

JULY 31, 1994

## GOD IS WITH US

It is interesting to watch children grow and develop. You can see a progression in what they learn and how they learn it. In our area we have the "Hands-On" Museum for children. It is designed specifically to help them learn in the way they need to learn. They need to see things, to touch them, hear them, smell and taste them. In other words, they learn primarily through experiencing the world around them with the five physical senses. The role of the teacher is to interpret what they experience through their senses. As children develop, they move from a strictly tangible environment and become more able to grasp abstract concepts. By the time a person has started college, the learning atmosphere is primarily centered around ideas, concepts, and philosophies rather than in the laboratory -- the adult version of a "hands-on" museum.

Even we adults tend to learn better if we start with the physical and tangible and then move on to the spiritual and abstract. I believe God knows how we operate (after all He created us) and He used that very approach in revealing Himself to mankind. Today we talk about God's presence being always with us and that He lives in our hearts. That assertion is a spiritual and abstract concept. We say that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Fortunately, we have the benefit of the Scripture and can learn from the Bible how God demonstrated in a physical and tangible way He was present with His people. We can learn about the Tabernacle in the wilderness and get an account of that tangible temple that was indwelt by God's Spirit in the manifestation of the cloud.

God begins with us where we are. He starts where we can understand enough to believe and to be able to grow in our understanding as we experience Him. This is what He did with the Children of Israel. There was not a lot of background on which to build. To teach them (and us as we read the account) about Himself, He started with tangible things, things they could see and touch. The Tabernacle was a representation of the Temple in Heaven where God eternally dwells. The Tabernacle is also a representation of the human being -- body, soul and spirit.

**EXODUS 25:1-8** God spoke to Moses on the mountain to not only give him

the moral code by which their society would need to be successful, but also to prescribe the place where His presence would be manifest. The place where God would dwell would be a special place, set apart for that use only. This is the true meaning of "sanctuary." All God's people must have a place of sanctuary in their innermost being that is reserved only for God and the things of His kingdom. This place needs to be the "seat of our affections." In other words, that which matters most and is the focus of our lives must be reserved for God and God alone. In our churches today, the worship area is (or used to be) referred to as the sanctuary. This should tell us that this area is set apart for God. It is not to be for entertainment nor for political purposes or for any other agenda. It belongs to God and is to be used only for Him. In the church sanctuary we have a physical model of what should be happening in the spiritual realm within us. In the same way, the Tabernacle in the wilderness and later on the Temple in Jerusalem were physical precedents to teach the Children of Israel and us about the presence and place of God in our lives.

The people were asked to willingly contribute what they had for the materials to build the Tabernacle. This pattern of giving something which belonged to them and to give it freely and willingly points to the reality of our freedom to choose to give ourselves to God so that he can live in us as His temple.

**EXODUS 29:38-44** The daily sacrifice was to be made in the morning and evening throughout all generations. The yearling lamb was sacrificed for the sins of the people and it pointed to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Who is called the Lamb of God. This sacrifice is a reminder that God had told Adam that if he disobeyed God that in that day he would die. A worker was to receive his wages each day and the wages of sin is death. Therefore, the day you sin is the day you die. But we know that God the Son interposed Himself between the wrath of God and sinful man and He intercedes for mankind daily so that man might come to Him for salvation. This interposing of Jesus was manifest in time on the Cross. Prior to that time, Jesus could point to the coming sacrifice of Himself. Now, He points back to that completed work and

interposes His precious blood for the sins of the whole world.

The daily sacrifice for sin is made at the place where God meets us to speak to us. Without the work of Jesus in the Heavenly Sanctuary we would have no access to God. Without Him, we hear no word from God. It is no wonder that apart from Jesus there is no salvation.

The Tabernacle was a special place BECAUSE of the presence of God. God did not come to it because it was a special place, God came there because He wanted to establish a love relationship with His people. We hear so much today about how special we are as human beings and that we should have self esteem and feel good about ourselves. We need to be very careful lest we fall into pride and think that *in and of ourselves* we are "something." It is only the presence of God that gives us worth. It is only His grace (His unmerited favor) that causes Him to come to us. When we know that God has come to live in us we do have a sense of well being that is based on the trust we have in His loving nature and it is not borne out of pride. There is a great difference in assurance that results from the presence of God and self-esteem that comes from pride of our own achievements.

We see from these verses that God is the initiator of calling people to be ministers to Himself and to the people of God. In the case of Israel, God had told them they would be to Him a "kingdom of priest and a holy nation," yet He set some apart for special service. We can learn from this for ourselves in the Church. We speak of the priesthood of the believer, and that may be in the same sense as the nation of Israel being a kingdom of priests. God still calls people for special ministry to Himself and for His people.

**EXODUS 29:45-46** In the movie *The Field of Dreams*, the main character of the story was told, "If you build it, they will come." I fear that many people believe that if we will just build a church building, then that will be God's house. That is, they think God will be there just because there is a "church building." In the case of Moses and the Children of Israel, God gave them specific instruction of what to build and how to build it. Since God was the initiator and because of their obedience, then He did come to the Tabernacle.

**EXODUS 40:33-38** God was true to

His promise that was based on His word. In our own lives when we are listening to God and obedient to Him, then we experience His working in the world around us. The glory of God could be seen and the presence of God pervaded the camp of God's people. They knew when to stay and when to move on in their lives because they were aware of what God was doing. We can also experience the presence and power of God in our lives by the Holy Spirit in us. We can have our lives enriched by the glory of the presence of God and we can know when to wait and when to move in our life's journey. If we are His children, then He is with us.