

Lecture 6

The Curtains of the Tabernacle

EXODUS 26:1-6

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. 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. The five curtains shall be coupled together, one to another; and other five curtains shall be coupled one to another. 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. Fifty loops shalt thou make in the one curtain, and fifty loops shalt thou make in the edge of the curtain that is in the coupling of the second; that the loops may take hold one of another. And thou shalt make fifty taches of gold, and couple the curtains together with the taches: and it shall be one tabernacle.

Moreover, thou shalt make the tabernacle {Ex. 26:1}.

Having considered the principal vessels of the sanctuary, we now come to the consideration of the tabernacle itself.

In the tabernacle of witness, there are two sets of *curtains* and two *coverings*.

The ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, purple, and scarlet, with cherubims, forming the *tabernacle*; and the eleven curtains of goats' hair forming what is called the *tent*.

Then the *covering* of the *tent* of rams' skins, dyed red, and the *covering* above of badgers' skins (Ex. 36:8, 13, 14, 18, 19).

It is of the utmost importance to keep these things distinct in our minds, for although the translators often confound the terms "tabernacle" and "tent" ("mishcan" and "ohel"), and are extremely careless in rendering the words, the Holy Ghost employs the most exact and beautiful precision; and it is by attending to this precision that we may hope, through Divine grace, to ascertain the mind of God.

The tabernacle, as the Hebrew word "mishcan" signifies, is God's *dwelling-place*, according to Ex. 25:8:

Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may *dwell* among them,

and is more immediately connected with God's abiding presence.

The tent ("ohel") is more immediately connected with the congregation, as the place of assembly, and is therefore called "the tent of the congregation"; and I call especial attention to the fact, that the Holy Ghost *never* uses the expression "tabernacle of the congregation," but always "*tent of the congregation*"; thus never confounding the two ideas, as the translators frequently do.

"And thou shalt make the tabernacle." A dwelling-place for God with men on the earth. Oh marvellous, condescending grace! (2 Chron. 6:18).

Christ himself, while he was on the earth, was this tabernacle, and as such he abode alone (John 12:24).

The Word was made flesh, and dwelt, or *tabernacled*, among us (John 1:14).

He was God manifest in flesh: the Godhead and the glory dwelt in him.

But Christ having died, and being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, and sent down the Comforter; by that One Spirit all believers are now baptized into One Body, in union with the risen man, their glorified Head; the Church on earth thus forming the tabernacle, or dwelling-place of God, as, says the Scripture:

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? (1 Cor. 3:16).

In this sense the tabernacle represents the whole Church of God -- looked at in the *Spirit*, not in the *flesh* -- composed of all true believers in Jesus throughout the world.

I speak not now of any manifest oneness, but of that which exists in Spirit, notwithstanding all the outward failure.

As to the materials of which these curtains are composed, first, --

Of fine twined linen {Ex. 26:1}.

Let it be borne in mind, that here the Church is not looked at only as the purchase of the blood of the Lamb -- the ram's skins, dyed red, will give us that thought in due time -- but as the workmanship of the Eternal Spirit.

The new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him (Col. 3:10);

God's

workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Eph. 2:10);

the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:24).

The fine linen is the righteousness of saints (Rev. 19:8), expressive of conformity, through the Spirit, to the image of Christ as the holy one. For

he that is begotten of God sinneth not (1 John 3:9).

The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the *Spirit* (Rom. 8:4).

And blue. Blue is the emblem of heavenly perfectness.

And how beautifully these two thoughts of righteousness and heavenly perfectness are expressed by the Lord Jesus in his sublime prayer in John 17!

I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. . . . Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth (John 17:15, 17).

Here is the *fine linen*. And again:

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world (John 17:16).

Here is the *blue*.

And for their sakes I sanctify myself (set myself apart from the world to God), that they also might be sanctified through the truth (John 17:19).

Here is the fine linen and the blue combined. For by the Holy Ghost, sent down from heaven, uniting the believer with a glorified Christ at God's right hand, just so far as his soul enters by faith into the truth, is he in heart separated from the world, and brought into fellowship with God. And thus the *holiness* and the *heavenliness* of Jesus are wrought by the Holy Ghost into his spiritual being.

And purple. The emblem of earthly and heavenly glory combined.

For through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit the believer is identified with the Lord Jesus, in whom the *earthly* glories of the son of David, and the Divine and *heavenly* glories of the Son of God, meet and center.

And scarlet. The emblem of earthly glory.

And in the earthly glories of the Son of David the believer shares; and when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, the saints too shall reign, for it is a faithful saying,

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him {2 Tim. 2:12}.

The *purple* rather expresses the present glory of the Lord Jesus, while the anointed King of Israel, sitting on his Father's throne. The *scarlet*, his coming millennial glories, in his mediatorial kingdom. But the believer, through the Spirit,

is one with Christ in both respects:

With cherubims of cunning work shalt thou make them {Ex. 26:1}.

The cherubim inwrought with these various materials, beautifully express the gifts of the Spirit for service to God, in the building up and knitting together the Church, as the body of Christ, in Spirit.

Ten curtains. We have hitherto looked at the Church, in spirit, in its unity; we now contemplate it as composed of various parts or assemblies {the church is not composed of assemblies}.

Thus, in the apostles' times, there were the churches of Galatia, the church in Corinth, Ephesus, &c. And so now, believers, though one in Spirit, are dispersed in various localities. True, in the times of the apostles, there was an outward expression of local oneness which no longer exists. Yet, nevertheless, in spirit and in truth, all believers in a given place are one.

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 {Ex. 26:2}.

The Church of God, in Spirit, as here represented, in any given place, is composed of every real believer in that place -- of every converted sinner, of every new-born child of God. Wherever the Spirit of God has come as a quickening Spirit, there he remains as an indwelling Spirit. And every one in whom he dwells, is by him baptized unto the one body, of which Christ is the risen and glorified head.

The length and breadth of every curtain was fixed by God. God's measure of the Church, in Spirit, in any one place, takes in every real believer in that place; but no more. It is inclusive of every quickened soul, but exclusive of every unconverted person.

And God's principles are the same everywhere. He has not one measure for one place and another for another. "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 {Ex. 26:1}.

Literally, "a woman to her sister." An Hebraism.

When the different local assemblies of believers were outwardly, as well as spiritually one, as in the church at Ephesus, or at Philippi, composed of all believers in Christ in those cities, how real and sweet the fellowship of churches! How close and intimate the fellowship between Colosse and Laodicea! Hence writes the apostle Paul,

When this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea (Col. 4:16).

And so writes the apostle Peter, to the elect strangers:

The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you (1 Pet. 5:13).

But even now, while the outward oneness is gone, the fellowship of churches in Spirit remains, hindered, hampered, and feeble though it be; and when two or three are gathered together in {unto} the name of Jesus in different localities, a little of the sweet fellowship of churches may still be enjoyed.

Then again, the vital interests of believers, though sundered by distance of place, are inseparably connected. One member *cannot suffer* without all the members *suffering* with it, little as they may healthfully *sympathise* the one with another.

The membership of the body in Spirit, is the all-important point. Being members of particular churches, is a thought utterly unknown to scripture, and, practically, mischievous in the extreme.

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. Fifty loops shalt thou make in the one curtain, and fifty loops shalt thou make in the edge of the curtain that is in the coupling of the second; that the loops may take hold one of another. And thou shalt make fifty taches of gold, and couple the curtains together with the taches, and it shall be one tabernacle {Ex. 26:4, 5, 6}.

The marvellous prayer of the Lord Jesus, recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, gives us, I believe, in the Lord's own words, the precious truths set forth by the loops of blue and taches of gold, uniting the whole into one tabernacle, the dwelling-place of God.

This prayer of Jesus is occupied with the Church of God; it takes in neither Israel nor the world (John 17:9), neither the Old Testament, nor the millennial saints; but the then disciples of Christ, and those who should believe in him through their word -- the Church, as built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Having first reminded his heavenly Father of his earthly obedience, and asked to be glorified, as the obedient God-man, with the glory which, as the Eternal Son, he had with the Father before the world was, he then prays for his disciples. He had given to them eternal life, for they had known both him and the Father, and now, taking his place in spirit, as no longer in the world, but as ascended to his Father -- he at the right hand of God above, and they still on the earth -- he prays that they may be ONE, as the Father and the Son are one, that is, in a spiritual, Divine, and eternal oneness (John 17:11); and this prayer was accomplished when, being by the right hand of God exalted, having received the promise of the Father, he sent down the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, who baptized into one body all believers in Jesus, in union with their glorified head.

Then setting himself apart to the Father from the world which crucified and rejected him, thus sanctifying himself for their sakes, he prays for them, that they, being one with him risen, and thus no more of the world than he is of the world, through the knowledge and apprehension of this truth in the

power of the Holy Ghost, that they might be practically sanctified and separate in spirit from the world to God.

He next proceeds to take in all those who should believe an him, during the present dispensation of faith in the inspired word, previous to his return to receive the Church: that they ALL *might be one* in this divine, spiritual, perfect, eternal oneness. And so they are. And this oneness is the proof to the world of the mission and Messiahship of Jesus (John 17:20, 21).

He is not here contemplating their outward oneness in the flesh, but their inward oneness in the Spirit. Then, making them the sharers of his given glory, he asks that they might be *one*, as the Father and himself are one, *in that glory*, in grace! Glorious and blissful prospect!

And when associated with him in that resurrection glory, their bodies fashioned into the likeness of his own, they shall be *made perfect in one*, and the *perfection* of the oneness will be manifest.

And when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, and every eye shall see him, and they also appear with him in glory, then will the world *know* that Jesus is the sent one of the Father, and that they also are loved with the same love as that with which the Father loves him.

Then, as not having yet exhausted the desires of his loving heart, he asks that they may not only be associated with him in his manifested glory to the world, but that they also may be with him and near him in his own eternal dwelling place with the Father, there to gaze on his divine glories, and share his everlasting love.

This divine, heavenly, and perfect oneness of the Church in Spirit, is beautifully typified, as I have said, by these *taches of gold* and *loops of blue*.

Gold is the emblem of that which is *divine*; and *blue* of that which is *heavenly* and *perfect*: and such is the oneness of the Church in Spirit. Their oneness is *of God*. It is even as the Father and the Son are one, effected by the indwelling of the divine Spirit, the Spirit of the Father and the Son.

But it is a oneness with the ascended Christ, the *heavenly* Man, by the Holy Ghost sent down from *heaven*.

And this oneness is *perfect*; although the glorious perfection of it will only fully appear when the one Church, having no spot, wrinkle, or any such thing, shall descend out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, and shining with a light clear as crystal.

And this *Divine, heavenly, and perfect oneness* still exists, and nothing can touch it. The loops of blue and taches of gold never let go their holdfast.

The prayer of Christ secures it. A prayer heard and answered.

The outward manifested earthly oneness of the Church was committed dispensationally to the hands of man, and, like

every thing else committed to him, it is gone, utterly and for ever gone.

The earthen vessel has been smashed into a thousand fragments; the golden bowl remains intact.

The flesh of the oyster is corrupting and putrefying; the *pearl* remains in all its peerless oneness, and its priceless value.

The outward fellowship of Churches and of Saints, where is it? Nevertheless, in Spirit we are still one.

In matters of *human* opinion, of *worldly* policy, and of man's *imperfect* reasoning, how many the points of difference!

In matters of *divine* faith, of *heavenly* truth, and of scriptural *perfection*, how numerous the points of union!

One hundred loops of blue, and fifty taches of gold, unite the ten curtains and every fibre of them into *one Tabernacle*.

Is all this any excuse for our wretched outward divisions, when not called for by the glory of God and of Christ, and by the interests of vital truth? Is this any palliation of our sin? Far from it.

And even now, in various parts of the world, the Spirit of God is arousing individual souls to the consciousness of this solemn fact. And by gathering sinners direct to the person of a divine Saviour, and by associating saints around the person of a divine *Master*, he is bringing twos and threes in separation from human systems which *divide*, to the divine center, which *unites*, to taste afresh the blessedness of the words of Jesus, in their comfort, their sweetness, and their power,

that they all may be one (John 17:21).

Lecture 7

The Curtains of the Tent

EXODUS 26:7-13

And thou shalt make curtains of goats' hair, to be a covering upon the tabernacle: eleven curtains shalt thou make. The length of one curtain shall be thirty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: and the eleven curtains shall be all of one measure. And thou shalt couple five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves, and shalt double the sixth curtain in the forefront of the tabernacle. And thou shalt make fifty loops on the edge of the one curtain that is outmost in the coupling, and fifty loops in the edge of the curtain which coupleth the second. And thou shalt make fifty taches of brass, and put the taches into the loops, and couple the tent together, that it may be one. And the remnant that remaineth of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remaineth, shall hang over the backside of the tabernacle.

The Goats' Hair Curtains

And thou shalt make curtains of goats' hair, to be a tent³ upon the tabernacle: eleven curtains shalt thou make {Ex. 26:7}.

The ten curtains of fine twined linen formed the *tabernacle*; these eleven curtains of goats' hair compose the *tent*.

Looking on the tent as typical of the Lord Jesus when on earth, it presents him as taking upon him the form of a servant, and made in the likeness of men (Phil. 3:7). Yea more, oh marvellous stoop of condescending love, as made in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3). For the goat in Scripture was especially selected for the sin offering, as typical of Christ; though it was only on the cross that he was "made sin for us." And the parable in Matt. 25:31, to the end, shows the marked distinction in figure between the sheep and the goat. We know that he personally "knew no sin"; yet, in outward form and appearance, he was found in fashion as a man.

At the same time, like the tabernacle enclosed by the tent, he was the habitation of God, the glory of the godhead dwelt within.

In the second place, looking at the tent as typical of the Church of God on earth, it presents us the Church as composed of individuals living in the world: not as the Church inwardly in Spirit, but the Church outwardly in the flesh.⁴

It is called the tent of the *congregation*, as representing those who are associated, or gathered together, to the

confession of the name of Jesus -- the assembly, or assemblies, of the saints.

And the tent of *witness*, as representing them as the witnessing company for Christ in the earth.

I am black, but comely,
says the bride,
as the tents of Kedar;

such is the Church's outward appearance in the flesh,
as the curtains of Solomon (S of S 1:5);

such she is within, as the workmanship of the Divine and Eternal Spirit.

The Dimensions of the Curtains

The length of one curtain shall be thirty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits {Ex. 26:8}.

The dimensions and limits of the curtains of the tent of the congregation, as well as of the tabernacle, are fixed and laid down by God himself in his word.

There are two cubits more in the curtains of the tent than in those of the tabernacle, and this is significant.

The quickening and indwelling of the Spirit of God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, is all that is requisite in order to any one's forming part of the Church in Spirit now, as the body of Christ;

for by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body
(1 Cor. 12:13).

Where there is the revelation of the Son by the Father in the power of the Holy Ghost, *there* is a living stone; but, in order to form part of the Church as the witnessing company to Christ in the earth, there must also be the *confession* of Christ, the Son of the living God, as the result of Divine

3. Tent, not *Covering*. Compare Ex. 36:14.

4. Not as to standing, of course; for in that sense we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit (Rom. 8:9), but as being as yet in the body.

teaching. (See Matt. 16:13-18.) And those who are built upon the foundation, and associated together in this confession, compose the Church of Christ, as the witness for him in the world (John 12:42, 43). There must also be *consistency* with this confession; for the brother that has offended, and will not hear the Church, or the assembly of those who are gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus, such an one is to be regarded as a heathen man, and a publican (Matt. 18:15-20). He is outside of that which is the witness for Christ in the earth.

The inscription on the curtains of the *tabernacle* is,

The foundation of God standeth sure; having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his (2 Tim. 2:19).

The inscription on the curtains of the *tent* is,

Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity (2 Tim. 2:19).

As to the Church of God in Spirit -- the tabernacle of God -- the Lord Jesus knows every one of those who belong to him. They may not be able to apprehend themselves with certainty that they belong to Jesus; the world may not know it; they may be hidden ones; but the foundation of their security is this: the Lord knows them, and all they that are his at his coming, shall be raised to the first resurrection, and every member of his mystic body shall form part of the Bride in the glory. But as the witness to Christ in the earth -- the tent of the congregation -- the pillar and ground of God's truth -- separation from evil is the principle of its very existence: without this it crumbles into ruins. Moral or doctrinal evil, admitted into an assembly of witnesses for Christ, is like a fretting leprosy in one of the curtains of the tent, which will destroy it in the warp and woof (Lev. 13:47-52).

Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved {Rom. 10:13}.

This is true of all who compose the tabernacle, or Church of God in Spirit.

And,

Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity {2 Tim. 2:19}.

This is the precept which is imperative on all who form part of the tent of the congregation -- the witness to the name and truth of Christ on the earth.

The Uniformity of the Measure of the Curtains

The eleven curtains shall be all of one measure {Ex. 26:8}.

As each curtain of the *tabernacle* represents all those believers who, in any particular place, form the Church of God in Spirit in that place, so each distinct curtain of the *tent* represents those saints of God, and disciples of Christ, who may be associated together around the person, and to the confession

of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in a given locality; forming a local Church there, such as was the Church at Ephesus, or at Philippi, or at Colosse.

But it is the will of God, and according to the Word of God, that each distinct gathering of believers should have the same principles of association and of discipline; so that a person received in any one place as a believer, who is walking consistently and confessing the truth, should be admitted into full communion in every other assembly of God's saints, not as a member of any particular church, but as a member of the Body of Christ.

And an evangelist, a pastor, or a teacher, labouring acceptably in any one place, should be received in every other place, and be perfectly at liberty to perform his service there, as one under responsibility to Christ, and a steward in the household of God.

So, on the other hand, any person not received on sufficient grounds in one place, or put out of communion by the assembly there, with the sanction of Christ, and under the guidance of his Spirit, should be regarded as outside every other gathering of saints everywhere. That the godly discipline of one assembly may not be nullified by the ungodly laxity of another.

And there is another thing. There is a fellowship of *churches* as well as of *individuals*; and the same principles which apply to individuals, will apply with accumulated force to assemblies.

If we are to avoid communion with a *person* who refuses to judge or to renounce evil in conduct or doctrine, how much more are we called on to refuse communion with *assemblies* which refuse to judge evil or heresy, and to maintain *collectively* the holiness and truth which becomes the house of God, and the honour and authority of Christ.

The Coupling Together Of the Curtains

And thou shalt couple the five curtains by themselves, and the six curtains by themselves, and shalt double the sixth curtain in the forefront of the tent {Ex. 26:9}.

How beautifully and expressively this sets forth the happy fellowship of *assemblies*, where holiness, and truth, and subjection to Jesus has been maintained! And God would have this fellowship experimentally and practically realized.

"Thou *shalt* couple the *five* curtains by themselves, and the six curtains by themselves." And does not this also express the communion together which God would have enjoyed by assemblies of believers in any particular district, more or less extended? -- such as between the Churches of Galatia, or the Seven Churches of Asia; while provision is made, as we shall see presently, that *all* may be one.

The Loops and Brazen Taches

And thou shalt make fifty loops on the edge of the one curtain that is outmost in the coupling, and fifty loops in the edge of the coupling which coupleth the second. And thou shalt make fifty taches of brass, and put the taches into the loops, and couple the tent together, that it may be one {Ex. 26:10, 11}.

We have just seen the arrangement of God, that the *curtains* may be united. We have here his provision, that the *tent* may be one; for church union is not only an association of churches, but ONE CHURCH.

Bezaleel and his companions were endued with skill and wisdom from God, to make the tabernacle and the tent according to the pattern shown to Moses in the Mount -- one tabernacle and one tent.

The Spirit of God baptizes into one body all believers in Jesus {Christ}, as the tabernacle or dwelling-place of God; and the apostles and their fellow-labourers, under the direct guidance and control of the Spirit, carried out the Divine thought in the original formation of the outward Church; for it was one, in a manifest and unbroken outward unity, one tent.

And God had made full provision for the continuance of this oneness, in the one doctrine of his Word, the one teaching of his Spirit, and the supreme Lordship of his Son. But human traditions having been permitted to mingle with, and to supersede the pure doctrines of the Word; and the teachings of the so-called Church to interfere with the teaching of the Spirit; and the authority of man to set aside the *sole* Lordship of Christ in his Church, the outward oneness which once existed, exists no longer.

But God's principles are unchangeably the same. The Word of God continues to be the depository and criterion of revealed truth; the Comforter remains, and the Lord Jesus retains his supremacy; and the blessing, and the privilege, and the profit, is to be realized and enjoyed still, whenever two or three are found to carry into practice God's original instructions, by meeting together on God's principles. The testimony of the Lord Jesus to the Church in Philadelphia is the witness of this (Rev. 3:7-13).

There were one hundred loops, (of what material or colour we are not told, probably of the same material as the curtains,) forming one hundred links of union, but not of *blue*, not of heavenly perfectness. And fifty taches of brass, strong and enduring, but not taches of *gold*, the emblem of Divine and eternal oneness.

The loops of blue and taches of gold uniting in one the tabernacle of God, prefigured the oneness of the Church in Spirit, in the bond of charity or love -- a bond Divine, heavenly, and perfect.

These loops of goats' hair and taches of brass coupling the tent together that it might be one, shows the outward

Church united in the bond of brotherly kindness, a bond strong and lasting indeed, but still human.

This distinction is marked in 2 Pet. 1:5-7:

Giving all diligence -- add to your brotherly kindness, charity.

The tache of gold never lets go, for it is the emblem of Divine charity. The loop of blue never gives way, for it is the figure of perfect love. Not so the taches of brass and the loops of the tent, for they represent the human affections; the brotherly kindness which, by the command of God, we are to manifest the one to another, as belonging to the family of God and the household of faith, whilst walking worthy of God.

If any man obey not the Word of God, we are to have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. (See 2 Thess. 3:14).

The *outward expression* of brotherly love has received a check;

yet we are not to count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. (See 2 Thess. 3:15).

The tache of gold remains intertwined with the loops of blue. That is, in the exercise of Divine *charity*, we are to be *perfect*, as our *Father* which is in *heaven* is perfect.

In the deep love of our hearts we may grieve over, pray for, and seek the restoration of our erring brother; but if he bring not the pure doctrine of a true Christ, we are not to receive him into our house, neither bid him God speed, for in bidding him God speed we should be partakers of his evil deeds (2 John 10, 11).

John was the disciple whom Jesus loved; one who was wont to lie in the bosom of Jesus, and whose heart there learnt to beat in unison with the heart of him in whom Divine love, in all its fulness, dwelt. Yet we hear John saying,

I wrote unto the Church, but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth (3 John 9, 10).

John was one of those, and prominent among them, whose constant effort it was to maintain the truth of the Person of Christ, and who would admit of no compromise.

Diotrephes was one who sought to maintain his own place in the Church, in indifference to the truth of Christ. This is manifest, for rather than have his own influence interfered with, he kept the witnesses for the truth of Christ outside.

Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good (3 John 11).

Divine love led the Father to give his Son to die for sinners. The same love leads him to chasten his children for their sins. Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it. But he himself says,

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten (Rev. 3:19).

Divine love led Jesus to be a sacrifice for sin. The same love constrained him to pray,

If it be possible, let this cup pass from me {Matt. 26:39};
for contact with sin, and to be numbered with transgressors,
is intolerable to Divine love in its intrinsic holiness.

Divine love in a believer clings to a brother with an undying grasp; but Divine love will never allow him to rejoice in his iniquity, nor to have fellowship with his untruthfulness. For it is love in the truth for the truth's sake which Divine charity manifests.

Jesus prayed for his Church, that it might be one, and it is one, divinely, perfectly, and for ever one. Jesus commanded his disciples that they should love one another, and they are taught of God to do so. He who does not love, gives no evidence that he is born of God. And we *do* love one another, just in proportion as the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, and as we are thus made partakers of the Divine nature, for God is love, and love is of God. But in the manifestation of this love, and in the exercise of brotherly kindness, there is need of Divine wisdom, for real love can neither connive at sin, nor be indifferent to error.

Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth
(1 Cor. 13:6).

It manifests itself in faithfulness; faithfulness to God, to Christ, and to the brethren.

The Tent Covering the Tabernacle

And the remnant that remaineth of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remaineth, shall hang over the back side of the tabernacle. And a cubit on the one side, and a cubit on the other side of that which remaineth in the length of the tent, it shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle on this side and on that side, to cover it
{Ex. 26:12, 13}.

By this arrangement, the beautifully-wrought curtains forming the tabernacle were entirely enclosed and hidden by the curtains of the tent; the tabernacle, as we have shown, representing the Church inwardly in Spirit, and the tent the Church in outward manifestation.

Lecture 8

The Coverings of the Tent

EXODUS 26:14

And thou shalt make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering above of badgers' skins.

The Covering of Rams' Skins

And thou shalt make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red {Ex. 26:14}.

It is not called a covering for the *tabernacle*, though in one sense that is true, but a covering for the *tent*; for it is not the Church in Spirit, but the Church in testimony, that especially needs this covering. The curtains of goats' hair formed a *tent* upon the *tabernacle* (Ex. 26:7). These rams' skins dyed red form a *covering* for the *tent* {Ex. 26:14}.

The *lamb* was the type of the Lord Jesus in the meekness, gentleness, and lowliness of his *character*; the *ram* the type of him in the strength, firmness, and decision of his *testimony*.

The rams' skins being *dyed red* add another thought, that of the atoning death and precious blood of the Lamb of God.

The tent under the covering of the rams' skins dyed red shows the Church as accepted in the person, and under the cover and shelter of the blood of the Lamb.

When the first intimation of gospel grace was given by God himself to our first parents in the garden of Eden, in those words,

The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head {Gen. 3:15},

Adam, on the part of himself and of his wife, made his confession of faith, by calling his wife's name Eve, the mother of all *living*, though the sentence of death had just been pronounced on himself and his posterity on account of sin. Yet he calls her not the mother of all dying, but of all living, for faith laid hold on the promise, and associated in life and victory with the virgin's seed who was to come, all who should believe in him. Thereupon God made, as a substitute for the aprons of fig leaves, which unbelief had sewed together, *coats of skins*, and clothed them. Thus Adam and Eve no longer appeared in their nakedness and shame, but clothed and covered by God himself in the skins of those victims which probably were the first sacrifices, foreshadowing the bruising of the heel, and the atoning death of the woman's promised seed.

In like manner the tent, covered with this covering of rams' skins dyed red, shows the Church in its testimony as seen in Christ,

in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of God's grace {Eph. 1:7}.

And, as *thus seen*, notwithstanding all the failure in testimony of those composing it, and their unworthiness in themselves, what was said of Israel may be applied to them,

He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel (Num. 23:21).

While, at the same time, we know that there was no iniquity or perverseness that God did not discover and deal with, as walking in their midst.

It is important to remember this, that the Church's completeness in Christ above does not exempt her from God's fatherly discipline, and the judgment of the Lord Jesus down here. Totally the reverse. We are called to walk worthy of God unto all well pleasing, and to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. And we are dealt with on the ground of this high responsibility.

You only have I known,
says God to Israel,
of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you
for all your iniquities (Amos 3:2).

The more God's presence is manifested in the assembly, the more will it be felt that he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look on sin.

The Outer Covering

And a covering above of badgers' skins {Ex. 26:14}.

This typifies the Church in its outward appearance, as seen by man.

As the tents of Kedar (S of S 1:5).

I clothed thee also with brodered work, and *shod thee with badgers' skin* (Ezek. 16:10).

It is the *pilgrim aspect* of the Church, which is thus presented, in which it is conformed to the lowly appearance of Jesus when on earth, having no form nor comeliness, and no beauty that man should desire him (Isa. 53:2, 3). And therefore, whilst walking in conformity with the pattern thus set us by our Lord,

the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not
(1 John 3:1).

Solomon's Temple was "exceeding magnificent," for it was the type of the redeemed in glory. *The tabernacle*, though all glorious within, was covered with a covering of badgers' skins; for it is the figure of the Church in the wilderness.

Every thing externally gaudy and attractive to the natural eye is entirely out of character with the present dispensation. How much this truth has been lost sight of!

When the mustard plant became a tree, its original distinctive character was gone.

A spreading vine of low stature {Ezek. 17:6}

best comports with the Church's true design. Lowliness and humility best suit its spirit, and unpretending simplicity its external form.

Those upper rooms and private dwellings in which the disciples originally met, witnessed the presence of God, the manifestation of Christ, and the power of the Spirit, blessedly and gloriously beyond compare. While the finger of God, since then, has been often employed in writing "Ichabod" on the *plaster* of the interior walls of many of the ecclesiastical masterpieces of human skill (Dan. 5:5).

The wearing of gold, and the putting on of apparel, gives the lie to the profession of discipleship; and the embellishment of the places of assembly contradicts the acknowledgment that we are pilgrims and strangers here.

The world's livery does not look well on the servants of Christ; and the architecture of an idol's temple is not necessary to secure the presence of Jesus with the two or three assembled in his name. On the other hand, away with the thought that any thing is good enough for God and Christ. No! no!

Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase {Prov. 3:9};

but let it be suitable -- let it be in accordance with God's mind and word.

Let all things be done decently, and in order
{1 Cor. 14:40}.

Whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, let us think on these things.

A disciple's outward appearance should be so consistent with the position in which God in his providence has placed him, as to give no occasion for remark; and the places of assembly for God's saints should leave the hearers and worshippers while there in entire freedom to wait on the Lord without distraction.

The tent of the congregation was not left without a covering: a suitable and substantial one was provided.

And will our God and Saviour leave us destitute of decent clothing, or of suitable places of assembly? Surely not. Our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of these things {Matt. 6:32}.

Summary of the Curtains

Looking on the Lord Jesus while on earth as typified by the tabernacle (John 1:14), the inner wrought curtains answer to him as the *Son of God*, in his excellency and beauty.

Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness (Rom. 1:4).

The goats' hair curtains, as the *Son of Mary* (Luke 1:35), made in the likeness of men; yet personally that holy thing, born of the Virgin.

The rams' skins dyed red present him as the *Son of Man*, who gave his life a ransom for many -- God's spotless Lamb.

And the badgers' skin covering, as Jesus of Nazareth, the *Son of Joseph*, the stranger here, to whom the world was a wilderness wide, and life one weary pilgrimage from the manger to the Cross.

But regarding the tabernacle and tent, with its coverings, as typical of the Church of God, *the curtains of fine linen* represent the Church in spirit, as the workmanship of the Holy Ghost.

The goats' hair curtains, the Church in testimony, and in outward responsibility.

The rams' skins dyed red, the Church as seen of God in Christ, and under the cover of his atoning blood.

And the *badgers' skin*, the Church as seen by the world in their pilgrimage character, and their outward condition here.

In *resurrection glory*, however, the internal workmanship of the *Holy Spirit*, as typified by the curtains of the tabernacle, will appear in all its Divine perfection and beauty.

The *flesh*, with all its imperfections, will be done away for ever, these vile bodies fashioned like Christ's glorious body, this mortal will have put on immortality, and this corruptible incorruption. The goats' hair tent will be exchanged for the

building of God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (2 Cor. 5:1).

But the Church will ever appear as accepted in God's beloved, their robes washed and made white in the *blood of the Lamb*.

While the *pilgrim garb* will be exchanged for the becoming robes of royalty and triumph, the priestly garments of glory and of beauty. No longer the badgers' skin covering externally visible, but

having the glory of God (Rev. 21:11).

Lecture 9

The Boards of the Tabernacle

EXODUS 26:15-25

And thou shalt make boards for the tabernacle of shittim wood standing up. Ten cubits shall be the length of a board, and a cubit and a half shall be the breadth of one board. Two tenons shall there be in one board, set in order one against another: thus shalt thou make for all the boards of the tabernacle. And thou shalt make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards on the south side southward. And thou shalt make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for his two tenons, and two sockets under another board for his two tenons. And for the second side of the tabernacle on the north side there shall be twenty boards: and their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board. And for the sides of the tabernacle westward thou shalt make six boards. And two boards shalt thou make for the corners of the tabernacle in the two sides. And they shall be coupled together beneath, and they shall be coupled together above the head of it unto one ring: thus shall it be for them both; they shall be for the two corners. And they shall be eight boards, and their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board.

The Boards of Shittim Wood

And thou shalt make the ⁵ boards for the tabernacle of shittim wood standing up {Ex. 26:15}.

Regarding the tabernacle as typical of Christ, these boards of shittim wood overlaid with gold, the framework of the tabernacle, represent him in the combination of the human and the Divine natures in his blessed person, the foundation truth of Christianity,

God manifest in the flesh {1 Tim. 3:16}.

But, taking the tabernacle as typical of the Church, these boards represent the individual believers of whom the Church of God is composed.

The Material

They were to be of shittim wood, shittim wood being, as we have seen, typical of human nature.

Their Position

Boards of shittim wood standing up {Ex. 26:15}.

This intimates that they had been previously cut down.

Believers were once the children of wrath, even as

others, growing wild in nature's forest; but they had been selected by Divine grace, and had been brought low by the convictions of the Spirit, and they are here seen standing in grace (Rom. 5:2). Their feet, as it were, set upon a rock, and their goings established (Psa. 40:2).

The Design

Boards for the tabernacle {Ex. 26:15}.

Representing true believers, prepared to confess Christ, and to meet together in the confession of his name.

Not only by one Spirit baptized into one Body, which is true of all believers, but also builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. 2:22), which is outwardly true only of those who are united together in the confession of the name of Jesus in Church fellowship.

Boards for the tabernacle of God. Not members of a particular Church. This is man's perversion of the Divine original. Not *any* person for an outward professing Church, formed on man's model, but *the* boards, representing real believers, saints, and faithful brethren in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2), which could keep rank (1 Chron. 12:23). Consistent in walk, sound in doctrine, subject to the authority of Christ, keeping his word, and not denying his name, and associated together to form a sanctuary for a dwelling-place for God (Ex. 25:8, and Eph. 2:22).

5. The boards, so the Hebrew.

The Dimensions of the Boards

Ten cubits shall be the length of a board, and a cubit and a half the breadth of one board {Ex. 26:16}.

Say about eighteen feet three inches high, by two feet nine wide.

Thus ten cubits was the height of the tabernacle. One third of the height of the holy place in Solomon's temple, and half the height of the most holy place.

A certain height and breadth was appointed by God for the boards of the tabernacle.

In Num. 3:15, &c., we find that every male of the tribe of Levi was numbered from a month old and upward. But in ch. 4 they were numbered from thirty years old and upward.

All that entered into the host; to do the work in the tent of the congregation {Num. 4:3}.

And in chapter 1 we read that all Israel from twenty years old and upward were numbered,

all that were able to go forth to war in Israel {Num. 1:2, 3}.

Every regenerate person is born into the family of God, and is a member of the body of Christ: and, *as such*, has a title to a place in the assembly.

But in order to fill this place happily and to the glory of God, a certain depth, height, and breadth of Christian experience is desirable. He must have faith in Jesus, and being justified by faith, have peace with God; and standing in grace, rejoice in hope of glory. He must also be in charity with his brethren, and prepared to show and to receive love.

Faith, hope, and charity, these three. Depth, height, and breadth.

Depth, down to the sockets of silver (Ex. 26:19). *Faith* in redemption.

Height, up to the rings of gold (Ex. 26:24). *Hope* of the coming glory.

Breadth, extending to the other boards on either side. *Love* in the truth to all them that have known the truth, for the truth's sake which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever (2 John 1:2).

These boards were not trees left unhewn, in their natural shape, but planks, four-square, like stones fitted for their appointed place in a building.

We should meet, not simply as professors, but as *believers*; and not only as believers, but in the name of him that is *holy* and *true*, and that *hath the key of David* (Rev. 3:7).

This is, I believe, God's model for building at the present time.

There must be, individually and collectively, *faith*, *holiness*, *truth*, and *subjection* to the Lordship of Christ, if we would so meet as that Christ may say,

Thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name {Rev. 3:8}.

The Tenons

Two tenons shall there be in one board, set in order one against another: thus shalt thou make for all the boards of the tabernacle (Ex. 26:17).

"Two tenons," Hebrew, "hands." According to their name they appear to represent the *hands of faith*, laying hold on the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; and, according to their position at the bottom of the boards, they suggest the idea of the *feet of faith*, standing firm on redemption, and the redemption price.

"Set in order." So as to fit exactly into the sockets. No slackness, no wavering, but "steadfast, and unmoveable," "stablished, strengthened, settled."

"Two hands," or two feet. A firm grasp, and firm standing.

"*Thus shalt thou make for all the boards of the tabernacle.*" The tabernacle of God is composed of such and such only as have saving faith in Jesus, and in the redemption accomplished by his atoning blood.

The Number of the Boards On the South and North Sides

And thou shalt make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards on the south side southward. And for the second side of the tabernacle, on the north side there shall be twenty boards (Ex. 26:18, 20).

Twenty boards of a cubit and a half make thirty cubits, while the length of the holy place of the temple and the most holy together was sixty cubits, or double the length.

Thirty cubits will be about fifty-five feet long.

The Sockets of Silver

And thou shalt make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for his two tenons, and two sockets under another board for his two tenons (Ex. 26:19).

The comparison of Ex. 30:11-16 and Ex. 38:25-28, with 1 Pet. 1:18, 19, will give us most clearly and beautifully the spiritual import of these sockets of silver.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then they shall give every man a *ransom* for his soul unto the Lord, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them when thou numberest them. This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs;) an half shekel shall be the

offering of the Lord. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls (Ex. 30:1-15).

Forasmuch as ye know,
says Peter,

that ye were 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 {1 Pet 1:18, 19}.

All God's people are numbered as a *ransomed people*; to be reckoned among them on the ground of profession merely, is to come under judgment. The tares will in due time be all burned in the fire (Matt. 13).

The redemption price is fixed by God himself. The value of the soul, and the demerit of sin, being estimated according to divine holiness and its requirements. ("After the shekel of the sanctuary.") There can be no ransom for the soul, and no redemption for the sinner at a less price than the precious blood of Christ; and all souls are of equal value.

Then as to the use made of the redemption silver.

And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shall appoint it for the service of the tent of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls (Ex. 30:16).

And the silver of them that were numbered of the congregation, was an hundred talents, and a thousand seven hundred and three score and fifteen shekels after the shekel of the sanctuary . . . *and of the hundred talents of silver* were cast the *sockets of the sanctuary*, and the *sockets of the vail*; *an hundred sockets of the hundred talents*, a talent for a socket (Ex. 38:25, 27).

A talent of silver is computed at £342 3s. 9d.; a talent being about 1.14 lbs. weight.

Thus typically each individual comparing the habitation of God is seen standing on redemption as a soul ransomed by the precious blood of Christ, God's spotless Lamb; and the whole foundations of the tabernacle are laid in that which is the memorial to God's people, and the memorial before God of the completed work of Jesus.

The candlestick was made of one talent of gold, expressive of the all-sufficiency of Divine grace, as provided for testimony.

And to each socket of the tabernacle there was apportioned a whole talent of silver, expressive of the all-sufficiency of the redemption price.

The Two Sides Westward

And for the sides of the tabernacle, westward, thou shalt make six boards. And two boards shalt thou make for the corners of the tabernacle in the two sides {Ex. 26:22, 23}.

Sides, not side; "two sides westward." Three boards for each

side, meeting in the middle, and projecting about two cubits in the center, and two boards for the corners, one board for each corner, making eight boards in all.

In representations of the tabernacle, the west end is generally drawn as though it was composed of one side only, whereas there are two sides and two corners. Six boards are but enough to reach from side to side (the breadth of the tabernacle, as found by the size of the curtains being ten cubits), and eight boards are too many if put straight. As suggested above, I believe all difficulty is removed, and the sixteen sockets will also be in place.

The Coupling and Foundations Of the Corner Boards

And they shall be coupled ⁶ beneath, and they shall be coupled together above the head of it unto the ring: thus shall it be for them both; they shall be for the two corners. And they shall be eight boards, and their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board (Ex. 26:24, 25.)

In Heb. 3:6, we read,

Christ as a Son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the *confidence* and *rejoicing of the hope* firm unto the end.

And again,

For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the *beginning of our confidence* steadfast unto the end (Heb. 3:14).

The boards were "coupled *beneath*." And believers are one in the confidence of *faith*. Each board standing firm in the sockets of silver, and each believer established in the faith of the Gospel.

And the boards were also "coupled together to one ring *above*." And we are one in the rejoicing of the *hope*. We have *one faith* and one *hope of our calling*. Christ crucified is the foundation of our *faith*, and Christ glorified the substance and center of our *hope*, Christ himself being the chief Corner Stone, uniting the Jew and the Gentile in one on earth beneath; and he is also the Head Stone of the corner, uniting them together in one in heaven above.

6. Not coupled together. Compare Ex. 36:29, where it is correctly rendered. There is a difference in the Hebrew expressions.

Lecture 10

The Bars of the Tabernacle

EXODUS 26:26-30

And thou shalt make bars of shittim wood; five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle, for the two sides westward. And the middle bar in the midst of the boards shall reach from end to end. And thou shalt overlay the boards with gold, and make their rings of gold for places for the bars: and thou shalt overlay the bars with gold. And thou shalt rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which was showed thee in the mount.

The Bars

And thou shalt make bars of shittim wood {Ex. 26:26}.

We have already considered the *boards* of the tabernacle, fitly framed together, and firmly fixed in the sockets of silver, as typical of believers standing in redemption, and associated together in Church fellowship. We have now to consider the *bars* of shittim wood, overlaid with gold -- God's provision for compacting together and securing the whole.

The fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians will furnish us with a solution of the spiritual import of these bars.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is largely occupied with priesthood and sacrifice, and there we find the corresponding types richly unfolded.

The Epistle to the Ephesians preeminently treats of the Church, and it is there we especially find the interpretation of the things connected with the tabernacle.

In the first six verses of Eph. 4, the seven-fold, or perfect provision for the unity of the Church is mentioned; one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.

Then, from verses 7 to 11, the *five gifts* given from a once humbled, but now ascended and glorified Saviour, are noticed -- apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

Then the object for which they are given is stated from verses 12 to 16:

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning

craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

These five bars of the tabernacle answer most strikingly to these five gifts from a risen Christ, and their object and end is the same, the "perfecting," "edifying," and "compacting" of the whole together.

The Material

Bars of Shittim Wood {Ex. 26:26}.

They were to be *of shittim wood*, reminding us that those who have received gifts for service to the Lord and to his saints, are men of like passions with others. They have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of them. Not sufficient of themselves to think anything as of themselves, they can of their own selves do nothing.

The Arrangement of the Bars

Five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle, for the two sides westward. And the middle bar in the midst of the boards shall reach from end to end (Ex. 26:26-28).

There are five bars for each side of the tabernacle, and there are four sides, one north, one south, and two sides westward.

God's arrangements and provisions for ministry are simple, perfect, and uniform, and adapted to the need of the

Church of God throughout the whole world.

The gifts of the Spirit are for the edifying of the whole body; and wherever believers are gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus, there these gifts have their place and service.

All believers everywhere have need of all the gifts of the Spirit for their compacting and edifying; and according to God's arrangements, whatever gifts there may be, are available for all.

The apportioning a certain number of souls for one man's care, or one man to a certain number, is entirely contrary to God's order. The gifts are for the body, and God sets them in the Church for the benefit of all.

The leading of the Spirit, or the providence of God, may indeed place some in certain localities; but all believers have a title to their service, and they are debtors according to their ability and opportunity to all. Every human arrangement which interferes with this, is a thwarting of God's gracious, benevolent plan.

There are two bars lying side by side near the bottom of the boards of the tabernacle (not one above the other), one in the center, and two side by side near the top; thus,



The two under bars may be taken to represent the gifts of the *apostles* and *prophets*. These, as to doctrine and practice, according to the ability given them of God, have laid the foundation. And the Church is said to be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.

This they did by their labours, example, and teaching in their lifetime, and in the inspired Scriptures of the New Testament which they have left, the Church has still the benefit of their gifts.

The foundations have been laid; the word of God filled up and perfected. Since then there have been no new revelations of doctrine, and no new directions for practice, the doctrines, precepts, and principles of Scripture being fully adequate to meet all emergencies. Therein the man of God is thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Hence, apostles and, prophets, in the strict sense of the words, are no longer to be found among living men; but we have them, as I have said, in the inspired word, for every necessary purpose.

The middle bar in the center of the boards was entire, extending the whole length of the tabernacle from end to end; whereas, the other bars met in the middle, extending only half way each.

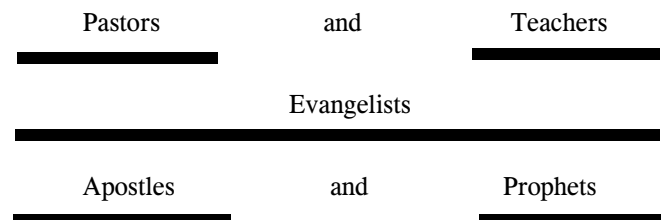
The middle bar is beautifully suggestive of the wide,

extended sphere of the labours of the *evangelist*, whose commission is,

Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature {Mark 16:15},

and in whose experience the prompting of the Spirit is ever to the regions beyond {2 Cor. 10:16}
-- "the regions beyond."

The two bars near the top represent the ministry of the *pastors* and *teachers*; the *pastor* watching over the souls of the converted, feeding the flock of God. And the *teacher* leading them onward and upward into further and higher acquaintance with the truth of God, and of the love, person, and ways of Jesus. Thus,



The Overlaying of The Boards with Gold

And thou shalt overlay the boards with gold {Ex. 26:29}.

It is remarkable that the direction for overlaying the boards does not occur in the portion which treats of the *boards* themselves (verses 15 to 25); but here in connection with the *bars*; and, doubtless, there is significancy in this.

The boards were of shittim wood, for they represent believers, *in themselves* the partakers of *human nature*, in its weakness and frailty. But the boards are overlaid with gold; signifying that, *as one with Jesus*; believers are also partakers of the *Divine nature* (2 Pet: 1:4).

As associated together in the confession of the name of Christ, they are not regarded as they are in themselves, but as seen of God in Christ Jesus, -- the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty.

As we are by the grace of God -- as seen by him in the Son of his love -- such we ought to be practically and experimentally at all times, but especially when gathered in the name of Jesus, under the searching eye of him with whom we have to do, that, as builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit, there may be nothing to grieve or quench that Holy Spirit of our God, or to hinder the full flow of blessing from our God and Father.

Oh for grace ever to remember this! As the shittim wood in the tabernacle was nowhere to be seen, so the flesh, or that

which is merely natural, should never be manifest in the assembly of God's saints. But putting off the old man, and putting on the new, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the Divine nature should appear, and Divine charity be ever in full exercise.

Thus it would come to pass that the distinctions and graduations which exist in the arrangements of Divine providence, and which cannot be overlooked with impunity in the outward walks of life, would disappear when believers were assembled together in the Church; and each and all, as children of God, members of Christ, dwelt in by the Spirit, partakers of the same Divine and eternal life, loved and loving with the same Divine charity, they would hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, without respect of persons (James 2:1).

But more than this. "Holiness becomes God's house." The infirmities of the flesh may be confessed in the closet, but ought never to mar the worship of the assembled saints. Collective failure may be acknowledged in the prayer meeting; but when met in the Church, as, for example, around the table of the Lord, we should meet and worship as the sons of God,

a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, showing forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light (1 Pet. 2:9).

Yet, while the gold glittered on the surface of the boards, the shittim wood still existed within. So it becomes us ever to remember that, notwithstanding all that Divine grace has made us; in ourselves we are nothing at all.

The true circumcision, worshipping God in the Spirit, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, but having no confidence of the flesh {Phil. 3:3}.

This, however, is no excuse for sin or failure; for the grace of Christ is sufficient for us, and his strength is made perfect in weakness.

But why is this direction to overlay the boards with gold reserved for insertion here, in the midst of the instructions respecting the bars?

Does it not intimate a connection between the exercising of the gifts given, and the fuller participation and manifestation of the Divine nature?

Thus holding the Head, all the Body, *by joints and bands*, having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth *with the increase of God*.

And while God,

according to his Divine power, has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, . . . whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, *that by these we might be partakers of the Divine nature*,

-- is it not through the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit, in the ministry of the Word, that very especially, both individually

and collectively, these great and precious promises are realized, and that this growth in grace is experienced (2 Pet. 1:3, 4)?

The Golden Rings

And make their rings of gold for places for the bars (Ex. 26:29).

There is a divinely given and provided place for ministry, in the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit, in the Church of God.

"Rings of gold for places for the bars"; how significant!

Yes, there is a place provided and appointed of God for each of the several kinds of ministry.

A place for the apostles and prophets, which none else can occupy: a place of authority and power.

A place for the evangelist, and a work of vast importance and responsibility; having to do with souls and with eternity.

A place for the pastor and the teacher, in watching over, and leading on, the souls of the redeemed, with which the saints' well-being, and the honour of the Lord Jesus, is intimately connected.

The Overlaying of the Bars

And thou shalt overlay the bars with gold {Ex. 26:29}.

As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ {1 Pet. 4:10, 11}.

Real ministry is the exercise of a gift received from God through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Ghost, according to the ability which God giveth, and for God's glory.

It is not mere natural ability, however highly cultivated, or however fully recognized by human authority. It is something far more precious, more glorious, more important than this.

How vividly the Apostle Paul realized the truth so beautifully set forth by these bars of shittim wood, overlaid with gold!

I magnify mine office {Rom. 11:13},
he exclaims;

not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, *but our sufficiency is of God* {2 Cor. 3:5}.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, *that the excellency of the power may be of God*, and not of us {2 Cor. 4:7}.

To sum up these various figures of ministry which we have already considered.

In the *cherubim* on the mercy-seat, in the holiest of all, we have set forth *ministry in its heavenly origin and source*.

In the golden *candlestick* in the holy place, over against the table, and by the altar of incense, we have *ministry in the assembly, and in connection with communion and worship*.

And in these *bars of the tabernacle*, uniting the boards together, we see *ministry for the building up and compacting of the Church of God*.

The Charge

And thou shalt rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which was shewed thee in the mount {Ex. 26:30}.

All important, and ever important words! Whether as to Church gathering and constitution, or whether as to ministry in the Church, God's pattern, and that alone, is to be followed; -- a pattern not earthly and human, but heavenly and Divine.

Is there not pride, presumption, and sin, in pretending to improve on God's order of things in any particular? or in setting aside that order to make way for man's?

How thankful should we be to God, that he has condescended so minutely to arrange and order every thing for us in his word! -- in type in the Old Testament, in example in the Gospels and the Acts, and in express directions in the inspired epistles of the apostles!

May we be prayerfully diligent to ascertain God's order by means of every portion of his word, and hearty and earnest in seeking to carry it out, in our humble measure, according to the grace given to us: esteeming all his commandments concerning all things to be right, and hating every false way, fully persuaded that God's plans are the best plans, and that in keeping his commandments there is great reward.

Lecture 11

The Vail and Hanging For the Door

EXODUS 26:31-37

And thou shalt make a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made: and thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold: their books shall be of gold, upon the four sockets of silver.

And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony: and the vail shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy. And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place. And thou shalt set the table without the vail, and the candlestick over against the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south: and thou shalt put the table on the north side. And thou shalt make an hanging for the door of the tent, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework. And thou shalt make for the hanging five pillars of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, and their hooks shall be of gold: and thou shalt cast five sockets of brass for them.

The Vail

And thou shalt make a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made {Ex. 26:31}.

The spiritual signification of the vail is given us by the apostle in the following words:

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through THE VAIL, that is to say, his flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God; let us draw near (Heb. 10:19-22).

This vail represents the flesh of Jesus, and in connection with his atoning sacrifice, it shows him as the way of entrance by faith into the holiest of all.

Before the death of Jesus,

The priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: the Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing (Heb. 9:6-8).

But when Jesus expired on the cross at Calvary,

The vail of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom (Matt. 27:51).

God by this act distinctly intimating that the way of access was clear -- the glory could shine out, and the believer in Jesus could enter in. God could be just while he justified -- and manifest himself as glorious in holiness, while the

pardoned sinner was accepted and brought nigh by the blood of Jesus.

In this beautiful vail we thus behold set forth typically, Jesus -- God manifest in flesh; who by his atoning sacrifice becomes himself the way of near approach to God in the very holiest. Precious Jesus! Precious privilege! How little apprehended or estimated in proportion to its value!

The Construction of the Vail

Of blue, &c. {Ex. 26:31}.

We may trace in these colours and fine linen with cherubim the various excellences combined in the person of Christ. The *blue*, his perfection as man, and the heavenly beauty of his character,

the Son of Man which is in heaven {John 3:13}.

“And *purple*.” The combination of the heavenly and earthly dignities in him who was at once Son of David and Son of God.

“And *scarlet*.” He was born King of the Jews, and, though rejected of his own, he yet shall reign.

“And *fine twined linen*.” He was “that holy thing” born of the virgin in his incarnation, and “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners” in his whole life and conversation here.

“Of *cunning work*.” What beautiful blendings, what exquisite harmonies may be discovered in the character of Jesus! How each grace tempers the others, and enhances the glory of the whole!

“With *cherubim* shall it be made.” The cherubim, as we have before said, represent the various characters of service to God, in the accomplishment of the Divine will.

In the garden of Eden it was *angelic* ministry. -- As shown by the cherubim on the mercy seat, the *gifts of the Spirit* for ministry *at their heavenly source*. -- In the vision of Ezekiel, *prophetic* ministry and its characteristics. -- And in the four living creatures around the throne of God, and of the Lamb, the ministry of the *redeemed in glory*.

Here, on the vail, the cherubim represent the various kinds of service to God, which were seen in perfection in Jesus, who came down from heaven to do the will of the Father, and in whom the apostle and prophet, the evangelist, the pastor, and the teacher were combined and manifested in all their excellency.

The Pillars of the Vail

And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood, overlaid with gold: their hooks shall be of gold, upon four sockets of silver (Ex. 26:32).

This beautiful and significant vail, representing the incarnate Saviour, Immanuel, God with us, was to be suspended on four pillars of shittim wood, overlaid with gold. And can we be at a loss to ascertain the fact which answers to this foreshadowing? Did not God employ four individuals, men of like passions with ourselves, but Divinely qualified by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, to hold up to view the great mystery of godliness, -- God manifest in the flesh?

In the *four* inspired records of the life and death of Jesus, the whole truth of his person is exhibited as the Incarnate One. Whereas the *five* gifts given from an ascended Saviour go a step beyond, and in addition present him in his risen glory at God's right hand.

Their *hooks* were to be of gold.

Their capacity to take hold of, to select, and to arrange, the various incidents in the life and death of the Man of sorrows, his words and teachings, so as to bring out the truth of his Person in all its fulness, was of God.

So that those apparent discrepancies between the narratives of the four inspired historians, which so puzzle the natural mind, and so often render futile the attempt to form a harmony of the four Gospels, these seeming blemishes are, in fact, the marks and proofs of the handiwork of a Divine Editor.

Under his all-wise guidance and control, *Matthew* selects and arranges those materials which present the Lord Jesus especially as the Son of David and of Abraham, in connection with the kingdom, and with the promises made of God unto the fathers.

This corresponds with the *scarlet*.

Mark presents him especially as the Son of God and Son

of Man, in his untiring service. The *purple*.

Luke, as the social Son of Man, and in connection with mankind at large. The *fine twined linen*.

And *John*, as the Divine and heavenly Stranger, in all the perfection of his character and ways.

Answering to the *blue*.

The full-length portrait -- the perfection of the truth of the person of our precious Immanuel, is the result of the whole combined.

These pillars stood on four *sockets of silver*.

For while the four inspired historians were employed and capacitated of God to exhibit the truth of the person of Jesus, they themselves reposed on his redeeming work, and on his precious and atoning blood.

The Position of the Vail

And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony: and the vail shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy (Ex. 26:33).

These taches connected together the two larger curtains, composed of five smaller ones each, thus forming one Tabernacle (Ex. 26:3-6).

The vail was to be hung immediately beneath these taches, dividing the tabernacle into two parts twenty cubits for the holy place, and ten cubits for the most holy.

Into the first tabernacle, or the holy place, the priests went continually, accomplishing the service of God. Setting forth the ordinary privilege of believers in their priestly service and worship.

But into the second, or most holy place, the high priest alone entered once every year. For while the first tabernacle was yet standing, the Holy Ghost signified that the way into the holiest was not made manifest.

The vail *divided unto Israel* between the holy and most holy place. But the true light now shineth; the vail has been rent; the glory of God's grace has shone out; and the believer has boldness to enter in through faith in the blood of Jesus (Heb. 10:19-23). The vail now no longer *divides* between the holy and the most holy place; but he whom the rent vail typifies rather *unites*. He is himself the *way of access* by faith into the very presence of God. Our true place of worship and communion is in the holiest of all. How far is this realized by the majority of Christians?

The heart must be sprinkled from an evil conscience, in order to the enjoyment of this privilege in reality. The body must be washed in pure water; that is, the believer must apprehend his interest in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, which this washing or baptism in water signifies, or access into the holiest is not enjoyed. It is a practical,

personal, experimental thing.

Unbelief cannot enter there. Neither can the believer and unbeliever worship together within the vail. The presence of sin, in the license and love of it, in the holiest of all, is as impossible as the existence of darkness in the brilliance of the noon-day sunshine.

A firm standing in grace, and separation from evil personally and corporately, are indispensable to entrance, abiding, and worshipping in the holiest of all.

The Arrangement of the Vessels of the Sanctuary

That thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony . . . (Ex. 26:33).

And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place (Ex. 26:34).

And thou shalt set the table without the vail, and the candlestick over against the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south: and thou shalt put the table on the north side (Ex. 26:35).

The ark and the mercy seat were to be placed within the vail in the holiest of all. Thither Jesus our forerunner has for us entered: and there it is, from off the mercy seat, that God delights to hold communion with his people.

The table and the candlestick had each their appointed position in the holy place without the vail; for they typify communion and testimony in the Church on earth assembled.

The table has its place on the north side, or side of judgment; for it is in connection with the table of the Lord that discipline is to be maintained.

The candlestick was to be set over against the table. For the ministry of the truth of Christ is designed to throw its light on the communion of saints. And it was to be on the south side; for it is to be a testimony of grace.

Neither is communion to set aside ministry, nor ministry to supersede communion; but each is to occupy its proper place, the place assigned to it by God in his word.

The altar of incense, afterwards described, had also its place before the vail and mercy seat; for worship comes in beautifully and blessedly in combination with communion and testimony.

The Hanging for the Door, Or the Door of the Tent

And thou shalt make an hanging for the door of the tent, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework (Ex. 26:36).

This hanging for the door of the tent is precisely similar to the vail, with this exception, that there are no cherubim on it.

It presents to us Christ, the incarnate Son of God. The blue intimating his heavenly perfectness -- the scarlet his earthly dignity and glory -- the fine twined linen his pure humanity -- and the needlework his exquisitely beautiful character, in which every grace and virtue were combined and blended.

The *vail* represented him as the way into the *holiest* -- the *hangings for the door* as the way into the *assembly*.

It is Jesus, through whom alone, by faith in his person and work, in the confession of his name, and in subjection to his Lordship, there is admission into the assembly of God -- the assembly which is the witness for Jesus in the earth, and the dwelling-place of God through the Spirit.

Christ is the door into the assembly of saints. How important is this truth! It is not a ceremony, a creed, a set of opinions, or an agreement in a certain course, that is the door of entrance; it is Christ, and Christ alone -- the Christ of the Scriptures and the Christ of God:

He that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth {Rev. 3:7}.

The Pillars of the Door

And thou shalt make for the hanging five pillars of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, and their hooks shall be of gold: and thou shalt cast five sockets of brass for them (Ex. 26:37).

And the five pillars of it with their hooks: and he overlaid their chapiters and their fillets, (or suspending rods) with gold: but their five sockets were of brass (Ex. 36:38).

As the four pillars of the vail represent the four-fold provision made by God in the divinely inspired histories of the life and death of the Lord Jesus, so the five pillars by which the hanging for the door is suspended, represent to us those gifts of the Spirit from a risen and ascended Christ, by which he is made known as the way, the truth and the life; the gifts of the apostle and prophet, the evangelist, the pastor and the teacher, corresponding with the five bars of the tabernacle, and with the cherubim on the mercy seat, and in the vail.

But while there are correspondences, there are also distinctions. The *cherubim on the mercy seat* signifying these gifts in their Divine and heavenly source. The *cherubim on the vail*, these gifts as possessed in all their fulness by the Lord Jesus when on earth. The *five pillars of the door* of the tent, the gifts as connected in their exercise with admission into the assembly. And the *five bars* of the tabernacle, the same gifts employed for the edification and compacting of the Church together.

This suggests the reason why there are no cherubim on the hanging for the door, as in the vail, -- the truth of the cherubim being signified in another form by the five pillars which sustain it.

The Materials of the Pillars

The pillars are of shittim wood, as pointing to the human agency employed. But they are overlaid with gold, for it is by the grace of God that this ministry is fulfilled.

Their hooks are of gold, for those employed are divinely capacitated to lay hold on and to exhibit the truth of Christ, so as to lead the soul into fellowship with those gathered in his name.

Their chapters also, and their fillets or suspending rods, are of gold, significant of the Divine glory which crowns, and the Divine grace which accompanies this service.

But their five sockets are of brass; for decision, strength, and firm standing are requisite in this presentation of Jesus.