

NOTES ON THE TABERNACLE

by John Telford Armet

A collection of articles and writings by John Telford Armet from Notes on the Tabernacle, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

68 Chapters

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Notes on the Tabernacle

Preface

These notes on the tabernacle were edited and in a large part written by a beloved servant of the Lord, Mr. J. T. Armet. He enjoyed ministering on these types of heavenly things wherein the glories of the Lord Jesus are so vividly set forth.

On the principle of "Gather up the fragments that nothing be lost," these notes were run serially in Christian Truth during 1956. At that time they were enjoyed by many of the saints of God. Now we send them forth in book form, earnestly desiring that they may be used for further blessing.

We are including some black and white sketches from Mr. Armet's model of the tabernacle and some full color drawings which he used, some of which he made.

The Supplement, being an outline of the feasts of the Lord as given in Leviticus 23, contains a complementary line of truth, for it deals with those times in the year when the Lord gathered the people to Himself around the tabernacle.

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Introduction

Before presenting the typical meanings of the tabernacle, we shall point out briefly the background which led to its construction. God did not dwell with innocent man in the garden of Eden, although He did visit with him. After the fall, even this was no longer possible, except that God did on occasion visit Abraham — His friend.

It was not until after Israel as a people were redeemed from the just judgment which fell on the land of Egypt and were brought out into the wilderness through the Red Sea that God spoke of dwelling with them. This was on the basis of their being sheltered by the blood of the Passover lamb, and their separation from Egypt. Then God said to Moses, "Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Ex. 25:8). For this purpose Moses was instructed to build the tabernacle. It was to be the place of God's abode among the people.

No discretion was left to Moses as to the manner of its construction; everything was to be made "according to the pattern" which was shown to him in the mount. Man's thoughts have no place when it comes to God's house, or that which pertains thereto.

In this day God dwells by the Spirit in a house on earth which is composed of all true believers in the Lord Jesus. In the Millennium God will have a temple on earth at Jerusalem, but in the eternal state "the tabernacle of God" will be with men, "and He will dwell with them."

This brings us to the section of the book of Exodus which gives us the account of the tabernacle (Ex. 25-30). This section is divided into three parts.

1. The vessels which manifest God (Ex. 25-27:19).
2. The garments of glory and beauty, and the consecration of the priests (Ex. 28-29).
3. The vessels of approach to God (Ex. 30).

It will be noticed that some of the vessels which manifest God are also used for vessels of approach to Him, and if the particular order in which the vessels are given to us is noticed, much may be learned in God's wonderful design.

There are also three ways in which we may view the tabernacle in its typical teachings.

1. A type of Christians as the house of God (Heb. 3:6).
2. A type of the three heavens (Heb. 9:24; 2 Cor. 12:2), as the tabernacle was divided into three parts — the court (sometimes called the holy place), the holy, and the holy of holies.
3. A type of Christ (Heb. 10:20).

The Ark and the Mercy Seat

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.

The Table of Showbread

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).

The Candlestick

The candlestick comes next in order (Ex. 25:31-40). Like the mercy seat, it was made of pure gold, having no wood in its composition, so that nothing human, only that which is divine is symbolized through it. Its seven branches would speak of perfection, the number seven in Scripture indicating completeness or perfection, whether in good or in evil. The light was furnished by oil, which is a type of the Spirit of God. In olden days, kings and prophets were anointed with oil. In the present day, believers are anointed with the Spirit of God. (See 2 Cor. 1:21; 1 John 2:20,27.)

In the words of another, "Putting therefore these three things together in their typical meanings — the number seven, the gold and the oil — the result is that the significance of the candlestick is divine light in its perfection in the power of the Spirit. It is God giving the light of the Holy Spirit, and this is displayed in its sevenfold perfection." The priests who moved about in the holy place could see the beauty of all that was there, as this sevenfold light was thrown upon the golden furniture and walls and reflected back their brightness and fell upon the handsome curtains with their varied hues. Even so now the Spirit of God presents Christ in His loveliness to the soul. "He will guide you into all truth"; "He shall glorify Me." And as this blessed One is unfolded to our hearts, we can say, Yes, altogether lovely! It is in the sanctuary that the light is shining; there it is the beauties are displayed. So it is that we learn Christ in God's presence, as taught of Him by the Spirit. Is there no light outside? Is all lying in darkness? Gross, moral darkness would have filled the scene when Christ, "the light of the world," went up on high, had not God made gracious provision to preserve them from such a calamity. He left a people, in whom He had put His Spirit, in the world, that they might reflect Christ and thus "shine as lights" in the dark scene (Phil. 2:15). This we get in the seven candlesticks of Revelation 1:20. There it is not the sevenfold power of the Spirit of God in the sanctuary, but the seven churches in the world. Christ is seen in His majesty in the midst of the candlesticks, trying the ways of His people, and noting whether or not they are giving forth light for Him. How great then is the responsibility of the Christian to learn Christ in the sanctuary, and to go forth and reflect Him in the world. May each of His own seek to allow nothing in word or deed that would hinder the Spirit to take of "the things that are Christ's" and show them unto him. And may each be a light in the world, reflecting Christ until He comes.

The Curtains and Coverings

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).

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,

“On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.”

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.

The Veil

The object of the veil (Ex. 36:31-37) was to divide between the holy place and the most holy. Its materials were the same as those of the fine twined linen curtains; and since these speak of Christ, so also must the veil speak of Christ. That it does so is clearly shown from Hebrews 10:20. Thus we find, looking again into the tabernacle, that it is the merits of the Lord that are brought before us. It may be well to notice the difference of the order in which the materials of the veil and those of the curtains overhead are mentioned. In the veil, blue comes first, and the fine twined linen last; in the curtains, the fine twined linen is mentioned first. This, as every other detail, has its significance. The various coverings of the tabernacle, in its wilderness wanderings, present Christ in His pathway here on earth; therefore, the fine twined linen which speaks of the spotless purity of His character, is mentioned first. The veil introduces immediately into God's presence, and therefore the blue, which speaks of that which is heavenly, is first brought to our notice.

Man was shut out from God's presence by the veil. Redemption was accomplished only in type; therefore, entrance into "the holiest" was death. To this there was one exception: once a year the high priest could enter, but not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people. The Holy Spirit signified in this way that the "holiest of all" was not yet made manifest (Heb. 9:7-8). Death must be the portion of the sinner if he attempts to meet God on the merits of his good works. He must come through Christ; he will be received in virtue of the work that He has done, but in no other way. Full redemption having been accomplished, the believer has "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. 10:19-20). A remarkable and precious truth is revealed to us in these words; it is no longer death to pass behind the veil, because of God's presence there, but joy and blessing to enter that holy presence through Christ, and this in virtue of the shed blood which is of infinite and eternal value in God's sight.

When the work that Jesus undertook to do was done, He uttered those words so full of meaning, "It is finished" — then bowed His head and gave up the Spirit, and the veil of the temple was rent in two from top to bottom. It was no human hand that rent that veil, neither was it torn from the bottom to the top; it was a hand from above — the hand that smote the Shepherd (Zech. 13:7) — the hand that brought the forsaken One into the dust of death (Psalm 22:15) — the hand that caused all the waves and billows to pass over His soul (Psalm 42:7). Yes, the hand that smote, was the hand that rent the veil from top to bottom, making thus a way into His own presence. Could man ever have devised such a plan? In the words of another, "Access to the heaven of heavens was to be laid open; no love and no power could either have devised or accomplished this, but the love and power of God." The rending of the veil "in the midst" made a way of approach "directly to the very center of the mercy seat where, between the cherubim, the God of glory dwelt. It was not a side access, but the shortest and most direct that could be made to the forefront of the ark." Could the love of God be told out in a fuller or more blessed way? And at what a cost! "Who can tell the feelings of His heart when, compelled by His love to us, He spared not His own Son? Or, who can tell the sufferings of that Son when bruised by the hand and pierced by the arrows of

the Almighty?" Quoting again from another, "The same hand that rent the beautiful fabric which hitherto had concealed the holiest of all, opened simultaneously the graves; one act of God laid open the way, even from the ruin and death caused by sin, up to the height of His own glory. Henceforth no human priest was needed to stand between the sinner and God.

No steps of approach were prepared in order that, by slow degrees, the unclean might be gradually fitted to draw nigh. The way from the grave to the glory was but one step; by the blood through the veil, the sinner, however guilty, however unclean, might at once with boldness take his place before the throne overshadowed by the cherubim of glory."

Let us review for a moment. The priests, Aaron's sons, ministered in the holy place; the people had no access there; the high priest alone entered the most holy, and that but once a year. Since the veil has been rent, all believers in Christ have been made priests, and through this "new and living way," have access into the very presence of God by the death of Christ (Rev. 1:5-6; Heb. 10:19). God's grace in His thoughts for His people, all of which speaks of His measureless love, may be seen in what He unfolds to us through the veil. The fullness of that love may be known only in eternity.

Cherubim were to be embroidered on the veil, which brings again before us the thought of God as a judge. It is not difficult to trace God's purpose here; entrance into the holiest would have been death, so the way is barred; return to Eden, after man had sinned, there to partake of the tree of life, would have been to prolong life in misery; there also the way was barred. God would hinder both these issues until the prolonged misery, and the death that ends not, come to those who "will not" have Jesus to reign over them.

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.

The Brazen Altar – The Altar of Burnt Offering

Passing from the holy place into the court, the first thing that would meet the view would be the laver. As this is a vessel used in approaching God, it is not described until after the priesthood is established. The altar of burnt offerings is next brought before us in the Word (Ex. 27:1-8). This altar, although made of the same kind of wood as the ark and other furniture inside the golden walls, yet was unlike these pieces, for it was overlaid with brass, while they were overlaid with gold. Both of these metals are symbols of divine righteousness; the one is righteousness suited to God's nature, which is love; the other, as already noticed, is righteousness which tests man in responsibility, and must therefore be told out in judgment, for sin is ever found with man, and "the wages of sin is death." But judgment is God's "strange work" (Isa. 28:21). We get then God's righteousness told out in love, inside, where gold met the eye on every hand. Outside, where the sinner approached in his sins, righteousness is manifested in judgment, and therefore the altar is brazen. The various altars mentioned in Scripture were erected for the purpose of offering offerings, all of which pointed to the one perfect offering. At the cross of Christ we get the substance of which other offerings were but the shadow. The brazen altar is a symbol of that cross, and this must be the meeting place for the sinner and God. When one approached the brazen altar leading an animal that was to be slain at that altar, he owned in this act that he was a sinner, and that judgment was his due. When the victim is slain and his body burned, God's righteousness in the punishment of sin is told out. Jesus, the Lamb of God, sustained the stroke of judgment for all who came unto God by Him. When atonement was made, God could not only righteously receive back and place at His right hand the One who had glorified Him as to the whole question of sin, but also in value of the "precious blood" that had been shed, He could justify the guilty sinner who would come to Jesus.

When man's hatred and Satan's venom were combined to do their deadly work, and nature's throes added to the awful gloom, the grace of that Holy One shone out in strongest relief — "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." O wonder of wonders! "Righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psa. 85:10). God's righteousness in the punishment of sin has been told out; His deep, unfathomable love in receiving the sinner is made known, for with the yielding of that precious life, the veil is rent and peace is made. Yes, "Mercy and truth are met" (Psa. 85:10). Mercy is toward the sinner; truth is meted out in the judgment of sin. What grace! What love! Reader, can you say, All this for me?

"Stroke upon stroke, as God's wrath awoke,

Fell upon Thee for me."

Of the great ones who have trodden this earth, who could say, "Come unto Me"? Not one! Who could say, "I am the way"? Not one! Who among men was sinless? Not one! Who could save? Not one. The Christ of God is the only one "mighty to save," the only "way" to the Father, the only sinless One. "What think ye of Christ?"

At the brazen altar, both sin and burnt offerings were offered, but an important difference was made in the manner of offerings. In both cases the hands of the offerer were laid upon the victim; in both cases the victim was slain at the altar, but, while the burnt offering was wholly burnt upon the altar of burnt offering, the body of the sin offering, after the fat was removed, was carried outside the camp and burnt in a clean place. The burnt offering was a sweet savor offering showing the acceptableness of Christ to God; and never was that blessed One more acceptable than when, amidst the awful agonies of the cross, He was glorifying God about the question of sin. The sin offering presents another phase of the death of Christ. It is not classed among the sweet savor offerings. Sin is abhorrent to God; its desert is death. With the laying on of hands, the sins of the people are confessed and transferred to the victim. Thus “made sin,” it is an unclean thing, and its body cannot be laid upon the altar. It must be carried outside the camp to be burned. “For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate” (Heb. 13:11-12).

The hill of Calvary was outside the gates of Jerusalem, which was called “the holy city,” and there the cross was set up, for Jesus, as a sin offering, might not suffer within the gate. The One “who knew no sin” was there “made sin for us” that we “might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). Here the depths of human need were met, and the heart of God was told out. Christ, made sin for us, suffered without the gate; and bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, He was forsaken of God. The unutterable love of God for the perishing sinner is seen at the cross as nowhere else — “He spared not His own Son.” Here, as nowhere else, His hatred of sin is seen in His smiting that sinless One, “made sin.” God must have His portion in the sin offering, for “nothing in the whole work of Jesus so marked His positive holiness, as His bearing sin. He who knew no sin alone could be made sin.... It was a total consecration of Himself, at all cost, to God’s glory.” God was glorified; God was honored. In order that a sweet savor should go up to Him from this offering, the fat, which is the “energy and force of the inward will,” which in Jesus was wholly devoted to God, was taken from the animal before it was carried out of the camp, and was burnt on the altar. It ascended in all the preciousness of Christ to God.

The position of the brazen altar was significant; it was just inside the gate; those from the outside world entered and approached God through the altar. Christ when on the cross, had, so to speak, left the outside world. He hung between heaven and earth; “I, if I be lifted up from the earth”; the only way of approach to God is through the lifted-up One. Since the tabernacle and its vessels of ministry are spoken of as “patterns of things in the heavens,” we may be warranted in comparing “the holiest” to the “third heaven,” and the court where the brazen altar stood, to the “first heaven,” or the “firmament above,” the altar being, so to speak, between the outside world (earth) and the court (heaven above).

The Court of the Tabernacle

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).

The Priesthood

Up to this point (Exodus 28) God has been revealing Himself (in type) in Christ to man. Now we find Him providing a way for man to be represented in His presence; hence, what follows concerns access to Him. The vessels that have been omitted are those that are used in drawing nigh to God, and these are described after the question of the priesthood is considered. The priest was the medium through which the people had to do with God. He represented the people, and ministered on their behalf. God's character was such, and man's condition was such, that man could not know what God required of him, nor could he stand in God's presence, so a mediator is provided. Garments in Scripture speak of walk and character. Here the garments of the priest are described, and bring before us the character of God's beloved Son in His office as High Priest. What is needed for God's presence is necessarily symbolized also. Aaron and his sons were chosen of God to minister to Him in the priest's office. Aaron, when viewed alone, is a type of Christ as the High Priest for all believers now. When Aaron is associated with his sons, he is a type of the Church; that is, they together form in type the priestly family, believers now being made priests unto God. We get, then, in Aaron and his sons, the Church in association with Christ, and in Aaron, as looked at alone, a type of our great High Priest. It was the high priest only who could represent the people, and none but Christ can represent those who are saved. One Christian cannot represent another before God. All Christians have access to God, as priests, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:5-9).

The Garments and the Priestly Office

In Exodus 28, two things are presented to us — the garments for the priests, and the priestly office. These garments for Aaron, which were to be “for glory and for beauty,” consisted of twelve different parts — the breastplate, ephod, robe of blue, brodered coat, miter, girdle, gold chains, rings, lace of blue, gold bells, pomegranates, and plate of gold for the miter.

The Ephod

The ephod, being preeminently the priestly garment, is first described. The priest could not fully execute his office without this garment (Ex. 28:4-6). It was made of the same materials as the various hangings of the tabernacle, with gold added. The divine character of Him who is our great High Priest is brought before us in the gold, which is mentioned first. The blue comes next, and speaks of His heavenly character — then the purple which tells of His glories as Son of Man — “Lord of lords, and King of kings.” Then the scarlet in its order, telling of Jewish royalty, as Son of David — “born King of the Jews.” Last, the fine twined linen which speaks of the spotless purity of His life on earth — “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” Christ, acting for us as Priest, is thus beautifully presented to us. In Hebrews 4:14 mention is made of this perfect High Priest in such a way as to bring both God and man before us: “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.” The gold woven into the garments speaks of that which is divine; the varied colors speak of the perfections of the “man Christ Jesus.” But the interweaving of the gold with the other materials, shows the inseparable character of the two. Who but such a person could be a suitable representative for His people? He is not in God’s presence for the salvation of sinners; sinners must meet Him at the cross; He is there on behalf of a saved people (Heb. 9:24). We see this in Aaron who entered the holiest in virtue of the shed blood on behalf of God’s people. And Christ is before God for us, not according to what we are, but according to what He is. This is a truth of vast importance which we should do well to remember.

The gold was beaten into thin plates and then wrought into the blue, and into the purple, and into the scarlet, and into the fine linen, with cunning work (Ex. 39:3). Thus we see all were interwoven; and in the words of another, “The strength and glory of the gold was intimately blended with every part of the ephod, and gave firmness as well as brilliancy to the whole fabric.... Scarlet and blue are colors of the ephod. The purple also — the new and wondrous color which combines in itself both the blue and the scarlet was curiously wrought in this priestly garment — a color denoting that great mystery so inseparably connected with all contemplation of the ways, thoughts, and words of Jesus; namely, that He did combine the wisdom, love, holiness, and power of God, with every true feeling, affection, and sympathy proper to man. All these beauties were inwrought in a vesture of fine twined linen.” These materials thus interwoven, would forbid us to say, This part is gold; that part is something else. Neither can we say of our blessed Lord, This part is divine; that is human. But this we can say: Christ can represent His people because He is human; He can go into God’s presence because He is divine.

Such is our High Priest, dear fellow believer. When we look at His spotless life, we can say, God sees us there, for we are in Him — “accepted in the beloved.” When we look at the glory into which, as man, He has entered, we can say, That is what awaits us, for His own words are, “The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them” (John 17:22). God looks upon the Christian as in Christ, and can, therefore, speak of him as cleansed from all sin through the blood of Jesus Christ (1 John 1:7). On the same principle He could say as to failing Israel, “He hath not beheld iniquity in

Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel” (Num. 23:21).

The Girdle

The girdle of the ephod was of the same beautiful materials as the ephod itself (Ex. 28:8). It seems to have been used to bind the ephod upon the high priest. In the girdle we get the thought of service (Luke 12:37). Christ our High Priest never ceases to serve. The love that led Him to die for us, leads Him to live for us. The bitter waters of death that rolled over His soul, could not quench that love; it lives in all its unchanging power and blessedness today. In God's presence for His people, He is thinking of them in all their weakness and all their need; He is concerned in all that concerns them. He is pleading their cause with the Father, and meeting all the accusations that the enemy of souls is bringing against them. Failure after failure marks the steps of His people, but His love for them changes not. Their hearts often grow cold, and their feet turn into a wrong path; unwearingly He follows them, and in tenderest love restores; His care for them, notwithstanding their perversities, never ceases. Unflinching He nourishes and cherishes them. The hands of Moses grew weary, and had they not been upheld by Aaron and Hur until the going down of the sun, the battle would not have been to Israel. Our blessed High Priest needs none to stay His hands; they are ever uplifted in intercession in behalf of His people (Heb. 7:25). Those who come unto God by Him are saved "to the uttermost." Triumphant victory will be theirs — "more than conquerors" through Him that loved them.

The Onyx Stones

We get next the onyx stones and the breastplate (Ex. 28:9-30). The names of the children of Israel were to be engraved upon two onyx stones, six names on each. These stones were to be set in gold, and then placed upon the shoulders of the ephod which was to be worn by the high priest. We should notice that these names were to be “according to their birth.” As a writer beautifully brings before us, “If looked at in the onyx stones, there was no difference between one of the children of Israel and another. They were alike children of the same father, and each was presented in the same glory and beauty. No order of precedence was adopted — no conduct evidenced by any altered the arrangement. Reuben might prove as unstable as water, and yet he was first in one of the stones. Benjamin and Joseph might be especial favorites, yet they were last. In point of fact, each of the two stones gave forth its glowing brilliancy equally to each of the six names inscribed thereon. Thus it is with all the redeemed now. If viewed with reference to their birth of God, there can be no difference. One is as precious and glorious as the other.”

These names were to be engraved on the stones — not simply written upon, but cut into them, there to remain. This pictures to us the blessed security of those whose names are written in the book of life, never to be erased. The stones were to be set in gold, which would speak to us of God’s righteousness surrounding and securing His people. The high priest was to bear the stones on his shoulders; this was the place of strength, and since it was not one, but both shoulders, it gives the thought of full strength. The thought connected with the onyx stone is blessedness; and with full strength, the One in the sanctuary above, to whom all power belongs, is bearing His people on to the blessedness that awaits them.

The Breastplate

The same precious and comforting truths are brought before us in the breastplate, where again the names were engraven on precious stones (Ex. 28:22-30). But in the breastplate, each name had its separate stone, while on the onyx stones, six names were on one, and six on another, as we have seen. Also the names were placed in an altogether different order. On the onyx stones each came in the order of birth, the first six were placed on the right shoulder, the other six on the left shoulder, each name being that of a son of Jacob. On the breastplate the two sons of Joseph are found, and Levi, devoted to the service of the sanctuary, was omitted. The arrangement of the twelve on the breastplate was according to the arrangement of the tribes about the camp. Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun were placed on the east side at the front of the tabernacle. They formed the advance guard, being the first to set forth when the tabernacle was taken down. Reuben, Simeon, and Gad were on the south side, and they set forth in the second rank. Then came the tabernacle borne by the Levites; next came Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin from the west side; they set forth in the third rank. Dan, Asher, and Naphtali brought up the rear. In this order the names were placed on the breastplate. Each name there had its own peculiar precious stone, and each its own peculiar place. So it is with those who compose the Church of God. Each has his own place, and each is marked by some special Christ-like trait, as love, faith, courage, hope, patience, endurance, gentleness, humility, absence of self, and so on. These beauties of character are seen in different ways and in different measures, even as in the stones: "The gorgeous color of the ruby stone shone out from one; the soft refreshing green of the emerald was visible in another; the brilliant light of the diamond flashed out from a third; and the heavenly azure of the sapphire was displayed in a fourth." Whatever is seen of Christ in the Christian is a joy and beauty to those who behold. It is the light that brings out these beauties.

The breastplate was worn over the heart, the seat of the affections. Deep, sweet comfort is given to the saints of God in this wonderful picture. They are precious to Christ; their names are engraven on His heart, and they are firmly held in this place of affection; they are borne along in all the power of the Omnipotent. Everlasting love and everlasting power are thus combined in their behalf. What more could be asked — What more desired?

Chains of Gold on Lace of Blue

Chains of gold in rings of gold bound the breastplate to the shoulders and to the ephod, so nothing was to separate Israel from the strength, affection, and priestly character of the high priest (Ex. 28:14-24). The chains of gold on a lace of blue would serve to show that these everlasting ties of divine righteousness are connected with the heavenly character. May those who know the Lord appreciate more fully what it is to have a High Priest in whom these types are all fulfilled, and One who surpasses all. His beauty can never fully be made known; His eternal worth can never be fathomed.

We would make mention of one more thought in connection with the names borne upon Aaron's shoulders. They were there for a memorial (Ex. 28:12,29). Aaron's presence in the holy place would bring before Jehovah "the love and perfection in which Israel stood accepted before Him"; and thus we have "a constant memorial before God in our great High Priest who presents us in the fullness of His love and power, bright with His own glory, spotless in His own holiness." Can we measure what it is to be "accepted in the beloved"?

The Urim and Thummim

The Urim and Thummim were put in the folded breastplate. The meaning of Urim is “lights”; of Thummim, “perfections.” Through these “lights” and “perfections” the Lord gave counsel and guidance to Israel (1 Sam. 28:6). But Aaron bore the judgment of Israel on his heart before the Lord in connection with the breastplate on which their names were engraven (Ex. 28:30). So Christ has borne our judgment; our names are upon His heart, and according to the “lights” and “perfections” that dwell in Him will be our guidance. God alone could give the lights and perfections of the Urim and Thummim, but this He gave to Israel; and to this people He committed His oracles (Rom. 3:2). And through them, as instruments of God, we are indebted for the preservation of the Old Testament Scriptures. Thus they are given to us of God, according to His own mind. How full, how inexhaustible, how exact is the Word of God. May it be our guide at every step.

The Robe of the Ephod

This robe, which was “all of blue,” presents to us the heavenly character of the priest, which was according to the holy place in which he ministered (Ex. 28). It symbolizes the heavenly character of the One who was “made higher than the heavens” (Heb. 7:26). Instructions are given that the hole made in the top of this garment be bound, that it “be not rent.” Nothing which would admit of imperfection must be allowed in that which symbolizes Christ.

Pomegranates

On the hem of this robe were placed golden bells and pomegranates (Ex. 28:33). These alternated, and were equal in number, though no mention is made of their number. The position of the fruit on this garment is significant: it hung low, near to the earth, and it is fruit from the earth that is mentioned; also it is fruit that belonged specially to the “holy land” (Num. 13:23; Deut. 8:8). This fruit was not found in Egypt. We may look upon it as a symbol of those who are saved — fruit that Christ, as the great High Priest, has carried into heaven from this earth. The character of the pomegranate is also significant, being a fruit full of seeds contained in a red fluid. The Lord Jesus Christ has brought every believer to God as the fruit of His shed blood; this fruit is from the earth, and is without number. “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied” (Isa. 53:11).

Golden Bells

The bells were for the purpose of giving forth a sound, that Aaron might be heard when he went into the holy place, and when he came out (Ex.39:25). A heavenly melody thus sounded out at each step. This melody was connected with the rich fruit that was carried on the person of the high priest, for it was a pomegranate and a bell alternating all around the garment. But note that these sounds were given forth “that he die not” (or lest he should die). What sounds had he left behind in the camp from which he proceeded? Murmuring, complaint, discord is what marked Israel. Shall Aaron carry these fleshly sounds into the sanctuary? No; heavenly sounds must mark the footsteps of the one who approaches God; his walk must be a heavenly walk. Such must be the walk of Aaron lest he should die. When returning to the camp, his footsteps must be known as from heaven. “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom. 10:15). Were not Aaron’s feet thus beautiful as he came forth to the people with heavenly melody at every step and, standing before them in his robes of glory and beauty, brought them glad tidings of good things — acceptance, security, power, love! When Christ our great High Priest entered the sanctuary above, was it not with heavenly melody: a people redeemed (fruit thus borne to God); glory to God thus sounding from the cross, and ringing through the highest heavens. How blessedly God the Spirit made known to man acceptance through Christ when sent from the Father. To listening ears, how sweetly comes the sound, Christ in heaven, “now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb. 9:24). When Christ comes forth from the sanctuary above to call His loved people to Himself, what heavenly melody will mark the scene! And how closely associated is this melody with the fruit that is borne to God.

Christ in You, in Your Walk

Those who have been made priests to God (Rev. 1:5, 6) should represent Christ on earth — “Christ in you” — while Christ represents them before God. A heavenly walk and “glad tidings of good things” sounded out, will be attended with sweet melody. And the beautifully blended colors of the fruit which ornamented the priest’s garment, will be seen in the fruit of the Spirit, which is “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, temperance.”

What pleasure must have been afforded to the heart of God as He gave instructions for the making of these symbols which spoke of the One in whom was all His delight. They can neither be understood nor appreciated apart from seeing their fulfillment in Christ. And how God’s heart of love toward His people is told out in His marking beforehand each detail in this way rather than waiting until His Son should come and accomplish these things.

Dear reader, what to you is this One who is the delight of God? Do you find beauty in Him, or is there no beauty that you should desire Him? If you are still far from God, why not turn to Jesus who will receive all who come to Him.

“The Redeemer now calls; will you still turn away?

Is it nothing to you — nothing to you?

There is danger in doubting, and death in delay;

Is it nothing to you — nothing to you?

O then flee to the Saviour, respond to His call;

He will save from the sins that now chain and enthrall;

He will welcome you gladly, and pardon you all.

Is this nothing to you — nothing to you?”

As has been noticed, the golden bells were heard not only when the high priest went into the holy place, but also when he came out; and for the believer, a “shout” will be heard when the Lord descends from heaven. To that shout, living and sleeping saints will respond by rising to “meet Him in the air.” He will take these ransomed ones to His Father’s house, and later will come with them to reign over the earth. A blessed prospect for believers — to see the One who has died for them, and who has represented them before God during the whole of their path down here, and to be forever with Him!

“What will it be to dwell above,

And with the Lord of glory reign,

Since the blest knowledge of His love

So brightens all this dreary plain!

No heart can think, no tongue can tell,

What joy 'twill be with Christ to dwell."

The Plate of Gold

In this plate we get another mark of God's grace toward His people. Only that which was suited to His presence could be accepted by Him. All that was offered must be stamped with holiness. The inscription on this plate — "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" — speaks of this (Ex. 28:36). Christ, as our High Priest, bears "the iniquity of the holy things" (precious thought, that even our failures in drawing near to God are met by Him!), and He Himself is holiness. Thus the worship of the Christian, presented through Him, is acceptable to God.

The plate of gold was placed on the miter which was made of fine twined linen, and which would speak of the purity that was necessary in one who would stand in the presence of God on behalf of others.

The service of Aaron and his sons, when it was a question of atonement, or putting away of sins on which God's judgment must come, was conducted in the fine linen, or "holy garments." The burnt offering which tells of the acceptance of the worshipper according to the sweet savor of the sacrifice, was a service of different character, and it would seem that Aaron in this service wore the garments "for glory and for beauty," which, as we have been considering, represented the people, and therefore identified them with himself in glory and beauty. Thus is the believer now accepted before God, in Christ. When once a year the sins of the people were numbered and brought before God, Aaron laid aside his garments of glory and beauty and, robed in the garments of fine linen, entered the holiest. Spotless from head to foot in these "holy garments," he presents a fitting picture of the One who stood in His own holiness before God, to make atonement for the sins of others.

Nadab and Abihu

Aaron seems to have had liberty to enter within the veil at all times, until after the death of two of his sons, Nadab and Abihu. They had offered “strange fire before the LORD,” and fire had gone out from the Lord and devoured them (Lev. 10:1-2). On other occasions, fire from the Lord had been the unsparing judgment sent upon sinning ones — fire as a symbol, ever speaking of judgment (Num. 11:1; 2 Kings 1:5-16). The case of Nadab and Abihu is very full of significance. Fire from God had come down and consumed the burnt offering upon the altar, showing God’s judgment upon the victim, and yet His acceptance, when the fire had done its work, for this was a sweet savor offering. This fire, and no other, must be used in the burning of the incense; the sweet fragrance of Christ must go up to God through the judgment that has fallen upon Him. The bruising brings this out in its fullest sweetness — “bruised for our iniquities.”

Nadab and Abihu did not use this fire, and fire from God fell upon them instead of upon the victim. In the words of another, “These two eldest sons of Aaron should have taken coals of burning fire from off the altar — fire which had come from the Lord. But instead of this, they put fire in their censers which was common to them, but strange to the Lord. May we not regard this as another form of Cain worship? Cain offered an offering without the shedding of blood. His was a religion of works, though the name of the Lord was in it. His was not the worship of a false God, but it was false worship of the true God — worship which was not preceded by salvation. Nadab and Abihu were quite correct as to censer, incense and the holy place, but they did not recognize that it was the fire from God which had fed upon the sacrifice, and that no fragrance could come up to God from the hands even of His priests, unless through the sacrifice consumed in judgment upon the altar. Christ may be owned as the true Christ. He may even be confessed with the lips as the Son of God. Prayer and worship may be conducted in His name, but unless His death be acknowledged and trusted in the way of atonement... the worshipper, whoever he be, is offering strange fire, mingled though it be with the name of Christ.”

Sin having thus been brought into the holy place, Aaron was restricted in his entrance into the holiest, and when he went, it must be in the “fine linen” garments. At other times he moved about in the holy place bearing on his shoulders and on his breast the names of Israel engraven on the precious stones, those on the breast and those on the shoulders being inseparably bound together; and the golden plate on behalf of others adorned his forehead.

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).

Vessels of Approach

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.

"Much incense is ascending
Before th' eternal throne;
God graciously is bending
To hear each feeble groan;
To all our prayers and praises,
Christ adds His sweet perfume,
And love the censer raises,
These odors to consume."

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.

The Laver

Passing over the account of the atonement money, which has already been referred to in its typical teaching, we come to the laver (Ex. 30:17-21). This closes the account of the tabernacle. The laver, like the golden altar, was needed in approaching God, and, like it, has been left undescribed until after the vessels which manifested God were presented to us. It was placed in the court between the brazen altar and the door into the holy place. Neither the size nor the shape of this vessel are mentioned. It was made of brass; and, as in the brazen altar, the righteousness of God testing man in responsibility is seen. Water was put into the laver for the priests to wash their hands and feet before going into the tabernacle to perform the service of the Lord. The solemn admonition given in connection with this washing with water was “that they die not.” This tells of the importance of this cleansing. The altar of burnt offering being overlaid with brass, and the laver made wholly of brass (or copper, according to some authorities), must have for us a like voice. If sinful man comes into the holy presence of God, he must be tested as to what he is and as to what he has done. God is righteous in thus testing him. But man cannot stand the test — sin is there — then “the exceeding riches” of God’s grace is manifest; for at the brazen altar, where man is put to the test, a substitute is provided, and judgment falls upon this victim instead of upon the sinner who deserved to die. Christ, the Substitute for His people, has made full atonement and has been accepted of God for them; they are clean from all their sins before the Lord (Lev. 16:30), and their sins and iniquities are to be remembered no more (Heb. 10:17). At the altar then we get man tested and man cleansed. Of what need then is the laver? What voice has it for us? Being of brass, it too must speak of God’s righteousness in testing man according to his responsibility. But there is this very important difference in these two brazen vessels: at the altar we find blood; in the laver we find water. Man has utterly failed in his responsibility; death is the wages due; nothing but blood can atone. “Without shedding of blood is no remission.” But blood has been shed; sins have been canceled; the believing one is cleared of all guilt — “justified by His blood” (Rom. 5:9). “Washed... from our sins in His own blood” (Rev. 1:5). Thus we see blood cleanses from guilt. At the laver we get water, not blood. As we have already seen, water cleanses morally and is a symbol of God’s Word by which our ways are cleansed (Psa. 119:9; John 15:3; Eph. 5:26; and more). This is a thoroughly practical thing. The question arises, Why was the water put in a brazen vessel? Man is tested not only according to his nature, but according to his ways also; born in sin, an unclean thing out of which nothing clean can come (Job 14:4), he is condemned — Christ, “made sin,” was condemned. Out of the unclean nature come evil thoughts, words, and deeds; these need forgiveness, and, through Jesus, forgiveness is granted — “justified from all things.” But the old nature still being in the forgiven one, there is a recurrence, in greater or lesser measure, of wrong thoughts and ways; and from these he needs cleansing.

The Cleansing by Water

Notice the particular brass out of which the laver was made (Ex. 38:8). It was the “looking glasses of the women.” When the metal was highly polished, they could behold themselves in it. As the priests approached the laver, they too would find a reflection of themselves; so now, the believer is tested as to his state, God leading him to feel his shortcomings from day to day. These failures need the cleansing power of the Word; this we get pictured for us in the water put into the laver. Our state is made manifest, and our ways can be cleansed only through the Word of God. This cleansing is needed daily, for our feet become defiled in passing through an ungodly world. The bath of regeneration is needed but once, for one can be born again but once (John 13:10). The priests were washed in connection with the consecration. After that, they washed their hands and feet in connection with service. Those now made priests unto God should serve continually (1 Pet. 2:5,9), but the daily use of the laver shows the need of constant self-judgment. How often God’s dear people are hindered in prayer, service, and enjoyment of the Lord because of the lack of this.

Some talk about re-application of the blood, but this is not according to Scripture. “We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once” (Heb. 10:10). “By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14). Water filled the laver — not blood. The question of guilt was eternally settled at the cross for all who believe, and it is blessed to be at rest as to all our sins through the finished work of Christ. As to our walk, Christ is the standard; and having this blessed hope of being like Him, there is the purifying ourselves as He is pure (1 John 3:3). May we allow God’s blessed Word its full place in our lives, being cleansed by it from the defilement we may gather as we journey down here; thus will we be a separated people — separated from evil, and separated to God — and our lives will be to His glory. “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

The All Cleansing Blood

Before closing these brief notes, we would call special attention to one point; that is, that God cannot dwell with man unless man is made clean. The holiness of God would forbid it; and if such a thing could be, man in his sins would be supremely wretched in presence of the light that would search him through and through. Righteousness cannot have fellowship with unrighteousness; light cannot have communion with darkness. This is specially marked in the earthly dwelling place, that Jehovah had prepared for Himself, which was a pattern of things in the heavens. The purification was by blood; Moses “sprinkled... with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.” “And almost all things are by the law purged [purified] with blood.” Blood was carried within the veil and sprinkled upon the mercy seat; blood was put upon the golden altar; upon the horns of the brazen altar, and poured out at the bottom of the altar; it was put upon the tabernacle; upon the people; everywhere God’s eye would take in the blood, and thus all, in type, was cleansed. And He had said, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” Blessed truth! the sinner, saved by grace, is safely sheltered under the blood of Christ which will never lose its value — redeemed not with silver and with gold, “but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet. 1:19). It is the blood that makes atonement for the soul. It is the blood that cleanses. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

“In heaven the blood forever speaks

In God’s omniscient ear;

The saints, as jewels on His heart,

Jesus doth ever bear.

“No condemnation!” — O my soul;

‘Tis God that speaks the word.

Perfect in comeliness art thou,

In Christ the risen Lord.”

The fool, who says in his heart, “There is no God,” may be allowed the horror of the “blackness of darkness” forever; but, through the exceeding riches of God’s grace, many a scoffing infidel has at last found shelter under the precious blood, and has exultingly praised the One who drew him to the Saviour. Through the rent veil, all who will may come. Will you, my unsaved reader, be made clean by that all-cleansing blood? He gave His life for you. Has His loving entreaty, “Come unto Me,” no power with you? Will you reason that the way is barred and you may not come, when His word is, “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out”? Listen while you may; delay not until too late. The day draws on apace when the door will be shut; then none may enter.

“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2).

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” (Heb. 2:3).

The Feasts of the Lord

by Paul Wilson

God has prophetically unfolded His dispensational ways in the symbolic “Feasts of the LORD.” These have a bearing on the present dispensation in which the first day of the week, and not the Sabbath, is preeminent; they also have great importance concerning Israel’s coming repentance and national resuscitation. With these thoughts in mind we give herewith a concise review of Leviticus 23.

In this chapter the Lord gave directions through Moses to the children of Israel concerning certain yearly feasts which they were to keep unto Him. But before outlining them, He told them to keep one weekly celebration — the Sabbath. This Sabbath was not a part of the yearly feasts that follow, but it is important that it should be given first. The first mention of the Sabbath is in Genesis 2:1-3 when the Lord rested on the seventh day after His work in making the earth ready for man, but His rest in creation was soon broken by the sin of Adam and Eve. God again began to work and prepared coats of skin for the guilty pair; even so the Son of God could not take His rest in this sin-spoiled creation when He came. He could not rest from His work even on the Sabbath day, for all around Him He found the effects of sin and the works of the devil; but He came to undo the works of the devil. So on one occasion, when He was chided for healing a man on the Sabbath day, He said, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John 5:13), thus referring to God’s rest having been broken by sin.

But a chief reason for the introduction of the Sabbath at the beginning of Leviticus 23 is that God still purposes that there should be a period of rest for this creation. It was ever before Him, but inasmuch as it could not come in at first by reason of sin, God, in this chapter, shows how it will be brought in as we shall see later.

These seven yearly occasions when the people would hold religious observances were not equally divided throughout the year. Normally, three were held in the first month, one in the third month, and three in the seventh month.* It was not God’s plan to divide the year into three equal parts, but to teach us lessons about His dispensational ways.

The Passover

The foundation feast was the Passover; it was the basis on which all God's ways would be established, for man was a sinner, and his being sheltered by blood must come first. It took place in the first month. We need to go to Exodus 12 to learn more about the Passover. God's earthly people, the people of promise, were slaves in Egypt, and the Egyptians defied the Lord when He asked them to let His people go. Nothing was left for God but to execute judgment on that rebellious people and land. But when He was going to visit the land in judgment, His earthly people were amenable to judgment, for they were sinners and had fallen into the ways of the Egyptians. But God said that He would "make a difference" between the Egyptians and the Israelites. It was not a difference founded on parentage or previous privileges, but one which He would make — one founded on the blood of the lamb.

The secular year had been running its course, but God interrupted it and said, "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you." There was to be a new beginning and it was to be founded on redemption. A lamb without blemish was to be taken on the 10th day and kept until the 14th day; and on that 14th day it was to be killed and its blood put in a basin; then the blood was to be applied with hyssop to the outside of their houses — to the two doorposts and the lintel above the door. After this was done they were to enter into the house and take shelter under the sign of that blood — a mark that a substitute had died. God said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Wherever this was acted upon, there was security, but not necessarily peace, for that depended on faith in God's word. They were safe under the blood, for God had spoken; they should have been in perfect peace about it, for His word should have dissolved every doubt.

The Passover pointed on to the "Lamb of God," and was a type of Christ the true Lamb of God's providing. We are not left to our imagination on this point, for the Word of God says, "For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7).

What a blessed privilege it is for us who believe to rest in His work, His blood-shedding, and the Word of Him who cannot lie. Nothing else secured those in Egypt from the destroying angel that night, and nothing else secures the sinner now but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His shed blood. Truly this is the foundation of all God's ways of blessing, both now and forever.

Unleavened Bread

The next feast in the yearly calendar was that of “unleavened bread.” It began on the very next day after the Passover and was directly connected with it. The two could not be separated. They are often referred to as one; for example, see Luke 22:1. We may inquire what lesson God would teach us in this feast, and here again we are not left to conjecture, for we read in 1 Corinthians 5:8, joined with the statement about Christ’s being our Passover, “Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” Here it is not Israel but us who are exhorted to keep this feast, but not in the outward manner as many Jews do to this day, making diligent search in the house to remove all leaven before the Passover begins. We are to put away “the leaven of malice and wickedness.” Leaven is used throughout Scripture, without exception, as a type or symbol of evil. There is the leaven of Herod, of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and so forth. It is evil that works secretly, corrupting and assimilating to itself. It may be in practice (1 Cor. 5:6) or in doctrine (Gal. 5:9), and frequently the practice becomes a doctrine to support the practice.

So it is plainly evident that the Christian who is sheltered by the blood of Christ, “as of a lamb without blemish and without spot,” is called upon to put away evil, and that immediately after conversion; for the feast of unleavened bread followed the Passover immediately. There is still another point, that is, the feast lasted for seven days. Seven is a number always used to signify completeness, and indicates that the complete period of our lives should be marked by “the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” There is never a time when the Christian may carelessly sin; he is to remember that he is “unleavened.”

Wave Sheaf

The next yearly feast is the “wave sheaf.” We read: “Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: and he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it” (Lev. 23:10-11). They were not to eat of their new harvest until the very first sheaf of it was presented before the Lord, as was said, “to be accepted for you.”

Now we are not left to devise some means of explaining the typical meaning of this feast, any more than the preceding ones. In 1 Corinthians 15:20 we read: “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.” Also, “Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Cor. 15:23). The Christ who died as our Passover also rose from the dead. He had said, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” He was the true “corn of wheat” who died as “our Passover” and rose again as the firstfruits of a new harvest. This feast definitely represents Christ in resurrection as the firstfruits of them that slept. And in resurrection He is accepted for us. We are “accepted in the beloved.” We are seen in Him before God — in Him in resurrection.

The very day that the Lord Jesus died, the priest and the people were keeping the Passover, not realizing that in His death the type had come to its completion — that type had met antitype. Then on the very day in which He arose, the priests were waving the wave sheaf in the temple.* Little did they realize that as they sought to bribe the soldiers to falsify the report of His resurrection, they themselves were actually doing that which for 1500 years had foretold His resurrection.

Another singular thing is that this was done on the “morrow after the sabbath” — the first day of the week, the Lord’s day. He was not only the firstfruits of a new harvest, but He arose on the first day of a new week. Let the Jews (and those “who say they are Jews, and are not”) explain why this departure from the Sabbath was written into their own Scriptures.

Feast of Weeks – Wave Loaves

Next comes the “feast of weeks,” which took place fifty days later than the waving of the sheaf of the firstfruits. “And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD. Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD” (vss. 15-17).

The harvest from which they offered the wave sheaf had now had time to be made into flour, and they were to present “two wave loaves” unto the Lord. Fruit of the same harvest, but offered fifty days later. Are we left to our inventions as to the meaning of this feast? No, in no wise. In Acts 2 we read, “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come.” Pentecost means “fifty,” or fifty days. Therefore, on the very day when the priests in the temple were presenting the wave loaves with their necessary offerings, a new offering was being presented unto the Lord, not now in the temple, but in the upper room. The disciples were assembled there, awaiting the promised coming of the Holy Spirit; and on that very day, another first day of the week, He descended from heaven and dwelt in each believer individually, and in all collectively. Thus was something new formed, something never before known — the Church on earth united by the Spirit to Christ the Head in heaven. The fourth of the yearly feasts had its fulfillment in the inauguration of the Church on earth by the Spirit from heaven.

It is worthy of note that in these two feasts (the wave sheaf and the wave loaves), and these two only, the first day of the week is the day on which they were performed. The one speaks of the resurrection of Christ, and the other, of the formation of the Church of God. Should not this silence the Seventh-day Adventists and all who would have Christians keep the seventh day, that those feasts which foretold of this period of time, the first day of the week should be preeminent? It should forever resolve any doubt in the minds of those who are subject to the Word.

Another important point to notice with regard to these two feasts is that there was no sin offering presented with the wave sheaf, but there was with the wave loaves. How accurate is Scripture! How could a sin offering be offered in connection with that which spoke of Christ in resurrection! But how fitting that it should be offered with that which spoke of the Church! The wave sheaf needed no preparation; it was presented as it was taken from the field. The wave loaves prefigure the Church (“two” perhaps referring to ample testimony on earth, or to its composition of Jews and Gentiles), and there is sin in it. There is leaven baked in the loaves; therefore, the need of the sin offering. Other offerings were also presented at both times, but we shall not go into them. Leaven was never burned on the altar; it is used here as a type of sin in the Church; and on another occasion it is used to represent sin in the individual offerer (Lev. 7:13). The leaven in the loaves was “baken,” indicating that it was not seen as active before God.

Corners of the Field

There was a long interval between the feast of weeks and the next feast — from the third month to the seventh month.* This no doubt illustrates the period of the Church's history, for just before the next yearly festival, there is a strange statement — “And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleanings of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I am the LORD your God” (Lev. 23:22).

This seemingly has no connection with the seven feasts; it appears to have been dropped in almost at random, but its very position is full of instruction for us. How will the Church's history on earth end? With the harvest — the gathering of the redeemed of this age into the heavenly garner. What a blessed hope we have! This verse is undated, just as the hope of the Lord's coming is undated in the New Testament. Nothing intervenes between the offering of the wave loaves and this 22nd verse. There is also an answer here for those who say that the Church must go through the great tribulation first, if only they would see it.

Soon the Lord shall come and gather the Church home, but there is going to be a little grain left in the field, in the corners. The poor Jew and the stranger Gentile who will believe in the coming King during the tribulation period, and suffer martyrdom, will also have a heavenly portion Revelation 20:4, in the JND Translation, gives the account of the two classes which will be raised from the dead for heavenly blessing at the end of the tribulation period, before the fulfillment of the fifth feast of Leviticus 23. The grain left in the corners of the field may also indicate the food of these tribulation martyrs who will apprehend the truth of the Scriptures regarding Christ as coming King.

Feast of Trumpets

But to return to our chapter. The next feast in order took place in “the seventh month, in the first day of the month.” It is commonly called the “feast of trumpets.” Directions were given more completely in Numbers 29:1-6. It signaled a new beginning, a calling together by the trumpets. The feast has not yet had its typical fulfillment; it and the next two are still future. It signifies the time when Christ will return to the earth with His heavenly saints and recall His earthly people, the Jews, to their promised land. When the Son of man appears in power and great glory, “He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matt. 24:31). “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown” (Isa. 27:13). The Jews are now going back to Palestine in unbelief to accept the antichrist; but then their Messiah will call them back to settle them in their own land with His blessing.

Day of Atonement

The next unfulfilled feast (that is, in its typical meaning) is the day of atonement, which took place on the “tenth day of this seventh month.” This feast prefigures the day of Israel’s mourning when they look on Him “whom they have pierced,” and “shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him.... In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem.... And the land shall mourn, every family apart” (Zech. 12:10-12). Thus our chapter says, “For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people.” This was also typified in Joseph’s dealing with his brethren when he had them recall their sin “concerning” their “brother.” It will be a solemn time for Israel when they go through in reality the fulfillment of the type of the day of atonement. After it is over they will say in the language of Isaiah 53, “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities.” (Lev. 16 gives the details of the day of atonement and the offerings to be offered). Then the repentant remnant of Israel will be ready to fulfill the type of the next feast.

Feast of Tabernacles

The feast of tabernacles prefigures the Millennium (which will be the Sabbath for the earth), founded on Him who was the true Passover. Here we see the rest which will come in, not on the basis of creation, but on that of redemption. This last feast is a feast of gladness and joy. It, like the feast of unleavened bread, lasts for seven days; that is, a complete period of time. "And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days" (vs. 40). In that day all the promises made to Abraham and to Israel respecting their ultimate blessing will be fulfilled in detail. Israel shall be made a rejoicing, and blessing will flow out from the earthly Jerusalem to the whole earth. Space does not permit a more detailed examination of this wondrous scene of joy and blessing, not only for Israel, but for the nations, and for the whole animate creation, "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19).

There is something special connected with the feast of tabernacles, which is not found in any other feast, that is, that after the feast runs its allotted seven days, an eighth day is mentioned. This brings before us another new beginning, and that without an end being mentioned. We may call the eighth day the day of eternity, or a hint that God will then bring in a new and final scene of blessing.

In Deuteronomy 16, the three times that all the males in Israel should go up to God's center were mentioned as Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, but they were so arranged that in doing this they could keep all seven of the feasts. They were the times when God gathered the people around Himself. But while they kept them unintelligently, not realizing what they pointed on to, it is ours to rejoice in the knowledge of their typical meanings, not only in those that have already been fulfilled as part of our blessings, but of those yet to be kept in their real meaning for the blessing of Israel, the nations, and the animate creation, when Christ shall have His rightful place.

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