

It is hard to believe that it is July 26 ... already! The weeks seem to fly by so quickly. But here we are in the summer time, and it is time for another glimpse into the Word of God, and find spiritual nutrition for today. God bless you, as you fellowship with the One Who became flesh, and "tented" among us!

## A KING IN A TENT

A Devotional prepared by Dr. Robert L. Morris

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"Paul came to them, and being of the same occupation, stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade." (Acts 18:3; HCSB)

This verse in the Book of Acts is a part of the historic narrative focusing on the life and ministry of Saul of Tarsus, who after the Damascus Road meeting with the Risen Christ Jesus, became the Apostle Paul. He was a missionary, preacher, student of the highly recognized Jewish teacher Gamaliel, scholar in the Jewish University of Hillel, Biblical theologian, teacher, friend, servant of God, prisoner for the cause of Jesus, and finally a martyr because of his undying faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross. But, he was a tentmaker by trade.

Like any other Jewish boy, he had learned a manual trade in addition to his chosen profession of becoming a Pharisee. Paul joined with Barnabas, and they were responsive to the Holy Spirit, and "separated ... for the work to which I have called them." (Acts 13:2; NKJV)

The fact that Paul by trade was a tentmaker may not seem very important. What is important is the New Testament use of the word for "tent" or "tabernacle." The word is σκηνή - skene - pronounced as "skay - nay," and translated by the English words "tent" or "tabernacle." (It is found 20 times in the New Testament: Mt 17:4; Mk 9:5; Lk 9:33, 16:9; Acts 7:43, 44; 15:16; Heb. 8:2, 5; 9:2, 3, 6, 8, 11, 21; 11:9, 13; Rev. 13:6; 15:5; 21:3.) The word σκηνοποιός - skenopoios - "tentmaker" is used only in Acts 18:3. Cognate words, σκῆνος - skenos - "tabernacle" is used only in 2 Cor. 5:1, 4, while the verb σκηνόω - skenoo - (pronounced as ske - nah - o, and emphasizing the second syllable) is translated by the English as "to live or camp in a tent; take up temporary residence, as in a tent." In this Devotional we want to learn what the Bible tells us about the King in a tent and its application to our lives.

### 1. THE TENT SPEAKS OF THE PRELUDE TO HAPPINESS.

The tent, the σκηνή - skene, speaks of the transitory life we live on this planet. We are "sojourners and pilgrims" (1 Peter 2:11; NKJV), passing through this earthly existence. In the Book of Hebrews we read of "Abraham (who) obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob ... these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (Hebrews 11:8-9, 13; NKJV)

A pilgrim journey, living in tents, looking for a permanent place to live. It is isn't any wonder then, that the Apostle Paul wrote: "For me, living is Christ and dying is gain. Now if I live on in the flesh, this means fruitful work for me; and I don't know which one I should choose. I am pressured by both. I have the desire to depart and be with Christ - which is far better." (Philippians 1:23; HCSB) While Paul does not use the Greek word σκηνή - skene - "tent," "temporary dwelling," we have the sense of the meaning. Paul uses the word ἀναλύσαι - analusai - translated by "to depart." This is from the main verb, ἀναλύω - analuo. In Classical Greek this is a military word carrying the idea of "untying and leaving," or literally, "taking down one's tent and leaving." The Apostle Paul, like all of us, lived in a temporary dwelling ... a tent ... a σκηνή - skene, a tent ... the tent of flesh. When we have repented of our sins, placed our faith and trust in Jesus Christ, this earthly body, our temporary dwelling place, is our prelude to happiness. We are waiting for the prelude to be completed ... to play its final notes and then the full eternal orchestra of the majesty of heaven will burst forth in the anthem of praise to the Lamb of God, "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise." (Revelation 5:12; TNIV)

### 2. THE TENT SPEAKS OF THE PROVISION FOR HOLINESS.

The tent, the σκηνή - skene is used to communicate another dynamic Scriptural truth. Please indulge my penchant for the original languages. The Greek text for this segment of the Devotional reads as follows: Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας. This is John 1:14, and translates as follows: "And the Word became flesh and lived (tabernacled; lived in a tent) among us, and we observed His glory, (the) glory as the One and Only (uniquely born One) from the Father, full of grace and truth." (My translation) The first key phrase here is ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν – eskenosen en hemin, (the latter word pronounced as "hay mean"). The root of the primary word, ἐσκήνωσεν, is the Greek word σκηνή - skene, a tent, and followed by the prepositional phrase "in (or) among us." The Authorized, or King James Version, the New King James Version, and the New American Standard Version, translate this phrase by the English words "dwelt among us." The Today's New International Version changes it slightly to "... made His dwelling among us." The Holman Christian Standard Bible uses "... took up residence among us." These are all similar, self-explanatory, and do not merit any "finely tuned discussion!"

Jesus said: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10; TNIV) The eternal, equal-with-the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Second Person in the Holy Trinity, uniquely-born, one-of-a-kind Son came into this world with a singular purpose, "... that He might destroy the works of the devil." (1 John 3:8; NKJV) This He accomplished through the Cross. The Word of God is clear: "Jesus also suffered outside the gate, so that He might sanctify (purify, make holy) the people by His own blood." (Hebrews 13:12; HCSB) The Apostle Paul declared: "He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a human being, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross." (Philippians 2:7, 8; TNIV). Yes, the Word became flesh and tented among us – took up residence among us – temporarily lived among us, and then suffered and died so that "we can share His holiness." (Hebrews 12:10; HCSB)

### 3. THE TENT SPEAKS OF THE PROMISE OF HOPE.

The tent, the σκηνή - skene is used to communicate yet another life-challenging Scriptural truth. In the Book of Revelation John, the Isle of Patmos, wrote as directed by the Spirit of God. (I am inserting the Greek text here because there is something very special I want to share with you.) Καὶ ἤκουσα φωνῆς μεγάλης ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου λεγούσης, Ἴδου ἡ σκηνὴ (the tabernacle; the tent) τοῦ Θεοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ σκηνώσει (He will tabernacle; dwell) μετ' αὐτῶν, καὶ αὐτοὶ λαοὶ αὐτοῦ ἔσονται, καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Θεὸς μετ' αὐτῶν ἔσται αὐτῶν Θεός. Translation: "And I heard a great voice out - heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with (the) men, and He will tabernacle (take up residence) with them, and God Himself will be with them (and) will be their God.'" (Revelation 21:3; My translation) This is one of the most magnificent promises of hope in the Word of God. Did you notice the words ἡ σκηνή - skene (the tabernacle; the tent) and σκηνώσει - skenosei (He will tabernacle; dwell, take up residence)? (σκηνώσει - skenosei is pronounced as skay-no-say). Now, did you catch it? To this point we have focused on the tent being a temporary dwelling place, just as the Tabernacle in the Wilderness was temporary, but later replaced by the great Temple of King Solomon. Jesus came to "temporarily live among us" until He paid the bitter price of Calvary, was resurrected, and ascended into eternal glory. But again, did you catch the words of John in Revelation 21:3? It is that magnificent promise fulfilled in eternal glory. There THE TEMPORARY BECOMES PERMANENT! The Transformed Tabernacle! The Eternal Temple of God! Glory to God! The King who lived among us for a little while, rose in triumph from the grave, ascended into glory, is preparing a place for His Bride. That place is the dwelling place of God Himself ... not temporarily, but eternally His dwelling place. There we will tabernacle (take up our residence) with Him and He with us forever and ever. Amen and Amen!

I want to close this Devotional with the words of a great hymn, words and music written in 1900 by Charles H. Gabriel. It is a greatly loved hymn to be sung in the Church. I trust it will be familiar to the people who read this Devotional, and that you will sing it as you close this Devotional reading.

#### O THAT WILL BE GLORY

1. When all my labors and trials are o'er,  
and I am safe on that beautiful shore,  
just to be near the dear Lord I adore,

will thro' the ages be glory for me.

CHORUS (after each verse)

O that will be glory for me, glory for me, glory for me.

When by His grace I shall look on His face,

That will be glory, be glory for me!

2. When by the gift of His infinite grace,

I am accorded in heaven a place,

just to be there and to look on His face,

will thro' the ages be glory for me.

3. Friends will be there I have loved long ago;

Joy like a river around me will flow.

Yet, just a smile from my Savior, I know,

will thro' the ages be glory for me.