

## WEEK 2 – OUTLINE

### Living by Faith—Being Today's River Crossers

#### to Live the Life of the Altar and the Tent

Scripture Reading: Josh. 24:2-3; Acts 7:2; Heb. 11:8-10; Gen. 12:1-3, 7-8; 13:3-4, 18

#### DAY 1

### **I. As believers in Christ, we are the corporate seed of Abraham, repeating the history of Abraham (Rom. 4:11-12):**

- A. Christ as the life-giving Spirit is the transfigured seed (descendant, or son) of Abraham dispensed into us to make us the sons of Abraham and the corporate seed of Abraham (1 Cor. 15:45; Gal. 3:6-7, 9, 16, 29).
- B. Abraham's living by faith is presently being repeated among us (Heb. 11:6).
- C. The Christian life and the church life today are the harvest of the life and history of Abraham (Rom. 4:12).

### **II. The first Hebrew was Abraham, the father of all those who contact God by faith; therefore, God is called “the God of the Hebrews” (Gen. 14:13; Exo. 7:16; 9:1, 13; Rom. 4:11-12; Heb. 1:1):**

- A. The root of the word Hebrew means “to pass over”; it can mean specifically to pass over a river, that is, to pass over from this side of the river to the other side; therefore, a Hebrew is a river crosser (Gen. 14:13):
  - 1. River crossers are a people separated from the world.
  - 2. Abraham left Chaldea, crossed the river, and came into Canaan, the good land of blessing (Josh. 24:2-3).

#### DAY 2

- B. Abraham's crossing the river and entering into the new land signifies his entering into an uplifted, new mankind, which would be used by God to be His expression:
  - 1. We need to leave the law and cross over to grace (Heb. 4:16; 7:18-19; 12:28; 13:9).
  - 2. We need to leave the old covenant and cross over to the new covenant (8:6-7, 13).
  - 3. We need to leave the ritualistic service of the Old Testament and cross over to the spiritual reality of the New Testament (Heb. 8:5; 9:9-14).
  - 4. We need to leave Judaism and cross over to the church (13:13; 10:25).
  - 5. We need to leave the earthly things and cross over to the heavenly things (12:18-24).

6. We need to leave the outer court, where the altar is, and cross over to the Holy of Holies, where God is (13:9-10; 10:19-20).
  7. We need to leave the soul and cross over to the spirit (4:12).
  8. We need to leave the beginning of truth and life and cross over to the maturity of life in the truth (5:11—6:1).
- C. Apparently, Abraham journeyed into Canaan (Gen. 12:4-5), but actually, the God of glory appeared to him (Acts 7:2-3) and then “removed him” across the Euphrates River into the good land (v. 4; Josh. 24:2-3).

### **DAY 3**

### **III. If we would walk in the steps of Abraham's faith, we must be those who live the life of the altar and the tent, taking Christ as our life and the church as our living to live a life of being transfused by God, consecrating our all to God, and taking His presence as our road map (Rom. 4:11-12; Gal. 3:6-9; Heb. 11:9; Gen. 12:7-8; 13:3-4, 18):**

- A. The Lord Jesus appeared to Abraham as the great I Am, the God of glory, to transfuse Himself into Abraham (John 8:56-58; Exo. 3:14-15; Acts 7:2).
- B. We need to come again and again to the Lord and beseech Him:
  1. We must pray, “Appear to me again and again, and speak to me again and again!”
  2. We need to have a continuous seeing, an eternal seeing, of what the goal of God is (John 14:21; Acts 26:16; 2 Tim. 4:8).
- C. God's goal with Abraham was not merely to save him out of his environment and his background but to bring him into the land of Canaan for the fulfillment of God's purpose; likewise, God's goal with the New Testament believers is not merely to save them from their fallen condition but to bring them into the reality of the good land, which is the all-inclusive Christ as the portion allotted by God to all the called ones (Gen. 12:5; Deut. 8:7-10; Col. 1:12; 2:6-7).
- D. Through His repeated appearings to Abraham, God transfused Himself into him, causing him to experience a spiritual infusion with a spiritual infiltration of God's essence into his being (Gen. 12:1-3, 7-8; 13:14-17; 15:1-7; Rom. 4:3; Gen. 18:17-19; cf. Acts 26:16; 22:14-15).
- E. God's appearing and transfusing issue in our living by faith for His perfect will to build up the church as the Body of Christ, consummating in the New Jerusalem (Gen. 12:7-8; 13:3-4, 18; Rom. 1:17; 4:16-17; Heb. 12:1-2a; Matt. 16:18; Rom. 12:1-2; Rev. 21:2).
- F. Abraham's faith did not originate with himself; rather, his believing in God

was a reaction to the God of glory appearing to him and to the transfusing and infusing of God's element into his being (Acts 7:2).

## DAY 4

G. God's appearing and transfusing issue in our consecration, causing us to build an altar, live in a tent, and live totally for God; by God's appearing and transfusing, Abraham trusted in God for His instant leading, taking God's presence as the road map for his traveling (Gen. 12:7-8; 13:3-4, 18; Heb. 11:8):

1. When we meet God Himself, we have the power to deny ourselves.
2. The matter of denying the self ceases to be optional when we have met God—no man can see God and live.

H. An altar is for worshipping God by offering all that we are and have to God for His purpose; building an altar means that our life is for God, that God is our life, and that the meaning of our life is God (Gen. 8:20-21a; Exo. 29:18-22).

## DAY 5

**IV. Abraham built three altars in three places—Shechem, Bethel, and Hebron; these three places represent the good land, typifying the all-inclusive Christ as the all-inclusive Spirit (Col. 1:12; 2:6-7; Phil. 1:19):**

A. “Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh...And Jehovah appeared to Abram and said, To your seed I will give this land. And there he built an altar to Jehovah who had appeared to him” (Gen. 12:6-7):

1. Shechem means “shoulder”—the place of strength; the name Moreh means “teacher” or “teaching”; Abraham journeyed to a land where he could receive God as his power and where he could know God as we do today through the healthy teaching of God's economy (Phil. 3:10; 1 Tim. 1:3-6; 6:3).
2. The power of the good land is the power of life that satisfies man, the power of the flowing Triune God to know Christ inwardly, so that we may become and build up the New Jerusalem (John 4:14b; Psa. 84:3, 5-7, 11).

B. “And he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to Jehovah and called upon the name of Jehovah” (Gen. 12:8):

1. Bethel means “house of God,” and Ai means “a heap of ruins”; in the eyes of the called ones, only Bethel—the church life, the Body life—is worthwhile;

everything else is a heap of ruins (cf. Eph. 1:10).

2. The desolate heap includes our natural life; only after our natural life has been dealt with by God, and only after we have been subdued to realize that the natural life should be judged rather than praised, will we be joined spontaneously to the brothers and sisters to live out the life of the Body of Christ (Phil. 3:3; Gal. 6:3, 14-15; 2 Cor. 12:7-9).

## DAY 6

C. “And Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to Jehovah” (Gen. 13:18):

1. Hebron means “fellowship,” “communion,” or “friendship”; Mamre means “strength” or “fatness” with riches for transfusion, infusion, saturation, and permeation by the sealing Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14).
2. Abraham had his failures, and there was the forsaking of the altar and the tent; however, with him there was a recovery, and recovery is a matter of returning to the altar and the tent with calling on the name of the Lord (Gen. 12:9-10; 13:3-4; Rom. 10:12-13; 12:1-2).
3. Eventually, at Hebron Abraham's tent became a place where he had fellowship with God and where God could fellowship with him (Gen. 13:18).
4. If we have seen the house of God, the church as the Body of Christ, we will do everything in fellowship with God and with one another (1 John 1:3).
5. At Hebron God was revealed to Abraham as the God in His human friendship so that He might gain him to be His intercessor for the rescue of His backslidden believer, for the bringing forth of Christ, and for the destruction of the works of the devil in His chosen people (James 2:23; 2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; Gen. 18; 1 John 5:16a; Gal. 4:19; 1 John 3:8).

**V. Abraham's dwelling in a tent, a movable abode, testifies that he did not belong to the world but lived the life of a sojourner on earth; erecting a tent is an expression, a declaration, that we do not belong to this world but that we belong to a better country, the New Jerusalem (Heb. 11:9-10, 13-16; cf. Psalms 90:1):**

- A. By living the life of the altar and the tent, Abraham bore God's testimony, God's expression (Gen. 12:1-3; Exo. 25:22; 38:21):
1. All the things we possess must pass through the altar; they are given back to us by the Lord to meet our need in the world.
  2. We may use them, but they must not govern us; we can have them and let them go; they can be given, and they can be taken away—this is the principle of the tent life.
- B. God's purpose in choosing His people is for them to become His

testimony, a great and holy nation; God's goal is to gain a group of people who will declare, "I belong to Jehovah; I am the Lord's" (1 Pet. 2:9; Rom. 14:7-9).

- C. Abraham's tent with the altar built by him was a prefigure of the Tabernacle of the Testimony with the altar built by the children of Israel (Exo. 38:21).
- D. Abraham's tent was a miniature of the New Jerusalem, the ultimate tent, the ultimate tabernacle of God (Gen. 9:26-27; John 1:14; Rev. 21:2-3).
- E. As we are living in the "tent" of the church life, we are waiting for its ultimate consummation—the ultimate Tent of Meeting, the New Jerusalem (1 Tim. 3:15; Lev. 1:1; Heb. 11:9-10; cf. Lev. 23:39-43).

## **Morning Nourishment**

Rom. 4:12 "And the father of circumcision to those...who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had in uncircumcision."

Gal. 3:7 "Know then that they who are of faith, these are sons of Abraham."

14 "In order that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

The seed of Abraham is for the believers in Christ, who are Abraham's seed, to inherit the consummated Spirit, the consummation of the processed Triune God, as their divine inheritance—their spiritual blessing for eternity (Acts 26:18; Eph. 1:14a; Gal. 3:14). Christ is the seed of Abraham, and all His believers are also the seed of Abraham (v. 29)...Abraham is our father (Rom. 4:12). (The Central Line of the Divine Revelation, pp. 88-89)

Today we are repeating the life and history of Abraham. Once there was only one Abraham; now there are many. The church life today is the harvest of the life and history of Abraham. Abraham's life by faith is presently being repeated among us. We all are here building an altar and pitching a tent. Look at the church life: we have an altar and a real tabernacle. This is a picture of the coming New Jerusalem where we shall spend eternity with God. (Life-study of Genesis, p. 563)

### **Today's Reading**

The word Hebrew was first used in Genesis 14:13, at the time when Abraham was about to fight for the rescue of his nephew Lot....Abraham was a Hebrew. As a result of considerable study, we discovered that the root of the word Hebrew means "to pass over." It especially means to pass over a river from one region to another and from one side to another. Therefore, the word Hebrew means a crosser, a river crosser, one who crosses a river. Abraham was a river crosser. He crossed that great flood (Josh. 24:2-3).

Abraham was born in Chaldea, the site of ancient Babylon, Babel. Between Chaldea and the good land of Canaan was a great river flowing from north to south. This is very meaningful. All things, including the land, were created by God to fulfill His purpose. The land of Chaldea became satanic, devilish, and demonic. It was a land filled with idols, a land totally usurped by God's enemy and possessed by the evil one. So God intervened to call Abraham out of that idolatrous land, out of that land which had been usurped, possessed, poisoned, corrupted, and ruined by Satan. God simply called Abraham out without telling him where he should go (Heb. 11:8). Abraham had to look to the Lord step by step, saying to Him, "Lord, where should I go?" Abraham knew what he had to leave, but he did not know where he was to go. Eventually God led him to that great river, and Abraham crossed it. Joshua 24:2-3 says that Abraham "dwelt across the River" and that the Lord took him "from across the River and brought him throughout all the land of Canaan." Therefore, a Hebrew is a person from the other side of the water.

Now we can understand the real meaning of baptism. Why must all repentant people be baptized? Because the world in which we are has been usurped, possessed, corrupted, and ruined by God's enemy. It is no longer good for the fulfillment of God's purpose. God's salvation is not merely to rescue us from hell to heaven. God's salvation is to bring us out of the land that has been possessed and ruined by Satan. How can we pass out of it? By being baptized. Every baptistry is a great river, a great flood. After you have been baptized, you come out on the other shore....We must all declare, "We are Hebrews! We are typical Hebrews."...We are the true, genuine Hebrews because we have passed over the river. Everyone among us is a real river crosser....We are people who have crossed over from the other side. What is for us on this side? Churching! We are the water crossers. We are Hebrews. The water has separated us....Now we, today's Hebrews, are building the church. (Life-study of Hebrews, pp. 2-5)

Further Reading: Life-study of Hebrews, msg. 1; The Central Line of the Divine Revelation, msg. 8

## **Morning Nourishment**

Heb. 4:16 "Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help."

13:13 "Let us therefore go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach."

6:1 "...Let us be brought on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith in God."

Although God created man with such an intention and purpose, man has been ruined and corrupted....The Bible often uses lands and cities as figures to symbolize man. So Chaldea and Babylon signify the ruined and corrupted man filled with idolatry. Since man has fallen, there is the need to cross the river out of the corrupted land into the elevated, new land, that is, into an elevated, new mankind. So God came in and called Abraham out of that ruined mankind, that is, out of Chaldea, making him the head and father of the called race. Abraham crossed the river and became the first Hebrew, the first river crosser. Abraham's crossing the river and entering into the new land signified his entering into an uplifted, new mankind which is to be used by God to be His expression. (Life-study of Hebrews, p. 110)

### **Today's Reading**

From Chaldea, the land of idolatry, which was on the other side of the great river Euphrates, Abraham crossed over to Canaan, the land of the worship of God, which was on this side of the Euphrates (Josh. 24:2-3). The intention of God's speaking in Hebrews was that the Jews who believed in the Lord but still lingered in Judaism would leave the law and cross over to grace (4:16; 7:18-19; 12:28; 13:9), that they would leave the old covenant and cross over to the new covenant (8:6-7, 13), and that they would leave the ritualistic service of the Old Testament and cross over to the spiritual reality of the New Testament (8:5; 9:9-14); that is, that they would leave Judaism and cross over to the church (13:13; 10:25), that they would leave the earthly things and cross over to the heavenly things (12:18-24), that they would leave the outer court, where the altar is, and cross over to the Holiest of all, where God is (13:9-10; 10:19-20), that they would leave the soul and cross over to the spirit (4:12), and that they would leave the beginning of truth and life and cross over to the maturity of life in the truth (5:11–6:1). (Heb. 1:1, footnote 2)

We all must see that to be saved means to be called to fulfill God's purpose. To be saved is to be delivered out of many negative situations so that we may come into God's goal. Many Christians have been saved, but they have never come into God's goal. God's goal firstly is Christ. We are in Christ. We are in the enjoyment of Christ. This is God's good land. Secondly, God's goal is the church. Years ago I did not realize that, in a sense, the church is also the good land of Canaan. Furthermore, God's New Testament economy, the kingdom, and the Sabbath rest are all the good land to us today.

Regardless of how long Abraham delayed in answering God's calling, he could not delay God very long. According to God's feeling, a thousand years are the same as a day. Can you delay God a thousand years? No one can do this. At the most, we might delay him for fifty years, which in God's eyes are a little more than an hour. God is sovereign and patient....God is God. No one can frustrate Him. Once He has chosen and called you, He will not be stopped by anything. Sooner or later He will get through....According to Acts 7:4, it was not Abraham who entered into the good land but God who removed him into the land. Although Hebrews 11:8 says that Abraham went out by faith, Acts 7:4 says that God removed him from Haran into Canaan. At most, we can delay the Lord for just a short time. Eventually we shall be gained by Him. If we delay, we shall only waste our time. God told Abraham to get out of his country. Since he did not do it in a rapid and clean-cut way, God removed him into His land. (Life-study of Genesis, pp. 546-547)

Further Reading: Life-study of Genesis, msgs. 39-40

## **Morning Nourishment**

Acts 7:2 "...The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was in Mesopotamia..."

John 8:58 "Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, Before Abraham came into being, I am."

Heb. 11:8 "By faith Abraham, being called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going."

[The glory in Acts 7:2] might have been visible glory (cf. v. 55), as when the cloud and the fire appeared to Israel (Exo. 16:10; 24:16-17; Lev. 9:23; Num. 14:10; 16:19; 20:6; Deut. 5:24) and filled the tabernacle and the temple (Exo. 40:35; 1 Kings 8:11). It was the God of such glory who appeared to Abraham and called him. His glory was a great attraction to him. It separated (sanctified) him from the world unto God (Exo. 29:43) and was a great encouragement and strength that enabled him to follow God (Gen. 12:1, 4). In the same principle, God calls the New Testament believers by His invisible glory (2 Pet. 1:3). (Acts 7:2, footnote 2)

[Not knowing where he was going] afforded Abraham constant opportunity to exercise his faith to trust in God for His instant leading, taking God's presence as the map for his traveling. (Heb. 11:8, footnote 1)

## **Today's Reading**

Even if we are consciously trying to be a proper Christian, it is still possible for us to lose our vision. We can lose our vision even while we are working diligently day after day....If we do not live continuously in God's appearing, it will be easy for us to lose the vision of our calling. The calling that the church has received is the same as the calling that Abraham received. But many people have not seen the hope of this calling. Therefore, Paul prayed, "That you may know what is the hope of His calling" (Eph. 1:18). Hope indicates the content of this calling, the things included in God's calling. May God deliver us from selfish thoughts. We know that God calls us with a definite goal. Our salvation is to fulfill this goal. If we have not seen the substance of Abraham's calling, we will not see the meaning of our own calling. If we have not seen the key to Abraham's calling, we will not see our own ministry. If we do not see this, we will be like those who build a house without a foundation. How easy it is for us to forget what God wants to do! Many times, when we have too much to do and the work becomes a little more hectic, we lose sight of our spiritual calling. We need to come again and again to the Lord and beseech Him: "Appear to me again and again, and speak to me again and again!" We need to have a continuous seeing, an eternal seeing; we need to see God's goal and what God is doing. (CWWN, vol. 35, pp. 29-30)

God's goal with Abraham was not merely to save him out of his environment and his background but to bring him into the land of Canaan for the fulfillment of God's purpose. Likewise, God's goal with the New Testament believers is not merely to save them from their fallen condition but to bring them into the reality of the good land, which is the all-inclusive Christ as the portion allotted by God to all the called ones. (Gen. 12:5, footnote 3)

Abraham's faith did not come from his natural ability and it did not originate with himself. His believing in God was a reaction..., a response to the divine infusion....Genuine faith is the working of God within us. This is why God counted Abraham's faith as righteousness. It seemed that God was saying, "This faith is something of Me. It corresponds to Me. This is Abraham's righteousness before Me." What was that righteousness? It was the righteousness of God.

Whenever we preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in a normal way, there will be an appearing of the living Christ, and this appearing will transfuse Christ into people. I can confirm this by my own experience....My reaction to God was my believing in Him. That was my faith. God's reaction back to me was to justify me, to give His righteousness with peace and joy to me. (Life-study of Romans, pp. 94, 92)

Further Reading: CWWN, vol. 35, "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," ch. 2; Life-study of Romans, msg. 8

## **Morning Nourishment**

Gen. 12:7 "And Jehovah appeared to Abram and said, To your seed I will give this land. And there he built an altar to Jehovah who had appeared to him."

13:3-4 "And he continued on his journey from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place of the altar, which he had made there formerly; and there Abram called on the name of Jehovah."

In Genesis 12:7 we see that the altar is based on God's appearance. Where there is no divine appearance, there is no altar. No one can offer himself to God unless he has first met God....Consecration is not the result of man's exhortation or persuasion but of God's revelation. No one can voluntarily offer up all he has on the altar if God has not first appeared to him. By nature, no one can offer himself to God. Even when a man does want to offer himself to God, he finds that he really has nothing to offer. Some have said, "I want to give my heart to the Lord, but my heart will not agree." Man cannot come over to God's side. However, when man meets God, consecration takes place spontaneously in his life. If you catch sight of God just once and touch God just once, you are no longer your own. God is Someone who cannot be touched lightly! Once a man touches God, he can no longer live for himself. (CWWN, vol. 37, "The Life of the Altar and the Tent," p. 89)

### **Today's Reading**

A turning point in our spiritual life does not come through our decision to do something for God; it does not come as a result of our resolving to do this or that for God. It comes when we see Him. When we meet God, a radical change takes place in our life. We can no longer do what we did in the past. When we meet God Himself, we have the power to deny ourselves. The matter of denying one's self ceases to be optional when we have met God. His appearance makes a person unable to go on by himself; it forces him to not live by himself anymore. God's appearance brings with it inexhaustible power. Such an appearance will alter the whole course of a person's life. For a Christian, the power to live for God is based on his vision of God. Oh! It is not our decision to serve the Lord that enables us to serve Him. It is not our will to build an altar that produces an altar. An altar is built when God comes to a man.

God appeared to Abraham, and Abraham built an altar. This altar was not for a sin offering but for a burnt offering. A sin offering is for redemption, while a burnt offering is an offering of ourselves to God.

God appeared to Abraham, and Abraham offered himself to God. Once a man sees God, he will offer himself up totally to God. It is impossible for a man to see God and yet be indifferent. The altar is present as soon as a person sees God. Once there is the taste of His grace, the result is the altar. Once a man sees God's mercy, he becomes a living sacrifice. When the Lord's light comes, he will say, "What shall I do, Lord?"

Abraham had not heard many doctrines about consecration, nor had he been urged by others to consecrate himself. But Abraham had seen God, and when he did, he immediately built an altar to God. O brothers and sisters, consecration is a spontaneous thing. Anyone to whom God has manifested Himself cannot do anything other than live for Him. Once God appears to a person, he will live totally for God. So it was with Abraham, and so it has been with everyone who has met God throughout the two thousand years of church history. (CWWN, vol. 37, pp. 90-92)

An altar means that we do not keep anything for ourselves. An altar means that we realize that we are here on earth for God. An altar means that our life is for God, that God is our life, and that the meaning of our life is God. So we put everything on the altar. We are not here making a name for ourselves; we are putting everything on the altar for the sake of His name. (Life-study of Genesis, p. 556)

Further Reading: CWWN, vol. 37, "The Life of the Altar and the Tent," ch. 16

## **Morning Nourishment**

Gen. 12:6-8 "And Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh....And Jehovah appeared to Abram....And there he built an altar to Jehovah who had appeared to him. And he...pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to Jehovah and called upon the name of Jehovah."

After Abraham arrived in Canaan,...the first place he went to was...Shechem, [where] he built an altar. The second place he went to was Bethel, and there he also built an altar. Later he left Bethel and went to Egypt. Then he went from Egypt to the south, and from the south he went back to Bethel, staying in between Bethel and...Ai....Later he went to another place, Hebron, and built another altar. In these three places, Abraham built three altars....The Bible shows us that God used these three places—Shechem, Bethel, and Hebron—to represent Canaan. (CWWN, vol. 35, "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," pp. 30-31)

### **Today's Reading**

The meaning of the word Shechem in the original language is "shoulder." In the human body the shoulder is the place with the most strength....Therefore Shechem can also mean "strength." The first characteristic of Canaan is strength. This means that God's strength is in Canaan....The name Moreh means "teacher" or "teaching" in the original language. It has something to do with knowledge. The oak of Moreh was in Shechem. This means that knowledge comes from power and that knowledge is the result of power. In other words, genuine spiritual knowledge comes from the power of Christ. If we do not have the satisfying power of the life of Christ, we will not have genuine spiritual knowledge and will not be able to convey anything spiritual to others.

God brought Abraham not only to Shechem, but to Bethel as well [Gen. 12:8]. The name Bethel in the original language means "the house of God." God is not after hundreds and thousands of strong, but uncoordinated, men like Samson, and He is not after a pile of unorganized, living stones. God's intention is to build a temple—the house of God. One characteristic of Canaan is that God's people are the temple of God and the house of God.

It is not enough to have Shechem (power) only. There must also be Bethel. All the powerful ones must become God's house and the Body of Christ before they can become useful.

The problem is that many Christians consider the Body of Christ merely as a principle; they have not seen the life of the Body of Christ. What good is it if we try to do something according to a principle without having the life to do it? We think that we should cooperate with one another in everything, and we often reluctantly agree to cooperate, but our heart has no taste for it....If we do not know that the Body is a life, and if we merely act according to a principle, we are only imitating in an outward way.

The basic condition for knowing the life of the Body is that our tent must be pitched between Bethel and Ai....It is not merely a matter of Bethel, but a matter of Ai as well. The name Ai means "a heap."...Bethel is a house, the house of God, while Ai is a heap, a desolate heap,...[which] signifies the old creation; Ai symbolizes the old creation. If we are to turn our face towards God's house, we must turn our back towards the desolate heap. In other words, unless a Christian is dealt with in his fleshly life, he cannot possibly know the Body of Christ. Only when we have Ai on the east will we have Bethel on the west. If we do not have Ai on our east, we will not have Bethel on our west. One begins his experience of the Body of Christ and enjoys and lives out the Body life by dealing with the life of the flesh. If we want to find out what the house of God is, we must deny the desolate heap on the negative side. Only after our natural life has been dealt with by God, and only after we have been subdued to realize that the natural life should be judged rather than praised, will we be joined spontaneously to the other brothers and sisters. Only then will we be able to live out the life of the Body of Christ. (CWWN, vol. 35, pp. 31-34)

Further Reading: CWWN, vol. 35, ch. 3

## **Morning Nourishment**

Gen. 13:18 "And Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to Jehovah."

Rev. 21:2-3 "And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God....Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will tabernacle with them..."

The name Hebron means "fellowship."...God's house is a matter of life, while fellowship is a matter of living. It is impossible for one to live in Hebron without first passing through Bethel....Where there is God's house, there is fellowship. Fellowship is not a community organized by a number of people. Fellowship can only be found in the house of God. Without God's house it is impossible to have fellowship. If our natural life is not dealt with, we cannot have any fellowship. We live in the Body and have fellowship only when the natural life is dealt with. (CWWN, vol. 35, p. 35)

### **Today's Reading**

The Body is a fact; it is a real, definite fact. In this Body we spontaneously communicate and fellowship with other children of the Lord. Once we turn our back towards Ai and judge the natural life, we will enter into the life of the Body of Christ and be brought into the fellowship spontaneously. Those who truly know the Body of Christ are freed from individualism spontaneously. They do not trust in themselves, and they realize that they are very weak. They fellowship with all the children of God. God must bring us to the point where we cannot go on without fellowship. God will show us that what is impossible with individuals is possible when it is done in fellowship. This is the meaning of Hebron.

In Hebron there were...the oaks of Mamre (Gen. 13:18). The name Mamre means "fatness" or "strength" in the original language. The result of fellowship is fatness and strength. All fatness, riches, and strength come from fellowship.

If our natural life has been dealt with, and if we know what the life of the Body means, we will learn to treasure the other brothers and to touch life and receive help in the meetings....Even the weakest brother or sister can render...some help. (CWWN, vol. 35, "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," pp. 35-37)

At Hebron Abraham's tent became a place where he had fellowship with God. By Abraham's pitching a tent at Hebron, God had a place on earth where He could communicate and fellowship with man (cf. Gen. 18). Abraham's tent with the altar built by him was a prefigure of the tabernacle with the altar built by the children of Israel after the exodus from Egypt (Exo. 40). That tabernacle was God's testimony (Exo. 38:21) and the place where God and His people could dwell and fellowship together. The ultimate consummation of the tabernacle will be the New Jerusalem, the testimony, the expression, of God in eternity and the eternal dwelling place of God and all His called ones (Rev. 21:2-3 and footnote 1 on verse 3; 21:22 and footnote 2). (Gen. 13:18, footnote 1)

The altar has its issue in the tent [Gen. 12:8]....From then on, Abraham lived in God's house—Bethel....Actually, he lived in a tent before, but God did not mention it. Not until he had built the altar does the Word of God bring the tent into view.

A tent is something movable; it does not take root anywhere. Through the altar God deals with us; through the tent God deals with our possessions....What was not consumed on the altar could only be kept in the tent. Here we see a principle....God leaves some of the things offered on the altar for our own use....We must apply the principle of the tent to all the physical things that He permits us to retain, because they have been given back to us to meet our need in the world. If we do not need them, we should dispose of them. We may use them, but we must not be touched by them....May we learn this lesson. We dare not use anything that has not been placed on the altar, we may not take anything back from the altar, and what God gives back must be kept according to the principle of the tent. (CWWN, vol. 37, "The Life of the Altar and the Tent," pp. 92-93)

Further Reading: Life-study of Genesis, msg. 41

**Hymns, #974**

1

He looked for a city and lived in a tent,  
A pilgrim to glory right onward he went;  
God's promise his solace, so royal his birth,  
No wonder he sought not the glories of earth.  
City! O city fair!  
God's dwelling with man to eternity is there.

2

He looked for a city, his God should prepare;  
No mansion on earth, could he covet or share,  
For had not God told him, that royal abode  
Awaited His pilgrims on ending the road.

3

He looked for a city; if sometimes he sighed  
To be trudging the road, all earth's glory denied,  
The thought of that city changed sighing to song,  
For the road might be rough, but it could not be long.

4

He looked for a city, his goal, Lord, we share  
And know that bright city, which Thou dost prepare  
Is ever our portion, since willing to be  
Just pilgrims with Jesus, our roof a tent tree.