Introduction to the Tabernacle in the Wilderness pt. 1

Charles Feinberg

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This is a message by Dr. Charles Lee Feinberg dean of Talbot Theological Seminary in La Mirada, California. We begin here a series of nine messages on the tabernacle in the wilderness, God's panorama of redemption. The tabernacle in the wilderness may seem to the ordinary reader to have instructions that are very dry, uninteresting, and needless certainly could not in any way be applicable today. But when studied closely the tabernacle is a prophecy in linen in gold in brass in silver and in the other materials. As the apostle Paul has indicated in Colossians, the second chapter, he was not speaking in the first instance of the tabernacle alone but of all the old testament pictures and figures of Christ he said of them they are a shadow of things to come collations 2:17 a shadow of things to come but the body or the substance of the reality is Christ and as we study the tabernacle the dwelling place of God we're reminded of the wonderful words of the psalmist in Psalm 29 verse 9 in God's temple, everything says glory Psalm 29 9 in the 25th chapter of Exodus.

We begin the instructions given by God to Moses for the making of the tabernacle the construction of it the materials the different appointments or articles of furniture and the purpose is indicated as well. Notice in Exodus 25 you had Israel out of Egyptian bondage. You've had them come all the way to Sinai had them go through the Red Sea and now we read in Exodus 25 one and the Lord spoke unto Moses saying speak unto the children of Israel that they bring me an
offering of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart. You shall take my offering and this is the offering which you will take of them gold and silver and bronze and blue and purple and scarlet and fine linen and goats' hair and ram skins dyed red and badgers skins and acacia wood oil for the lights, spices for anointing oil and for sweet incense Onyx stones and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate.

Now notice verse 8 of Exodus 25. Here is the ultimate objective and purpose in it all and let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them according to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the Tabernacle and the pattern of all the furnishings thereof. Even so shall you make it in verse 22 of Exodus twenty-five. And there I will meet with thee, this is the important the sanctuary and the meeting place and a communion place there I will meet with you and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat from between the two cherubim which are upon the Ark of the testimony of all things which I will give the commandment unto the children of Israel. Well what is the theme of the tabernacle what is it trying to get at. Well the theme of the tabernacle friends is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself. And in the marvelous fullness of revelation of his deity obvious humanity of his manhood of his atoning death, his finished work on Calvary his resurrection and so many many blessings that result from him to his people their fellowship with him their communion with the Lord Jesus Christ is this Tabernacle really important.

As far as the Bible story of redemption is concerned well let's just look at its importance. You will notice in Genesis 1 and 2 you have less than two chapters that tell us of the grand work of redemption of creation rather less than two chapters those chapters are not entirely on all the work of creation but just about two chapters Genesis 1 and 2. Tell us of the grand work of creation. The first verse of Genesis tells us the creation of heaven and earth a vast enterprise.
Notice how much can be gotten into such little space. That first verse of Genesis may be ten words in English but only seven in Hebrew. It tells about all the creation of heaven and earth a vast comprehensive enterprise. But think of it 13 chapters in Exodus alone deal with the tabernacle why. Why this proportion because friends creation is the scaffolding the tabernacle reveals the building of God.

Now what was the basis of this entire project? The Tabernacle in the wilderness. Well you remember Israel chosen in Abraham had gone down into Egypt they had been enslaved there for 430 years and they sighed and they cried and they groaned and God did deliver them by the hand of Moses and Aaron God delivered them first by blood and then by power. Now we have Israel redeemed from Egypt through the means of the Passover land saved by power through the red sea. Passover marks the beginning of Israel's spiritual history showing that redemption is God's basis in dealing with men. It's on the foundation of salvation alone friends that God said he would dwell with men. It's only after they are redeemed that you can have any construction of a tabernacle or any instructions concerning its use. God dwells with men on the basis of salvation.

And so he ordered Moses to construct the tabernacle. What is the thinking? What is all of the concept behind the tabernacle? Looked at more closely friends and this is a feature that I'm afraid so few see but friends, the Tabernacle indicates as nothing in the world could God's infinite blessed longing for fellowship. You remember in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve Genesis 3 verse 8 and 9. We read that God walked with Adam in the cool of the evening God the Father God the Son God the Holy Spirit having infinitely wonderful fellowship in the Godhead nevertheless longed for a creature in order to have fellowship with Him. So God created that creature Adam is a direct result of the creative hand and activity of God without any secondary agents at all. God made Adam out of the dust of the earth and breathed into his
nostrils the breath of life and it became a living soul a personality and God longed to fellowship with him because Adam as a person had intellect. He had emotion and had will and God thinks, God loves, and God wills so God had wonderful fellowship oh what must those walks have been in the cool of the day with God and Adam. So God longed for fellowship. But you remember sin came in and that fellowship was destroyed and Adam didn't have to be told it was destroyed because he himself went off and hid himself from the presence of God. And then we turn a few pages after Genesis 3 into Genesis 5 21 and 24 we come and notice that Enoch walked with God oh the fellowship that Enoch had for those hundreds of years.

As he walked with God and then God took him to glory a wonderful prefiguring of what God is one day going to do with a whole generation of believers who will not die but will be caught up to be with the Lord. Enoch is a picture of that. So God longed for fellowship in the garden of Eden. But it wasn't some kind of a passing emotion that God would get over. No he still longs. So we find it in Enoch. Then one day God found a willing open heart in Abraham, called him out of Ur of the Chaldees, brought him into the land had many many dealings and relationships with him and brought him into covenant relationship. I will make of thee a great nation. I will bless them that bless thee And I will curse them that curseth thee I'm going to make your name great. Be thou a blessing. And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Then we come to Genesis 22 when Abraham at the command of God is willing to give up his son. What fellowship Abraham had over the offering up of his son his intended offering up of his son God spared the heart of Abraham the father heart of Abraham. But he did not spare his own heart for Romans 8:32 tells us have God spared not his only son. God didn't spare his son but delivered him up for us all. How shall he not also with him freely give us all things.
And oh how wonderful it is that Abraham had such tremendous fellowship with Isaac and the both of them went together we read again and again in Genesis 22 notice verse two verse eight verse 16 and 17 and now we come to the Tabernacle and in verse 8 and 22 of Exodus 25. We read I will dwell among you. God says since the individual Abraham has become a whole nation in Egypt in the crucible of fiery bondage and slavery servitude I am going to, I still long to fellowship but I will fellowship with the seed of Abraham on a national scale. And so here is where the tabernacle comes in. God says I will dwell among you. And you remember years later when Israel was settled in the land God had promised it in Deuteronomy 12:5 and 11 that there was to be a place where he would he would condescend to put his name there.

And so in first kings we find that in the reign of Solomon in the 10th century B.C. how wonderful that God accepted this ornate beautifully appointed temple. He put his name there and it has been connected with the temple and with Jerusalem ever since, God still longing for fellowship in the Tabernacle and the temple and then in wondrous fulfillment of his promise of many many predictions God says I am going to come down in human form in the person of Jesus of Nazareth the second person of the Trinity became man and God dwelt in Christ. Emmanuel means God with us. Notice John 1:1 and 14. Don't miss that. It is well to read those two together for the moment in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God yes. And the word was God and the word dwelt among us and we beheld his glory glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth.

In Christ, we have a marvelous exemplification a marvelous illustration of God's longing for fellowship as that blessed one lived for over 33 years on this human scene. And then even today since the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ since his absence from the earth God has a way of dwelling among those who love him in Christ and so we have a habitation of God
through the spirit in the church today in Ephesians 2:22 we have that indicated. What will happen in days ahead with God still seek fellowship. Oh yes. In the Kingdom time in Isaiah two we're told that many peoples and nations shall come up to Jerusalem. Why. Who's going to be there. What is the great drawing and attraction there. Notice it in Isaiah Chapter 2 Verse 3. Many people shall go and say come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord to the house of the God of Jacob and he is the Lord who is going to teach us of his ways we'll walk in his path for out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem and verse four he shall judge this as Christ the judge among the nations.

And shall rebuke many peoples and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks nations shall not lift up sword against nation neither shall they learn war any more. Oh friends Yes God will still be seeking and longing for fellowship with his people in the time of the kingdom and it will be realized. Bless God. At that time as well in the seventh chapter the revelation of the fifteenth verse we read therefore are they his followers before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple and he that siteth on the throne shall dwell among them. Well what will be the condition in eternity. Will this be just a phase that is past with time with the earthly scene. No. revelation 21 three and four and I heard a great voice out of heaven saying behold the tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with them notice down to the end of the book to the end of the story. The Tabernacle of God is with men and he shall dwell with him 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.

There shall be no more death neither sorrow nor crying neither shall there be any more pain for the former things are passed away and it's in the 22nd chapter of the revelation and verse 3. There shall be no more curse but the throne of God and of the lamb shall be in it and his
servants shall serve him. Are they going to be able to get anywhere near him. Oh yes they shall see his face and his name shall be in their foreheads and there shall be no night there. They need no lamp needs the light of the sun for the Lord God give them light and they shall reign forever and ever. Do you hear this marvelous wonderful story of God's longing for fellowship in the Garden of Eden with Adam and then with Eve. Surely and then Enoch. And Abraham. Then in the Tabernacle and Temple and centuries later in Christ and now through this age in the church but after the church age and after the return of Christ reign on Earth in the kingdom time. And then in eternity as we call it eternity that is to come how beautiful a story.

I repeat creation is important but it's only the scaffolding the Tabernacle is really what God was about in creating man that there might be redemption that it might be to the praise of the glory of the grace of the father to the praise of the glory of the grace of the Son to the praise of the glory the grace of the Holy Spirit as we have it in the first chapter of Ephesians. You see in creation friends, God gave the product of the earth for our bodies in redemption. He gave his own begotten son for our souls. Every visitor when he's in Florence Italy seeks out Michelangelo's statue of David the shepherd lad. It's a masterpiece in marble it stands nine cubits high and a cube it is as a foot and a half alert with all the wonderful expressiveness of artistic genius. The shepherd lad is equipped for mastery.

He stands there with a determined expectant countenance ready for conflict. The figure is erect but the body is slightly curved as if in the act of hurling the fatal stone. The statue has a history that's not only remarkable but it's beautifully suggestive. A hundred years or more before the time of Michelangelo a magnificent block of [inaudible] marble had been brought to Florence by a sculptor whom they claim was Donatello. He worked on it blocking out the figure, which was in his mind but suddenly bungled the work cut a great slice out of the side that rendered it
useless for him and so it was cast aside. Something think that before Donatello got it was done by an unknown sculptor at any rate Donatello refused this and would not work on this great magnificent block of Carrara marble. But there the castoff rejected Block lay for a century until the trained eye of Michelangelo rested on it immediately.

He cut the possibility that lay in that stone soon it was taking on form under his hand outlining and fashioning, carving and chiseling oh he worked at it. Day after day week after week and month after month year after year the majestic figure was finally seen stepping from the marble and even the mutilation that had rendered it useless to the original workman became part of the majesty of the new design. So does God redeem and retrieve and overrule all the errors of the first creation in order that the second creation matter of redemption in Christ might be accomplished. Now if you were to be looking from a high vantage point down on the camp of Israel what would the tabernacle look like. What was its outward appearance? Well it was divided into two compartments. The holy place and the Holy of Holies. Course it was all covered so you couldn't have seen the two compartments.

But as the Scriptures describe it you can see and visualize a cross section of it two compartments. One called the holy place and the other [Hebrew phrase], the holy of holies the total length of the tabernacle proper was 54 feet its breadth was about 16 feet but it sat, the tabernacle did, it sat in a court called the court of the tabernacle just as you would have a fence around a beautiful palatial home or a mansion. Well this court of the tabernacle was about a hundred eighty feet by 90 feet twice as long as it was wide. A court of 180 feet by 90 feet for its size. Friends. This was no Dollhouse of of a child. It was no toy for its size the tabernacle was the most expensive structure ever known. And to think of what Solomon did when he built the
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temple. What ever was of Bronze and the like. He was willing to make of gold. His was immensely expensive.

But for the size the tabernacle itself was the most expensive structure known to that time. There were over for instance eight hundred thousand dollars worth of gold there was over a hundred and seventy thousand dollars worth of silver to say nothing about bronze and Linen and the other materials that went into the construction of the tabernacle. For instance the weight of the silver itself has been estimated at about 4 tons. This building then was easily worth 1 million dollars. Now there were so many parts to it. It was so important. It was so intensely significant that God wanted no indignity No indecorous acts to be perpetrated around it so God had men to guard it priests to have the Ministry of it and also when they were on the march there were designated ones to carry the tabernacle. It had to be carried as they wandered all those years decades in the wilderness and there were sons of Levi that did that of Gershom. There were 26 hundred men of Kohath. Twenty seven hundred and fifty men and of [inaudible] Yes even more thirty two hundred men.

If you add those together the twenty six hundred twenty seven fifty or thirty two hundred you get eight thousand five hundred and fifty men that many men in all to carry the tabernacle. Well you say how in the world did they get that much money. Where did they get all that material. That must be in reading at the beginning of this message. We read about all these materials that went into the tabernacle where did they get there. Where did these slaves down in Egypt accumulate anything like that. Well you remember Exodus 12:36. God had told them in verse 35. The children of Israel did according to the word of Moses and they asked not borrowed. That's a mistranslation they asked of the Egyptians jewels of silver and jewels of gold and Raymond and the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians so that they gave
unto them such things as they required and they despoiled the Egyptians. Yes. In other words friends these were back wages. And if you were ever to compute them by compound interest I am sure that would have gone up to quite an amount.

But at any rate they were being paid their back wages. And so in Exodus twenty five two we read speak to the church of Israel that they bring me an offering. They had it to bring so God said bring it but I don't want it unwillingly. I don't want it by duress or by compulsion of every man that give it that willingly with his heart. The Original is very beautiful of every man whose heart makes him willing you shall take my offering. They gave willingly they gave so willingly friends that something happened here that I have not read of anywhere either in ancient times or in modern times. Something happened. The people of Israel gave so willingly they had to be stopped. They had to be restrained in their giving in Exodus 36 verses five to seven we read and they spoken to Moses saying the people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the Lord commanded to make and Moses gave commandment and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp saying let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary.

So the people were restrained from bringing for the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it and too much it's in the Bible so it's true. Otherwise we might not want to credit it. Here it is. They brought not only enough material but they brought too much oh Israel procured the materials and from Egypt as back pay and out of redeemed loving grateful willing hearts they gave back to God. Well you say you're going to enter into a study of the tabernacle as types do you have sufficient proof for types. Oh yes we have ample proof for types friends for instance the Passover lamb. in Exodus twelve. That's what was meant by behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. What about the brazen serpent in numbers twenty-one
eight and nine when it was lifted up all the Israelites that were bitten with the serpents the fiery serpent sent among them when they looked upon the brazen serpent upon a pole.

   Every one that was bitten was healed. Oh yes. What. How do you know that's a type. While our Lord Jesus used it himself in John 3 As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. Yes. These and many others find their place as types in the New Testament think of the Passover for Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us just as plainly and as directly stated as that in first Corinthians chapter five verse seven as a matter of fact God specifically said God told us that events that happened to Israel didn't just happen to them to be forgotten to be recorded and allowed to remain in some kind of a record account. No. The Scripture tells us in first Corinthians 10 verse six. Now these things were are examples to the intent we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. In verse 11 all these things happen unto them for examples and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come. These things happened as types.

   One great student of the word of God. Sir Robert Anderson of Scotland Yard has said that the typology of the Old Testament is the very alphabet of the language in which the doctrine of the New Testament is written. He went on to say and as many of our great theologians since many of these great theologians are admittedly ignorant of the type ology we need not feel surprised if they are not always the safest exponents of the doctrines. For instance if we were to ask one in the ordinary congregation which of the four gospels would you say would contain the least relationships to types in the Old Testament. It's true they say Matthew was for the Jew expecting a king and the Messiah Mark is for the Romans they were great accomplished. Immediately this way a straight way he does. Does that mark the servant and Luke the man that would be for the Greek man in his aesthetic form man in the perfect ideal the god man. John.
Well John is a spiritual gospel he always is for the believer is to draw out his adoration and praise to the Lord as he thinks of Christ and His glory. These things he did that he might manifest his glories. Revealed as the son of God. But yet friends do you know that John's Gospel as much as any of the rest of them is a wonderful example of types. One of the grandest books in scripture for that matter. Let's just take a look through it in chapter 1. When they saw the Lord Jesus Christ. When John the Baptist saw him for instance he said Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Now that wasn't that an amazing thing to say about a person, a Lamb of God he didn't even call him a rabbi in Israel. He didn't call him a man of God. He didn't call him the king of Israel we didn't call him the messiah he didn't call him the coming ruler of the universe he calls him the Lamb of God. Isn't that a strange designation. No. John the Baptist was thinking of Abel's lamb to the very last one offered in the temple.

He was thinking doubtless of the Passover lamb as well. And surely he could well have been thinking about that word in Genesis 22 when Isaac asked Abraham we have all that we need for a sacrifice. Except the main thing where is the lamb for a burnt offering and you remember how wonderfully Abraham came through in Genesis 22:8 and said God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering and they didn't have the lamb that day it was a ram that God substituted so that they could keep on looking for the lamb and one day John the Baptist saw Jesus of Nazareth coming and said Behold thee Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. [End]