Exodus - Commentaries by John Telford Armet

Notes on the Tabernacle, Vessels of Approach

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We now come to one of the vessels of approach to God (Ex. 30:1-10). God's righteousness was manifested at the brazen altar, but there also He met the sinner in love and accepted him in the value of the sacrifice, and thus opened the way to draw near to Himself.

The Golden Altar – the Altar of Incense

We may then readily understand why the altar of incense is not mentioned until now, for the way of approach must first be opened. Here Aaron burned the sweet incense. Taking coals of fire from the brazen altar, from the fire which God had kindled, and which never was allowed to go out, he carried these to the golden altar, and there placing incense upon the coals, a sweet fragrance arose before the Lord. The position of this altar of incense was in the holy place, before the veil. At the brazen altar, inside the gate of the court, God could meet with the people; at the golden altar, He met the priests, in the sanctuary. Both these altars convey the thought of drawing near to God, and this on the ground of the value of the sacrifices. On the golden altar there was no sacrifice; therefore coal was taken from the altar of burnt offering, showing that the judgment which consumed the offering there was the same that would bring out the sweet savor on the golden altar; and as the priest was accepted in the value of the shed blood, he would be seen in the acceptance through the cloud of sweet incense, in God's presence. It was the action of the fire that brought out the sweet fragrance of the incense, even as the bruising under Jehovah's rod manifested the fullest fragrance of Christ to God. The incense was to be perpetual (Ex. 30:8). This would show that the fragrance of Christ is unceasingly precious to God. In Revelation 8 an angel (evidently Christ) stood at the altar with a golden censer, and much incense was given Him that He should add it to, or offer it with, the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar; and the smoke of the incense ascended with the prayers of the saints before God; and God gave the answer in judgments poured out on those who were persecutors of the suffering ones. From this we would gather that the incense offered by Aaron (type of Christ) was of an intercessory character; "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). From this scripture we learn the precious truth that Christ saves to the uttermost — that is, through all the difficulties of their wilderness journey — those who come to Him.

Sweet Incense

In turn, the believer, made a priest unto God, has also sweet incense to offer; for, brought into God's presence in all the acceptance of Christ, he is there as a worshipper, and, filled with Christ, he can give back to God of that which God has given to him — Christ. This is true worship — the heart filled to overflowing, and praise going forth to God out of the heart thus filled. "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Heb. 13:15). "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5).

The materials of the golden altar being the same as those of the ark and table, we have Christ presented to us in all that He is in nature, and also in character, and our approach to God is wholly through Him. And, as we have seen, not only is the thought of the believers' acceptance in Christ brought before us in this altar, but, as priests, they have the privilege of presenting Him to God, and of enjoying with Him all the preciousness of Christ. This offering of incense was to be morning and evening, day after day, and year after year — never ceasing. "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." (Phil. 4:4).

The Lamps

The lamps must be dressed morning and evening at the time of the burning of the incense — a priestly care that there be nothing to hinder the light to shine out in all its brightness (Ex. 30:7-8). If this care is not taken by believers, there cannot be the enjoyment of Christ in what He is. The two things go together — light and ascending fragrance. It is when the Spirit is ungrieved that He takes of the things that are Christ's and shows them unto us; and from hearts thus filled sweet fragrance goes forth to God. How careful the Christian should be to keep the lamps trimmed, not allowing in his thoughts, words, or ways, anything that will hinder the power and working of God's Spirit in him.

Notes on the Tabernacle, Consecration of the Priests, The

Washing With Water

Jehovah now instructs Moses concerning the consecration of the priests (Ex. 29:1-35). The first step was their being washed with water at the door of the tabernacle. Water cleanses from physical defilement; in Scripture it is used as a symbol of God's Word which cleanses from moral defilement. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word" (Psalm 119:9). "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). These and other scriptures show the cleansing power of God's Word as applied to the walk of the Christian. In this case, however, the washing would speak rather of the bath of regeneration or the new birth. The washing by blood cleanses from guilt. Washed from our sins in His blood (Rev. 1:5). The moral cleansing is by the Word, which we have here — "shalt wash them with water." But the washing was entire — the whole body. A different word is used for the washing of the hands and feet at the laver. The same two words are used in John 13:10, and are kept distinct. The one who has come to Jesus has had the bath — been morally cleansed — but in his daily path he contracts defilements, and needs his feet washed often, in other words, he needs the constant intercession of Christ.

Aaron is found here in association with his sons (Ex. 29:4), which we will remember gives us a type of the Church, or the priestly family. But none can become priests (“hath made us kings and priests”) until they are born again. God does not accept service from any until they have had the bath of regeneration. Priests cannot be made so by man, but it is the office of all true believers to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God (1 Pet. 2:5).

Anointing of Aaron and His Sons

After the bath, Aaron is separated from his sons, and clothed in the garments for “glory and beauty,” becoming thus again as high priest, a type of Christ (Ex. 29:5-7). He was then anointed with oil, which is a type of the Holy Spirit. His sons were not anointed until later. Christ was anointed while on earth — His disciples, after He had gone on high and sent down the Holy Spirit. Christ was anointed on the ground of His absolute holiness; His people are anointed on the ground of the cleansing before God by His precious blood. This comes out clearly in the types before us; The sons are sprinkled with blood before being anointed; Aaron is anointed when clothed. Christ was anointed when ready to enter upon His public ministry. Later, Aaron is sprinkled with blood, but in association with his sons, in which case he is seen, not as the high priest, but as a member of the priestly family and, as such, having need of the blood.

After being washed, the sons are also robed, but in garments differing from those that pertained to the high priest. This robing, as applied typically to all believers, is the putting on of Christ. Christ should be seen in the walk, the ways, and the service of believers.

The Sin Offering

The next thing is the offerings through which the priests were consecrated, without which they could not go into God’s presence to serve Him. The sin offering came first (Ex. 29:10-14). Christ as the sin-bearer is brought before us in this offering. Aaron and his sons were to lay their hands upon the head of the bullock which had been provided for this purpose. In this act their sins were, in type, transferred to the animal. The victim, thus identified, or laden with their sins, must be slain before the Lord: “The wages of sin is death.” The stroke of justice thus fell upon the appointed victim, and the guilty were allowed to go free. “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (1 Pet. 3:18). In what was done to the sin offering we get a glimpse of the exceeding hatefulness of sin to God. In its fullness it is told out in what was done to His beloved Son on the cross. Aaron and his sons who stood and watched in that solemn moment when the victim was bound, their sins confessed on its head, and then the victim slain, must have entered in some measure into God’s hatred of sin. “The life... is in the blood” and “without shedding of blood is no remission.” A portion of the blood of the victim was put upon the horns of the altar; the rest was poured out at the bottom of the altar. It is through the yielded life that reconciliation is brought about; the blood was shed. Sinners are “justified by His blood,” and “reconciled to God by the death of His Son” (Rom. 5:9-10).

We have already considered, in connection with the brazen altar, the burning of the fat, God’s portion, on the altar, and the burning of the body of the victim outside the camp. This is a type of the Lord Jesus bearing the wrath of God on account of sin, consumed like the victim outside the camp; and yet in that death there was that which was a sweet odor to God.

On Mount Sinai, the sight of God’s glory was like devouring fire (Exod. 24:17). “The Lord thy God is a consuming fire” (Deut. 4:24). When Aaron began his service in the tabernacle, fire came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering (Lev. 9:24), and thus showed His acceptance of it. The fire brought out only a sweet savor, and God’s righteous testing of Christ on the cross, brought out a sweet savor to God. Although forsaken of God, He could say, “But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel” (Psalm 22:3). God shall judge and punish the wicked with unquenchable fire. The eternal punishment is described as “the lake of fire.”

In that fearful hour of sorrow, when the fire of God’s judgment fell upon the sinless One “made sin” for us, all nature was convulsed. Fire is a symbol of God’s searching righteous judgment, whether in the acceptance of what was good, or the condemnation of evil. The rending rocks, the quaking earth, the darkness which added its gloom to the awful scene, all served to emphasize His entire abandonment. Of sympathy there was none; human friends had fled; God had forsaken Him. That hour of horror is an hour that stands alone in the annals of eternity. The issue, which will stand for eternity, is — God glorified, and man saved.

Precious truth for the one who can say, The judgment that I deserved has been borne fully by Jesus in those three hours of darkness. O to be able to say, All this for me! Three is a number which indicates full, or complete, testimony. In the three hours of darkness, testimony was borne to the fact that the judgment of God against sin was exhausted by the One who suffered under it. Three days under the power of death gives complete testimony as to His death. The days were not complete, but, according to Jewish reckoning, they were counted as three days. Not waiting until the hours of the third day had expired, would speak of the fullness of grace in the heart of Him who would announce to His sorrowing ones, the bringing in of full blessing to man.

The Laying on of Hands

As to the laying on of hands, we give an extract containing some beautiful thoughts from a certain writer. He says, “What, then, is the doctrine set forth in the laying on of hands? It is this: Christ was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). He took our position with all its consequences, in order that we might get His position with all its consequences. He was treated as sin upon the cross, that we might be treated as righteousness in the presence of infinite holiness. He had to endure the hiding of God’s countenance, that we might bask in the light of that countenance. He had to pass through three hours’ darkness, that we might walk in everlasting light. He was forsaken of God, for a time, that we might enjoy His presence forever. All that was due to us as ruined sinners was laid upon Him, in order that all that was due to Him, as the Accomplisher of redemption, might be ours. There was everything against Him when He hung upon the accursed tree, in order that there might be nothing against us. He was identified with us, in the reality of death and judgment, in order that we might be identified with Him in the reality of life and righteousness. He drank the cup of wrath, the cup of trembling, that we might drink the cup of salvation, the cup of infinite favor. He was treated according to our deserts, that we might be treated according to His.”

The Burnt Offering

What follows is the burnt offering (Ex. 29:15-18). Not only would God have the sins of His people atoned for, and thus blotted out from before Him. He will have that people accepted in His presence. The burnt offering brings this thought blessedly before us. As in the sin offering, the people had to lay their hands on the head of the victim. This laying on of hands in the offerings always speaks of identification, but in these

two offerings, the order of identification is reversed. In the sin offering, the victim was identified with the sins of the people; in the burnt offering, the people were identified with the perfection of the unblemished animal, and it was accepted for them.

The burnt offering is the highest sacrifice in Scripture. It is characterized by being “a sweet savor... unto the Lord.” All of this offering being burnt upon the altar, and all going up as a sweet savor to God, shows the satisfaction and the delight God took in the blessed One of whom the offering spoke. Another characteristic of this offering was that the one who offered it brought it “of his own voluntary will” (Lev. 1:3). All this brings out the devotedness of the One whose devotion was even unto death, and His obedience in His willingly offering Himself. When the burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin became an empty form on the part of the people, and God could take no pleasure in them, Jesus offered Himself; His words were, “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God” (Heb. 10:7-9). The old order must give way to the one perfect offering. His will was ever yielded to the will of God. In the agony of Gethsemane, when facing the unmingled sorrow of the cup He would needs drink, His words were, “Not My will, but Thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). In the unparalleled sufferings of the cross, He vindicated God in the expression, “But Thou art holy” (Psa. 22:3). Perfection marked this blessed One in all His earthly path, and the cross was the crowning manifestation of it. Although forsaken of God, because bearing the sins of His people in His own body on the tree (1 Pet. 2:24), yet at no other time was the sweet savor to God so precious as in that bitter hour. And in all that sweet savor — in all the value of that perfect offering — those who come to God by Him, are accepted of God.

The Ram of Consecration

In the ram of consecration, we get another aspect of the death of Christ (Ex. 29:19-22). This offering bears in general the character of the peace offering in which the priests had their portion (Lev. 3). Happy communion with God on the part of One who partook, and communion with His people, is what is represented here. All believers, as priests in association with Christ, are figured in this offering. Being priests, they should be consecrated to God, even as Christ who swerved not, nor turned aside in His devotedness. He came to glorify God, and He came to save sinners; and with death before Him, “He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.”

Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon this ram of consecration, identifying themselves thus with it, as with the other victims that had been slain. Its blood was put upon the tip of the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the great toe of the right foot of each of them. This ceremony should have a voice for all who have been made priests unto God. Set apart by the blood of the One who has been slain for them, their responsibility is to live in devotedness to Him. Special significance attaches to the blood having been put upon ear, hand and foot. The ear that is consecrated to God through the death of Christ will listen to His voice. “The perfect Servant of Jehovah was blind and deaf — blind to all fascinations of the world, and deaf to every suggestion of Satan.” The theme of some who talk of their consecration is giving up this and giving up that for the Lord, when, unlike the “perfect Servant,” they know little of what God says to them in His Word. The truly consecrated ear will seek to hear what God has to say, and to be closed to all else. Then Christ will be the theme, not what has been given up, or what high advancement has been made. The more there is of true consecration, the fuller place Christ will have in the life, and the less of self there will be manifested.

Blood upon the ear is first, then blood upon the hand. Where one has listened to the Word of God and is obedient to it, he is ready for service, and the hand is brought into use. The right hand speaks of power and of skill (Ex. 15:6,12; Psa. 37:5). The blood on the right hand of the priests fitted them for service in the handling of the sacrifices; the Christian should be found serving God in the strength and with the skill given to him; all he does should be done to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). And his first aim should be to seek “the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33). What before may have been done for one’s own pleasure, should now be done to please the Lord.

Blood put upon the foot speaks of the consecrated and separated walk. The foot that once trod the paths of unrighteousness, and was found in the way of sinners, should now, when set apart to God, be found in the path of the righteous, and should be “beautiful” as the bearer of “glad tidings.” Light, not the stumbling of the darkness, should characterize the path. “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov. 4:18). The believer, thus set apart to God, is not free to go his own way or to do his own will. “Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

After the blood had been put thus upon the bodies of the priests, their garments were sprinkled with blood and with oil, the oil being a type of the Holy Spirit. They were in this way “hallowed,” or set apart to God. Notice that the oil follows the blood; it is not until one knows that he is “justified by His blood” (Rom. 5:9), and his sins are therefore forgiven (Eph. 1:7), that he is sealed with the Holy Spirit. “In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. 1:13).

Wave Offering

After this, certain parts of the ram, and “one loaf of bread, and one cake of oiled bread, and one wafer out of the basket of the unleavened bread that is before the Lord” are all put into the hands of Aaron and his sons to wave them before the Lord (Ex 29:22-23). All this is exceedingly blessed when seen fulfilled in Christ. The ram speaks of Christ in His death; the loaves, of Christ in His spotless life, lived in the power of God’s Spirit. And note carefully, please, that this was what was filling the hands of the priests; now note that to fill the hands (in the margin of verse 9) is used in place of consecrate, which is the true meaning of the word. And, mark it well, true consecration to God is being filled with Christ. Then, and then alone, have we that to give to God, which is acceptable to Him.

When these things (parts of the ram, and the bread) are given back to Moses, they are burnt upon the altar of burnt offering, and go up as a sweet savor to God (Ex. 29:25). The natural man sees nothing to desire in Christ — God finds all His joy in Him. In the portions that were left of the ram of consecration, Moses was to have his part, and Aaron and his sons were to have their part. Not only is God’s heart satisfied in His blessed Son, but His people also have joy and satisfaction in that perfect One — both in His life and in His death.

The Continual Burnt Offering

After the seething of the flesh in the holy place, and Aaron and his sons feeding upon it (feeding upon Christ must be connected with the altar), we have the “continual burnt offering,” so called because of its being offered daily, morning and evening, throughout their generation. The fire that was kindled of God upon the altar was never to go out. The continual ascending of this sweet savor offering speaks blessedly of what Christ is continually to God, and that for His own people. With the lamb offered twice daily, there was the “tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of a hin of beaten oil; and the fourth part of a hin of wine for a drink offering” (Ex. 29:40). In this we get the meat (or

meal) offering, and the drink offering. The one gives Christ in His perfect life, the oil mingled with the flour shadowing forth the truth that “Christ as to His humanity was begotten of the Holy Ghost”; the other is a symbol of joy (see Judg. 9:13), and would tell of the joy the believer has in communion with God in all the perfection of His Son. How wonderful that God should have His creatures, who are saved by His grace, share with Him in His joy, having fellowship with Him in His one object of delight.

The Meeting Place

The next point is the meeting place. The people were not permitted to go nearer than the gate of the tabernacle, while Moses, through grace, was allowed to go into God’s presence before the mercy seat. This is now the believer’s place through the finished work of Christ. All God’s claims against the sinner having been fully met, and God having rent the veil from top to bottom, the one, made clean, can enter His presence without fear. Thus God could meet His people (Ex. 29:43).

The tabernacle and the priesthood were sanctified, or set apart, in the value of the sacrifice, and by the glory of God (Ex. 29:43-44). In that place alone, of all the earth, was God’s glory manifested. Now, God’s glory shines in the face of Jesus Christ; and God shines into the hearts of those who believe, to dispel the darkness with which the god of this world blinds, and to give the light of the knowledge of this glory (2 Cor. 4:4-6). When Jesus comes to reign, the whole earth will be filled with His glory.

In starting out, we noticed God’s purpose and desire to dwell with man. Now that everything has been arranged, and people and sanctuary have been set apart to God, we get the word, “I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God.” How far all this is from the heart of man by nature! He does not want God. He takes without thankful heart all that God gives him and, like the prodigal son, goes off to enjoy it without the thought of God. “But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us,” gently draws man to Himself; and, in the deep love of His heart, not willing to wait until He has His ransomed ones home with Him in the glory, comes down now and makes His abode with those who love Him and who keep His words (John 14:23). “His kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus,” will manifest “the exceeding riches of His grace” in the ages to come (Eph. 2:7).

Notes on the Tabernacle, Court of the Tabernacle, The

Hangings of fine twined linen enclosed this court (Ex. 27:9-19). In the order in which these things are revealed to us, the court made the third division of the tabernacle. First came the “holy of holies” — the innermost room — next the “holy place,” and now “the court.” It was one hundred cubits long and fifty cubits broad. There were twenty pillars on each side, and ten on each end. The east end, at which the entrance was placed, had three pillars on each side of the gate, and four for the gate — sixty pillars in all. On fifty-six of these pillars were hangings of fine twined linen, and on the four for the gate, the hangings were the same as those for the door. That which enclosed this sanctuary of God would thus speak of the purity of Christ. And the bright and beautiful hangings of the gate would convey the thought that all who would approach must draw near in the sense of what was becoming to God. He had provided but one entrance, and that of such character as to speak of the glories and beauties of Christ. Many seek to climb up some other way rather than by entering through Christ, the Door that God has opened for those who will to enter. But such will never enter the courts above; they will fall back, baffled in their useless attempts. Over the gate which entered the court might be written, “I am the way”; over the door into the holy place, “I am the door”; over the veil which led to “the holiest,” “the new and living way.” The very common expression that all denominations are but different ways to heaven, will not stand the test of Scripture, for Jesus says, “I am the way... no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me” (John 14:6).

An ecclesiastical position, whether right or wrong, can never be a way to heaven. Christ is the way. God will have no entrance but through His Son. This is typified in the one entrance to the tabernacle.

Sockets, Fillets, Chapiters

Other blessed and important thoughts are given us in the sockets, fillets, chapiters, pins, and cords, though we will not attempt to enter into all these details. The sockets were of brass so that at the base, all around the court, was found the mark of God in righteousness, testing man. While the knowledge of this would be necessary in approaching God, fear would be removed when the one who entered would look upon the silver fillets, chapiters, and hooks, which would speak of redemption. (Ex. 38:28.) All God’s righteous testing was fully met in redemption. How blessed! God has come to man, revealing Himself in Christ, and now man can approach God through Christ.

Pins and Cords

The pins and cords also have a voice: they were used to hold the boards of the tabernacle, and the pillars of the court, in position (Ex. 27:19). Looking at the boards and pillars as symbols of all Christians, the pins and cords would picture to us that needful word, “Kept by the power of God” (1 Pet. 1:5). How could these boards or pillars stand without the cords? And how could the Christian stand in a difficult position, tempted from without and tempted from within, were he not kept by the power of God! But while kept of God, there is also a responsibility on the part of the Christian which must not be overlooked, though not prefigured in the pins and cords. God’s Word is given to be the guide; and walking in the light of it the believer can say with the Psalmist, “By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer” (Psa. 17:4).

Notes on the Tabernacle, Hanging for the Door

The curtain hung at the front of the tabernacle formed the entrance into the holy place as the veil did into the most holy. The materials were the same, but there was this striking difference in the two: no cherubim were embroidered on the “hanging for the door.” If the cherubim on the veil would speak of Christ in His judicial character, their absence on the door would present Christ to us in grace. Those within the door could look without fear on that which spoke of judgment, for they were there in all the value of the blood that had been shed. Such was not the case with those without; to them judgment meant death. But God’s attitude toward the sinner is that of grace, and so in His merciful provision the cherubim were not wrought upon the door. God in Christ is now reconciling sinners to Himself; those who come to God through

Christ, the door, have all fear of judgment taken from them, for they know that Christ has suffered in their stead. “Shall not come into judgment,” is true to such (John 5:24).

The veil was hung upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold. Pillars form the support of a house. In the address to Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13), the overcomers are made pillars in the temple of God; that is, a special portion and special blessing are accorded them. In the midst of weakness on every hand, Christ has been their object, and they have kept His Word and have not denied His name; all this He rewards in a marked way. The pillars supporting the veil would then speak of those who are found cleaving with purpose of heart to the Lord, and who are living epistles known and read of all men (2 Cor. 3:2).

The hanging for the door was supported by five pillars. The number five speaks of responsibility toward man; the entrance to God’s presence must be through the One who has perfectly filled this place of responsibility. The sockets, or bases, of the four pillars for the veil, were of silver, showing that those who stand for Christ, stand on redemption ground. The sockets of the five pillars, for the hanging of the door, were of brass which speaks of God’s righteousness in testing man. God would have the walk of His people to be in keeping with the character of the One through whom they enter His presence — the One who so fully filled His place of responsibility toward man, and so perfectly answered to God’s righteous testing.

Notes on the Tabernacle, Framework of the Tabernacle

Boards

The boards of the tabernacle were of shittim wood, or acacia, overlaid with gold. Being of the same material as the ark and the table of showbread, they too must refer to Christ. But as the house of God is now composed of all believers, the boards would necessarily typify also all believers of the present time. The length of each board was to be ten cubits. This has its meaning, and believers should seek to learn what there may be for them in this. The number ten is given in Scripture in connection with responsibility toward God, so we have ten commandments. Each individual Christian should therefore remember that he is responsible to God for all that he does, since he forms a part of His house. “Holiness becometh Thine house, O LORD, forever” (Psalm 93:5).

Tenons

There were to be two tenons on the bottom of each board. We get the number two used in Scripture in connection with testimony: “That in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established” (Matt. 18:16). The number of boards to be used was forty-eight. This number is a multiple of other numbers which are used symbolically in Scripture, and in order to get its symbolic force, we must separate it into its factors, twelve and four. Twelve in Scripture gives administrative completeness in government, as we see in the twelve tribes, twelve apostles, twelve gates (where the judges sat), and so forth. Four gives us completeness on earth — the “four corners of the earth,” four winds, foursquare, four gospels, and more. The whole number, therefore, will be administrative perfection displayed in all its completeness in Christ; or, if the boards are taken in connection with the divine dwelling place, this perfection displayed through the house of God.

Silver Sockets

Under each board were two silver sockets, which would make ninety-six sockets under the boards; and there were four sockets under the pillars that supported the veil, making one hundred sockets, or bases, in all. Again, we must resort to its factors, ten and ten, to learn the meaning of this number. According to what we have seen, ten times ten would give the highest expression of responsibility toward God. Let us inquire a little into the meaning of the silver sockets. In order to do this we will need to turn to Exodus 30:11-16. Here we learn that when the people were numbered, each man must give half a shekel of silver, “a ransom for his soul unto the LORD.” The rich were not allowed to give more, and the poor must not give less. In this we get a vital principle — when the question is the ransom, or redemption of the soul, the man of highest morality must be redeemed at the same cost as that which will be required for the vilest sinner, and that is the precious blood of Christ.

Passing on to Exodus 38:25-27, we get the interesting fact that this ransom money amounted to something over a hundred talents of silver, and that out of the talents a hundred sockets were cast for the sanctuary, “a talent for a socket.” Let us look at one more point and then seek to make the application. Each board with its two tenons stood on two of these silver sockets. Now gathering up the thoughts — silver speaks of redemption; every ransomed sinner is redeemed at a like cost; one hundred speaks of responsibility. We have then the blessed and precious truth that each believer stands before God on the ground of redemption, the purchase price being the blood of Jesus, but he stands in this position as fully responsible to God, and there to bear witness for Christ. His feet have been lifted from the miry clay and placed upon the rock; and now, with glad heart, he can sing,

Feelings that rise and fall even as the waves of the sea have no part in this perfect redemption; nor have the good works of one who has not eternal life any part in it; such works are termed of God, “dead works.” All is based on the finished work of Christ the unchanging One.

Looking at the boards as they stand in their silver sockets, we see the house of God formed; but, thus far, the boards are detached, therefore are independent of each other. God could not have His house in this unstable condition. Man’s heart would lead him to be independent, and to do as he pleases, but this is not God’s thought; He speaks of believers as being builded together for His habitation through the Spirit. The building together, which is according to His heart, is seen in type in the bars which passed through rings of gold at the sides and the ends, and held all securely together. Some see in the five bars a type of the five gifts to the Church, which are given “for the perfecting of the saints,” the “work of the ministry,” and so forth (Eph. 4:11-13).

Gathering – Ground, Center, Power

The sockets being made of silver, we learn that redemption; is the foundation of the house of God. From the rings being of gold, and the boards and bars being covered with gold, we learn that those who form the house of God are clothed in divine righteousness — gold, as we have seen, being a symbol of divine righteousness — and in this same righteousness they are bound together. We learn from Romans 3:22

that “the righteousness of God” is upon all them that believe. Thus clad, and thus bound together, believers form a dwelling place for God according to His own heart. He would have His people use diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace (Eph. 4:3 JND). There should be on the part of Christians the practical demonstration of what really exists by the Spirit. This maintaining of the unity is entrusted of God to their keeping; but alas! what failure is ever found where man is put in responsibility. Instead of one house, fitly framed together, being represented, God’s people are divided into many companies, independent of one another and differing in doctrines and in ways. God has given one center around which He would have His people gathered; that center is Christ. None of the various doctrines, forms of government and other things which bring so many of God’s dear people together, form the ground of gathering according to His Word. “Receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God” (Rom. 15:7). Redemption is the ground; Christ is the center; the Spirit of God is the power that gathers. “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20).

As we have seen, the silver sockets on which the boards stood, show that believers stand on the ground of redemption; and the binding together of the boards with bars covered with gold, show that God would in divine righteousness hold His people together. The ark, surrounded by the boards and placed in the innermost chamber, might well speak to the hearts of God’s people of the One about whom He would have them gathered.

Notice, we are not told, Where two or three meet, or, Where two or three gather; it is “are gathered.” The Spirit of God is the power that gathers to that one center — Christ. If the boards were taken down and placed in bundles here and there, what has become of the house? Is it not in ruins? And is not that the state of Christendom today — a mass of confusion rather than the manifestation of saints builded together by the Spirit for a habitation of God? Alas! that it should be so. Men have made for themselves centers, and the result is, not one company but many companies. The work of the Good Shepherd was to gather into one His loved flock. The work of the enemy is to scatter; and how well he has succeeded in this evil work, the state of Christendom today testifies. God grant that those who belong to Christ may get their eyes so fixed on Him, God’s center, that they will accept no other name to which to be gathered.

Notes on the Tabernacle, Curtains and Coverings, The

The curtains and coverings are described in Exodus 26. Each color, each number, each part, has its significance; but for the general reader, it may be well not to enter too far into details.

Curtains of Fine Twined Linen

Four sets of curtains are mentioned. In our picture we shall see each covering is rolled back in a way to show those that are beneath. The first, or under covering, consisted of ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet. These were coupled together in such a way as to form one curtain, and were called the tabernacle, probably because they were the innermost covering of the tabernacle, and it would be roofless until this covering was put over it. We may gather precious thoughts from the various materials used. The fine linen, “clean and white,” mentioned in different parts of Scripture, conveys the thought of spotless purity, and is so used as a symbol. “Blue” speaks of what is heavenly; the symbols used of God are always according to nature; for instance, the earth is carpeted with green, and its many beautiful foliages and deckings are in green; but green is never found among the symbolic colors of Scripture. But if we look into the azure of the vaulted heavens, we find a color that is used to set forth that which is heavenly. “Purple” is the royal color. When Jesus was made a mock king, they put upon Him a purple robe (John 19:2). “Scarlet” speaks of earthly glory (Rev. 17:3-4). Also it makes mention of the scarlet robe, when in mockery they bowed the knee before Him. In Jesus we find these glories combined. “In Him is no sin”; He was the only pure and spotless One. He only could say, “I am from above” (heavenly blue); He is coming “King of kings” (purple); He was born “King of the Jews” (scarlet). Thus we have Christ again brought before us. He will come in heavenly power and glory; He will reign over the earth, and earthly glory will be His also.

Cherubim

These curtains were to be made with cherubim of cunning work. The cherubim, as we have seen, speak of judgment. Here again, that which belongs to Christ is brought before us, for “The Father... hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22). When “all nations” shall be gathered together before “the throne of His glory,” it is Christ who from that throne shall say, “Come, ye blessed of My Father,” and “Depart from Me, ye cursed” (Matt. 25). And when “the great white throne” is set, and the wicked dead are assembled there, Christ will be the Judge. Condemnation awaits all who will stand before that throne, for the sentence is “according to their works,” and according to this judgment none can stand, for “all have sinned.” Those who have taken shelter under the blood of the Lamb, will there be seated with Him on His throne. Judgment from God has fallen upon Him who took their place and suffered for their sins, and now they are exempt from the unending sorrow that must come upon those who “will not have this man to reign over” them. (Rev. 20; Luke 19:14.)

Curtains of Goat’s Hair

The next covering, which was placed over these curtains, was the “curtains of goats’ hair.” This covering also points to Christ. It takes all the types and shadows, yes, the whole Scripture, to tell the wonders of that blessed Person; and from God’s Word the believer may ever be learning more of Him. But while the Spirit unfolds these “wondrous things” to those who “seek His face,” when we shall see Him, with rapturous hearts we shall exclaim, “The half hath not been told.” His greatness and worth far exceed that of any other human being; He is the incomparable One. As we trace His glories and perfections in these remarkable types, as we follow Him in His lowly path on earth, as by faith we gaze upon His face in which the glory of God is now shining, our hearts echo the refrain, “Thou art fairer than the children of men.”

In the goats’ hair covering, our thoughts are turned to the prophets whose rough garments of hair marked them as such, in their path of separation (Zech. 13:4; Matt. 3:4). The One who is Prophet, Priest and King may here be seen in His path of complete separation from evil.

Rams’ Skins Dyed Red

The next covering was “rams’ skins dyed red.” When we remember that the ram was the animal used in connection with the consecration of the priests, and that this consecration was marked by devotedness, we can readily see how this covering would point to the devotedness of

Christ to God; and as it was dyed red, it would speak of His devotedness even unto death. No numbers are given with this covering, as with the others, for the devotedness of Christ, in His consecration to God, was without measure. How the perfection of God's Word shines out, as one is able to enter into these details.

Badgers' Skins

The uppermost covering was made of badgers' skins. Its character was such as to resist the elements. It could be seen by those outside, and it presented nothing of beauty to the beholder. Those inside could look up and see the innermost covering in the perfect light that was thrown upon it; and in the dazzling splendor of the reflected gold, its beauties and its glories would fill their vision. How was it as to Christ? Listen to the prophet Isaiah: "When we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." The natural heart sees no beauty in Christ, and has no desire for Him. (Here we get those without.) But the heart taught of the Spirit of God (those within) sees ever new and fresh beauties in that glorious One. Even as the light revealed the perfections of those wonderful curtains, so the Spirit of God reveals Christ in His spotless perfection and glory to the soul. "He shall glorify Me." Rain and storm would sometimes beat upon the badgers' skin covering, but would be perfectly resisted by it. So Satan in his dreadful assaults against our blessed Lord was always resisted. There was nothing in Him that responded to the evil one. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me" (John 14:30).

Curtain Lessons

Not only do these coverings give us a deeper understanding of the fullness of Christ, but they convey also lessons of great importance for the Christian who is left in this world to represent Christ, and whose responsibility it is to follow His steps. If the curtains of fine twined linen bring before us the spotless purity of Christ, the believer should learn that he too must seek to be pure. "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:3).

If the goats' hair curtains speak of separation from evil in the Servant in whom God finds His delight, the one who would serve Him should see to it that he separates from evil of every kind. "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me" (John 12:26). "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19).

If the rams' skin curtains speak of the devotedness of Christ in His consecration to God, the life of the Christian should also be characterized by devotedness to Him. Let him heed the exhortation, "That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1).

If we learn from the badgers' skin covering that Christ resisted "the prince of this world," His followers should be marked as also resisting him; instead of yielding in greater or lesser measure to his alluring power, as too many, alas! do, they should resist him wholly. "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2:14).

Notes on the Tabernacle, Table of Showbread, The

Passing from the "holy of holies" into the "holy place," the first thing one would meet would be the golden altar of incense, but no mention is made of it here. As it was a vessel of approach unto God, the account of it is not given until after the priesthood is established. The ark, the mercy seat and other pieces of furniture yet to be considered, manifest God's character, and because of this have been called by some, "vessels of manifestation." Other pieces, instead of specially showing forth His holiness and righteousness, speak of how He may be approached, and these have been called "vessels of approach."

Before God manifested Himself in Christ, and Christ became the way of approach, the people had to approach Him through the mediation of the priesthood. We can thus understand the choosing and consecration of the priests being described before the vessels of approach are taken up. This is not confusion; the perfect order that governs God in all His ways may be seen in it.

The Table of Showbread

The table of showbread is now described (Ex. 25:23-30). Its materials being the same as those of the ark, we have Christ in type brought before us again. Christ in His varied perfections and glories may be seen at every point when God's dwelling place with man is viewed in connection with the tabernacle; this it is that makes its beauty and its blessedness. The "border of a handbreadth" crowned with gold (Ex. 25:25) was doubtless, in its natural use, to hold the loaves of bread in their position on the table.

Does not this speak of the One who is holding His own secure, and out of whose hand no power can pluck them? "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand" (John 10:28). Eternally secure! That hand of power, actuated by that heart of love, holding His ransomed ones until He has them safe home with Himself, beyond the reach of every foe.

The Loaves

The loaves which were placed upon the table may be viewed in two ways: first, as a type of Christ who is food for His people (John 6:32-35), as the loaves were food for the priests in the sanctuary — next, as a type of God's people accepted in Christ in all His perfection before God. Thus the loaves represented God's earthly people, Israel, who in turn were a type of Christians, God's heavenly people.

We learn from Leviticus 24:5-9 that these loaves were to be made of fine flour which would mark the evenness of character and perfection of ways that marked the Lord Jesus in His lowly path on earth — a path which was ever to the glory of God.

Leaven, always a type of evil in Scripture, was excluded from all the offerings "made by fire" (Lev. 2:11). The fittingness of no leaven in the loaves can readily be seen, for thought of evil cannot be connected with Christ who is "the bread of life," and who is the food for His people.

The priests were to eat the bread in the sanctuary; now the believer feeds upon Christ in the sanctuary of God's presence. He cannot enjoy both Christ and the world. If Christ is the object of his heart, he has lost his relish for the world with its unsatisfying pleasures and vanities (Col. 3:1-3). If he seeks enjoyment in the world, the sanctuary is not his place; Christ in whom he professes to believe does not satisfy the

heart.

The loaves were twelve in number, placed in two rows of six each. In this connection we can see how they were used as a type of Israel. The twelve tribes were represented in the twelve loaves, and being held, and that securely, by the table which was a type of Christ, their acceptance before God stands out to our admiring gaze; and this is seen again in the “pure frankincense” which was to be poured on each row, for this speaks of the sweet fragrance of Christ to God. How blessed it all is! “Accepted in the beloved” — loved as He is loved! Dear reader, Do you know what it is to have the “pure frankincense” poured upon you, and can you rejoice in that word, “As He is, so are we in this world”? (1 John 4:17).

Notes on the Tabernacle, Ark and the Mercy Seat, The

The ark and the mercy seat form one piece, and yet they must be viewed separately (Ex. 25:10-22). The law — “the testimony that I shall give thee” — was to be put in the ark, and the mercy seat was to be put “above upon the ark.”

The Ark

We may ask, Of what was this ark a type? To use the words of another, “If we want to understand Scripture, we must have the same object before our hearts that God had before His, and that is Christ.” Keeping this in mind, we may readily see a type of Christ in the ark. This may be seen both in its composition and in its object. It was composed of shittim wood, and was overlaid with pure gold. These two materials fitly symbolize the humanity and the deity of Christ our Lord who is both God and man. The wood, which is mentioned first, having natural life and growth, would speak of His humanity. The character of this wood, so firm and enduring as to be supposed by some to be the imperishable acacia, would make it a suitable emblem of the Holy One who was not allowed to see corruption. The pure gold which covered all would speak of His deity — gold as a symbol being constantly used to bring before us what is divine. We have thus the outshining of God in Christ beautifully pictured; and the perfection of One, who in His pathway here below was both God and man, is manifest to those whose eyes are opened.

An impenetrable mystery veils the Person of that Holy One. The Son has revealed the Father to man, but none may know the Son save the Father (Matt. 11:27). The “fullness of the Godhead,” as also the dignity and sympathy of the perfect Man, may be traced in His life on earth; but in His thoughts, feelings, words, ways, and actions, there is an invariable blending of the two. The One who in weariness of body slept amid the tossing of the billows was the One who could fearlessly tread the angry waves, and at whose voice they cowered at His feet; the One who wept in human sympathy at Lazarus’ grave, was the One who had power over death and the grave, and could release whom He would; the One who was “crucified through weakness” was the mighty God who ruled the universe. Who can fathom the depths of that wonderful God-man! None save the Father.

May our hearts bow in holy adoration before Him; and may we be preserved from seeking to discriminate between the humanity and the deity of Christ, as many have done.

Not only is this blessed Person brought before our hearts as one both human and divine in this type, but something additional is mentioned. A crown of gold was to be placed around the top of the ark; this would speak of the One who was rejected by man on earth, but now is crowned with glory and honor in God’s own presence.

Two Tables of Stone

The law, written on two tables of stone, was placed within the ark, which was a safe place for the law of God to be kept. Man could not keep the law, but the Lord Jesus Christ kept it in every respect. He could say, “Thy law is within My heart” (Psa. 40:8).

Looking down from heaven upon the children of men, God said, “They are corrupt.” “There is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Looking through the opened heavens upon Jesus, He said, “Thou art My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”

The Staves

The staves by which the ark was carried are next mentioned (Ex. 25:12-15). These were made of the same materials as the ark itself and would therefore symbolize Christ again. These staves were not to be taken from their rings in the ark. This gives a most comforting thought, for it speaks of the presence of the Lord with the children of Israel in all their wilderness wanderings. It was Jehovah Himself who led them “in fire by night” and “in a cloud by day” that they might know the way they should go (Deut. 1:33). This is seen again in Numbers 10:33 where the ark went before them to search out a resting place for them, and it is blessedly true now that Christ accompanies His people in all their path. “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” May we follow Him, even as Israel followed the cloud, moving when it moved, and resting when it rested. When, for Israel, the settled place for rest in the promised land was reached, the staves were drawn out of their rings because their journeyings were ended. We learn from 2 Chronicles 5:9 that the staves when drawn out were left in “the holy of holies,” and so were not seen from without. Rest was obtained, but the remembrance of the wilderness was still before them.

The Mercy Seat

Having considered the “ark of the covenant,” we may now look at that which completed it as God’s throne; namely, the mercy seat (Ex. 25:17-21). Its composition differs from that of the ark, there being no wood used. It was made of “pure gold.” Again, we have before us that which is divine. God’s righteousness is what is told out in this type of His throne. Notice the contrast God makes between His own and human righteousness; the latter He terms “filthy rags,” for without faith, the good works of man have neither beauty nor merit in God’s estimation. But when He uses a symbol to express His own righteousness, He chooses that which is pure, precious and enduring.

The Cherubim

The cherubim on either end of the mercy seat speak of God’s judicial power. This judicial character may be seen from cherubim being placed with flaming sword to guard Eden after man was driven out; in the “beasts” or living creatures of Revelation 4 these creatures are connected with a throne which was a throne of judgment; seraphim were also there, for praise to God is connected with judgment in this case, and seraphim celebrate His praise (Isa. 6:2-3; Rev. 4:8). In connection with this throne of judgment, we get in the living creatures the strength of the lion; the stability of the ox, seen in the energy of youth in the calf; the intelligence of man; the swiftness of the eagle, which in Scripture symbolizes swiftness and endurance in flight. Thus the throne is characterized by strength, stability, intelligence, and swiftness of execution; in other words, these qualities are attributes of the throne of God, and the cherubim over the mercy seat give, in type, the judicial character of the throne. But righteousness also characterizes that throne (seen in the gold), and this would lead to the guilty sinner getting his just desert — death. But here mercy intervened and judgment is stayed, for the blood is there, and the cherubim are looking down upon the sprinkled blood. That slab of gold has now become a seat of mercy; atonement has been made. As in Egypt the people were secure under the shelter of the blood of the slain lamb, so here the blood of the victim is accepted in lieu of the guilty. This speaks blessedly of the death of Christ as the only means of escape from coming judgment.

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