

The Jewish Tabernacle.

by Robert Murray M'Cheyne

The sermon emphasizes the significance of the Tabernacle as a type of Christ and the importance of understanding divine things to be saved.

Scripture: Exodus 25:8, Exodus 25:23-30, Leviticus 24:5-7, John 1:14, John 2:19, Galatians 3:24, Colossians 2:9, Hebrews 9:1-5, Hebrews 10:19-20, Revelation 1:20

Topics: "The Tabernacle", "Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law"

Description

Robert Murray M'Cheyne emphasizes the significance of the Jewish Tabernacle as a shadow of Christ, illustrating how the Mosaic covenant served as a precursor to the Christian covenant. He explains that while the Tabernacle was a worldly sanctuary where God dwelled among His people, it ultimately pointed to the greater and perfect Tabernacle, which is Christ Himself. M'Cheyne highlights the various elements of the Tabernacle, such as the candlestick and the table of shew-bread, as representations of Christ and His sustenance for believers. He urges the congregation to seek a deeper understanding of these divine truths, stressing that Christ is the substance of all Old Testament types and the source of true nourishment for the soul. The sermon calls for a serious inquiry into divine matters, encouraging believers to engage deeply with their faith.

Transcript

Hebrews ix. 1-5.--"Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shew-bread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly."

You will remember, that in speaking upon the previous chapters of this Epistle, I have tried to show you, that the main intention of the Apostle was to show you, that the Mosaic economy or covenant was the shadow--that Christ is the substance. The Mosaic covenant, you remember, was delivered from Mount Sinai : It was given in that year, you remember, when God took Israel by the hand, and led them out of Egypt. The whole object of the covenant is stated in one word by Paul, when writing to the Galatians--"The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." [3:24] The Christian covenant or dispensation was

the covenant that was made on the hills of immortality between the Father and the Son ; and it was ratified when Christ gave up the ghost ; and it was not delivered in terror, but in love, for his lips were "like lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh."

Now the great object of this Epistle to the Hebrews was to show, that the Mosaic covenant was a typical and shadowy one, and that the Christian covenant was the substance.

In the words I have read, Paul compares the two covenants in respect of two things. In the 1st verse, he compares them in respect of the ordinances and sanctuary. In the 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5th verses, he speaks only of the last of these two,--namely the sanctuary. In the following verses, he speaks of the things that were transacted in the sanctuary.

There are three things to which I desire to direct your attention. The 1st is the name given to the Tabernacle--"A worldly sanctuary." The 2d thing is the holy place, or "the sanctuary." The 3d the most holy, or "the holiest of all."

First of all, observe the name given to the sanctuary. Verse 1st "The first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary." It is called a worldly sanctuary, although it was the chief glory of the Mosaic covenant. It was their chief glory for several reasons.

First, it was because God dwelt in it. Exodus xxv. 8--"And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." The very object of the sanctuary was, that God might dwell among them. See also Numbers xxiii. 21--"He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them." You will see, brethren, that it was the Tabernacle that was their chief glory. Another reason why it was their chief glory was, that it was the meeting-place with God. Exodus xxv. 21,22-- "And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony." Chapter xxix. 43-- "And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory." So that you see it was the meeting-place between Israel and Israel's God. Another reason was, that it was the greatest type of Christ becoming incarnate ; so that it was the chief glory of the Mosaic dispensation. And yet, observe, it is called "a worldly sanctuary." Why was it called a worldly sanctuary ? First, it was a sanctuary in the world. It was erected first at Sinai, and then it was carried about from place to place. Although the boards of shittim-wood, and the fine twined linen of blue and purple and scarlet made it a glorious sanctuary, yet it was seen but a little way off ; and though the gate was open every day, it could only admit a few at once--it could not admit all the world. Another reason why, it was perishing. You know it was made of very precious materials. The shittim-wood, and the blue and purple and scarlet and fine linen, were very precious things ; and yet these were all fading. The world is a fading flower, and so was the Tabernacle. Its boards soon rotted ; its curtains of blue and purple and scarlet and fine linen soon decayed ; and the gold that covered the ark decayed ; and the very ephod and mitre and garments that were upon Aaron decayed : So that it was but a worldly sanctuary after all. Although it was the glory of that covenant--although it was the meeting-place with God--yet it was but a worldly sanctuary.

Now, compare this with the Tabernacle under the Christian dispensation. See verse 11--"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building." You will notice in the 11th verse that the Christian Tabernacle is said to be a greater and more perfect one, and not of this building--not of this world at all. Some may say,

"And what is this Tabernacle under the Christian dispensation ?" Now, I do not like to say positively ; but it appears to me that it is none other but the incarnate Son of God. I think that is the Tabernacle that is greater and more perfect, and not of this building. This is the meeting-place now between a sinner and God. In order to prove this, turn to John ii. 19--" Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Now, I think our Lord tells us here that the Temple was the shadow, of which his body was the substance. The Temple was of this world's building ; but his body was not of this building. Compare this with John i. 14--"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Now, I lately explained this verse to you, and showed that it means to tabernacle as in a tent, which seems to show the same thing. Compare Hebrews x. 19,20--"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." Now, here you are expressly told that the veil that separated between the holy place and the holiest of all was exactly the veil of his flesh, which was rent at his death. Colossians ii. 9--"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Just as in the Temple of old God dwelt between the cherubims, so in Christ dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Now, coming back again to the words of the text, you will observe that Christ is our Sanctuary, a greater and more perfect one, and then made by the Eternal Spirit to be dwelt in by us. Every believer, wherever he is, can come to Christ--can put his hand on this altar. All things about the worldly Tabernacle were fading--its shittim wood, its boards, and its curtains, decayed ; but Christ abideth ever--the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

II. I hasten now to the second thing ; and that is, the description here given of the holy place. Verse 2--"For there was a Tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shew-bread; which is called the sanctuary." The holy place here spoken of is described in three ways,--first, by its situation ; and then by its contents ; and lastly, by its name.

It is described by its situation. You know there was a large court ; and the first thing you beheld, when you entered this court, was the brazen altar ; and then, going a little farther in the court, you came to the brazen laver full of pure water, where the priests had to wash their hands and feet ; and then, a little farther in the court, rose majestically the Tabernacle itself, and then pushing aside the curtain (that is to say, if you had been a priest, for it would have been death to any who were not priests to enter), you entered into the first chamber. It was here that all the priests were allowed to come and minister every day. Every day they came in to trim the lamps, to burn incense, and to set in order the shew-bread on the pure golden table. This was the first chamber or holy place.

Again, notice now what was the contents of this first chamber. There was the candlestick and the table and the shew-bread. The first thing was the candlestick. You are told about it in the 25th of Exodus, 31st verse--"And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same." Verse 36--"Their knops and their branches shall be of the same: all it shall be one beaten work of pure gold." Now, brethren, the candlestick, I think, represents unto us Christ mystical,--that is, Christ and all his members, the light of a dark world. Just as you read in the 1st chapter of Revelation, that Christ walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, so here you find one in the midst, to which all the rest are united. And just as you were now told that the candlestick was all of beaten gold, we are thereby taught that Christ and all his members are one--completely one-- not joined by outward profession merely ; but they are one in reality--they are looked upon by God as one. And just as the lamp was supplied by olive oil, and just as that oil was first poured into the middle shaft and then went through all the rest, to Christ receives the

Spirit, and sheds it out upon all the rest--upon all his members. This is evidently the meaning of the candlestick.

And then notice, that in the holy place was the table of shew-bread.--Exodus xxv. 23--"Thou shalt also make a table of shittim wood: two cubits shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof." Verse 29--"And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and spoons thereof, and covers thereof, and bowls thereof, to cover withal: of pure gold shalt thou make them." Verse 30--"And thou shalt set upon the table shew-bread before me alway." Compare this with Leviticus xxiv. 5-7 verses--"And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake. And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the LORD. And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the LORD." Now, brethren, you will notice that the table not only had golden spoons and dishes ; but it was covered every day with bread, twelve put in two rows. I do not know, but I believe, that this is intended to represent to us Christ, the nourishment of his people in the Wilderness : And there were twelve cakes. This shows that there is enough in Christ and to spare.

My dear friends, I find I will not now have time to go on to the most holy place.

From this, notice that Christ is the substance of all Old Testament types. The candlestick shows Christ the light of the world. The ark, with the law in its bosom, shows Christ with God's law in his heart. The golden pot that had manna shows Christ, the bread on which we are to feed. The rod that budded shows Christ, the great high priest. So with all the Tabernacle : It showed Christ, so that, if they did not see Christ, they saw nothing. And just so now, brethren, Christ is still the substance of all --all our righteousness--all our strength--all our hope. If you come not to him, you have no religion at all. If you come not to Christ as your bread--as your hidden manna--as your life--if you do not come daily and live on Christ--you have no part nor lot in the matter. O, brethren ! look to it ; for I am persuaded that many of you have got merely notions about him, if we would be saved.

Learn still farther what a solemn duty it is to inquire into divine things. Suppose a Jew had rested in his ignorance about the meaning of the Tabernacle, as some of you do, how would ever he have been saved ? And, O, brethren ! the same duty rests on you, not to take up with mere surface reading. You must have your whole mind in it. For what use were your minds given but for this ? Be sure there is depth enough for the deepest mind. Go, then, and ask the Spirit to enlighten you fully. Do not be content with mere babe's meat, but with meat for strong men, as the Lord grant. Amen.

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