

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF EXODUS

by

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Exodus 25

This chapter forms the commencement of one of the richest veins in inspiration's exhaustless mine - a vein in which every stroke of the mattock brings to light untold wealth. We know the mattock with which alone we can work in such a mine, namely, the distinct ministry of the Holy Ghost. Nature can do nothing here. Reason is blind - imagination utterly vain - the most gigantic intellect, instead of being able to interpret the sacred symbols, appears like a bat in the sunshine, blindly dashing itself against the objects which it is utterly unable to discern. We must compel reason and imagination to stand without, while, with a chastened heart, a single eye, and a spiritual mind, we enter the hallowed precincts and gaze upon the deeply significant furniture. God the Holy Ghost is the only One who can conduct us through the courts of the Lord's house, and expound to our souls the true meaning of all that there meets our view. To attempt the exposition, by the aid of intellect's unsanctified powers, would be infinitely more absurd than to set about the repairs of a watch with a blacksmith's tongs and hammer.

“The patterns of things in the heavens” cannot be interpreted by the natural mind, in its most cultivated form. They must all be read in the light of Heaven. Earth has no light which could at all develop their beauties. The One who furnished the patterns can alone explain what the patterns mean. The One who furnished the beauteous symbols can alone interpret them.

To the human eye there would seem to be a desultoriness in the mode in which the Holy Ghost has presented the furniture of the tabernacle; but, in reality, as might be expected, there is the most perfect order, the most remarkable precision, the most studious accuracy.

From Exodus 25 to Exodus 30, inclusive, we have a distinct section of the Book of Exodus.

This section is divided into two parts, the first terminating at Exodus 27:19, and the second at the close of Exodus 30.

The former begins with the ark of the covenant, inside the veil, and ends with the brazen altar and the court in which that altar stood. That is, it gives us, in the first place, the Lord's throne of judgment, whereon He sat as Lord of all the earth; and it conducts us to that place where He met the sinner, in the credit and virtue of accomplished atonement.

Then, in the latter, We have the mode of man's approach to God - the privileges, dignities, and responsibilities of those who, as priests, were permitted to draw nigh to the Divine Presence and enjoy worship and communion there. Thus the arrangement is perfect and beautiful. How could it be otherwise, seeing that it is divine?

The ark and the brazen altar present, as it were, two extremes.

- The former was the throne of God established in “**justice and judgment**” (Psalm 89:19).
- The latter was the place of approach for the sinner where “**mercy and truth**” went before the Lord's face.

Man, in himself, dared not to approach the ark to meet God, for “**the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest**” (Hebrews 9:8). But God could approach the altar of brass, to meet man as a sinner. “**Justice and judgment**” could not admit the sinner in; but “**mercy and truth**” could bring God out; not, indeed, in that overwhelming brightness and majesty in which He was wont to shine forth from between those mystic supporters of His throne - “**the cherubim of glory**” - but in that gracious ministry which is symbolically presented to us in the furniture and ordinances of the tabernacle.

All this may well remind us of the path trodden by that blessed One, who is the antitype of all these types - the substance of all these shadows.

He travelled from the eternal throne of God in Heaven, down to the depths of Calvary's cross. He came from all the glory of the former down into all the shame of the latter, in order that He might conduct His redeemed, forgiven, and accepted people back with Himself, and present them faultless before that very throne which He had left on their account. The Lord Jesus fills up, in His own person and work, every point between the throne of God and the dust of death, and every point between the dust of death and the throne of God. In Him God has come down, in perfect grace, to the sinner; in Him the sinner is brought up, in perfect righteousness, to God. All the way, from the ark to the brazen altar, was marked with the footprints of love; and all the way from the brazen altar to the ark of God was sprinkled with the blood of atonement; and as the ransomed worshipper passes along that wondrous path, he beholds the name of Jesus stamped on all that meets his view. May that name be dearer to our hearts! Let us now proceed to examine the chapters consecutively.

It is most interesting to note here, that the first thing which the Lord communicated to Moses is His gracious purpose to have a sanctuary or holy dwelling place in the midst of His people - a sanctuary composed of materials, which directly point to Christ, His Person, His work, and the precious fruit of that work, as seen in the light, the power, and the varied graces of the Holy Ghost. Moreover, these materials were the fragrant fruit of the grace of God - the voluntary offerings of devoted hearts. The Lord, whose majesty, “**the heaven of heavens could not contain,**” was graciously pleased to dwell in a boarded and curtained tent, erected for Him by those who cherished the fond desire to hail His presence amongst them.

This tabernacle may be viewed in two ways:

- First, as furnishing “**a pattern of things in the heavens;**” and,
- Secondly, as presenting a deeply significant type of the body of Christ.

The various materials of which the tabernacle was composed will come before us, as we pass along; we shall, therefore, consider the three comprehensive subjects put before us in this chapter, namely, the ark; the table; and the candlestick.

I. The Ark of the Covenant

This occupies the leading place in the divine communications to Moses. Its position, too, in the tabernacle was most marked. Shut in within the veil, in the holiest of all, it formed the base of the Lord’s throne. Its very name conveys to the mind its import. An ark, so far as the word instructs us, is designed to preserve intact whatever is put therein.

- An ark carried Noah and his family, together with all the orders of creation, in safety over the billows of judgment which covered the earth.
- An ark, at the opening of this book, was faith’s vessel for preserving “**a proper child**” from the waters of death.

When, therefore, we read of “**the ark of the covenant,**” we are led to believe that it was designed of God to preserve His covenant unbroken, in the midst of an erring people. In it, as we know, the second set of tables were deposited. As to the first set, they were broken in pieces, beneath the mount, showing that man’s covenant was wholly abolished - that his work could never, by any possibility, form the basis of the Lord’s throne of government. “**Justice and judgment are the habitation of that throne,**” whether in its earthly or heavenly aspect.

The ark could not contain within its hallowed enclosure, broken tables. Man might fail to fulfil his self-chosen vow; but God’s law must be preserved in its divine integrity and perfectness. If God was to set up His throne in the midst of His people, He could only do so in a way worthy of Himself. His standard of judgment and government must be perfect.

“And thou shalt make staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. and thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them.”

The ark of the covenant was to accompany the people in all their wanderings.

- It never rested while they were a travelling.
- It moved from place to place in the wilderness.
- It went before them into the midst of Jordan;
- It was their grand rallying Point in all the wars of Canaan;
- It was the sure and certain earnest of power wherever it went.

No power of the enemy could stand before that which was the well-known expression of the divine presence and power.

The ark was to be Israel's companion in travel, in the desert; and **"the staves"** and **"the rings"** were the apt expression of its travelling character.

However, it was not always to be a traveler.

"The afflictions of David," as well as the wars of Israel, were to have an end. The prayer was yet to be breathed and answered, **"Arise, O Lord, into thy rest: thou and the Ark of thy strength"** (Psalm 132:8).

This most sublime petition had its partial accomplishment in the palmy days of Solomon, when **"the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims. For the cherubims spread forth their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark, and the staves thereof above. And they drew out the staves, that the ends of the staves were seen out in the holy place before the oracle, and they were not seen without: and there they are unto this day"** (I Kings 8:6-8).

The sand of the desert was to be exchanged for the golden floor of the temple (I Kings 6:30). The wanderings of the ark were to have an end; there was **"neither adversary nor evil occurrent,"** and therefore, **"the staves were drawn out."**

Nor was this the only difference between the ark in the tabernacle and in the temple. The apostle, speaking of the ark in its wilderness habitation, describes it as **"the ark of the covenant, overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant"** (Hebrews 9:4). Such were the contents of the ark in its wilderness journeyings - the pot of manna, the record of the Lord's faithfulness, in providing for His redeemed in the desert, and Aaron's rod, **"a token against the rebels,"** to **"take away their murmurings"** (Compare Exodus 16:32-39; and Numbers 17:10). But when the moment arrived in which **"the staves"** were to be **"drawn out,"** when the wanderings and wars of Israel were over, the **"exceeding magnificent"** house was completed, when the sun of Israel's glory had reached, in type, its meridian, as marked by the wealth and splendour of Solomon's reign, then the records of wilderness need and wilderness failure were unnoticed, and nothing remained save that which constituted the eternal foundation of the throne of the God of Israel, and of all the earth. **"There was nothing in the ark, save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb"** (I Kings 8:9).

But all this brightness was soon to be overcast by the heavy clouds of human failure and divine displeasure. The rude foot of the uncircumcised was yet to walk across the ruins of that beautiful house, and as faded light and departed glory were yet to elicit the contemptuous "hiss" of the stranger.

This would not be the place to follow out these things in detail; I shall only refer my reader to the last notice which the Word of God affords us of **"the ark of the covenant,"** - a notice which carries us forward to a time when human folly and sin shall no more disturb the resting-place of that ark, and when neither a curtained tent, nor yet a temple made with hands, shall contain it.

“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in Heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou has taken to thee thy great power and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldst destroy them which destroy the earth. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of His covenant: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail” (Revelation 11:15-19).

II. The mercy-seat

The mercy-seat comes next in order.

“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 make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy-seat. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end; even of the mercy-seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy-seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy-seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark shalt thou put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.”

Here the Lord gives utterance to His gracious intention of coming down from the fiery mount to take His place upon the mercy seat. This He could do, inasmuch as the tables of testimony were preserved unbroken beneath, and the symbols of his power, whether in creation or providence, rose on the right hand and on the left - the inseparable adjuncts of that throne on which the Lord had seated himself - a throne of grace founded upon divine righteousness and supported by justice and judgment.

Here the glory of the God of Israel shone forth. From hence He issued His commands, softened and sweetened by the gracious source from whence they emanated, and the medium through which they came - like the beams of the mid-day sun, passing through a cloud, we can enjoy their genial and enlivening influence without being dazzled by their brightness. **“His commandments are not grievous,”** when received from off the mercy-seat, because they come in connection with grace, which gives the ears to hear and the power to obey.

Looking at the ark and mercy-seat together, we may see in them a striking figure of Christ, in His Person and work.

He having, in His life, magnified the law and made it honourable, became, through death, a propitiation or mercy-seat. for every one that believeth. God's mercy could only repose on a pedestal of perfect righteousness. "**Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord**" (Romans 5:21).

The only proper meeting place between God and man is the point where grace and righteousness meet and perfectly harmonize. Nothing but perfect righteousness could suit God; and nothing but perfect grace could suit the sinner. But where could these attributes meet in one point? Only in the Cross. There it is that "**mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other**" (Psalm 85:10).

Thus it is that the soul of the believing sinner finds peace.

He sees that God's righteousness and his justification rest upon precisely the same basis, namely, Christ's accomplished work. When man, under the powerful action of the truth of God, takes his place as a sinner, God can, in the exercise of Grace, take His place as a Saviour, and then every question is settled, for the Cross having answered all the claims of divine justice, mercy's copious streams can flow unhindered.

When a righteous God and a ruined sinner meet, on a blood-sprinkled platform, all is settled for ever - settled in such a way as perfectly glorifies God, and eternally saves the sinner. God must be true, though every man he proved a liar; and when man is so thoroughly brought down to the lowest point of his own moral condition before God as to be willing to take the place which God's truth assigns him, he then learns that God has revealed Himself as the righteous Justifier of such an one. This must give settled peace to the conscience; and not only so, but impart a capacity to commune with God, and hearken to His holy precepts in the intelligence of that relationship into which divine grace has introduced us.

Hence, therefore, "**the holiest of all**" unfolds a truly wondrous scene. The ark, the mercy seat, the cherubim, the glory! What a sight for the high-priest of Israel to behold as, once a year, he went in within the veil! May the Spirit of God open the eyes of our understandings, that we may understand more fully the deep meaning of those precious types.

Moses is next instructed about "**the table of showbread,**" or bread of presentation. On this table stood the food of the priests of God. For seven days those twelve loaves of "**fine flour with frankincense**" were presented before the Lord, after which, being replaced by others, they became the food of the priests who fed upon them in the holy place. (See Leviticus 24:5-9).

It is needless to say that those twelve loaves typify "**the man Christ Jesus.**"

The "**fine flour,**" of which they were composed, mark His perfect manhood, while the "**frankincense**" points out the entire devotion of that manhood to God. If God has His priests ministering in the holy place, He will assuredly have a table for them, and a well-furnished table too.

Christ is the table and Christ is the bread thereon.

The pure table and the twelve loaves shadow forth Christ, as presented before God unceasingly, in all the excellency of His spotless humanity, and administered as food to the priestly family. The “**seven days**” set forth the perfection of the divine enjoyment of Christ; and the “**twelve loaves**” the administration of that enjoyment in and by man. There is also, I should venture to suggest, the idea, of Christ’s connection with the twelve tribes of Israel, and the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

III. The candlestick of pure gold

This comes next in order, for God’s priests need light as well as food: and they have both the one and the other in Christ. In this candlestick there is no mention of anything but pure gold. “**All of it shall be one beaten work of pure gold.**”

“**The seven lamps**” which “**gave light over against the candlestick,**” express the perfection of the light and energy of the Spirit, founded upon and connected with the perfect efficacy of the work of Christ. The work of the Holy Ghost can never be separated from the work of Christ. This is set forth, in a double way, in this beautiful figure of the golden candle stick.

“**The seven lamps**” being connected with “**the shaft**” of “**beaten gold,**” points us to Christ’s finished work as the sole basis of the manifestation of the Spirit in the Church. The Holy Ghost was not given until Jesus was glorified (Comp. John 7:39 with Acts 19:2-6).

In Revelation 3, Christ is presented to the Church of Sardis as “**having the seven spirits.**” It was as “**exalted to the right hand of God**” that the Lord Jesus “**shed forth**” the Holy Ghost upon His church, in order that she might shine according to the power and perfection of her position, in the holy place, her proper sphere of being, of action, and of worship. Then, again, we find it was one of Aaron’s specific functions to light and trim those seven lamps.

“**And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel that they bring unto thee pure olive, beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually. Without the veil of the testimony, in the tabernacle of the congregation, shall Aaron order it, from the evening unto the morning, before the Lord continually: it shall be a statute for ever in your generations. He shall order the lamps upon the pure candlestick before the Lord continually**” (Leviticus 24:1-4).

Thus we may see how the work of the Holy Ghost in the Church is linked with Christ’s work on earth and His work in Heaven.

“**The seven lamps**” were there, no doubt; but priestly energy and diligence were needed in order to keep them trimmed and lighted. The priest would continually need “**the tongs and snuff-dishes**” for the purpose of removing ought that would not be a fit vehicle for the “**pure beaten oil.**” Those tongs and snuff-dishes were of “**beaten gold**” likewise, for the whole matter was the direct result of divine operation.

If the Church shine, it is only by the energy of the Spirit, and that energy is founded upon Christ, who, in pursuance of God's eternal counsel, became in His sacrifice and Priesthood, the spring and power of everything to His Church. All is of God. Whether we look within that mysterious veil, and behold the ark with its cover, and the two significant figures attached thereto; or if we gaze on that which lay without the veil, the pure table and the pure candlestick, with their distinctive vessels and instruments - all speak to us of God, whether as revealed to us in connection with the Son or the Holy Ghost.

Christian reader, your high calling places you in the very midst of all these precious realities.

Your place is not merely amid “**the patterns of things in the heavens,**” but amid “**the heavenly things themselves.**” You have “**boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.**”

- you are a Priest unto God.
- “**The showbread**” is yours.
- your place is at “**the pure table,**” to feed on the priestly food, in the light of the Holy Ghost.
- nothing can ever deprive you of those divine privileges.
- they are yours for ever.

Let it be your care to watch against everything that might rob you of the enjoyment of them. Beware of all unhallowed tempers, lusts, feelings, and imaginations. Keep nature down - keep the world out keep Satan off. May the Holy Ghost fill your whole soul with Christ. Then you will be practically holy and abidingly happy. You will bear fruit, and the Father will be glorified, and your joy shall be full.

~ end of chapter 24 ~

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