

Message Four

The Recovery of Living the Life of the Altar and the Tent

Scripture Reading: Acts 7:2; Rom. 4:12; Heb. 11:8-10; Gen. 12:1-4, 7-8; 13:3-4, 18

I. As believers in Christ, we are repeating the history of Abraham; the Christian life is the life that Abraham lived—Gal. 3:6-9; Rom. 4:12:

- A. For Abraham to live and walk by faith means that he had to reject himself, to set himself aside, to forget himself, and to live by Someone else—Gal. 2:20.
- B. Abraham's life of faith is presently being repeated among us; the church life today is the harvest of the life and history of Abraham—Rom. 4:12.
- C. An Abraham is a person who has been called out by God, who no longer lives and walks by himself, who forsakes and forgets everything he has by nature, and who takes God's presence as his road map—Gen. 12:1-4; Heb. 11:8.
- D. Abraham's faith did not originate with himself; rather, his believing in God was a reaction to the God of glory appearing to him and to the transfusion of God's element into his being—Acts 7:2; cf. John 14:21; 2 Tim. 4:8:
 - 1. Once we have this transfusion, we will experience a spiritual infusion as God's essence infiltrates our being—Rom. 8:6, 11.
 - 2. Faith is our reaction to God, produced by His transfusion, infusion, and saturation—Heb. 12:2; Gal. 2:20; cf. Mark 11:22.

II. If we would walk in the steps of Abraham's faith, we must live the life of the altar and the tent, taking Christ as our life and the church as our living—Rom. 4:12; Heb. 11:9; Gen. 12:7-8; 13:3-4, 18:

- A. An altar is for worshipping God by offering all that we are and have to God for His purpose—8:20-21a; Psa. 43:4a; cf. John 1:14, 29; 4:24:
 - 1. Building an altar means that our life is for God, that God is our life, and that the meaning of our life is God—Exo. 40:6, 29; Lev. 1:3, 9; 6:8-13.
 - 2. Abraham first took care of the worship of God by erecting an altar, and then he took care of his living—Gen. 12:7-8.
- B. Abraham's dwelling in a tent testified that he did not belong to the world but lived the life of a sojourner on earth—Heb. 11:9-10:
 - 1. The tent is the issue of the altar; the altar and the tent are interrelated and cannot be separated.
 - 2. Erecting a tent is an expression, a declaration, that we do not belong to this world, that we belong to another country—vv. 15-16.
- C. As the true descendants of Abraham (Gal. 3:7), we should be pilgrims on the earth, moving and pitching our tents as he did (Heb. 11:9, 13; 1 Pet. 2:11).
- D. We should walk on the earth but not dwell here, because the Lord is our dwelling place (Psa. 90:1), and "our commonwealth exists in the heavens" (Phil. 3:20); on earth we should "wander without a home" (1 Cor. 4:11):
 - 1. We need to be migrating ones who spread the church life from city to city, from country to country, and from continent to continent until there are local churches everywhere on earth.
 - 2. The more a church gives up people for migration, the more people it gets; the more a church keeps, the more it loses.

3. Instead of having a burden to migrate to spread the Lord's recovery, we may become set, settled, and occupied—cf. Matt. 8:20.
- E. After Abraham built his first altar (Gen. 12:7), he built a second altar between Bethel and Ai, which stand in contrast to each other (v. 8):
 1. *Bethel* means “house of God,” and *Ai* means “a heap of ruins.”
 2. In the eyes of the called ones, only Bethel, the church life, is worthwhile; everything else is a heap of ruins.

III. Abraham had his failures, and there was the forsaking of the altar and the tent; however, with him there was a recovery, and recovery is a matter of returning to the altar and the tent with calling on the name of the Lord—vv. 9-10; 13:3-4; Rom. 10:12-13; 12:1-2:

- A. Eventually, at Hebron Abraham's tent became a place where he had fellowship with God and where God could fellowship with him—Gen. 13:18.
- B. Abraham's tent with the altar built by him was a prefigure of the Tabernacle of the Testimony with the altar built by the children of Israel—Exo. 38:21.
- C. Abraham, a stranger and a sojourner, “eagerly waited for the city which has the foundations, whose Architect and Builder is God”—Heb. 11:10:
 1. By living the life of the altar and the tent, Abraham testified that he was sojourning by faith, as in a foreign land—v. 9.
 2. The excellent and lovely New Jerusalem is the dear expectation of God's elect and the destination, the goal, of the heavenly pilgrims—vv. 13-16.
 3. Abraham's tent was a miniature of the New Jerusalem, the ultimate tent, the ultimate tabernacle of God—Gen. 9:26-27; 12:8; 13:3; 18:1; Heb. 11:9; Rev. 21:2-3.
 4. As we are living in the “tent” of the church life, we are waiting for its ultimate consummation—the ultimate “Tent of Meeting,” the New Jerusalem—1 Tim. 3:15; Lev. 1:1; Heb. 11:10.
- D. The overcomers live in tents, looking forward to the New Jerusalem, the eternal tabernacle and the ultimate Feast of Tabernacles—Rev. 21:2-3; Lev. 23:39-43:
 1. The Feast of the Passover signifies Christ as the initiation of God's redemption judicially, and the Feast of Tabernacles signifies Christ as the consummation of God's full salvation organically—John 6:4; 7:2, 37-38.
 2. God ordained the Feast of Tabernacles so that the children of Israel would remember how their forefathers had lived in tents (tabernacles) in their wandering in the wilderness; the word *tabernacles* implies the thought of remembrance—Deut. 16:13-15.
 3. Their coming together for this feast to worship God and enjoy the produce from the good land is a real picture of blending—1 Cor. 12:24.
 4. The Lord's table is a feast of remembrance, just as the Feast of Tabernacles was a feast of remembrance—Luke 22:19-20.
 5. Our enjoyment of Christ today as the Feast of Tabernacles, in our corporate coming together for blending to enjoy the riches of Christ as the produce of the good land, reminds us that we are still in the wilderness and need to enter into the rest of the New Jerusalem, which is the eternal tabernacle—Rev. 21:2-3.