

CHAPTER 8

TABERNACLES - THE FEAST OF UNITY

“And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, the branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days... Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths ...” (Lev. 23 :40,42).

In the Feast of Tabernacles we have a beautiful picture of the unity of the saints. On this notable occasion every Israelite must leave his place of dwelling, his farm, his flocks, his place of business — and assemble together in the streets of Jerusalem or along the highways, and dwell for seven days in the humble little booths which they were to construct with branches and willows and boughs of trees. They all had one common purpose in mind, to keep the Feast of the Lord in its season, and to celebrate the ingathering of their wines and oils. And if some would fear lest the enemy would attack their homes during their absence and take away their property, God promised that obedience to this ritual would be their safeguard. “Neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year.” Ex. 34:24).

If the saints of God could only see the glory of the Feast of Tabernacles which even now looms before us, they could not possibly be in doubt or fear concerning their little fenced plots of sectarianism and division; and they would joyfully assemble together in the streets of Jerusalem and keep this glorious Feast. Let us be assured of this, our only safeguard rests in obedience to the Lord and a willingness to follow in the path which He shall choose for us. And if God reveals, as He does in this present hour, that the Body of Christ is being firmly knit together by the Spirit to form a vital, living organism, operating in the power of the Holy Spirit — then obedience to that revelation is all that matters. God will look after our property; our pet doctrines, our theories, our little churches, our opinions, our ambitions, and so forth. If any of these are of God, He will preserve them for us; if not, then who is concerned about maintaining them?

What then is involved in the revelation of the Body of Christ? Briefly and simply it is this: that henceforth we must learn to minister and function as members of that Body, and not as members of a sect or a denomination. In other words, we must recognize that the Body of Christ is a spiritual organism, whose Head is in Heaven, and whose very life and being is in the Holy Spirit Himself. If any individual or group of individuals is unwilling to recognize the Holy Spirit as the life of the Body, and

His ministries as the faculties of the Body, then a “sect” is born. The word “sect” from the original Greek means ‘opinion’, ‘sentiment’, ‘party’. Therefore it is quite possible to have **non-sectarian sects**, as well as sectarian sects. That is to say, it is not necessary to belong to a religious system in order to be a “sect.” There are many sects who loudly denounce the whole ecclesiastical system — but they themselves are the most sectarian of any. To be a member of a “sect” all one has to do is to refuse to recognize the ministries which God is raising up and setting in their place in the Body of Christ. To be non-sectarian it is not sufficient to withdraw from the maze of religious schemes abroad in the world today; but we must become a vital member in the Body of Christ, functioning according to the power of the Holy Spirit, and in the place and ministry which God has ordained for us in the Body.

IS THIS UNITY POSSIBLE?

It is amazing how unbelieving a believer can become. One might as well call Christ a liar, and his apostles false witnesses of God, as to deny that God is going to have a Body functioning in absolute unity of the Spirit, with each member in his proper place, and all members working together as one harmonious whole. Here again, there is only one reason why “believers” refuse to believe it, and it is because we have never seen it either in our own experience or in the history of the Church, and it is scarcely visible in the days of the early apostolic Church. When will the saints of God realize that the sins of Israel are recorded in the Word “to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted” (1 Cor. 10:6). The story of strife and division and corruption that is recorded in God’s Word concerning God’s people is for one purpose, namely, that we **should not follow** in their pathway of disobedience. And the Church’s long and bitter history of disunity and strife does not prove that God’s Word means disunity when it speaks of unity. If God said it, it is going to come to pass; and if Jesus prayed for it, not all the devices of Satan can prevent the glorious fulfillment of that prayer of faith.

THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST

Let us examine briefly John 17, where we have the request of the Son of God for this vital union among the saints:

“Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be **one, as we are ...**”

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; **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. And

the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be **one, even as we are one**: I in them, and thou in me, **that they may be made perfect in one**; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”

Surely this marvelous prayer needs little comment. The unity for which Christ prayed, and which the Father is duty-bound to create, is going to be fulfilled. It is a unity both inexpressible and exquisite: “**Even as we are one ...**” As surely as the Father tabernacles in the Son, speaking through Him, thinking through Him, walking in Him, working with Him ... so shall it be in the sons of God. They shall have “the mind of Christ,” and therefore they shall be “**perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment**” (1 Cor. 1:10; 2:16). The many members shall function as the members of the human body, in unity and harmony of purpose (1 Cor. 12:13,14). They shall “**be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind**” (Phil. 2:2). They shall have **the mind** in them “**which was also in Christ Jesus**” (Phil. 2:5). Unthinkable! Yes, but God is able to do exceeding and abundantly above all that we can ask or think!

THE MEANS TO THIS END

It is because such a measure of unity and harmony is so positively beyond us, and almost inconceivable, that men refuse to believe it is possible. And of course, it is impossible. But with God “all things are possible.” Let us not limit the Holy One of Israel. For God has established a sure and a certain means by which this inexpressible unity is going to be brought into being, even the ministries of “**apostles, ... prophets, ... evangelists, ... pastors, ... teachers.**” These are given, we are told, “**For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry,...**” Step by step the work is brought to pass: the ministries perfect the saints, and they in turn are empowered “for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ**” (Eph. 4:13). Thank God the hour is at hand when this glorious unity for which Christ prayed, and for which He ascended on high and bestowed gifts unto men, is about to be manifested. Ministries are being raised up and established in the Body of Christ — and these constitute Christ’s love-gift to the Church for their perfection. Will they bring this unity to pass? To doubt it is to doubt God’s Word. It is not a case of rejecting man, because of his faults and failures; but to reject the God-ordained ministry is to reject God who gave him. Many would much rather prefer to perfect themselves through prayer, fasting, reading the Word, and so forth. These, of course, all have their place, and will do much to

prepare the heart and soul. But in themselves they will not produce this perfection. God has ordained ministries in the Body by which this perfection shall come to pass. To refuse the ministries, then, is to say to Christ: "I don't need your Ascension Gifts. I prefer to be perfected some other way."

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF CHRIST'S MINISTERS?

The sincere saints of God are being subjected to a great test; of that there is no question. For they are being called upon to receive God's ministers on the one hand, and to refuse the false minister on the other hand. And in this great hour when God is establishing His ministries in the Body of Christ, Satan is likewise sending forth His ministers of light; and we must learn to discern the true from the false. Truly the saints are like the multitudes over whom Christ yearned in the days of His earthly ministry - for He beheld them as sheep having no shepherd. Yes, there were Scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees, men who loved to wear the garb of religion, and say long prayers, and receive greetings in the marketplace, and to be called "Father," and receive the applause of men. But there were no true shepherds. Even Paul in his day was forced to testify: "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. 2:2 1). It is therefore with the greatest concern and tenderness that the Holy Spirit doth now raise up true ministers in the Body of Christ to establish the saints, and to lead them in the path of righteousness. And though it might be difficult for us to discern the true from the false, if we will pay good heed to God's Word, and the pattern of the true minister as outlined therein, we shall not go astray. Here are a few ways and means by which we shall be able to discern the true from the false:

THE TRUE MINISTER WILL LOVE THE FLOCK

The good shepherd, Jesus tells us, will be prepared to lay down his life for the sheep. (Jn. 10:11). In this hour of comparative security and ease, there are thousands of hirelings ruling over the sheep. But let persecution come our way, or let some difficulty arise in the assembly that is apt to prove dangerous to the minister - and the hireling will flee because he is a hireling and careth not for the sheep. But the true shepherd will lay down his life for the sheep.

THE TRUE MINISTER WILL NOT BE COVETOUS

The size of the congregation, the amount of money one is to receive, the kind of place a man will have to live in - these will not matter to the true minister. He will as readily preach to the ones and the twos, as to the hundreds and thousands. And if necessary, he will work with his own hands to sustain himself, rather than burden the flock. Paul said, "I know both how to be

abased, and I know how to abound...” (Phil. 4:12). Very few “know how to abound.” Riches have deceived many and ruined their ministry. The true minister, as a pattern of the flock, must know how to suffer hardship in times of difficulty, and to use the world without “abusing it” in times of plenty.

THE TRUE MINISTER WILL SHOW THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Jesus said, “By their fruits ye shall know them.” We must admit there is a woeful lack of the real fruit of the Spirit everywhere; but it is beginning, nevertheless, to become manifest in those who are going on with God. And this fruit shall be the final test: “Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith(fulness), meekness, temperance (self-control) ...” (Gal. 5:22,23).

THE TRUE MINISTER SHALL NOT SEEK HIS OWN GLORY

“He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true ...” (Jn. 7:18). It is usually not difficult to discern whether the minister is taking the glory unto himself, or ascribing all the glory unto Christ. The true minister will exalt Christ, and Christ only; and not merely with lip service, but from the heart.

THE TRUE MINISTER SHALL DISCERN THE BODY.

He shall recognize the ministries which God is beginning, and will continue, to establish in the Church. God is going to vindicate his true ministers so that there will be no confusion in the minds of those who are really seeking to follow the Lord. The ministries will be contested, as with any ministry God ever established in Old Testament or New. They contested the authority of Moses, of Aaron, of Elijah, of Elisha, of David, of Solomon, of Jeremiah, of all the prophets, and of Christ Himself. But God vindicated them all in one way or another - and in such a manner that the people feared God, knowing that of a truth they were His chosen. The ministries will not be established by self-appointment, nor by human-appointment, but by Divine appointment; their word shall be with power and authority, and not as the Scribes; and the servants of Christ shall recognize and acknowledge them.