

# NOTES ON THE BOOK OF EXODUS

by

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## Exodus 26

The section of our book which now opens before us contains the instructive description of the curtains and coverings of the tabernacle, wherein the spiritual eye discerns the shadows of the various features and phases of Christ's manifested character.

**“Moreover, thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet : with cherubims of cunning work shalt thou make them.”**

Here we have the different aspects of **“the man Christ Jesus.”**

The **“fine twined linen”** prefigures the spotless purity of His walk and character; while the **“blue, the purple, and the scarlet”** present Him to us as **“the Lord from heaven,”** who is to reign according to the divine counsels, but whose royalty is to be the result of His sufferings. Thus we have a spotless man, a heavenly man, a royal man, a suffering man. These materials were not confined to the **“curtains”** of the tabernacle, but were also used in making **“the veil,”** (ver. 31), **“the hanging for the door of the tent,”** (ver. 36), **“the hanging for the gate of the court,”** (Exodus 27:16), **“the cloths of service and the holy garments of Aaron”** (Exodus 39:1). In a word, it was Christ everywhere, Christ in all, Christ alone.\*

**\* The expression, “white and clean,” gives peculiar force and beauty to the type which the Holy Ghost has presented in the “fine twined linen.” Indeed, there could not be a more appropriate emblem of spotless manhood.**

**“The fine twined linen,”** as expressive of Christ's spotless manhood, opens a most precious and copious spring of thought to the spiritual mind; it furnishes a theme on which we cannot meditate too profoundly.

The truth respecting Christ's humanity must be received with scriptural accuracy, held with spiritual energy, guarded with holy jealousy, and confessed with heavenly power. If we are wrong as to this, we cannot be right as to anything. It is a grand, vital, fundamental truth, and if it be not received, held, guarded, and confessed, as God has revealed it in His holy Word, the entire superstructure must be unsound.

Nothing can be more deplorable than the looseness of thought and expression which seems to prevail in reference to this all-important doctrine. Were there more reverence for the Word of God, there would be more accurate acquaintance with it; and, in this way, we should happily avoid all those erroneous and unguarded statements which surely must grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whose province it is to testify of Jesus.

When the angel had announced to Mary the glad tidings of the Saviour's birth, she said unto him, **"How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?"** Her feeble mind was utterly incompetent to enter into, much less to fathom, the stupendous mystery of **"God manifest in the flesh."** But mark carefully the angelic reply - a reply, not to a skeptic mind, but to a pious, though ignorant, heart. **"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; wherefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God"** (Luke 1:39, 35).

Mary, doubtless, imagined that this birth was to be according to the principles of ordinary generation. But the angel corrects her mistake, and, in correcting it, enunciates one of the grandest truths of revelation. He declares to her that divine power was about to form A REAL MAN - **"the second man the Lord from heaven"** - one whose nature was divinely pure, utterly incapable of receiving or communicating any taint. This Holy One was made **"in, the likeness of sinful flesh,"** without sin in the flesh. He partook of real bona fide flesh and blood without a particle or shadow of the evil thereto attaching.

This is a cardinal truth which cannot be too accurately laid hold of or too tenaciously held. The incarnation of the Son - His mysterious entrance into pure and spotless flesh, formed, by the power of the Highest, in the virgin's womb, is the foundation of the **"great mystery of godliness"** of which the topstone is a glorified God-Man in Heaven, the Head, Representative, and Model of the redeemed Church of God.

The essential purity of His manhood perfectly met the claims of God; the reality thereof met the necessities of man. He was a man, for none else would do to meet man's ruin. But He was such a man as could satisfy all the claims of the throne of God. He was a spotless, real man, in whom God could perfectly delight, and on whom man could unreservedly lean.

I need not remind the enlightened reader that all this, if taken apart from death and resurrection, is perfectly unavailable to us. He needed not only an incarnate, but a crucified and risen Christ. True, He should be incarnate to be crucified; but it is death and resurrection which render incarnation available to us.

It is nothing short of a deadly error to suppose that, in incarnation, Christ was taking man into union with Himself. This could not be. He Himself expressly teaches the contrary. **"Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit"** (John 12:24). There could be no union between sinful and holy flesh, pure and impure, corruptible and incorruptible, mortal and immortal. Accomplished death is the only base of a unity between Christ and His elect members.

It is in beautiful connection with the words, **“Rise, let us go hence,”** that He says:

- **“I am the vine, ye are the branches.”**
- **“We have been planted together in the likeness of his death.”**
- **“Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed.”**
- **“In whom also are ye circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”**

I would refer my reader to Romans 6 and Colossians 2 as a full and comprehensive statement of the truth on this important subject. It was only as dead and risen that Christ and His people could become one. The true corn of wheat had to fall into the ground and die ere a full ear could spring up and be gathered into the heavenly garner.

But while this is a plainly revealed truth of Scripture, it is equally plain that incarnation formed, as it were, the first layer of the glorious superstructure; and the curtains of **“fine twined Linen”** prefigure the moral purity of **“the man Christ Jesus.”**

We have already seen the manner of His conception; and, as we pass along the current of His life here below, we meet with instance after instance of the same spotless purity.

- He was forty days in the wilderness, tempted of the devil, but there was no response in His pure nature to the tempter’s foul suggestions.
- He could touch the leper and receive no taint.
- He could touch the bier and not contract the smell of death.
- He could pass unscathed through the most polluted atmosphere.
- He was, as to His manhood, like a sunbeam emanating from the fountain of light, which can pass, without a soil, through the most defiling medium.
- He was perfectly unique in nature, constitution, and character.

None but He could say, **“Thou wilt not suffer thine holy One to see corruption.”** This was in reference to His humanity, which, as being perfectly holy and perfectly pure, was capable of being a sin-bearer. **“His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.”** Not to the tree, as some would teach us; but **“on the tree.”** It was on the Cross that Christ was our sin-bearer, and only there. **“He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”** (II Corinthians 5:21).

*“Blue” is the ethereal colour, and marks the heavenly character of Christ, who, though He had come down into all the circumstances of actual and true humanity - sin excepted - yet was He “the Lord from heaven.”*

Though He was **“very man,”** yet He ever walked in the uninterrupted consciousness of His proper dignity, as a heavenly stranger. He never once forgot whence He had come, where He was, or whither He was going. The spring of all His joys was on high. Earth could neither make Him richer nor poorer. He found this world to be **“a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;”**

and, hence, His spirit could only find its refreshment above. It was entirely heavenly. **“No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the son of man who is in heaven”** (John 3:13).

*“Purple” denotes royalty, and points us to Him who “Was born King of the Jews;” who offered Himself as such to the Jewish nation, and was rejected; who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, avowing Himself a king, when, to mortal vision, there was not so much as a single trace of royalty.*

**“Thou sayest that I am a king.”** And **“hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”** And, finally, the inscription upon His cross, **“in letters of Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin”** - *the language of religion, of science, and of government* declared Him, to the whole known world, to be **“Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.”** Earth disowned His claims - so much the worse for it but not so Heaven; there His claim was fully recognized. He was received as a conqueror into the eternal mansions of light, crowned with glory and honour, and seated, amid the acclamations of angelic hosts, on the throne of the majesty in the heavens, there to wait until His enemies be made His footstool.

**“Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel. Be wise, now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. BLESSED ARE ALL THEY THAT PUT THEIR TRUST IN HIM”** (Psalm 2).

*“Scarlet,” when genuine, is produced by death; and this makes its application to a suffering Christ safe and appropriate.*

**“Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh.”** Without death, all would have been unavailing. We can admire **“the blue”** and **“the purple”** but without **“the scarlet”** the tabernacle would have lacked an all-important feature. It was by death that Christ destroyed him that had the power of death.

The Holy Ghost, in setting before us a striking figure of Christ - the true tabernacle - could not possibly omit that phase of His character which constituted the groundwork of His connection with His body the Church, of His claim to the throne of David, and the headship of all creation. In a word, He not only unfolds the Lord Jesus to our view, in these significant curtains, as a spotless man, a royal man, but also a suffering man; one who, by death, should make good His claims to all that to which, as man, He was entitled, in the divine counsels.

*But we have much more in the curtains of the tabernacle than the varied and perfect phases of the character of Christ.*

We have also the unity and consistency of that character. Each phase is displayed in its own proper perfectness; and one never interferes with, or mars the exquisite beauty of, another. All was in perfect harmony beneath the eye of God, and was so displayed in **“the pattern which was showed to Moses on the mount,”** and in the copy which was exhibited below. **“Every one of the curtains shall have one measure. The five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and other five curtains shall be coupled one to another.”** Such was the fair proportion and consistency in all the ways of Christ, as a perfect man, walking on the earth, in whatever aspect or relationship we view Him. When acting in one character, we never find ought that is, in the very least degree, inconsistent with the divine integrity of another. He was, at all times, in all places, under all circumstances, the perfect man. There was nothing out of that fair and lovely proportion which belonged to Him, in all His ways. **“Every one of the curtains shall have one measure.”**

*The two sets of five curtains each may symbolize the two grand aspects of Christ’s character, as acting toward God and toward man.*

We have the same two aspects in the law, namely, what was due to God, and what was due to man; so that, as to Christ, if we look in, we find **“thy law is within my heart;”** and if we look at His outward character and walk, we see those two elements adjusted with perfect accuracy, and not only adjusted, but inseparably linked together by the heavenly grace and divine energy which dwelt in His most glorious Person.

**“And thou shalt make loops of blue upon the edge of the one curtain, from the selvedge in the coupling; and likewise. shalt thou make in the uttermost edge of another curtain, in the coupling of the second . . . And thou shalt make fifty taches of gold, and couple the curtains together with the taches; and it shall be one tabernacle.”**

We have here displayed to us, in the **“loops of blue,”** and **“taches of gold,”** that heavenly grace and divine energy in Christ which enabled Him to combine and perfectly adjust the claims of God and man; so that in responding to both the one and the other, He never, for a moment, marred the unity of His character. When crafty and hypocritical men tempted Him with the enquiry, **“Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?”** His wise reply was, **“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”**

Nor was it merely Caesar, but man in every relation that had all his claims perfectly met in Christ. As He united in His perfect Person the nature of God and man, so He met in His, perfect ways the claims of God and man. Most interesting would it be to trace, through the Gospel narrative, the exemplification of the principle suggested by the **“loops of blue,”** and **“taches of gold;”** but I must leave my reader to pursue this study under the immediate guidance of the Holy Ghost, who delights to expatiate upon every feature and every phase of that perfect One whom it is His unvarying purpose and undivided object to exalt.

*The curtains on which we have been dwelling were covered with other “**curtains of goats’ hair**” (Ver. 7-14).*

Their beauty was hidden from those without by that which bespoke roughness and severity. This latter did not meet the view of those within. To all who were privileged to enter the hallowed enclosure nothing was visible save “**the blue, the purple, the scarlet, and fine twined linen,**” the varied yet combined exhibition of the virtues and excellencies of that divine Tabernacle in which God dwelt within the veil - that is, of Christ, through whose flesh, the antitype of all these, the beams of the divine nature shone so delicately, that the sinner could behold without being overwhelmed by their dazzling brightness.

As the Lord Jesus passed along this earth, how few really knew Him! How few had eyes anointed with heavenly eye salve to penetrate and appreciate the deep mystery of His character! How few saw “**the blue, the purple, the scarlet, and the twined linen!**”

It was only when faith brought man into His presence that He ever allowed the brightness of what He was to shine forth - ever allowed the glory to break through the cloud. To nature’s eye there would seem to have been a reserve and a severity about Him which were aptly prefigured by the “**covering of goats’ hair.**” All this was the result of His profound separation and estrangement, not from sinners personally, but from the thoughts and maxims of men. He had nothing in common with man as such, nor was it within the compass of mere nature to comprehend or enjoy Him.

“**No man,**” said He, “**can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him;**” and when one of those “**drawn**” ones confessed His name, He declared that “**flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven**” (Comp. John 6:44; Matthew 6:17). He was “**a root out of a dry ground,**” having neither “**form nor comeliness**” to attract the eye or gratify the heart of man.

The popular current could never flow in the direction of One who, as he passed rapidly across the stage of this vain world, wrapped Himself up in a “**covering of goats’ hair.**” Jesus was not popular. The multitude might follow Him for a moment, because His ministry stood connected, in their judgment, with “**the loaves and fishes**” which met their need; but they were just as ready to cry, “**Away with him!**” as “**Hosanna to the Son of David!**”

Oh! let Christians remember this! Let the servants of Christ remember it! Let all preachers of the Gospel remember it! Let one and all of us ever seek to bear in mind the “**covering of goats’ hair!**”

*But if the goats’ skins expressed the severity of Christ’s separation from earth, “**the rams’ skins dyed red**” exhibit His intense consecration and devotedness to God, which was carried out even unto death.*

He was the only perfect Servant that ever stood in God’s vineyard. He had one object which He pursued, with an undeviating course, from the manger to the Cross, and that was to glorify the Father and finish His work.

**“Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business”** was the language of His youth, and the accomplishment of that **“business”** was the design of His life. **“His meat was to do the will of him that sent him and to finish his work.”** **“The rams’ skins dyed red”** formed as distinct a part of His ordinary habit as the **“goats’ hair.”** His perfect devotion to God separated Him from the habits of men.

***“The badgers’ skins”** may exhibit to us the holy vigilance with which the Lord Jesus guarded against the approach of everything hostile to the purpose which engrossed His whole soul.*

He took up His position for God, and held it with a tenacity which no influence of men or devils, earth or hell, could overcome. The covering of badgers’ skins was **“above,”** (ver. 14), teaching us that the most prominent feature in the character of **“the man Christ Jesus”** was an invincible determination to stand as a witness for God on the earth. He was the true Naboth, who gave up His life rather than surrender the truth of God, or give up that for which He had taken His place in this world.

The goat, the ram, and the badger, must be regarded as exhibiting certain natural features, and also as symbolizing certain moral qualities; and we must take both into account in our application of these figures to the character of Christ. The human eye could only discern the former. It could see none of the moral grace, beauty, and dignity, which lay beneath the outward form of the despised and humble Jesus of Nazareth. When the treasures of heavenly wisdom flowed from His lips, the inquiry was, **“Is not this the carpenter?”** or **“How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?”**

When He asserted His eternal Sonship and Godhead, the word was, **“Thou art not yet fifty years old,”** or **“They took up stones to cast at him.”** In short, the acknowledgement of the Pharisees, in John 9, was true in reference to men in general. **“as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.”**

It would be utterly impossible, in the compass of a volume like this, to trace the unfoldings of those precious features of Christ’s character through the Gospel narratives. Sufficient has been said to open up springs of spiritual thought to my reader, and to furnish some faint idea of the rich treasures which are wrapped up in the curtains and coverings of the tabernacle.

Christ’s hidden being, secret springs and inherent excellencies - His outward and unattractive form - what He was in Himself, what He was to Godward, and what He was to manward - what he was in the judgment of faith, and what in the judgment of nature - all is sweetly and impressively told out to the circumcised ear, in the **“curtains of blue, purple, scarlet, and the twined linen:”** “ and the **“coverings of skins.”**

**“The boards for the tabernacle”** were made of the same wood as was used in constructing **“the ark of the covenant.”** Moreover, they were upheld by the sockets of silver formed out of the atonement; their hooks and chapters being of the same. (Compare attentively Exodus 30:11-16, with Exodus 38:25-28).

The whole framework of the tent of the tabernacle was based on that which spoke of atonement or ransom, while the **“hooks and chapters”** at the top set forth the same. The sockets were buried in the sand, and the hooks and chapters were above. It matters not how deep you penetrate, or how high you rise, that glorious and eternal truth is emblazoned before you, **“I HAVE FOUND A RANSOM.”** Blessed be God, **“we are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”**

The tabernacle was divided into three distinct parts, namely:

- **“The holy of holies,”**
- **“The holy place,”** and
- **“The court of the tabernacle”**

The entrance into each of these was of the same materials, **“blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen”** (Compare Exodus 24:31, 36; Exodus 27:16). The interpretation of which is simply this: Christ forms the only doorway into the varied fields of glory which are yet to be displayed, whether on earth, in Heaven, or in the Heaven of heavens. **“Every family, in heaven and earth,”** will be ranged under His headship, as all will be brought into everlasting felicity and glory, on the ground of His accomplished atonement. This is plain enough, and needs, no stretch of the imagination to grasp it. We know it to be true: and when we know the truth which is shadowed forth, the shadow is easily understood.

If only our hearts be filled with Christ, we shall not go far astray in our interpretations of the tabernacle and its furniture. It is not a head full of learned criticism that will avail us much here, but a heart full of affection for Jesus, and a conscience at rest in the blood of His cross.

May the Spirit of God enable us to study these things with more interest and intelligence! May He **“open our eyes that we may behold wondrous things out of his law.”**

~ end of chapter 26 ~

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