

O.T. Shadows of the Church – The Tabernacle and Temple

(Build It According to the Pattern)

(Ephesians 2:14-22)

INTRODUCTION:

1. Today we return to our study of O.T. shadows with our attention leaving those specifically on Christ to focus on the O.T. shadows of God's people, the church.
 - A. A shadow is an O.T. person, thing, place, or event used by God to give us an image, outline, etc., of something that would come to its fullest reality, or meaning, through or in Christ.
 - B. The shadow of God's people that we will consider today is that of the Tabernacle or Temple, the **O.T. house of God**, which He commanded to be built "according to the pattern" He had given.
 - C. As we shall see, building God's house *according to the pattern* was a very significant matter for Moses and others to obey in their service of God.
2. And, it is my hope that as we consider the importance of building these shadows, the Tabernacle and Temple, "according to the pattern" that we will appreciate the need for us to build the fulfillment, the substance, the antitype, which is the **church**, "according to the pattern" given us by God as well.

BODY:

I. Shadow: The tabernacle/Temple was built according to God's will and design

- A. The **Tabernacle** and everything in it were built according to God's **pattern**.
 1. This shouldn't surprise us because this was *God's* house built because *He desired it* (Ex. 25:8-9 – "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.⁹ According to all that I show you, that is, the **pattern** of the **tabernacle** and the **pattern** of all its **furnishings**, just so you shall make it.").
 - a. Again, in Exodus 25:40, during God's revelation of the detailed instructions concerning the tabernacle, He states to Moses "see to it that you make them according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain."
 - b. Nothing was left to man's imagination or whim. It was God's house, designed by God, and built entirely according to His revealed instructions!
 2. It was to be built by God's pattern because it had a divine *purpose* (Heb. 8:4-5 – "Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law.⁵ They serve a **copy and shadow of the heavenly things**. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.").
 - a. God's pattern had to be followed because the divine purpose of the tabernacle was to present to the world the *copy* or *shadow* of the heavenly things of God.
 - b. If Moses had changed its design, content, or services, it would not have presented the proper image of the heavenly things for which it was designed!
 3. So, when it was time to build it, Moses exhorted the people saying, "Let every skillful craftsman among you come and make all that the **Lord has commanded**" (Ex. 35:10).
 - a. Moses then went on to list all the elements of the tabernacle, its furnishings, and its services that *God commanded*.
 - b. Everything had to be made according to God's plan down to the minute detail. Nothing was left to man's surmising, desires, or wisdom.
- B. When the Temple was being built some 480 years later, it too was built...
 1. According to God's will, as Solomon stated to Hiram king of Tyre (1 Kings 5:5 – "And behold, I propose to build a house for the name of the Lord my God, as the Lord spoke to my father David, saying, "Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he shall build the house for My name."). This work was not *assumed*—it was God-given!

2. As the dwelling place of God (1 Kings 8:10-13 – “And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the **house of the Lord**,¹¹ so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the **house of the Lord**.¹² Then Solomon spoke: “The Lord said He would dwell in the dark cloud.¹³ I have surely built You an exalted house, and a place for You to **dwell in** forever.”).
3. The temple also served as a **shadow**, or form, of the church (1 Cor. 3:16-17 – “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?¹⁷ If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.”).
4. Thus, like the tabernacle, the creation, construction, furnishings, and services of the Temple were not by Solomon’s wisdom or desire, but by the pattern revealed by God.

II. Substance/real: The church of Christ is to be built according to God’s will and design

- A. The church and the tabernacle/temple differ in their material construction.
 1. The O.T. pattern for the tabernacle/temple concerned the construction of physical buildings, earthly structures, in which worship and connection with God were made.
 - a. These had walls and regulations that separated the inner services offered to God from most of God’s people, only allowing a select few to enter and participate.
 - b. Those barriers required a *separate priesthood* to act on behalf of the people.
 - c. For all but a select few, service in God’s temple was an unattainable goal.
 2. In contrast, Christ’s church is superior in that it is a *spiritual* house made up of *followers* of Christ wherever they are found (1 Pet. 2:4-5 – “Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious,⁵ **you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house**, a holy **priesthood**, to offer up **spiritual sacrifices acceptable** to God through Jesus Christ.”).
 - a. No longer is service in God’s house limited to a specific place or specific tribe, but is found wherever there are worshipper of God in spirit and truth (Jn. 4:19-21, 23 – “The woman said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.”²¹ Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father...²³ But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.”).
 - b. **Wherever they may be**, those who come to Christ in faith/obedience are *living stones* made into God’s *spiritual house* who serve as its *holy priests* offering up *spiritual sacrifices* to God!
 - c. No longer is there the separation, the dividing walls, the inability to serve the Lord in His holy place found in the original tabernacle/temple, seeing all in Christ make up God’s temple and are His holy priests!
 - d. It is important that we understand this to be part of the pattern.
- B. Just as the tabernacle and temple were built as *God’s* house, His dwelling place, so is the church (**Ephesians 2:19-22** – “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and **members of the household of God**,²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Jesus Christ** Himself being the chief cornerstone,²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a **holy temple** in the Lord,²² in whom you also are being built together for a **dwelling place of God** in the Spirit.”).
 1. As was true of old, you and I now as the church are the dwelling place of God—He dwells in us and we need to ponder and grasp what that truly means for how we live our lives!

2. The church exists by God's will and design today, being the true *fulfillment, the substance of the shadow* of His house constructed by Moses and Solomon.
 3. Because the church is *God's house* today, His temple, it is God who has determined its design, content, and its services.
 - a. Way too many are confused about whose house the church is and treat God as the guest, acting as if the Church belonged to them.
 - b. If God is the owner, then *His* will, values, and instructions will be those that are lived out in the Church. The church will reflect *His* character and interests, not ours!
- C. Like the O.T. tabernacle/temple, the church is built with divine *purpose* in mind (Eph. 3:8-11 – “To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,⁹ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things,¹⁰ so that **through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known** to the rulers and authorities **in the heavenly places**.¹¹ This was according to the **eternal purpose** that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord” – ESV).
1. The church exists for the *purpose* of expressing the *manifold*, or multiple and varied, *wisdom of God* to the rulers and authorities *in the heavenly places*!
 2. So many fail to see the importance of this reality in shaping their view of the church, its organization, worship, and work.
 - a. For, if the shadow had to be strictly made *according to the pattern* because of its *divine purpose*, why would we assume that the church, the real thing, that exists for such a *sublime purpose* can be changed and molded to *our liking*?
 - i. A church tainted in design, worship, and work by human wisdom cannot function as the fulfillment, the actual image, of what the strictly formed shadow portrayed!
 - ii. If God designed the church for the purpose of showing *His wisdom* to the heavenly places, how can that happen if it is changed and shaped by our desires and wisdom?
 - b. We must also understand that this is to be applied to our lives individually.
 - i. How *sobering* it is and how amazing an honor it is that **God** would use **us**, sinners, to present His wisdom not only to this earth but to the heavenly places!
 - ii. Have you thought about that and what that requires concerning how you live your life and what your life is expressing to the heavenly places?
 - iii. In other words, is your life lived as the expression of God's divine wisdom?
- D. So, we should not be surprised that we are warned, as was Moses and Israel, to take proper care when building the church (1 Cor. 3:10-11 – “According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. **Let each one take care how he builds upon it.**¹¹ For **no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.**”).
1. Here Paul speaks of his work in laying the only foundation upon which the church can be built, which is *Christ*.
 2. But workers will continually build upon this foundation throughout the life of the church, whether it is the church in Corinth or elsewhere, and are warned that they must take care to build according to the will of Christ, who is the chief cornerstone, and *not their own!*
 - a. This can only be done by preaching and practicing the words of the “apostles and prophets” (Eph. 2:19-20 – “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,²⁰ having been **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone**”).

- b. Now someone might wonder how a foundation of “the apostles and prophets” could be true when 1 Cor. 3:11 says *Christ* is the only foundation of the church.
- c. The answer is that laying the foundation of Christ and properly building upon it happens only when guided by the words of the “apostles and prophets” (1 Cor. 2:9-13 – “But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”¹⁰ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.¹¹ For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.¹² Now we [apostles - rp] have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.¹³ These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”).
 - i. Why can’t everyone understand the significance of this passage?
 - ii. If we cannot know the *things of God* separate from the revelation of the Spirit given by the apostles, we can’t know how to lay the foundation of Christ and properly build on it without a strict adherence to the Spirits words given through the apostles!
- 3. As was true of the tabernacle and temple, the church and its purpose, design, work, worship, etc., are not left to man’s wisdom, desire, or caprice.
 - a. Yet that is the course of so many today, creating and filling *their* churches in the “name of the Lord” with all sort things that reflect man’s wisdom and desires, not God’s!
 - b. That the church is God’s **spiritual** house (1 Pet. 2:5) wouldn’t be known today by how many churches have become places where people assemble “in God’s name” to gratify **carnal cravings** for food, fun, entertainment, music, socializing, social services, etc.
 - c. That the church is **designed by God** in such simplicity of organization *would never be seen* in the gigantic organizational structure of *human design* that dominate denominationalism in hopes of *improving on God’s design* to accomplish *His* work!
 - d. That Paul wrote concerning the church “...if I am delayed, I write so that you may know **how you ought to conduct yourself** in the **house of God, which is the church of the living God**, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15)...
 - i. Would never be seen in most churches because have so little concept of “ought” when it comes to people’s conduct morally and spiritually in the church.
 - ii. Would never be seen in most churches because men have established councils, conventions, synods, etc., to determine for themselves what they will believe/practice in their churches, rejecting Jesus’ rule and law over them revealed in the N.T.!
 - e. The list could go on, but I shudder to think of what the Lord, who cleared out the temple, turning over the money changer’s tables, and driving out the animals saying, “It is written, My house shall be called a **house of prayer**,’ but you have made it a den of thieves” (Mt. 21:13) will do concerning those who have stolen away His purpose and intent for His church, departing from pattern to build their own church!

CONCLUSION:

1. One of the most important lesson we learn from the shadow and substance of God’s house, His temple, is that in all things it had to be made *according to God’s pattern*, and not man’s!
2. We must take care to check our doctrine and practices by God’s revealed word to assure we are building God’s house as God desires!
3. If you would like to be part of God’s house, you must B-R-C-BP-LF.