

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

For reply: Email: truthfortoday@aol.com

Broadcast Date: 31 July 2005

No. T0377

Speaker: Mr. Arthur Goodwin

Christ in all the Scriptures (Luke 24:27): Christ as seen in the Tabernacle

Sir Robert Anderson was an eminent lawyer and also a well known Bible Expositor of the late nineteenth century and it is recorded that he once wrote "The typology of the Old Testament is the very alphabet of the language in which the doctrine of the New Testament is written, and as many of our great theologians are admittedly ignorant of the typology, we need not feel surprised if they are not always the safest exponents of the doctrines". Additionally Augustine said, "The New is contained in the Old, the Old is explained by the New".

Today we begin a series of studies as to where we find Christ in the Old Testament and we begin by considering the Tabernacle. In Hebrews 8:5 we are clearly authorised to look for such revelations because Moses, when commanded to erect the Tabernacle was advised by Jehovah that he was portraying the shadow of heavenly things by the pattern given for its construction. The Tabernacle was to be the dwelling place of God amidst His people. Details of this are given in Exodus 25-31 and 35-40, thirteen chapters in all and it will not be possible to examine all these in detail in the time at our disposal but we will endeavour to cover the main subjects where we find Christ typified. Scriptures will not always be quoted verbatim but references will be given and a transcript showing them will be provided on request.

The main area of the Tabernacle was known as The Court; it was rectangular in shape and measured 150 feet by 75 feet. Its boundary was designated by hangings made of fine twined linen and measuring 7½ feet in length. These were supported by 56 pillars of bronze standing on sockets of bronze and attached to the pillars by hooks and connecting-rods of silver. In the east side of the court was the gate (Exodus 27:16-19) but here the fine twined linen of the hangings was adorned with blue and purple and scarlet. Thus any person approaching the tabernacle from outside was immediately confronted with features that speak of Christ. The fine twined linen would point to His spotless manhood. Ever the eternal Son of God He left the glory to carry out the will of God in this world, and for that work He was, through the immaculate conception of Mary, found in the form of man. (Philippians 2:8) But what a man! One who 'did no sin', 'who knew no sin' and 'in whom was no sin'.

Here, in the fine twined linen is one of the fundamental and basic doctrines of Scripture brought into relevance in the early chapters of the Scripture of Truth. Blue is the heavenly colour and marks the character of Christ as 'the Lord from heaven'. Purple is the colour of royalty (See e.g. Judges 8:26. Revelation 17:6) and we are reminded that Christ firstly presented Himself to Israel as their Messiah King and the inscription upon the Cross proclaimed Him as such. Scarlet, in some instances depicts dignity and grandeur (2 Samuel 1:24, Song of Solomon 4:3) but scarlet is produced from the death of a worm and so we have reference both to His glory and death. To appear in the presence of God it was necessary first of all to pass through the gate and that gate is Christ. He said "I am the door" John 10:9 and "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6) Surely there is significance in the typifying of the Lord by the gate of the Tabernacle.

Passing through the gate and approaching the very place where Jehovah resided amongst His people, the seeker first comes to the brazen altar which was placed in the court between the gate and the tabernacle itself. (Exodus 27:1-8) This altar was made of shittim or acacia wood which was a wood of the desert and very durable. It thus typifies the humanity of Christ as "a root out of a dry ground". (Isaiah 53:2). It was overlaid with brass (or copper) as were the four horns situated at the four corners together with all the utensils that would be needed when the sacrifices were offered. Brass speaks of judgment as is demonstrated in Numbers 21:9 and John 3:14 where Moses lifted up the brazen serpent to allay the judgment of God against Israel. Here was the altar where the burnt offering as well as the sin offering was slain and the blood poured out to make atonement for the offerer. At this altar we have the divine righteousness of God demanding judgment against sin and being met by the life and blood of the sacrifice. The Cross of Christ was the place where all this was brought about in reality in answer to the type. "This Man after He had offered one sacrifice for sin ... For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Hebrews 10:12-14. At the Cross, the believer's sins are reduced to ashes and the sinner seeking forgiveness and a place in heaven needs the Cross, the true brazen altar.

The cleansed sinner, redeemed to God is now able to approach God or as Hebrews puts it 'the throne of grace' but first he needs the laver. This was placed between the brazen altar and the entrance to the tabernacle and we are told that it was made of the looking glasses of the women. It was provided for the priests to cleanse themselves from any defilement they might have contracted between the altar and the tabernacle. I do not think that it directly typifies our

Lord but would correspond to 1 John 1:9 where self judgment is necessary when fellowship with the Father and Son has been marred by our daily sinning.

Now we come to the tabernacle proper which was really a tent rectangular in shape and measuring 45 feet by 15 feet and set up in the court of the main tabernacle. The framework was made of boards of acacia wood 15 feet high and 2 feet, 3 inches wide and the lower end had two tenons which fitted into sockets or mortises made of silver bedded into the sand of the desert. The boards were held together by bars also made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. The acacia wood again would speak of the humanity of our Lord and the gold would speak of His glory in deity and divine righteousness. Thus we have Him portrayed as Son of man and Son of God. These boards did not rest upon the earth but upon sockets of silver a metal which is connected with redemption as Exodus 30:11-16 would teach. Our Lord was the Man from heaven and morally separate from the world. If any of these components were to disintegrate by perishing as with wood or rusting away as with many metals or if any bar or ring were found defective the whole fabric of the tabernacle would collapse. But they were materials of endurance and so truthfully testify to the person and work of the Lord. How important it is to hold tenaciously to every aspect of "the doctrine of Christ" for every false doctrine such as is found among the cults and other religions can be usually traced to some error respecting the Lord Jesus Himself.

The tabernacle was enclosed by curtains that were draped across the structure and hung down the boards on either side of the framework. Details of these curtains will be found in Exodus 26:1-14 and 36:8-19. The first of the coverings was made of fine twined linen with blue, purple and scarlet but also cunningly embroidered with cherubim, which according to Genesis 3:14 would remind us of God's holiness and governmental judgment. These typical features of the Lord Jesus displayed in these beautiful curtains were only visible to those inside the tabernacle and so it has ever been; the people of His day and the unbeliever today see no attraction in Him at all.

Three other curtains were laid over the curtain of fine linen the first being one made of goat's hair which, whilst reminding us of the sin offering on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) would, with its roughness, perhaps also depict how the Lord was apprehended when here on earth. Then came a covering of ram's skins died red which must surely point to the death of Christ but particularly how it was witnessed by His enemies. Think of those surrounding the Cross and gleefully rejoicing in His sufferings, although they were not permitted to witness His final hours. The last of the curtains, that is the one most visible from the outside, was made of badger's skins and its application to the Lord is perhaps not so apparent. The thought raised however does present a covering not attractive in its appearance and we remember the words of Isaiah "He hath no form or comeliness, and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him."

The tent was divided into two areas the first comprising two thirds of the whole and was entered by the door which faced the laver and the brazen altar. This door was in fact five hangings or curtains made of blue, purple and scarlet and fine twined linen and were supported by five pillars of bronze standing on sockets of bronze with their connecting rods overlaid with gold. This first area was called the Holy Place and in it stood the Table of Shewbread, the Golden Candlestick and the Altar of Incense. These have very clear and beautiful relevance to our blessed Lord which we will now attempt to expound.

Details as to the Table of Shewbread its measurements and materials used are given in Exodus 25:23-30 and 37:10-16, where, as we would expect, acacia wood and gold were predominant. Every Sabbath twelve cakes made with fine flour were to be placed on the table in two rows of six and pure frankincense was to be put upon each row. When the new cakes were placed those that were being replaced became the food of the priests and was eaten in the Holy Place. It goes without saying that these cakes were representative of 'the Man, Christ Jesus' as the fine flour would demonstrate, and the frankincense would speak of His utter devotion to God in His life upon earth. As such the cakes became the food of the priests and we are immediately turned to John 6 where the Lord speaks of Himself as the bread of life which came down from heaven and upon which we are exhorted to feed daily. Thus we can see how that both the table itself and the bread placed thereon reflect features of Christ.

Instructions for the provision of the candlestick are given in Exodus 25:31-40 and 37:17-24 and we are told that all was to be made of pure gold. Just as Christ is food for the believer so also He is the light. 'God is light' (1 John 1:5) and He, the Son of God is 'the light of men' (John 1:4) and 'the light of the world' (John 8:12). The candlestick was equipped with seven lamps which were supplied with oil to give the light. Both of these facts are very suggestive for oil is a type of the Holy Spirit and in the letter to Sardis Christ is presented as the One who 'hath the seven Spirits of God' (Revelation 3:1) and in Acts 2:33 He 'sheds forth' the Spirit upon His church. The Holy Place was the sphere where the priest operated and part of his responsibility was to ensure that the light was always burning and the golden snuffers and snuff dishes were provided to this end. We who are priests (1 Peter 2:5) are part of Christ's assembly and have the privilege of occupying the heavenly place of which The Holy Place was but a pattern. Let us ask ourselves "Do we enter into the realities of being in such an environment by accepting our blessings and responding to our responsibilities?"

As we have already seen Jehovah in His instructions to Moses concerning the order for building the tabernacle firstly refers in chapter 27 to the brazen altar and this is followed in chapters 28 and 29 to the garments of the high priest and the consecration of the priests, and then in chapter 30:1-10 we have the altar of incense made of pure gold. This order is highly significant and teaches us a serious and solemn lesson. The altar of incense has to do with true worship and communion and requires the service of a priest, and in the application of these Scriptures to ourselves we must first know that our sins have been dealt with at the brazen altar, then we have entered into priesthood (1 Peter 2:5) and then are able to approach God as worshipers. Sadly, today many of the children of God have got no further than the brazen altar. They are truly saved but have never entered the reality of true priestly worship. The golden altar brings before us Christ as the acme of the Father's delight and pleasure – "My beloved Son in whom is all my delight". There, in the Holy Place, we feed upon Him, there we recount our appreciation of Him and this goes up to God as an odour of a sweet savour. This is not the place to be occupied with our sins and shortcomings; they have been dealt with at the brazen altar and confessed at the laver. At the golden altar it is Christ who is presented to God the Father who delights in every honour and ascription of praise that is given to His Son.

In our approach through the tabernacle to the very place where God dwells we have to pass another veil which separated the Holy place from the Holy of Holies and is referred to in Exodus 26:31-35. Again this was made of blue, purple, scarlet and fine twined linen adorned with cherubim of cunning or artistic work and was hung upon four pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold with hooks of gold and standing upon sockets of silver. Thus we see that this veil positively typifies the Lord Jesus Christ both in deity and manhood. This veil precluded the passage of anyone who would approach God, the High Priest being the only one who had this privilege and he only once a year on the Day of Atonement. It is the veil that was rent in two by the hand of God after the Lord had paid the supreme sacrifice and yielded up His spirit. It was a type of the body of the Lord according to Hebrews 10:20, the body in which he bore our every sin; it signified the end of the law and opened up the dispensation of grace whereby all believers by 'a new and living way' could now approach God. It is very expressive that all three veils or doors are all typical of Christ but this is so very appropriate when we remember that He alone is the entrance to every spiritual blessing and privilege whether it be salvation, worship, communion or any sphere in which the true Christian may be found.

Having passed through this veil we now find ourselves in the presence of God. The only article of furniture here is the ark sometimes called the 'ark of the covenant', sometimes 'the ark of testimony' and sometimes 'the ark of Jehovah'. It was made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold both inward and without. Thus it reflected both the Manhood and the Deity of our Lord and it would seem that these great truths are guarded by a crown or ledge of gold placed round about it indicating how God jealously protects every attack upon the Person of His dear Son. "No man knoweth the Son but the Father" and all should be most careful in their speculations concerning Him. The lid of the ark was a slab of gold and was known as the Mercy Seat and it was upon this that the High Priest when once a year, he entered the Holy of Holies sprinkled the blood of the sin offering once on the Mercy Seat and seven times before it. Here the gold speaks of divine righteousness, particularly God's righteousness in the matter of sin. Once again we have a clear reference to Christ and His work for we read in Romans 3:24-25 "Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation - and this word means mercy seat-through faith in His blood".

Three things were originally placed in the ark; they were; Aaron's rod that budded, a pot of manna and the two tables of the Covenant. I like to think that when God looked down upon the ark, before His gaze rested on the law He saw the blood upon the mercy seat and I am reminded that the claims of the law have been met by the blood of my Saviour. This is emphasised by the two cherubs that were made of gold which stood at each end of the mercy seat looking towards each other and with their wings spread. We have already pointed out that cherubim are connected with judgment and here we have two angelic beings with wings spread ready instantly to carry out the judicious actions of God but restrained by the sprinkled blood.

So we have travelled through the whole tabernacle and examined some of its foremost characteristics all of which in type speak to us of our blessed Lord. Much has of necessity been omitted but such is the wonder of the Holy Scriptures that further study of this subject can only enhance our appreciation of our Lord Jesus the Son of God and the Son of Man.

Please Note:

We encourage you to use this transcript for your personal or group Bible studies. This material should not, however, be used in any publications without the express permission from Truth for Today, whose contact details can be found on page 1. Large Print copies of this document are also available upon request.