

THE BUILDING OF GOD'S DWELLING PLACE

There are many more important details to consider about the spirit and the soul, but now our attention must be focused on the building of God's dwelling place. Much stress has been made on the tabernacle, God's dwelling place. We have seen that it was composed of the outer court and the two parts of the tent of the tabernacle, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Let us briefly review the contents of these three places.

In the outer court there were the altar, which typifies the cross of Christ, and the laver, which typifies the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Place contained the table of the bread of the Presence, the lampstand, and the incense altar. These three items are types of the various aspects of Christ as our life. The table of the bread of the Presence reveals Christ as our daily life supply—He is our very bread of life. The lampstand typifies Christ as the light of life. The supply of life that we enjoy becomes the light, which shines within us. Next, the incense altar typifies the resurrection savor of Christ.

The Holy of Holies contained one thing, the Ark, the type of Christ Himself. There were three things within the Ark: the hidden manna, which is the inner life and inner life supply; the hidden law, which is the inner enlightening within us; and the hidden rod with sprouted buds, which is the inner resurrection power and authority. The hidden manna, the hidden law, and the hidden authority are all in resurrection and are much deeper than the three corresponding items in the Holy Place.

THE CONTENTS OF THE TABERNACLE

All these things were the contents of the tabernacle, the dwelling place of God. The experiences of all these eight items in the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies are the real contents of the true building of God, the church. If we desire to be the building of God's dwelling place, we must experience what Christ has accomplished by His cross and the cleansing of the Holy Spirit. We must also adequately experience Christ as our life, our light, and our resurrection savor. Furthermore, we must have real experiences of Christ Himself as the hidden manna, the hidden law, and the hidden authority. The experience of Christ in all these aspects forms the real content of the building of God and provides the very materials for the building.

THE SEPARATION OF THE OUTER COURT

Based on this principle, let us see what the main materials of the tabernacle were. First of all, there was the separation of the outer court (Exo. 27:9-19; 38:9-20). It is called the separation because it was like the fence surrounding a property, separating and keeping it from all that is outside. The separation of the outer court was made of three main things: the bronze sockets, the bronze pillars, and the hangings made of fine twined linen. The base of the separating walls was made of the sockets of bronze. There were twenty sockets on the north side, another twenty on the south side, ten on the west side at the rear, and ten at the front—altogether sixty sockets of bronze. On each of these sockets stood a pillar, all of which were connected and united with connecting rods. The hangings on the pillars were made of fine linen, twined together with two threads. Therefore, the three main things were the bronze sockets, the bronze pillars, and the fine twined linen hangings.

The bronze that formed the base of the separation was the same material as that of the two things seen in the outer court: the bronze altar and the bronze laver. The spiritual meaning is that the bronze sockets come from the experience of the altar and the laver. Both the altar and the laver were made out of bronze; therefore, all the sockets of separation were made of bronze. Within the outer court were the bronze altar, the bronze laver, and the bronze sockets. The immediate impression people received when they came into the outer court was that the base of the separation was bronze, the same material of which the altar and the laver were made. This means that the experiences of the cross and the cleansing of the Holy Spirit are the very base for the separation of the Lord's building.

We know that bronze in type is God's divine judgment. All that we have, all that we are, and all that we do must be put on the altar to be judged. The altar, or the cross, is first a place of judgment; God judged everything on the cross. The bronze used to overlay this altar, according to Numbers 16, came from the bronze censers of the two hundred fifty rebellious people. When these people who rebelled against God and Moses were judged with fire, God told Moses to pick up all their bronze censers to make a cover for the altar as a memorial. This was a memorial of God's judgment on the rebellious (v. 38). In order to realize the building of the church, all that we have, all that we can do, and all that we are need to be judged by the cross of Christ. This is the separating base of sockets for God's building.

Perhaps we are clear about the principle of separation, but we are not able to apply it. Suppose that I am a brother who was saved in today's Christianity. Through the preaching of the gospel I heard that I was a sinner, that Christ loved me, and that He died on the cross. As a result, I admitted that I was a sinner. I prayed, "O God, forgive me, for I am sinful. I thank You that You have given Your Son, the Lord Jesus, to die on the cross for me. I praise You that He is my Savior and that my sins are forgiven. Hallelujah! I have joy and peace within me." Of course, I then went to a pastor, who was a good friend of mine, and allowed him to baptize me. After being baptized, I became a "member" of his church. One day the Lord opened my eyes to see why He saved me. He saved me for the purpose of being built up together with others to become the dwelling place of God. After hearing a group of believers in my locality talk about the Body life and the building up of the church, I was willing to be built up with them in the Body life. Finally, the Holy Spirit said to me, "Do you come to be built up? Do you come to realize the church life? Then you must first go to the cross. All that you can do, all that you are, and all that you have must be judged on the cross." I then must confess and repent, saying, "Lord, nothing of me is acceptable to You, and nothing is good for Your building. All has to be judged." If I do not follow through with the judgment of the cross, it is impossible for me to be built up with others; there is no base, no foundation. If I come into the church proudly, it is possible for me to be organized, but it is impossible for me to be built up in the church. The foundation, as seen in the sockets of the separation of God's building, comes from the experience of the bronze altar. Thus, the solid foundation of the building of God's dwelling place comes from the experience of the cross. There is no other way. All must be put on the altar and burned and judged. At the main entrance of the church there is the cross. If we are going to enter into the church, we must put ourselves on the altar of the cross.

When our whole being and all our actions have been put on the cross, we can testify how dirty, how worldly, and how sinful we are. We realize that we not only need Christ's redemption but also the cleansing of the Holy Spirit. One day, according to my inner sense, I felt like jumping into the laver. I prayed, "Lord, cleanse me. I am sinful, and I am worldly. Every bit of me is dirty. I need the cleansing of the Holy Spirit." By this burden in prayer, I experienced the cross and the laver. At the cross we put everything of ourselves to death, and at the laver we put everything under the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit. This not only makes us pure but purged. Then we will come humbly to the church by His mercy, by His redemption, and by His cleansing. After a brother experiences the altar and the laver, and after he is purified from all pride and self-righteousness, he has the base, the sockets of bronze, upon which the pillars are erected.