

The Symbolism of the Old Testament

by Charles Ewing Brown

Charles Ewing Brown discusses the doctrine of entire sanctification preached by the pioneers of the holiness movement, emphasizing the allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament by New Testament writers to support this truth. He highlights the importance of not rejecting the allegorical approach, as it reveals profound truths reflected in the Book of Hebrews, particularly regarding the rest that remains for God's people and the concept of heaven on earth. Brown also delves into the symbolism of Canaan as a type of both heaven and the completely consecrated life, and the significance of entering the holy of holies as an experience of entire sanctification where believers enjoy the fullness of the gospel blessing.

Description

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Transcript

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 "/pdf-text/text/c/charles-ewing-brown---the-symbolism-of-the-old-testament.txt" thumbnailUrl: ""
 hasTranscript: true oneLinerSummary: "The sermon explores the symbolism of the Old Testament and its application to the experience of entire sanctification, in which the believer enjoys the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ and enters into a state of perfect rest and peace." sermonType: "teaching"
 topics: - name: "Entire Sanctification" slug: "entire-sanctification" - name: "Allegorical Interpretation" slug: "allegorical-interpretation" bibleRefs: - text: "Philippians 3:20" bookId: "PHP" chapter: "3" verse: "20" - text: "Hebrews 4:11" bookId: "HEB" chapter: "4" verse: "11" - text: "Hebrews 6:1" bookId: "HEB" chapter: "6" verse: "1" - text: "Hebrews 10:19" bookId: "HEB" chapter: "10" verse: "19" - text: "Revelation 21:2" bookId: "REV" chapter: "21" verse: "2" outline: - heading: "I" points: - "The pioneers of the holiness movement" - "The symbolism of the Old Testament" - "Evidences for entire sanctification" - heading: "II" points: - "The New Testament writers allegorized the Old Testament" - "The Apostle Paul's use of allegory" - "The Epistle to the Hebrews" - heading: "III" points: - "The rest that remaineth for God's people" - "The Jewish Sabbath as a type of eternal rest" - "The experience of entire sanctification" - heading: "IV" points: -

"Heaven on earth begun" - "The church as a spiritual reality" - "The baptism of the Holy Spirit" - heading: "V" points: - "Marching to Canaan" - "Canaan as a type of heaven and the completely consecrated life" - "The fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ" - heading: "VI" points: - "Entering the holy of holies" - "The experience of entire sanctification" - "The heavenly state realized here and now" faq: - q: "What is the symbolism of the Old Testament?" a: "The symbolism of the Old Testament refers to the use of allegory and typology to interpret the historical stories and events of the Old Testament as foreshadowing or representing spiritual truths and experiences in the New Testament." - q: "Can we allegorize the Old Testament?" a: "Yes, the New Testament writers, including the Apostle Paul, allegorized the Old Testament, and we can follow their example in interpreting the symbolism of the Old Testament." - q: "What is the rest that remaineth for God's people?" a: "The rest that remaineth for God's people refers to the experience of entire sanctification, in which the believer enjoys the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ and enters into a state of perfect rest and peace." - q: "Can we attain to the heavenly state here on earth?" a: "Yes, the New Testament teaches that Christians can attain to the heavenly state here on earth, and this is illustrated in the symbolism of Canaan and the experience of entire sanctification." - q: "What does the holy of holies represent?" a: "The holy of holies represents the experience of entire sanctification, in which the believer enjoys the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ and enters into a state of perfect rest and peace." quotes: - "The rest that remaineth for God's people" - "For our conversation is in heaven" - "We are a colony of heaven" applicationPoints: - "The experience of entire sanctification is a real and attainable experience for Christians today." - "The symbolism of the Old Testament can be used to interpret and understand the spiritual truths and experiences of the New Testament." - "The heavenly state can be realized here on earth through the experience of entire sanctification." keywords: - "entire sanctification" - "symbolism of the Old Testament" - "allegory" - "typology" - "heaven on earth" - "Canaan" - "holy of holies" - "experience of perfection" - "baptism of the Holy Spirit" ---

The pioneers of the holiness movement preached the doctrine of entire sanctification with unflagging zeal. Part of the evidences for this truth they drew from the symbolism of the Old Testament. Of recent years there has been some hesitation regarding this type of evidence concerning the doctrine of entire sanctification. In general, there has been a feeling that it is improper, as they say, to "allegorize" the Old Testament in this way and thus use its historical data as proof of an obscure doctrine. This reaction against the symbolism of the Old Testament has been carried entirely too far, as many critical scholars now believe. [22]

The point is not whether man today using his own imagination is free to spiritualize the Old Testament so as to prove whatever comes to his mind; modern criticism has definitely ruled against any such frivolous twisting of the ancient scriptures. The simple fact is: The New Testament writers in general, and the Apostle Paul in particular, did allegorize, or as we say, "spiritualize," the historical material of the Old Testament; and if we reject the ideas which they developed in this way, we must deny a large part of the New Testament and reject its teachings.

This is a fact so plain that no scholar would need any evidence to support it, but since we are not all scholars let us refer to J. A. Weiss. He says that Paul "used this method (I Cor. 9:9; 10:5; Gal. 4:21-31), but not nearly to the same extent as we find it used in the Epistle to the Hebrews for instance." [23]

Now if the writers of the New Testament allegorized the historical stories of the Old Testament, and if we refuse to accept their results, then we must willfully shut our eyes to much truth which the New Testament has to show us.

Bearing these facts in mind, I feel free to assert that those parts of the Old Testament which are definitely allegorized by New Testament writers may well be called "types" without fear of violating some rationalistic rule of criticism. This sound critical method opens the door for us into some very striking truths reflected in the Book of Hebrews.

THE REST THAT REMAINETH FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

It would make this book far too long if the writer should do all the work for the reader. To condense as much as possible, let the student read the fourth chapter of the Book of Hebrews. This study is worth a day of any Christian's time. There he will learn that the world was made in six ages of time. The seventh age began at the close of creation and is continuing to the present moment. It is God's day of rest.

Since it was impossible for the Israelite as a natural man to rest forever in the flesh, one day in seven was given to him as a type of the eternal rest of the soul. As God's rest was symbolized, or typified, by the Jewish Sabbath, that Jewish Sabbath was a type of the rest of God into which the soul enters when, perfectly purged and cleansed from all carnality and truly infilled with the Holy Ghost, it finds the rest that "remaineth for the people of God." The recurring rest of the seventh day in the Old Testament was a reflection of the partial experience of the regenerated Christian who rests and yet not completely. The perfect rest is the rest of the entirely sanctified who enter into the place of victory where struggle and labor are forever ended. Proof that this is an experience possible for Christians today is found in the exhortation "to enter into that rest" (Heb. 4:11). This is sufficient evidence that that rest is not heaven alone but is an experience obtainable in this life; because no one would be exhorted to make a special effort to enter the final heaven by any act of his own will -- that must await the moment of death. Voluntarily to hasten it is to commit suicide.

HEAVEN ON EARTH BEGUN

However, we are not ranging into the ecstatic rhapsody of the mystics when we say that it is the plain teaching of the New Testament that Christians may attain to the heavenly state here on earth. The works of the most radical, critical scholars have admitted as much, as can be proved by numerous citations. An illustration of this truth is found in Revelation 21:2, a passage that has perplexed Bible students for nearly two thousand years. It cannot be lifted out of the clouds of confusion until its Platonic background is understood. Platonism taught that there is in heaven a pattern of everything that exists on earth. In his apocalyptic vision John saw the pattern of heaven as a great spiritual idea coming down from heaven and abiding among men. To a Platonist there was no difficulty here. Heaven as a spiritual idea came from the eternal heaven wherein is the throne of God, and yet the eternal heaven remains as secure and real as ever. This pattern of heaven which came down to this world is the spiritual reality that we call the church. It lives among men as the passionate love and the inspiring thought of God. The man who enters it is already in heaven, not in his fleshly body, but in spiritual reality. Death is not the crisis for this man; for him the crisis is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which fully assimilates him to the perfect will of God.

For the New Testament believer, therefore, the startling crisis of life is not stepping into eternity, but rather stepping into the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. From that moment he is already in heaven in spirit. Paul clarifies the matter when he writes, "for our conversation is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). Here the word "conversation" means citizenship, and Moffatt's translation is: "We are a colony of heaven," and that is the meaning of the passage. The Philippians understood this well because they were a colony of Rome. They were Romans with full rights of citizenship. There was no distinction between them and the other

citizens of Rome. They were simply a little Rome of their own, a colony of Roman citizens outside the city of Rome. In the same way, says Paul, all believers are a colony of heaven in this world of human life.

MARCHING TO CANAAN

These truths help to illuminate the symbolism of Canaan as set down in the third and fourth chapters of the Book of Hebrews. Probably the majority of Christians regard Canaan as a type of heaven. Almost all Wesleyan teachers regard it as a type of the completely consecrated life. The truths here expounded make it clear that it would be perfectly proper to regard Canaan as a type of both these experiences; for in the full light of the New Testament they are both one. The justified believer struggles like the Israelites, sometimes for forty years, in the wilderness of an incomplete Christian experience. At Jordan he crosses into Canaan. In the light of Scripture that is a crisis more exacting than natural death; for it marks the complete movement of the soul into the heavenly state of final deliverance, insofar as full redemption and enjoyment of divine grace are concerned. Canaan represents the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. It is heaven begun here on earth.

ENTERING THE HOLY OF HOLIES

The symbolism of the Tabernacle has perplexed Christians for generations. The Tabernacle proper had two compartments: the outside room, called the holy place; and a sacred, inner chamber, called the holy of holies. Around the whole Tabernacle ran a wall enclosing a court. This court represents the state of a convicted, penitent sinner. The altar typifies Christ with his eternal sacrifice for sin. The laver represents the experience of the washing of regeneration, after which one enters the holy place as a regenerated and justified saint. But what does the holy of holies represent? Most Christians who think about the matter at all suppose that it typifies heaven, and I believe that is true. However, it does not represent the eternal heaven alone, but also the heavenly state realized here and now in time, for the temple of God is among men. In other words, the holy of holies represents the experience of entire sanctification, in which the believer enjoys the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Further proof of this is found in the fact that Christians are exhorted to enter this holiest place here and now.

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience [by the experience of regeneration], and our bodies washed with pure water [in baptism]" (Heb. 10:19-21).

The people who are here exhorted are brethren, and these same people are told to hold fast their profession (vs. 23). All the context proves conclusively that Christians are the ones addressed, and yet these Christians are exhorted to go on and enter the holy of holies by faith. This one passage alone would be convincing to any thoughtful person free of all dogmatic bias. To the same effect is the notable passage in which Christians are exhorted to leave the elementary principles of Christianity and go on to perfection (Heb. 6:1). An argument has been made here that this is only rhetoric. Christians, we are told, are urged to talk about something else. It is amazing that serious-minded men could use the Scriptures so lightly. If Christians are to go on talking about perfection, there is only one reason why they should do so, and that is because there is for them a duty of pressing into the experience of perfection so beautifully developed in the whole Book of Hebrews. No serious-minded Christian can degrade the noble march to perfection in the Book of Hebrews into a cheap exercise in rhetoric.

22 See Darwell Stone, "The Mystical Interpretation of the Old Testament," in A New Commentary on Holy Scriptures, p. 688

23 Cf. Johannes Weiss, The History of Primitive Christianity, Vol.I, p. 335

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