

SIMPLE TALKS ON THE TABERNACLE

by

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CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE ARK OF THE TESTIMONY AND THE MERCY SEAT

“And they shall make an ark of shittim wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about . . . And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof . . . 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” (Exodus 25:10, 11, 17, 21).

How the hearts of the children of Israel must have been full of holy joy and gratitude when God made them the gracious promise that He would dwell amongst them! How gladly they brought their offerings to make a sanctuary for the Most High!

God Himself had shown Moses on the mount the pattern, and they were to make it even as it had been shown to Moses (Exodus 25:9). God has a plan for each of His children, for their lives and service. He can only be responsible for His plan).

Often we make our own plans and incur responsibilities which God does not want us to take with its resultant cares and anxieties. He tells us in His Word that we ought to love and walk and give as our Lord walked and loved and gave.

God has a plan for your future; He planned the work you should do; and, in fact, I believe for every day and hour of your life. He shows it to you through the Holy Spirit and also through the trend of circumstances. Let us work according to the pattern.

The five chapters, Exodus 25-30, describing the tabernacle and its contents, fall into two divisions.

God begins with showing us the ark of the testimony and the mercy seat, and then leads through the holy place by the golden candlestick shedding its light on the table of shewbread and the altar of incense, through the veil, past the brazen laver to the altar of burnt-offering.

In chapters 25-7:19 we trace the way which God takes to meet man.

In God's ways of salvation, described all through the Bible from the very beginning, where God meets fallen man with the question: "**Adam, where art thou?**" it is God that stoops down to meet man, not man going to meet God. Our Lord Jesus Christ travelled all the way from the mercy seat to the altar of burnt-offering. "**For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, and despised the shame, and then went the way back to the throne**" (Hebrews 12:2). Open the gates wide, that the King of Glory may come in.

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Psalm. 32:1).

Every Israelite who had entered the gate of the court and at the brazen altar had confessed his sin and had laid his hand on the animal that was to die in his stead could say that. Reader, are your sins covered by the blood of Christ? Have you entered the gate of the court? There is only one door. Jesus is the door.

Saved to serve.

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" (Psalm. 116:12).

He longs to serve his Lord, to consecrate his life to his Lord's service, to enter the sanctuary. Only priests are allowed to enter. He that hath loved us and washed us from our sins with His own blood has made us kings and priests to God our Father.

Once more, therefore, he approaches the altar of burnt-offering, not this time with a sin-offering.

That has been burnt outside the camp. His sins have been covered, so this time he brings a burnt-offering which has to be consumed on the altar as an offering of sweet odour unto the Lord. Now with clean hands and feet the priest may enter the holy place. Enlightened by the Holy Ghost, he may feed on the Word and lead a life of prayer and service.

Many of God's children stop at the brazen altar.

They have accepted the Lord as their Saviour, but have remained in the court. They have never heeded the call of the Master: "**Go ye also and work in my vineyard.**"

They have never become soul-winners. A soul saved; a life lost for the Master. I pray that every reader may dedicate his life to the service of the Lord and not stand before Him empty-handed. The time may be short in which we have the privilege of winning souls. "**The night cometh when no man can work.**"

Under the old covenant, only the high priest was allowed once a year on the Day of Atonement to enter the Holiest of all, and not without blood. Now the veil has been rent in twain. Christ has opened for us a new and living way through His own broken heart, and with boldness we may now approach the throne of grace, to find grace to help in time of need.

"Make an ark of shittim wood . . . overlay it with pure gold, within and without . . . make staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. . . . The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it" (Exodus 25:10-15).

In the Holiest was only one object, consisting of two parts: the lower part was called the ark of testimony; the upper part was the mercy seat.

The ark was of acacia wood overlaid with gold within and without, pointing to the human and divine natures of our blessed Lord. Two staves overlaid with gold were put through the four golden rings and were not to be taken out of them. The priests had to carry it on their shoulders before the Israelites when the cloud by day or the fiery pillar by night rose.

“The ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them to search out a resting-place for them” (Numbers 10:33).

Oh, the loving-kindness and care of the Lord for His people! Wherever the people were, the Lord was. He never left nor forsook them. For instance, there was a time when it was hard to secure a suitable home. They were scarce.

How many of God's children have proved at that time that our Father-God is the best Real Estate man and provides for His children. **“He shall choose our inheritance for us”** (Psalm. 47:4).

The good Shepherd still goes before His sheep. Lord, help us to follow Thee closely!

As long as the children of Israel journeyed in the wilderness, the ark went before them. When they had settled in the Promised Land and the temple of Solomon was built, the staves were taken out of the ark.

In the ark were the two tables of stone on which God had written the Ten Commandments.

When, in our meditation, we look at that ark in the Holiest, we lift up our hearts to the Lord Jesus, of which the ark of testimony was such a wonderful type, to him who said: **“I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart”** (Psalm. 40:8).

Once before God had given to Moses two tables on which He Himself had written the Commandments. As Moses went down the mount he saw how the children of Israel worshipped the golden calf and, angry at the idolatry of his people, he cast the tables out of his hand and broke them (Exodus 32:19).

God commanded Moses to bring two new tables and once more wrote the commandments upon them. These were the tables that God commanded Moses to lay up in the ark of the testimony. These unbroken tables are a type of the perfect obedience of our Lord.

“He was not rebellious, neither turned away back” (Isaiah 50:5).

“He was obedient unto death, even the death on the cross” (Philippians 2:8).

Moses can only show us broken tablets through which we can never be saved. Jesus and Jesus alone is the true ark of testimony, where righteousness and peace kissed each other (Psalm. 85:10), the mediator between God and a fallen race.

“Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Romans 10:4).

An ark without the mercy seat would not have afforded a refuge to a sinful race.

God is holy and merciful, but He is also just. The law of Moses, the stone tablets, had been broken.

“Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10).

Israel had not sinned against one commandment, but against all. So have we. How terrible an ark without a mercy seat: an uncovered law, a silent witness against each one of us! An open ark is a seat of justice, not a seat of mercy.

“Thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold” (Exodus 25:17).

The mercy seat was the cover of the ark.

On both ends was a cherub, their eyes looking at the mercy seat, as if anxious to fathom that great mystery of godliness:

“God was manifest in the flesh” (I Timothy 3:16).

The mercy seat must cover the whole ark.

Nothing could be seen of the two tables. Jesus covered the commandments.

Our own righteousness is as filthy rags; they cannot cover us. The mercy seat had to have the same length and breadth as the ark. The mercy seat must be pure and flawless. The eye of the Holy One must be able to rest on it with pleasure. Therefore, it had to be made of pure gold.

The mercy seat must be sprinkled with blood.

Each year on the Day of Atonement, the high priest entered the Holiest to sprinkle the mercy seat. Otherwise it would not have been a shelter for a fallen race.

Mercy seat, what message hast thou for a sinner seeking pardon and grace? The Holy Spirit gives us the answer: **“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood”** (Romans 3:24, 25).

Jesus Christ is our mercy seat.

His righteousness is not too short, it covers all our sin. His blood cleanses us from all sin. There is power in the blood to set us free from all sinful habits. Reader, have you ever been to the mercy seat? It is the only place where you can be reconciled with God.

Your blameless life, your unselfish character, your kind deeds cannot save you. If you trust in your merits, your house is built on shifting sand. You will find no mercy there. Mercy you can only find at the mercy seat. You can go there now. You need no priest, no man to open the way for you. The vail has been rent in twain. The way is open. Do not delay. You do not know whether you can still come tomorrow.

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

LOVE'S HIGHWAY

From the depths of the doom and darkness
Ascends that wondrous road
Which leads from the heart of the sinner
Up to the heart of God.
For from heights of the golden City,
God made the glorious road
Which leads to the sinner
Down from the heart of God.

— From manuscript of the earlier part of the fourteenth century.

~ end of chapter 22 ~

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