

Hebrews 8:1-2 ***The True Tabernacle***

“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.”

Introduction

The above passage is one of the most important in Scripture with regard to the truth it presents in contrast to the distortions and misrepresentations presented in other religious and philosophical belief systems, and in particular with regard to Islam. When John describes Jesus as being the “Word” who is “God” in John 1:1, and Jesus in turn tells His disciples in John 14:8-11 that “he who has seen Me has seen the Father,” we begin to understand that Jesus is the Eternal Word, and that Word is what gives Eternal Life to all who believe in Jesus. Thus, everything we see on this earth in relation to spiritual truth has its counterpart in the heavens that is the absolute truth represented on this earth. Thus, the “true tabernacle” is that which gives the true spiritual life we find in Christ, whereas the wilderness tabernacle, as well as the Temple that was built by Solomon, are merely facsimiles of the real.

One other very important point about the “true tabernacle” is what Jesus also said to the woman of Samaria with regard to the true nature of God: “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). In addition to this essentially important truth concerning the true nature of God, Jesus also told Nicodemus, a pharisaical leader, the following:

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶ “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ “Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ “The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes

from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit. (John 3:5-8)

Therefore, if God is “Spirit,” then the fact that to “enter into the kingdom of God” one must be “born of the Spirit” makes total sense – to have a true, saving relationship with God, one must become one with God, and that comes through a ‘spiritual rebirth’ by the Holy Spirit. Consequently, the “true tabernacle” is that which is of the Spirit, and it may also be compared with the “temple of God,” which Paul said we who are believers are: “Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?” Since we who are believers are the “temple of God” as a result of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, then this “true tabernacle” is also a picture of us who are believers, “which the Lord pitched, not man,” and it is this truth that we are going to look at.

I. In The Beginning

A. The true nature of God

1. In Genesis 1:1-2, we read: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.”
 - a. The very fact of the spiritual nature of God is seen in verse 2 in which “the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.”
 - b. The phrase “was moving” comes from the Hebrew verb רָחַף (*rāḥap*), and in this particular instance, it is what we call a piel verb, which focuses on “intensive action.”
 - (1) רָחַף (*rāḥap*) actually refers to a bird “hovering over its young” with the idea of “shaking or trembling” in such a way so as to keep the eggs warm until they hatch, and then to keep their offspring warm immediately after their birth.

- (2) In this particular instance, רָחַפַּ (rāḥap) is in the Piel verb form, which implies intensive action – thus, a more literal translation would be, “the Spirit of God was intensively hovering over the surface of the waters,” and He was doing it in order to bring life.
- c. Therefore, from the very inception of the material world as we know it, the “Spirit of God,” who is God Himself as the third part of the Trinity, was the life-giving source of all material creation.
2. In Genesis 1:26, we read: “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’”
- a. The word translated for “God” in Hebrew in Genesis chapter one is אֱלֹהִים (’elōhîm), and this is a plural form for the singular word for God in Hebrew.
- (1) The oldest form of the word for God in Semitic languages what is called the proto-Semitic form אֵל (’ēl), and the Aramaic form is אֱלֹחַ (’ēlōach).
- (2) Thus, אֱלֹהִים (’elōhîm) is the plural form, with the ם (îm) indicating the plural, but the translation throughout Genesis when speaking of the eternal God is “God,” not “Gods.”
- b. Therefore, we have a plural form of a noun translated as a singular noun, and in addition, it is used with a singular form of the verb – that is, with reference to English, it would comparatively be, “the dogs eats,” versus “the dog eats,” where the latter is the grammatically correct form, but the former is what is used in the text.

- (1) The way it is written in the actual Hebrew text in Genesis 1:1 is, בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים (bērē’sīt bārā ’elōhîm – “In the beginning, God created”), with the verb בָּרָא (bārā’) being the singular verb for “create” in Hebrew.
- (2) If the translation were according to grammatical correctness, with a plural noun having a plural verb, the verb would be בָּרְאוּ (bārē’û), “They created,” verses, בָּרָא (bārā’), “He created.”
- (3) Therefore, we see that the word אֱלֹהִים (’elōhîm), a plural noun, is used with a singular verb, בָּרָא (bārā’), “He created,” and that means that this word is considered to be singular, though plural.
- c. Thus, in Genesis 1:26, we see the singular concept of this plural noun, אֱלֹהִים (’elōhîm), now being used with a plural verb, “let us make.”
- (1) In John 1:1-3, we read:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

- (2) In Colossians 1:15-17, we read:

And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created by Him and for Him. ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Thus, we can see clearly that the word אֱלֹהִים (*'elōhîm*) may be said to include God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit – the three persons of the one Godhead – who are clearly included in the creation of man in Genesis 1:26, as well as the whole of the creation, which is stated in the above two New Testament passages.

B. The true nature of man

1. Adam and Eve were created as sinless beings, but beings who had free wills without any sinful compulsions as a result of a sinful nature.
2. When Eve was tempted by Satan through the serpent to disobediently eat of the fruit God had commanded not to eat, her doing so was totally out of a free, non-compulsory choice, but as a result of deception based on setting aside God's command for the purpose of seeing herself equal to and with God:

For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

3. As a result of their sin, their genetic natures were corrupted throughout, and from that point forward, mankind was born with a compulsory nature of rebelling against God, His truth, and a single-minded propensity toward self-deification leading to self-destruction in every area of life.

- a. In Genesis 6:4, we read: "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

- (1) The phrase, "every intent," may also be translated, "every form" – that is, before one's thoughts even become cognizant, their very inceptive formation is evil.

- (2) And not only that, but the adverb "continually" in Hebrew is כָּל־הַיּוֹם (*kol-hayôm*), which means, "all day, every day"!

- b. In Psalm 14:1-3, we read:

The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good. ² The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, To see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God. ³ They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.

- (1) The phrase, "There is no God," contains the most emphatic word for no in Hebrew, אֵין (*'ayin*), which literally means, "non-existence."

- (2) Thus, as the "fool" believes "God is not even in existence," God categorically states through the Psalmist that "There is no one who does good, not even one."

- (a) The phrases, "no one" and "not even one" both contain the Hebrew אֵין (*'ayin*) – thus, "There doesn't exist one who does good, there doesn't exist even one."

- (b) The phrase, "together they have become corrupt," may also be translated with a

reflexive meaning, “together they have corrupted themselves” – thus, the innate corruption of each individual is exacerbated through their societal relationships.

- c. In Isaiah 64:6, we read: “For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.”

- (1) The phrase “filthy garment” is **בְּגֵד עֲדִים** (*beged idim*) in Hebrew, and literally it may be translated as “garment of bloods,” that is, a menstrual cloth.
(2) For the Jew, the menstrual cloth represented the apex of uncleanness as indicated by the following passage:

When a woman has a discharge, *if* her discharge in her body is blood, she shall continue in her menstrual impurity for seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening.²⁰ 'Everything also on which she lies during her menstrual impurity shall be unclean, and everything on which she sits shall be unclean.²¹ 'And anyone who touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening.²² 'And whoever touches any thing on which she sits shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening.²³ 'Whether it be on the bed or on the thing on which she is sitting, when he touches it, he shall be unclean until evening.²⁴ 'And if a man actually lies with her, so that her menstrual impurity is on him, he shall be unclean seven days, and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean.

- (3) Therefore, in God’s sight, our “righteous deeds” are utterly contaminated with the corruption and impurity of our sinful motivations that we are not even aware of – in fact, it is only when we are born-again that we can even begin to see these motives for what they are.

II. The Practical Application

A. Prayer

1. The most important aspect of our being able to experience the “true tabernacle” in our lives is prayer, and it is, without any equivocation, the most difficult.
 - a. The reason for this difficulty is that we move from relying upon our own understanding and reasoning to a dependency upon the Lord for His guidance through the Holy Spirit as He makes His Word alive in our hearts.
 - b. Thus, the spiritual, mental, and emotional battle that rages within us against our spending time in prayer can be enormous – e.g., self-pity; a misdirected and skewed view of life and God; anger and bitterness; unexplained tragedies and setbacks; etc.
2. The following passages stress the importance of prayer for our spiritual, mental, and emotional health and well-being:

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!⁵
Let your forbearing *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near.⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:4-7)

Rejoice always;¹⁷ pray without ceasing;¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (I Thessalonians 5:16-18)

B. The Word

1. Reading, meditating upon, and studying God's Word is absolutely essential for a believer to grow and mature spiritually, mentally/intellectually, and emotionally.
2. The following passages stress the importance for the Word of God being ingested into our hearts and minds on a consistent basis:

How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping *it* according to Thy word. ¹⁰ With all my heart I have sought Thee; Do not let me wander from Thy commandments. ¹¹ Thy word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against Thee. ¹² Blessed art Thou, O LORD; Teach me Thy statutes. ¹³ With my lips I have told of All the ordinances of Thy mouth. ¹⁴ I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, As much as in all riches. ¹⁵ I will meditate on Thy precepts, And regard Thy ways. ¹⁶ I shall delight in Thy statutes; I shall not forget Thy word. (Psalm 119:9-16)

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! ² But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. ³ And he will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season, And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers. (Psalm 1:1-3)

Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; ³² and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' (John8:31-32)

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but

be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2)

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth. ¹⁶ But avoid worldly *and* empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, ¹⁷ and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸ *men* who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and thus they upset the faith of some. ¹⁹ Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness." (II Timothy 2:15-19)

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (II Timothy 3:16-17)

Conclusion

We who are believers are the "true tabernacle," built by Jesus, as the following passage would indicate: "And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, ⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (I Peter 2:4-5). Thus, our true identity can only be found in Jesus, whereas our false identity is found in the "god of this world": "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (II Corinthians 4:3-4).