

Message Two

**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

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.
- 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.

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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).

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 appearances 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—

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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.
- 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.

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.

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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.
- 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

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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. Psa. 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.