that once again God declares, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men." Brothers and sisters, this is God's desire. We need to look upon His mercy.

We really need to prostrate and worship our Lord. Through the old covenant, though a covenant with fault, God has spoken to us who are under the new covenant. God willing, we shall talk about putting the better covenant into practice tomorrow night.

Let's bow our heads and pray:

Lord, we pray that you have mercy on us. We know your love to us never changes, and your calling for us is irrevocable. We feel that we short change you too much. We are disobedient people. Often time we go against your covenant. We are just like the people of Israel in the Old Testament time, and we often break your heart. We thank you. You have not forsaken your people. No matter what condition we are in, you still speak to us. Lord, as we come to the end, many signs show that your return is imminent. In this imminent moment, may we firmly hold on to the final opportunity and follow you. We may rise up and say to you, "We are willing to obey you. We are willing to make covenant with you again. We are willing to put away the things that cannot satisfy your heart. May once again your tabernacle be pitched among men. May your glory once again be among your people." Lord, listen to our prayer. We look upon your mercy. We know you are among us tonight. Every brother and sister is before you. May you have mercy on us. Again, we offer you our worship. We pray in the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.