

Tent Dwellers

Can we say a study of tents in the Bible is a fruitful task? Consider this. Many of the descriptions of this creation are very similar to those used of a tent, which is a temporary dwelling place, and which can be packed up and put away. Typical characters of the Bible such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were tent dwellers. Even the cherubim are “tabernacled” in the Garden of Eden to guard the way of the Tree of Life. The God of all creation was satisfied to be a tent dweller in the tabernacle in the wilderness. Moreover, the earthly tabernacle was a pattern of a true tabernacle in heaven itself. Our human bodies are spoken of as tabernacles, in which Christ lives in our hearts by faith. Moreover, our salvation is only possible because Word Himself was made flesh and tabernacled among us. And the capstone of all is that God Himself plans to permanently tabernacle with us, even to the extent that we might be one with Him as Christ is with the Father. Now let’s look each of these aspects individually.

Creation as a tent

(Gen 1:6-8 KJV) "And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. {7} And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which *were* under the firmament from the waters which *were* above the firmament: and it was so. {8} And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day."

The Hebrew word for firmament (“riqua”) is used in the following to mean to beat or spread out exceedingly thin. Indeed, what we know of the universe to be spread out exceedingly thin and wide seems almost an understatement!

(Num 16:38 KJV) "The censers of these sinners against their own souls, let them make them broad plates for a covering of the altar: for they offered them before the LORD, therefore they are hallowed: and they shall be a sign unto the children of Israel."

Heavens stretched out:

(Psa 104:2 KJV) "Who coverest *thyself* with light as *with* a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:"

(Isa 40:22 KJV) "*It is* he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof *are* as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:"

(Isa 42:5 KJV) "Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:"

(Isa 44:24 KJV) "Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I *am* the LORD that maketh all *things*; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;"

(Isa 45:12 KJV) "I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, *even* my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded."

(Isa 51:13 KJV) "And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where *is* the fury of the oppressor?"

(Jer 10:12 KJV) "He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion."

(Jer 51:15 KJV) "He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding."

Heavens above like a tent, below fastened in type upon redemption:

(Zec 12:1 KJV) "The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him."

(Job 38:4-7 KJV) "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. {5} Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? {6} Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; {7} When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

Here the Hebrew word for foundation is also used 52 times for the sockets of the tabernacle in the wilderness. Significantly, these were made of the silver redemption money in which everyone was to pay the same for the "atonement of their souls." Not that salvation can be bought but in type salvation is the same price for everyone- the precious blood of Christ. Therefore in type, all of creation, our salvation, our hope rests upon redemption.

(Exo 26:19 KJV) "And thou shalt make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for his two tenons, and two sockets under another board for his two tenons."

(Exo 30:14-16 KJV) "Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the LORD. {15} The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls. {16} And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls."

When this present creation has accomplished its goal, then it will be rolled up and packed away like a tent, as is suggested in the following passages.

(Isa 34:4 KJV) "And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree."

(Rev 6:14 KJV) "And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places."

Others in tents

(Gen 3:24 KJV) "So he drove out the man; and he placed (tabernacled) at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

As you may be aware, the cherubim are very closely aligned with redemption, man's lost dominion and his restoration through Christ.

(Heb 11:8-9 KJV) "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. *{9}* By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:"

Our body as a tent

(2 Cor 5:1-4 KJV) "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. *{2}* For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: {3} If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. {4} For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

(2 Pet 1:12-14 KJV) "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know *them*, and be established in the present truth. *{13}* Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; {14} Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me."

Christ sharing in our tent dwelling experience

In Bible times, a king of an army would divest himself of his palatial surroundings and dwell as a soldier in the center of the camp. This was well illustrated in type with the tabernacle in the wilderness. Even presently, there is "a war on" and the "Captain of our salvation" is pleased to dwell in hardship with His people in the center of our lives. Moreover, every aspect of the tabernacle was a type of Christ, who eventually was made flesh and tabernacled among us."

(1 Ki 8:27 KJV) "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?"

(Lev 25:23 KJV) "The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me."

(2 Sam 7:4-6 KJV) "And it came to pass that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying, {5} Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in? {6} Whereas I have not dwelt in *any* house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle."

(Lev 26:11-12 KJV) "And I will set my **tabernacle** among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. {12} And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people."

(Exo 40:35-38 KJV) "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. {36} And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: {37} But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. {38} 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."

(Isa 63:7-9 KJV) "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, *and* the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses. {8} For he said, Surely they *are* my people, children *that* will not lie: so he was their Saviour. {9} In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old."

(John 1:14 KJV) "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt (tabernacled) among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

Bullinger believes that Christ may have been born during the feast of the tabernacles. Furthermore, the Jewish festival year ends with this feast, looking forward to the second coming when God again will dwell with His people.

True Tabernacle in Heaven

Much is beyond our ken, yet we can just present what the Scripture says and go on faith that its true meaning will someday be known. There is much said about how the tabernacle in the wilderness was a pattern of a greater and true tabernacle in heaven, which the Lord pitched and not man.

(Exo 25:8-9 KJV) "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. {9} According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make *it.*"

(Psa 46:4-5 KJV) "*There is* a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. {5} God *is* in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, *and that* right early."

(Psa 84:1-2 KJV) "To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! {2} My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

(Heb 8:1-5 KJV) "Now of the things which we have spoken *this is* the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; {2} A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. {3} For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore *it is* of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. {4} For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: {5} Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, *that* thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount."

(Heb 9:11 KJV) "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;"

(Rev 15:4-6 KJV) "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for *thou only art* holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. {5} And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: {6} And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles."

Goal of Ages

God is not some far off God now. He is pleased to share in the tent dwelling experience of our present creation and lives. Thankfully and unbelievably, He also has in mind an incredible oneness of habitation with His people for all eternity as well. What grace! What love He has bestowed upon us!

(Ezek 37:26-27 KJV) "Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. {27} My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

(John 17:21-22 KJV) "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. {22} And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:"

(Rev 21:3 KJV) "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, 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."

(1 Cor 15:28 KJV) "And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

Conclusion

Seeing all of these Scriptures together helps me to better appreciate the temporality of it all. Our bodies are like tents to be inhabited while passing through on this wilderness journey in the midst of an entire creation that God likens to a tent soon to be packed up and put away. But the wonder of it is that God Himself is roughing it right along side us, pleased to sojourn as a pilgrim too for the time being, with the ultimate plan that He will someday dwell with us face to face. Like Abraham, may we be content to "dwell in tents" because in faith we look toward something that corresponds in our calling to "a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God."

For further discussion concerning this subject, see *The Alphabetical Analysis*, vol. 7, p. 267, and the message series "The Pleroma" W-63-110, both by C.H. Welch. I am greatly indebted to Mr. Welch for his exposition on this and many other topics.

Karen George
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