The Tabernacle in the Wilderness

God's Salvation Plan Prophetically Demonstrated in the Tabernacle in the Wilderness

The unending daily fellowship with God - filled with the Spirit - speaking in our prayer language to God: "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." (NUM 14:21; Reference to the Stone Kingdom in DAN 2:44).

This story begins in Eden, the garden of God. It was there that God regularly walked and talked with Adam and Eve until the day they chose to disobey Him and do their own thing. As a result of this sin (i.e. disobedience), God put them outside the garden and closed the entrance of Eden by the fiery judgment of His Word (the sword of the Holy Spirit). Because of this separation from unending daily fellowship with God, Adam and Eve were denied access to the tree of life and so walked the way of death.

The descendants of Adam through to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were to wait 2,500 years before God again presenced Himself amongst His people as in Eden. In the time of Moses, following Israel's deliverance from Egypt through the opened Red Sea, God directed that a portable worship complex known as "The Tabernacle in the Wilderness" be constructed. Every material used in this wonderful building, every colour, every dimension, every specified item of furniture and associated religious ceremony showed in type how God would again, in the fullness of time, open the door to His presence and to the tree of life. The tabernacle complex was in fact a prophetic working model of God's salvation plan for sinful mankind doomed to die.

The plan of the tabernacle complex set up by Moses is shown in Fig.1. A white linen fence five cubits high (about nine feet) separated the tent and its furniture from the outside world. The ONE entrance into the tabernacle courtyard was situated at the eastern end, and the curtain across this gateway was supported on FOUR pillars. The significance of ONE in Bible numerics (the numeric code that threads its way through God's scriptures) is:- THAT SINGLE THING TO WHICH THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE. The prophetic message of the tabernacle is that there is only one way into God's presence.

At the eastern end of the courtyard stood the altar of sacrifice or the "FOUR square" brazen altar. Here the children of Israel, after passing through the gateway curtain, presented their offerings to God. The brazen altar was a place where blood was shed, where animals without blemish suffered the pangs of death and were offered by fire by the priests as a "sweet
savour unto the Lord.” In Moses’ day only Israelites could enter the courtyard thereby suggesting that God’s salvation was reserved for the descendants of Jacob alone. However, the significance of FOUR in Bible numerics is:- THE NATURAL CREATION - THE WORLD NUMBER, and the Word of God tells us (2.COR 4:18), "For the things which are seen (i.e. the natural creation) are temporal; but the things which are not seen (i.e. the spiritual realm) are eternal." The numeric specification of the curtain at the courtyard gate and of the brazen altar prophetically pointed to a day when both of these would be removed, but while this curtain remained, Israel alone had access to God’s presence. Even then, however, only the priests were permitted to wash at the laver (located between the altar and the tent), a prerequisite to ministering at the brazen altar or entering the tent itself where God presented Himself. In the setup of Moses, God was still remote from the great majority of His chosen people Israel and utterly inaccessible to the people of all other nations.

The tabernacle itself stood at the western end of the courtyard and entrance into it was through a curtain known as "the hanging" which was supported on FIVE pillars. Inside the tabernacle was yet another curtain, "the vail" which was supported on FOUR pillars and divided the tent into two rooms. The first and larger (eastern) room - the "holy place" - contained three items of furniture: the table of shewbread, the golden candlestick and the altar of incense. There is not enough space in this article to discuss the prophetic significance of these items in relation to God’s new Eden - the spirit-filled church.

The second smaller (western) room - "the holy of holies" - contained but one item, the "Ark of the Covenant", complete with its sculptured lid of solid gold known as "the mercy seat".

The mercy seat, and the two cherubims integral to it, symbolised the throne of God, and it was there, between the cherubim above the mercy seat, that God appeared to Israel.

Each day the priests would minister before God in the holy place, but only the high priest, and then on only one day each year, could pass through the vail into God’s presence.

The pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night over the tabernacle was evidence to the children of Israel that God dwelt in their midst, but they could not come into His presence on a daily basis as did Adam and Eve.

Again the numeric specification speaks prophetically: the significance of FIVE:- THE GRACE OF GOD - GOD’S GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT - indicates that whereas the gateway curtain, the brazen altar and even the vail would be removed, entry into His presence must always be through His Holy Spirit. In God’s plan, as detailed in the tabernacle, His priests must always pass through the curtain of grace to come into His presence.

Israel and the world were to wait another 1,500 years before the events prophetically detailed in the tabernacle complex came to pass. About 400 years prior to Israel’s Exodus from Egypt, their forbear Abraham took Isaac, his only son by Sarah his wife, to Mount Moriah, to offer him up as a sacrifice to God. As they climbed the hill Isaac asked his dad, "Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" (GEN 22:7). Abraham replied prophetically, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering;" (GEN 22:8) and indeed God did spare Isaac and Abraham offered up a ram (caught by its horns in a bush) in his place. With the advent of Jesus, born of Mary and the Holy Spirit, God fulfilled this prophecy and did indeed provide for Himself a sacrifice.

When as a man of about thirty years of age, Jesus was baptised (immersed) in the Jordan River, the Holy Spirit came down on Him and the voice of God was heard to say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (MATT 17:5). John's testimony was, "Behold the
Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." (JN 1:29). Animals offered up on the brazen altar had to be without blemish, prophetically pointing to Jesus, the only human being who never sinned.

Nearly three and a half years later, as Jesus neared the end of His ministry, He said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (JN 12:32). When subsequently Jesus died on the cross, in effect the curtain (supported by FOUR pillars) at the courtyard gate was removed and the way to God was opened to ALL nations. It should be clearly understood here that Jesus is the ONLY way to God. The Word of God says, "I AM (i.e. Jesus) the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." (JN 10:9). And again, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is NONE other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (ACTS 4:12). There was but ONE gateway into the tabernacle courtyard.

Again speaking of Jesus' sacrifice, God's Word says, "But this man, (Jesus) after he had offered ONE sacrifice for sins FOREVER, sat down on the right hand of God;" (HEB 10:12), and, "Now where remission of these (sins) is, there is NO MORE OFFERING FOR SINS." (HEB 10:18). In another place we are told that Jesus, "...hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." (EPH 5:2). The cross of Calvary prophetically fulfilled the FOUR square brazen altar and with Jesus' sacrifice this second obstacle (only the priests could proceed beyond the altar) to God's dwelling place was in effect removed. This reveals the hopeless futility of so-called "churches" in which priests minister before altars, thereby testifying that their adherents have no access to God. The prophetic message of the tabernacle is clear - that while the altar of sacrifice stood, the way to God's presence was closed to the people.

The third event of prophetic significance that occurred when Jesus died was the rending from top to bottom of the curtain in Herod's Temple in Jerusalem. By this supernatural act God in effect removed the vail (supported by the FOUR pillars) thereby allowing day to day fellowship between Himself and His priests and opening to them the way to the tree of life. The "after Calvary" tabernacle, Fig.2, shows that although the courtyard gate curtain, the brazen alter and the veil have in effect been removed, the laver and the "curtain of grace" supported on FIVE pillars at the One entrance to the tabernacle still remain. The Word of God is adamant that only God's priests could wash at the laver and this was mandatory each time they entered the tabernacle. It follows then that today, only those who fulfil the prophetic role of the Aaronic priests may enter into God's presence, partake of the tree of life and so be saved from the eternal judgment of death, that is the inevitable result of sin.

At this stage we must look at the prophetic significance of the Aaronic priesthood in relation to God's salvation plan. These priests were set up by God Himself. Men did not become priests of God because of ability, study or selection by other men, but by sanctification (separation) to Himself through the detailed process laid down in His Word. Those called to be priests were washed in water, clothed in new linen garments and sanctified by anointing with oil AND blood. (See REV 12:11; ACTS 2:38,4).

The setting up of the Aaronic priesthood was prophetically fulfilled in effect on the day of Pentecost in the church, when the Holy Spirit filled the body of Christ, and God's spiritual Eden came into being. On this day Peter told the enquiring multitude, "For the promise (of reconciliation to God, as demonstrated in the tabernacle system) is unto you and to your children, and to them that are afar off, EVEN AS MANY AS THE LORD OUR GOD SHALL CALL..." (ACTS 2:39) (through the hearing of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ).

In these days of confusion and compromise men have devised all sorts of ways of making priests for themselves, but the Word of God, speaking of Jesus says, "He hath made us (His Servants) kings and PRIESTS unto God and his Father." (REV 1:6). The way Jesus makes priests was prophetically outlined in the Aaronic priesthood, and in effect, the method has not changed.

1. Aaron and his sons were prepared to do ALL that the Word of God required of them - i.e. they were REPENTANT.

2. They were washed in water, prophetically pointing to baptism (immersion). Jesus said, "...they that believe (obey the gospel) AND are baptised shall be saved." (MK 16:16).

3. They were clothed in new linen garments symbolising the new man; righteous (the whiteness of linen) in God's sight. The Scriptures say: "For he (God) hath made
him (Jesus) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2.COR 5:21). And again, "...for the fine linen is (in type) the righteousness of saints (God's called-out ones, His priests)." (REV 19:8).

4. They were sanctified (i.e. set apart to God) by the anointing with oil and blood. Again, this was prophetically fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, as the Word of God says: "Elect (chosen) according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: grace to you, and peace, be multiplied." (1.PET 1:2).

This whole process was summed up by Peter on the day of Pentecost when he told the multitude, "Repent (do what God says without argument), and be baptized (immersed) EVERYONE OF YOU in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (ACTS 2:38).

It follows that the only people who may wash at the laver (be continuously cleansed from the sin by efficacy of the Blood of Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit) and pass the "curtain of grace" are those whom God has made priests by filling them with His Spirit. Passing through the "curtain of grace" into the tent in effect brings the priest into the very presence of God, and the Edenic situation is restored; he and God fellowship together. Jesus described this to us when He said, "...TRUE worshippers (those who would communicate with God) shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him MUST worship him in spirit and in truth." (JN 4:23-24).

The Word of God only allows ONE way to worship GOD in spirit - "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prayeth." (1.COR 14:14). Speaking in tongues is essential if one is to fellowship with God, and is evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit. Just as there was only ONE "curtain of Grace" into the tabernacle, so there is only ONE way into God's presence today, through the Holy Spirit and everyone who receives the Spirit of God, speaks in tongues: there are no exceptions. Jesus said, "...the Spirit breithes where it wills and thou hearest the LANGUAGE (or voice) thereof, but canst not tell where it cometh, and wither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (JN 3:8).

Finally, in the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, God prophetically revealed His plan of salvation to sinful men and women. These prophesies have been fulfilled now, and any person who earnestly desires to find God can do so in the glorious experience of receiving the Holy Spirit. God loves you and wants to live with you. Why stand back and reject Him and die?

CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLIES INTERNATIONAL, P.O. BOX 888, COFFS HARBOUR N.S.W. 2450, AUSTRALIA