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CHAPTER

1

The Tabernacle a Type of Christ

AND THE LORD spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering. And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood, oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense, onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate.

And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.

And they shall make an ark of shittim wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. Exodus 25:1-10

The Tabernacle is the greatest of all the Old Testament types of Christ. It was all one great object lesson of spiritual truth. In its wonderful

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furniture, its priesthood and its worship we see with a vividness that we find nowhere else the glory and grace of Jesus and the privileges of His redeemed people.

Just as in the architect's plan we can understand the future building better, so in this pattern from the mount we can understand as nowhere else that glorious temple of which Christ is the cornerstone. And we also, as living stones, are built up in Him "a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5).

The Form and Structure of the Tabernacle

The Tabernacle was an oblong structure about 45 feet long and 15 feet wide and high. It was constructed of boards of shittim wood, a peculiarly indestructible material, overlaid with gold and fastened in sockets with tenons of silver and brass. It was covered with three tiers of skins and a fine interior lining of costly curtains. These curtains were adorned with embroidered symbolic figures of the highest beauty and spiritual significance.

The external covering of the roof was of rough badgers' skins to protect the Tabernacle from inclement weather. The exact form of the roof is a matter of dispute, some believing it to have been pitched at an angle and some an arched or a flat surface.

The Tabernacle itself was divided into two chambers of unequal size by a magnificent curtain called a veil. The larger division was 15 by 30 feet. It was called the Holy Place, open to the minister-

ing priest only—not to the common people. The Holy Place was protected from the outer court by a curtain door, also of blue, purple and scarlet, past which none but cleansed and consecrated priests might go.

Its articles of furniture were three. There was the golden candlestick, which was its only light, there being no windows. There was the table of showbread—12 loaves fresh-baked for each Sabbath, crowned with pure frankincense, that remained displayed for one week and then were eaten by the priests. And there was the golden altar of incense, with its accompanying censer, where pure frankincense was continually offered. From that altar once a year on the great Day of Atonement the high priest with the golden censer took burning coals and smoking incense in his hands, passed through the mysterious veil, entered alone the Holy of Holies and there made atonement for the people in the immediate presence of God.

The inner Holy of Holies was a perfect cube, 15 feet square. It contained the ark of the covenant, over which was the mercy seat. The mercy seat was the ark's top, and it consisted of a solid plate of gold. Springing from this and formed of the same piece of gold, hovered the cherubim, symbolic figures representing the faces of the four typical forms of the animate creation—man, ox, eagle and lion.

Between the meeting wings of the cherubic figures shone the Shekinah or visible divine glory, a luminous cloud of transcendent brightness that perhaps arose and expanded into the pillar of cloud

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and fire that hovered above the Tabernacle, leading the march of Israel. This Holy of Holies was God's special presence chamber and throne of grace and glory. None ever entered it except the high priest, and he only once a year.

Surrounding the Tabernacle was a court, an enclosure 87 by 175 feet, with an opening or gate on the eastern side. Into this court all the people might come.

Two objects of ceremonial worship stood in the court. Near the gate was the brazen altar of burnt offering. There the sacrifices of burnt offering were presented, the blood sprinkled and the fire kept ever burning, from which the altar of incense was supplied. All parts of the Tabernacle had to be sprinkled with blood from that altar. It was the only way of access to the presence of God.

Farther in was the brazen laver, a vast basin made from the metal mirrors of the women of Israel. Perhaps the exterior was polished, forming thus a mirror as well as a fountain. If so, it would have enabled the priests at once to see their uncleanness in the metal and then to wash it away in the water it contained. The laver was for the purification of the priests as they entered the sanctuary, and no one could pass through the door until he had washed in that fountain.

The gate to the outer enclosure was always open. It had no hangings as did the two inner doorways. All might freely go into the Lord's courts and bring their offerings for sin and uncleanness.

Outside the outer gate was the camp of Israel. It formed a vast square around the Tabernacle.

Three tribes were on each side. The tribe of Judah was on the east, opposite the Tabernacle entrance. Out beyond the camping tribes of Israel there continually burned the fire without the camp, where the bodies of the sin offerings were consumed and the refuse of the camp burned.

Such was this simple and wonderful structure—God's first sanctuary and the type of all that is sacred and precious in the person and work of Christ and the privileges of our heavenly calling.

***The Erection of the Tabernacle and
Its Subsequent History***

There are two accounts in Exodus of the construction of the Tabernacle. First, in Exodus 25:40 we have the Tabernacle as it was planned in heaven and shown to Moses on the mount as a pattern. It is the type of Christ set forth from eternity in the counsels of divine love. This is a type of our Redeemer, prepared for us from before the foundation of the world and revealed in successive types and prophecies long before His actual enfleshment and life on earth. Moses built the Tabernacle according to an actual model that God had shown him during the 40 days he spent on Mount Sinai. So Christ was born, lived and died exactly as previous revelation prophesied.

In Exodus 32 and 33 the dark interval of sorrow and rebellion is described, during which the people transgressed the covenant they had just entered into, showing most painfully their need of the salvation God had been preparing for them.

It typifies man's fall and his failure under the

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old dispensation. Christ had been already provided, but man must feel the need of divine salvation by the actual experience of sin. It is touching beyond degree to know that all the time man was rebelling against his God, God's remedy was waiting in that mount of grace.

Then in Exodus 34 we come to the second stage in the history of the Tabernacle—its actual erection according to the divine plan already shown. It was made possible through the freewill offerings of the people and the skill and workmanship of the men whom God had specially endued for this purpose. Two men were particularly called and qualified by the gifts of the Holy Spirit in sacred art to originate and execute all the Tabernacle's symbolic decorations. The women of Israel were similarly prepared and enabled to make ready its costly materials. So its entire erection was through the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit as well as the divine plan that was revealed to Moses.

During the 40 years of Israel's wilderness life, the Tabernacle was borne from place to place by the faithful Levites who had been appointed for this special ministry. After Israel's entrance into Canaan, the Tabernacle remained for a time at Gilgal and afterwards was established at Shiloh, which became the religious center of national worship.

During the period of the Judges we lose sight of the Tabernacle for a season as Israel is subjugated and humiliated. But we find it afterward in Nob, in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, in the reign of David. And finally it was established on Mount Zion

through the piety of this good king, where it remained until superseded by the more magnificent Temple of Solomon.

Solomon's Temple, however, was only a more splendid edition of the same building, containing all the essential features of the Tabernacle. The Temple added a higher degree of splendor and so typified the future glories as the Tabernacle typified the grace of Christ and His redemption.

A Representation of Christ

The Tabernacle was designed to represent and prefigure the most important teachings of the Scriptures with reference to Christ, to the Church, to the individual Christian.

As a type of Christ, the very word *Tabernacle* is used with reference to Him in the opening chapter of the Gospel of John. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt [tabernacled] among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (1:14).

Again, in Hebrews 9 the writer, after describing the structure of the ancient sanctuary, applies it all to the person and work of Christ.

The points of comparison are almost limitless. Among them these may be mentioned:

(1) The positioning of the Tabernacle, which was entered from the camp of Judah, suggests that Christ was born of the tribe of Judah.

(2) The indestructible wood and pure gold suggests Christ's perfect humanity on the one hand and His supreme divinity on the other.

(3) The colors that were so constantly mingled in

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the Tabernacle, especially the prevailing hues of white, blue, scarlet and purple, all point to qualities in Jesus: the white, His spotless purity; the blue, His heavenly origin; the scarlet, His sufferings and death; the purple, His kingly glory.

(4) The external plainness of the Tabernacle in contrast with the internal glory—the badgers' skins without and the gold and Shekinah glory within—proclaim the lowliness of Christ's earthly state and the beauty and glory of His character and inner presence as He reveals Himself to the soul that abides in Him.

(5) The contrast between the Tabernacle and the Temple, the one a shifting tent exposed to constant vicissitude and humiliation, the other combining in itself all the glory of earth and heaven, suggests to us the earthly life of our Lord and His exaltation and the kingly glory of His millennial reign.

(6) The Tabernacle was God's meeting place with Israel. "There I will meet with thee . . . from between the two cherubims" were His own words (Exodus 25:22). "When Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with him, then he heard the voice of one speaking unto him . . . from between the two cherubims" (Numbers 7:89). And so the Lord Jesus Christ is the only way of access to the Father and fellowship with heaven. "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23).

(7) The Tabernacle was the place of sacrifice. Its most vivid spectacle was the flowing and the sprinkled blood. Every part of the Tabernacle

speaks to us of the sacrifice of Christ.

(8) Not only was the Tabernacle the place of sacrifice, but it was also the place of cleansing. The blood atoned for and the water washed away the stains of defilement. So Christ is the "fountain . . . for sin and for uncleanness" (Zechariah 13:1). He gave Himself for the Church "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle" (Ephesians 5:26-27).

(9) The Tabernacle was the place where the guilty might freely go to the altar of atonement. And Jesus Christ "is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

(10) The Tabernacle had inner chambers. And so it speaks of the deeper life and the fuller blessings into which those may enter who are willing to abide in Christ. "I am the door," Jesus says (John 10:9). "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (10:10). He is our Life, our Bread, our Light, our Altar of Prayer, our open Veil of access even to the innermost presence of the holy God.

(11) The Tabernacle was the place where the law was enshrined within the ark, ever covered by the sprinkled blood that proclaimed the sinner's acceptance. So Jesus keeps for us the divine law, then keeps it also in us by His indwelling life and presence, and so He becomes our perfect righteousness.

(12) The cherubim of glory in the Holy of Holies

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were types of Christ's exalted glory, of His humanity crowned with the strength of the ox, the majesty of the lion and the loftiness of the eagle's flight. He is the pledge of our future glory.

All this and much more we see in this ancient object lesson concerning Jesus, of whom Moses and the prophets wrote. Jesus came Himself to fulfill the type with a fullness that He will yet enable us more fully to understand in every detail respecting the pattern in the mount.