

CHRIST IN THE TABERNACLE

by

Louis T. Talbot, D.D., LL.D.
President of The Bible Institute of Los Angeles

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE SHEKINAH GLORY UPON THE FINISHED TABERNACLE

“My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.”

Exodus 33:14; 40:33-38; Numbers 9:15-23; 10:33-36

NOT ONLY did the Shekinah Glory dwell between the cherubim upon the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies; but, in the form of a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night, the Lord of glory dwelt **“in the midst”** of His people upon the finished tabernacle.

With the tents of the families of Moses, Aaron, and the priests pitched on the east; with the three families of the Levites on the north, south, and west; and with four tribes on each side of the tabernacle, their tents pitched by families beyond those of the priests and Levites, the tabernacle was literally **“in the midst”** of the camp.

And all Israel was conscious of God’s Presence among them throughout their wilderness wanderings.

Not only so; but the Shekinah Glory was a Guide, **“a sun and shield,”** a searcher of rest for Israel, and a visible manifestation of the glory of God — from Egypt to Canaan. What a picture of our crucified and risen Lord! Before He ascended into Heaven, He said to those who loved Him,

“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world [aged]” (Matthew 28:20).

He is our Guide throughout the wilderness pilgrimage of this godless world. He is verily **“a sun and shield,”** our resting place. One day we shall behold and share His glory, the glory which He had with the Father **“before the world was.”**

As today we consider *“The Glories of Christ As Foreshadowed in the Jewish Tabernacle”*; as we look back, through the centuries, and see the Shekinah Glory **“in the midst”** of His ancient people, upon the sanctuary, in which He dwelt among them — as we think upon these things, and how they prefigured our blessed Lord, we can only praise Him for His grace, even as we look forward to that yet future day when **“we shall see him as he is.”**

GOD’S PRESENCE “IN THE MIDST” OF HIS PEOPLE

Moses was very discouraged when God spoke to him in those reassuring words, saying,

“My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest” (Exodus 33:14).

Israel had broken God’s holy law by worshipping the golden calf.

Moses realized something of the awful responsibility of leading a stiff-necked and rebellious people; and in his intercession on their behalf he also implored the Lord’s presence and power. God honored his trust, and spoke **“unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend”** (Exodus 33:11).

And in answer to Moses’ prayer, the Lord reassured him, saying,

“My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.”

Dear, troubled Christian, let God’s answer to Moses’ prayer encourage your heart; for He is “the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” And His promise is sure:

“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20).

“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20).

“THE GLORY OF THE LORD FILLED THE TABERNACLE”

It had been a wonderful manifestation of the glory of God when, upon and within the finished tabernacle, the Shekinah Glory had descended.

We read the Holy Spirit’s own record of this miraculous story in Exodus 40:33-38:

“So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: but if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.”

In the beginning of these studies we saw that the glory of God upon and within the Jewish tabernacle was a type of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the church; for the Lord said to Moses,

“Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8).

In this church age the believer's body is "**the temple of the Holy Ghost**" (I Corinthians 3:16; 6:19). The church is "**the house hold of God . . . an habitation of God through the Spirit**" (Ephesians 2:19-22).

And the Holy Spirit is, in very truth, the Christian's guide and power, even as the pillar of cloud and fire was Israel's unfailing guide and power throughout the wilderness journey from Egypt to Canaan.

Even on the march, the Ark of the Covenant was the symbol of God's Presence, literally "**in the midst**" of the camp. With minute detail God told Moses in what order the tribes were to journey, as the Shekinah Glory led the way.

We turn to the second and third chapters of Numbers for these instructions. Six tribes went forward on the march, three tribes in one rank. Then the tabernacle followed. And finally the remaining six tribes, also by their ranks, completed the army of 600,000 soldiers, to say nothing of women and children and aged men.

Wagons and oxen were provided for the Gershonites and Merarites (Levites), whose duty it was to take care of the tabernacle, with all its pillars and sockets and boards and hangings and cords. But the Kohathites carried the sacred pieces of furniture on their shoulders, after the priests had carefully covered them from the gaze of men.

All of this detail speaks to us of the sacredness of this "**sanctuary,**" in which the Lord dwelt among His people. Often we wonder if the church of our crucified and risen Lord is conscious of His will for her separation from the godless world.

We fail so many times in living as before Him who dwells within these bodies of ours. We dishonor His holy name by careless and unconfessed sin.

May He give us grace to remember at all times that our bodies do not belong to us, to do with as we please; that we have been "**bought with a price,**" even His own precious blood. Then only shall we keep "**our garments unspotted from the world**" which thrust the Son of God out at the point of a spear. Then only shall "**the glory of the Lord**" shine through the testimony of our lives, even unto the salvation of never-dying souls, and to our Lord's own honor and glory.

THE PILLAR OF CLOUD AND FIRE

1. A Guide.

In Numbers 9:17 we read,

"When the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents."

For forty years the Shekinah Glory led the people of God. Through the burning sands of the desert, in the enemies' country, through "**the howling wilderness**," God led His ancient people, Israel. It is always true that the Lord is a guide to those who trust Him. No matter what the danger or trial or sorrow, He still leads on, even as He said to David many centuries ago,

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye" (Psalm 32:8).

2. "*A Sun and Shield.*"

The Psalmist must have been thinking of the Shekinah Glory when he wrote, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, saying, in another place,

"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God . . . For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand . . . For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:1, 2, 10, 11).

The Lord is a sun for the dark day, a shield from "**the fiery darts of the wicked.**" Israel had experienced the meaning of this truth. On the night when the nation had left Egypt, the cruel Pharaoh and his hosts pursued God's people. With the Red Sea before them, with the mountains and the wilderness beside them, and with the enemy behind them, Israel was afraid.

But God spoke His reassuring, "**Fear not**"; and the pillar of cloud and fire moved from before Israel and stood between His people and the enemy. Moreover, the Shekinah Glory gave light unto Israel, but darkness and confusion to the Egyptians. "**The Lord God**" was "**a sun and shield**" to His redeemed people. And so He is to His blood-bought children in every age. So He is to us today!

3. "*Rest.*"

In words of unspeakable comfort and beauty, God wrote of His purpose in going before Israel throughout the wilderness journey,

"And they departed from the mount of the Lord [Mount Sinai] three days' journey: and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them" (Numbers 10:33).

In words of unspeakable comfort and beauty, our Lord Jesus said to a heart-hungry and sin-weary people nearly two thousand years ago:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

4. *“Glory” — for all Eternity.*

It was the Shekinah Glory that led Israel for forty years from Egypt to Canaan. And it is the vision of the glory of God, now seen by faith, one day to become sight, that encourages the Christian to press on in the pilgrimage toward that **“city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”**

In His intercessory prayer, uttered before He went to the cross, our Lord said unto His Father on behalf of His own: **“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one . . . Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world”** (John 17:22, 24).

When the Levites exchanged their burdens for the rest and worship and praise in Solomon’s temple, with all the splendor and glory of his kingdom, their wilderness wanderings were over. And when the Christian beholds and shares the uncreated glory of the Lord Jesus, then his wilderness journey will be past. With no more perplexities and tears and heartaches, with no more sin, with no more curse, he **“shall be like him”** who many centuries ago appeared to Israel in the pillar of cloud and fire — to give them a glimpse of His glory.

In that yet future day the words of the risen Lord, spoken to the aged John on the Isle of Patmos, will come to pass,

“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21: 3, 4).

Until then, may we let **“the God of Glory”** be our guide, **“even unto death,”** or **“till he come.”** Then we shall know Him as **“a sun and shield,”** and as **“rest”** unto our souls, as we look forward to seeing Him throughout eternity in all His glory.

Our bodies are His blood-bought temple. He is our Priest. He has entered **“within the veil,”** there to be our **“Advocate with the Father.”** He is coming again to receive us unto Himself, and to be given His rightful kingdom and throne. As we seek to serve the God of Israel, and **“to wait for his Son from heaven,”** this is our fervent, believing prayer,

“Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).

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