

I WILL BE TO THEM A LITTLE SANCTUARY

Ezek 11:16 Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.

God gives his people assurance that he will be a little sanctuary for his people in foreign and hostile lands. Although we may be surrounded by a sea of ungodliness, the Lord himself will be a little sanctuary for his people. Consider the Tabernacle of Moses. The surrounding landscape was desert, and the inhabitants were very hostile to Israel, such as the Amalekites. But it was precisely in this alien and threatening environment that God said, “And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8). Let us not complain and be overwhelmed by our surroundings – let us look for the little sanctuary and enter into it. The prophet Daniel lived in Babylon where he had many enemies who were constantly scheming to destroy him. Most people would have panicked and run away but Daniel went into his little sanctuary in his house when the blasphemous royal decree was signed. “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime” (Daniel 6:10). Let us consider what one would encounter in the Tabernacle of Moses and draw some valuable lessons.

Heb 9:3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; Heb 9:4 Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

Once the noise of the outside world is cut off, one sees a golden censer in the Holy Place. The sanctuary is a place of prayer more than anything else. “And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Mark 11:17). When the Apostles followed the Lord, they gave up everything and took nothing with them because there cannot be any distractions in the little sanctuary. The little sanctuary is God’s space; this is where he has unbroken communion with us. Just as the incense filled the entire Holy Place, our prayers must seep out and fill the little sanctuary – the thoughts of the world should not fill this space but our prayers must rise and dominate this space. God wants us to put the sign common in hotel rooms “Do not disturb” outside the little sanctuary. Such was the importance of this that God only revealed to Moses on the 40th day that his people were committing idolatry at the base of the mountain.

The writer of the Book of Hebrews next mentions the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle. If the children of Israel ever forgot that they have a covenant with God, all they had to do was behold the Ark of the Covenant. It was a constant and tangible proof of God's promise to Abraham. The promise of global salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ is the meaning behind the promise to Abraham. "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Genesis 22:18). As Christians, we should take heart from this prophecy. Once we enter the little sanctuary and behold the Ark of the Covenant, spiritually speaking, God reassures us that many people worldwide will receive this salvation in the name of Jesus. Prayer will remind us, and reassure us, that our efforts in evangelizing the world are backed by the powerful promise to Abraham. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal 3:16). As often as we go into the Tabernacle of prayer, the little sanctuary, we will spiritually see the Ark of the Covenant and be encouraged.

Next, we have the golden pot which had manna. "Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full" (Psalm 78:25). When we enter the little sanctuary of prayer, there is heavenly food waiting for us. Just as the physical body sets aside and looks forward to mealtimes, the spirit in us longs for set intervals to enter the little sanctuary and eat the heavenly manna contained in the golden pot. When the flesh is very hungry, it doesn't mind eating anywhere, and almost any kind of food – it does not discriminate. However, the spiritual inner man can only eat at one place, one "restaurant" – the little sanctuary. "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God" (Psalm 84:2). "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed" (John 6:27). How incredibly blessed were the children of Israel – they ate food prepared by God, they drank water that God gave from a rock and their clothes and shoes did not wear out because God was their Jehovah Jireh – God their provider.

After these holy items comes the rod of Aaron that budded. The Christian who enters the little sanctuary often will be assured that God gives leadership with fruit. One can forgive the children of Israel perhaps for doubting the ministry of Aaron. God bless the memory of Aaron but we know that he had some weaknesses or character flaws. Make no mistake, however, Aaron was called and ordained of God. "The sons of Amram; Aaron and Moses: and Aaron was separated, that he should sanctify the most holy things, he and his sons for ever, to burn incense before the LORD, to minister unto him, and to bless in his name for ever" (I

Chron 23:13). The little sanctuary will remind you of the miraculous call of Aaron. God does not want his people to doubt and ask for a King, as they did Saul who was a disaster. The world outside the Tabernacle will confuse us with the babble of political candidates all clamoring for our attention to trust them with the reigns of the government but the little sanctuary reminds us that God gives us leadership. Neither Aaron nor Moses could make the dead almond branches come back to life again. – only God could do this. The church must always discern and confirm that their leader’s gifts are not natural gifts but spiritual ones.

***1 Cor 12:28** And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.*

***James 1:17** Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*

Finally, the writer of Hebrews mentions tables of the covenant in the Tabernacle. Without the word of God there would be no Tabernacle. God can only dwell where his word dwells. The word was made flesh and dwelt among us in Israel because that was where the word of God dwelt. The only material upon which God himself wrote his word were these tables of stone. Writing is an act of humans, but this writing was unique – God’s fire wrote these words. When we enter the little sanctuary, we will be reminded that the word of God is not human thoughts and speculations but divine communication. “I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing” (Hosea 8:12). May the word of God not become a strange thing to us! The more frequent our visits to the little sanctuary, the more solid will be our grounding in the power and truth of the word of God.

Let us go to often to the little sanctuary! Let us determinedly shut our eyes and ears to the noise of the world and behold God’s holy items – the censer of prayer, the Ark of the Covenant of the promise of salvation in Christ, the golden pot with promise of divine providence, Aaron’s rod pointing to divine enablement of leadership and the tables of stone reminding us of enduring power of the word of God. May the Lord grant us to be quick in entering the little sanctuary and slow in departing from it!