2 Chronicles - Commentaries by Charles Stanley

Solomon's Temple: The Altar Equal to the Holiest, Solomon's Temple: The Altar Equal to the Holiest

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(Read 2 Chron. 3:1-4:5)

And now look again at this molten sea. Do you see the little oxen cast with the sea, ten in a cubit? And then of course you see those twelve large oxen on which the sea stood. "Three looking toward the north, and three looking toward the west, and three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east." Do you not see patience and strength typified in the ox? We scarcely know this in this land. I remember watching with much interest the patient tread of four large oxen, a little way from P-, drawing a vessel on a canal. Nothing could illustrate more strikingly patient endurance. And have we not found the most amazing patience in our Great High Priest, mighty to save to the uttermost? And oh how He bears with us!—so unlike our bearing with one another. Surely not to overlook our defilements (suffer not such a thought for a moment); but in mercy and faithfulness to wash our feet.

Why did three of the oxen look every way? North, east, west, south? Ah, not a temptation can come against us but the eye of our patient and mighty watching Jesus sees it and knows it before it comes. As I write these lines, or as you read them, Satan may be plotting, or men may be taking counsel against us; but the eye of Jesus sees it all, whether it may be from north, east, west, or south. He who is gone up on high, still watches His little flock in the desert, His few loved ones in the wind-tossed boat. How comforting this is! however great the trial it cannot surprise our patient Deliverer. He saw the temptation coming against Peter, and He saw his fall; yet He says to him, "I have prayed for thee, that

thy faith fail not." Now what love this is,, is it

not? Do you thus know the patient loving heart and watchful eye of Jesus—watching for us every way? We may indeed say, I will not fear what man can do unto me.

Do you say, Well, I mostly look to Him in great trials, to help me in great temptations; but what hinder my soul, and vex it most, are the little worrying trials of life? "The little foxes that spoil the vines." Have you not noticed also those little oxen? not only the great oxen, looking every way; but the patient, watchful care of our tender High Priest, in His preserving, restoring service, over all or in all the little trials of our wilderness path? yes, even though it be ten in every cubit.

And they were cast, when the molten sea was cast. It is the inseparable part of His blessed work, as He says so sweetly, "I am among you as he that serveth." (Luke 22:27.)

But let not this precious word be used as a cover for indifference about evil; as if He lovingly allowed the least evil or defilement. Nothing can be more false or dangerous. He does not allow it; but lovingly takes the towel and girds Himself to serve. He pours the water into the basin, not to allow or overlook evil; but to wash it away, to restore our consciences. The Lord grant that we may do the same to one another in the fear and love of the Lord!

We thus need, and we thus have, Jesus, in the smallest secret failure, as in the strongest temptation, or gross and open sin. The smallest dot of leprosy must be brought to the priest. It cannot be overlooked, without the gravest danger of public dishonor to Christ. Satan is seeking to set this aside: "Oh, it is nothing, it is nothing: the Lord overlooks our faults." And thus the Holy Spirit is grieved. Let us give Jesus His true place in washing our feet. Let us be more real in confessing our sins to Him. God is faithful and just in forgiving our sins, and cleansing us from all unrighteousness.

Now do you see why there were large oxen looking every way and little oxen, even "ten in a cubit?" Even thus was the Son of God "made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God." Heb. 2:17. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Heb. 4:15. The Captain of our salvation has trodden the road before us in every step; He is made perfect as our Captain through sufferings. "In every point." Therefore He is able to save us from all temptations: be they great, from north, east, west, or south; or be they small, even ten in every cubit of our path.

Do you notice the brim of the molten sea? What are those flowers? Flowers of lilies. It is said in the Song of Songs, "as the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." And again, "He feedeth among the lilies." Does not all this say then, "I must wash your feet, according to what you are in My sight—what I have made you."

There are three things said of Christ. 1) "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it." 2) "That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." 3) "That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Eph. 5:25-27.

How fair, how spotless white the lilies of Christ! How sweet the perfume of Christ! Surely if we look at our old condemned, crucified nature, we may well say, "Black as the tents of Kedar." And little washing do these black Arab tents get. But it is just as we know ourselves as the lilies of Christ; as we know our acceptance and completeness in Him, that we can say, "without spot," "no condemnation."

If He feeds among His lilies, our feet must be washed; all defilement must be confessed to Him, and put away, washed by the water of the word—our feet must be washed as becomes His presence; washed according to His thoughts of us, not our thoughts of one another. Oh how little we have of the mind of Christ as to one another! Think of those words, "Forever perfected." "As He is, so are we in this world." "There is

therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God." 2 Cor. 5:17, 18. "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." Eph. 1:6.

Now seriously, do you believe that all these statements of God's word are true of every Christian on earth? that every Christian is a lily of Christ? Are you a believer? Have you passed from death unto life? Then I ask, Are these statements of God to you true or false? Do you say, I thought that such scriptures as these pointed to a higher christian life—a state of perfection to which few, very few, attain? "Attain!" did you say? oh! fearful mistake! Is there one thought of attainment either in these types of the temple or in these plain statements of scripture?

The great stones, that were lifted out of the pit with such strength and power, and were made ready before being brought, and built in the temple; was this their own work? and is it the work of great sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, to raise themselves from the dead? or is this the wondrous work of God? see Eph. 2. Or did the lofty trees of Lebanon attain to be cut down, to be rolled down the sides of Lebanon into the sea, and again floated to Joppa, and lifted out of the water, and built in the temple? Was not all this done to them? and the gold that covered them, was this attainment? Did they cover themselves with it?

Oh no, the very opposite; the gold was put over them! And when the proud religious pharisee is cut down, and buried in the death of Christ, and raised out of death with Christ, completely and forever justified in Christ risen, is this attainment? Did not God give His Son to die for our sins? did not He raise Him from the dead, to be our everlasting subsisting righteousness? Now if we believe God, if we believe that all this was of God, and is of God, then where is our foolish notion of attaining to a state of higher perfection than God has given every believer in Christ?1 This does not call in question, but

Take any one of the above divine statements of the God of all truth. Take this, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Surely that well describes a lily of Christ; so heavenly white and pure from sin that there is nothing that the eye of God can detect and condemn. I do not know that I can state the case stronger or clearer: Nothing to condemn in them that are in Christ Jesus. Can this state be a matter of attainment, when our best righteousness is only filthy rags? Yes, and if we say we have no sin we only deceive ourselves and are liars. Did you ever attain, for one hour, to such a state of love to God and man?—to such holiness of heart, that there was nothing that the eye of God could detect and condemn? Oh! if man could thus attain to sinless holiness, what need was there that the altar should be equal to the holiest? What need was there for the infinite sacrifice of the cross?

I grant you there is something passing wonderful in this declaration of God: there is "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." How can this be? How? Blessed be God, Scripture answers very simply; the altar must be, and was, equal to the holiest. The cross of Christ met all God's claims against me, the sinner. All that the eye of God could detect in me, my sins, and my sin—all, all that I am, as a fallen sinner—was condemned, as God saw me; so God gave His Son to be condemned for me. Then if all that could be condemned—sins and self—has been condemned, judged to the uttermost, in Christ, how can there be anything left to condemn? All has been judged on the cross!

And more, not only if the old I has been thus crucified, beneath the wrath of God—not only has the old man, I say, thus passed away under the divine judgment on sin, in the Sin-bearer, whose one sacrifice met all the claims of God—but the new man is wholly of God—the new life is the justified life of the risen Christ—the new nature is the new creation of God; and, as we have seen, all things have become new, all is of God. New, and of God: can this be condemned? The old has been condemned: the new cannot be condemned. And "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." And since all this is of God, how can it be one's attainments?

And now, before we part, do remember this blessed fact, that every Christian is a spotless lily of Christ. If not, how could every Christian give thanks, that he is made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light? See Col. 1:12-14.

Let us not say, Unto Him that loved us, and half-washed us from our sins Shall we not, and can you not say, O reader, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood?" Rev. 1:5. Yes, once a mass of moral corruption, dead in sins (and death is corruption), now washed in the blood of the Lamb, a heaven white lily, having the life and perfume of the risen Christ.

A lily of Christ! what a starting point this is! And what an end, when He who thus loved the Church and gave Himself for it, and has thus sanctified it, in holy separation to God, shall present it to Himself, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

The new nature in every believer must and will long to be holy, even as He is holy. The desire will be, that the walk may be in keeping with what we are in His sight. And if we fail, may we go to our Great High Priest, remembering the flowers of lilies in the molten sea.

And when tempted and harassed by the enemy of souls, may we remember that the molten sea was not half the size of the brazen altar. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, MUCH MORE, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Rom. 5:10. If thus reconciled by the death of the infinite Son of God offered on the cross, the sacrifice for sins, remember that, on the authority of God's Word, your final salvation is thus much more certain. Christ is for you in the heavens mighty to save, and the Holy Ghost is dwelling in you consequent on His work being finished to the glory of God.

Solomon's temple, with its types and shadows, has passed away; but the Church, as the dwelling-place of God, shall not pass away. In those coming bright millennial days, it is seen "descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." Not one of the great stones, or lofty trees, brought by the Spirit of God, and built into the heavenly temple, can be lost.

Are you saved? Have you been brought to God? Have you passed from death unto life? Has all your religious pride been felled and laid in the dust? Have you been crucified with Christ? Have you been buried with Christ in death? Are you risen with Christ? Is the risen Christ your righteousness, redemption, sanctification, and all? What is the death of Jesus to your soul? Has it glorified God, even about your sins? Do you believe Him to be the Son of God? that His one sacrifice was equal to all the claims of God? Do you believe He is your Great High Priest? Do you need another sacrifice? Do you need another priest?

Oh no! the square of the altar was equal to the square of the holiest! and His priestly loving care knows no end. The brazen sea was round. Unto Jesus, Son of God, be everlasting praise.

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(Read 2 Chron. 3:1-4:5)

Next, we consider the altar of brass. "Twenty cubits the length thereof, and twenty cubits the breadth thereof, and ten cubits the height thereof." (Chap. 4:1.) Is not this most remarkable? the square of the altar is the exact square of the holiest. Here are two symbols: the one, the holiest—the presence of God; the other, the altar—the cross of Christ. And the one equal to the other. The altar is equal to the holiest: the cross of Christ is equal to all the claims of God. Twenty cubits, by twenty, was the measure of the holiest; and twenty cubits, by twenty, the measure of the altar. And did not every victim that was ever offered on that altar point on to Jesus the Lamb of God? Yes, as the body of the beast was consumed on that altar, and the blood poured out at the foot of that altar, even so on the cross the Son of God bore the divine consuming wrath, in that holy body prepared for Him; His own blood too was poured out at the foot of that cross.

But the measurement of the altar being equal to the holiest, does not this give us a marvelous knowledge both of what the sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God, really was; and also what it must be to meet the claims of God as to sin and righteousness? I say, must be; for note these measurements were given by instruction. "Now these are the things wherein Solomon was instructed." The altar must not be one cubit less or more than the holiest.

Does not this direct our thoughts at once to the Person of Christ? Could any other being be found equal to God? For the sacrifice can only be what the person is, or the victim offered. If a bullock or a goat be offered, the sacrifice can only be finite, and makes nothing perfect as to sin before God, for God is infinite. In other words, a finite offering cannot meet the claims of the infinite God. If a finite offering could have put away sin, then the altar would not need to have been equal to the holiest. We are shortsighted, we are blind, as men: but is God shortsighted? is God blind? Can He either under or over estimate anything? How dreadful then is sin, since nothing could put it away from His sight but a sacrifice equal to Himself! The altar must be equal to the holiest.

Let us now solemnly approach this tremendous question, Who is that Holy One, made sin for us, hanging on the forsaken cross, in the midst of that awful darkness? Is He truly man? Yes, truly man; crucified by men, forsaken by God, His soul made an offering for sin. Is He only man? Then His offering can only be finite. Unbelief says, it is so; and hence the need of repeated sacrifices, or continued masses, being offered to God, for the sins, and the souls, of the living and the dead. And all sadly true if He were only man. For if He were only man, then the claims of God have not yet been fully met; and who can tell how much has yet to be added to the one offering of Jesus, before the altar is equal to the holiest? If Jesus is only a man, then work on, you priests—add your thousands of masses—burn fiercely, you fires of purgatory—and strive hard, you children of unbelief, to add your merits and attainments to the work of Jesus: for the altar must be equal to the holiest. But, oh, enough!

God did not spare His own Son (Rom. 8:32). "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." "Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high:... unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." (Heb. 1:3, 8.) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him... and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth... No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." (John 1:1-18.) "He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins... And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God... for this is the witness of God, which He hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself... he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life... The Son of God... This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John 4; 5) "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (Col. 2:9.)

Now if any man says he does not own the co-equality of the eternal Son with the Father, let him honestly say he does not believe the Scriptures of truth.

Blessed Jesus, I own Thee, though truly man, yet as truly God, over all, blessed for evermore. He that hath seen Thee, hath seen the Father also.

Again, I say, How dreadful is sin, when no one in heaven or earth could be found to offer the atoning sacrifice for sin but He, the Son, who dwelt in the bosom of the Father, who was with God, and was God.

Let us now again look back at the cross. Who is that Holy One bearing the wrath and consuming judgment due to sin? Is He truly man? Yes, truly man. Is He only a finite man? The Son of God! who, though equal with God, has humbled Himself in untold love, love to us; humbled Himself to the shameful death of the cross. Is He truly God? Truly God. He who was with God, the real distinct Person of the Son, but yet truly the self-existent, "was God." Though thus emptying Himself and humbling Himself unto death, yet the glory of His Person is the glory of the cross. The infinite Son of God can only offer an infinite sacrifice.

THE ALTAR IS EQUAL TO THE HOLIEST. The claims of God against the sinner must be fully met, by the death of the Son of God, for the sinner. Now do you not see great value in this type, the altar being the exact measure of the holiest? Nothing short of the sacrifice of an infinite Person could meet the claims of the holy infinite God—more than such an offering could not be.

And now ponder this well; faith links us with this perfect and infinite Savior. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1.)

It is not merely our own thoughts of what we are, but God, who knows all we are from first to last; surely He saw all that could be condemned in us. Now if His claims are met on the cross, then most surely our need is met. What has met the infinite must meet and cover the poor finite. A close study of Hebrews will show all this to be most true. There we learn that by the will of God all believers are sanctified "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once." We also learn that this sacrifice can neither be repeated nor continued. For Jesus, "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God." And then how infinite its efficacy for all believers: "For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." The Holy Ghost is a witness of all this. God in righteousness says, "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." There can be no more offering for sin. Nothing can possibly be added to the infinite. Every mass, or pretended sacrifice, is an insult to God—and every doubt is a dishonor cast on Christ. 0 let us no longer keep at such an unbelieving distance, but let us enter, let us draw near with the boldness that corresponds to the offering of the body, the blood, the atoning death of Jesus. 0! the glory of the cross! The altar is equal to the holiest—the righteousness of God is exalted by the one propitiatory sacrifice, equal to Himself. Can anything then destroy the peace which He has made by His death on the cross?

If we are, then, thus forever perfected worshipers by the one infinite sacrifice of Christ, what about our failures? What is the provision for these? Does not failure in a believer interrupt his communion with God? Certainly! Then how is this to be met? This brings us to the "molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, round in compass, and five cubits the height thereof; and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about." (2 Chron. 4:2.)

It might be well to notice here that these chapters show us more of the counsels of God, as to the glory of Christ, than man's side of the question; or man's approach to God. Indeed, this had been given in the types of Exodus and Leviticus. A little remembrance of these things is, however, necessary. In man's approach to God, the first thing was the altar, setting forth the cross of Christ—atonement having been made on the altar. Then the next thing was the laver, in which the feet of the priests were to be washed. Then the entrance into the tabernacle.

This is the way now; first, the altar, the cross of Christ—the blood of Jesus which cleanses us from all sin. And when the soldier with a spear pierced His side, forthwith came there out blood and water. There is the blood of atonement. And the water, the washing by the word. There is the death of the Just One, by which we have been brought to God. And there is the living priesthood that maintains us in living communion with God.

We have seen the square of the altar, equal to the square of the holiest. The death of the cross has met all the claims of God to the utmost measure. But then why was the washing laver, or molten sea, round? In this chapter the Lord Jesus reveals to us His present priestly service. The atoning work is done. "It is finished." This priestly work for us is going on. "He took a towel and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded." The molten sea was round, that is, it had neither beginning nor end, so to speak—everlasting as an emblem. And such is the love of our Great High Priest. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Love that never ceases to wash our feet, to restore our souls.

But why was the molten sea so much less than the altar? Nothing through eternal ages can compare with the cross of Christ. God only can measure it. He, the Infinite, can only fully know that which is infinite; equal to Himself. There is an axiom that holds good here: the greater includes the less; or, as the Apostle expresses it, "MUCH MORE then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; MUCH MORE, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Rom. 5:9, 10.) Surely this is unspeakably comforting. If we have been reconciled to God by the greatness, by the infinite sacrifice, typified by the altar equal to the holiest, how much more certain that we shall be washed from all daily failure and defilement, as typified by the molten sea. Is it not also true that if He does not wash us, we have no part or lot with Him? For if we are His, He cannot fail to wash our feet, to restore the defiled conscience. Everlasting love cannot fail.

Now are we willing to take this low place, and thus give to Jesus all the glory? Do not say, I am perfect in the flesh; He shall never thus wash me from daily failures. And do not say, if I am saved by the infinite death of Christ, I will practice sin, and will not look to Jesus for holiness of life, for cleanness of feet in my daily walk. Remember that he that practices sin is of the devil.

Do you ask, Is this true, that if we are really saved by the death of the cross, it is MUCH MORE certain that we shall be saved from all defilement to the end? That is exactly what the Holy Ghost is saying to us in these types, and plain scriptures. Why should you doubt God?

Solomon's Temple: The Altar Equal to the Holiest, Solomon's Temple: The Altar Equal to the Holiest

(Read 2 Chron. 3:1-4:5)

It would require a large volume to trace fully the glory of Christ as shadowed in this portion of the word. My desire, in this short paper, is to help you with a few thoughts to the closer study of the word of God.

I hope you will not think that I am about to give any supposed authority from Solomon's temple for the building of so-called christian places of worship. The Lord Jesus promised that the Holy Ghost should come, and guide the disciples into all truth. The Holy Ghost did come, and did guide the apostles and the early Church into all truth. And is it not most clear, from the Acts and the Epistles, that the Holy Ghost did not, after He came, guide the Church to build any places of worship on earth? No, not one. The Christian worship is purely spiritual. Wherever believers were found on earth, in spirit they entered heaven itself with their great High Priest, and worshiped in the holiest.

The New Testament Scriptures, however, clearly recognize a spiritual building—of which Solomon's temple, I do not doubt, will be found to be in some interesting particulars a type.

The Epistle to the Ephesians especially describes this risen, heavenly spiritual building. Believers "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Eph. 2:20-22. What a building! and what a builder! "Ye are God's building." (See 1 Cor. 2:8-11.) With these, and many other passages of the Word describing the spiritual building, let us now turn to Solomon's temple for instruction.

And first, the materials of which the temple was built. Great stones and lofty trees. God is pleased thus to picture the two conditions of those whom He brings, and builds, in Christ the heavenly temple. Man is a great sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, and yet he is a lofty Pharisee.

In a former tract, "GREAT STONES AND COSTLY," I have dwelt a little on the exceeding greatness of the power of God to usward, in the raising from the dead the Lord Jesus—the chief corner-stone—and in raising us up, though dead sinners, in Him. Let us now see the way in which the lofty trees of Lebanon were brought to the temple at Jerusalem.

Solomon sent to Huram, saying, "Send me also cedar trees, fir trees, and Algum trees, out of Lebanon: (for I know that thy servants can skill to cut timber in Lebanon;) and, behold, my servants shall be with thy servants, even to prepare me timber in abundance: for the house which I am about to build shall be wonderful great." 2 Chron. 2:8, 9. Huram replied, "We will cut wood out of Lebanon, as much as thou shalt need: and we will bring it to thee in floats by sea to Joppa; and thou shalt carry it up to Jerusalem." v. 16.

Thus there was only one way for every tree used in building the temple. The ax, the ax; stoke after stroke, until the lofty tree lies flat and dead, severed from every root of nature. And then down, down, down the slopes of Lebanon, right down into the water. It must go into the water at the foot of Lebanon before it can be taken out of the water at Joppa—and it must be put into the water, and taken out of the water, before it can be carried up to Jerusalem's temple. There was no overland route for a single tree.

The ax, the fall, down into the water, symbol of death: out of death into the temple. Could there be a more concise, or striking picture of God's way of bringing man to Himself?

Let us compare it with one or two examples. Now Saul of Tarsus was not only a great sinner—he says, "the chief of sinners"—but he was also the most lofty pharisee that ever waved his head on the moral Lebanon of man. He was a cedar tree of the cedar trees; a fir tree of the fir trees; "a Hebrew of the Hebrews"—never was there a straighter moral fir tree, or more lofty religious cedar. But when the word of God, which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, entered his soul, yes, when Jesus said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" the lofty cedar fell flat on the ground. Then did he find that even his religious zeal was his greatest wickedness.

What a felling! What a severing from every fancied root of goodness, from every trust in himself as a natural man! All had to become dross and dung. Down, down, down, until he is nothing, and Christ is all. Yes, for three days in darkness it was down, down to the water, symbol of death, and the lofty Pharisee was buried by baptism into the likeness of the death of Christ. And as the trees were put in the water at the foot of Lebanon, and raised out at Joppa, so Saul was buried with

Christ in death, and the new man Paul was raised out of death, possessed of the new life, even one with the risen Christ.

It was so with the eunuch. The scripture which he read was opened, and stroke after stroke was given; Jesus, the holy One, must needs die for his sins; He was led as a sheep to the slaughter. "His life is taken away from the earth." Where is man's religiousness? Where his lofty pride—if he is so utterly lost in sin that the Son of God must thus come and suffer for his sins? And He has thus come, and has thus suffered even unto death, forsaken of God. The fine straight worshiper from Jerusalem bows his head; he falls down, down; he justified God. He says, Here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And again, like our trees of Lebanon, they went down into the water, and came up again out of the water.

Now if you will read carefully the Acts, you will find this was the only way to the spiritual temple of the Holy Ghost: "Hearing, they believed and were baptized." Acts 18:8. Do not forget the only way the trees traveled to Jerusalem. Do not mistake; God's only way of bringing you to Himself is through the death and resurrection of Christ. Read very carefully on this, Rom. 6:3-11. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

I grant you it is a hard struggle to give up all pretensions to righteousness; to be crucified with Christ, dead with Him, buried with Him, into His very death. Many Christians struggle desperately to keep a little footing on Lebanon. What a mistake! Now is it not most blessed to see not only my sins judged on the cross, but all that I am condemned once for all on the cross, and buried with the holy Sin-bearer in the grave of His death. Do not you see that all that can be condemned has been, and is thus, condemned, so that there is now therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.

We shall have to notice shortly where and how these materials were placed in the temple, but having thus seen the route of the trees of the building, let us next notice the building itself with its wondrous lessons of instruction.

When Solomon began to build, God gave him very exact measurements. "The length by cubits after the first measure was threescore cubits and the breadth twenty cubits. And the porch that was in the front, the length of it was according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits, and the height an hundred and twenty, and he overlaid it within with pure gold." In verse 8, "He made the most holy house: the length whereof was according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits; and the breadth thereof twenty cubits: and he overlaid it with fine gold, amounting to six hundred talents." That is about 3,285,000 pounds. 1

The first point of measurement I notice is this: The length of the porch, or way into the temple, is according to the breadth of the holiest—twenty cubits. The holy house symbolized the presence of God; and the porch, or way into that presence was according to the divine presence itself. Do you see this? A few of the words of the Lord Jesus will make it plain: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me. If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also': and from henceforth ye know Him and have seen Him." And again, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

These few words of the Lord Jesus make the matter most clear. The way, or porch, is according to or equal to the holiest. Jesus is the way, and He is equal to the divine presence; for He is God. And he that has seen Jesus, has seen the Father also. God could not have opened a more

glorious way to Himself for lost sinners; for the Son of God has died, and risen again, that He may be the way; as it is written, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." Heb. 10:19.

Not only was the length of the porch equal to the breadth of the holiest; but what a height! what boldness we have in Jesus to enter! Do you

Before we go on to the next interesting point in the measurement, we will return, and see where the stones and trees were placed in the temple, and thus learn a little more of the counsels of God as to those that are in the spiritual building.

All, whether stones or trees, were overlaid with pure gold. Jesus alone, the righteous One, the righteousness of God, can be set forth or symbolized by "pure gold"; as He says, "I counsel thee to buy of Me pure gold." (Rev. 3.) And not only was every tree and stone overlaid with pure gold, completely covered out of sight—not a notch of the fir being seen—but also there were "graved cherubim on the walls." Believing God, who "raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification," it (that is, righteousness) is reckoned unto us (Rom. 6). As the pure gold overlaid or covered the trees and stones, so Jesus has been raised from the dead, to be our ever subsisting righteousness. Not a notch of the old tree was to be seen. God could make no mistake; He raised up the Holy One, who had died for our sins, to be in resurrection our everlasting and subsisting righteousness. As God looked in the temple He saw only the pure gold. Even so in the heavenly building in Christ: "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved."

Furthermore, do you ask, But where are the cherubim graved on the pure gold that covers the wall? Look up by faith at Jesus our subsisting righteousness in the presence of God: what are those wounds on that pure and glorified body? do they not answer to the cherubim graved on the wall? Cherubim in Scripture set forth the consuming judgment of God (Eze. 19), as seraphim are the burning purification of God (Isa. 6), but both are taking action from the fire of the altar: the consuming judgment of God against sin as endured by Jesus, Son of God, on the cross. By this is all the believer's sin put away; or by this, according to this, must the rejecter of Christ be forever under the judgment and wrath of God. The ways of God are equal. He has shown what His wrath against sin is once on Calvary, and can He show less wrath to the lost soul, after rejecting pardon, then He showed His beloved Son when hanging on the accursed tree, the Sin-bearer?

God is just, and the justifier. He who is our everlasting righteousness bears in His own body the marks of the consuming cherubim judgments, once endured for us, on Calvary. This is an all important subject; for the better we know the righteousness of God, the more solid will be our peace.

Just notice how this truth of the cherubim is repeated, and enforced. There is the cherubim graved on the fine gold. He who is our righteousness did first endure the consuming judgment due to sin.

Then "In the most holy house he made two cherubim of image work and overlaid them with gold;" and the utmost care is taken to show that the span of the cherubim's wings was the exact breadth of the holiest. "The wings of these cherubim spread themselves forth twenty cubits; and they stood on their feet, and their faces were inward." Not one cubit short of the breadth of the holiest. Can anything give more solid peace than this: that the consuming judgment of God on sin was according to God's own measure of sin? Not our thought of sin, not our measure: but according to the divine presence—the twenty cubits of the holiest: twenty cubits, the length of the porch: twenty cubits, the breadth of the holiest: and twenty cubits the span of the cherubim's wings. He who was with God, and was God, He is the way; and He bore the divine judgment, according to what God is.

Furthermore: not only were cherubim graved on the wall, and cherubim stretching their wings the full width of the most holy house; but on that veil of blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen were wrought cherubim. Nothing short of the divine judgment on sin could open the new way into the holiest; but since Jesus has borne that wrath due to us, sin is now put away, and the veil rent from top to bottom—where man could not by any means be brought, we now have "boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus; by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." What a contrast to the Jews' religion of old! No veil with wrought cherubim now, to hide God from man, and keep sinful man from God. The blood has been shed; sin is put away. Divine judgment has been executed; the veil is rent, and by one offering everlasting in its efficacy. How loud those types of old spake out the fact that Jesus must needs suffer the atoning death! And our happy place now, in the presence of God, as loudly proclaims the work is done.

Pamphlets, Fruit

How beautifully the order is still brought out! Now is the time for fruit. And what abundance did the children of Israel bring; of corn, wine, and oil, and dates. And the tithe of holy things consecrated unto the Lord their God, and they laid them by heaps; or, heaps, heaps. As all fruit must be in the power of resurrection to be perfect, so in this type, “In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps, and finished them in the seventh month” Chron. 31:7). What a principle this is, and so little understood: “Dead to the law by the body of Christ: that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead: that we should bring forth fruit unto God” (Rom. 7:4). “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection’ (Phil. 3:10). The Holy Spirit could not be given to dwell in us until Christ was risen from the dead and glorified. And if the Spirit could not be given until then, how could we have the fruits of the Spirit? What a contrast this is to man under law! But is it not a universal fact, wherever the doors are shut, and the lamps put out? Yes, wherever men are not led by the Spirit, they are invariably placed under the law, for fruit-bearing. Just as the opposite is also true, even as it is written: “But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law” (Gal. 5:18). How little is this true, only resurrection-foundation principle, in the power of the Holy Spirit, for fruit-bearing, understood! We might meditate on this with great profit. Has anything occurred answering to these heaps, heaps of fruits? The doors have been opened again by a full gospel. The Holy Spirit is again owned in the assembly; the immutable perfection of the believer, by the sacrifice of Christ, again revealed. Joy and worship, the result. The Lord’s supper again as it is written. The Lordship of Christ owned; and the blessed fact again enjoyed, oneness with the risen Christ. The Holy Spirit known and owned as sent down to lead and guide. All this, not the work of men, but the hand of the Lord. Now, can it be denied that the blessed Spirit, now owned again, has poured forth such a stream of Christ-exalting ministry, by tongue and pen, as the church never knew since He was set aside at the close of the apostolic age? This, not for money, or worldly applause, but the Holy Spirit, leading the children of God thus to serve in consecration to the Lord. Spiritually, we may say with Azariah, “Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the Lord, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty: for

the Lord hath blessed His people; and that which is left is this great store" (2 Chron. 31:10). Now this is a notable fact, that since the Holy Spirit has been known, and oneness with the risen Christ believed, the most astonishing numbers of tracts and pamphlets, books and periodicals, have been sent forth, without any sectarian motive, but "unto the Lord" (2 Chron. 31:6), and for the food and edification of His people. "Tracts, periodicals," said a brother to me the other day; "I do not know what to do with them; it is impossible to read them all." I dare say it would have been impossible for Hezekiah to have eaten all the oxen, and rams, and heaps, heaps of fruits. But was that God's intention? And, my brother, you may have mistaken the Lord's intention; it may not be that His only thought is, that you should eat all the heaps, heaps of precious fruits, thus laid up in the chambers, or depots, of the treasuries of the Lord. This just brings us to the question, What is the porter's situation?

Pamphlets, Now the Hammer and the Ax

Yes, "Now when all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves" (2 Chron. 31:1). As with the Thessalonians, they turned first to God, then from idols. We must be purged worshipers first within the veil, before there can be power for testimony without. This is God's way. Then Hezekiah appointed the courses of the priests, and the Levites after their courses, every man according to his service. And did not the ascended Lord give gifts, every man according to his service (Eph. 4:7-13)? The Holy Spirit distributing to every man severally as He will (1 Cor. 12:1-11). Is He not the same Lord above? Is He not the same Spirit here below? "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning (James 1:17). However the church may have failed — doors shut and lamps put out — have not as many as have been gathered to Christ found the Father the same; the Lord, the Holy Spirit the same? "No variableness, neither shadow of turning." Let us, then, in faith wait on the Lord, and He will put both priests and Levites in their courses, every man according to his service — for worship or service. This brings us to the question of

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2 Chron. 15, "Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The Lord is with you, while ye be with him: and if ye seek him, he will be found of you: but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." Whilst, as we have seen, this cannot now be said to the individual believer, as to the eternal salvation of his soul, or the love of God to him in Christ; yet cannot these words be true of an assembly now? Or does an assembly once gathered to Christ always remain so? It is clear if they are gathered to Christ, He is in their midst. He says so. And in the beginning this was so. It was the very constitution of the church of God. But did it continue to be so T We read in our chapter, verse 3, "Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law. And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries. And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city," &c. Israel had the true God, teaching priest, and laws, but they did not own them; and we see the result.

Has it not been the same with the church?

Yes, for a long season what an utter departure from owning the Lord in the midst of the assembly! He is ever the same, and the Holy Ghost is ever here; but for a long season where should we find the assembly gathered unto the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that He was manifestly in the midst of them? And in those days there was no peace to him that went out, or came in. What vexations and persecutions! What hatred of sect against sect, or so called church against church! And further we see unquestionably that after the blessed reviving in Philadelphia, there will come a state of things when Christ is not in the midst, but outside knocking, "The Lord is with you, while ye be with him."

These warnings are not given to depress, or discourage, far from it. No, "Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak, for work shall be rewarded." Can anything in these last days be so strengthening and encouraging; as this, "The Lord is with you?" The question then is this, How is His presence to be realized and enjoyed? "And when Asa heard these words.... he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah.... and renewed the altar of the Lord," &c (Ver. 8.) This must be done if we would enjoy the manifest presence of the Lord in our midst.

As the Spirit says, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Whatever we trust in, or rest in apart from Christ, is an abominable idol. And if, like Asa, we hear these words, every idol must be put away, and the altar be renewed, the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus must have the alone supreme place before our souls.

This is the secret of souls being truly gathered to Him. "And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeons for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance WHEN THEY SAW THAT THE LORD HIS GOD WAS WITH HIM." What is there to attract souls now if Christ is not manifestly in the midst!

We could not desire to see them gathered to a Laodicean assembly. How solemn then these words of Oded! "The Lord is with you, while ye be with him."

"So they gathered themselves together Jerusalem in the third month," &c. Oh to be gathered now in the power of resurrection, and so gathered, putting away all idols, and renewing the true table of the Lord! This would lead to large-heartedness. "And they offered to the Lord the same time of the spoil." Oh how much is spent on self; in dress, in amusements, in superfluities, that might be offered to the Lord! Some are starving, and thousands perishing around and a cry for the gospel in the dark towns, and villages, even of England. Oh, if those professedly gathered to Him would but offer unto the Lord the spoil. And what purpose and diligence is expected of us! if they were bid "to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart, and with all their soul." Fellow believers, is it so with us? What is our profession worth if it is not? The Lord stir up all hearts.

If we are in His presence, there must, and will be holy discipline. “That whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman.” There must be no toleration of the flesh: “Baptized into his death.” “Knowing this, that our old man, is crucified with him.” The old man must be treated as dead. How little we have learned this lesson! But if the Lord is with us, there must not be room for a bit of self. Yes, there, was purpose of heart, no lukewarmness: “They sware unto the Lord with a loud voice, and with shouting.” “And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and the Lord gave them rest round about.” (Vers. 14, 15.)

We know it is not for us now to make covenants, or to swear oaths. But should there be less earnestness or purpose of heart in lowly dependence on the Spirit of God? May the Lord arouse us every one to seek the Lord in the midst of His saints truly gathered to His name, with all our hearts, with our whole desire. Is the Holy and the True our whole desire? He who loved us, and gave Himself for us; He who loves us to the end; He whom we shall so soon see! Is He our whole desire? They to sought him with their whole desire.” If this is not the case, that which merely professes to be gathered to Him would soon become Laodicea, and He outside. And what was the result when they sought Him with their whole desire? “He was found of them.” Precious words of encouragement to them, and to us. Yes, to the end it will be so. If but two or three seek Him with their whole desire, He will be found of them. Shall we doubt this? It was to Jerusalem they were gathered together, for there He had recorded His name. But long before this He had said, “In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.” (Exod. 20:24.) And long after this, He said to us, concerning His assembly, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Yes, His presence is our Jerusalem. There He is found of us, if we seek Him with our whole desire.

“And the Lord gave them rest round about.” When he had finished redemption, and risen from the dead, did He not stand in the midst and say, “Peace to you,” perfect peace, perfect rest? There is not only peace of conscience, but peace, rest of heart, found in His blest presence that can be found nowhere else. But let us beware of the cold-hearted indifference of Laodicea. There is not one thing the Lord cam approve in that condition of soul. (Revelation in. 15-18.)

Many Christians have great difficulty in giving up their favorite idol, the principle of what is called the mother-church, and gathering simply to Christ as at the beginning. It was really beautiful in Asa: “Concerning Maacha the mother of Asa, the king, he removed her from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove: and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped it, and burnt it at the brook Kidron.” Yes, if we would enjoy the peaceful rest of His presence, all, and every idol must be given up. Surely there ought not to be a moment’s hesitation betwixt Christ and the idolatry of even mother-church, since she and her end is so fully described in Rev. 17.

We would again repeat the caution, let not the reader apply these warnings and encouragements to the question of his soul’s eternal salvation. That is wholly the work of Christ, and it is finished. But as it regards the condition of all assemblies, it would be impossible to overrate the importance of these words of Oded. May the Lord use them to stir up our hearts to seek the Lord in the midst of His saints with all our heart, and all our desire.

The failure of Asa after all this reviving is also full of solemn warning: but for the present we close.

C. S.

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