

The Transfiguration and the Tabernacle

©2021 Mike Whyte

Copyright Notice: this document may be used freely for personal study, preaching, and teaching. No part of it may be used under any circumstances for commercial purposes or to attain personal gain or advantage.

... **Jesus** ... was **transfigured before them**, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them **Elijah with Moses**, and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three [**tabernacles**]¹, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” (Mark 9:2-5 ESV)

This vision, as recorded in the New Testament, is one of the most enigmatic events of the life of Jesus Christ. The event has vast significance on many levels. To fully comprehend it, the life situation in which it occurred must be carefully analyzed. The significance of the two persons appearing in the vision, Elijah and Moses, must be carefully considered. Finally, the significance of the allusion to the Old Testament “Tabernacle” must be understood.

Table of Contents

1. The Setting of the Transfiguration.....	1
2. The Transfiguration	5
3. Analysis of the Transfiguration.....	6
4. After the Transfiguration	7
5. The Tabernacle	9
5.1 Construction of the Tabernacle	9
5.2 History of the Tabernacle.....	11
5.3 Symbolism of the Tabernacle	12
6. The Feast of Tabernacles	15
6.1 The Meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles	16
7. The Beginning and the End	18
Excursus 1 – Hebrew and Greek Words	20
Excursus 2 – תֶּבֶת and ψυχή	26
Excursus 3 – The Branch	28
Bibliography	33
Appendix: Maps and Figures.....	34

1. The Setting of the Transfiguration

The Transfiguration occurred somewhere around the middle of the period of time that A.T. Robertson² calls “**The Special Training of the Twelve in Districts Around Galilee**”. In this period, Jesus is working out of Capernaum (see Appendix Map 1). Both Mark and Luke record that Jesus is specially working with “the apostles”³ – the twelve to the exclusion of the other disciples.⁴ John records that this period

¹ Greek is σκηνάς – skenas (noun, accusative, plural, feminine), from σκηνή – skēnē (see www.esv.org). This word carries the general range of meaning implied by “tent” (ESV), but it is specifically used in the Septuagint of the various words used in the Old Testament for the Tabernacle (see Excursus 1 – Hebrew and Greek Words).

² See Robertson page 85

³ See Mark 6:30 and Luke 9:10

⁴ At times it appears that other disciples were also present, but the focus is clearly the Twelve.

began around Passover⁵. On three occasions, Jesus leaves the area of Galilee which was under the political control of Herod Antipas. Jesus was aware of the hostility of Herod Antipas⁶ and wanted no interference. The first three training excursions may have taken as much as a year, because when we get to the fourth excursion it seems to be again around Passover:

And he left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side. Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. And he cautioned them, saying, **“Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.”** And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? **Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear?** And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?” They said to him, “Twelve.” “And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?” And they said to him, “Seven.” And he said to them, **“Do you not yet understand?”** (Mark 8:13-21 ESV)

When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread. Jesus said to them, “Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” And they began discussing it among themselves, saying, “We brought no bread.” But Jesus, aware of this, said, **“O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”** Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Matthew 16:5-12 ESV)

The destination of the journey was Bethsaida Julias to the north-east of the Sea of Galilee in the Tetrarchy of Herod Philip (see Appendix Map 1). Jesus seems to have the Days of Unleavened Bread on his mind – both Mark and Matthew record that the oversight of the apostles to bring food was immediately used by Jesus as an opportunity for an object lesson. Mark more likely records words that are closer to what Jesus actually said; while Matthew, as he frequently does, reports an interpretation of what Jesus said. The words reported by Mark imply a lack of faith; Matthew’s report explicitly states, **“O you of little faith”**. Mark leaves it with the question, “Do you not yet understand”; while Matthew makes it explicit that Jesus’ point is that the “teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees” is like “leaven”, to be regarded as “sin” during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

After the initial conversation, Mark records a miracle of healing a blind man.⁷ This healing is an obvious answer to Jesus’ rhetorical question, **“Having eyes do you not see?”** The object lesson is **“faith”** in Jesus’ ability as Messiah to accomplish his purpose. Jesus uses the “Pharisees and Sadducees” as a foil – their teaching is the antithesis of “faith”. This object lesson was the beginning of very specific preparation which Jesus was giving the apostles prior to the Transfiguration. **The objective of the fourth training excursion is the Transfiguration**. Jesus wants the apostles to be fully prepared to comprehend the significance of the Transfiguration when it occurs.

From Bethsaida Julias, Jesus and the disciples made their way north to the area of Caesarea Philippi, still in the Tetrarchy of Herod Philip (see Appendix Map 2). Here Jesus explicitly questions the disciples to ensure they are fully aware of his role as Messiah:

And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, **“Who do people say that I am?”** And they told him, “John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.” And he asked them, **“But who do you say that I am?”** Peter answered him, **“You are the Christ.”** And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him. (Mark 8:27-30 ESV)

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, **“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”** And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, **“But who do you say that I am?”** Simon Peter replied, **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”** And Jesus answered him, **“Blessed are you,**

⁵ See John 6:4

⁶ See Luke 13:31-32

⁷ See Mark 8:22-26

Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven ... Then he strictly charged the disciples to **tell no one** that he was the Christ. (Matthew 16:13-17, 20)

Now it happened that **as he was praying alone**, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, **“Who do the crowds say that I am?”** And they answered, “John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen.” Then he said to them, **“But who do you say that I am?”** And **Peter answered, “The Christ of God.”** And he strictly charged and commanded them to **tell this to no one** ... (Luke 9:18-21 ESV)

All three synoptists record the interaction. All record the two-part question and that Peter responded on behalf of the apostles that **Jesus is indeed the prophesized Messiah**. There are differences in wording due to the assumed audience of each author. Luke omits the reference to Caesarea Philippi since local geography would be of no interest to readers outside of Palestine, but he adds that Jesus was praying prior to the questions. All three synoptists record that Peter, speaking on behalf of all the apostles, clearly recognizes that Jesus is the promised Messiah. All three synoptist end with Jesus’ injunction NOT to publicize his Messiahship – Jesus did not want political trouble.

Only Matthew records **the blessing on Peter**, Simon Bar Jonah, for his having been given special revelation from the Father. This leads into one of the most controversial scriptures in the entire Bible:

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you **the keys of the kingdom of heaven**, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 16:18-19 ESV)

There is an enormous literature on the meaning of these verses,⁸ a survey of which is beyond the scope of this paper. Jesus Christ is the “Rock” upon which the New Testament Church is built.⁹ In the context of the Transfiguration, it is the promise of the **“keys to the kingdom of heaven”** that is important.¹⁰ Keys open doors. The objective of Christ’s teaching is salvation by entry into the Kingdom of God. Peter as the “representative” apostle, is told that he and the other apostles will be given **the knowledge to bring people to salvation**.¹¹

Continuing to prepare the apostles for the Transfiguration, Jesus now unequivocally states:

And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and **be killed**, and **after three days rise again**. And he said this plainly. (Mark 8:31-32a ESV)

From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and **be killed**, and **on the third day be raised**. (Matthew 16:21 ESV)

The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and **be killed**, and **on the third day be raised**. (Luke 9:22 ESV)

This is the first time Jesus spoke plainly about his crucifixion and resurrection. Even much later Luke affirms that the apostles did not understand how this was possible.¹² On this first mention of the crucifixion and resurrection, Peter has a typical reaction:

And **Peter** took him aside and **began to rebuke him**. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For **you are not setting your mind on the things of God**, but on the things of man.” (Mark 8:32b-33 ESV)

And **Peter** took him aside and **began to rebuke him, saying**, “Far be it from you, Lord! **This shall never happen to you**.” But he turned and said to Peter, **“Get behind me, Satan!** You are a hindrance to me. For **you are not setting your mind on the things of God**, but on the things of man.” (Matthew 16:22-23 ESV)

⁸ See for example, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew_16 and the various articles referenced there.

⁹ See 1 Corinthians 10:4, Deuteronomy 32:4, 15, 18, 30, 31, Psalm 18:2, 31, 46, 19:14, 31:3, Isaiah 26:4, 30:29, 44:8, Habakkuk 1:12, Acts 4:11-12, Ephesians 2:19-21, 1 Peter 2:4-8

¹⁰ This is an allusion to the prophecy of Eliakim ben Hilkiah in Isaiah 22:15-22. The allusion to the “house of David” seems to be related to the promise of Messianic descent given to David. The metaphor is used again in Revelation 3:7 and 1:8 with direct reference to Jesus as possessor of the keys. In Luke 11:52, Jesus upbraids the Pharisees, “lawyers”, for “taking away the key of knowledge” by their perverted teaching.

¹¹ See also John 21:15-17

¹² See Luke 18:31-34

The apostles did not yet grasp the nature of the First Advent. They subscribed to the popular conception of a political Messiah freeing Israel from Roman overlordship and establishing Israel as the first of the nations. For Jesus to talk of his death was unthinkable – such a thing could NOT happen to the Messiah. Again, Peter is used as an example for the benefit of all the apostles. His attitude is impugned as satanic, and he is told that he needs to refocus his thinking on the things of God.

Jesus uses this incident as a segue to the Parable of Taking Up the Cross, the Parable of Loss of Life, the Parable of Shame in Christ, and the Parable of Seeing the Kingdom:

And calling **the crowd to him with his disciples**, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and **take up his cross and follow me**. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but **whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it**. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his [life]?¹³ For what can a man give in return for his [life]? For **whoever is ashamed of me and of my words** in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, **there are some standing here who will not taste death** until they **see the kingdom of God** after it has come with power. (Mark 8:34-38, 9:1 ESV)

Then Jesus told his **disciples**, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and **take up his cross and follow me**. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but **whoever loses his life for my sake will find it**. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his [life]? Or what shall a man give in return for his [life]? For the **Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father**, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. Truly, I say to you, **there are some standing here who will not taste death** until they **see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom**.” (Matthew 16:24-28 ESV)

And **he said to all**, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and **take up his cross daily and follow me**. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but **whoever loses his life for my sake will save it**. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?¹⁴ For **whoever is ashamed of me and of my words**, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. But I tell you truly, **there are some standing here who will not taste death** until they **see the kingdom of God**.” (Luke 9:23-27 ESV)

These parables were presented to illustrate the need to refocus on the things of God as remonstrated to Peter. Jesus ensured all present disciples (NOT just the twelve) and a general audience, “the crowd”, heard the parables.

Parable of Taking Up the Cross: this is a simple comparison

- Point of comparison: a cross used as an execution tool by the Romans
- Known quantity: a condemned victim was required to carry a beam of the cross for his crucifixion
- Unknown quantity: how to follow Christ – “If anyone would come after me ...”
- Meaning: to follow Christ requires absolute commitment

Parable of Loss of Life: this is a simple comparison

- Point of comparison: a person’s life
- Known quantity: one’s life can only be lost once
- Unknown quantity: how to save one’s life
- Meaning: only through Christ’s words of salvation is it possible to save one’s life (looking to the resurrection)

Parable of Shame in Christ: this is a simple statement with an implied comparison

- Point of comparison: words of Christ
- Known quantity: salvation is only possible through Christ’s words (previous parable)
- Unknown quantity: result of rejection of Christ’s words

¹³ See Excursus 2 – **ὁτι** and **ψυχήν**, this word occurs several times in these passages.

¹⁴ Luke is very careful to use different wording due to the Greek conception of the “immortal soul”.

- Meaning: unless one embraces and acknowledges the teaching, the words, of Christ, when Jesus comes, he will not recognize that person

Note that Matthew does NOT include this parable, but he states its result: “the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done”.

Parable of Seeing the Kingdom: this a simple statement with an implied comparison

- Point of comparison: death is inevitable
- Known quantity: life is only possible through the words of Christ (previous parables)
- Unknown quantity: how to see the kingdom of God
- Meaning: as stated here, the meaning is an enigma: this is the segue into the transfiguration which provides an object lesson on the Kingdom of God, and the meaning of this parable

2. The Transfiguration

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses,¹⁵ and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three [tabernacles]¹⁶, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.” And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. (Mark 9:2-8 ESV)

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah,¹⁷ talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three [tabernacles] here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.” When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and have no fear.” And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. (Matthew 17:1-8 ESV)

Now about eight¹⁸ days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three [tabernacles], one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said. As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!” And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen. (Luke 9:28-36 ESV)

The Transfiguration was a vision – the three leading apostles went up into the mountain, likely Mount Hermon (see Map 2), with Jesus, and the vision occurred. Jesus’ face “shone like the sun” and his “clothing became dazzling white”. Presumably, Elijah and Moses appeared similarly. All three synoptists record there was confusion on the part of the apostles, verbalized by Peter: “he did not

¹⁵ Note that Mark puts Elijah first, Moses second, while Matthew and Luke do the reverse. This could reflect the actual memory of Peter, who was at the transfiguration. In popular thought Moses would naturally have the pre-eminence over Elijah. But since a focus of the vision is John the Baptist fulfilling the role of Elijah, it is likely that the representation of Elijah was more prominent than the representation of Moses.

¹⁶ Greek is σκηνός – skenas (noun, accusative, plural, feminine), from σκηνή – skēnē (see www.esv.org). This word carries the general range of meaning implied by “tent” (ESV), but it is specifically used in the Septuagint of the various words used in the Old Testament for the Tabernacle (see Excursus 1 – Hebrew and Greek Words).

¹⁷ Note that there is no indication how the identity of Elijah and Moses was known – there must have been some verbal recognition of them.

¹⁸ Luke is apparently using inclusive reckoning – 8 days, while Mark and Matthew use exclusive reckoning – 6 days.

know what to say”, “If you wish”, and “not knowing what he said”. This confusion reflects their lack of understanding when Jesus explained to them the inevitable course of events leading up to his death. Associated with the confusion was **a feeling of comfort** in the situation: “Rabbi, it is good that we are here”, “Lord, it is good that we are here”, and “Master, it is good that we are here”. After the feeling of comfort, there came **a desire to tabernacle**: “Let us make three tabernacles”, “I will make three tabernacles”, and “Let us make three tabernacles”.

There is no explicit indication why Peter, presumably reflecting the feelings of John and James, suggested the construction of tabernacles. We can only assume it was under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and that it is integral to the meaning of the vision. Immediately after the mention of the three tabernacles, a cloud appears and an angelic messenger delivers **a message from the Father**: “this is my beloved Son; listen to him”, “this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him”, and “this is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him”. Then the vision ends.

3. Analysis of the Transfiguration

Jesus has carefully set the stage for the transfiguration by the following:

- Jesus challenges the apostles’ faith and admonishes them to eschew the hypocrisy of the ruling elite (Mark 8:13-21, Matthew 16:5-12)
- Jesus verifies unequivocally that in contrast to popular opinion, the apostles know that he is the prophesized Messiah (Mark 8:27-30, Matthew 16:13-17, 20, Luke 9:18-21)
- Jesus then points out that the apostles are to be given the keys to the Kingdom of God, the knowledge that is required for people to be prepared for the gift of eternal life (Matthew 16:18-19)
- Jesus then provides the apostles with the insight as to the primary purpose of the First Advent: that the Messiah is to be sacrificed to pay the penalty of human sin so that the Holy Spirit can be made available and the New Testament Church can commence (Mark 8:31-32a, Matthew 16:21, Luke 9:22)
- Jesus then points out how diametrically opposed to the Plan of God is the popular conception of the Messiah (Mark 8:32b-33, Matthew 16:22-23)
- Finally, Jesus presents four related parables, the first indicating that complete commitment is required; the second, indicating that salvation is only possible through the teaching, the words, of Christ; the third, requiring a believer to embrace and acknowledge Christ’s words; and the fourth, explaining how to see the Kingdom – a segue into the Transfiguration (Mark 8:34-38, 9:1, Matthew 16:24-28, Luke 9:23-27)

The following elements comprise the Transfiguration:

- Jesus appears in a glorified state: this answers to the final parable – Jesus appears glorified as he will be in the Kingdom; Peter, James, and John have seen the Kingdom before facing death
- Elijah and Moses, also glorified (Luke 9:31), speak with Jesus: they are also represented as being in the Kingdom; they speak with Jesus concerning the Plan of God (Luke 9:31)
 - Why “Elijah and Moses”?
 - This is clearly an allusion the prophecy of Malachi in chapter 4 verses 4 through 6
 - See the paper “The Work of Elijah” at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca
- Peter proposes the construction of three tabernacles: this is the most important feature of the vision – its meaning is discussed in detail later in this paper
- The apostles experience confusion and comfort: confusion is natural given the enormous amount of information Jesus gave then in preparation for the vision and the awesomeness of the vision itself; the comfort no doubt was directly attributable to the presence of the Holy Spirit assuring them of them of beneficence of the vision
- The apostles then experience fear as a cloud overshadows them: this is a direct allusion to the theophany at Sinai – the awesomeness of God is over-shadowing in a cloud, as at Sinai, there as here, fear is induced

- A voice speaks from the cloud: the voice is an angelic messenger with a message from the Father – the message affirms the divinity of Jesus; the apostles had been with Jesus for a considerable time; of his humanity, they were not in doubt
- This is my beloved son: this is a direct allusion to the words of the angelic messenger at the baptism of Jesus;¹⁹ Jesus Christ is the only being that can ever be “the son of God” in the way he was. YHWH, as he was known in the Old Testament, gave up his status in eternity, and through the miracle of human birth through Mary, he became a human being. As Jesus of Nazareth, he was fully human and fully divine.
- Listen to him: this is the final injunction in the vision – it alludes to all the preparation for the vision, and the content of the vision itself:
 - faith is required to follow Jesus
 - Jesus is unequivocally the prophesized Messiah
 - Jesus’ words are the words of life – the keys to the Kingdom of God
 - The Plan of God is inexorable – the crucifixion and the resurrection must occur
 - Complete commitment on the part of disciples is required

4. After the Transfiguration

After the vision of the Transfiguration, Mark and Matthew record the following conversation:

And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to **tell no one what they had seen**, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, **questioning what this rising from the dead might mean**. And they asked him, “Why do the scribes say that **first Elijah must come**?” And he said to them, “**Elijah does come first to restore all things**. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I tell you that **Elijah has come**, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him.” (Mark 9:9-13 ESV)

And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “**Tell no one the vision**, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.” And the disciples asked him, “Then why do the scribes say that **first Elijah must come**?” He answered, “**Elijah does come, and he will restore all things**. But I tell you that **Elijah has already come**, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands.” **Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist**. (Matthew 17:9-13 ESV)

Jesus does not want to fuel the popular Messianic expectations, so he adjures the apostles NOT make the vision public. Mark, again reflecting Peter’s recollection, indicates that the apostles were still unsure about the resurrection. This confusion was NOT resolved until after the apostles had been begotten by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost at the inauguration of the New Testament Church. Jesus gave them this promise this during his discussion after the first New Testament Passover:

These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But **the Helper, the Holy Spirit**, [which]²⁰ the Father will send in my name, [it] **will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said** to you. (John 14:25-26 ESV)

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: **it is to your advantage that I go away**, for if I do not go away, **the Helper** will not come to you. But if I go, I will send [it] to you. And when [it] comes, [it] will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the **Spirit of truth** comes, [it] will guide you into all the truth, for [it] will not speak on [its] own authority, but whatever [it] hears [it] will speak, and [it] will declare to you the things that are to come. [It] will glorify me, for [it] will take what is mine and declare it to you. **All that the Father has is mine**; therefore I said that [it] will take what is mine and declare it to you. (John 16:7-15 ESV)

Having seen “Elijah” in the vision, both synoptists allude to the prophecy of Malachi: “Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?” Jesus responds somewhat enigmatically with “present tense” verb “does come”, even though John the Baptist is dead. Matthew records a saying, which implies the

¹⁹ See Mark 1:11, Matthew 3:17, and Luke 3:22

²⁰ The Holy Spirit is the power of God, NOT an independent sentient entity.

duality, that “Elijah has already come”. As Luke had alluded to discussion of the death of Christ in the vision, both Mark and Matthew record further discussion of it in the after conversation: “the Son of Man will/should suffer” as “Elijah” has suffered is an obvious allusion to the execution of John the Baptist. Matthew is explicit: “the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist”.²¹

On getting back to the main group of disciples, probably in Caesarea Philippi, they were engulfed in a crowd with some commotion:

And when **they came to the disciples**, they saw **a great crowd** around them, and **scribes arguing with them**. And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. And he asked them, “What are you arguing about with them?” And someone from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought **my son** to you, for he **has a spirit that makes him mute**. And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So **I asked your disciples to cast it out**, and **they were not able**.” (Mark 9:14-18 ESV)

And when they came to **the crowd**, a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, said, “Lord, have mercy on **my son**, for **he has seizures and he suffers terribly**. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. And **I brought him to your disciples**, and **they could not heal him**.” (Matthew 17:14-16 ESV)

On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, **a great crowd** met him. And behold, a man from the crowd cried out, “Teacher, I beg you to look at **my son**, for he is my only child. And behold, **a spirit seizes him**, and he suddenly cries out. It convulses him so that he foams at the mouth, and shatters him, and will hardly leave him. And **I begged your disciples to cast it out**, but **they could not**.” (Luke 9:37-40 ESV)

Jesus uses this situation as an object lesson in faith for the disciples. Only the three had been on the mountain for the Transfiguration. The rest of the disciples would have to accept, on faith, the recounting of the vision by the three. Jesus publicly sets the stage:

And he answered them, “O **faithless generation**, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me.” And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” And Jesus said to him, “If you can’t! **All things are possible for one who believes**.” Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!” And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.” And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, **it came out**, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, “He is dead.” But **Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose**. (Mark 9:19-27 ESV)

And Jesus answered, “O **faithless and twisted generation**, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me.” And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and **the boy was healed instantly**. (Matthew 17:17-18 ESV)

Jesus answered, “O **faithless and twisted generation**, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.” While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and **healed the boy**, and gave him back to his father. And **all were astonished at the majesty of God**. (Luke 9:41-43 ESV)

All the synoptists record the public nature of the miracle. Only Luke records the effect on the crowd “all were astonished”. Only Mark records the purpose of the object lesson “All things are possible for one who believes”. Later Jesus does elucidate for the disciples:

And when he had **entered the house**, his disciples asked him **privately**, “**Why could we not cast it out?**” And he said to them, “**This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer**.” (Mark 9:28-29 ESV)

Then the disciples came to Jesus **privately** and said, “**Why could we not cast it out?**” He said to them, “**Because of your little faith**. For truly, I say to you, if you have **faith like a grain of mustard seed**, you will

²¹ For more information on John the Baptist, see “John the Baptist – More Than a Prophet” on <http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and **nothing will be impossible for you.**" (Matthew 17:19-20, 22)

Mark records only the short answer, since under Peter's direction, he had already related the purpose of the object lesson. Matthew, who would have been among the waiting group of disciples, records the parable of **"faith like a grain of mustard seed"**²² which brings home the purpose of the object lesson: **"nothing will be impossible for you"**.

All three synoptists recorded the Tabernacle as being central to the vision of the Transfiguration. None of them gave any indication as to why the Tabernacle was central to the vision. In analysis of the Tabernacle and its meaning, it is obvious that the Tabernacle in the vision is central to understanding the Kingdom of God. Soon after this, Jesus plainly states the importance of the symbol of the Tabernacle during the Feast of Tabernacles:

About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. ... **"My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.** If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood. ... So **Jesus proclaimed,** as he taught in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I come from. But **I have not come of my own accord.** He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me. ... **On the last day of the feast,** the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, **"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.** Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, **'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'**" Now this he said about the Spirit, [which] those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:14-18, 28-29, 37-39 ESV)

The Tabernacle in the vision symbolizes the Kingdom of God – dwelling with God the Father as part of his family. This is the goal of Christian calling; the focus of Jesus' teaching; the objective of the Plan of God.

5. The Tabernacle

The Tabernacle was the portable sanctuary built by the Israelites in Horeb under directions given to Moses by YHWH. Its purpose was to provide a location to focus the worship of YHWH by the Israelites. Figuratively speaking, YHWH would "dwell" in the Tabernacle. Originally Moses, but on an ongoing basis, the High Priest would receive communication from YHWH in the Tabernacle. All sacrifices and all rituals of worship were performed in the Tabernacle. During the wilderness period, the Tabernacle was the center of the social and religious life of the Israelites. After the conquest, the Tabernacle was the central sanctuary to which the Israelites made their pilgrimages on the three annual feasts. The Tabernacle including the courtyard were also the location where the cult of YHWH was performed on a daily basis.

The English word "tabernacle" comes from the Latin word "taberna",²³ which means "shed, hut, or shop". In English, the word is usually used with a religious connotation. The verb "to tabernacle" means to take up temporary residence. The most important Hebrew words for the Tabernacle are:

- מִשְׁכָּן - mish'kan which means "dwelling place", "tabernacle"
- סֻכָּה - sukkah which means "covert", "booth"

For a discussion of the Hebrew and Greek words related to the Tabernacle see **Excursus 1 – Hebrew and Greek Words.**

5.1 Construction of the Tabernacle

The entire sanctuary consisted of a "fence" made of cloth partitions hung between posts which surrounded the "tent" which was the Tabernacle. The "fence" was secured by guy ropes on the posts. Moses received the instructions for its construction from YHWH:

²² For a discussion of this parable, see "Faith Parables" on <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

²³ The English word "tavern" is also derived from "taberna".

The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the people of Israel ... And let them **make me a sanctuary**, that **I may dwell in their midst**. Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of **the tabernacle**, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it. ...” (Exodus 25:1-2a, 8-9 ESV)

The pattern of the Tabernacle was given to Moses on Mount Sinai.²⁴ Chapter 26 of Exodus describes the overall construction and appearance of the Tabernacle. See Figure 1 and Figure 2 in the Appendix for artists conceptions of what the Tabernacle might have looked like.

The tent comprised two rooms: the first called the “Holy Place” where incense was burned daily²⁵ and a golden lampstand, a Menorah, was kept burning each night and trimmed each morning.²⁶ The Holy Place is frequently referred to as “The Tent of Meeting”:²⁷

... at the entrance of **the tent of meeting** before the LORD, where **I will meet with you**, to speak to you there. There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory. I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar **I will dwell among the people of Israel** and will be their God. And **they shall know that I am the LORD their God**, who brought them out of the land of Egypt **that I might dwell among them**. I am the LORD their God. (Exodus 29:42b-46 ESV)

The second room was the “Most Holy Place” where the Ark of the Covenant resided:

And you shall make **a veil of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen**. It shall be made with cherubim skillfully worked into it. And you shall hang it on four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, with hooks of gold, on four bases of silver. And you shall hang the veil from the clasps, and **bring the ark of the testimony in there within the veil**. And **the veil shall separate for you the Holy Place from the Most Holy**. You shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in **the Most Holy Place**. (Exodus 26:31-34 ESV)

Only the High Priest was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place, and only once a year for the Day of Atonement ritual:

... the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into **the Holy Place inside the veil**, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat. But **in this way Aaron shall come into the Holy Place** ...” (Leviticus 16:2-3a ESV)

Leviticus chapter 16 verses 3b through 28 then describe the ritual for the Day of Atonement. The objective of the ceremony is summarized as follows:

And it shall be a statute to you forever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict yourselves and shall do no work, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you. **For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you**. You shall be clean before the LORD from all your sins. It is a Sabbath of solemn rest to you, and you shall afflict yourselves; it is a statute forever. And **the priest who is anointed and consecrated as priest in his father’s place shall make atonement, wearing the holy linen garments**. He shall make atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. And this shall be a statute forever for you, that **atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year** because of all their sins.” And Aaron did as the LORD commanded Moses. (Leviticus 16:29-34 ESV)

In the court, in front of the Tabernacle was the large bronze altar upon which the daily sacrifices were performed.²⁸ Between the bronze altar and the Tabernacle was a bronze basin containing water for the priests to wash their hands and feet.²⁹

It took about six months to build the Tabernacle. In the second year after leaving Egypt, when the Tabernacle was finished:

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “On the first day of the first month **you shall erect the tabernacle** of the tent of meeting. ...” This **Moses did; according to all that the LORD commanded** him, so he did. In the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was erected. ... Then the

²⁴ See Exodus 24:18, 25:40, 26:30

²⁵ See Exodus 30:34-36

²⁶ See Exodus 27:21

²⁷ While the Tabernacle was under construction, Moses had a temporary “Tent of Meeting” pitched outside the camp, see Exodus 33:7-11.

²⁸ See Exodus 27:1-8, 29:38-42, 38:1-7

²⁹ See Exodus 30:17-21, 38:8

cloud covered the tent of meeting, and **the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle**. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and **the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle**. (Exodus 40:1-2, 16-17, 34-35 ESV)

The “glory of the LORD” filling the Tabernacle was symbolic of YHWH dwelling with his people. The presence of YHWH made the Tabernacle Holy.

5.2 History of the Tabernacle

During the wilderness period, whenever the Israelites made camp, the Tabernacle was erected at the center of the camp with the various tribes encamped around it:

Throughout all their journeys, **whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out**. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. For the **cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night**, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys. (Exodus 40:36-38 ESV see also Numbers 9:15-23)

When the Tabernacle was to be moved, it had to be taken down piece by piece in a very specific order. Numbers chapter four provides the detailed instructions for each group of Levites regarding their duties in moving the Tabernacle. On the march, six tribes preceded the Levites with the Tabernacle, and six tribes followed.

Once the initial conquest of land of Canaan had been accomplished by Joshua, the Tabernacle was set up at Shiloh (see Map 3), where it remained for many years:

Then the whole congregation of the people of Israel **assembled at Shiloh** and **set up the tent of meeting** there. The land lay subdued before them. (Joshua 18:1 ESV see also Joshua 19:51, 22:19, 29)

There was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was **Elkanah** the son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an Ephrathite. He had two wives. The name of the one was **Hannah** ... Now this man **used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh**, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD. (1 Samuel 1:1-3 ESV)

Apparently, there was a more permanent “Temple” constructed at Shiloh, either in conjunction with the Tabernacle or the Tabernacle was taken down and stored:

So it went on year by year. As often as she went up to **the house of the LORD** ... Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. And Elkanah, her husband, said to her, “Hannah, why do you weep? ...” After they had eaten and drunk in **Shiloh**, Hannah rose. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of **the temple of the LORD**. (1 Samuel 1:7-9 ESV)

Jeremiah alluded to the temple at Shiloh as foreboding the destruction of the Jerusalem temple:

Go now to **my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first**, and see what I did to it because of the evil of my people Israel. And now, because you have done all these things, declares the LORD, and when I spoke to you persistently you did not listen, ... therefore **I will do to the house that is called by my name**, [the Jerusalem temple] and in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your fathers, **as I did to Shiloh**. (Jeremiah 7:12-14 ESV)

The Psalmist laments the destruction of Shiloh:

When **God** heard, he **was full of wrath**, and he utterly rejected Israel. **He forsook his dwelling at Shiloh, the tent where he dwelt among mankind**, and delivered **his power** to captivity, **his glory** to the hand of the foe. (Psalm 78:59-60 ESV)

At the battle of Ebenezer (see Appendix Map 4) in about 1050BC,³⁰ Israel is defeated by the Philistines. The Ark is captured, and the sanctuary at Shiloh is destroyed. There is no explicit mention of the Tabernacle, but clearly it was removed before the destruction of Shiloh. The next explicit mention of the Tabernacle is in the time of Solomon when the Tabernacle is setup at Gibeon (see Appendix Map 5):

And Solomon, and all the assembly with him, went to the high place that was at **Gibeon**, for **the tent of meeting of God, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness, was there**. ... So Solomon came from the high place at **Gibeon**, from before **the tent of meeting**, to Jerusalem. And he

³⁰ See 1 Samuel 4:1-17

reigned over Israel.

(2 Chronicles 1:3, 13 ESV see also 1 Kings 3:4-5, 1 Chronicles 6:31-32, 16:39-40, 21:29)

It is possible that the Tabernacle had been erected at Nob³¹ during the time of David:

Then David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. ... And David said to Ahimelech the priest “... what do you have on hand? **Give me five loaves of bread**, or whatever is here.” And the priest answered David, “I have no common bread on hand, but there is holy bread ...” So the priest gave him the holy bread, for there was no bread there but **the bread of the Presence, which is removed from before the LORD, to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away.** (1 Samuel 21:1-6 ESV see also 1 Samuel 22:11-19)

The bread of the Presence sat on table in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle. Abimelech is apparently a descendant of Eli.³² So, the priests from Shiloh moved to Nob, and apparently set up the Tabernacle.

There is one other possible location at which the Tabernacle may have been set up, Bethel

(see Appendix Map 5):

Then all the people of Israel, the whole army, went up and came to **Bethel** and wept. **They sat there before the LORD** and fasted that day until evening, and **offered burnt offerings and peace offerings** before the LORD. And the people of Israel inquired of the LORD for **the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days**, and Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, **ministered before it in those days.** (Judges 20:26-28 ESV)

The final disposition of the Tabernacle was a storeroom in the Temple built by Solomon:

Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers' houses of the people of Israel, before King Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion. And all the men of Israel assembled to King Solomon at the feast in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month. And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. And they brought up the ark of the LORD, **the tent of meeting**, and **all the holy vessels that were in the tent; the priests and the Levites brought them up.** (1 Kings 8:1-4 ESV)

Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers' houses of the people of Israel, in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion. And all the men of Israel assembled before the king at the feast that is in the seventh month. And all the elders of Israel came, and the Levites took up the ark. And they brought up the ark, **the tent of meeting**, and **all the holy vessels that were in the tent; the Levitical priests brought them up.** (2 Chronicles 5:2-5 ESV)

The Tabernacle was the pattern for Solomon's temple. The temple comprised the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place surrounded by an enclosed courtyard – it was the Tabernacle made of stone. Over the years, as the Temple was looted on various occasions,³³ all the precious metals used in the Tabernacle would have been removed. Finally, the wood and fabrics would have been burned in the destruction of the Temple in 586BC.³⁴

5.3 Symbolism of the Tabernacle

The most important symbolic meaning of the Tabernacle, as stated above, is the “dwelling” of YHWH with his people Israel. This establishes the overall meaning of “to tabernacle”: dwelling together implies a close relationship, generally a family relationship.

Several Psalms appeal to this close relationship, for example:

O LORD, **who shall sojourn in your tent?**

Who shall dwell on your holy hill?

He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart;
who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor,
nor takes up a reproach against his friend; (Psalm 15:1-3 ESV)

³¹ The exact location of Nob is uncertain, but it seems to be very close to Jerusalem to the North.

³² See 1 Samuel 14:3, 22:20, 1 Chronicles 24:3

³³ See 1 Kings 14:25-26, 2 Kings 12:17-18, 16:17, 18:13-16, 24:10-13

³⁴ There is a tradition in 2 Maccabees 2:4-8 that Jeremiah was able to remove whatever was left of the Tabernacle to a cave prior to the destruction of the Temple. While this is possible, it seems unlikely.

You **prepare a table before me** in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and [hesed] shall follow me all the days of my life,
and **I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.** (Psalm 23:5-6 ESV)

One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after:
that I may **dwell in the house of the LORD** all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in **his temple.**
For **he will hide me in his [booth],**³⁵ in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock.
And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me,
and **I will offer in his tent** sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to the LORD. (Psalm 27:4-6 ESV)

In the Book of Job, a “booth” is used in parallel to “clouds” as a shelter provided by God:

Indeed, he soars amidst the **spreading of the clouds,** with **thunderings from his [booth]**?³⁶
Behold, he spreads his light over it; he uncovers the roots of the sea.³⁷ (Job 36:29-30 Hartley³⁸)

In Psalm 105, a cloud is similarly used for covering with a direct allusion to the cloud which covered the Tabernacle:

Egypt was glad when they departed, for dread of them had fallen upon it.
He spread a **cloud for a covering,**³⁹ and fire to give light by night. (Psalm 105:38-39 ESV)

In a personification of Jerusalem, Jeremiah laments with several direct allusions to the Tabernacle:

Woe is me because of my hurt! My wound is grievous.
But I said, “Truly this is an affliction, and I must bear it.”
My tent is destroyed, and all **my cords are broken;**
my children have gone from me, and they are not;
there is **no one to spread my tent** again and **to set up my curtains.** (Jeremiah 10:19-20 ESV)

In the Book of Lamentations, Jeremiah again compares Jerusalem to the Tabernacle:

He has bent his bow like an enemy, with his right hand set like a foe;
and he has killed all who were delightful in our eyes **in the tent of the daughter of Zion;**
he has poured out his fury like fire. ...
He has laid waste his booth like a garden, laid in ruins his meeting place; (Lamentation 2:4, 6a ESV)

In the New Testament, the Book of Hebrews makes many comparisons between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. A detailed analysis of these is beyond the scope of this paper, but the specific reference to the Tabernacle requires analysis:

Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. For a [tabernacle]⁴⁰ was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the **Holy Place.** Behind the second curtain was a second section called the **Most Holy Place,** having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron’s staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. **Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.**⁴¹ These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, but **into the second only the high priest goes, and he but**

³⁵ בִּסְכּוֹה - b’sukkoh: in booth of him – see **Excursus 1 – Hebrew and Greek Words**

³⁶ סִכְתּוֹ - sukkatho: booth of him – see **Excursus 1 – Hebrew and Greek Words**

³⁷ “uncovers the roots of the sea” is an allusion to the dividing the waters of Yam Suph.

³⁸ Hartley page 476 and 479

³⁹ See also Psalm 18:11 // 2 Samuel 22:12

⁴⁰ Greek is from σκηνή – skēnē (Noun: nominative singular feminine) (see www.esv.org). This word carries the general range of meaning implied by “tent” (ESV), but it is specifically used in the Septuagint of the various words used in the Old Testament for the Tabernacle (see **Excursus 1 – Hebrew and Greek Words**).

⁴¹ The author of Hebrews is not quite precise in his description: the altar of incense was in front of the curtain (Exodus 30:6); the jar of manna was in front of the ark (Exodus 16:33-34) as was Aaron’s staff (Numbers 17:10), the staff would not have fit into the ark in any case.

once a year, and **not without taking blood**, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional⁴² sins of the people. (Hebrews 9:1-7 ESV)

By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places [was]⁴³ not yet opened as long as the first [tabernacle] [was] still standing (which is **symbolic for the age then present**⁴⁴). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, **regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation**. But when **Christ appeared as a high priest** of the good things that have come, then through **the greater and more perfect [tabernacle]** (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) **he entered once for all into the holy places**, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but **by means of his own blood**, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Therefore **he is the mediator of a new covenant**, so that **those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance**, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. (Hebrews 9:8-15 ESV)

In verses 1 through 7 the author rehearses the particulars of the Tabernacle and the Day of Atonement ritual. Then the author expounds his understanding of the Tabernacle as a type of the salvation offered through Christ. **“The age then present”** was the time of the Old Covenant – the time of the physical nation of Israel, represented by the physical Tabernacle. With Jesus’ sacrifice, the Old Covenant ended – God was no longer dealing with a physical nation. At the first Christian Pentecost, the New Testament Church was inaugurated. The Church is spiritual Israel with which God has been working ever since – the Church is **“the greater more perfect tabernacle”**. The blood of animals symbolically represented the removal of sin in the physical Tabernacle, but the blood of Christ fully removes the penalty of sin from repentant Christians. The blood of Christ is the basis of the New Covenant. The **New Testament Church** is the **“dwelling place”**, the Tabernacle, of Jesus Christ, the head, and the members of the Church, the body, who comprise **the Family of God**.

Hebrews chapter nine verse ten makes reference to “regulations for the body imposed until **the time of reformation**”. This “time of reformation” began with the work of Jesus in the First Advent, but it looks to the inauguration of the Kingdom of God at the Second Advent. Luke records Peter’s early speech in the Solomon’s Portico of the Temple:

And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But **what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets**, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that **times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord**, and that **he may send the Christ** appointed for you, Jesus, **whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things** about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. (Acts 3:17-21 ESV)

Paul takes the metaphor of the Tabernacle one step further – he compares our physical existence to “the tent”, which we long to put off at the resurrection for an eternal existence:

For we know that if **the tent**⁴⁵ **that is our earthly home** is destroyed, we have a building from God, **a house not made with hands, eternal** in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, **longing to put on our heavenly dwelling**, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that **what is mortal may be swallowed up by life**. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. (2 Corinthians 5:1-5 ESV)

⁴² Intentional sin could NOT be atoned for by sacrifice (see Numbers 15:27-31). The sacrificial system was efficacious only for the repentant. The Day of Atonement sacrifices were for all the “uncleannesses” of the people – they superseded all the other sacrifices during the year and pointed to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Leviticus 16:16-19).

⁴³ The two instances of “is” in this verse are supplied by the translator. Given the context, “was” is more appropriate.

⁴⁴ Text from ESV footnote

⁴⁵ σκηνός – skēnos, (Noun: genitive singular neuter) from σκήνω – skēnos; see discussion in **Excursus 1 – Hebrew and Greek Words**

Peter also takes up the metaphor of physical life being a temporary “tent”:

Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this [tent],⁴⁶ to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my [tent] will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. (2 Peter 1:12-14 ESV)

The Tabernacle was central to the nation of Israel for several hundred years as a “tent”. Then the Temple was constructed on the pattern of the Tabernacle. Throughout all this time it was the center of the nation. Symbolically, YHWH the God of Israel, dwelt with his people in the Tabernacle and the Temple. This dwelling of God with Israel made them his people, his family. The New Testament extends the symbolic meaning of the Tabernacle to the spiritual family of God, the New Testament Church, and looks to the Second Advent and the establishment of the Kingdom of God, when True Christians, and all the “saints” who died over the millennia, will be resurrected into the Family of God and be part of the Kingdom of God. This leads into the most important symbolism of the Tabernacle – the Feast of Tabernacles.

6. The Feast of Tabernacles⁴⁷

The Feast of Tabernacles is discussed most fully in Leviticus chapter 23:

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month and for seven days is the Feast of Tabernacles to the LORD. On the first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work. For seven days you shall present offerings by fire to the LORD. ... These are the appointed [times] of the LORD, which you shall proclaim as times of holy convocation, for presenting to the LORD offerings by fire, burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day ... On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD seven days. On the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest. And you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. You shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.” (Leviticus 23:33-43 ESV)

The Feast of Tabernacles was one of the “pilgrim” Feasts of Israel, a time of “holy convocation” which meant that all men of military age were to present themselves at the sanctuary. Of course, many women and children also came. By the middle of the “seventh month” the vast majority of the final harvest was complete, the people had “gathered in the produce of the land”. They were then to “rejoice before the LORD your God seven days”, living in “booths” or “temporary huts”. This was to have an educational effect on succeeding generations – as a memorial of the Exodus event.

The agricultural focus of the Feasts was suited to the agricultural way of life of most Israelites:

You shall keep the Feast of Harvest, of the firstfruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field. You shall keep the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor (Exodus 23:16 ESV)

You shall observe the Feast of Weeks, the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year’s end. Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the LORD God, the God of Israel. For I will cast out nations before you and enlarge your borders; no one shall covet your land, when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year. (Exodus 34:22-24 ESV)

You shall keep the Feast of Booths seven days, when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your winepress. You shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns. For seven days you shall keep the feast to the LORD your God at the place that the

⁴⁶ σκηνώματι – skēnōmati, (Noun: dative singular neuter) from σκηνώμα – skēnōma; see discussion **Excursus 1 – Hebrew and Greek Words**

⁴⁷ See the literature referenced under www.ucg.org in the Bibliography for general information on The Feast of Tabernacles, and the Feast Days ordained by God.

LORD will choose, because **the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands**, so that you will be altogether joyful. (Deuteronomy 16:13-15 ESV)

The first pilgrim Feast was the **Feast of Unleavened Bread**, associated with the Passover, commemorating the emancipation of Israel from Egypt.⁴⁸ The second pilgrim Feast is called the **Feast of Harvest of firstfruits** because it marked the end of the early grain harvest. It was also called the **Feast of Weeks** because its date was calculated as seven weeks from the day after the Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The **Feast of Tabernacles** or **Feast of Booths** was also called the **Feast of Ingathering** because it marked the general end of the total harvest including figs, olives, and grapes.

One of the oldest examples of early Israelite writing is the **Gezer Calendar**.⁴⁹ See Figure 3 in the Appendix for depictions of the Gezer Calendar. The Gezer Calendar contains a brief “poem” which outlines the activities of the agricultural year. It was possibly a child’s exercise tablet. The following translation and explanation are from DOTT.⁵⁰

Two months of ingathering
Two months of sowing
Two months of late sowing (or spring growth)
Month of pulling flax
Month of barley harvest
Month when everything [else] is harvested
Two months of pruning [vines]
Month of summer fruit

Line 1 begins with months 6 and 7 (September/October) – the final ingathering and processing of all the harvest – especially grapes and olives. The completion of this approximates the time of the Feast of Tabernacles. Line 2 is months 8 and 9 (November/December) – planting crops after the fall rain had softened the ground. Line 3, months 10 and 11 (January/February) – completion of sowing. Flax was harvested in March, month 12. The barley harvest began in April, month 1. Other grains were harvested in May, month 2. Over the summer, June and July, months 3 and 4, vines and fruit trees were tended. Finally, in August, month 5, summer fruits, mostly figs, were harvested.

6.1 The Meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles

The original agricultural associations of the Feast of Tabernacles are obvious. Also stated in the above quotations was the objective of “**rejoicing**” and “**that your generations may know**” – clearly God had more in mind than just the agricultural meaning. As stated above, the basic meaning of the word mishkan, “tabernacle”, is “dwelling place” or “home”. The basic meaning of sukkah, “booth”, is a “hut” or “temporary dwelling”. These meanings are exemplified and extended by the Feast of Tabernacles.

A prophecy in Isaiah sets the stage for many other prophecies and allusions to the full meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles:

In that day **the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious**, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of **the survivors of Israel**. And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem **will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem**, when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning. Then the **LORD will create over the whole site of Mount Zion** and over her assemblies **a cloud by day**, and smoke and the shining of a **flaming fire by night**; for over all the glory there will be **a canopy**. There will be **a booth for shade** by day from the heat, and for **a refuge and a shelter** from the storm and rain. (Isaiah 4:2-6 ESV)

“**The Branch**” is a common prophetic symbol for **the Messiah**⁵¹ – this prophecy looks to the Second Advent, when **the Messiah is glorified, as depicted in the Transfiguration**. The “**survivors of Israel**”⁵²

⁴⁸ See Exodus 12:14-20

⁴⁹ See DOTT pages 201-203, and Plate 11 following page 214.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ See **Excursus 3 – The Branch**

⁵² See Micah 2:12, 4:6-7, 7:18-20, Ezekiel 5:1-4, 6:8-10, 11:14-17, Zechariah 8:9-13

are those people called by God to come to the Land of Israel, the “second exodus”,⁵³ and form a New Nation of Israel in which each person is “called holy”.⁵⁴ These people will all be converted – part of the True Church of God, having entered into the New Covenant.⁵⁵ The “canopy” is the protection provided by God “over the whole site of Mount Zion”, symbolic of the New Israel and extending from there to the whole earth. The “cloud” and “fire” are a direct allusion to the pillar of smoke and fire associated with the original Tabernacle. The “booth for shade” is the presence of the King of kings, YHWH as he was known in the Old Testament, Jesus Christ as he was known in the New Testament, but now the returned God of all mankind, who will “dwell” with all mankind and bring freedom, abundance, peace, happiness, justice, and good government.

Another prophecy of Isaiah looks specifically to the return of the King of kings. Isaiah chapters thirty through thirty-five relate to the time period around 705BC when Hezekiah has withheld tribute from Assyria. There are strong factions in Jerusalem – some support open rebellion with promised support from Egypt; some look to a strengthening Babylon for help; Isaiah warns that the only hope is trusting in YHWH. These were dark times – Sennacherib would soon invade and reduce Hezekiah to “a bird in a cage”.⁵⁶ As always, Isaiah saw in the contemporary situation the inexorable unfolding of the Plan of God. This prophecy looks beyond the contemporary trouble, beyond all the intervening centuries, beyond the destruction at the close of the age, to the arrival of the King of kings:

Your eyes will behold the king in his beauty; they will see a land that stretches afar.

Your heart will muse on the terror:

“Where is he who counted, where is he who weighed the tribute?

Where is he who counted the towers?”

You will see no more the insolent people,
the people of an obscure speech that you cannot comprehend,
stammering in a tongue that you cannot understand.

Behold Zion, the city of our appointed feasts!

Your eyes will see Jerusalem, an untroubled habitation, an immovable tent,⁵⁷

whose stakes will never be plucked up, nor will any of its cords be broken.

But there the LORD in majesty will be for us a place of broad rivers and streams,
where no galley with oars can go, nor majestic ship can pass.

For the LORD is our judge; the LORD is our lawgiver;

the LORD is our king; he will save us. (Isaiah 33:17-22 ESV)

Isaiah is the speaker. Under inspiration, he is summarizing the insight God has given him into the Plan of God and the working-out of worldwide events. This prophecy is a promise to those human beings who have lived over the millennia; who have been called by God and have remained faithful in their calling; to whom God will see fit to grant the gift of eternal life at the first resurrection. Isaiah says to these people “Your eyes will behold the king in his beauty” – the glorified Jesus Christ as depicted in the Transfiguration. In the Messianic Kingdom all lands over the whole earth will “stretch” far and wide in peace and abundance. The “terror” that Isaiah’s contemporaries were facing, the ongoing tribute and war that has always plagued the human race will be over. All the world will “Behold Zion, the city of our appointed feasts!” – all the Feasts of God, especially the Feast of Tabernacles,⁵⁸ will be celebrated by all. Jerusalem is directly compared to the Tabernacle: it is “an immovable tent” – God will use Jerusalem as the center of the world⁵⁹ Jerusalem will be an immovable Tabernacle. The “stakes” and “cords” are a direct allusion to the guy ropes that secured the perimeter of the Tabernacle. There are a several prophecies of the “river” flowing from Jerusalem to heal the world.⁶⁰ Isaiah makes the meaning of the metaphor clear: “the LORD in majesty will be for us a place of broad rivers” – the teaching of the King

⁵³ See Isaiah 10:20-22a, 11:11-12, Jeremiah 3:14, 16:14-16, 23:7-8, Ezekiel 34:11-16

⁵⁴ See also “The Remnant and the Second Exodus” on <http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

⁵⁵ See Jeremiah 31:31-34, 32:37-41, Ezekiel 11:17-20, 34:25-31, 36:22-31, Hebrews 8:6-13, 9:15-22

⁵⁶ “But as for Hezekiah, the Jew, who did not bow down in submission to my yoke ... I shut up like a caged bird within Jerusalem ...” from the Taylor Prism, British Museum No. 91032, DOTT page 67.

⁵⁷ אֹהֶל - ‘ōhel, tent (noun, common, masculine singular absolute) see discussion in **Excursus 1 – Hebrew and Greek Words**

⁵⁸ See Zechariah 14:16-19, Nahum 1:15

⁵⁹ See Isaiah 60:1-22 (note verse 14), 62:1-7, Zechariah 2:1-12, 8:1-8

⁶⁰ See Psalm 46:4, 65:9 Ezekiel 47:1-12, Zechariah 14:8, Revelation 22:1-2

of kings will truly bring spiritual healing to the world. The King of kings will bring true justice, respect for and understanding of the teaching of God, and salvation to all the world, to each and every human being.

The Book of the prophet Micah⁶¹ contains one of the most beautiful descriptions of the World Tomorrow:

It shall come to pass in the latter days that **the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains**, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, and many nations shall come, and say:
“Come, **let us go up** to the mountain of the LORD, **to the house of the God of Jacob**, that **he may teach us his ways** and that we may walk in his paths.”
For **out of Zion shall go forth the [teaching]**,⁶² and **the word of the LORD from Jerusalem**.
He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, **neither shall they learn war anymore**; but **they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree**, and no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of **the LORD of hosts has spoken**. (Micah 4:1-4 ESV)

Some examples of Psalms which look to the “dwelling” of God with his people follow:

Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me;
let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling!
Then I will go to **the altar of God**, to God my exceeding joy,
and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God. (Psalm 43:3-4 ESV)

God’s “**light and truth**” are as Micah prophesized: “**out of Zion shall go forth the teaching, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem**” – these will lead people to “**dwelling**” with God. For the Psalmist, going to “the altar of God”⁶³ had literal meaning – figuratively, it implies being a living sacrifice to God.⁶⁴

The following Psalm focuses on the “**family**” relationship of “**tabernacling**” in God’s house:

How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!
My [life]⁶⁵ longs, yes, faints for **the courts of the LORD**;
my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.
Even the sparrow finds **a home**, and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young, **at your altars**, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God.
Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! (Psalm 84:1-4 ESV)

The actual “**dwelling place**”⁶⁶ of God is “**eternity**” – the Psalmist longs to be part of God’s family and dwell with God in eternity, to be home with God. God’s “dwelling” in the Tabernacle is a type of God’s intention for each and every human being to truly dwell with God in eternity. The Psalmist uses the metaphor of a simple bird’s being provided a home by God and finding the “altars” of God. If God takes care of simple birds,⁶⁷ surely one whose “life longs ... for the courts of YHWH” will find the “altars” of God. **This is the significance of the Transfiguration**. The three apostles were given a glimpse of eternity – the glorified Jesus Christ, the King of kings, with two of the individuals who have had most important roles in accomplishing the Plan of God.

7. The Beginning and the End

God sees the end from the beginning.⁶⁸ The Plan of God has been intact from the beginning, and God says, “I will accomplish my purpose”.⁶⁹ Looking back, we can clearly see how the prophecies have

⁶¹ This prophecy is paralleled in Isaiah 2:2-4; see also Amos 9:11-15

⁶² תּוֹרָה - torah (noun, common, feminine singular absolute), “teaching”, “instruction”, “direction”, NOT “law”

⁶³ Psalm 26:6-8 carries a very similar meaning.

⁶⁴ See Romans 12:1-21, 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, Hebrews 13:1-16

⁶⁵ See Excursus 2 – נַפְשִׁי and ψυχήν

⁶⁶ See Isaiah 57:15, 2 Chronicles 30:27, Isaiah 33:5, Jeremiah 23:24, 25:30, Zechariah 2:13

⁶⁷ See Matthew 6:26, 11:29-30, Luke 12:6-7

⁶⁸ See Isaiah 46:10, 41:4, 22, 23, 26, 45:11, 48:3

⁶⁹ See Isaiah 55:11, 45:23, 24:3, Jeremiah 1:12, Ezekiel 17:24, Psalm 147:15, 33:4

unfolded. We are approaching the time when many more prophecies will be fulfilled. The Book of Numbers chapter 24 contains one of the earliest, and also one of the most enigmatic, prophecies of the unfolding of the Plan of God culminating in the establishment of the Kingdom of God and the World Tomorrow:

“The oracle of **Balaam** the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened, the oracle of him **who hears the words of God, who sees the vision of the Almighty**, falling down with his eyes uncovered:

How lovely are your tents, O Jacob, **your encampments**, O Israel!

Like palm groves that stretch afar, like gardens beside a river,
like aloes that the LORD has planted, like cedar trees beside the waters.

Water shall flow from his buckets, and **his seed shall be in many waters**;

his king shall be higher than Agag, and **his kingdom shall be exalted**.

God brings him out of Egypt and is for him like the horns of the wild ox;

he shall eat up the nations, his adversaries,

and shall break their bones in pieces and pierce them through with his arrows.

He crouched, he lay down like a lion and like a lioness; who will rouse him up?

Blessed are those who bless you, and cursed are those who curse you.” (Numbers 24:3-9 ESV)

Bil^eam (Balaam) was a shadowy figure – he was not averse to accepting money from the King of Moab to curse the Israelites as they camped east of the Jordan.⁷⁰ Yet clearly, he had contact with God. He certainly knew of YHWH,⁷¹ at least by name, and God forced him to deliver several prophecies. In the end, he counselled the King of Moab how to corrupt Israel and was killed for it.⁷²

The pericope quoted above is full of **dual implications** – much of it has direct application to the immanent conquest of Canaan, but also much of it extends to the arrival of the Kingdom of God. The end-time focus of the prophecy is made clear in the next few verses:

... I will let you know what this people will do to your people **in the latter days**. ...

I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near:

a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel;

it shall crush the forehead of **Moab** and break down all the sons of **Sheth**.⁷³

Edom shall be dispossessed; **Seir** also, his enemies, shall be dispossessed.

Israel is doing valiantly.

And **one from Jacob shall exercise dominion** and destroy the survivors of cities!”

(Numbers 24:14, 17-19 ESV)

Looking out at the camp of Israel, Bil^eam commented “How lovely are your **tents**, O Jacob, your encampments, O Israel!”. The word “encampments” is translated from mish^ekan – “**dwelling place**”, “**tabernacle**”⁷⁴ – this foreshadows the subsequent symbolism of the Tabernacle and the Feast of Tabernacles. The symbolism of “**flowing water**” relates to the “**river**”, as well as Jesus’ allusions to “**living water**”.⁷⁵ The metaphor of “**seed**” of Israel in “**many waters**” looks to the dispersal of Israel throughout the nations;⁷⁶ but also to the Second Exodus and the calling of people out of the whole world to a New Israel, which will “be exalted” as the first of the nations.⁷⁷ The metaphor of “**he shall eat up the nations**” has many implications. Indeed, Israel was about to “eat up” the nations of Canaan in the conquest; but more importantly the metaphor applies to conquering the nations of the world with the Gospel in the World Tomorrow.⁷⁸ “**Blessed are those who bless you, and cursed are those who**

⁷⁰ See Numbers 22:1-21

⁷¹ See Numbers 22:18

⁷² See Numbers 31:16, 8

⁷³ The Hebrew is **תִּשְׁבֵּת** the same as the name Adam’s son in Genesis 4:25; however, it is parallel with Moab (as are Edom and Seir). Some commentators suggest it is, therefore, in some way a designation of Moab. Others suggest it is in fact referring to Adam’s son.

⁷⁴ See discussion in **Excursus 1 – Hebrew and Greek Words**

⁷⁵ See John 4:7-15, 7:37-39

⁷⁶ See Leviticus 26:33, Deuteronomy 28:64, Amos 9:9, Micah 5:27, Hosea 9:17, Jeremiah 5:18-19, Ezekiel 12:15, Daniel 9:7

⁷⁷ See Jeremiah 31:7, Amos 6:1, Isaiah 2:2-4, Micah 4:1-3

⁷⁸ See Isaiah 11:14-15, 26:4-6, 41:15-17, Micah 5:8-9, Matthew 11:12, Luke 16:16

curse you” is a direct allusion to the promises to Abraham⁷⁹ fulfilled initially by Jesus Christ in the First Advent, but fully to be realized by Jesus Christ as King of kings in the Second Advent.

The “**star**” from Jacob is generally recognized as a **Messianic prophecy**. The references to Edom and Moab have many implications for the relationship of Israel with those nations over the centuries. But, in and end-time context, those nations are symbolic of the world system,⁸⁰ the conglomerate nations of the world under the sway of Satan, in opposition to the way of God. Jesus Christ will defeat the armies of these nations at his second coming,⁸¹ then, through the spread of the gospel, they will be “spiritually defeated”, and brought into the Family of God.

As this very early prophecy, alluding to the “**Dwelling Place**”, the Tabernacle, foreshadows so much of the Plan of God, it is fitting that the Book of Revelation closes out the description of the Plan of God with several references to the “**Tabernacle**”:

And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also **those who had conquered** the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. And they sing **the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb**, saying,

“Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty!

Just and true are your ways, O **King of the nations**!

Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name?

For you alone are holy.

All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

(Revelation 15:2-4 ESV)

After this I looked, and the sanctuary of **the tabernacle of witness** in heaven was opened, and out of **the sanctuary** came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels **seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God** who lives forever and ever, and **the sanctuary** was filled with smoke from **the glory of God and from his power**, and **no one could enter the sanctuary**⁸² until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished. (Revelation 15:5-8 ESV)

Then I saw **a new heaven and a new earth**, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw **the holy city, new Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, **the tabernacle of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people**, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for **the former things have passed away.**” (Revelation 21:1-4 ESV)

Excursus 1 – Hebrew and Greek Words

The word מִשְׁכָּן - mish^akan, (noun, masculine) means “dwelling place”, “tabernacle”.⁸³ The noun is used about a hundred times mostly with specific reference to The Tabernacle. Other uses include:

- The temple in Jerusalem:
For our fathers have been unfaithful and have done what was evil in the sight of the LORD our God. They have forsaken him and have turned away their faces from the **habitation** of the LORD and turned their backs. (2 Chronicles 29:6 ESV)
- The figurative home of the unrighteous:
Surely such are the **dwellings** of the unrighteous, such is the place of him who knows not God. (Job 18:21 ESV)
- The natural abode of wild animals:
Who has let the wild donkey go free? Who has loosed the bonds of the swift donkey, to whom I have given the arid plain for his home and the salt land for his **dwelling place**? (Job 39:5-6 ESV)

⁷⁹ See Genesis 12:2-3; for a discussion of the promises to Abraham, see the paper “*Covenants of Grace*” on <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

⁸⁰ See Isaiah 14:3-11, 20:1-10, 47:1-15, Jeremiah 50:1-46, 51:1-56, Ezekiel 27:1-36, Daniel 2:31-45, Revelation 18:1-24

⁸¹ See Revelation 11:18, 14:17-20, Amos 9:1, Isaiah 1:24, 13:9, 26:21, 34:1-8, 59:18, 63:1-6, Jeremiah 25:33

⁸² See Exodus 40:34-35

⁸³ BDB page 1015; TWOT article 2387c, page 925

- The grave:
For he sees that even the wise die;
the fool and the stupid alike must perish and leave their wealth to others.
Their graves are their homes forever,
their **dwelling places** to all generations, though they called lands by their own names.
(Psalm 49:10-11 ESV)
- The tents of the Israelites in the wilderness:
he rained meat on them like dust, winged birds like the sand of the seas;
he let them fall in the midst of their camp, all around their **dwelling**s. (Psalm 78:27-28 ESV)
- A rock-cut tomb:
What have you to do here, and whom have you here, that you have cut out here a tomb for yourself, you who cut out a tomb on the height and carve a **dwelling** for yourself in the rock? (Isaiah 22:16 ESV)
- The state of being in the World Tomorrow:
My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure **dwelling**s, and in quiet resting places.
(Isaiah 32:18 ESV)
- The same as the previous bullet; but note the several direct allusions to the Tabernacle:
Enlarge the **place of your tent**, and let **the curtains** of your **habitations** be stretched out;
do not hold back; **lengthen your cords** and **strengthen your stakes**. (Isaiah 54:2 ESV)

“*mishkan*” is derived from the verb שָׁכַן - shakan, which means “settle down”, “abide” “dwell”.⁸⁴ This verb occurs 129 times. The subject of the verb can be persons, animals, places, or abstract concepts. God is the subject of the verb 43 times;⁸⁵ some examples follow:

- God dwells with Israel:
Now the word of the LORD came to Solomon, “Concerning this house that you are building, if you will walk in my statutes and obey my rules and keep all my commandments and walk in them, then I will establish my word with you, which I spoke to David your father. And **I will dwell among the children of Israel** and will not forsake my people Israel.”
(1 Kings 6:11-13 ESV, see also Exodus 25:8, 29:45-46, Numbers 35:34, Ezekiel 43:7, 9)
- God dwells in Jerusalem:
Thus says the LORD: I have returned to Zion and **will dwell** in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, the holy mountain.
(Zechariah 8:3 ESV see also 1 Chronicles 23:25, Psalm 74:2, 135:21, Isaiah 8:18, Joel 3:17, 21)
- God dwells in his sanctuary:
The chariots of God are twice ten thousand,
thousands upon thousands; the Lord is among them;
Sinai is now in the sanctuary.
You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train
and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious,
that the LORD God **may dwell there**. (Psalm 68:17-18 ESV see also Numbers 5:3)
- God makes his name dwell in a location of his choosing:
But when you go over the Jordan and live in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and when he gives you rest from all your enemies around, so that you live in safety, then to **the place that the LORD your God will choose**, to **make his name dwell there**, there you shall bring all that I command you ... (Deuteronomy 12:10-11a ESV see also 14:23, 16:2, 6, 11, 26:2, Nehemiah 1:9)
- The glory of YHWH dwelt on Mount Sinai during the theophany:
The **glory of the LORD dwelt** on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days ... Now the appearance of **the glory of the LORD** was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. (Exodus 24:16-17 ESV)

There is another verb which also means “to dwell”: יָשַׁב - yashav, it occurs 1090 times and the root exists in most other Semitic languages;⁸⁶ hence, it is a more common verb than shakan. For persons, animals, places, and abstract concept yashav carries essentially the same range of meaning as shakan. With respect to God, the range of meaning is slightly different:

⁸⁴ BDB page 1014

⁸⁵ TWOT article 2387, page 925

⁸⁶ TWOT article 922, page 411

Some have argued that *yāshab* is never used of Yahweh “dwelling” on earth or any appearance of Yahweh to Israel. According to this view, the verb *shākan* and its derivatives are reserved for concepts of the immanence of God or for his “tabernacling with the men” of the OT. Usually the Lord is said to dwell in heaven or is “enthroned with the cherubim”.⁸⁷

Some examples of YHWH “dwelling” in eternity follow:

He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. (Psalm 2:4 ESV)

But the LORD **sits enthroned** forever; he has established his throne for justice, and he judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness. (Psalm 9:7-8 ESV)

The LORD **sits enthroned** over the flood; the LORD **sits enthroned** as king forever. (Psalm 29:10 ESV)

The LORD is high above all nations, and **his glory above the heavens!**

Who is like the LORD our God, **who is seated on high**,
who looks far down on the heavens and the earth? (Psalm 113:4-6 ESV)

Some examples of YHWH symbolically “dwelling” above the Ark of the Covenant” follow:

So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, **who is enthroned on the cherubim**. (1 Samuel 4:4 ESV)

And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baale-judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the LORD of hosts **who sits enthroned on the cherubim**. (2 Samuel 6:2 ESV // 1 Chronicles 13:6)

And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said: “O LORD, the God of Israel, **enthroned above the cherubim**, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. (2 Kings 19:15 ESV)

The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble!

He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!

The LORD is great **in Zion**; he is exalted over all the peoples. (Psalm 99:1-2 ESV)

The nouns מְעוֹן - *maʿon* (masculine) and מְעֹנָה - *mʿonah* (feminine) also mean “dwelling” or “habitation”. They occur much less frequently than *mishʿkan*.⁸⁸ They frequently denote the dwelling place of animals. With respect to God, they refer to his dwelling in eternity, in the Tabernacle, and metaphorically of man dwelling with God. Some examples follow:

- God’s dwelling in eternity:
Look down from your holy **habitation, from heaven**, and bless your people Israel and the ground that you have given us, as you swore to our fathers, a land flowing with milk and honey. (Deuteronomy 26:15 ESV)
Then the priests and the Levites arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard, and their prayer came to his holy **habitation in heaven**. (2 Chronicles 30:27 ESV)
The LORD will roar **from on high**, and from his holy **habitation** utter his voice;
he will roar mightily against his fold, and shout, like those who tread grapes,
against all the inhabitants of the earth. (Jeremiah 25:30 ESV)
- God’s dwelling in the Tabernacle:
Why then do you scorn **my sacrifices and my offerings** that I commanded for **my dwelling**, and honor your sons above me by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of **every offering of my people Israel**? (1 Samuel 2:29 ESV)
O LORD, I love **the habitation** (*maʿon*) of your house and **the place** (*mishʿkan*) **where your glory dwells**. (Psalm 26:8 ESV)
- Metaphor, dwelling with God:
Be to **me a rock of refuge**, to which I may continually come;
you have given the command to save me, for **you are my rock** and my fortress. (Psalm 71:3 ESV)
Lord, you have been our **dwelling place** in all generations. (Psalm 90:1)
Because you have made **the LORD** your **dwelling place** (*maʿon*)—the Most High, who is my refuge—
no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near **your tent** (*ʾohel*). (Psalm 91:9-10)

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ TWOT article 1581, page 654

The masculine noun סֹךְ - sok, and the feminine noun סֻכָּה - sukkah, carry the range of meaning “covert”, “thicket”, “booth”. The nouns derive from the root סָכַךְ - sakak which means “block”, “stop the approach”, “shut off”, “cover”. “The basic meaning is blocking, or stopping up something. ... This important root is productive in both a physical and a figurative sense, particularly with the idea of covering.”⁸⁹ Some examples follow:

The cherubim spread out their wings above, **overshadowing** the mercy seat with their wings, with their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat were the faces of the cherubim. (Exodus 37:9 ESV)

On the first day of the first month you shall erect the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. And you shall put in it the ark of the testimony, and **you shall screen** the ark with the veil. (Exodus 40:3 ESV)

Then David gave Solomon his son ... his plan for the golden chariot of the cherubim that spread their wings and **covered** the ark of the covenant of the LORD. (1 Chronicles 28:11, 18 ESV)

Related to the construction use of the verb *sakak* is another derived noun, מַסָּךְ - masak (masculine) which is primarily used for the screen which acted as a veil in the Tabernacle:

Then they brought the tabernacle to Moses, the tent and all its utensils, its hooks, its frames, its bars, its pillars, and its bases; the covering of tanned rams’ skins and goatskins, and the veil of **the screen**; (Exodus 39:33-34 ESV)

He took the testimony and put it into the ark, and put the poles on the ark and set the mercy seat above on the ark. And he brought the ark into the tabernacle and set up the veil of **the screen**, and **screened** the ark of the testimony, as the LORD had commanded Moses. (Exodus 40:20-21 ESV)

The verb *sakak* is also used figuratively for God’s protection:

But let all who **take refuge** in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and **spread your protection** over them, that those who love your name may exult in you. (Psalm 5:11 ESV)

For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence.

He will cover you with his pinions, and **under his wings** you will find **refuge**; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. (Psalm 91:3-4 ESV)

O LORD, my Lord, the strength of my salvation, **you have covered** my head in the day of battle. (Psalm 140:7 ESV)

The noun *sok* is used only four times – twice for animals’ dens, and twice as allusion to the Tabernacle or the Temple:

One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after:
that I may **dwelt in the house of the LORD** all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire **in his temple**.
For he will hide me in **his shelter** in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under **the cover of his tent**;
he will lift me high upon a rock. (Psalm 27:4-5 ESV)

In Judah God is known; his name is great in Israel.

His abode has been established in **Salem**, his **dwelling place in Zion**. (Psalm 76:1-2 ESV)

The most important of these nouns is *sukkah*. This word is used thirteen times in the context of the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Booths – it means “tabernacle” or “booth”. Several of the occurrences have already been quoted in the section on **The Feast of Tabernacles**. Some of the other references are:

Then Solomon offered up burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of the LORD that he had built before the vestibule, as the duty of each day required, offering according to the commandment of Moses for the Sabbaths, the new moons, and the three annual feasts—the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and **the Feast of Booths**. (2 Chronicles 8:12-13 ESV)

When the seventh month came, and the children of Israel were in the towns, the people gathered as one man to Jerusalem. ... They set the altar in its place, for fear was on them because of the peoples of the lands, and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, burnt offerings morning and evening. And **they kept the Feast of Booths** ... (Ezra 3:1-4 ESV)

⁸⁹ TWOT article 1492, page 623

And they found it written in the [instruction] that the LORD had commanded by Moses that **the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month**, and that they should proclaim it and publish it in all their towns and in Jerusalem ... And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity **made booths and lived in the booths**, for from the days of Jeshua the son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so. And there was very great rejoicing. And day by day, from the first day to the last day, [Ezra] read from the Book of the Law of God. **They kept the feast seven days** ... (Nehemiah 8:14-15, 17-18 ESV)

A *sukkah* can be a pen for animals:

But Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built himself a house and made **booths** for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth. (Genesis 33:17 ESV)

A *sukkah* can be a temporary shelter in a military camp:

When Ben-hadad heard this message as he was drinking with the kings **in the booths**, he said to his men, "Take your positions." And they took their positions against the city. (1 Kings 20:12 ESV)

Jonah built a *sukkah* to protect himself from the sun:

Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made **a booth** for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city. (Jonah 4:5 ESV)

Isaiah compared besieged Jerusalem to a solitary *sukkah* in vineyard:

Your country lies desolate; your cities are burned with fire;
in your very presence foreigners devour your land;
it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners.
And the daughter of Zion is left **like a booth** in a vineyard,
like a lodge in a cucumber field, like a besieged city. (Isaiah 1:7-8 ESV)

The Psalmist extols the goodness of YHWH as he protects those who fear him in his *sukkah*:

Oh, ***how abundant is your goodness***, which you have stored up ***for those who fear you***
and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind!
In the cover of your presence you hide them from the plots of men;
you store them **in your shelter** from the strife of tongues. (Psalm 31:19-20 ESV)

Clouds are metaphorically called a *sukkah*:

He made darkness his covering, **his canopy** around him, thick ***clouds*** dark with water.
Out of the brightness before him hailstones and coals of fire broke through ***his clouds***.
(Psalm 18:11-12 ESV // 2 Samuel 22:12-13)

The last important word related to the Tabernacle is אֹהֶל - 'ohel a masculine noun. It carries essentially the same range of meaning as the English word "tent". It is used in several ways with respect to the Tabernacle.

- The fabric covering the frame of the Tabernacle is called a 'ohel:
You shall also make ***curtains*** of goats' hair **for a tent** over ***the tabernacle***; (Exodus 26:7 ESV)
- The masculine noun מוֹעֵד - mo'ed, meaning "appointed place",⁹⁰ is frequently used with 'ohel to designate the first room of the Tabernacle:
You shall command the people of Israel that they bring to you pure beaten olive oil for the light, that a lamp may regularly be set up to burn. **In the tent of meeting, outside the veil that is before the testimony**, Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening to morning before the LORD.
(Exodus 27:20-21 ESV)
The holy garments of Aaron shall be for his sons after him; they shall be anointed in them and ordained in them. The son who succeeds him as priest, ***who comes into the tent of meeting to minister in the Holy Place***, shall wear them ... (Exodus 29:29-30 ESV)
The LORD called Moses and spoke to him **from the tent of meeting**, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of livestock from the herd or from the flock. "If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. ***He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting*** ... (Leviticus 1:1-3)

⁹⁰ TWOT article 878b, pages 387-388

- The feminine noun עֲדוּת - 'eduth, meaning “testimony”,⁹¹ is frequently used with the Tabernacle (*mish^ekan* or *’ohel*) to highlight the existence of the Ark of the Covenant containing the tablets of the Ten Commandments:
These are the records of **the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the testimony**, as they were recorded at the commandment of Moses ... (Exodus 38:21 ESV)
The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Command the people of Israel to bring you pure oil from beaten olives for the lamp, that a light may be kept burning regularly. Outside **the veil of the testimony, in the tent of meeting**, Aaron shall arrange it from evening to morning before the LORD regularly. (Leviticus 24:1-3 ESV)
On the day that **the tabernacle** was set up, **the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the testimony**. And at evening it was **over the tabernacle** like the appearance of fire until morning. So it was always: the cloud covered it by day and the appearance of fire by night. (Numbers 9:15-16 ESV)

The Greek feminine noun σκηνή - skene is more or less the equivalent of *’ohel*. The Septuagint translates *σκηνή* from *’ohel* 245 times; from *mish^ekan* 93 times; and from *sukkah* 25 times.⁹² The word occurs about twenty times in the New Testament:

- In the Transfiguration (Mark 9:5, Matthew 17:4, Luke 9:33) for “Tabernacle” – see section “*The Transfiguration*”
- Several occurrences are direct quotations or allusions to Old Testament scriptures: Acts 7:43, 44, 15:16, Hebrews 8:5, 9:21, 11:9, and 13:10
- The several instances in Hebrews 9:1-15 were discussed in the section “*Symbolism of the Tabernacle*”
- The word is used symbolically for “eternal life” in the Parable of the Dishonest Manager:
And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into **the eternal dwellings**. (Luke 16:9 ESV)
- The word is used for the spiritual location of Jesus in his intercessory role as High Priest for the New Testament Church:
Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the **throne of the Majesty in heaven**, a minister **in the holy places, in the true tabernacle** that the Lord set up, not man. (Hebrews 8:1-2 ESV)
- The word is used for the eternal habitation of God:
And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to utter **blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name** and **his tabernacle** that is, those who dwell in heaven. (Revelation 13:5-6 ESV)
... after this I looked, and **the sanctuary of the tent of witness** in heaven was opened, and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues ... (Revelation 15:5-6 ESV)
- Finally, it is used symbolically for the ultimate goal of all humanity living in harmony with God:
And I saw the holy city, **new Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, **the tabernacle of God** is with man. **He will dwell with them**, and they will be his people, and **God himself will be with them** as their God. (Revelation 21:2-3 ESV)

Several related Greek words are used relatively infrequently:

- The neuter noun σκήνος – skēnos, means “tent” – it is used symbolically of “the body”:
For we know that if **the tent** that is **our earthly home** is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For **while we are still in this tent**, we groan ... (2 Corinthians 5:1-4 ESV)
- The neuter noun σκήνωμα – skēnōma, means “tent”, “dwelling place” – it is used for the Temple of Solomon and for “the body”:
So it was until the days of David, who found favor in the sight of God and asked to find a **dwelling place** for the God of Jacob. But it was **Solomon who built a house for him**. (Acts 7:45b-47 ESV)
I think it right, **as long as I am in this body**, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that **the putting off** of my **body** will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. (2 Peter 1:13-14 ESV)

⁹¹ TWOT article 1576f, pages 648-650

⁹² TDNT VII page 369

- The verb σκηνώω – skēnoō, means “to live”, “to dwell”, “to shelter”:
And the Word became flesh and **dwelt** among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14 ESV)
Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple;
and he who sits on the throne **will shelter** them with his presence. (Revelation 7:15 ESV)
Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and **you who dwell** in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short! (Revelation 12:12 ESV)
It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, **those who dwell** in heaven. (Revelation 13:6 ESV)
And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. **He will dwell** with them, and they will be his people ... (Revelation 21:3 ESV)
- The feminine noun σκηνοπηγία – skēnopēgia is used once specifically referencing the Feast of Tabernacles:
After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. Now the Jews’ **Feast of Booths** was at hand. So his brothers said to him, “Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. (John 7:1-3 ESV)
- The masculine noun σκηνοποιός – skēnopoios means “tentmaker” – it is used once:
After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were **tentmakers** by trade. (Acts 18:1-3 ESV)
- The verb κατασκηνώω – kataskēnoō is essentially a synonym of σκηνώω, meaning “to nest”, “to live”, “to dwell”:
And he said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the **birds of the air can make nests in its shade.**”
(Mark 4:30-32 ESV // Matthew 13:31-32, Luke 13:18-19)⁹³
For David says concerning him,
I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; **my flesh also will dwell in hope.**
(Acts 2:25-26 ESV quoting Psalm 16:8-9 from LXX)
- The feminine noun κατασκήνωσις – kataskēnōsis means “nest”:
And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and **birds of the air have nests**, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” (Matthew 8:20 ESV // Luke 9:58)
- The verb ἐπισκηνώω – episkēnoō is used only once. It means “to take up residence in a nest or dwelling”⁹⁴
Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, **so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.** (2 Corinthians 12:8-9 ESV)

Excursus 2 – נֶפֶשׁ and ψυχή

Both the Hebrew noun “*nephesh*” and the Greek feminine noun “*psuche*” are commonly translated “soul” in English Bibles.⁹⁵ A dictionary definition of the English word “soul” is:

1: the immaterial essence, animating principle, or actuating cause of an individual life ... 3: a person’s total self 4a: an active or essential part ... 5a: man’s moral or emotional nature b: the quality that arouses emotion and sentiment c: spiritual or moral force : FEVER 6: PERSON ...⁹⁶

⁹³ TDNT VII page 389 comments, “In the NT κατασκηνώω is used only under OT influence.” This parable makes direct allusion to Daniel 4:12 where κατασκηνώω is used in LXX. For a discussion of the Parable of the Grain of Mustard Seed, see the paper “*Faith Parables*” on <http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

⁹⁴ TDNT VII page 386

⁹⁵ The best and most complete discussion of both nephesh and psuche is in TDNT IX page 608.

⁹⁶ Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, G.&C. Merriam Company, Springfield, Massachusetts, 1967, page 834

This is of course somewhat ambiguous, but it is generally a reasonable definition. Note there is no suggestion of “immortality” or of the soul being an independent entity capable of existence apart from the body. The pagan notion of the “immortal soul” has become so pervasive in modern thought, that the word “soul” itself is essentially unusable. To most people today, if the word “soul” is used, they automatically assume the notion of the “immortal soul”.

All ancient pagan peoples developed some concept of life continuing after death. This is evident from even a casual reading of the myths of Sumer and Babylon. The Egyptians took the afterlife most seriously. The massive pyramids were built as eternal homes for the Pharaohs. But it was the Greeks who refined the concept; attached it to the word ψυχή; and transmitted it into the modern world.

Schweizer summarizes the concept from Homer as follows:

This ψυχή leaves man at the moment of death ... The soul goes to the underworld and may sometimes show itself to a living person ... In the underworld it leads a shadowy existence ... Nothing is expected of the shadowy existence of the ψυχή in the underworld.⁹⁷

Schweizer then goes on to summarize the further development of the concept:

... ψυχή did in fact become the term for this newly found master-concept ... connected with the belief in retribution in the hereafter ... The ψυχή in the underworld has to guarantee the continuity of life ... In close connection herewith the doctrine of the transmigration of the soul is found for the first time among the Greeks ... Here the ψυχή is the epitome of the individual. It can be thought of apart from the body ... we find the idea of ... the body as the tomb of the soul ...⁹⁸

This takes us essentially to the concept of the “immortal soul” in modern thought. This concept is diametrically opposed to the biblical concept of נִפְשׁ / ψυχή.

The original notion of nephesh seems to be “breath”. Cognates in other Semitic languages support this.⁹⁹ In Genesis 1:30 we have:

And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has **the breath of life**, I have given every green plant for food. (ESV)

The Hebrew is נִפְשׁ חַיָּה - nephesh hayah, “breath of alive” – *nephesh* is breath which gives life. In Genesis 2:7 we have:

... then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground **and breathed** into his nostrils **the breath of life**, and the man became **a living creature**. (ESV)

The Hebrew is the same as in 1:30, *nephesh hayah*, the breath of life breathed by God into the man made him a living “*nephesh*”. In Genesis 1 verses 20, 21, and 24, the lower life forms are called “living creatures”. This is the essential meaning of “*nephesh*” – something alive which breaths. A *nephesh* can cease to be alive:

But if there is harm, then you shall pay **life [nephesh]** for **life [nephesh]** ... (Exodus 21:23 ESV)

You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it **shall be put to death**. Whoever does any work on it, **that person [nephesh] shall be cut off** from among his people. (Exodus 31:14 ESV)

Behold, all **lives [nephesh]** are mine; the **life [nephesh]** of the father as well as the **life [nephesh]** of the son is mine: the **person [nephesh] who sins shall die**. (Ezekiel 18:4 ESV)

The most frequent usage of *nephesh* means “life”, “being”, “person”:

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters. He restores **my [life]**. (Psalm 23:1-2 ESV)

Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of **my life**. (Psalm 54:4 ESV)

Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all the day.

Gladden **the [life]** of your servant, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up **my [being]**. (Psalm 86:3-4 ESV)

⁹⁷ Eduard Schweizer, TDNT IX, page 609

⁹⁸ Op. cit. page 611

⁹⁹ TWOT article 1395, pages 587-588

Nephesh is used metaphorically and symbolically for such things as appetite, desire, innermost feelings:

- The grave is personified as having an insatiable “*nephesh*”, “appetite”:
Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite and opened its mouth beyond measure ... (Isaiah 5:14 ESV)
- The Israelites in the desert tested God by demanding food “to the *nephesh* of them”:
Yet they sinned still more against him, rebelling against the Most High in the desert.
They tested God in their heart by demanding the food they craved. (Psalm 78:17-18 ESV)
- The Psalmist bemoans “the waters” threatening his life, have risen to his “*nephesh*”, “his neck”:
Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck.
I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold;
I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me. (Psalm 69:1-2 ESV)
- A frequent metaphor is “inner most feelings”:
Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter in nephesh ... (Job 3:20 ESV)
Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit;
I will complain in the bitterness of my nephesh. (Job 7:11 ESV)
- The “*nephesh*”, “will”, of adversaries threatens the Psalmist:
Give me not up to the will of my adversaries;
for false witnesses have risen against me, and they breathe out violence. (Psalm 27:12 ESV)

In the Septuagint, נֶפֶשׁ is most commonly translated by ψυχή. This is the environment of the New Testament authors. They clearly stick to the Old Testament meaning of *nephesh* when they use *psuche*. They specifically avoid the Greek notion of the “immortal soul”. The most common uses of *psuche* mean “life”, “person”, “mind”, “self”:

And he said to them, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?”
(Mark 3:4 ESV)

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your psuche [person, mind].
(Matthew 11:28-29 ESV)

And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my [self], “[Self], you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your [life] is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ (Luke 12:18-20 ESV)

Now is my [mind] is troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. (John 12:27 ESV)

Paul uses *psuche* to emphasize will power, determination, “heart”:

Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart ... (Ephesians 6:5-6 ESV)

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. (Colossians 3:23-24 ESV)

Excursus 3 – The Branch

The metaphor of “the branch” is introduced in the Book of Job. The comparison is to a person who appears to be flourishing:

Such are the paths of all who forget God; the hope of the godless shall perish.
He is a lush plant before the sun, and his shoots spread over his garden. (Job 8:13, 16 ESV)
he will not depart from darkness; the flame will dry up his shoots ... (Job 15:30 ESV)
His roots dry up beneath, and his branches wither above. (Job 18:16 ESV)

Job then applies the metaphor to himself looking back on more prosperous times:

Oh, that I were as in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me, ...
Then I thought, ‘I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand,
my roots spread out to the waters, with the dew all night on my branches,
my glory fresh with me, and my bow ever new in my hand.’ (Job 29:2, 18-20 ESV)

In exploring the concept of the resurrection, Job again applies the metaphor:

*"For **there is hope for a tree**, if it be cut down, **that it will sprout again**, and **that its shoots will not cease**. Though its root grow old in the earth, and its stump die in the soil, yet at the scent of water **it will bud** and **put out branches** like a young plant. **But a man dies and is laid low**; man breathes his last, and where is he? As waters fail from a lake and a river wastes away and dries up, **so a man lies down and rises not again**; till the heavens are no more he will not awake or be roused out of his sleep. Oh that you would hide me in Sheol, that you would conceal me until your wrath be past, that you would **appoint me a set time, and remember me!** **If a man dies, shall he live again?** All the days of my service I would wait, till **my renewal** should come. **You would call, and I would answer you**; you would long for the work of your hands. (Job 14:7-15 ESV)*

The Psalmist compares Israel to a spreading vine with verdant branches:

You brought **a vine out of Egypt**; you drove out the nations and **planted it**. You **cleared the ground** for it; **it took deep root and filled the land**. The mountains were **covered with its shade**, the mighty cedars **with its branches**. It sent out its **branches to the sea** and its **shoots to the River**. Why then have you broken down its walls, so that all who pass along the way **pluck its fruit**? (Psalm 80:8-12 ESV)

Hosea looks to the New Israel in the World Tomorrow as a beautiful tree:

***I will heal their apostasy**; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. **I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily; he shall take root** like the trees of Lebanon; **his shoots shall spread out**; **his beauty** shall be alike the olive, and **his fragrance** like Lebanon. **They shall return and dwell** beneath my shadow; **they shall flourish like the grain**; they shall **blossom like the vine**; their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon. (Hosea 14:4-7 ESV)*

Amos is the first to link "the branch" metaphor to the Messiah:

*"In that day **I will raise up the booth of David** that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old, that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name," declares the LORD who does this. "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit. **I will plant them on their land**, and they **shall never again be uprooted** out of the land that I have given them," says the LORD your God. (Amos 9:11-15 ESV)*

The "booth" (*sukkah*) of David is an allusion to the promise of an everlasting dynasty to be fulfilled by the Messiah:

*And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. **Your throne shall be established forever**. (2 Samuel 7:16 ESV)*

*I will establish **his offspring forever** and **his throne as the days of the heavens**. ... Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. **His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun** before me. (Psalm 89:29, 35-36 ESV)*

*Of the **increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David** and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness **from this time forth and forevermore**. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. (Isaiah 9:7 ESV)*

*He will be great and will be called the **Son of the Most High**. And the **Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David**, and **he will reign over the house of Jacob forever**, and **of his kingdom there will be no end**." (Luke 1:32-33 ESV)*

Isaiah records, during his commissioning by YHWH, a question he asks regarding temporality and YHWH's response:

Then I said, "**How long, O Lord?**"

And he said: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant,
and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste,
and the LORD removes people far away,
and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the [earth].¹⁰⁰

And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again,

like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled."

The holy seed is its stump. (Isaiah 6:11-13 ESV)

Isaiah wonders "**How long, O Lord?**" it will take to complete the work to which YHWH has commissioned him. Isaiah is neither prepared for, nor able to understand, the answer he is given. We can understand the answer looking back over the last 2500 years of the working-out of the Plan of God using the insight provided by the many prophecies which came later than this one to Isaiah. Isaiah had no such insight.

"Until cities lie waste ... and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the earth." This looks to the final holocaust preceding the Second Advent.¹⁰¹ Then Isaiah records the same metaphor as Job of the felled tree with the remaining stump. Job recognized that the stump could bring forth new branches. Isaiah identifies the "**stump**" as the "**holy seed**". This is clearly Messianic. Though the Davidic line was eradicated from its status as royalty over Israel,¹⁰² in the "stump", the bloodline continued until the First Advent.¹⁰³ Then "**the stump put out a branch**", the Messiah. Isaiah's prophecy looks to the Second Advent when "**The Branch**" will return as **King of kings**. Isaiah later elaborates on this:

There shall come forth **a shoot from the stump** of Jesse, and **a branch** from his roots shall bear fruit.

And the **Spirit of the LORD** shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

And **his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD**.

He shall not judge by what his **eyes see**, or decide disputes by what his **ears hear**,
but with **righteousness** he shall judge the poor, and decide with **equity** for the meek of the earth;
and **he shall strike the earth** with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips **he shall kill the wicked**.

Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and **faithfulness** the belt of his loins. (Isaiah 11:1-5 ESV)

The first part of the prophecy applies to the Messiah in the **First Advent**: "the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him ... his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD". "He shall not judge ... the meek of the earth" describe the nature of government to be instituted at the **Second Advent**. "He shall strike ... the wicked" refer to the **retributive justice** to be applied by the King of kings at his return. "**Righteousness** ... **faithfulness**" are two of the distinguishing character attributes of the King of kings.

The prophet Jeremiah picks up the metaphor of "The Branch" on two occasions. Immediately after chronicling the physical end of Davidic line,¹⁰⁴ Jeremiah quotes YHWH pronouncing "woe" on the "shepherds" of Israel – the "leaders" of the nation:

Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!" **declares the LORD**. Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, **concerning the shepherds** who care for my people: "You have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, **I will attend to you for your evil deeds**, declares the LORD. Then **I will gather the remnant of my flock** out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. **I will set shepherds over them who will care for them**, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the LORD. (Jeremiah 23:1-4 ESV)

YHWH promises the leaders retributive justice, then goes on to discuss the Second Exodus and the New Israel. The actual leaders of Jeremiah's time received their retributive justice in the destruction by

¹⁰⁰ אֶרֶץ — 'eretz carries a range of meaning including "land" as in the Land of Israel, and the whole earth – context determines the meaning

¹⁰¹ And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days. (Mark 13:20 ESV // Matthew 24:22)

¹⁰² See Jeremiah 21:11-14, 22:1-30, Ezekiel 19:1-14

¹⁰³ See Matthew 1:12-16, Luke 3:23-31

¹⁰⁴ See Jeremiah 21:11-14, 22:1-30

Nebuchadnezzar in 586BC. Those leaders were of course typical of the leaders of Western Civilization who are currently “destroying the earth”¹⁰⁵ – they will receive retributive justice at the Second Advent just before the Second Exodus and the establishment of the New Israel. In this context, Jeremiah then quotes YHWH reiterating the prophecy of “The Branch”, the Second Exodus, and the New Israel:

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when **I will raise up for David a righteous Branch**, and **he shall reign as king and deal wisely**, and shall execute *justice* and *righteousness* in the [earth].¹⁰⁶ In his days Judah will be saved, and **Israel will dwell securely**. And this is the name by which he will be called: **‘The LORD is our righteousness.’** Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when they shall no longer say, **‘As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,’** but **‘As the LORD lives who brought up and led the offspring of the house of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries** where he had driven them.’ Then **they shall dwell in their own land.**” (Jeremiah 23:5-8 ESV)

Later, just before the final destruction of Jerusalem, when Jeremiah is coming to an understanding of the working-out of the Plan of God, YHWH reiterates the prophecy of “The Branch”:

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time **I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David**, and he shall execute *justice* and *righteousness* in the [earth].¹⁰⁷ In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: **‘The LORD is our righteousness.’** “For thus says the LORD: **David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel**, and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man in my presence to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings, and to make sacrifices forever.” (Jeremiah 33:14-18 ESV)

The permanent resident of the “throne of the house Israel” is of course the King of kings. The Levitical Priesthood will be also reconstituted under the Kingdom of God.¹⁰⁸

In chapter 17 of the Book of Ezekiel, YHWH propounds the Parable of Two Eagles and Vine. Briefly, the eagles represent Babylon and Egypt. The vine represents Zechariah. The purpose of the parable is to explain the final condemnation of the last king of Israel, Zechariah. After this parable, YHWH elaborates:

Thus says the Lord GOD: “I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. I will break off from the **topmost of its young twigs a tender one**, and I myself will **plant it** on a high and **lofty mountain**. On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that **it may bear branches and produce fruit** and become a noble cedar. And under it will dwell every kind of bird; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest. And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the LORD; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. **I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it.**” (Ezekiel 17:22-24 ESV)

The “top of the cedar” is the last king of the Davidic line. The “sprig, topmost of its young twigs” is the Messiah at the First Advent. The “lofty mountain” is the Kingdom of God. The “planting” of the “sprig” is the Second Advent. The Kingdom of God will “bear branches and produce fruit” by the spread of the gospel throughout the world in the World Tomorrow.

The Book of Zechariah contains two related references to “The Branch”. The first reference is in chapter three in the Vision of Joshua the High Priest. Joshua is seen clothed in filthy garments which are replaced by clean garments. This would seem to be an allusion to the role of the High Priest in atoning for the sins of the people. Then Joshua is given this charge:

And the angel of the LORD solemnly assured Joshua, **“Thus says the LORD of hosts:** If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here. Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and **your friends who sit before you**, for **they are men who are a sign:** behold, **I will bring my servant the Branch.** For behold, on **the stone** that I have set before Joshua, on a **single stone** with **seven eyes**, I will engrave its inscription, declares the LORD of hosts, and **I will remove the iniquity of [the earth]**¹⁰⁹ **in a single day.**

¹⁰⁵ Revelation 11:18

¹⁰⁶ עֵרֶץ — ‘eretz carries a range of meaning including “land” as in the Land of Israel, and the whole earth – context determines the meaning

¹⁰⁷ עֵרֶץ — ‘eretz carries a range of meaning including “land” as in the Land of Israel, and the whole earth – context determines the meaning

¹⁰⁸ See Ezekiel 44:15-31, some commentators take this as figurative

¹⁰⁹ ha’aretz – the earth

In that day, declares the LORD of hosts, **every one of you will invite his neighbor to come under his vine and under his fig tree.**" (Zechariah 3:6-10 ESV)

The import of the vision and the charge to Joshua relates to **the purpose of the restored community to prepare for the First Advent**. The "**friends**" were other priests, community leaders, to whom God was giving the responsibility to establish the remnant community. God says, "**I will bring my servant the Branch**", the Messiah will come. The purpose of the community is to prepare. The leaders are to ensure this happens. The "**single stone**" is Christ, the corner stone.¹¹⁰ The "**seven eyes**" represent God's ability to be aware of events through-out the whole earth.¹¹¹ The "**removal of iniquity**" looks to the primary objective of the First Advent: **Jesus' sacrifice to atone for sin**. The First Advent makes the Second Advent possible, "**In that day**", when all the world will finally live in peace and prosperity, "under his vine and under his fig tree".

The second reference in Zechariah to "The Branch" is in an object lesson. A group of exiles had returned to Jerusalem bringing a collection of gold and silver from the exiles remaining in Babylon. Zechariah is given following instruction from YHWH:

Take from them silver and gold, and **make a crown**, and set it on the head of **Joshua**, the son of Jehozadak, the **high priest**. And say to him, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, **the man whose name is the Branch**: for **he shall branch out from his place**, and **he shall build the temple of the LORD**. It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and **shall bear royal honor**, and **shall sit and rule on his throne**. And **there shall be a priest on his throne**, and **the counsel of peace** shall be between them both.'" And **the crown shall be in the temple of the LORD as a reminder** ... (Zechariah 6:11-14 ESV)

The "**crown**" was put on Joshua the High Priest to establish him as **a type of "The Branch", the Messiah**. The name "Joshua" is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek name "Jesus". The Messiah did "**branch out from his place**" through the spread of the Gospel and the establishment of the New Testament Church throughout the "world" in the First Century. This was the beginning of the symbolic "**temple of the LORD**".¹¹² At the Second Advent, "The Branch" "**shall bear royal honour**" as King of kings and he will "**sit and rule on his throne**". But Jesus Christ has a **dual roll as High Priest**, so indeed "**there shall be a priest on his throne**". Through this dual role, "The Branch" will deliver "**the counsel of peace**" which will bring to the whole world freedom, peace, prosperity, justice, and good government. The "**crown**" was to remain in the Second Temple as a permanent object lesson for the restored community. There is also **duality** in that Joshua and Zerubbabel were responsible for the physical construction of the second temple.

In **Jesus' final discourse to the apostles** on the evening of the first New Testament Passover, Jesus makes clear the meaning of the metaphor of "The Branch":

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. **Every branch** in me that does not **bear fruit** he takes away, and **every branch** that does **bear fruit** he prunes, that it may **bear more fruit**. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. **Abide in me, and I in you**. As **the branch** cannot **bear fruit** by itself, unless it **abides in the vine**, neither can you, unless you **abide in me**. **I am the vine; you are the branches**. **Whoever abides in me and I in him**, he it is that **bears much fruit**, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not **abide in me** he is thrown away like **a branch** and withers; and **the branches** are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you **abide in me**, and **my words abide in you**, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you **bear much fruit** and so prove to be my disciples. **As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you**. **Abide in my love**. If you **keep my commandments**, you will **abide in my love**, just as I have kept **my Father's commandments** and **abide in his love**. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. (John 15:1-11 ESV)

Jesus extends the metaphor to encompass **the nature of the New Testament Church** of which he is the head and Christians are the body. A branch alone is of no value. A branch must be connected to the vine in order to produce fruit – **grow in grace and knowledge**.¹¹³ The relationship of Christ with the

¹¹⁰ Psalm 118:22, Isaiah 28:16, Mark 12:10-11, Acts 4:11, Romans 9:33, 1 Peter 2:6-8

¹¹¹ Zechariah 4:10b, 1:10, 6:7, Revelation 5:6

¹¹² See 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 6:19, 2 Corinthians 6:16, Ephesians 2:20-22, Revelation 3:12

¹¹³ See 2 Peter 3:18, 1:5-8, Ephesians 4:15, Colossians 1:9-10, 2:19

Church is one of “**abiding**” together, “**dwelling**” together, “**tabernacling**” together, **as a family** united by the love that is available from the Father through the indwelling¹¹⁴ of the Holy Spirit.

Bibliography

Blair, T., editor, *The Hebrew-English Interlinear ESV Old Testament*, Crossway, Wheaton, Illinois, 2014.

This excellent resource provides the text of the ESV beside the Hebrew Old Testament text from Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. The running interlinear below the Hebrew text comprises literal glosses for each Hebrew word.

Brown, F., Driver, S., and Briggs, V., *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, (BDB), Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, Peabody Massachusetts, 2015, originally published by Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, Boston, 1906

Dennis, L.T., and Gruden, W., editors, et.al., *English Standard Version*, (ESV), Crossway, Wheaton, Illinois, 2008
All English Language Bible quotations are taken from the ESV, unless other wise specified.

Drayton, C.B., editor, *The Greek-English Interlinear ESV New Testament*, Crossway, Wheaton, Illinois, 2018.

This excellent resource provides the text of the ESV beside the Greek New Testament text. The running interlinear below the Greek text comprises literal glosses for each Greek word.

Harris, R.L., Archer, G.L., Waltke, B.K., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, (TWOT), Moody Publishers, Chicago, 1980,

Hartley, J.E., *The Book of Job*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1988.

Kittel, G., et.al., editors, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (TDNT I - X), WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1964-1976.

Robertson, A.T., *A Harmony of the Gospel*, Harper & Row, 1922, Citizens Fidelity Bank & Trust, 1950.

The original edition of Robertson was first published more than a hundred years ago, but it remains an adequate evaluation of the Gospel Material in relation to the life of Christ.

Thomas, D.W., editor, *Documents from Old Testament Times*, (DOTT) Harper & Row, New York, 1958.

www.esv.org

This excellent website provides full access to the ESV text, plus many useful tools to work with the text.

www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

The location of “The Transfiguration and the Tabernacle”

www.ucg.org

This excellent website contains dozens of articles, videos, and booklets on the Feast of Tabernacles. In particular, the following contain useful general information:

What is the Feast of Tabernacles?

The Feast of Tabernacles

God's Holy Day Plan

Holidays or Holy Days

¹¹⁴ Romans 8:9-11, 14-17

Appendix: Maps and Figures



Map 1



Map 2



Map 3



Map 4



Map 5

Figure 1



Figure 2

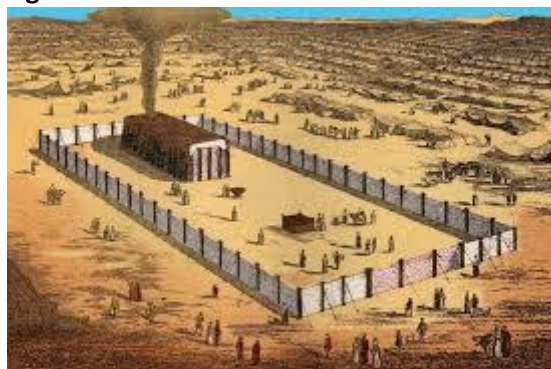


Figure 3

