

Christ In the Tabernacle



“Do you see yonder Wicket Gate?”



An e-book produced by the Wicket Gate Magazine. Articles are taken from various editions of the magazine and reproduced with the kind permission of the Reformed Baptist Church, Inverness, Scotland.

<http://www.wicketgate.co.uk/>

Acknowledgements

1. Cover Photograph of the “Golden Lampstand” is copyright of Dreamstime. <http://www.dreamstime.com>
2. “Ark of the Covenant”, “The High Priest”, “The Mercy Seat” and the “Acacia Tree” photographs are copyright of Dreamstime. <http://www.dreamstime.com>
3. “Table of Shewbread”, “The Brazen Alter” and the “Alter of Incense” were downloaded from <http://www.galery.oldbookart.com>
4. All articles making up this booklet came from issues of the Wicket Gate Magazine. <http://www.wicketgate.co.uk>

Content

Chapter 1	God’s Command	Page 1
Chapter 2	Ark of the Covenant	Page 7
Chapter 3	The Mercy Seat	Page 12
Chapter 4	The Table of Shewbread	Page 16
Chapter 5	The Golden Lampstand	Page 20
Chapter 6	The Curtains and Coverings	Page 24
Chapter 7	The Veil	Page 28
Chapter 8	The Brazen Altar	Page 32
Chapter 9	The Courtyard and Laver	Page 36
Chapter 10	The Altar of Incense	Page 40
Chapter 11	The Priesthood	Page 44
Chapter 12	The Priest’s Garments	Page 48

Christ in the Tabernacle

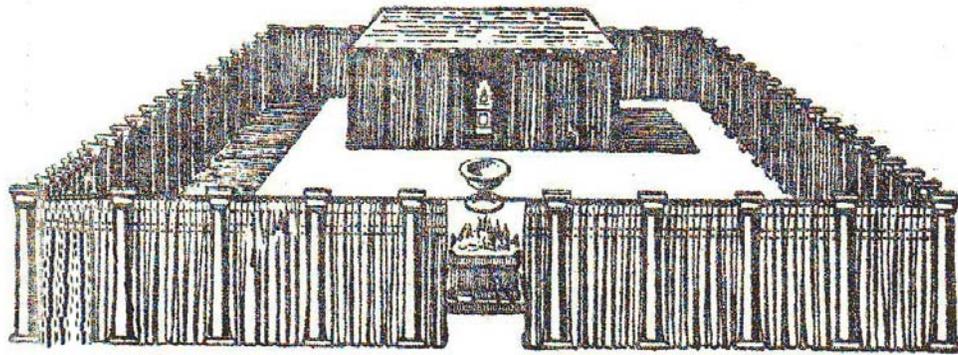
Chapter 1

The Tabernacle – God’s Command

The account of God’s command to the Children of Israel to build the Tabernacle in the wilderness begins in chapter 25 of the Book of Exodus, and occupies, virtually the whole of the remainder of the book. It is in that chapter that the materials for the Tabernacle are specified, and the great purpose of the Tabernacle stated – verse 8, “And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.”

When we think in terms of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, then, above all things, we are to think of it being the place where God decreed He would dwell in the midst of His people. Where He would meet with them, and they with Him, in the way that He would duly appoint. It doesn’t mean that God was *confined* within those Tabernacle precincts, for “heaven is thy throne, and earth is thy footstool;” but, in a very special manner, He was granting those people of old a visible means, whereby they could know His presence, and enjoy His presence amongst them. It was also called, “the tabernacle of the *congregation*,” or the tent of *meeting*, because, there, God met with His people, and they with one another; “the tabernacle of the testimony,” because, in that particular piece of the Tabernacle furniture called the “Ark”, God has caused His Word – His testimony – to be deposited; and, of course, it was called “the tabernacle of the LORD,” because, there the Lord had made His abode, and taken up His abode amongst them.

In the leading concept and purpose, then of God dwelling with His people, and they with Him, we are immediately pointed-up to Jesus Christ our Saviour. God makes His dwelling with every individual believer in this world, with the Church in this world, and with His glorified saints in heaven for ever. But each of these dwellings is dependent on the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Saviour.



The Tabernacle

Points to Heaven and Glory at Last

The Tabernacle in the Wilderness pointed to heaven and glory at last. In Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 23, the apostle Paul refers to the Tabernacle as “the patterns of things in the heavens,” and “figures of the true,” into which Christ has “entered” to “appear in the presence of God for us.” When he calls the Tabernacle, and the things pertaining to it, “patterns” of things in the heavens, and “figures” of the true, what he is saying is – The Tabernacle in the wilderness was a “copy” – an earthly duplicate of the heavenly original. In heaven at last God ultimately and eternally dwells with His people for ever, and they with Him. In the wilderness Tabernacle, (and in the Temple at Jerusalem that followed it), God gave the pointer to that great fact. God granted us to have a duplicate picture of how things would be for us eternally. It **is** like a ***duplicate*** – a duplicate in black and white, as we might say, of the original; but a good pattern of “good things to come” for all that.

The Tabernacle

Points to the Church of Christ and its Members

The Tabernacle in the wilderness also pointed to the Church of Christ in this world, and its members. One of the great titles of the church in the world is, “the house of God,” (1st Timothy chapter 3 verse 15). The ***kind*** of house that it is, is beautifully described by the apostle in Ephesians, as “an habitation of God through the Spirit,” (Ephesians chapter 2 verse

22). Very simply, it is where God *now* dwells with His people in a peculiar sense, just as He dwelt of old in the Tabernacle, in a peculiar sense. It is not any *building*, for “the house of God” in the New Testament scriptures, is wherever His people meet in His name.

The “house” is made up of “living stones,” and whenever, or wherever these living stones meet together *there* is the house of God, as God comes to make His dwelling with them – His “habitation through the Spirit.” What is true of the church “corporate” is true of each member of the church, for, says the Word of God, “Know ye not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” The Tabernacle pointed to heaven – the eternal dwelling of God for all God’s people, and to the Church for as long as time will be in this world.

The Tabernacle

Points to Christ - the Church and its Being

The Tabernacle in the wilderness pre-eminently pointed to Christ through whom the Church has its being, and heaven stands open for us. The scriptures of God all unite in bearing glorious witness to the fact that it was in Christ in this world that God supremely dwelt, and that it is through Christ that His people may dwell forever. As Paul calls Him, in Hebrews, “the true tabernacle, which God pitched, and not man.” Not that the *old* Tabernacle was *untrue*; but that it was partial, and temporary until the fulness came in Jesus Christ the Lord. As he says in another place, “God was *in Christ*, reconciling the world unto himself;” or another, “For *in Him dwelleth* all the fulness of the Godhead bodily”. John’s statement, in the opening chapter of his gospel virtually says it all, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us”, - *tabernacled* among us.

So, we are to see *Heaven* in the Tabernacle, the *Church and its members* in the Tabernacle, and *Christ* – and supremely Christ – in the Tabernacle, through whom the church has its life, and with whom the church shall dwell for ever with God.

As with the Tabernacle, *as such*, pre-eminently points to Christ, so with every part and piece that went into the making and constructing of the Tabernacle under God's hand. As soon as God had given His initial instructions regarding the various pieces of "furniture", etc. which were to take their places in the Tabernacle, then, He said, "And look that thou make them after their pattern that was shown thee in the mount." The Tabernacle was God's prescribed place of meeting between Himself and old Israel, and they must meet Him in the way that He prescribes. An ever-abiding lesson for the people of God at all times.

The Tabernacle (see above) was really a large tent, for that's what Tabernacle means. It sat in the midst of a courtyard, which was all part and parcel of the Tabernacle complex, and the overall dimensions were somewhere in the region of 190 foot long by 90 foot wide. The Courtyard was completely enclosed by a linen screen hung on pillars, and it had only one opening – one door – at the eastern end, which gave access to the Court, and on into the Tent, at the other end of the Court.

Immediately our eyes are taken to Christ. One door only into the presence of God for us; only one way to find access into the enjoyment of God's dwelling, now and for ever. And the *pointers* that begin at the door of the Courtyard increase and abound with every following step.

Right in front of the door there stood the blood-stained altar on which the sacrifice for sin must be made; no access without the shedding of blood. Next came the *Laver* for washing – for nothing that defiles shall enter the presence of God. The Tent itself was divided into two compartments – the Holy Place, and the Holiest of Holies. The compartments were divided by the *Veil*. In the first compartment three pieces of furniture stood: the *Table of Shewbread*, the *Golden Candlestick*, the *Altar of Incense*. Within the Holiest of Holies, there was but one piece, the *Ark of the Covenant*, with its "lid", which was known as the "*Mercy Seat*" where the blood of sacrifice was sprinkled once a year by the High Priest, on the day of Atonement.

The significance of each piece of furniture and furnishing is apparent. In the Table of Shewbread, we have Christ as the bread of life, who came down from God for us; in the Golden Lampstand, we have Christ the light of the world; and in the Altar of Incense – the golden Altar – we have Christ as the One who ever lives to make intercession for us, and through whom our prayers ascend to God in heaven above. The Ark of the Covenant with its Mercy Seat – blood stained – stands as one of the Bible’s great pictures of the Person and Work of Christ in the business of saving our souls to God. In the on-coming pages, we will look at these pieces more closely, but as our Saviour said of the whole of the scriptures themselves, we may safely say of the things of the Tabernacle, that these are they which testify of Him.

The Tabernacle in the Wilderness *Practical Lessons from the “First Beginnings”*

In the “first beginnings” of the Tabernacle work, there is great practical application for the Lord’s people at all times.

The Call for the Materials

In the call for the materials of the Tabernacle to be gathered, the Lord makes that call through Moses in a certain manner. Exodus chapter 25 verses 1 and 2. “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering; of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.” Not only did God require that the children of Israel should make provision for this building that was going to be set up amongst them, but He required that they do it “willingly”, and from the bottom of their heart. That is always a requirement in anything that the Lord asks us to do in His service, or for His name’s sake, for “the Lord loveth a cheerful giver.” In the case of the Israelites of old they, in fact, gave so willingly, and so lavishly, that God had to finally restrain their giving, or they would have ended up with enough for *two* Tabernacles at the end of the day! That might lead

us to ask why they reacted in such a way in response to God's call to them; the answer is that they saw this task that now lay before them as the great purpose of God in calling them "out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

The Mindset of the People

In chapter 15 of Exodus, as soon as Israel have crossed the Red Sea, they begin their great song of redemption. In that song they give voice to the determination that because God has saved them, they will then "prepare him an habitation." "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation; he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, my God, and I will exalt him," (Exodus chapter 15 verse 12). When God, therefore, tells them to bring their offering for the purpose of making this "habitation" for Him to dwell among them, they see great opportunity to serve the God who delivered them, and they grasp that opportunity eagerly. In New Testament terms, as the Saviour put it, "He that is forgiven much, the same loveth much." As in the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem under Nehemiah – "So built we the wall," says Nehemiah, "... *for the people had a mind to work.*" The children of Israel had a willing heart and mind to engage in the work of building the Tabernacle, for in this way they could render thanks to God for His redemption, and fulfil the purpose in that redemption.

The Unity of the People

Another abiding practical lesson in the initial call to gather those necessary materials together, is that lovely lesson that the church of Christ enjoys a unity in its diversity. The people were to bring, "gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple ... and goats' hairs, and rams' skins dyed red," etc., So many varied materials; yet composing one house for God. Not every one could bring "gold", or "silver"; but each could bring, *something* – even though it only be a hank of "goats' hair" to be spun for a curtain or covering. In the church, there are many gifts, but all precious and purposeful to God's house.

Christ in the Tabernacle

Chapter 2

“Ark of the Covenant”

The first piece of “furniture” the Children of Israel were commanded to make in relation to the Tabernacle in the wilderness was the “*Ark of the Covenant*” also called, the “Ark of the Lord”.



Like every other piece of furniture, or furnishing, within that building, it served a practical purpose for the children of Israel in their life before God, and it also provides a prophetic pointer to Christ our Saviour. The actual description of the Ark, in its construction and purpose, etc., is

given in Exodus chapter 25 verses 10 and 22, and, thereafter, the word of God refers to it on many occasions.

As far as its structure was concerned, the Ark of the Covenant, was a wooden chest, oblong in shape, and measuring approximately – 4 foot long, 2 foot wide, and 2 foot deep. It was made of “shittim” wood, or acacia wood, and both the inside and the outside were completely lined with pure gold, beaten into sheets for the purpose. Running round the edge of the chest was a “crown” of pure gold, and on the sides of the chest was a series of four golden “rings.” Into the rings were placed two “staves” made out of shittim wood, and these, too, were overlaid with beaten gold. The staves were never to be removed from the rings as the Ark of the Covenant sat within the Holiest of Holies in the Tabernacle, and the purpose of the staves was for the “bearing” of the Ark, as the children of Israel, time and again, “struck camp”, as they made their journey to the land of Canaan. It also indicated that no human hand was to come near the Ark; it was “the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all

the earth”. So, we may envisage a wooden chest, overlaid with pure gold; a crown of gold around the rim, with four golden rings and staves, by which the Ark was borne from place to place.

Probably the most remarkable feature of all in the Ark of the Covenant was – what was, in reality – the “lid”. This was the “Mercy Seat”, (Exodus chapter 25 verse 17 forward). It did, in fact, form a lid for the chest, but it was no ordinary lid. It was to be the same length and width as the Ark itself, and was to be constructed out of one piece of solid gold. The golden “slab” was to form the lid, but out of the golden slab, two cherubim, (angelic beings) were to be fashioned. The cherubim were not to be made and *placed on top of the lid*. They were to “rise out” of the *one* solid piece of gold; it was one lid; one *covering* for the whole Ark.

The Ark, with its Mercy Seat on top, was the only piece of furniture to sit within the Holiest of Holies, and inside the Ark were placed – the two stone tablets on which God had directed Moses to write the Ten Commandment, a pot of the “manna” God had given the Israelites in the wilderness, and Aaron’s rod that “budded”. Such was the Ark of the Covenant.

In looking for the *Prophetic pointers* to Christ in the Ark, we may think in terms of its *purpose*, its *materials*, and its *contents*.

Purpose of the Ark

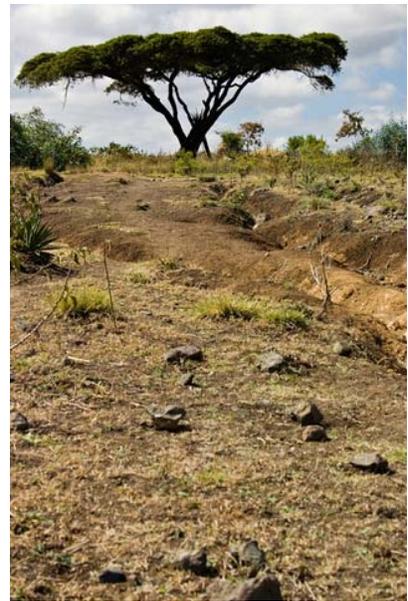
Its purpose is clearly stated at the end of the instructions concerning its making, (Exodus chapter 25 verses 21 and 22;) “And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. *And there I will meet with thee, and will commune with thee* from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims, which are upon the ark of the testimony ...” The Ark, with its Mercy Seat, was the especial meeting place of God for the children of Israel. The Tabernacle, as such, also served this purpose; but

it was especially at the Mercy Seat on the Ark that God deigned and designed to meet with the nation of old.

The way in which the meeting was affected was through the blood of a sacrifice being sprinkled on the Mercy Seat of the Ark; and if we look for a break-down of the prophetic picture in Christ, we are permitted to say that, in the Ark of the Covenant itself, we have a pointer to the person of Christ, and in the Mercy Seat above the Ark, a pointer to the work of Christ. It is *in* Christ alone, and *through* Christ alone we meet with God and He with us; but it is on account of the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, as an acceptable sacrifice to God, that the meeting is effected. The *person* of Christ for us, and the *work* of Christ for us are of course, inseparable; but just as the older arrangement under God – the type and shadow – had two aspects in one, so our salvation and reconciliation to God rests in both the *person* and the *work* of our Saviour for us. In another chapter we can look at the Mercy Seat in its own right; but for now, we can trace something of the precious foreshadowing of the *person* of our Saviour which God encased in the “pattern of things” given to earthly Israel, until the “fulness of the time was come.”

The Materials of the Ark

The materials brought together in the construction of the Ark of the Covenant – where God would meet with Israel – were two; shittim wood, (acacia wood) and gold. Such a combination comes to its fulness of expression in the *incorruptible humanity* and the undeniable Godhood combined in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, our Saviour. Gold speaks for itself within the terms of God’s word; but the significance of the acacia wood is not to be overlooked. The outstanding characteristic of that wood was, in fact, its incorruptibility. In so far as anything that grows in this world can be said to be incorruptible, the wood of the acacia tree met the mark. It grew out of the arid desert in Sinai, and yet



had a durability about it second to none, which gave it the reputation of incorruptibility. It was such a wood, chosen and commanded by God, that was to form the “structure” of the Ark, and give it its “shape” and “dimensions”. At the same time, everything was to be *overlaid* with the finest of gold, and the purest of gold. In the Person of Christ, we have Him presented to us as, “Very God, and Very Man”. Undeniably the one, incorruptibly the other. Just as those two completely contrasting materials were drawn together in the old Ark, so Christ came in human form – as the Son of Man – but was never other than the Son of God, and God the Son, as well.

The necessity of such a combination in the One who would save our souls to God is never to be missed. No one has stated it more clearly or majestically than John Calvin in his Institutes.

“It deeply concerned us”, he says, “that He who was to be our Mediator, should be truly God and truly man.” And then he gives the reason; “... since as God only he could not suffer, and as man only he could not overcome death, he united the human nature with the divine, that he might subject the weakness of the one to death ... and by the power of the other ... might gain us the victory.” The Christ “must suffer”, and then “enter into his glory”. In His perfect humanity, He suffered and died for us; in the power of His Godhood, He rose again from the dead for us. “It deeply concerned us, that he who was to be our Mediator, should be truly God and truly man.” That which “concerned us” God had taken in account from the beginning, and in the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle was displaying the “pattern of things in the heavens.”

The Contents Deposited in the Ark

The Manna

In the contents deposited in the Ark, the Person of our Lord stands in shadow for us. As we’ve said, inside the “chest” God told Moses to make, there was to be deposited – a pot of the manna – the bread from heaven – God had provided for Israel for their wilderness wanderings.

In the Person of Christ for us there is all “the bread of life” we will ever need for as long as we are in this life – and on into life eternal.

Aaron's Rod

As well as the manna, Moses was told to place “Aaron’s rod that budded.” The whole background to that “rod” is found in Numbers chapter 17, and it involves the issue of the “true priest” in Israel – who was to be Aaron, and not some one else. In *our* Ark of the Covenant, we have our Great High Priest, who ever lives to make intercession for us.

The Law of God

Finally, the fact of the Law of God – the testimony of God – being placed within the Ark of old, rises to its heights in the Person of Jesus Christ our Saviour. In prophecy He had said – (Psalm 40 verses 6 to 8 and Hebrews chapter 10 verse 5 forward) “a *body* hast thou prepared me.” And in the same prophecy He says – “I delight to do thy will, O my God; *yea, thy law is within my heart.*” In the “margin” or our Bibles in Psalm 40 verse 8 – “Yea, thy law is in the midst of my bowels;” *In my very innermost being.* If ever the old Ark had the Testimony of God, God’s Word, *in* it, nothing more characterised our Saviour than the fact that He was the One who was pre-eminently the “bearer” of the word of God, in this world. “Then said, I Lo, I come in the volume of the Book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart.”

When God promised Israel a “meeting place” at the strange piece of furniture He told Moses to make, and place within His presence in the Holiest of All, He also gave gracious indication of the One through whom the “Israel of God” would meet with Him for ever.

Christ in the Tabernacle

Chapter 3

“The Mercy Seat”

As we saw in the last chapter when God commanded the children of Israel to make the “Ark of the covenant” to sit within the Holiest of Holies in the tabernacle, He also commanded them to make a “lid” for the Ark – that “lid” which was to be known as the “Mercy Seat”. As the Ark of the Covenant itself gives a vivid prophetic pointer to the *Person* of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Mercy Seat does the same in relation to His *work* of salvation on our behalf. Both are inseparable, of course, just as the old Ark with its Mercy seat was one provision from God, although in two parts. The description of the Mercy Seat is found in Exodus chapter 25 verses 17 forward, and its function and purpose are related in the Books of Moses thereafter.

As the Ark of the Covenant was essentially a “chest”, so the Mercy Seat was essentially a “lid” for the chest; but it was no ordinary lid, even in its appearance. It was to be made of one solid piece of gold, or slab, of gold, with a “cherubim” at either end. The cherubim were not to be made and *placed on* the lid, but were to *rise out of* the same piece of beaten gold; “even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims”. They were not two separate entities attached to the lid; they were part of it, and integral to it, and of the same substance with it. In its dimensions, the Mercy Seat matched the Ark, because it was to form its covering, and it was held in place by the gold rim which ran around all four edges of the Ark. The total picture, then, is of this “chest” – the Ark – made of wood, but overlaid with pure beaten gold, and for a lid, the Mercy Seat: one slab of solid gold, *flowing up into* two majestic heavenly beings at either end,



with their wings outstretched to form an “archway” over the Mercy Seat, and their faces turned inwards towards one another.

Ark and Mercy Seat the great “meeting place”

The Ark with its Mercy Seat was the great “meeting place” between God and the children of Israel. After God has given Moses all His directives with regards to constructing the Ark with its Mercy Seat, then He says to him, “And there I will meet with thee, and will commune with thee from above the mercy seat” (Exodus chapter 25 verse 22). It wasn’t simply at the Ark, as such, that God was going to hold fellowship with Israel, but the Ark with its Mercy Seat. In the terms of the gospel, we are never to forget that God meets with us, in the **Person** of His Son, but on account of the **Work** performed by His Son for the “Israel of God” forever. When God undertook to meet Israel via the Ark and Mercy seat, He gave prior notice of what was to be in all the fulness of His grace in the Person and Work of Christ. The arrangement went like this; once a year, on the great Day of Atonement, the High Priest of Israel was permitted to enter the Holiest of Holies, where the Ark of the Covenant stood, and there represent the nation before God. The entrance could only be effected in one way: when the High Priest brought some of the blood of the sacrifice made for sin, and with the blood sprinkle the “ground” immediately in front of the Mercy Seat, and the Mercy Seat itself, seven times. Only as that was performed in detail did the meeting and the communing take place, with all the benefits to the people which flowed from it. It is a pure gospel picture to draw our eyes to Christ the Saviour.

In Romans chapter 3, in verse 24, the apostle Paul speaks about our being “justified freely” by God’s grace, “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” “Whom”, he says, “God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood ...” The word, “propitiation”, or propitiatory, is the self-same word used in connection with the old Mercy Seat of the Tabernacle, (c/f Hebrews chapter 9 verse 5a). There is only one way for sinners to meet with God, and it is through our Lord Jesus Christ; that One, whom Paul says, God has “set for to be a **mercy seat**

through faith in his blood”. How did the old nation of Israel ever find the measure of acceptance before God required in their day? It was through this Mercy Seat which God had provided for them, and “set forth” for them in all the intricate details and instructions surrounding it. It was never through their righteousness they could meet with God; it was by another means altogether. It was by their blood-stained Mercy Seat which God alone had devised and decreed. In that way alone they had right of access to God, and the enjoyment of all the attendant blessings and mercies flowing out from it. The very ground on which the High Priest stood before the Mercy Seat had to be blood-sprinkled; this is “the grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God,” (Romans chapter 5 verse 2).

Mercy Seat provides a covering from judgment

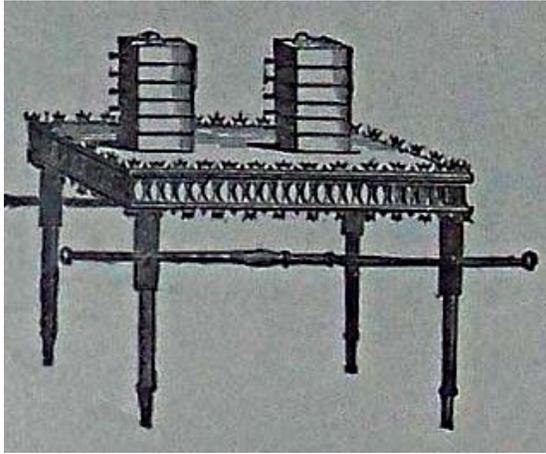
The actual Old Testament expression used in connection with the Mercy Seat in the tabernacle is the Hebrew word, *kapphar*. It simply means “to cover”. The first use of the word in the Bible is full of significance, and the significance is never lost until it finds its fulfilment in Christ. When God told Noah to build an Ark to save him out of the judgment of the flood, He simply told him to “cover it with pitch”. Literally, the Lord simply said “cover it with cover” ... Cover it with kapphar. The “covering” that God decreed, of course, was going to bring Noah safely through the flood of judgment. In the same way, the Mercy Seat in the Tabernacle was “kapphar”; it provided the covering from judgment that old Israel needed. And in the same way – but in all fulness – Christ is our covering from the “wrath to come”. In the language of the New Testament, but with the same meaning, He is our “propitiation”; our Mercy Seat. Propitiate means to placate; to make satisfaction; to appease. Christ, through the shedding of His blood for sin, has effected all that for us.

Mercy Seat a reminder that God is a “just God”

One other significant feature of the Mercy Seat may be found in the two cherubim, which rose up out of the piece of gold, which constituted the

lid. The first mention of cherubim in the Bible is in connection with the “fall” of our first parents, and their debarring from the presence of the Lord in the Garden of Eden, (Genesis chapter 3 verse 24). They, therefore, are representative of the justice, righteousness, and holiness of the God with whom we have to do. The fact of them being incorporated in the Mercy Seat may well remind our hearts that God is a “just God”, as well as a “Saviour” to us. His “mercy” is not dispensed at the cost of His “righteous character”. In Romans chapter 3 again, the Lord’s apostle refers to Christ as the One whom “God set forth to be a propitiation ... *to declare His righteousness* for the remission of sins that are past”, etc. “To declare his righteousness.” Just as the old Mercy Seat, then, was a marvellous display of God’s “mercy” to Israel, it was, at the same time (in the cherubim) a sober reminder of God’s righteousness and justness. Such a combination is of the very essence of the Cross to us. The hymn-writer rightly calls it, “the trysting place”, where “heaven’s love and heaven’s justice meet”. The blood-stained Mercy Seat is a precious prophetic picture; the reality of the Cross is even more precious to them who believe.

Christ in the Tabernacle



Chapter 4 "The Table of Shewbread"

Three individual pieces of furniture sat within the Holy Place of the Tabernacle in the wilderness: the golden lamp standard, the altar of incense, and the table of shewbread.

Each of the three pieces is representative of Christ; none more so than the latter. The *table* on which the shewbread sat was constructed of the same blend of materials as the Ark of the Covenant; that is, it was made of the "incorruptible" acacia wood, but covered over entirely with fine beaten gold, with a crown of pure gold running around the edges. In this general make-up, then, it stood as a symbol of the incorruptible manhood and the undeniable Godhood that would be present in the Saviour when He came into the world to save sinners.

The *shewbread* itself consisted of twelve loaves of bread, prepared in the way God described, and renewed every Sabbath Day, when the priests of Israel would eat the "old" loaves in the presence of God in the Holy place, and replace them with the new. God decreed that the shew bread should sit on the table "always" before Him, and with regards to the whole arrangement, there are gospel lessons in abundance.

Shewbread - Ever in the presence of God

First of all, the fact of the shewbread ever being in the presence of God. The literal reading for shewbread is, "the bread of faces," or the "bread of the presence". What was being conveyed to the old Israel was the fact of their good, and their sustenance, and their provision being in the hands

of their God. **Bread** is the very staff of life; the essence of life; and there, in the very presence of God Himself was the token of their life in God's hands, all the days of their wanderings in the wilderness, and beyond.

It all serves as a very precious and practical pointer to all that Christ is for us. We may remember what He said of Himself, "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Christ is the total and all-sufficient sustenance for the life of all His people for as long as they are in this world. Christ is the bread of life; and there is no more precious description of Him in the gospel for us than that. But, He did not only say He was "the bread," He also said He was the bread "that came down from heaven." "I am the bread that came down from heaven;" or, if we like – "I am the bread that came down from the presence of God." Our Lord, of course, was ever in the presence of God; ever at His right hand; before God's face continually. He came down from the presence of God, *as* the bread from heaven, for the salvation of His people; and once having accomplished their salvation He returned to the presence of God, and there He is now, before God's face for us forever.

Our Lord Jesus Christ *as bread* – in almost any application of such a gospel figure to our souls, is clearly read and understood; it is when we see Him as the *shewbread* of the Tabernacle – the bread of the presence – that we see Him clearest and dearest of all. Old Israel was assured of God's sustaining hand, and providing hand, by the symbol of life laid out on the table before His face. The new Israel of God has all the fulness and reality of the picture in Christ the Saviour. One day they will be in the presence of God with Him; in the meantime, they will never lack, because Christ is now in the presence of God on their behalf.

The psalmist David gives lovely expression to that in his famed 23rd psalm. His conclusion is that he will "dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Heaven is the ultimate end, the completion and terminus of all his earthly wanderings; "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." In the meantime, however, he sees his provision and sustenance in the

hands of the same Saviour with whom he knows he will one day dwell forever; “thou preparest a table before me,” he says (even) “in the presence of mine enemies”. David, in an alien world, looks forward to sitting down in the presence of God for ever; but until such a time, God still spreads the table of sustenance and provision for him here below.

We may read into that all the fulness of Christ for us, and never doubt the Lord’s sustaining grace for our souls. It was the sin of Israel when they said, “Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?” The provision of the table of shewbread should have silenced all such questioning for ever; the provision of Christ for us should dispel all doubts that would arise in our hearts and minds.

The Table - Ever in the presence of God

Another aspect of the table of shewbread which very readily points us to the gospel grace received in Christ, lies in the *table* itself, as well as the *bread* on the table. In the word of God if a table epitomises anything, it epitomises communion, and fellowship and one-ness on the part of those who are present at the table.

One of the great gospel “types” of the word of God is the young man Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan. When David extends his kindness to him, on account of the “covenant” made between Jonathan and himself, that kindness rises to its heights in David’s statement that Mephibosheth would eat bread at his table continually. He was to be as one of the king’s children, and therefore, enjoy the closest relationship possible with the king. So it is in the gospel for us, on account of the covenant of God’s grace towards us. In the Book of the Revelation, when the risen Christ has spoken to all seven churches, He extends a gracious invitation; “Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” Very simply – I will sit down at table with him, and he with Me.

Arrangement of the table

The arrangement of the table of showbread in the Holy Place is not only a pointer to our communion with Christ in a general way, but also in the particular, as well; that is, in the communion of the Lord's Table. In the old arrangement, those who were the priests in Israel entered the Holy Place every Sabbath day to renew the shewbread, as the Law directed; but they also partook of the previous week's bread. Every week, on the Sabbath day, the priests of Israel could meet in the presence of God and eat of the "bread of the presence." The whole affair so readily sharpens into focus in the gospel arrangement of the table of the Lord. All the Lord's people are priests unto their God, and week-by-week they meet in communion at the table He has granted to partake, by faith, of the body and blood of the Lord. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

Twelve loaves on the table

And finally, it was also the directive of God that there should be "twelve loaves" laid out on the table of shewbread. By this was indicated the fact of all twelve tribes of Israel being represented in the presence of God. In the instructions given, each loaf of bread was identical in weight and size. The tribes of Israel themselves were not equal; neither in size, nor power, nor significance for that matter. But before God, all had equal representation, and each stood continually before God's face.

Christ is in all the scriptures, and He is most-assuredly in the Table of Shewbread in the Tabernacle of old.

Christ in the Tabernacle

Chapter 5

“The Golden Lampstand”

Immediately facing the Table of Shewbread in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle stood the Golden Lampstand, or the Golden Candlestick. Like all the pieces of the Tabernacle, it was constructed in accordance with God’s directives, and it not only served God’s purpose towards the nation of Israel in the wilderness, but also pointed forward, prophetically, to our Lord Jesus Christ. Its purpose, of course, was to shed light within the dim interior of the Holy Place, so that the priests could carry out their duties, and from the description of the lampstand given to us, in Exodus chapter 25, it must have been an impressive piece.

Description



It is sometimes referred to as the “Seven branched candlestick”. One main shaft ran from the base, forming the trunk of the candlestick, and out of the trunk stemmed six other branches, three on each side, making seven stems in all. At the end of each branch was a container which held the oil and the wick, and when the whole thing was lit it made an impressive sight. It was probably the most ornate of all the Tabernacle’s furnishings; not only was it made of pure beaten gold, but the gold was formed into a whole series of ornamental buds and flowers of the almond tree. The Tabernacle had no windows, and this was its source of light.

The Light of the World

Such purpose and such description immediately refers our thoughts to Christ and the salvation He accomplished for His people. On numerous

occasions He referred to Himself under the terms of giving light. “I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness ...” “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” He has left His church in the world under the same figure – “Ye are the light of the world;” and heaven is spoken as having no need of a candle, etc, because “the Lamb is the light thereof.” As He is the “true” bread, so He is the true light.

The seven-branched candlestick not only points to Christ as the “light of the world”, etc., in a general sense, but in two very important particulars. First of all in relation to His sufferings that He would undertake for His people, and secondly, in relation to the Holy Spirit, through Whom He would undertake those sufferings, and all things, for the souls of men and women.

The “Light of the World” and suffering

In the instructions given to Moses in connection with the golden lampstand, he was told, not only that it was to be made of gold, but it was to be “of beaten work”. Old Israel’s “light-bearer” was provided through all the process of beating, and pressing, and hammering, and striking. Only when those processes were completed was Israel’s light provided. Our Lord was to come into the world to “give light to them that sit in darkness”, and so on; but, the light, like the bread, was to be dearly purchased for us. We are never to forget that. Everything Christ ever said *prior* to His cross, was always said in relation to His cross. It was prior to the cross He uttered His famous description of Himself as the “light of the world”, etc., but none of that was *apart from* the cross. He had not come to give some kind of light, merely through His teaching, or His ministry to men and women. He had come to “bring life and immortality to light through the gospel”, and that gospel centred on the cross, and His sufferings and death on the cross. To give the light of God’s salvation to the world involved the cross, and necessitated all the gruelling process of the cross. The Tabernacle was the “pattern of things in the heavens”; a temporal picture of the eternal mind and purpose of God. When Israel’s source of light in the “house of God” in the

wilderness was provided in gold of “beaten work” it was, surely, the cross of our Saviour which was in prospect.

The “Light of the World” and the Holy Spirit

The other particular of the Lampstandard as a prophetic pointer to Christ is the relationship of the Holy Spirit to all His sufferings and work in salvation.

In order to give light, the lampstandard, of course, had to be “fuelled.” In common with every other directive given from God, the fuel for the lampstandard was outwith the ordinary. It was designated “holy oil”, and as it was filled into the “cups” at the end of the seven branches, and lit, so the whole purpose and function of the lampstandard came into operation, as the light shone forth in the darkness. In the Word of God, the Holy oil is a definite symbol of the Holy Spirit, and are to be reminded that it was through the “power of the Spirit” that Christ did all things necessary to bring us to God. Holy oil fuelled the lamp of beaten gold, and the Holy Spirit “fuelled” the light of the world for every accomplishment in our soul’s salvation.

“The Light” highlights the work of God

It is not necessary to point out, of course, this fact in no way takes away from what Christ did, or was, for us in this world; rather, it highlights the work of God. With regards to His Godhood, our Lord Jesus is one – in being, in purpose, in power, in glory – with the Father and the Spirit; co-equal, co-existent, co-eternal with both. With regards to His Man-hood, however, when He came into the world as the light of the world, He was to be upheld, and supplied, by the power of the Spirit. That is why we have the visible descent of the Spirit at Christ’s baptism, once He had “publicly” put His hand to the work of our salvation. The voice of the Father comes from heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” “Immediately”, it says, “the spirit took him into the wilderness”, where He entered the fray with the devil; and immediately after that again, we are told how He returned to Nazareth, “in the power

of the Spirit”, and how He stood up on the Sabbath in the synagogue there, and pronounced, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.” The work of salvation is Trinitarian; “Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit,” etc. We look to Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

“The Light” two noteworthy features

Two features worth noting is the fact that there are no dimensions given for the lampstand, and also, you could only see the lampstand by the light of the lamps!

Of all the pieces of the tabernacle the lampstand alone has no specifications regarding size; it has no measurements. The Table, the Ark, the Mercy seat, etc., have very detailed measurements. Not so with the lampstand. Is there a significance in this in what John the Baptist says about Christ, that the Spirit was given to him “without measure”?

Also, in verse 37 of Exodus 25, it is clearly indicated that it was only as the oil flamed up in the cups of the candlestick that the whole candlestick was seen in all its glory and splendour. Never forget, the great office and work of the Spirit is to “show us that Lovely Man, who walks the courts of bliss”. “In that purest light of Thine, we clearly light shall see,” Psalm 6 verse 9.)



Buds and flowers of the almond tree

Christ in the Tabernacle

Chapter 6

“The Curtains and Coverings”

As already stated, the Tabernacle in which God met with Israel in the wilderness was really a *tent*, and as such, then, it consisted of a skeleton, or framework, overspread with a series of curtains and coverings. Like everything else in the Tabernacle these were to be in accordance with God’s instructions, and like everything else, they pointed to some aspect of the person and work of Christ as our Saviour.

The Curtains

The Curtains were of two kinds; what might be called the inner curtains and the outer curtains. The inner curtains were the more elaborate of the

CHAPTER 26
MOREOVER thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with chër-û-bîms of cunning work shalt thou make them.
2 The length of one curtain shall be eight and twenty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: and every one of the curtains shall have one measure.
3 The five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and other five curtains shall be coupled one to another.

two, and their description is given in Exodus chapter 26. They were made of “fine twined linen”, and were to be in “blue”, “purple” and “scarlet”. They were heavily embroidered, of the most “cunning needlework”, depicting those heavenly beings called cherubim; so what they really were, were tapestries of the highest quality. There were ten of these curtains altogether; five hanging down

one side of the tabernacle’s frame, five down the other on “loops”, and they were joined together by a collection of fifty golden clasps, or “tatches”.

Over the inner curtains was the second set, made from goats’ hair spun into a fine woollen material; and over those again were the outward coverings of the “tent of God”. The outward coverings were also two-fold; one set was “rams’ skins dyed red”, and the other was “badger’s

skins” – or possibly this should read, “seal’s skins”. Whatever, the whole overall picture we are given of the tabernacle in its curtains and coverings is that of an interior of glorious appearance, with an outward that could easily have gone unnoticed among a thousand tents in its day. But this is how the Lord had decreed it and designed it.

Prophetically

As a pointer to our Lord Jesus Christ – the Tabernacle in its curtains and coverings portrays the whole nature of Christ when He was in this world perfectly. John’s famous statement, that “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,” really says it all. Christ had come to “tabernacle” with men as the great new means whereby God would meet with men and be their God.

But what God saw in Christ His Son, and the natural eye of man saw, was in complete and total contrast from beginning to end. The outstanding feature of the tabernacle in its curtains and coverings is the feature of contrast; the contrast between the outward and the inward. Inside the tabernacle was to be seen the glorious coverings, with the furniture, and the light that never went out; but all of that was seen by God, or the priests of God who were given the calling to minister in the things of the tabernacle. On the outside, all that men and women in general saw were the non-descript coverings of the seal skins, or badger skins. Any wandering band of desert travellers would simply have seen yet another tent, as far as the tabernacle appearance was concerned. It was to the eye of God, and the priests of God, that the tabernacle was “all glorious within”. No “parable” speaks louder of Christ – as seen by the eye of the natural heart, on the one hand, and the eye of God and His people, on the other.

From the mere outward appearance

From the mere outward appearance, the Bible tells us again and again how Christ was viewed as He moved amongst men. “Is not this the

carpenter's son", they said; "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph and Mary"? "Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil"; "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us"? "By what authority doest thou these things"? Wherever we look on the gospel page we find that the natural heart and, therefore, the natural eye, never saw anything in Christ but an outward appearance that conveyed nothing. It was exactly as Isaiah had spoken, by the Holy Spirit, "and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him". As John also says, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not". That is the universal testimony summed-up; "the world knew him not". Not for one minute did any of those who gazed on Christ with the natural eye only ever discern or rightly appreciate what He was or who He was. Only God, or the people of God, had that knowledge of what was contained within "the man of Nazareth". To the eye of man, Jesus of Nazareth was only a man. Undoubtedly, there were some "features" that gave a ring of uniqueness to Him in the eyes of some; (just as the old tabernacle in the wilderness had some unique features about it, even among the tents of its day) but who, and what, He *really* was, never entered the heart of man. That was only seen by God, and by those to whom God had given "eyes to see, and hearts to understand aright".

John's statement

John's statement about Christ **tabernacling** among men says it perfectly: "we beheld his glory", he says, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, *full of grace and truth*". What John, and the others saw in Christ, pre-eminently, was **inward**; it was the glory of God's grace and truth. That doesn't mean they didn't appreciate and love His outward appearance when He was with them, or miss it when He was taken from them; but the appreciation of the outward came after the realisation of what the inward really consisted of.

To any devout Hebrew Priest, who ministered about the things of the tabernacle, its outward appearance meant a great deal, and conveyed a great deal, on account of what he knew about the glories of God within.

And when John rejoices to remember how God set up His tabernacle among men in Jesus of Nazareth that, in itself, is the wisdom of God. But especially this – in Jesus they saw the glory of God’s grace and truth to their souls for ever. It is spiritual eyesight that causes a person to see who Jesus really is. Old blind Bartimaeus is a wonderful illustration of that. Before Bartimaeus’s physical eyes were ever opened in the miracle Christ performed on him, his spiritual eyes were unclouded. Before Jesus ever restored his natural eyesight, his spiritual eyes detected who it was passing the walls of Jericho that day – “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me”. It is the spiritual eye which sees beyond the outward form, as God grants such eyes to those who are made to be “priests unto their God”.

The Priests

The Priests knew what the inside of the tabernacle was like as designed and decreed by God. They were given to see the glorious curtains as well as the outward coverings. In the terms of the gospel to our hearts, that, too, is prophetic of what would be. Old Israel *had* a priesthood, and to the priesthood was granted the right to see; now Israel, the church of God, *is* a priesthood, and to every believer is granted the sight which John saw – “We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”. The old priests saw the glory *in shadow*; the new is given to see it *in substance*, through faith in the One who gave Himself for the Church.

Christ in the Tabernacle

Chapter 7

"The Veil"

Of all the "curtains and coverings" of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, none held a more significant place than the "veil" which divided off the Holy Place from the Holiest of Holies. In the Holy Place of the Tabernacle stood the Table of Shewbread, the Golden lampstand, and the Altar of Incense; but in the Holiest of all there was nothing but the Ark of the Covenant complete with its Mercy Seat. Between the two apartments, then, hung the "veil" which God directed Moses to make according to His commandment.

The veil was similar in appearance to the other interior curtains mentioned in chapter 6; it was made of "fine twined linen", and heavenly embroidered with cherubim figures in blue, and purple, and scarlet.

THE GREAT ESSENTIAL MESSAGE

God separate from Israel

The great essential message spelled out by the veil was that God was separate from Israel, and that they were separated from Him. It wasn't a new message for Israel on their way from Egypt to Canaan. At the foot of Mount Sinai, when God had given the Law, He commanded barrier fences to be place around the skirts of the mountain, "lest the people should come near unto me". Israel, like all mankind, had to appreciate that there was no right of access, or right of entrance into God's holy presence. In the Tabernacle arrangement, where God has decreed a more permanent presence amongst the people, there is also a more permanent reminder that they are shut out from that presence. The veil stood for

apartness; God's apartness in the Holiest of Holies where His presence dwelt above the Mercy Seat. It stood for separation – no access – no entrance into the presence of the Almighty. In God's own words, - "the veil shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy". The "most holy" was the place of the immediate presence of God for Israel; but stretched out over the "entrance" to it was the veil of separation which divided it off from everything else.

Access available into God's presence.

Although the great essential message of the veil was one of separation, and no access, at the same time it also spoke of an access available into God's presence. As someone has rightly said, "God hung a veil, he did not build a wall," and that which spoke of no entrance was, in itself, an entrance, when God's means of entrance were complied with and followed.

Entering in.

The "entering in" took place on the Day of Atonement in Israel's religion. It was on that one day that the High Priest in Israel took the blood of the sacrifice offered for sin, and with the blood, entered into the Holy Place in order to approach the Holies of Holies. With the basin of blood in his hand, and by virtue of the blood, he then drew aside the veil and entered the thick darkness which enveloped the Holiest of Holies. With the blood he sprinkled the ground on which he stood, and also the Mercy Seat, and in that way, God met with him, and communed with the people through him. The veil which unmistakably spelled out the apartness of a holy God from a sinful race, at the same time was made to be the one and only entrance to a Holy God, in a way which God Himself had appointed and ordained. Such was God's arrangement of old; and like all of the old arrangement, it finds its perfections and fulness in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Entering in - relating to Christ.
(Hebrews chapter 10)

One of the great passages of scripture relating to Christ under the terms of the old Tabernacle veil is in Hebrews chapter 10. The apostle Paul, of course, has been showing the Hebrew believers how the old Tabernacle in the wilderness was always pointing to Christ, and so he draws in a conclusion: - “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us, through the veil, **that is to say, His flesh** ... let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith”, and so on. A **new and living way – through the veil** – that is to say **His flesh**. The Holy Spirit of God, in scripture, then, likens our Lord Jesus in His flesh – or the days of His flesh – to the veil of the Tabernacle of old. And it is a humbling and remarkable exercise to consider just how Christ did occupy the prophetic role of the Tabernacle veil during his time on earth, in both respects of proclaiming separation from God, and providing access to God.

We are not to be over startled by the thought of Christ acting like a “barrier” between men and God. If the life of Jesus in the flesh proclaimed one thing, it proclaimed just how far away, and separated, men and women were from the Holy God with whom they had to do. The immediate lesson of the earthly Christ, in all His spotless and sinless holiness, is our **unholiness**. “If I had not come and spoken unto you”, said Christ on one occasion, “you would have had no sin, (no knowledge of sin), but now, you have no longer any cloak for sin.” The sinless life of Christ exposes man’s sinfulness. In the words of BB Warfield, Christ is “the measure of men”. “By the straight is judged both the straight and the crooked.” Christ is like a plumb line let down from heaven, and alongside of His perfect life men and women may see that bent of their nature that spells exclusion from the presence of their God. The life of Christ isn’t meant to serve as an **example** to the natural man, how to come near to God, but as an **evidence** how far away from God he is. Christ as a the walking embodiment of God’s perfect Law shows us how

completely we have “come short” of the standard of God. When the Spirit of God “convinces” the sinner, one of the things He convinces of is the fact that only Christ is “righteous”, because only Christ can “go to the Father”. He alone has free access on account of His holy nature; a holy nature which hangs before our face to show us that we have no such access like that before God.

The Full Picture

Entrance as well as exclusion.

The full picture of the tabernacle veil, however, is entrance as well as exclusion. There was a way to God – through the veil, as it was lifted aside, and by blood. So, says the apostle to the Hebrews, “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest **by the blood of Jesus ... through the veil**, that is to say, His flesh.” And there is no more vivid picture of the parting of the veil into God’s presence than the rending of the body of Christ on the cross, when He poured out His blood in atonement for His people’s sin. The evangelist Matthew says it all – “**Jesus**, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.” It was rent “in the midst” – in the middle – says Luke. That is, at the place where the Ark and the Mercy Seat sat in the old Tabernacle arrangement. It was rent “from the top to the bottom”, for it was no earthly hand that was providing the “new and living way” into God’s presence. And being rent “from the top to the bottom”, it was not **partly** rent, of course; nor was there any interval between the sacrifice being made, and the veil being rent. As soon as He died and shed His blood, God opened the way to Himself for ever. What Christ had “cried” was, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.” In that strange arrangement of our redemption it was Christ’s **separation** that brought us near.

Christ in the Tabernacle

Chapter 8

“The Brazen Altar”

The Brazen Altar of the Tabernacle was, very simply, the place where Israel made their sacrifices to God, and their offerings to God; and, in this respect, it was an unmistakable pointer to the Cross of Christ. It



was, by far, the largest of all the Tabernacle furniture, measuring something like 7½ x 7½ feet square, and standing some 4½ feet high. It was, therefore, a great square “chest” – made, once again, of “shittim wood”, and completely encased in brass, to withstand the tremendous heat of the fires that “consumed” the sacrifices burnt on it. It had four “horns” on its four corners and like some of the other pieces, had a series of “rings” through which the “carrying

poles” were slipped for transportation through the wilderness. Other features were the “pans to receive the ashes”, Exodus 27 verse 3, and “shovels” and “fire pans”, etc. It was also known as the “altar of burnt offering”.

Activity at the altar of burnt offering.

The activity at the altar of burnt offering was continuous. Any one out of the children of Israel could bring a burnt offering to the altar – from the least to the greatest – so long as the person came in the appointed way, with the appropriate sacrifice. The sacrifice was a “kid of the goats”, or a “lamb for a sin offering”, and so forth. The person presenting the offering was to lay his hands on the head of the sacrifice, which the priest on duty then slew. When the animal was slain, the priest then collected the blood in the basin, walked round the altar and smeared some of the blood on each of the four horns of the altar. The

remainder of the blood was then poured out at the foot of the altar, and the body of the sacrificed animal “burnt with fire” on the altar itself. On the Day of Atonement, of course, there were much more elaborate functions carried out; and in addition to the individual and personal offerings made each day there was the “daily sacrifice” for all the people. This consisted of the “morning sacrifice”, which began the day for Israel, and the “evening sacrifice” – made at the close of the day, so that the “smoke” of the sacrifice ascended to heaven throughout the night while Israel slept.

Such was the Brazen Altar that God takes in hand to command Moses to make as part of the Tabernacle in the wilderness.

The Lessons of the Brazen Altar

The lessons of the Brazen Altar are simply the lessons of the Cross of Christ in “picture” form. Above all things, what was to ever impress the children of Israel was the fact of there being only one way to approach God – through the shedding of the blood of what had been offered in sacrifice, at God’s command. It was a lesson as old as the fall itself, and embedded in the whole issue of Cain and Able. Cain’s offering was no less expensive than Abel’s; Abel’s offering had no greater “market value” than Cain’s. But, obviously, it had that which God required the shedding of blood – and which He would *always* require until Christ would come to make “one offering for sin, for ever”. Israel’s Brazen Altar in the tabernacle, of course, was not the “fulfilment” of Abel’s altar, but simply another “signpost” to the fulfilment of every true altar ever set up, or every true sacrifice ever made: the Cross of Christ. Until the Cross of Christ, thousands upon thousands of sacrifices would be made, and rivers upon rivers of blood shed. Once Christ poured out His blood on the cross, however, the terminus was reached. It is a startling fact that once the given time-span for Israel ran out with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, (a “generation” after the Cross), there were never again any offerings of blood. Christ had “appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself”, and all other blood dried up, and all other sacrifices ceased.

The Spectacle of blood shedding

The spectacle of blood shedding in such a constant manner is an awesome thought; all of those “innocent” victims; why should they have to die in that manner, and suffer in such a way?

The reason for it all was to strike home to hearts and minds the high price that had to be paid for sin; the high cost of making them acceptable to God. Not the high price of “market value”, of course; hence the case of Cain and Abel; but the high price of *life for life!* Indeed, it was the high price of “innocent” life for “guilty” life. Insofar as anything in this sinful world could be classified as “innocent”, the victims for the altar, etc, were innocent. So the specifications – “A lamb of the first year, without spot and blemish”, etc. The keynote was, innocent victim bearing the shame and sin of the guilty party, who had now come with that sacrifice which God had prescribed and commanded, and that is the very essence of the Cross, except in the cross, of course, God Himself makes the provision of the sacrifice which we are to identify with in salvation.

Isaac Watts beautifully draws the gospel procedure out of the old procedure of the brazen altar arrangement – when the Israelite would come with his offering, and lay his hand on its innocent head, confessing his sin, and knowing by faith his sin transferred to the “victim led”.

“My faith would lay her hand,
On that dear head of Thine;
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin.”

Once that procedure has been entered upon, then the “assurance of faith” is the blessing of the soul for ever.

“My faith looks back to see
The burden Thou didst bear,

While hanging on th' accursed tree,
And knows her guilt was there."

It is innocent victim, and penitent sinner. In what was offered in the "burnt offerings for sin", there was no "gift" involved – as from man to God; quite the opposite. There were many arrangements for the offering of "gifts" to God in Israel's religion, but the provision of a means for forgiving sin did not centre in what the person was giving to God, but in what God was giving for the person. God was not accepting a gift provided by man, but a substitute prescribed by Himself. No lesson of the Cross needs to be more clearly appreciated: -

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to the Cross I cling."

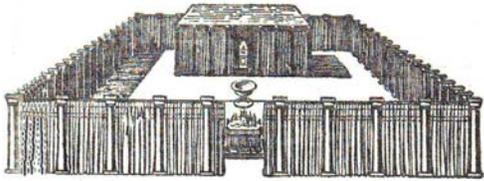
Various lessons in the brazen altar.

There are various lessons in the brazen altar. The presence of "fire" in relation to "brass" must always indicate the judgment of God in scripture. On the cross Christ, indeed, bore the fiery indignation for us. How much more precious to think, then, that with our "hand on His head", we are free from the guilt *and* the condemnation of sin for ever. May the sight of the Cross make us ever more free from sin's power and influence also.

Christ in the Tabernacle

Chapter 9

"The Courtyard and Laver"



The Courtyard and Laver. Within the precincts of the outer courtyard of the tabernacle in the wilderness, two pieces of the tabernacle's furnishings stood: the Brazen Altar, just at the entering in of the courtyard, and the Brazen Laver, (or Wash-basin), which stood midway between the Altar and the "tent" of the tabernacle itself. Each of the tabernacle pieces, of course, served some particular function in the religious system which God had revealed to that nation, and they also give us certain spiritual pointers and pictures concerning the salvation we have in Christ our Lord. This is true with regards to the Courtyard itself, as well as with the two pieces which took their places in it.

The Outer Courtyard

The outer courtyard was constructed with a series of upright pillars, which slotted into a whole series of sockets spread out at intervals on the ground in the Sinai desert. On this skeleton, or framework, the "walls" of the courtyard were then hung – made out of "fine twined linen". A ready comparison to our own minds would be the kind of wind-break that people use on a beach, or for a picnic. It was a massive construction of its type, of course, measuring something like 150 feet or more in length, by about 60 or 75 feet in width. The walls reached to a height of about 7 or 8 feet, so that it was a great linen enclosure, with one entrance, and the tent of the tabernacle itself set at one end of it, with those precious pieces of furniture inside the tent.

Christ the fulness of the courtyard.

One of the great truths signified in the court of Israel's Tabernacle is the peoples communion with the Lord their God. Even though it was not as close or full as the communion which the priests of Israel enjoyed within the tent of the tabernacle, for all that, it was an entrance into the presence of God which brought a blessing to all who sought it with a true heart. The over-all thought is expressed in the likes of the 65th psalm:

“Bless'd is the man who thou dost chuse,
and mak'st approach to thee;
That he *within thy courts*, O Lord,
May still a dweller be.”

Or, in the 100th:

“O enter then his gates with praise,
approach with joy his courts unto.”

Every Israelite of old who stepped within the linen walls of the tabernacle courtyard with faith realised and believed that he was entering into a place of communion and fellowship with the Lord his God. God was “in the midst” of the people, and in coming into the courts of God's house, he was coming near to that place where God especially dwelt.

The tabernacle courtyard, then, points us to Christ. Wherever you find that concept in the Word of God of men and women being found in those positions that bring them near to God, those positions are always and ever pointing us to that one, final, position of being found “in Christ”. One of the greatest of New Testament phrases is, “in Christ”, or “in him”, because it expresses, like nothing else, our complete and total communion with God for ever. It was that for which the apostle Paul was willing to count all other things but loss; “that I may be found *in Him*, not having mine own righteousness”, etc. To be found “in Christ” is to be found with God, and where God is forever. The old Israelite in the courtyard is only a faint shadow of that, but it is a precious shadow nevertheless.

Christ is not only the fullness of the courtyard, but the fullness of the *way* into the courtyard. When God gave his instructions to Moses, he specified *one way only* into the court and beyond; “And for the gate of the courtyard, there shall be a hanging of twenty cubits of blue and purple ...” For the “gate”. Not the gates, but the gate. There was but one way, one door, one entrance into the place where the Israelites found fellowship with God. And again, a constant theme of our gospel in Christ our Lord. “I am the door of the sheep ...” “I am the door by me, if any man enter in, he shall be save.” Christ does not speak of Himself as “a” door – as though there are several; but as “*The*” door, because there is only one. In the same way, He speaks of himself as “*The* way” “*The* truth”, “*The* life”. Christ as the sole and unique way to God, and fellowship with God, stands well portrayed in the one, single, exclusive door into Israel’s old courtyard where the blessing of the communion was found.

Within the Courtyard stood the Brazen Laver

Within this courtyard, then, also stood the brazen laver, or the brass wash-stand. As already stated, it stood mid-way between the Brazen altar and the entrance into the tent of the tabernacle, and its purpose was simply for the “washing” of the priests before they made their entrance to the tent, to perform their duties there. The priests had been engaged in the bloody work of offering the many sacrifices each day on the behalf of the people at the altar. When it came the time to go into the tent to “burn incense”, or “light the lamp”, etc, they must first go to the Laver and wash their hands and their feet, as God commanded. God’s word was clear – “Nothing that defileth shall enter in”, and so a place of cleansing and washing was a necessary part of the whole arrangement for the worship of His name and the work of his house.

The gospel application to our souls is not hard to see. Among other things, those who believe in Christ have been made a “kingdom of priests” unto God. We have the blessedness of offering spiritual sacrifices, and performing spiritual duties in God’s house. We probably

need little reminding of the fact that in the pursuit of our calling, we need a daily cleansing and washing of our “hands” and our “feet”. As God provided the means for that for the old priesthood, much more for the new. It is our on-going sanctification – by the Spirit, through the Word, in Christ. It is interesting to remember that every one brought into the old priesthood had a *once-for-all* washing – a bathing – at their consecration. Thereafter, the daily cleansing of hands and feet at the laver. It is not hard to apply the heart of Christ’s words to Peter in the upper room; “He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.” We are washed once and for ever in the blood of our Saviour, but the “laver” will be necessary for all our walk, work, and worship, until we enter his courts above.

Christ in the Tabernacle

Chapter 10

“The Altar of Incense”

In addition to the Brazen Altar which stood in the Courtyard of Israel’s Tabernacle there was also a smaller, golden Altar, located inside the tent itself – in the Holy Place. This was known as the Altar of Incense, and its purpose is summed up in its name, viz. for the burning of incense before God in the course of Israel’s religion. On the Left hand side, as you entered the tabernacle tent, there stood the golden Lampstand, and on the right hand side opposite stood the Table of Shewbread.



Directly in front, and against the Veil which separated the Holy Place from the Holiest of Holies, the Altar of Incense was set, and its place in Israel’s religion was most significant and most precious to that people.

Like various other pieces in the Tabernacle this Altar was made of Shittim wood and overlaid with pure, beaten gold; accordingly it was also known as the Golden Altar, to distinguish it from the Brass altar in the courtyard. It also had the same series of poles and rings as the other pieces to facilitate its transport as the Israelites moved on in their journeys. God’s word of instruction concerning the Altar was, “And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon”, Exodus 30:1. What this simply involved was Aaron, or one of the other priests on duty, taking a required amount of incense, already prepared, into the Holy place and sprinkling it on the “censer of fire” in the Altar, so that its smoke and fragrance rose up before the Lord. Incense was an elaborate preparation of various perfumes, etc., so that it was a “sweet smelling savour” which was being offered to God. The exercise was performed every morning and every evening, when the priests went in to see the Lamps of the Lampstand, and it was to be performed only with the incense which God would

prescribe and detail, in the closing verses of chapter thirty of Exodus. God told Moses that this was to be “a perpetual incense”, Exodus 30 verse 8, and what we may visualise is a constant wafting up to heaven – night and day – of the perfume prepared according to God’s prescription, and burnt on the Altar in the way God directed. Such was the Altar of Incense.

The thing that stood symbolized and signified.

The thing that stood most symbolized and signified in Israel’s Altar of Incense was the prayers, and the praise, and the worship of the nation as they stood in covenant relationship with their God in heaven above. The offering up of incense is one of the Bible’s favourite figures for symbolizing the prayers and praise of God’s people – Old Testament, or New. In the 141st psalm, the psalmist calls out, “**Lord**, I cry unto thee; make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee. Let my prayer be set forth before thee *as incense*, and the lifting up of my hands *as the evening sacrifice.*” And in the Book of the Revelation at the end of the Bible, we read about the “Vials full of odours, *which are the prayers of the saints.*” So when Aaron, and the others, entered into the Holy Place, morning and evening, to “burn incense” unto the Lord, it was God’s worship, God’s praise – the prayers of the Lord’s people – that were being borne up “perpetually” before him. That was what God had directed, and the people took advantage of the full enjoyment of it. For God’s people today there is an ever-abiding practical application in the old arrangement, and also, once again, that which points us up to Jesus Christ our Saviour.

On the practical side of things

On the practical side of things, the application stands clearly written. The principle needs to be borne in mind again that whereas *old Israel* had a priesthood, the *new* Israel of God, the church of Christ, **is** a priesthood. “We have been made a kingdom of priests unto God.” And just as the old Israelite priests had received their calling to burn incense

“continually”, and “perpetually”, so the believers in Christ are told to “pray without ceasing”, to “offer the praise of God continually”, and to be “praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the spirit”, and so on. Just as surely as the priests of old had their “daily course” set out before them, so the “priests” of the New Israel of God have their calling, and their vocation, and their privilege day by day.

It may be worth noting – and without pressing the application too far, that the burning of the incense by the priests stood directly connected with their duty concerning the “Lamps” of the Tabernacle. It was when they went in to attend to the lamps which gave light in the Tabernacle that they were also to see to the task of offering up the sweet-smelling incense on the Altar. The same David, who speaks about our prayers and praise to God as “incense”, speaks about God’s Word to us as a “lamp”. “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path”, Psalm 119.

There is no doubt that our worship **of** God, and our prayers and praise **to** God, must always stand connected with our duty in regard to God’s word to us. It is in the “light” of that lamp that a person really sees clearly to burn the incense of praise and prayer to God, *as God has directed*. “And Aaron shall burn sweet incense thereon every morning; when he dresses the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lights the lamps at evening, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord, throughout your generations.” Exodus 30 verses 7-8.

The Prophetic Symbolism of the Altar of Incense

The prophetic symbolism of the Altar of Incense relating to our Lord Jesus Christ is both sweet and stimulating to our hearts and souls. There are two aspects of it: - First, What we perform through Christ: Second, What He performs for us.

In relation to the first, it should be borne in mind that there was an inseparable connection between the Brazen Altar of sacrifice which stood in the courtyard of the Tabernacle, and the Golden Altar of Incense

which stood in the Holy Place. The connection was this: the fire which fuelled the golden Altar on which the incense was burned was only, and exclusively, brought from the Brazen Altar on which the sacrifices had been made. No other fire at all was ever permitted, and where such an attempt was made, God's judgement swiftly fell; C/F Leviticus chapter two. There was only *one fire* on which incense could be offered and burned; the same fire which consumed the sacrifices of the Brazen Altar.

For us, that connection is *total*. Any praise we offer to God, any prayer, any worship – may only be offered acceptably in the light of the one sacrifice for sins for ever which Christ has made on our behalf. Peter has it just right, in his first epistle, where he speaks about our privileged priesthood, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, *an holy priesthood*, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, *acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*.” There is no coming to the “altar” of the throne of grace for us, apart from the altar of the Cross of our great Sacrifice. We are, indeed, priests to our God – to pray, and praise, and worship; him every day that we live; but there is but one way to do that. There can be no altar of incense without the altar of sacrifice. “*By Him*” therefore let us offer the sacrifices of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks.” Hebrews chapter 13 verse 15.

Finally, the Altar of Incense, prophetically, not only serves to remind us that all that we perform we perform through Christ, but also, of what Christ performs for us. It is simply, yet profoundly, an illustration of the great gospel fact of Christ's never-ceasing intercession on our behalf. Israel's incense wafted up to God, day and night; it was “perpetual”, as God had directed. And the type is never greater than the reality. So we may constantly realise that constant aspect of our Lord's grace towards us – “He ever liveth to make intercession for us.” If you care to read the description of the incense, at the end of Exodus chapter 30, you will see it was to be “sweet”, “pure” and “most holy”. The description is impelling: as Paul tells the Ephesians, “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, *an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour*.”

Christ in the Tabernacle

Chapter 11

“The Priesthood”

In addition to all the words of instruction God gave Moses for the building and making of the furniture and furnishings of the Tabernacle, He also commanded him concerning the Tabernacle “personnel”. This was the “Priesthood”, of course, and in Exodus chapter 28 we begin to read about the appointment and adornment of those who were called to the Priest’s office – especially the one who was to be “High Priest” in the nation of Israel.

The first High Priest of the nation was Aaron, Moses’ brother, and the office continued until the coming of Christ, who was the fulfilment of all that was ever signified in that office of old. There is no more stupendous fact than the finalising of Israel’s priesthood following on from the days when Christ had died, risen, and ascended to the Father’s right hand. Just as the blood of sacrifice dried up in Israel for ever, after Christ, so the men who offered those sacrifices for the people likewise became redundant. He was the one sacrifice for sins for ever, and He was also the one eternal High Priest who made the sacrifice of Himself.

Israel’s Priesthood – Two main functions

Israel’s Priesthood had two main functions: offering all the prescribed sacrifices to God, and making intercession on behalf of the people. The Shorter Catechism rightly gathers up those functions under our recognition of Christ as **our** High Priest for evermore.

Question. “How doth Christ execute the office of a Priest?”

Answer. “Christ executes the office of a Priest, in his once offering up of Himself as a sacrifice to satisfy Divine justice and reconcile us to God, *and* in making continual intercession for us.”

Just as the High Priest of Israel, on the Day of Atonement, shed the blood of the sacrifice at the Brazen Altar, and then appeared in the presence of God for the people, so our Saviour “executes” all of that on our behalf. The sacrifice is complete; the intercession is continual, until all the ransomed church of God be saved, to sin no more.

For the full explanation of all these foreshadowed in Israel’s priesthood, the grand commentary is the Epistle to the Hebrews. Hebrews chapter 8 verse 1 forward, “Now, of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum; we have such an high priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens; a minister of the *sanctuary*, and of *the true tabernacle*, which the Lord pitched and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices ... who serve unto the *example and shadow* of heavenly things.” Undoubtedly, God drew pictures for us of all that Christ Jesus would do for His people, and be for His people, and none so vivid or precious than the priesthood of Israel.

According, we are reminded in Hebrew, that He is “such an High Priest” who “made one sacrifice of himself for ever;” that He is One, “able to be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; He has “entered into that within the veil, there to appear in the presence of God for us” – and being there, “He ever liveth to make intercession for us”. No wonder the Lord’s apostle exhorts his readers – “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, *consider* the apostle and *High Priest* of our profession, Christ Jesus.” No better object for the continual consideration of God’s people than the One who is both sacrifice and priest on our behalf; and is not only priest in once dying for us, but is also priest in ever living for us.

Two Important Points of Contrast.

Two important points of contrast are worth noting between the priests of old and all that Christ did, and does, on our behalf. For one thing, they had to offer those old sacrifices “continual” day after day, month after month, year after year. For another thing, before they ever made one of

those sacrifices for the people they had to, first of all, make a sacrifice for their own sins. The “types and shadows” of the Old Testament are glorious where the *similarities* to Christ are displayed; they are every bit as glorious in the dis-similarities as well. So, the apostle reminds us, Christ our Lord made “but *one* sacrifice for sins for ever”, and it was for “his people’s sins”, and never His own – for He had none.

As we cast our eye back into the old arrangement of the High Priest of Israel entering into the Holiest of Holies on the day of atonement – carrying the blood of the sacrifice and representing the nation before the Lord – we can grasp something of the impact of Paul’s words to the Hebrews, “For Christ is not entered into the holy places and made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us”. Hebrews chapter 9 verse 24. The theme of Hebrew is that Christ is more excellent, more perfect, superior to all things. The old priesthood was a gracious and glorious provision of God for His people, but it fades away and waxes old, “by reason of the glory that excelleth”. As in all other things, “many have done valiantly, but Christ has excelled them all”.

In relation to the Necessity

In relation the necessity of the priests having to make sin offerings for themselves as well as for the people, the *actual setting* in which the Priesthood was first inaugurated is not without gospel significance. The details were, of course, given to Moses while he was in Mount Sinai over a period of forty days. The holy stillness of those scenes is thrown into stark contrast by the realisation that at that the very time the children of Israel, in the valley below, had entered the most blatant act of idolatry and blasphemy. They had built the golden calf, and bowed down in worship of it.

If our eyes drift between what was taking place in the valley below, and what was being transacted for the people’s good in the mountain above, our hearts might well recall that it was “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”. The High Priest of our profession, Jesus Christ the

Righteous, was set for that office against the backdrop of a fallen, sinful world. We are to bear in mind that the Tabernacle, with all its equipment – including the priesthood – were “the *patterns* of things in the heavens”, Hebrews chapter 9 verse 23. God had already ordained what He would do in Christ our Saviour, and so He gave a “visual illustration” of all that until the fulness of the time appointed.

Bear in mind also, that Aaron himself – Israel’s first High Priest – was deep-dyed and totally implicated in the sin of the golden calf. Indeed, “every high priest” who had ever gone before must, of necessity, “first make atonement for his own sin, *but this man...!*” No wonder Aaron had to be clothed and covered in “Holy garments”. But for Christ it was the spotlessness of His own righteousness that was His Priestly clothing.

No wonder, Paul exhorts us all – “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus ... and having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith ...”

Christ in the Tabernacle

Chapter 12

The Priest's Garments



As the “office” of the High Priest in the Nation of Israel was a clear pointer to our Lord Jesus Christ, the “garments” which God required for that office are also significant. Whereas it is possible to be excessive in “spiritualizing”, it is also possible to rob ourselves of great significant facts of our salvation fore-shadowed in the things that went before. When God, therefore, told Moses to “make *holy garments* for Aaron thy brother ... *for glory and for beauty*”, the purpose and arrangement of those garments are to be seen to their full in Christ – just as the “office” itself is filled up in our Saviour. Without undue elaboration we may look at the main parts of that clothing and rejoice in “so great a salvation”.

The First two items God gave directions about were the Ephod and Breastplate. The directions are found in Exodus chapter 28, and both the items served essentially the same purpose, with variation.

Ephod

The Ephod was really a loose, sleeveless coat, worn over the other pieces of the High Priest's clothing. It was belted together at the waist by what was called the "curious girdle", and held together at the shoulders by two "clasps" made of gold and mounted with an onyx stone in each. On the two onyx stones were engraved the names of the twelve tribes of Israel – six on each, according to the order of age, beginning with Reuben, the first born.

Breastplate

The breastplate of judgment also incorporated the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, but in a different way. The *breastplate* itself was really like a "pouch", or a purse, that was fastened to the ephod by a series of chains, and hung down over the front of the ephod. It was square, and had four rows of semi-precious stones set into it – three stones to a row – making twelve stones in all. Each stone displayed the name of one of the twelve tribes and, again, the order of birth and age was to be followed.

The Purpose and Theme

The purpose and theme of the ephod and breastplate is that of "representation". As the High Priest entered the Holiest of Holies on the Day of Atonement, he was representing Israel before God. Not one tribe was missing; each name of each tribe was clearly engraved, both on the onyx stone of the clasp of the ephod, and also on the breastplate of judgment itself, as it hung down over the breast of Aaron, and those who followed in the office. *The fullness* of that is beyond question, and many a hymn-writer has grasped it fully:

"My name from the palms of His hands,
Eternity will not erase;
Engraved on his heart it remains,
In marks of indelible grace."

Our Lord Jesus Christ, as the great “apostle and high priest of our profession” ever lives to represent His “Israel” in the presence of God. “For Christ has not entered into the holy place made with hands which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God *for us.*” Just as not one “tribe” of Israel was missing in the old representation, so not one blood-bought soul is absent from the Saviour’s High Priestly “ephod” or “breastplate”, as He now stands adorned with all that the “figures of the true” ever pointed to. Not only may we see ourselves “represented” before God by our Saviour, but “doubly” so, according to God’s design and purpose.

The variation in representation

The variation in representation is not to be overlooked. In the ephod arrangement, the names of the tribes were on the shoulders of the High Priest; in the breastplate arrangement, they were hung over the heart. God Himself makes this clear in His instructions to Moses; “and Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his *two shoulders*”, Exodus chapter 28 verses 12; “And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment *upon his heart*”, verse 29. The representation, therefore, was two-fold, and not without significance.

In the Word of God, the “shoulder” is always the place of *power*, whereas the “heart” is always the place of *love*. We are to constantly remember that the One who appears in heaven for us is all-powerful, and all-loving in seeing to those issues of life that affect us here below. As the prophet foretold, “the government shall be upon his shoulder”. “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth”, says the Saviour. He has all *love* for us to see to our good, and all authority and power to effect it. “His love is as great as His power, and knows neither measure nor end.” We may well “consider him”, in His “ephod” and “breastplate of judgment” for us.

The Urim and Thummim

Of all the items in the High Priest's attire, none seems more curiously named than the Urim and Thummim. General agreement would point to those being two polished stones, one black and one white, and according to the directions in Exodus, they were to be placed inside the "purse" of the breastplate of judgment. In this position, they too were said to be "upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the Lord."

Purpose of the Urim and Thummim

The purpose of the Urim and Thummim in Israel was that of ***counsel and guidance***. It was one of the "diverse manners" by which God spoke to His people of old, and was used in confirming the choice of Joshua as Moses' successor, Numbers 27 verse 21. It was not a "chance" thing; as Solomon says, "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole judgment thereof is of the Lord". So, the Urim and Thummim were placed inside the breastplate of ***judgment***. This is not "judgment", of course, in the sense of condemnation, etc., but judgment in the sense of discernment and understanding the will of God. God had vested within the person and clothing of the High Priest a guaranteed means of guidance, and counsel, and directive – and all of that, upon the "heart" of the High Priest, as well.

Spiritual Application of the Urim and Thummim

The spiritual application of the Urim and Thummim to our lives is ever precious, and should give an undergirding to our walk in this world. We have a Great High Priest, endowed with all "judgment", and discernment and wisdom to guide us and lead us all our days. When we join the purpose of the Urim and Thummim to that of the Ephod and the Breastplate, a total impression of assurance is brought to our hearts. Our "names" are on the High Priest's ***shoulder*** – the place of power; they are also on the breastplate on His ***heart*** – the place of love. In the Urim and Thummim we have another dimension added to His care of us, namely, His ***all-wise counsel and guidance*** of as all our days. In Him we have

“All the glorious names, of wisdom, love, and power;” and how comforting that combination is. You or I may have **love** enough to want to perform something for some one; but it may not be within our **power** to do so. We might even have it within our **power**, but there is always the perplexity of the shortfall in **wisdom** that each and all of us suffer from. With Christ it is entirely different, in His **love** he always desires what is best for us, and in His **power** He performs what is best for us; because, in His **wisdom** He knows what is best for us.

“Too wise to be mistaken, He;
Too good to be unkind.”

The Mitre and the Robe of the Ephod

We can only mention two other pieces, which also come to their fulness in Christ for us: the Mitre, and the Robe of the Ephod.

The Mitre



The Mitre was, of course, the pieces of “head-gear” which the High Priest wore in his administrations before the Lord. It was not like the impression of a “mitre” we have today but more in the form of a turban, wrapped around the head. The most outstanding feature of the Mitre, however was the “golden plate” attached to the front of it by strings of blue lace. On the plate was engrave the words, “**Holiness to the Lord**”, and in the Mitre was spelled out, man’s greatest problem, and God’s great remedy.

The great problem – for Israel, for the nations, for any of us, is that God is **holy** and we are not. Because God is holy and we are not, then there is no way we can devise for approaching God and finding acceptance with Him. All the initiative in such an arrangement must lie with God. In the High Priest’s Mitre that initiative stands displayed. Exodus chapter 28 verse 36, “And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and engrave upon it,

like the engravings of a signet, *holiness to the Lord* ... and it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things ... and it shall always be upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord."

The last few words are the key to God's arrangement: "and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord". "It shall be always upon *His* forehead, that *they* may be accepted." Aaron was not "holy", but in his capacity as Israel's High Priest the people were accepted as he wore the Mitre with the inscription in God's presence. The inscription was a constant reminder of the *holiness* of God that de-bars sinners from His presence; yet, there was a way – through a High Priest whom God accepted, and accept them in him.

In the words of the apostle again, Christ has not gone into a sanctuary made with hands, but into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us. Neither is He, like Aaron, simply *accepted* as holy, on account of the "mitre" which he wore as Israel's High Priest, but He *is* holy! "Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." In the whole of His being is inscribed, *Holiness to the Lord*, and we are made acceptable "in the beloved".

The Robe of the Ephod

The Robe of the Ephod is very precious in telling us about our Saviour in the presence of God for us.

The "Robe" was simply just that; it was made of one piece, with slits for the arms, and went down to the feet of Aaron. Where it differed from other robes, however, was around the hem at the bottom. On the hem, God commanded Moses to sew a series of "bells and pomegranates" – "A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about." The purpose for this strange device was to assure the people that Aaron had not been struck down dead in the presence of the Holiness of God as he ministered on their behalf. The "sound" of the bells could be detected by the people as they

stood outside and inclined their ears in the direction of the Holy Place. Their High Priest was alive, accepted, and active on their behalf.

Like everything else, the substance is greater than the shadow. There are no shortage of “bells and pomegranates” in the Word of Truth to assure us that our High Priest is alive, accepted, and active on our behalf. We have the very illustration by the Saviour Himself of how He would ever live to make intercession for us. In John chapter 17, we have what is normally referred to as our Lord’s High Priestly Prayer. In that He prays for His disciples, and explains *why* He is doing so: - “And now I come to thee”, He says to the Father, “but these things I speak in the world, that thy might have my joy fulfilled in themselves”. It was an example and a foretaste of what He would do always for them when He would return to the Father. As the psalmist says, “Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound”. Assuredly, He is alive, accepted, active for all His people for ever.

Amen and Amen