

## The Realization of the Tabernacle in the New Testament 1

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Let us read a few scriptures.

Gospel of John 1: 14 *'And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth'.*

Hebrews 9: 1 – 5 *'Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place. Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail'.*

These few verses give the items in the holy place and in the Holy of Holies.

Hebrews 10: 1 *'For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very image of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.*

Here the author of the Hebrews said there is something called 'the shadow' and something called 'the very image of things'. The items we have read in the beginning of chapter 9 are the shadows of the real things. And then there is this thing that is called 'the very image of things'.

Hebrews 10: 5 – 7. These verses are talking about Jesus. *'Wherefore coming into the world He says, sacrifice and offering thou have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, "behold, I have come to do your will, O God"'*.

Our Heavenly Father, we really thank you for giving us this opportunity to gather before You. Lord, every time we look at this matter of the tabernacle, we really marvel at Your wisdom, Your heart, Your mind and the wonders You have done. And the most wonderful thing is that You sent down Your Son, who makes it possible for us to understand the tabernacle. Lord, this afternoon we pray that Your Spirit be with us. Open our eyes to see the wonder of Your tabernacle and the real meaning of Your son, our Lord Jesus. May all the honor and glory be to You. In the name of the Lord Jesus, we pray, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, we have already heard two sessions, last night and this morning about the tabernacle. What is assigned to me this time is the realization of the tabernacle in the New Testament time. Last night, our brother Dana has shown us the heavenly nature of this tabernacle and that it is pitched by God and not by man. This morning our brother Wong has shared on the original intent of our Lord God in this tabernacle. Those are revelations and what is assigned to me is the realization. So I have to give you some facts. This session I will talk about Jesus being the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. The original idea of this tabernacle is to have Jesus fulfill it. He made it real to us. He made it possible for us to understand. He made it possible for us to get in. And tomorrow I will like to share with brothers and sisters the other aspect of this. It has to do with the church because the Lord Jesus said, 'tear down this temple and in three days I will raise it up'. So it has to do with God living among us, His church.

Today we just want to share on Jesus Himself being the tabernacle. After listening to what brother Wong shared this morning, I would summarize the three things that I am going to say. The first thing is that God wants to dwell among man and this is in Exodus 25:8 as our brother shared this morning. The second thing is that God wants to talk to us in the tabernacle. He wants to speak to us at the ark. The third thing is that the Lord God wants to walk among us. This is in Leviticus chapter 26. He said He wants to be our God and we are to be His people. The first two things are that He wants to dwell among us and He wants to speak to us. The third thing is that He wants us to be something. We have to be His

people. Not only that but He wants us to be His treasured possession. So these are the things that the Lord wants.

When we look at the Old Testament history, oftentimes the Israelites failed. But God's tabernacle was in the heart of the people who loved Him. These included people who were kings, prophets and the remnants. For example, we see Joshua in the time of the wilderness. He loved to stay in the tent of meeting, alone with God. Somehow the idea of God's tabernacle grasped him. He treasured the presence of the Lord. Later we see the story of Samuel. Samuel's life was really connected with this tabernacle. He grew up in the so-called house of God. Actually that was the tabernacle where Eli and his sons live and serve. It was very painful for Samuel. When he grew up, he made it his life mission to restore the spiritual reality of the tabernacle and its service. He said one thing that stuck in our hearts. He said, 'to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken is better than the fat of the ram'. Samuel was not interested in formality. He was interested in spiritual reality. He really touched the heart of the Lord. He wanted to listen to the Lord and he wanted to obey. And thank the Lord, later we have David. David loved God. He wanted to build the house of God. But God did not allow him. And yet he so happily prepared everything for the house. Not only he did it, not only he got the pattern of the house of God and its location but he prepared all the materials for the building of the temple. Not only he did it, but he motivated all the people of Israel to do it. And his son Solomon became king. When Solomon was young he was offering sacrifice at this big place in Gibeon. But then that night the Lord appeared to him in a dream. He went back to the ark and then he offered sacrifices there. Solomon had great insight of what house of God is. He said, 'even the heaven of heavens is not big enough for the Lord to live, and then this place I build is not worthy for Him to live. And yet His name is going to be here. His eyes will be here and His ears will be here'. And the Lord answer, 'my heart will be here too'. This was the place where people could pray to the Lord. The other great insight of Solomon was that he said, 'Lord, this is the place where foreigners will pray to you; they can fear you and they can love you'. This was Solomon's insight.

Many years later, we know that in the Old Testament time, the spiritual condition of the Israelites just slid. And then years later, the Lord Jesus came. Dear brothers and sisters, we have just read 'the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us full of grace and truth'. 'The Word become flesh, tabernacled among us' is revelation. And then John said 'we have beheld His glory, a glory as of an only-begotten Son, full of grace and truth'. Brothers and sisters, this was John's testimony. Last night and this morning, our brothers talked about this revelation. Indeed, brother Dana mentioned this true tabernacle is from the very, very beginning, before this creation. And we also know there was an altar in the tabernacle. And our brother Wong talked about this altar this morning. An altar is for sin offering and burnt offering. In Revelation 3: 18, it said 'the lamb which has been slain from the foundation of the earth'. So God's idea of the tabernacle is way before the exodus. Nothing can express His thoughts. Matters cannot express His thoughts. There is only one who can express His own thoughts and that is His Son. And that is even before exodus. But the wonder is this, when the Lord Jesus came, all this idea of the tabernacle became real in Him. Now there are people who have seen this. When the apostle John saw this, he wrote the Gospel of John. He was about ninety years old when he wrote it. This tabernacle being the Lord Jesus Christ was not only a revelation to him but it was also an observation to him. It was his experience. Brothers and sisters, when we come to see this matter of the tabernacle, when we understand the relationship between the items and our Lord Jesus, may the Holy Spirit stir our heart. We can experience this thing just as the apostle John experienced it. So when John said he beheld His glory, as the glory of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth, brothers and sisters, this is also for you and for me to experience. We have to experience this and we have to tell other people that indeed Jesus came, full of grace and truth. The items in the tabernacle really were the Lord Jesus.

I would like to go from the outside to the inside of the tabernacle. I just want to show brothers and sisters how to experience it. Or put it another way, how people over the years have experienced it. I will pass this altar because our brothers already mentioned it. I just want to say one thing. Every Sunday when we come to the Lord's table, what do we observe? We observe our Lord Jesus as the sin offering. We see that He became sin offering for us. With regards to the burnt offering, oftentimes we want to serve the

Lord. Actually we want to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice. We want to be a bond slave but we do not know how. We are full of baggage. Now here is the Lord Jesus, a burnt offering. All we have to do is to look at Him. And then we will be willing to say we want to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice.

The brazen laver was, at that time, where the priests washed their hands before they go in. But today, brothers and sisters, the Lord Jesus has done something. He is telling us that He is sanctifying His church, cleansing it by the washing of water with the word. Brothers and sisters, how can we get ourselves sanctified? According to apostle Paul, the Lord Jesus wanted to sanctify His church and He used water which means His life, and the word which means His word. This is so real to us.

And then we go inside to the holy place. On the right hand side was the show bread. Last night our brother Dana mentioned that it symbolized a fellowship. And this morning our brother Wong told us actually we have the food and we grow. This is all very, very true. We can experience it. Oftentimes we have love feast, sometimes at brothers and sisters' home and sometimes at the church. Love feast means to eat. It would be such disappointments if after the love feast, you leave and do not feel you have any connections with the Lord. On the other hand, the food maybe very, very simple at the love feast, but if the Lord is there, that is all we need. You leave the feast happy. So this is something we can experience.

The church in Laodicea closed their door to the Lord. The Lord has to knock. And why does He want to knock? It is because He wants to come in to sit with you. Brothers and sisters, to sup is to eat and to fellowship. It is very real. We turn to our left and we see the lampstand. This lampstand was very heavy and weighed seventy pounds. It was very beautiful. The important thing is this. Our brother Wong told us this morning that the holy place was actually very, very dark. The natural light could not come in.

That was the design of it. And yet this lampstand gave light and that light was the only light used in the holy place. Brothers and sisters, this is very, very practical for us today. Today in the church where is the light? Is the light our natural smartness? Or is the light based on how the world does things? Or is it none of this? The only light in the church is the Lord Jesus Himself. Anytime we deviate from that, we get into trouble. This is our experience. And then this lampstand was one piece of gold, no joint, and no patch up. It was a beaten work. Brothers and sisters, in the world, if you see a group of people serving

the Lord, and you see one piece of gold, no impurities, and members in right condition in the church and only the church, then it is the fullness of Him who fills all in all. If we want to be in His church in the right condition, then let the Lord Jesus fill every one of us and let the Lord Jesus fill everything we do. And that is the picture of this pure golden lampstand. This is very practical. And then the oil that went into the lampstand, it was the pure olive oil from the Israelites. It was not just from the priest, it was from the people. So brothers and sisters, it is a picture of you and me. And when the Holy Spirit works in us and purifies us so that the life of Christ in us is the work of the Holy Spirit, it becomes the source or fuel that goes into the light.

Another thing in the holy place was the golden incense altar. We can see from the New Testament that this means prayer. But our experience is that without the Lord Jesus teaching us how to pray, we do not really know how to pray. We just pray, Lord, give me this, and give me that. But the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We sometimes want to pray for other people to see. But the Lord Jesus said, go enter into the inner room, close the door and pray to the Father who is in secret. And when we are in trouble or feel things too much of a burden, we pray to God, O Lord, take away our burden. But our Lord thinks differently. In the garden of Gethsemane, it is 'not my will but thy will'. Brothers and sisters, how many times when we serve the Lord, and the going is pretty rough, and it is very hard, it is the Lord's prayer 'not my will but thy will' upheld us. So brothers and sisters, it is our Lord Jesus who taught us to pray.

When we enter into the Holy of Holies, there was one thing which was the ark. And there were four things that were mentioned in the ark. One was the ten commandments; the second was the container of the manna; the third was Aaron's rod that had been budded and the fourth was the mercy seat. And also there were cherubs. But I will just mention the four things.

The ten commandments inside the tabernacle were the heart of the Lord. The Lord God told Moses to put the ten commandments there. Brothers and sisters, if you really read the ten commandments, you find that they are really what the Lord said about Himself. God is talking about Himself. He also talks about His relationship with us, and our relationship with each other. So this is the truth once for all that He

gave to His people. We all know we can easily see that this is truth. But it is a little hard to see this as grace. Moses actually was the one who received the ten commandments directly from the Lord, and he also shepherded the Israelites for forty years. And when he reflected, he put this law in a different light as we see it. In Deuteronomy 33: 2 – 3, He said, *‘The Lord came from Sinai and dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, and He came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones; at His right hand there was flashing lightning for them. Indeed, He loves the people; all Your holy ones are in Your hand, and they followed in Your steps; everyone receives of Your words’*. So this was Moses’ recollection of what the law meant to them. On the one hand God gave His fiery law to His people so they could be good people. But He also said it was because He loves His people. So the ten commandments are a wonderful demonstration of God’s truth and grace. Throughout the generations people and we see only the harsh part of the ten commandments. Now the Lord Jesus came. He put the law in a totally different light. In Matthew chapter 22, someone asked the Lord, ‘what is the first and the greatest commandment?’ The Lord Jesus said, love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your mind and all your soul and also love thy neighbor as thyself. This is the first and the greatest commandment. The Lord Jesus saw the ten commandments as love; He saw it as loving God. Of course in His own words, Jesus also said in the New Testament that God really loves His own people. This is in John 3: 14 before He said ‘for God so love the world that He gave his only begotten Son’. He talked about the Israelites that while they were in the wilderness they complained and the serpents came and bit them. And the Lord actually asked Moses to build a bronze serpent and to raise it up. Whoever was willing to look at it would be saved from the serpent. And the Lord Jesus said when the Son of Man was raised up; that was how we would be saved.

Dear brothers and sisters, in the Lord Jesus’ eye, the law is God’s love to us. And then He also said it is for us to love God. This is a very deep thing. When you think about it, this is basically what the Book of Romans was talking about before chapter 8. Paul was a Pharisee. He had a painful experience with the Lord. But he saw it very, very clearly. He said that the law is spiritual; I am fleshly, sold to sin. The law is spiritual means that God sees our heart; because God does see our heart. So to fulfill the law is a matter

of the spirit. The problem is that we are of the flesh. If we want to fulfill the law with our flesh, maybe today I am able to do five out of the ten commandments. And then tomorrow I will try to work on the sixth and then the following week I will try to work on the seventh. So this is how the flesh tries to fulfill the law. Paul said it will not work. In Romans chapter 8, Paul said the mind of the flesh is enmity towards God. It does not subject to God and it cannot. So brothers and sisters, it is not possible to obey the Lord with our own flesh. Our Lord Jesus said the law is to love God. So brothers and sisters, in the Book of Romans, Paul said that we thank the Lord because when we believe in the Lord Jesus, God considered us as righteous so we can be reconciled to Him. We can reconcile and we are not enemies anymore. Then Paul said we can rejoice in hope; we can even rejoice in tribulation and we can even rejoice in God. So the Lord Jesus is really pointing out the way to fulfill the law and to love God. Paul said in Romans that we actually have to rejoice in the Lord. We have to see serving the Lord and obeying the Lord is a happy thing.

So dear brothers and sisters, that has to be done. Otherwise we will always see the commandments as something pressed on us. Martin Luther was a priest. When he was a monk, he tried to fulfill the law with his flesh and it never worked. So he wrote an introduction to the book of Romans. He said our problem with the law was that we tried to do the law but our heart hated it. That is exactly what Paul said. The mind of the flesh is enmity to God. The important thing is that by the grace of the Lord and by His salvation we become different and we start to love the Lord. We even start to love the law. When we do something we do it happily. We may still make some mistakes. We may still offend our brother. But immediately the Spirit comes and you know you are wrong. You repent before the Lord. You said sorry to your brother. You become a happy man again. You rejoice again. This is how to fulfill the ten commandments. We thank the Lord Jesus. It is so unusual that He mentioned to fulfill the law is to love the Lord. The Lord is so unusual.

The next thing we see was the container that contained the manna. We know when the Israelites were in the wilderness, the Lord provided manna for them for forty years. Brothers and sisters, this was grace of course. But it was more than grace. The Lord said in Deuteronomy 8: 3 that the Lord God gave you

manna so that you know that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes out of the mouth of the Lord. This is the Lord's truth. On one hand He gave you food to eat, on the other hand, He said 'eat this, this is not very tasty; you may not like it very much, but it tells you this; man lives not by bread alone but by every word that comes out of the mouth of the Lord'. Brothers and sisters, this is God's grace and God's truth. In the Gospel of John chapter 6, the Lord Jesus said, 'I am the bread of life, everyone one who comes to me will not hunger; he who believes me will not thirst'. This is grace. But the Lord Jesus also said 'my word is the spirit and the life'. What does that mean? It means 'you have to listen to what I said because the Spirit is there in what I said. The Spirit has to go into you. You have to let the Spirit come in, so that the Holy Spirit can make my word real in you. So this is the truth; and it is true for our Lord Jesus also. This story of manna from His mouth is both grace and truth. Brothers and sisters, again our Lord is so unusual. He said something about the word. He said how to keep the word - logos of God. He said if you love me you will keep my logos. And immediately after that He said if you do not love me you will not keep my word. Brothers and sisters, notice two things. One thing is that it is logos – it means what God wants to tell us is total. There are things in His logos that you like and there are things in His logos that you do not like. But no matter what, the Lord said you ought to keep my logos. How do you keep His logos? He said if you love me you will keep my logos. He also said if you do not love me, you will not keep my logos. The Lord is binding these two things together. You cannot say I want to keep his word but I do not love you. So He is putting these things together. Brothers and sisters, oftentimes we said we want to read God's words. We want to read the bible. We want to read the bible three or four times a year. Every morning I want to spend three hours reading the bible. You can find many ways to read the bible. But the Lord Jesus said if you do not love me, you will not keep this. If you love me, you will keep His word. This is so real. Sometimes our heart is away from the Lord for some time, perhaps a month, perhaps two months. Think about it, does the word of God mean anything to you during those times? And think about some other time. We can be so busy. They drive us to work sixteen hours a day. But I love the Lord. Now I open

the bible, five minutes, and it said something to me. So yes, there are various way of reading the bible.

But there is one thing that is necessary. We have to love the Lord.

And the next thing was Aaron's rod. Aaron's rod told a very bitter story. It was God's rule and God's discipline. And yet this Aaron's rod budded. It was a staff; it was a rod; it was dead wood and yet it budded. And it brought out flowers. It even brought out fruit. Brothers and sisters, only God can do this. The rod itself, the discipline is His truth. But yet God made life out of death and that is His grace.

Brothers and sisters, there is nothing in the world that can explain about resurrection. No explanation can touch it. But to us Christians it is so real. God raise the Lord Jesus from the dead. And by power declare Him Son of God. Thank the Lord and because of that you and I are saved. But it is not only that. The Lord wants you and me to have that resurrection, power, and life. John chapter 11 is about Lazarus who died and the story between his two sisters and the Lord. We know that Jesus said one thing; I am the resurrection; I am the life. He was basically saying I am your resurrection; I am your life. Dear brothers and sisters, we have no time to go into that. You all know that chapter. I just want to mention three things that this resurrection did to Martha and Mary.

What was physically resurrected was their brother. But in spirit, it was Mary and Martha who were given a new life. The first thing is about love, the second thing is about service, and the third thing is about worship. Now about love; at the very beginning of that chapter, Martha and Mary sent a person to tell Jesus that 'Lazarus whom you love is sick'. Then John recorded, 'Jesus loves Martha, Mary and Lazarus'. Now these two loves are different. From the point of view of Martha and Mary at that time, they thought Jesus liked them. There was attachment and they were good friends. So this love is phileo. And this was how Martha and Mary thought of their relationship with the Lord. But immediately the apostle John wrote that Jesus loved Mary, Martha and Lazarus. That was agape love. That is God's love. So in this story the first difference it made was this, the love from phileo to agape. And then the second thing was this. Martha liked to do things. She did a lot of things. And sometimes her sister was not helping her and she was not happy. But after this chapter, there was an occasion that she went to where she served and she did not say a word. So there was no murmur anymore. Her service changed. And

how did it work in Mary? When the Lord tarried and did not arrive on time, Lazarus died. These two sisters told the Lord Jesus, Lord if you have come earlier, my brother would not have died. It was not only Martha who said but also Mary. If it was us, we will say the same thing. But after the Lord raised Lazarus, on that day, at the gathering, Mary just brought her jar of nard, broke it and poured it on the Lord and did not say a word. And then the other disciples said what a waste. The Lord said, 'do not bother her; she is doing an excellent thing'. Brothers and sisters, before the resurrection, we see everything with our natural eyes. We have a reason to complain, Lord you are too late. But after the resurrection, we do not do that anymore.

Brothers and sisters, the last item was the mercy seat. Mercy seat was grace because mercy is grace. But mercy seat always reminded you that God hates sin. And that is truth. In John chapter 8, there was a woman who was caught in adultery. The Pharisees brought her to Jesus, and told Jesus she committed adultery. They said according to Moses' law, she should be stoned to death. So what should we do? The Lord did not answer immediately. But then the Lord said whoever was without sin could cast the first stone. Everybody left and the woman was left standing alone. The Lord asked, 'no one condemned you'? She said no. And Jesus said 'I do not condemn you either. Go and sin no more'. Brothers and sisters, there are three things here. Go, this was grace and this was mercy. The woman should have been stoned to death. But the Lord said, go. That was grace. And then the Lord also said sin no more. That was truth. But this is not the end of the story. Who at that time had the right to forgive sins? The woman was indeed a sinner. According to the law of God, she should indeed be stoned to death. But who was qualified to say I do not condemn you? Brothers and sisters, sometime later, the Lord Jesus died on the cross for this woman. He paid the price for sin. He died for this woman. He died for the Pharisees and He died for me and He died for you. He paid the price of sin. He completed this story. It was grace and truth. And He paid the price. This is why He is the mercy seat.

So dear brothers and sisters, when you look at all these things, you could not believe that someone did this. And indeed He is what God has said. Now He came so our sins can be forgiven. He came so that we know what grace is. He came so that we know what truth is. This is why He did it. Now brothers

and sisters, the saints over the ages probably did not see the whole thing about the tabernacle. But probably they have touched and seen what this altar is. They probably have touched and known what the showbread is. And they probably have touched what the light on the lampstand means. And they probably have touched what the ten commandments mean. That at first the reality of the ten commandments seemed to be a dreadful thing but then it was not dreadful anymore. Now they even loved the ten commandments. Then they gave the testimony of the content of the bible and what the bible said. Brothers and sisters, may the Lord give us the willingness to experience this. We can also then give a testimony.

There were two disciples of John the Baptist. The first time John the Baptist pointed out Jesus, 'behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world', these two young men went to the Lord Jesus. And they asked a strange question, 'Rabbi, where do you live'? And the Lord Jesus said, 'come'. And they stayed with Him one night. The next day they became different people. Andrew went to his brother and said we have seen the messiah. So these two people from that point on were different people. Lord Jesus indeed is God's tabernacle. It is He who gives grace and it is He who gives God's truth. It is He that we all ought to experience.

Let us pray.

Dear Lord Jesus, we thank you for having come to the earth. Lord, our life is pretty short on the earth. We come and then we go. But yet Lord, You came; You met us and You became the meaning of our life. God has a will and a desire to live among His people. Centuries after centuries He could not find one. Yet Lord, we thank you that there were a group of people who loved You. They knew what Your heart is and when the Lord Jesus came to earth, they were so overjoyed. We thank you that You let us live at this time, and Lord Jesus is so real to us. Lord, we just pray that You give us grace to experience You. we thank you, Lord. In the name of our Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen.