

GOD'S DWELLING PLACE

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1

THE MYSTERY

"The sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself" (Psa. 84.3). You have all seen the sparrow gathering pieces of straw or hay to build her nest. When the nest is completed, how much rest and comfort it gives to the sparrow! What does this say to us? Does it not teach us that with just such care and patience, our God is gathering material to build for Himself a dwelling-place?

We human beings, redeemed by the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, are being gathered together unto Him to become "a habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2.22)—that which will give comfort and rest and satisfaction to Him. Before we are saved we think only of what we can get from God, but here we are shown what we can give to God. That comfort and rest which, as long as man is in his sins, God cannot get from heaven and His angels, can be given to Him by worthless but redeemed humanity. This is a mystery, but when you come to understand the true meaning of the Church and its preciousness to God, then this mystery, also will be made clear to you.

We think so lightly of the word 'Church', and use it without knowing its true meaning. Many people say on Sunday, 'I am going to Church today!' Now that is a very wrong use of the word. In the Bible, the word 'Church' was never used for an earthly building. You will often see painted on boards the words 'Baptist Church', or 'Methodist Church', or 'Church of South India', and so on. But, you should never use the word 'Church' for a building. You can search through the whole Bible, I but you will never come across a single instance anywhere where any building is called a church. That is the reason why people have failed to comprehend the heavenly mystery of THE CHURCH.

When the Apostle was addressing his letters to the Church at Ephesus, or the Church at Corinth, or the Church at Antioch, or the Church at Philadelphia, he never meant a building when he used that word. What he did mean was something quite different. The Church is something living, not dead. A building has no life. Stones and bricks have no life. You may call a building a 'Baptist Church', but you are using the Holy Spirit's terms wrongly. You should call it a 'Baptist Building', or Hall or Chapel or anything else, but do not use the word 'Church', because in the Bible the Church means only those men and women who have been redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ. You can see this from Acts 2.47 where the Lord added souls daily to the Church—not to a building, but to a group of people who were believing in the Lord Jesus and had received His Holy Spirit. By that Church, God's manifold wisdom is to be revealed, and His manifold power. God's manifold wisdom is not going to be revealed by heavenly angels—but by human beings who are redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ.

I once saw a gift that was given by a very clever artist. One day in the bazaar, he saw an ordinary vessel being sold by the potter. He paid a quarter-anna for it and brought it home. Then he took his paints and brush, and began to draw upon that vessel beautiful designs of trees and flowers and fields. I saw the artist working upon that vessel for many hours and many days. Then he took it to one of his friends, and

said: 'I have brought you a present, my dear friend'. That friend was very delighted to receive it and placed it upon the mantelpiece above the fire-place in his dining room. Whenever any visitor came to see him, the very first thing he would see was that beautiful vessel resting on the mantelpiece. Together they would admire the beautiful designs on the vessel; and the first question would be: 'Where did you get that vessel? How much did you pay for it, and who is the man who painted so beautifully upon it?' So that vessel resting upon the mantelpiece was showing forth the wisdom and skill of the artist to all who came in. Going by its value, it cost only a quarter-anna, but its true worth lay in the way it showed forth the wisdom and skill of the artist to so many people.

This is the thought conveyed to us in the 10th verse of the 3rd chapter of Ephesians. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God". When we, by God's grace, are redeemed by the Blood of His Son, we are like vessels of clay which are given into the hands of a Master-Artist. Unknown to us the skilful Hand of God is working out designs, heavenly designs upon us. People may see only our thick lips and black faces and ugly noses, but God does not see that. Day and night He goes on working upon us His heavenly designs. A day is coming when He will present us before all the heavenly angels, and will say: 'Come, my angels, look at this vessel called Paul!' and they will say to God: 'How did you make him so beautiful? We knew that man when he was living in Hyderabad State in India—such a small human being of no real beauty, and of no account, but O God, he looks so beautiful to us now! Tell us how you made so beautiful such a worthless man, with such an ugly black face.' Yes! Even angels are going to admire us in heaven! I am not telling you fairy stories, but the truth from God's own Word! When we see our Lord face to face, and become like Him, we will be admired by all the heavenly hosts. How can God make a worthless, foolish, defiled, wretched human being so beautiful? Surely, if an artist of this earth could make such an ordinary vessel so beautiful, God can also work this miracle.

Many years ago when I was coming through Japan, I went to a place called Kobi. There are many bazaars in Kobi, and the vessels there are very beautiful and very well made. They are worth many thousands of rupees. I enquired about these vessels, how they were made, where they were made, and the price; and the shopkeeper said to me, 'Sir, these vessels have been made out of the filthy, dirty, ugly scraps of paper which are thrown on the roadside by the people.' Can you believe that? 'Sir,' he went on, 'we go here and there through the streets of Japan and we gather up every dirty bit of paper lying anywhere. Then we put them all in a machine, and they are changed into a thin paste, and from that paste these vessels are made. The material is called papier mache, and on it different coloured designs are painted by hand.'

That is what is happening upon this earth to-day. When human beings can make dirty papers into articles so beautiful, cannot God make us also into something of beauty?

As we read our Bible from Genesis to Revelation we may see how in fact God plans to do so, and that His heavenly plan is brought out in the Word of God from the beginning to the end. As God helps us we shall see how He is working out that plan even now, and with this in mind we are going to study the House of God and see from it how God purposed from eternity past to show forth His glory to us and through us.

2

THE PROMISE

There are two passages of Scripture we should read at this point. They are Genesis chapter 28 and Revelation chapter 21. We shall look at the first of these now.

There we see a man called Jacob running away from home full of fright and fear. He had been told that Esau, his elder brother, might kill him any day, and when he heard that, he was greatly afraid. 'Who knows when Esau will meet me in some quiet place and kill me!' he thought. His mother came to him, and told him : 'My son, I am so afraid that Esau will kill you one day. Please go away from here to the house of your uncle and remain there for some time, till Esau's anger has cooled down.' So Jacob obeyed his mother, and full of fear, ran away from his home.

But God was with him, though neither he, nor his mother could see God; nor could they see how, in all these things, God was working. At last, feeling very tired and worn out, Jacob lay down, without pillow or bedsheet or bedding to lie on. He saw a stone nearby, and took it, put his head upon it, and went to sleep. There are some people who cannot go to sleep even if they have soft silken pillows, but Jacob slept easily and well, and while he was lying there sleeping, he had a dream. In his dream he saw the heavens opened, and behold, a ladder going from earth to heaven! Then he saw angels ascending and descending upon the ladder, and God Himself at its head. And he heard God speaking from above the ladder, saying wonderful things to him, which he could not understand (Gen. 28.13 and 14).

We see here how much blessing God promised to Jacob. He said: 'The whole land on which you are lying I will give you. In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Your seed shall spread North, South, East and West, and in you I am going to fulfil all My promises.' God could not give any greater good to Jacob.

Yet see the Smallness of Jacob's faith in verses 20-22. After God's great promises to him, he says, 'If God will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, and will protect and bring me home again in peace, I will give Him one tenth of all He gives to me.' Yes! That is how much he believed the promises of God! He had seen heaven opened, he had seen a ladder from earth to heaven, he had seen angels ascending and descending upon it, and God above, saying, 'I will give you all. Like the dust of the earth, your seed shall be multiplied. I will not leave you until I have fulfilled all My promises to you.' What is Jacob's reply? 'O God, only give me bread to eat, and one shirt, and I will be so thankful.' Jacob's faith could not rise above eight ounces of rice per day (or whatever it was he ate). That is as far as he could believe at that time, in spite of the wonderful things God was saying.

Jacob was blind; he could not understand what he saw, and what he heard; but even though he failed completely to comprehend the purposes of God, that did not change them. Some of you may be like Jacob to-day. You may say: 'O God, only heal me; only get me a job, even if just a small job', or, 'Get me a good house, and I will give Thee

much more.' It was because of fear that Jacob could not understand. His heart was full of fear, and even when he was asleep, it was still full of fear, perhaps imagining Esau to be coming after him, though he had walked very fast, and covered many miles that day. He was so full of fear, that he could not understand what God was saying. So God had to begin working in Jacob's life till he did comprehend what He had said.

As long as there is fear in our hearts, we will never understand what God is saying. The devil will bring all kinds of fear into our hearts at all times, and through this fear we are kept from understanding God's purposes and plans. Jacob had to learn many very hard lessons before he knew what God meant. It took over 20 years for him to be delivered from fear. But do not let us say because of this: 'It took Jacob 20 years, so let me also wait 20 years to learn that lesson.' We have the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts and the Holy Ghost to teach us all things, so we can be entirely and immediately free from fear.

Though it was un-comprehended by Jacob, we to-day can see how God was making known His divine plan very clearly to him that night. God said to Jacob: 'Look into My heart and see My great purposes for you'; and when Jacob overcame his sleep, he uttered some words the meaning of which he probably did not fully understand. He said: 'This is ... the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven'! (Gen. 28.17). It was the Holy Ghost who drew forth those words from the mouth of Jacob, words which meant that he saw something which could not be described except by the expression 'the House of God'. There was no building there, but God was saying to Jacob, 'Jacob, I am going to give you much blessing, but you will only know it when you understand what my House is, and how to build it. Only then will you know what it is I am giving you.'

So it is only by the divine understanding of God's House that we can know how much blessing is ours to receive from the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those words would never be forgotten by Jacob: "the House of God, the House of God"; and that is why he called the place "Bethel". They meant not only a place which God promised to give to him. They included all the fullness of His promise and blessing; "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 28.14).

What a promise! "In thee . . . shall all the families of the earth be blessed," as though God was saying to Jacob: 'From this day on I will not give blessing to anybody else, except through you.' That was the statement of God: 'Jacob, it is only through you, and by your Seed, that all the families of the earth can receive blessing from Me.' Sometimes in the bazaar, you find a shop stocking a certain article, and the shopkeeper tells you: 'Sir, I am the sole dealer in this article for the whole of the State.' In the same way God was saying to Jacob: 'Now Jacob, I will give you such a blessing that all the other families of the earth will be able to receive My blessing only through you.'

Did God mean what He said? All the words of the Bible are spoken with the full authority of God. You never come across any idle word in the Bible. What God says, He means. It was indeed God's plan that real blessing, given by God to any man anywhere, would be given only through Jacob. That did not refer to food, raiment, money and other earthly things. It was eternal blessing of which God was speaking, and this is His heavenly plan for the Church today.

For in Christ there has come into being a new, spiritual seed of Jacob. When we truly understand our heavenly vocation in Him we will realise that it is only of His Church, the true House of God—it is only through His Church and in His Church that God can give blessing to others. This was His plan from the very beginning, and when we come to the end (see Revelation chapter 21) this is what we see.

3

THE VISION

Some hundred of years after Jacob's day, when 'the sons of Israel were delivered by God from a life of slavery and bondage in Egypt which had lasted for 420 years, God reminded them of that purpose which He had revealed to Jacob at Bethel. What God said to Jacob in Genesis 28 was now made clearer to Moses on the Mount, when he was shown the pattern of the Tabernacle. Exodus chapter 24 tells us of some of the experiences which prepared him for that revelation, for men have to go through many experiences in order to get the spiritual vision which is needed to see that divine plan.

Then in chapter 25 verse 8, God spoke of the Sanctuary as a dwelling-place for Himself. When Jacob saw the angels coming from heaven, he had called that whole heavenly scene the "House of God" . Now God says to Moses, 'Come up here on the Mount, and I will give you a further revelation of what Jacob saw'. Jacob could not see all the details of the plan, but to Moses it was now given to see much more.

We read that, from the mountain covered by the cloud, Moses saw many things, and amongst them the House of God in its glory. When he came down, he told the people: 'I have seen such wonderful things on the mountain. God has shown to me a glorious heavenly House, and has told me that you—His people—are to have a share in preparing that House.' They of course, could not comprehend all that Moses was saying, for Hebrews 3.1-6 shows us that Moses himself was given a deeper and fuller understanding. In Hebrews we see that what Moses was shown on the Mount was but a shadow of that House which is now being built by God. As the Apostle says (3.6), we are the House of the Lord Jesus Christ, provided we hold fast our confidence and the rejoicing of our hope firm to the end.

How can God give us a share in that House? You will recall how our Lord Jesus Christ said to Peter: "Upon this rock I will build my Church" (Matt. 16.18). He had first asked Peter: 'Whom do you think that I am?' Peter had answered: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Then the Lord said to him: 'Peter that revelation has not come to you by flesh and blood. It is my heavenly Father who has revealed to you who I am, and upon that revelation I will build My Church'.

Roman Catholics say that upon the bones of Peter the Lord will build a Church. How blind they are! There was no special virtue in Peter himself. What our Lord was saying was that, 'upon the revelation which you have of Me, even upon that I will build My Church'. Of course, Peter could see the Lord face to face in the flesh, but the revelation spoken of here did not come to him simply because he was talking to Him, and walking with Him. It came not by any human intelligence. It came to him from heaven. Our Lord said to him: 'See Peter! flesh and blood has not revealed this to thee, but My Father which is in heaven'. It is, then, upon that revelation of Christ that the Church is built, and the more we know our Lord Jesus Christ by divine revelation, the more we are building the House of God. We are not building a House of stones or bricks or mud or bamboo such as you see in India; it is not by such material things

that we build the House of God, but by the divine unveiling of the greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ. In 2 Corinthians 5.16 the Apostle says that even though they had known the Lord in the flesh and could say: 'We saw Him, we walked with Him, we ate with Him, we lived with Him,' yet now they knew Him no more after the flesh, but henceforth knew and worshipped Him in the Spirit. It is not a bodily revelation of Christ that we want now, but a spiritual revelation, for the more we know our Lord by divine revelation, the more we are able to bring material to build the House of God.

When Saul of Tarsus was on the way to Damascus, he saw a great light and heard a Voice. Immediately, we are told, he fell down and became blind for three days, for the light which he saw did not at first bring light or illumination to him. He could say: 'Yes! I have seen the shining of the light, and have heard the voice of God,' but he could not go forth and build the Church upon that only.

Afterwards he began to see who the Lord Jesus Christ was. For this he had to go into the wilderness (Gal. 1.15-17), and it was there that he began to see the spiritual meaning of the Church. There in the wilderness, the light of God brought him spiritual insight and revelation. Only then could he tell people about the mystery of the Church, for it is something that comes only by revelation from God. Do not think that just because we know the contents of the Bible and have many natural intellectual gifts, that therefore we can comprehend that mystery by ourselves. That is impossible. There must be an inward revelation of the divine Word by the Holy Spirit if we are going to see the meaning of the Church, for it is not known by any human knowledge. You have to go 'through the mill' as we say—to go through a deep and transforming spiritual experience in order to have such a revelation.

But one day you will see that God has been saying to you: 'There is something wonderful before you, even that Christ is building His Church and that you can have a part in building that Church'. Then you will say like Paul: "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3.13-14).

Again we find the same truth revealed more fully in the book of Revelation. There we see the House of God, the heavenly Tabernacle, the Holy City of God coming down from heaven. What is now being builded is there complete, and will "come down" from heaven for all to behold. But before that day, the old things will have passed away (Rev. 21.5). Only then will you be able to see the full glory of the heavenly Jerusalem, God's Sanctuary, God's House. It is the same even now upon this earth (2 Cor. 5.17). Are you prepared to give up your old life? Then you must do so completely. Let go everything of the old life and let Him make you entirely new.

I know some people who delight in hoarding things. Lying in their homes are papers and magazines of 5 years ago; and 10-year-old tins and bottles, not to mention old clothes and shoes that they wore 15 or 20 years ago. They keep on hoarding the old things, and if you ask them why, they say: 'Cannot you see that they may be useful one day?' Is not that how you keep on hoarding old boxes and books and trousers and shirts? You become so miserly that you are afraid to let them go. In the same way you hang on to old habits, old friendships and old longings.

But everything old must pass away. If you want to take a share in God's House, you must be prepared to let them go and to be set free, to be liberated from everything that is old. All things that bring corruption must be given up, and what can bring eternal joy, and eternal peace, must take their place.

Supposing you are doubtful about a friendship. Some times you think that it must be broken; at other times you think: 'But why must it be broken?' You will go on thinking that way until you go to God and say to Him: 'O God, will that friendship in my life bring eternal joy? Will that habit in my life bring to me eternal joy and peace?' Thus you must pray, and when you have found the answer, keep to it. Indeed, that is the simplest way to find the answer. All habits, all friendships, all associations and aspirations that bring disharmony must be given up, and in their place the Spirit will give everything new—new habits, new longings, and new friendships.

The Lord says: "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21.5). In the House of God, there must be only what is new. There cannot be any old material accepted for that House. It is a simple principle. And you can learn from the Tabernacle how to bring that new material to God. May God reveal to us His heavenly plan, and that in His heavenly House all things everywhere are new.

4

THE DESIGN

Before we can understand the fuller message of the Tabernacle, we need to get a bird's-eye view of its structure. We need to study, verse by verse, chapters 24 and 25, Exodus, and to follow closely the details which are mentioned there.

First we read about the Ark, which was in the inner Sanctuary of the Tabernacle (Exod. 25.10-22). How was it made? Imagine a box made of shittim wood, $2\frac{1}{2}$ cubits long, $1\frac{1}{2}$ cubits wide and the same height. A cubit is about 20 inches, so $2\frac{1}{2}$ cubits would be approximately 50 inches. This box, made of shittim wood, was overlaid with gold inside and outside. The cover, or lid, which was made of pure sheet gold, was God's 'Mercy Seat'. Of one piece with this gold plate and overshadowing it were two cherubim, and it was from between these cherubim that God used to speak.

The inner sanctuary where this Ark was placed was called the Most Holy Place, and in front of this was another, larger room called 'the Holy Place'. In the latter was a candlestick, an altar for incense and a table for shewbread (Exod. 25.23-39; 30.1-6). Dividing the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was the veil (Exod. 26.31-33).

Now mark carefully the coverings of the Tabernacle. In the Tabernacle the walls were boards, but the ceiling was not made of tiles or wood, but of curtains (Exod. 26.1). There were, in all, four coverings. The first layer, we are told, was made of ten lengths of fine twined linen, each 28 cubits long and 4 cubits broad (Exod. 26.1-6). These ten curtains were put together in two sets of five each, and were joined to one another by 50 blue loops and 50 gold taches. Thus they formed a single covering for the whole roof hanging down on each side. Together they formed "one tabernacle" over the sanctuary (Exod. 26.6).

The linen was interwoven with blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and cherubim were embroidered upon it. The same materials were also used for the veil and for the hangings at the door of the Tabernacle and at the gate of the court. We cannot stay for all the details, though we might learn much from the dimensions, from the 50 loops, from the gold taches and from the beautifully wrought cherubim. Every small detail has something to teach us about the Lord Jesus Christ.

The second set of curtains, which also hung down on this side and that side, forming the second covering of the Sanctuary, was woven of goats' hair, and each curtain was 30 cubits in length and 4 in breadth (Exod. 26.7-13). In this case there were not ten curtains, but eleven, and they were joined in two sets of five and six. Together they formed the "tent" of the Tabernacle. Here the taches were of brass, not gold, and this too had a meaning. Over this was a third covering of rams' skins dyed red, and on top of this again, was the last covering of badgers' skins (Exod. 26.14).

Thus we see, first of all, the woven linen "tabernacle" underneath; then a curtain "tent" of goat's hair; over that a covering curtain of rams' skins dyed red; and right over all a covering curtain of badgers' skins.

Generally, men use bricks or stones to build a wall, but in this case, we are told that the walls of the Tabernacle were made of boards of shittim wood covered with gold (Exod. 26.15-30). Each board was 10 cubits high, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ cubits wide. There were 20 boards on the north side, 20 boards on the south side and 8 boards on the west side. In other words the total length of the Tabernacle was 30 cubits, the height 10 cubits, and the width 12 cubits. Those were the dimensions of the Sanctuary. At the bottom of each board were two tenons which rested upon silver sockets. Presently we shall learn the meaning of these.

As we have seen, the inner part was called the Most Holy Place and the outer part was called the Holy Place. The priests could enter the Holy Place every day, to keep the lamps alight and the incense burning day and night and to change the shew-bread each week. But only Aaron, the High Priest, might pass through the veil to enter the Most Holy Place and even he could do so only once a year. Others could not enter there at all. Such a veil hung also, you will remember, in the later temple at Jerusalem, and it was the rending in twain of that dividing veil when our Lord died on the Cross that signified that the way into the Holiest is now open through the Blood of Jesus (Heb. 9.12).

Between the Tabernacle and the main entrance of the outer courtyard was an altar 5 cubits long, 5 cubits wide, and 3 cubits high, made of shittim wood, but covered with brass (Exod. 27.1-8), and near it there was a brass laver (Exod. 30.17-21). Do not think that they were using brass just to save gold. They had brought so much gold that Moses had said: 'Do not bring more'. No! It was not to save gold, but again, for a special reason, that they used brass on the altar.

The outer walls of the courtyard were of white linen hung on pillars which stood in sockets of brass (Exod.27.9-18). The north and the south walls were 100 cubits long, and 5 cubits high and the west wall was 50 cubits long. The length of the east wall was also 50 cubits, but it had a gate in the centre 20 cubits wide, hung with embroidered linen.

The meaning of all these things you must seek in the Bible itself. The Bible is the best commentary we have. But concerning them all God said one thing to Moses very clearly: "Look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount" (Exod. 25.40). Surely this says to us that, whether we understand all the details or not, they are meant to speak to us of heavenly realities. They have a message for us all.

5

THE COVENANT

Now can we understand the meaning of the Tabernacle? We see in the beginning of chapter 24 that God called Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and 70 Elders to come before Him, but that they stood afar off while Moses alone went up the Mount. What God revealed to him, he then came and told them. The response of the people was, "All the words which the Lord hath said will we do" (verse 3). After that the details were given.

Those who are not prepared to obey the Lord can never understand what the Lord is saying. Only those who are prepared to obey what God reveals to them can be effectively instructed. We know very well how to acquire a knowledge of the Bible, but do we carry out in practice what God tells us? There is plenty of Bible knowledge, but people will not do the things that they learn, and light that is rejected becomes darkness. It is those who have knowledge, but who know nothing of the cost of experience, who become proud and haughty and puffed up. So, before we can go any further we must give God the promise: 'O God, whatsoever Thou shalt teach us we will obey'. We should make it a principle that, whenever we open the Bible, we give God such a promise: 'O God, what-soever Thou teachest me now, I promise Thee I will obey.' If you are not prepared to obey, then God cannot force you nor compel you to obey, because in love there cannot be compulsion or force. God has revealed Himself, but He waits for those who will come forward and say: 'Now we promise that we will obey what God says'.

God was about to make a very important covenant with the people (Exod. 24.4-8). In preparation for the covenant, Moses built an altar with twelve pillars, one pillar for each tribe. Upon the altar was laid the sacrifice, the blood of which was sprinkled upon the people. This teaches us that only those who come under the Blood of the Lord Jesus can understand what God is saying. Those who are not born again—those who know nothing of the sprinkling of the precious Blood of the Lord Jesus—can never understand fully what God is teaching here in the Tabernacle. It does not matter what is said, nor how well it is expounded, no one will really understand these things who has not been purchased and washed from his sins by the Blood of the everlasting covenant.

But for all who have been purchased and washed, these words are spoken. A man may be extremely illiterate in earthly things, but in Christ he can become extremely wise in heavenly things. This is the power in the Blood. It can make the most foolish man the wisest man. Our first step to the understanding of heavenly things is to be brought and kept under the Blood of the everlasting covenant. Have we said: 'Yes Lord, we promise Thee that we will be obedient to all that thou shalt say to us?'

Why is it that so many people struggle very hard to obey God, but cannot? Every morning they say, 'Now, to-day, I will not lose my temper; to-day I will not tell lies; to-day I will not take a bribe'; yet after two or three hours, again they lose their tempers. Even though they pray and read their Bibles, yet they fail. Why is that? Because

they fail to appropriate the Blood for cleansing to begin with, and then to lay hold of Christ as their life. They are trying to do the things of God with their own human energy. That is why they fail. Do you want to overcome in every temptation? Then come under the Blood by faith, every day, every morning. The Blood speaks of two things—cleansing and life. When you confess your sins, you are washed by the Blood from every defilement and the life of Christ in you will be manifested in your daily walk and actions. The Israelites had to come under the Blood to be able to obey what God commanded.

And then it says of the elders that “they saw God” (Exod. 24.10). Yet John 1.18 says “No man hath seen God at any time.” It goes on to say, however, “the only begotten, Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him”. We are to conclude that on the Mount, in that chapter in Exodus, they saw the Lord Jesus Christ. “No man hath seen God at any time.” That is definite. But then Moses took some blood in a basin. Some he sprinkled upon the people, and some on the altar. And then the elders began to see something. They saw the Lamb of God. First, they could only see animals being killed and their blood being sprinkled, but then, with the eyes of faith, they were seeing the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, being slain for them. In this figure of the slain offerings, they were seeing the Lord Jesus Christ suffering and dying for all sinners everywhere. “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1.29).

6

THE PROVING

“They saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness” (Exod. 24.10). A sapphire stone is a very dear stone. A real sapphire is so transparent, and so dear and pure that, when you look through it, you can see plainly what is on the other side. Here, the elders saw the beautiful clearness as of a sapphire stone in heaven, and shining through it the glory of the God of Israel. That is what they described, though even then we are not told precisely what they did see. It is sufficient that they saw something of heaven. What they saw brought joy to their hearts, and no wonder.

From that mountain top, God was about to give Moses laws, commandments and the pattern of the Tabernacle. But first those seventy nobles of Israel were made to see heaven. Then only did they see Moses go up the mount of God and enter the cloud. Without this experience they might have questioned Moses: “Why are you asking us to build such a costly House?” To take away all their doubts and fears, God permitted those seventy men to see into heaven. Listen to what God is saying by this experience: ‘All the things commanded are for heaven and from heaven, and nothing is for earth or of the earth.’

Moses was not introducing anything of his own. As the Lord revealed, so He made him write. Not a single idea came from Moses' own brain. “Look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount” (Exod. 25.40). It was God's direct revelation from heaven to Moses by a pattern or shadow of the real heavenly Sanctuary. That is why, by studying the details of the Tabernacle, we get some idea of God's Spiritual House. Naturally speaking, we might say: ‘Why should we waste time in studying all these details?’ and truly we might get easily tired and bored if we read them without appreciating their meaning. But when we recognise that they are things of heaven, reflecting heavenly principles, then we will read them with love and reverence. God has planned to teach us about heaven in this very simple way. That is why we can say with the authority of His Word that it is most important to study this subject,

Next we turn to the experience of Moses. First, he was made to see only God's glory on the Mount like a devouring fire for six whole days. Then on the seventh day, God called to Moses, calling him to enter the cloud. Moses did so and the cloud covered him so that no man could see him at all. There followed forty days and forty nights in which Moses heard God speaking to him. Here again every detail has some meaning. Before God could speak to Moses, Moses had to see the glory of God. That is why he stood there for six days outside the cloud. The number six in the Bible is man's number and for six days Moses was outside the cloud, till he saw what he himself was as a man, when compared with God in His full glory.

When you compare yourself with your neighbour, you think you are perhaps somewhat better. You can say : 'I am not such a bad man. Of course, I am a sinner, but not so very great a sinner. How can I be a great sinner? No doubt, I do tell lies, and get angry twice a day, but look at him!' That is what you say when you compare yourself with other men. But now God was revealing to Moses what He was while Moses stood there before the mountain for six days. As he began to see the glory of God, he began to compare himself with it. How small he became! How insignificant! — until before God he had to acknowledge : 'O God, I am nothing, I am nothing, I am less than nothing!' Now, what are we when we measure ourselves by the holiness of God? Only worms of the dust! Thus, to humble Moses, God made him stand for six days in the presence of that glory before he could enter the cloud.

All of us who are proud must thus be humbled. We must wait. We cannot go inside the cloud. Only the humble contrite heart can truly commune with God.

And then came forty days alone with God. The number forty in the Bible is the number of test and trial. Our Lord Himself was tested by the devil for forty days. So forty speaks of the testing given to prove every man. Before Moses could be God's mouthpiece, God's servant, he must go through every test. This again is God's order. Those who want to become God's servants must pass through every trial. They must know what it is to be lonely, cut off from their nearest and dearest; they must know hunger and disappointment and the loss of all things; they must know what it means to be alone with God. Some people think that just by going to a Bible School for three years—by learning Hebrew, Greek and Philosophy—that they can become servants of God, but it is not by such intellectual knowledge that anyone becomes God's servant.

Once I was travelling in a train, and was carrying my Bible. In the train, I closed my eyes and began to meditate and my neighbours thought I was sleeping. They were Hindus. One man said to the other, 'That man looks like a Padre or a Missionary'. The other said, 'He cannot be a Padre, he does not look like one! He must be a Preacher'. Then the first replied, 'He cannot be a Padre. You can see by his clothes that he cannot be a Padre'. The other man said, 'Then he must be a Third Class Padre'. It is a fact that some people think that by having different 'degrees' and by becoming Second or First Class Padres they can become better servants of God. It is not by degrees, either educational or social, that you become the servants of God. It is by learning how to suffer. It is by learning in the school of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember, for forty days and forty nights God's servant Moses had to be on the Mount alone with God.

As we come how to the heavenly mysteries revealed in Moses, it is not just by reading that we shall understand them. It is when we are prepared to go through suffering and hardship and tribulation for our Lord's sake, that God will reveal these things to us in a simple way. These heavenly mysteries are not meant for those who are not prepared to suffer, but for those who are willing to endure. God will teach such, step by step.

7

THE OFFERING

When Moses returned, he told the people what he had seen and heard, and the very first instruction concerned the Lord's offering. "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" (Exod. 25.1-2).

For the work of God and for His Sanctuary, God will not accept any offering that is given by pressure, by compulsion or from a wrong motive. I ask you: Do you know the secret of giving to God all that you have, joyfully, cheerfully, and without holding anything back? Do you know how to give God your very best?

Some time ago, a man came to me and said to me, 'Can you help my son? I have tried to educate him, but he has failed for so many years. I have tried to teach him some profession, driving, tailoring or engineering, but he is no good. Let him become a preacher.' That is what people think. If their sons or daughters are very clever, they will pray : ' O God, we want our boy to be a doctor, or a lawyer. 'But when the boy is no good they will say: ' Lord, I give him for Thy service. Because he has failed Matriculation, let him work for Thee. 'You want your clever boys and girls to make progress in this world, but of those who are no good, you say: ' Let them become preachers.' If that is how you reason, you have never yet learned the joy of giving to God the very best. Can you tell me of a greater joy than that of serving God? Those who know how to serve God are the most highly honoured of men. In fact the highest honour that anyone can have is to serve God. What we give to God is never wasted, whether it be money or time or energy or children! What is more, we get manifold more than all we can ever give. Yet how miserly we all are when we come to give to God.

God said 'I want only a willing offering. Whether you bring gold, or silver, or brass, or shittim wood, or blue, or purple, or scarlet—whatsoever it be, it must be given joyfully and cheerfully'. There is a secret hidden here. It is the secret of the willing heart that gives its best to God. If you really want to do any service in the House of God, whether it be praying, or teaching, or visiting, or any other form of service, you must do it joyfully and cheerfully.

Sometimes a cow, whose calf has died, will not let itself be milked. It is necessary then to deceive it by taking the skin of the calf, filling it with straw and bringing it before the cow, who starts licking the calf. While it is quiet the milkman is able to draw the milk because the cow has been deceived. Many Christians are deceived in this way. They will not give money to the work of God unless some deception is practised on them, and there are plenty of people ready enough to do that. So by devious means it is dragged from them.

Never think that God wants for His work money for which you beg or which you have to get by compulsion. Such money God will never use. Men may accept it, but God will never do so. He will only abhor it, for it is a willing, joyful offering that God wants.

As you are constrained by the Holy Spirit, so you must give. Those who do otherwise cannot learn the true meaning of the House of God. God will not touch even a pice which is brought by compulsion.

The 21st chapter of Revelation tells us about the New Creation which is to take the place of the old. John the Apostle saw the new heavens and a new earth, and he saw the Holy City coming down out of heaven from God. That City speaks of the New Creation in its fullness and it is all of pure gold.

I have already told you that we are having a part now upon this earth in the New Creation. When God was making the earth, he said: 'Let it be so', and it was so. In this way He went on speaking and everything was created. That was the old creation and, through man's sin, that came under the curse. But in the New Creation in Christ there is a difference, for we have a share in it. It is with the material that we give to God now that He is building that New Creation.

In 1 Corinthians 3.9-15 Paul makes this very clear. We are God's husbandry, God's field, and God's co-labourers. We are God's building. Moreover the foundation of the building is the Lord Jesus Christ, and upon that foundation is being constructed the building that is God's New Creation. God says to us: 'Will you bring gold, or silver, or brass, or will you bring wood, or hay, or stubble for your building?' Those who bring their own natural gifts, wood, hay or stubble, will live to see what they have built burnt down. But those who bring gold or silver or brass—the glories of Christ—will see, in that day, what they have built shining yet more brightly.

There is a Day coming in which God will test our works, our deeds, our preaching, our teaching, our workshop—everything, by fire. If your preaching, your teaching, your prayers, your charity are according to the will of God, then you will see what has been built standing the test. But that which is built of wood, hay or stubble will be burnt up.

Once a very wealthy lady, who was a good Christian, dreamed that she went to heaven. There among many beautiful mansions, she saw a particularly grand mansion in one corner. Seeing an angel she enquired to whom the mansion belonged, and he told her that it belonged to her serving-maid, who washed her vessels and made her fire every day. When she heard this, she felt very happy, and said to herself: 'If my servant woman has such a big mansion, then mine must be even greater'. A little further on she saw a hut, and asked to whom that belonged. 'Madam, that belongs to you,' said the angel.

She was so angry. 'That is not just,' she cried, 'you are giving my servant, who cannot even read, such a big mansion, and the building you have for me is just a small hut of straw. Why is that?' And the angel said to her, 'Madam, we are only building with the material which is sent to us from earth. That woman is sending us gold and silver, and with such material we are building that mansion. You are sending us only wood, hay and stubble and with it we are only able to build a hut.' Then she said: "But I have given thousands of rupees to charity. I attend Worship every Sunday and I am on all the Committees. Every Christmas Day I give large gifts. I built that Hospital, that School Hall. How can you say I am only sending wood, hay and stubble?" And the angel told her : 'You are doing everything before the eyes of men; you are not serving God. You are doing all these things in order to be regarded as a great woman, and to get a name for yourself. That poor woman, she is only your servant, but look and see how faithfully she serves you, and how she prays day and night for your family, and for every guest that comes into your house. Because of her prayers many souls have been saved. You, however, can only talk and talk of your fowl curry, and have no thought for God's message' In this way all that you are doing is to give hay and straw to God'.

8

THE PRECIOUS METALS

“And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass” (Ex. 25.3). God says to all His redeemed people: ‘I want you to come and contribute something’, and we are going to see that there is meaning in the materials which God prescribed for the building of the Tabernacle, What is the spiritual meaning of gold, silver and brass, and shittim wood? and for what reason has God demanded those materials? We shall examine, one by one? the materials required by God.

Gold speaks of the divine nature. All that is done must be done, not with human wisdom, but with the wisdom of God. We all need divine wisdom, divine strength, divine knowledge. And God has provided these in His Son (1 Cor. 1.30). So, when we do things according to the divine plan of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are gathering gold for His Sanctuary.

How easily we can preach for the sake of money! How readily we pray, just to show how well we can pray! Many times we do things just to show that we are very good, very righteous or very charitable. Once I was staying with some Christian friends and they had family prayers every morning and evening with their servants. I thought that they were very good, but one day one of the servants told me: ‘Only when guests come we have family prayers; when the guests go away again we have family prayers no longer! ‘If we do these things simply for men to see, God will not accept what we do. What ever we do for God, according to the divine plan and in the power of the divine nature, gathers gold for His building. It is our privilege in this way to bring the gold of the New Creation into the Heavenly City.

Silver speaks of redemption. You recall how our Lord was sold for 30 pieces of silver. That was the price of a slave. Our Lord was sold for the price of a slave by His own disciple and He gave His very self that we might become His property. The chief priests gave only 30 pieces of silver for Him, but He gave His own life-blood to save us. Wherever you see silver in the Tabernacle it speaks of redemption, of the price our Lord paid to save us.

When we are born again, we become the “purchased possession” of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our spirits and our bodies now belong to Him. We are “bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6.20). Now I can no longer say that my hands, my feet, my lips, my eyes are my own. They belong to the Lord Jesus Christ because He has purchased me, and bought me by His own Blood (1 Pet. 1.18-19).

Our bodies are the temples of His Spirit (1 Cor. 6.19). That is why we must glorify God with them, through our dress, our habits, our manners, our speech (1 Thess. 4.4-5; 1 Tim. 2.9-10). That is the pure silver. When I see silver in any part of the Tabernacle I am reminded that my body and my spirit have become the purchased possession of my Lord, and now I cannot dress as I used to do. Now I cannot waste my money upon worldly things, and upon worldly glory. Now, I must glorify my Lord through my dress, manners and ways.

We do not need to use worldly means to make ourselves beautiful, nor to waste our time or money on them. His holiness and His purity expressed through us surpass all other beauty (1 Pet. 3.3-4). As we glorify our Lord in this way, we are gathering, unknown to us, that material of silver which will be used in heaven for heaven's Creation. It is the privilege of every believer thus to bring silver to God's House.

The brass speaks of judgment. You remember that our Lord spoke to Nicodemus of the brass serpent in the wilderness (John 3.14; compare Num. 21.9 and 2 Kings 18.4). The people began to murmur in the wilderness, so fiery serpents were sent to punish them. Then Moses was commanded to make a serpent of brass, that those who looked on it might live (Num. 21.5-9). Alas, at a later day, the people began to think that there was some magic in the serpent of brass, so they began to burn incense to it, and in the end the same serpent had to be broken to pieces and thrown away (2 Kings 18.4).

But in that serpent God revealed His divine purpose. The Old Serpent, the Devil, was always bringing in rebellion, and it was because they listened to his voice, that they murmured. Those who looked on the serpent of brass, acknowledged thereby that they themselves were under judgment and that it was the devil who was responsible for their disobedience and death. God had to deal with him in judgment before they could be delivered from his power. It is Satan, the serpent, who is constantly stirring us up to trespass against God. The Lord Jesus Christ said: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3.14). As Son of Man, in our stead, our Lord died on the Cross—the place of the judgment and the curse—in order to judge Satan and to punish him who had been troubling us by making us disobey and go against God; by His Cross our Lord Jesus has defeated our enemy. He has crushed him, and through faith we have the victory in Him.

So brass speaks of judgment—that judgment which fell upon the serpent at the Cross when the Lord Jesus died. That is why they used brass for the altar—not gold, but brass—because the Lord Jesus Christ took upon Himself our punishment and overcame the devil. So, now we cannot glory in ourselves. We can only glory in the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If we would die to the world, it is only by the Cross that we can so die. Nobody can die to worldly pleasures and worldly enjoyment by his own power. Paul says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6.14). We cannot now glory in anything but the Cross, because by the power of the Cross alone we conquer the world, and by the power of the Cross alone we conquer temptation. So, through the brass, God was saying: 'O man, never try to conquer sin or temptation by human effort, or by human energy or will-power. You will never succeed.'

For 40 years the devil had been working in the hearts of the people in the wilderness and defeating them every time. Only when they realized that it was the devil, and that he must be judged, did they get the victory. And that is how you will get victory also. You will never conquer your temper, or your weakness, by religious exercises, by reading or by fasting or by prayer, nor yet by your own effort and will power. You will conquer them in one way only; by your identification by faith with the Lord Jesus Christ in His death, burial, resurrection and exaltation.

The more we understand how the Lord Jesus Christ judged, defeated, and confounded the devil on the Cross, the more we rejoice in the hour of temptation because of the victory that is ours in Him. In this way we gather the brass which God requires for the Sanctuary.

Every material required by God has some spiritual meaning, and all is found in Christ. Gold speaks of the divine nature; the silver of that price of redemption that our Lord has paid for us; while brass speaks of the judgment which our Lord had to bear on our behalf. All of us are commanded to gather that material, and bring it to Him.

9

THE CURTAINS

"And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen" (Exod. 25.4). For what were these materials required? We have already seen that there were to be ten curtains for the inner covering of the tabernacle (Exod. 26.1-6), a veil in front of the Most Holy Place (26.31-33) and hangings for the door of the tent (26.36-37) and for the gate of the court (26.16-17). All these, together with the garments of the High Priest (28.4-8) were to be of fine twined linen embroidered with needlework in these three colours; while the hangings around the outer court were also to be all of linen (27.9, 18). Now we shall see further the meaning of these materials.

Blue is a heavenly colour. When we see blue we are always reminded of the sky. So the colour blue reminds us of our heavenly vocation while upon earth. Even though here on earth we may have to labour as businessmen, as clerks, as doctors, as teachers, when we are saved we receive a heavenly vocation (Heb. 3.1). A heavenly vocation and a heavenly service are the privilege of every true believer.

Quite common questions put to us in the bazaar or railway train are, 'What is your name? What is your profession?' We answer: 'My name is So and So, and I am working as a clerk, as a labourer, as a doctor or as a businessman'. But among Christians we do not say: 'What is your name?' We say: 'Are you saved?' meaning, 'Are you a child of God? Have you found the joy of the Lord? Are your sins forgiven? Have you true peace? Is your name written in heaven?' That is what we ask as Christians. Then secondly: 'Are you fulfilling your heavenly vocation? You say you are born again, but are you living up to your heavenly vocation? Are you winning souls for your Saviour? Are you telling people about your Lord? Is God's glory being seen through you? Is the devil being defeated through you because of your faithfulness to your heavenly vocation?'

Every sinner whose sins have been washed away by the Lord Jesus has become, by the Blood, a partaker of the heavenly calling. It is this that the blue colour reminds us of.

Purple is a royal colour. It speaks of the kingship of our Lord Jesus Christ. Remember how, when those soldiers were mocking Him, they put on Him a purple robe and said, 'Hail, King of the Jews' (John 19.2-3). In mockery men gave to the Lord Jesus Christ a crown of thorns, but He gives us a crown of gold. In mockery, they clothed Him in purple, but He truly makes us kings and princes unto God.

So the purple colour in the Tabernacle was placed there to remind the people of their royal calling (Exod. 19.6). Even though we are such wretched sinners, God wants us to become kings and princes. This is His love to us. We may have broken every law of God, and have been grieving Him for many years, yet the divine plan is that we should actually become His kings and princes. He has given us the Bible, and His Holy Spirit to prepare us for that vocation.

The scarlet tells us of that cleansing which we receive by the precious Blood of Jesus (Isa. 1.18). This is what the scarlet says: It does not matter how many sins you have committed; it does not matter though they be as scarlet; the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ can wash away every guilty stain.

My brother, do not let your sins keep you away from the Lord Jesus Christ. Come to Him and confess them all; His Blood is sufficient to cleanse the foulest sinners anywhere in the world. By the scarlet we understand that our Lord welcomes all sinners, no matter how sinful they be (Luke 15.2).

Lastly we come to the fine twined linen. The fine linen is the righteousness of the saints (Rev. 19.8). The Lord Jesus Christ has given us the privilege of being clothed with the garments of Salvation. "He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isa.61.10). The white linen speaks of that robe which is given to us to cover our nakedness.

When we are born again the very nature of the Lord Jesus Christ is given to us to make us righteous in Him. When we come to Him we are actually made white, pure white, like white linen. We do not become righteous because we pray, or because we read the Bible. We are righteous because we are clothed and covered with the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

10

THE COVERINGS

"And goats' hair, and rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins" (Exod. 25.4-5). The ten inner curtains which together formed the "one tabernacle" over the Sanctuary (Exod. 26.6) were made of the materials we have just been considering. There were, however, three additional "coverings" of other materials, and these we come to now.

The first was the "tent" of the tabernacle and was woven of goats' hair. It was made of eleven curtains of this material joined together. Each curtain was 4 cubits broad and 30 cubits long. Together they covered right over the tabernacle and reached down, at the sides and back. They were folded up over the doorway.

In Proverbs 30.29-31, we read of four things whose progress is comely. There is the dignified gait of the lion; the graceful movement of the greyhound; the sure-footedness of the he-goat; and finally, the proud walk of a successful king who has put down all rivals. In this matter of their walk they are all alike beautiful.

It is a great sight to see a lion swimming a swift river, for even when the water is flowing very swiftly and violently, the lion will go right across and will not allow the current to take it away from its course. That is how every Christian should walk, keeping on the straight path and not being carried away by temptation of any kind. When we have seen the path of righteousness, we have to walk upon it. Let there be difficulties, let there be many obstacles and many trials, we have to go straight on and right through. Such a walk is something very graceful, very comely, and very pleasing to God.

The greyhound keeps on running till it catches its chosen prey. An ordinary dog will be diverted, even by a small piece of bone, for it is easily satisfied. But the greyhound will never stop even though you may use many bones. It continues running till it catches that prey on which its purpose is fixed. Our Lord Jesus has given us all a service to discharge upon the earth, and no amount of money, or bribes should be able to take us away from that ministry or service. We have to go with the determination of the greyhound to fulfil our duties. Such a walk too is some thing that is pleasing to the Lord.

A he-goat can climb the steepest hill. The steepness of the hill does not discourage it because it is accustomed to graze at the top. It looks very noble as it climbs upward, seeking the heights. That too is how we ought to walk. The Christian life is like climbing a very high hill. Do you want to enjoy the presence of God? Do you want to see the glory of God? You have got to climb hills of difficulty, refusing discouragement and with no turning back. Do not get frightened and discouraged when you meet problems, but with joy and gladness go on climbing until you are at the top. There are Christians, who, because of some very small difficulty, will shed tears on their pillows

in the night. They are ashamed to weep in front of other people, but in their bedrooms they take their pillows and cry over them! Such Christians can never grow spiritually. You have got to face every trial and tribulation and difficulty with joy and thankfulness, believing: 'My Lord will carry me through'.

Lastly, a king against whom there is no rising up is like the others, a pleasure to behold. His progress is something noble and stately. The king who knows that he can defeat any army marches triumphantly through the cities of his enemies. It is such a Christian that you ought to be. Our Lord wants you to live a life of triumph and victory. That is why He came into the world. You should not be a football Christian. Have you seen a football Christian? If you give a football a good kick, it goes very high; but when a tiny thorn pricks it, it becomes flat! Then you wonder what has happened to your football! A little while ago it was bouncing very high and now it is lying on the ground, all because a very tiny thorn has gone into its side. Then you have to patch it and pump it up.

Alas, there are so many Christians like that. At meetings they are very happy, leaping very high spiritually, and singing very happily, but when there are no more meetings and there comes a small thorn somewhere, down they go and lie flat for many months on end till again some other preacher comes along to patch them and pump them up again. These are 'football Christians'. Our Lord wants us to be like a king against whom there is no rising up. He wants us to be like the greyhound, the lion and the he-goat.

There will be difficulties. There are bound to be many trials; but as we hold His hand, and look upto Him, we are more than conquerors by His Cross. That is a lesson from the goat's hair,

The next covering of the Tabernacle was of rams' skins dyed red (Exod. 26.14). We are not told much about how it was made, but evidently it was of whole skins. It covered the tent completely, and outside where it hung down, you could see only the red.

This again is a type of the provision made by our Lord to keep us all covered by His Blood. When Adam was driven out from the presence of God, God "placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Gen. 3.24). God had made that tree of life for man; but now, because of his sin, man could not enjoy the tree of life. Adam was driven out of the garden, -and God put the cherubim and the flaming sword there to safeguard the tree of life, so that Adam as a sinner should not partake of it. That tree of life was being guarded until the day when our Lord Jesus Christ should again open the door. And in the interval we have the long history of the offering for sin of the blood of bulls and of goats and of rams—all pointing forward to Him.

Man had changed, but God cannot change, so how can the love of God change? God had purposed from Eternity past to give this gift of life to man, but man was not yet ready to receive it, so God held it in reserve. Then Adam rebelled, and thus could not receive it because of sin. But the cherubims were there to remind him: 'O Adam, what you have lost to-day, even that very same gift, will be given back again to you one day'.

Now, all of us commit many sins even though we are born again. We go on making mistakes, we get angry, we find jealousy coming into our hearts again and again; but because of the covering Blood over us, we are again and again restored, and that Blood of Christ ever ensures and safeguards for us all that we have in Jesus our Lord. In this way, we are given back all that we lost through failures, disobedience and transgression. That covering of rams' skins dyed red reminds us that we are not covered by man's blood, but by the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ which will preserve us for ever

The last covering was of badgers' skins. It covered the whole Sanctuary—the whole Tabernacle. The badger is said to be extremely watchful over its young ones. It is always on the watch, and will not allow any other animal to come near and attack them. So, by the covering of badgers' skins, we learn a further lesson, namely that our Lord watches over us as an eagle over its young (Deut. 32.11-12) or as a shepherd watches over his sheep (Ezek. 34.11).

The Lord Jesus Christ is our true, our great Shepherd (John 10.11, 14; Heb. 13.20; 1 Pet. 2.25). On earth there are many so-called shepherds, but very few who are worthy to be called shepherds (Isa. 56.10-12). For only God-given shepherds have the ability and strength to shepherd God's flock. In this world there will be many false prophets, many false teachers, many trials for all God's children; but like the badger over its young, the true Shepherd must watch over God's flock, protecting them from all wild beasts and ravening wolves, who sometimes even come in sheep's clothing to despoil them.

The apostle Paul warned the shepherds that many grievous wolves would arise among God's children, seeking to scatter God's flock and he commanded them to watch, reminding them how night and day, he himself had served them and warned them with tears (Acts 20.28-33). There are three things to note here.

The apostle said: "I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel" (verse 33). Alas! there are many preachers who say: 'We have no salary; we do not ask for money from anybody'. They may not covet gold or silver, but they go on coveting nice clothes, nice food, and everything else that is nice, very cleverly hinting when they pray, 'O Lord, you know I have no coat or shirt; Lord, I have no clothes', and praying so loudly that they can be heard everywhere. Those who want to be God's shepherds must be free from covetousness whether it be of gold or silver, or jewellery, or food, or anything else in this life, so that they may serve God joyfully and cheerfully in all circumstances. Such shepherds can truly watch over you, but the other shepherds cannot watch over you, for they will bring divisions and strife afterwards. Whatsoever Paul received he shared. He said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (verse 34). He even worked with his own hands for those who were in need. We think because we are preachers, we must be given everything, and what we receive must go into our own pockets. If we think like that we cannot be true shepherds. Only those who know how to give to God, and how to spend for God, are true shepherds.

The sick, the suffering, the needy, the poor, must be shepherded, but where are the men who will be God's true shepherds? We need to pray: 'O God, give to Thy Church true shepherds who, like the badger with her young, will watch over us.' Then you will be protected and shepherded from every wild beast.

11

THE SHITTIM WOOD

“And shittim wood” (Exod. 25.5). Shittim wood was everywhere in the Tabernacle. The Ark in the Most Holy Place, the altar of incense and the table of shewbread in the Holy Place, the boards and pillars of the Sanctuary, the pillars of the outer court, and the great brazen altar — all were of shittim wood. It has a special lesson to teach us.

The shittim wood comes from a tree of the acacia family. It is the most common wood to be found in any part of the world. Whether you go to North or South India, or to any other warm part of the world, you will find plenty of acacia trees and plenty of shittim wood. And yet it is very little used for anything except firewood.

The Lord Jesus, the Lord of Glory, took upon Himself the form of a common man. He was not born in a King's Palace. He was born in a stable, was laid in a manger, and was brought up as a very humble person. He did not come into the world with any earthly pomp or splendour. Just as an ordinary man He came and lived amongst the poorest people.

But when He spoke it was with authority (Mark 1.22; John 7.46). Looking at His dress, judging by His living, He was a poor man, but when He spoke, it was with divine authority, and not like the Scribes and Pharisees. The Pharisees were proud of their long flowing robes and long jeebas. But the Lord Jesus Christ did not come with outward show. He came as shittim wood—the ordinary common shittim wood—so that a man of any country, or of any degree, could say: ‘He is my Lord, my Saviour, my Friend’. He did not come with outward splendour, but nevertheless He brought to us the power, the authority, and the glory of God. Shittim wood tells us how the mighty God, the living God, became man for us (Phil. 2.5-9). Our Lord knew what it meant to be poor. He knew what it meant to go without food. He knew what it meant to go and sleep in the open air, under trees or in the mountains. He knew what it meant to be hated by His own brethren. He knew what it meant to be cast out by His own friends. He knew what it meant to be reviled and falsely accused. He knew what it was to be called Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. He knew it, because “in all things it behoved Him to become like His brethren” (Heb. 2.17-18), that He might face for them every temptation, every trial. That is why we can tell Him all our troubles, for “in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted”.

My attention was drawn at a most difficult time in my life to this verse. Before my conversion I had had a very easy time, with plenty of friends and plenty of money; but after my conversion, my money went and all my friends went, and I had sometimes to do without food for many days, I had even to work as a cook for many months. I had decided that I would never go and ask any man for any help—that I would die of starvation, if necessary, but would never tell any man what I needed.

After some time, I got a job as a cook! A man said, ‘Are you prepared to work as a cook?’ and I said: ‘I do not know how to cook, but anyway I will try’. I had to cook

Indian food in an American hotel, for about 500 people. Very early in the morning I had to leave my lodging and go to the hotel to prepare food for so many people. I had to cut up two buckets of onions to make the sauce, with the tears running down my face. Then, standing before a very hot fire, I had to prepare the food— vegetable curry, meat curry and rice—and, at the same time, I knew that if things went wrong I would lose my job and with it everything. In the biting cold I had to go to the hotel, and one day, I felt very sad that I had to face two buckets of onions and the fierce fire. But I had to go anyway, so feeling tired and miserable, I walked along the road and thought sadly: ‘Why has God allowed such a thing in my life? Before my conversion, I had plenty of money, but now I have to work as a cook for a few rupees’.

Suddenly, beside the road, I saw a wooden board and written on it this very verse: “In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Heb. 2.18). I did not know the verse, but as I stopped there, and read these words I felt comforted. I went on walking, saying to myself: “He is able to succour”. I walked to the hotel, brought the two buckets of onions, and started my work, and as the tears rolled from my eyes, a great joy came into my heart. From that day onwards, I never got discouraged. I thought: ‘My Lord has borne every trial for my sins. He knows what it means to be tempted, that is why He is able to succour me when I am tempted’. When you are being tempted, remember that the Lord Jesus Christ has been through that temptation, and that He is able to succour. That is why He became as shittim wood, that, for the poorest or lowest man, He might suffer with him.

Is it not wonderful? The Lord Jesus Christ knows every heart, and even yours more than you do yourself. Do not think you are suffering alone. You may be saying: ‘Oh! I do not think anybody suffers as much as I suffer. Nobody knows what kind of father or mother I have. Nobody knows what I suffer from my husband, or from my wife.’ But God knows. He knows everything. Please do not try to make excuses for yourself. The Lord Jesus became as shittim wood—perfect Man—that He might help you in any trial, at any time, anywhere.

But we must notice something else. The shittim wood is of the acacia family. If you look at acacia wood you will see that it is never straight. Nowhere will you find a straight branch. It is a very difficult job to make a straight board from shittim wood. Yet all the boards of the Tabernacle were straight boards — the crooked was made straight. How was this done?

The shittim wood that was used in the tabernacle was of the black acacia tree that grows only in the dry barren deserts of Arabia. This shittim wood is hard, tough, smooth, without knots, and extremely beautiful. It is so hard and solid as to be almost incorruptible, and so large that planks twelve cubits long can be cut from it.

What a wonderful picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. There was no crookedness, no deviation, no corruption in Him. Yet He came as a Root out of a dry ground (Isa. 53.2). All of us are by nature very crooked. We may look very good and very righteous outside, but inside we are very crooked, and our Lord became as shittim wood to make us straight.

My mother thought I was a very good boy because I never got into any mischief. I

started reading novels in school, and one day I came home with quite a number of them, and was reading until 2 o'clock in the morning. My mother said: 'Why are you studying so hard?' I replied, 'Mother, I have to appear for my examinations, and my teacher told me to read all these books before I come to school. I have to study so hard.' My mother said, 'You poor boy' and gave me extra milk, cream and butter. There I was reading filthy novels, and my mother thought I was studying. I felt so ashamed.

Even though you may be a clever boy or girl, God knows where you are crooked. All of us have got some crookedness in us, so our Lord became as shittim wood to make us straight, for we are crooked without Him, and only straight in Him. Can any man make you straight? It seems impossible, does it not? But, Praise God! "The crooked shall be made straight" (Isa. 40.3 and 4). Our Lord Jesus can make us like that in Him. That is what He desires to work in us. Thank God for the lesson of the shittim wood.

12

THE OIL FOR THE LIGHT

“Oil for the light” (Exod. 25.6). “Command the children of Israel, that they bring unto thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually” (Lev. 24.2). In the Bible, oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 25.1-13 we see that we must keep our vessels filled, and our lights burning, as we wait for the coming of the Bridegroom. (Compare also Luke 12.35-36.) In Romans 8.9 we read: “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His”, and in Ephesians 5.18 we are commanded to be “filled with the Spirit”.

When we are saved and redeemed through the grace of God, we come into a new family — the family of God. In that family, only those who have the life of the Lord Jesus Christ are members. Every one who is called a Christian is not necessarily a member of that family. You may have been born a Christian, and you may have been baptized; you may even be working as a Pastor, Preacher or Bishop, but unless you are ‘born again’ of the Holy Spirit, you are not a member of that heavenly family. And what we are saying concerns only those who are members of that heavenly family. It is up to you to find out whether you are a member of that family or not. It is only by having the experience of eternal life, that we become members of that eternal family; otherwise, we are not true members.

That heavenly family has a double divine service— service upon the earth, and service in heaven—and we have to prepare on earth for a fuller service in heavenly places. We can learn much about that service upon earth or in heaven from the details of the Tabernacle. We have seen that in the Holy place, the outer portion, there were three pieces of furniture. On the south side was the golden candlestick having seven branches, on the north side the table of shew-bread, and in the centre the golden altar for incense. Incense had to be burned upon the altar day and night. The light had to be kept burning day and night. The shewbread was kept there continually, being renewed every Sabbath. These three articles composed the furniture of the Holy Place. We will now spend some time on the golden candlestick.

Please read first the full description of the candlestick in Exodus 25.31-40. Then turn to Zechariah 4 and read carefully the whole chapter. There you will see how beautifully God has revealed from the beginning our whole service upon earth. Those who have eyes to see and ears to hear can understand.

In this chapter Zechariah was made to see in a vision a golden candlestick being fed continually with oil from two living olive trees (verses 2, 3 and 12). Then the angel of God said to him: ‘These seven branches of the candlestick tell of the power by which I have saved the world. My work cannot be done by human minds or human power, but only by my Spirit’ (verse 6).

Thus; through the seven lamps burning day and night in the Sanctuary, God was saying to His people: ‘My work can be done in one way only: not by might, nor by

power, but by My Spirit'. How clearly and beautifully God was speaking. Yet how often we think that God's work can be done with human strength, wealth and intellect. Why do we see such spiritual barrenness among Christian people now-a-days? There is spiritual barrenness everywhere, even though we think we are so strong. The total population of the world is 2,400 millions or 240 crores; out of that one quarter are Christians by name. We may say that Christians are in the majority in the world; but how many are 'born again' out of that number? Only one out of one hundred! Numerically we may be strong, but spiritually, we are barren and weak. Outwardly we are very rich, very grand, but in our pockets we have nothing.

My parents used to send me money while I was at College in England, and I used to send them false accounts. Every thing was so expensive in 1930! I used to wear grand clothes, good ties and expensive suits, but I had nothing in my pockets. That is the condition of many these days. There are grand buildings, schools and colleges, but how much spiritual life can be seen among the Padres, Preachers, Bishops, Missionaries and others. We are backward spiritually, having no real life in us. Why is that? Because our Leaders are depending upon their money and their wisdom for God's work, and God has said, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit". God says— 'Remember! I have made you to be like candlesticks of pure gold, that My light should shine upon all people, that men may know My greatness and glory'. We have become very educated, cultured and fashionable, but have lost everything of the Spirit. If there is a graduate in your village he can argue for hours together, yet he may not be able to pray a few words when asked to do so. He says he is a graduate, but does he know his Bible or the truth about God and the Lord Jesus Christ?

How many so-called Christians are falling into sin every day, without victory over temptation, and filled with lust, because those who have taught them thought they could do God's work with human wisdom. God's message to such is: 'You are Christians only in name, but have no life'. That is the message of the golden candlestick.

On either side of the candlestick, Zechariah saw an olive tree, and he questioned the angel: 'Who are these olive trees?' 'These are two anointed ones of God' the angel replied, and Zechariah asked again: 'Who are these two?'

In Revelation 11.4-11 we have a description of the last days—an account of the last three and a half years of tribulation when there will be great sin everywhere, and darkness and blindness. At that time God will raise up two witnesses, who will prophesy for 1,206 days. These are the two olive trees, even two faithful witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Anti-Christ will try to stop them by force from prophesying, but they will go on saying what God tells them. Then the beast, the Anti-Christ, will make war with them and finally they will be defeated and killed; but the third day God's Spirit will enter into them and they will come back to life and begin preaching and prophesying again, and no power will be able to stop them.

So these two olive trees speak of a faithful, loyal and true testimony. People do not want the truth these days. They want anything but the truth, and those who teach seek to change the Word of God into lies and falsehoods, because people do not like the truth. Preachers make false prophecies and give false messages, changing and twisting the Bible to suit their own needs. This is the condition of the last days. People

want only stories, lullaby stories, baby stories to make them laugh. They do not want the Bible. They want words of men. This is what the Bible prophesies, so we cannot be surprised when we see these things happening everywhere. But those who are true Christians will continue to shine like golden candlesticks, their light burning day and night, and no power on earth can change their testimony.

But why was the olive tree chosen? If you look in the Book of Genesis, you will have the mystery explained, for the Bible gives an answer to every question. If you will read Genesis 8.11 and Psalm 52.8, you will see that the olive tree speaks of God's mercy and grace. In Genesis 8 we are told how, by the Hood, the whole earth was covered with water, even every hill and mountain. There was water everywhere, speaking of God's judgment and terrible wrath, because sin abounded and every imagination and thought of man was evil continually (Genesis 6.5). That is why God sent the flood to destroy the whole earth, and no hope was left for any man again. Noah saw water everywhere, telling of God's judgment upon all.

But one morning a dove brought to him a small leaf of an olive tree in its beak. That tiny bit of the olive tree brought new hope to Noah. He was surely wondering: 'Now the whole earth is destroyed, the houses are fallen down, and every man has been killed. What shall be the condition of this earth again?' But the dove came with the small leaf in its beak, and that tiny leaf of the olive tree brought a new joy and hope to Noah, because he understood God's mercy in a new way. Even though God was judging the earth, God's nature of mercy and grace could not change. God may punish and judge us, yet He loves us. He hates sin, but loves the sinner. So that olive leaf was a symbol of God's mercy.

Beside the golden candlestick there were two olive trees, and, through them, God was saying to Zechariah, 'Go and proclaim my message of grace everywhere. Even though I must judge sin, my mercy and grace must never fail or change'. See again Zechariah 4.7: "Grace, grace." This is God's message which we have to proclaim. We have got to go and show the grace of God. By the vision, Zechariah was greatly cheered, because God was saying that His temple would be builded again.

In Nebuchadnezzar's time Jerusalem was ruined, and since then the temple had long lain desolate, because of God's judgments upon His sinning people. Zechariah had seen the ruins of God's House and was wondering: 'How can I build such a building by myself?' God answered him: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit" God was saying: 'Do not go to any king or any wealthy man and beg for money. You will see mountains becoming plains by the power of My Spirit alone. Zechariah, you obey My Word, give My message to My people and let them know the heavenly plan for My House. Be a true witness unto Me'.

What God has revealed, must be declared; what God has shown, must be conveyed to the people. That was the ministry of the Apostles at the beginning. You will remember how, in Acts 4.18-21, these Apostles were brought forth before the members of the Jewish Sanhedrin and were told not to mention the name of the Lord Jesus Christ or they would be punished and go to jail. But the Apostles said, "e cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Do you know that in many so-called Christian schools and colleges they have given

up praying in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? In the year 1939 we were in a certain place for special meetings. There was a large Christian College for boys and a High School for girls — both big places. The Principal had commanded the teachers not to use the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer. I met that Principal one day and asked him, 'Please tell me why you do not use the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer, and why have you given an order in your College to Professors, not to pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ?' The Principal then told me, 'We have many Hindu and Mohammedan boys in the College and we do not want to offend them. If we pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ they might get angry, and that is why we only pray for "Thy Name's sake". So I told him, 'Your prayers will not be heard in heaven. You may shout, but God will not hear your prayers. Every brick of this College has been builded with money given in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and now you are ashamed of Him.'

The Apostles did not act in this way. They were commanded, with threats, not to use the name of the Lord Jesus Christ any more, but they replied: "We cannot help but speak the things which we have seen and heard". That is our ministry. What we have seen and heard of God, we must proclaim. Whether you receive it or reject it is not our business, but we must declare what we have seen and heard. God commanded Paul, in Acts 22.15, that what he had seen and heard of Him he must go and testify, whether they received it or not; and God has given us the same command. The golden candlestick burning day and night was declaring that message. It is our example.

But to-day we do not see such witnesses. Preachers say one thing on weekdays and preach something else on Sundays. Men and women are outwardly good and righteous, but inwardly they mock God. On Sunday morning you may pray beautifully, sing cheerful songs and look good and pious for about one hour. But when you go home, do you practice what you have seen and heard? Do you carry with you the light of God into your business and into your shop? Can people see God's glory shining upon your face? If they cannot see that, can they see the marks of sin upon your face?—the marks of money and ambition?

Some have even told me: 'We do not preach, we do not like to preach, but people can see from our lives that we are Christians, and they can also become Christians'. Yes! but what can they see from the lives of many of you? Beedies, cigars, cigarettes, worldly saris, and arms full of bangles up to the elbow. Can people see from such lives that you are Christians? Take a mirror and look at your face, and you will see the marks of sin. How many are living in adultery these days! Can people see by your fornication that you are Christians? You deceivers! mocking God, trying to leave the Bible out of your teaching; trying to leave prayer out of your lives. By looking at you, will anyone become Christian? Never! They will not come near God. Do not be deceived by these wrong ideas. Unless you shine like golden lamps, burning beautifully day and night, you will never be able to manifest God's glory. That was the main message of the candlestick.

"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit" saith the Lord. Can you pray in the Spirit? Do you sing in the Spirit? Do you preach in the Spirit? Do you walk after the Spirit? Are you led by the Spirit? Are you possessed by the Spirit of God? Only thus can God's work be done. Not by money, not by buildings, not by education, not by human love. Some may give much money for God's work; but how much sin are they

hiding in their lives? It is only by the Holy Spirit that God's work can go on. God is concerned only with golden candlesticks, and only those who shine are worthy to be called God's candle -sticks. You may be very poor, yet the light of God can shine out from you, if the Holy Spirit is working in you daily. That is how God's work can be done. That is the heavenly vocation of God's people upon earth. We are to shine as lights of God, burning with the living oil of God's Spirit. All the seven lamps were of one piece, and speak of true oneness among God's children. When that is so, then God's message will go out. "Ye are the light of the world." Can you say that very truthfully? Can you say, 'The light of God, not the light of men, shines out from me?' The olive oil which was burning in the lamp speaks of the Spirit of God. Only those who have received and are walking in the Spirit can shine with the light of God.

13

THE ANOINTING OIL

“Spices for anointing oil” (Exod. 25.6). Special spices were required by God, to be used in making the anointing oil. Please read the full description of these in Exodus 30.22-33. That oil could only be used in the temple and in the Sanctuary, and upon those who were serving in the Sanctuary. It could not be used for any other purpose. The spices called myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, and cassia were used, along with olive oil. Let us see what the Bible teaches us about the spiritual meaning of these spices.

Psalm 45 is a prophetic Psalm. The first seven verses tell us about the glory and the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ as our heavenly King—the King of kings. The second part tells us about the glory and the beauty which He, the same heavenly King, gives to the Church, His heavenly Bride.

We read in verse 8 that the garments of the King are saturated with those heavenly spices. Compare now with this the words in Song of Solomon 4.12-16. Here the Church is compared to a garden where those spices grow. Spices cannot be grown everywhere for they require much care and attention. Imagine a garden where frankincense, myrrh, aloes, cassia and calamus are all growing together. After much careful cultivation the bushes begin to blossom. Then the North and the South winds begin to blow, and the sweet fragrance of mingled spices flows out, giving great joy to the one who walks in the garden. ‘Let my Beloved come into the garden’; sang the Bride, ‘Let Him enjoy these pleasant things’. Can you sing that to the Lord Jesus Christ? ‘Come, Lord Jesus Christ, into my heart—Thy garden of spices’. If you are not living a life to the glory of God, the Lord can smell no spices; He can smell nothing but a very bad smell. But if you are living a life pleasing to Him, then like that garden of spices, your heart can give joy to Him. We read in 1 Corinthians 3.9 that “we are God’s husbandry”—God’s garden, and in 2 Corinthians 2.14-16 that “we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ”. That is how our lives ought to be, so that, when our Lord Jesus Christ walks in His gardens, He may smell their fragrance.

Let us mark now in the Gospel story six stages of Christian growth taught to us by the spices. In Matthew 2.11 we read of the wise men who came from a very far country, led by a moving star. They saw the Baby, and fell down and worshipped Him. They had brought with them gold and spices, myrrh and frankincense. They knew only that He was a great King and with the spices they expressed their adoration. That is how we begin. At first, we come to Christ like the wise men. We do not know much of Him. If we are questioned, we cannot tell what is faith, or sanctification, or redemption, or substitution, and yet we love the Lord Jesus Christ, and we have just begun to worship Him.

Again, in Luke 7.37-38, we read of a woman who knew something of the Lord Jesus Christ. She saw her sins, and came to Him, showing her repentance by her tears, and then she poured the ointment upon His feet, longing to do something to show her love for Him. She knew only that the Lord Jesus Christ could forgive her sins; and with that

faith she brought ointment of spikenard, a precious spice. That is the second stage. We begin to see more and more what sins are in us when we begin to walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. The closer we live to God, the more we shall see how corrupt and sinful we all are, and how gracious He is, and that is why we have to thank and praise God for giving the Lord Jesus to us. And wherever we go we cannot help but testify: 'I was a sinner, and the Lord Jesus Christ forgave me. I was in darkness, and the Lord brought me into light. I had no joy, and my Lord gave me joy. I had no peace, and the Lord gave me peace!'

Yet again, in John 12, we read of a woman who was very grateful because the Lord Jesus Christ had raised her brother from the dead, and who in her gratitude also brought spikenard, for she understood now something of the power of Christ in other lives. So thirdly, when we too see how, through our testimonies, our brothers are converted, and our sisters and our neighbours are brought into new life, then it is that we want to thank the Lord : 'O Lord, Thou hast not only saved me, but also my brother or sister, mother or father, friend or neighbour'. So, with that zeal, we go to our neighbours and our friends, and say to them: 'Please let me share my joy with you.'

Fourthly, in Matthew 26.7-12, two days before the Feast of the Passover a woman brought "very precious ointment" and poured it upon His head. She did it for His burial, because she knew by faith that He was going to die, and be buried, for all sinners. The woman in Luke 7 could only see what the Lord had done for her personally, but this woman could see what He would do for "the whole world" (Matt.26.13). We also want to thank our Lord that He died for all sinners throughout the world, and throughout the ages. So we begin to want to know how our Lord is saving sinners in other parts of the world. Before our conversion, we never bothered to ask what our Lord was doing in other lands, but now we want to know how He is saving sinners in Japan, China, Russia, Asia, America, Africa, Australia, Europe, England everywhere. That gives an increase of joy: 'Oh, my Lord is working everywhere, and I want to praise Him!'

Now fifthly, in John 19.39, Nicodemus at last understood by revelation the power of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. He had been following the Lord very closely; he had seen His miracles, and came to Jesus by night. But when he saw Him dying, and saw how they pierced Him and reviled Him; when he saw how He forgave them, and how, when He died, the sun became dark and the earth quaked and the graves were opened, then he began to see the power of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ to defeat, crush and confound the devil. With the spices with which he anointed Him, Nicodemus expressed the fragrance of that service of the Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of all sinners. We too see by faith how our Lord is working in the universe, and understand how, in His Cross, we too can defeat and confound the devil. In this way also we bring the spices of praise: 'O Lord, Thou art wonderful I We rejoice to see how Thou art confounding the devil.'

Lastly, in Mark 16.1-3, we read that, after the Resurrection, some women prepared spices with which to anoint Him. They had worked very hard, but, when they were on the way, they remembered that there was a big stone before the sepulchre and that it was impossible to have it removed. Yet they believed somehow that the stone would be rolled away. Their faith was answered by the unexpected power and glory of the

Resurrection. The power of resurrection takes away every stone from every sepulchre. So, as God's children, we proclaim in naked faith God's message that the Lord Jesus Christ has conquered death. To bring people out of bondage and limitation, we preach the simple truth that our Lord will remove every stone, and as we do so the miracle happens and He is highly exalted.

Our value to God as His servants will increase as we grow spiritually. Spices tell us about spiritual growth. So, when God commanded the people to bring spices. He did so that they might learn the meaning of divine service the kind of service that can please Him—the kind of service that brings forth an abiding and eternal harvest.

Now note that the spices which were demanded by God to be used in the preparation of this very special anointing oil were not found in Egypt. The story in Genesis tells us how Joseph was sold by his own brothers to the Ishmaelites. He had come to enquire about the welfare of his brethren, and, because they were very jealous of Joseph, they wanted to kill him. Instead they cast him in a dark and deep pit, and later, when they saw a caravan of camels passing, they sold him to the Ishmaelites. Those camels were carrying spices to Egypt (Gen. 37.25). Joseph found it hard to understand why he had been sold by his brethren. He had done no evil to them, yet all the time they were trying to kill him, and to do him harm. Joseph had suffered much from his own brethren, of hatred, enmity, jealousy and cruelty, and must have been feeling downcast and dejected. But the camels were carrying spices! When the North wind and the South wind began to blow on those spices and when their sweet fragrance was carried to Joseph, God began to speak to him: 'Joseph, I will use all these sorrows one day to bless you'. And as that sweet fragrance of the spices began to bring to him a message from God, how he began to exult in Him!

Now we find the children of Israel bringing back spices from Egypt to Canaan. The Egyptians never knew the real value of the spices, because they used them for earthly purposes. Now they were to be used for a heavenly purpose in God's Sanctuary, and now their heavenly meaning would be displayed.

Leviticus 8 tells us how that anointing oil was used. Aaron was the first High Priest, and as such he had to serve God on behalf of all the people. Thus he had to be set apart and prepared for a very special service and ministry. We see here in what way this was done. First of all Aaron was brought forward before the whole congregation; then he was washed; thirdly, he was clothed; fourthly, he was anointed before everybody; fifthly, the blood was put upon his ear, and his hand, and his foot, to consecrate his ear to hear the voice of God, and his hands and his feet to move in God's service. Sixthly, his hands were filled; and seventhly, by the blood and the oil of anointing, he was sanctified to God's service.

That is how God works among all of us. First of all, by God's Word we come under conviction, and find the hand and power of God drawing us towards Himself and into His light (1 Pet. 2.9). As we see, Aaron was brought forward before the whole congregation, and before such a large number of people he had to be washed and bathed. Now, why was this done? Because if there was any blemish in him he could never be High Priest and have that service (Lev. 21.16-21). There must not be any blemish of any kind on his body. Suppose he had very good health, yet had a blemish in one eye, then he was disqualified for God's service. If he had any blemish in the nose, or teeth,

or lips, or ears, then he was disqualified. If he had an extra finger he was disqualified, or if he had a flat nose. Any blemish, however small, would disqualify him for God's service. Surely that is one reason why the Priest had to be washed publicly before so many people. He might deceive some people, but not all, and when so many lakhs of people were watching Aaron, someone would surely see whether he had a blemish or not.

Our Lord wants us to be without spot and Without blemish before Him (Jude 24). He not only forgives our sins, but He takes away every spot and every blemish from within us. That is true salvation. Do you think that our Lord forgives, and that is all there is to it? Whatever the ugly spot may be, He exposes it, for it will have to be removed completely.

After Aaron had been washed he had to be clothed with his "holy garments ... for glory and for beauty" (Exod. 28.2), signifying the glory and beauty which our Lord Jesus Christ wants us to have through Him. These are described for us in Exodus 28. First, he had to put on a white linen coat, and over the white coat a blue robe, at the bottom of which were pomegranates in blue, and purple, and scarlet round about the hem, and bells of gold between each one (31-35). Then they put on him what is called an ephod, worked with blue, purple, scarlet and gold thread (6-8), and in the ephod was the breast-plate. In the breast-plate were twelve stones, and on the twelve stones were the names of the twelve tribes (15-21). Besides the twelve stones, were two other stones called the Urim and Thummim (30). With the help of those two stones, the priest could find out God's will (Num. 27.21). On the shoulders were two onyx stones. These also had the names of the twelve tribes, in the order of birth (9-12). Then the holy mitre was put upon his head, and upon it the golden plate bearing the words: HOLINESS TO THE LORD (36-38).

When he had put on all these clothes, then the holy anointing oil was poured upon them all. Having been prepared by examination, by washing, by clothing, and anointing, he was now ready to serve God. Do not think it is an easy task to serve God. Some people think that by going to a Bible School they are made ready to serve Him. Others think that by carrying a Bible under the arm they can serve Him. You cannot serve God in that way. There is no such short cut. The holy anointing oil was a symbol of the kind of service that God wants. God has made a divine plan by which all of us can serve Him acceptably with reverence and godly fear, and for service which is thus acceptable to God, there must be the preparation which He has appointed.

But note that, before the oil could be poured upon Aaron, it had to be poured upon the Tabernacle, the ark, the table of incense, and the altar. Lastly, it was poured on Aaron also (Lev. 8.10-12). In other words, the service of the priest should be for the edification of the whole Sanctuary, and the fragrance of the anointing oil should be found everywhere. He was not to serve just one man, or just one tribe he was to serve the whole nation.

But note, too, that the oil spoke of a service which was to be fulfilled within the borders of the Sanctuary only. You say, There are so many buildings and institutions that have been built by so many godly people, and that are doing a good work. What about them? Were they all wrong? I ask you, Is your service devoted to God's Sanctuary? If not, it cannot bring forth any harvest. The high Priest could not go

anywhere he liked with the people's sacrifices. He might have said : 'I could offer sacrifices in that man's tent, or in that compound, or over there', but God told him that every sacrifice must be offered in the court of the Tabernacle for all the people and that the blood must go into the presence of the Lord Himself.

In the same way, only service that can bring an increase in the whole Church of God is acceptable to Him. That thought will answer for you many questions. He wants only such service as will bring fragrance into the Most Holy Place of His holy Sanctuary, a service by which the whole Church of God is edified. Not only the Church of God in one city, nor yet in India, nor even in all Asia, but the whole Church throughout the world, and throughout the ages.

But such a service will demand much suffering, and much sacrifice. We saw that the garments of our Lord Jesus Christ are full of spices. "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes and cassia" (Psa. 45.9). How did the garments of the Lord Jesus Christ get that smell of spices?

Firstly, He became man for us, and suffered as a man for us. He became humble and bore for our sake all reviling. Then He died and the third day rose again. That is how His garments gathered spices, and we too have to share His sufferings. It is only such suffering that gives our lives the sweet smell of those same spices (1 Pet. 2.21-24). That is why Joseph had to suffer so much. If God had so-wanted, Joseph could have escaped suffering, but God allowed that suffering for a purpose. Joseph was hated, despised, forsaken, and cast out by his own brethren. He was taken away from home, lived as a slave for many years, and was continually tempted by all the temptations of the flesh. He lay in the prison house, forsaken, forgotten, and falsely accused. Then God raised him to the throne. From that throne he was able to give service to the whole nation. And God showed him this by means of the spices on those same camels which carried him into Egypt.

There are some spices which can be grown only in very lonely places. You may be wondering: 'Why has God kept me in this lonely, hard, difficult place, with no one to talk to, no one with whom to worship, no one to pray with. I am all by myself. I am the only man in my family. Mother and father are against me, and so is every one else. O God, why hast Thou allowed things like this?' Are you going through that kind of experience? Are you being sold by your brethren? Are you being cast out by them? Are you being thrown into the same deep dry well? Is it a lonely and far off place that you are in? Are you going through some temptations of the flesh? Then remember that in this way you are gathering spices for God's House. Your garments will be soaked and permeated with the fragrance of these spices, and even when you are promoted to heaven, you will carry them with you there.

Yes, spices are generally found in difficult and lonely places. But you are God's husbandly, and when the North wind blows, and the South wind, then you will know why you were there for such a long time. The same anointing oil that was used for the High Priest, was used also for the cleansing of the leper, and by your earthly service of consecration even spiritual lepers can be cleansed. May the Lord teach you how to serve Him, and how to gather spices for Him.

14

THE SWEET INCENSE

"Spices... for sweet incense" (Exod. 25.6). We have seen that spices were used to make the anointing oil, and now we see that they also used to make the incense for burning. Read the instructions for preparing them in Exodus 30.34-38. The anointing oil speaks of service which we should render in the House of God, and the incense speaks of the intercession which ascends from the hearts of believers before God's throne.

In God's Sanctuary the incense burned day and night on the golden altar in the Holy Place. Like the light of the golden candlestick which was never allowed to go out, so the incense burned unceasingly, the whole day and the whole night. The light speaks of the Word of God, and the incense speaks of that intercession and prayer which ascends before God, through the High Priest. All of us have a share in that. "Let. my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Psa. 141.2).

From Revelation 8.2-3 also, we see that incense is a symbol of the prayers of the saints. "And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne." When we receive the gift of everlasting life, we become God's co-workers and as such we should bring everything to Him in prayer. But why should we pray? Surely, even before we pray, God knows everything. Yes, not only does God know what we want but He also knows our shortcomings and failures. Yet He wants us to pray always! Why is this?

We need to understand how we are co-workers with God. When we begin to talk with Him through our prayers, then He begins to work in other places. That thought is made clearer to us in Revelation 8.5 which immediately follows the verses just quoted: "And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire off the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake."

Here the judgment of God is about to be poured out on the whole earth. Thunderings, lightnings and earthquakes speak of the final judgment of God about to be executed. God does not expect justice or righteousness to triumph upon this earth to-day. To-day wicked people become more prosperous, while those who are living a good life often have to suffer, for, "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3.12). But a day is coming when God is to judge every sin and every sinner. Do not think, O sinner, that your sins are going to be left unjudged; they may be left covered for many centuries, but one day God will judge every sinner (Eccles. 8.11-13). Even though a sinner may sin a thousand times and seem to be left unpunished by God, that does not mean that He is not going to punish him. One day God will punish every sinner.

Yes, there is a Day of Judgment, and in Revelation 8 we see God's angels ready to carry out God's command, ready to pour upon the earth the fire of the wrath of God; and in their hands they are holding the incense—the prayers of the saints—rising day and night before God's throne. So, the prayers of God's children have a share in that final work of God's judgment.

We are God's co-workers; that is why we have to pray. And even though we may never receive an answer to our prayer upon this earth, when we reach heaven we shall know God's answer to every one. No prayer ever goes unanswered. You may think, 'God has not heard my prayer; God has not listened to me, and does not love me as much as He loves my neighbour. God has heard his prayer; yet though I have been praying for thirty-eight years I have had no answer!' That is not true. God hears and records every prayer of every born-again child of His. So your time is not wasted when you pray. You are working as God's co-worker and co-labourer.

Sometimes we wonder how to pray, and what to say in prayer, for the words will not come to us. Now remember, prayer does not depend on nice language! It may be uttered in very broken and poor language but if it comes from the heart, God accepts it. I met a young man some time ago who seemed very happy. So I said: 'Why are you so happy to-day?' He said, 'I have received the first letter from my small boy'. 'How old is your boy?' I asked. 'Three years old', he answered. I said in surprise, 'How can a three-year-old boy write to you? Let me see the letter.' So he showed me the letter—simply a piece of paper with nothing but lines all over it. The young man said that when his wife was writing to him, the boy saw her doing so, and questioned her, 'Mummie, what are you doing?' She said, 'Writing to your Daddy'. So the child took a piece of paper and an old stick and put it in the ink bottle and scribbled just lines! The father said, 'My son has written to me', and was so happy. Though there were only lines on the paper, yet for that father they were something more than mere lines! He saw the love in the heart of the small boy expressed in them. So do not think that you need to say long prayers with fine words in order to get an answer! Some people think that if they have a Prayer Book and read from it, they can be sure that God will answer their prayers. But God does not ask for Prayer Book prayers; He asks for prayers from the heart.

Do not think that you have to repeat things when praying. There is nothing formal about prayer. We are God's co-workers and with that faith we pray. Sometimes only an unspoken, painful sigh in our heart becomes our prayer. When we see sin here and wickedness there, we pray: 'O God, wilt Thou not do justice?' and through our prayer God will work.

In Leviticus 16 we have an account given to us of the Day of Atonement. On that Day the High Priest had to come into the Most Holy Place, offering the blood of the sacrifice first for himself and his house, and then for the whole nation. Generally the High Priest wore his garments of glory and beauty. But, on the Day of Atonement, he had to take off those garments of glory and beauty and bathe himself and put on clean linen garments, before he could enter the Most Holy Place- (verse 4). Then he had to bring two goats. On one, called the scapegoat, he laid his hands and it was sent away into the wilderness (verses 4, 20-22). The blood of the other was brought inside the Most Holy Place. But, before he could bring the blood, he had to burn incense before the Mercy Seat (verses 12-13). Then only was the blood sprinkled on the Mercy Seat, first of all for himself, and then for all the people (verses 6, 15-16).

All this was a type or shadow of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. First, our Lord Jesus took off His garments of glory and beauty. That is to say, He left His heavenly throne of glory and, even though He was God, became man for us. Then he took upon Himself our sins and bore them away. Even as the goat was sent into the wilderness and nobody ever saw it again, so just as truly, He bore away our sins, and they, in the same way, will not be remembered any more. Then finally, He brought His own Blood inside the Most Holy Place, thereby wholly satisfying God (Heb. 9.11-12).

When God forgives, He forgives completely. It does not matter how horrible your sins are; provided you repent sincerely, and believe from the heart that the Lord Jesus Christ died in your stead, then your sins will be no more remembered. God is perfectly satisfied with the precious Blood of His dear Son. Do not let the devil terrify you with the fear that your sins are not fully forgiven. That is how the devil came to me a few months after my conversion. I was going through great trial and difficulty and one day the devil said to me, 'Yes, God has forgiven your sins, but not all your sins; there are still some sins which you committed in London, for which you are being punished. God is still punishing you.' And I believed the devil. I said, 'Yes, it is quite true, God must punish me. I have grieved Him, so He must punish me.'

But the scripture teaches me that if I repent of my sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, believing from my heart that He died in my stead and rose again for my sake, then my sins are cast behind God's back. They are completely wiped out and will never be remembered. They are cast into the depths of the sea; they are removed as far as the East is from the West. This is what the scripture says (Psa. 103.12; Isa. 38.17; 43.25; 44.22; Micah. 7.19; 1 John 1.7). Yet, the devil will insist: 'Now you are still being punished for this sin or that sin', and so, many feel discouraged and cast down. But God has shown from the very beginning that, when He forgives, He forgives completely. The precious Blood is on the Mercy Seat before God and the scapegoat goes into the wilderness never more to be remembered.

But remember, before the blood was sprinkled, incense was burned before the Mercy Seat. That again reminds us of the prayers of the saints of God. Before any sinner is saved, -there will always be much prayer. I will give you my own experience of such prayer.

I wrote to my father about my conversion in September, 1932. I was at that time away in Canada, and I wrote from there telling him how I was born again. It was a very long letter in which I gave him verses from Genesis to Revelation, though I did not know how my father would understand the verses of the Bible. I told my Canadian friends that, by my calculation, my father would receive my letter on the 21st October, and I asked them: 'Will you please pray for him?' So, on the 21st October, forty-four friends of mine met and were praying. We knelt down in a room, and that morning all the forty-four prayed one by one: 'Lord use that letter to open the eyes of that man'. As I calculated, exactly on that same day my father got the letter. He opened it and he saw in it the many Bible verses, and said to himself: 'Let me go to a missionary nearby and ask him the meaning of this letter.'

There was a gentleman named MacArthur living in that town. So my father took that letter to Mr. MacArthur and said to him, 'My son has gone away to Canada. He wrote to me a long letter, and in that he gives a very long list of verses. I do not know what they are. Can you help me to understand them?' Mr. MacArthur then gave my father an Urdu Bible and he showed him how to look up references in the Bible, so my father went home and read all the verses. Then Mr. MacArthur sent a message to the Christians in the city: 'Please pray for this man.' The Lord spoke to him, telling him to do this.

Thus, unknown to my father, there were many praying for him in Canada and also in India. When I came back to India, I found my father ready to receive more of the Gospel and in due course, he was born again. Think of the people who had been praying for his conversion in many parts of Canada and in many parts of India. In answer to their prayers, God saved him.

So, for every soul's conversion there must be much prayer. In some cases we get an answer and know it, but in other cases we do not. But when we go to heaven, I am sure that God will say to us: 'My child, do you see those people over there? They were saved because of your prayers'. You may reply: 'O God, I do not even know who they are but He will say,' Remember how you prayed, where you prayed, and what you prayed for?' God has a good memory. He is not like us who so easily forget. Even though you may have very much enjoyed a meal last week, when you are asked: 'What did you eat last Sunday' you say, 'Let me think; now what was it? I have forgotten!' You cannot remember what you had four days ago. That is human memory! But God does not forget anything. When we pray to Him, He remembers every prayer. When you pray, your prayer rises like incense into His Sanctuary, and through your prayers God can do so much. Elijah was a man subject to the same passions as we are. He was just like us; yet he had the faith to pray, and God did great things through his prayer (James 5.17-20). So do not say that God does not hear your prayers.

Whosoever you may be, if you are bought by the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, you are a priest of God, and you can pray at any time for anybody. All cannot preach, but all can pray 'Lord, teach us to pray!'—any time, anywhere, and God will hear. Through your prayers God can do wonders; through your prayers souls can be brought back to Him, hearts can be softened, and many homes can be blessed. All of us can take part in that.

So, when people speak ill of you, as they did of Joseph, begin to pray for them. Do not try to talk ill against them, but begin to pray for them: 'O God, please bless so-and-so!' That is how you can send incense into heaven, and fill God's Sanctuary with fragrance. Spices came first from Canaan to Egypt, then they came back from Egypt to Canaan. 'Oil for anointing, incense of prayer'. We receive from heaven those spices, and send them back into heaven itself.

15

THE PRECIOUS STONES

“Onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate” (Exod. 25.7). We have seen already that precious stones were used in the garments of the High Priest. Let us look again at these priestly garments in Exodus 28.

Firstly, Aaron wore a white coat, over that a blue robe, and thirdly the ephod. The ephod was made of fine twined linen, embroidered with blue and purple, scarlet and gold (verses 6-8). On the shoulder of the ephod were two onyx stones or “stones of memorial unto the children of Israel”. They were engraved with the twelve names of the tribes, and, we are told, “Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders” (verses 9-12).

This tells us that our Lord carries us upon His shoulders. Many people try to carry their own burdens. I have often seen people coming into a train, and still carrying their loads on their heads. They even sit down with big bundles still on their heads. They will not put the burden under the seat! That is what we often do also. The Lord has said: ‘Put your burden upon my shoulders’, yet we insist upon carrying it ourselves, and worrying over it night and day, ‘What will happen to-morrow?’ we ask. ‘What will happen next month —or after two months ? We have five children now, and soon we will have seven. How are we going to educate them? How are we going to marry them?’ Even before they are born we worry about them! Let the Lord Jesus carry your burdens. Put your burden upon His shoulders, let Him carry it for you. Cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you (1 Pet. 5.7). When you learn that lesson, and let the Lord carry your burden, you will enjoy His perfect rest and peace.

Over the ephod was the breastplate of embroidered linen with its chains and ouches of gold. Upon the breastplate were twelve stones, upon which also were the twelve names of the twelve tribes (verses 15-21). These twelve stones were very near the heart of the High Priest. Wherever he went the stones went with him and by them God reminds His people that He wants them to be very close to His heart.

Now some people do not come very near to God. No doubt they love God, and His Word, but they do not come as close to God as He wants them to be. Sometimes worldly friends come between us and God. How often when we feel like praying, a visitor arrives and we leave the presence of God to go and keep company with that friend, and in this way allow worldly friends to come between us and God. The time we ought to spend with God and His Word is spent upon worldly things. We like the thought of living close to God, but there is a gap somewhere. Now, through these precious stones, God is saying to us ‘My people, I want you very close to myself, to enjoy My full affection and love.’

Some people only pray when they want something. For example, when they are sick they pray: ‘O God, heal me, heal me, heal me’, but when they are healed again, they forget God. They only pray when they are in trouble, ‘Lord, see my difficulty! Oh, please help me in my trouble.’ But when God hears their prayers, again they forget

Him. Many only pray when they are going through some great trial or affliction, but there are very few people who pray for God's sake, because they love Him.

You know how troublesome your growing children can be, but the small baby loves you for your own sake. As children grow older they love you for what you give them, but a small baby wants the mother's breast, and it does not mind if it has nothing else so long as it is given love and affection. As the baby is hungry for the mother's breast, we ought also to be hungry for God Himself. Without any request or supplication, without any particular need, we should cry out to Him : 'O Lord, I want only Thee; I want to be in Thy presence, to be loved by Thee.' We are to be like the precious stones upon the breast of the High Priest — drawn very close to God's heart, and in God's presence day and night.

Underneath these twelve stones, within the breastplate, there were two more stones, one called the Urim and the other the Thummim. Even to-day nobody knows what these two stones were. Their nature is a mystery, a secret which God has never revealed to us. We only know that with the help of these two stones, the High Priest could discover God's will. When people came to the High Priest to find out God's command concerning any matter, then he could do so with the help of these two stones.

In Psalm 43.3-4, we may see an allusion to these two stones. They can be compared to the Light of God and the Truth of God. "O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me." God has given these to every believer. Just as the High Priest had these two stones, Urim and Thummim, on the breastplate, so even now, in your heart, is the Light of God and the Truth of God, which you received from God when you were born again. (See 2 Corinthians 4. 4 & 6). Even as the blind have no light, those who have no faith in the Lord Jesus are in darkness, for the Devil has blinded their eyes. But God said, concerning those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that the light of God revealed in His face shines in them. But He said also: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3.16). When by faith you see the Lord face to face and are born again, you have the Word of God, even the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking to you, and the light of God shining in you. Even as the High Priest could find God's will through the help of these two stones, so, with His light and His truth in our hearts, all of us can now find the will of God. Before we go anywhere, before we spend our money, before we make any plans or any decisions, for ourselves, for our children or for the future, we should find out God's will.

Alas I people do not find the will of God for their lives. They go on spending money and time and gifts as they like, and do not use those two stones, either for themselves, or for their friends, or for their children. How many Christian parents have put their children in darkness? Children of born-again parents are being educated in Roman Catholic Convents. You say that you put your children there because you want them to be taught English. That is a trick of the Devil, and not of God. All these Roman Catholic Convents and Schools are dedicated to idol worship, and when your children are small, if they see the nuns worshipping idols and pictures, they will think it right to do the same. They may learn English well, but they may also bring idolatry into the House of God. That is how many parents are the cause of their children's failure.

In the same way with the marriage of your children, you do not find out God's will and so you do not make happy marriages. As you seek the will of God in everything, you will be drawn closer and closer to God's heart, and these precious stones remind us that God's plan for His people is to draw them very near, and close to His heart.

In Revelation 21.14-18 we see these stones once more. There we have a vision of the walls of the Holy City, which have twelve foundations, on which the names of the twelve Apostles are written. These precious stones are found in those foundations, and speak of the strong apostolic foundation on which we are built (Eph. 2.19-22). Now the Apostles were only ordinary men. Do not think they were men of extraordinary temperament. They were men of like passions as we are, yet they were made strong by God. In spite of human failure, all of us can become strong like that. In Luke 6. 13-16' we have the list of the twelve Apostles, and Simon's name comes first. We know what kind of a man Simon Peter was, yet, in spite of his failure, he became God's precious stone. Even though we too fail so often, yet, in the Lord Jesus Christ, we too are precious stones.

How did Simon Peter become a precious stone? That name 'Peter' means just an ordinary rough stone, but, that same rough stone became in the end a very precious, shining foundation stone. When he came to the Lord Jesus Christ in the beginning, he was like the ordinary, dirty-looking stones you see on the wayside; yet in the heavenly foundations he is represented by a very beautiful precious stone. "The first foundation was jasper" (Rev. 21.19). Peter, the rough stone, is now likened to a shining, bright, beautiful, precious jasper stone. How did he become like that?

In Luke 5.2-3 we see Peter sitting by his boat, washing his net. He was probably half-naked, with nothing upon his body save only a loin-cloth, and with a very rough face and rough hair. Then the Lord Jesus Christ came down to the seashore and by Simon's permission entered the boat and began to talk about faith, and other things. Meanwhile that naked fisherman was wondering how such things could concern him. But the Lord knew all about Simon, and after He had finished speaking, He told him: 'Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.' Even though the Lord was talking to so many people, yet he had seen the thoughts going on in the heart of Simon. Simon answered: 'Lord, we have been toiling the whole night and we have caught nothing, but now, just to please You, I will do as You ask'. But he never believed that he would get even one fish. He said in his heart: 'I am a fisherman, and this man does not know how to catch fish; yet He tells me to catch fish on that side of the boat. I have toiled all night and have caught nothing. I ought to know. But just to please Him, I will do it, —and he did (Luke 5.5-8).

And what happened? Simon, that rough looking stone, who earlier had been sitting there in the boat full of disappointment and doubt, obeyed the Lord; and soon the net was so full of fish that it began to break.

Such were the men whom the Lord chose: not B.A.s and M.A.s, but just unlearned and ignorant fishermen, full of failure and frailty and weakness, but ready to obey Him. For three years the same Simon gave the Lord Jesus Christ much trouble. He was so quick-tempered and impulsive that he had to be rebuked again and again. In Matthew 16 he confessed the Lord Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, but when He told him that He must suffer and die, Peter thought the Lord was making a terrible mistake

and said to Him: 'Never, Lord ! You cannot do such a thing as that.' But Peter did not know what he was saying, and the Lord rebuked him: "Get thee behind me, Satan. He said, 'You are not standing for the things of God'. Yet Peter thought that he was following the Lord. How many people are like that ! They have been to Bible Seminaries and have learned Hebrew and Greek; they know all about God; they profess to be walking in His ways; they even think they know much more than our Lord did, and like Peter they say: 'O Lord, the Cross was not necessary. The Blood is not necessary.'

Such people tell us: 'We like your preaching, but please do not talk about sin and the Blood. You can talk about anything else, but we do not like those words'. That is why so many so-called Pastors have given up talking about sin and the Blood of Christ. They have yielded to public pressure and will not even tell people that Christ died for their sins. But the Lord says: "Get thee behind me, Satan." "The Son of Man must suffer." "For this cause came I into the world."

Again in Matthew 18.21 the Lord said: 'You must forgive', but Peter thought, 'No Lord, how can I forgive? Lord, do not give such teaching. Men must be punished by bricks and stones. We must use the stick and the sword.' See how Peter was again and again coming in the way of the Lord. Our Lord had told the disciples many times: 'I must die; I have come into the world in order to die, because it is the only way that sinners can be saved. I left heaven to give My life willingly for all sinners'. Yet when Peter saw all the people coming around Him to take Him, he was so full of anger that he took out his sword and cut off the ear of the High Priest's servant. And again the Lord had to rebuke him.

Peter was a rough stone, and could not understand the mind of God. His life was full of frailties and weakness, but the Lord knew that one day the same rough stone would be like a precious jasper stone. And we are all like Peter. Before we come to the Lord Jesus Christ, we are bad-tempered and are always doing foolish things. Yet how patiently and lovingly the Lord goes on rebuking and teaching us, till we too become like precious stones. In spite of our failures and shortcomings and weaknesses, the Lord takes us and, if we only obey Him, will change and transform us till we become like a shining jasper stone.

Even years later God had to rebuke Peter through Paul the Apostle when Peter refused to eat with the Gentiles (Gal. 2.11-12), and we too shall receive many rebukes throughout our lives. Precious stones have to go through extreme heat under the ground to become so brilliant. God asks us to believe in His perfect will and to allow the trials He may send to work His will in us. That is how He can make of us shining stones. If we allow the light and truth of God to work in us, we shall become like precious stones drawn close to the heart of God, to enjoy His full love and affection.

Thus we see the spiritual meaning of the material gathered for the House of God. Let our daily prayer 'God help me to bring for Thy House, gold, silver and brass; blue, purple, scarlet, and fine linen; goats' hair, rams' skins and badgers' skins; shittim wood, oil, spices and precious stones. Lord give me the joy and the honour of bringing these things into Thy House. I want to take my share in the building of Thy dwelling place'.

16

THE BOARDS

We have considered so far the materials which were used at God's command in the building of His Sanctuary, following for that purpose the list given in Exodus 25.3-7. Now, we want to study the meaning of the holy structure itself.

The Tabernacle which was built in the wilderness at God's command should not be confused with the Jewish Synagogue, which is simply a place where Jews gather together to worship and to have the Word of God expounded. The Sanctuary was not a place where the public could come for this purpose. Nobody could enter except the priests, and then merely to keep the lights and incense burning and to renew the shewbread. In the case of the Most Holy Place, the High Priest alone could go in there to take the blood once a year.

The Synagogue was a meeting place for men. The Sanctuary was a dwelling place for God. Men went to it, not in order to pray, but to do their duties. The sacrifices were offered in the outer court, and the blood was taken inside on the Day of Atonement. God had ordained that that Sanctuary was to be a type of His spiritual House, even the Church. That was not true of the Synagogue.

The great Sanctuary, built of wooden boards, was 20 cubits long, 8 cubits wide and 10 cubits high. One cubit is about 1 foot 6 inches, so it was roughly 30 feet long, 12 feet wide and 15 feet high. The Sanctuary was divided into two parts : the front portion, called the Holy Place, and the smaller back portion, the Most Holy Place, the former being twice the size of the latter. There were three walls, north, south and west, all made of boards, while the open east end was closed with a curtain supported on pillars. The three walls were made of twenty boards on the north side, twenty boards on the south side and eight boards on the west side, forty-eight boards in all. These boards were each 15 feet high and 2 feet 3 inches wide. They were overlaid with gold both outside and inside (Exod. 26.15-25).

Now we shall see what God has to teach us about the meaning of the true Church from those wooden boards in the House of God.

Aaron was the first High Priest of the Sanctuary that was built in the wilderness at God's command through Moses. But that Sanctuary in the wilderness was a shadow of the true Heavenly Sanctuary of which the High Priest is our Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Heb. 8.1 & 2). For this reason God told Moses: "See . . . that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount" (verse 5), Every detail of the Sanctuary, however simple, was given to Moses by God, and it is quite obvious from the details that such a building and structure would never have been designed by any human architect. You can go all over the world, and see the buildings put up by men for different objects and different forms of worship, but you will never see another structure such as that was. You may see many temples and mosques but no building of that design. In every way it was unique. Such a design could never have come from any man's brain. God Himself gave every single detail to Moses, and said to him: 'Now take heed that you do not make any alteration in the design shown to you'.

If God gave such a warning to Moses, a man who talked with Him face to face, how much more should we heed His instructions. How dare any man ever change the heavenly plan for the Church of God? There are many preachers, missionaries and pastors who are trying to build the House of God after a plan derived from the brain of a man. The first lesson which we must learn from these studies, is that the House of God cannot be built by any man according to his own natural wisdom. No preacher or teacher of the Bible has any right or business to change the plan that God has given to us in His Word, the plan of the Church which He revealed to the Apostles and especially to Paul. Those to whom is committed the work of God should know first that heavenly design, and then seek to do His work according to that design.

The outer part of the Sanctuary, the Holy Place, speaks to us of the earthly vocation of the Church. The inner part, or Most Holy Place, tells us of the heavenly vocation of the same Church. The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ has that double service. We have to do some work upon earth, and at the same time we have to fulfil a heavenly vocation. Both must go side by side. Some people are so occupied with earthly things that they have forgotten the heavenly character and nature of their vocation. Others are occupied with heavenly things and have forgotten earthly things. But both have to go together, if there is to be manifested the divine plan for the Church. Let us look first at our heavenly vocation.

In Revelation 4 the Apostle John was given a heavenly vision. He saw in heaven a central throne, and around it twenty-four seats. Then he saw a rainbow round about the throne, and seven lamps of fire burning before it. Here we have the glorified Church in heaven as revealed to John. Everybody is invited to have a share in that Sanctuary. In Chapter 3.21 our Lord said to John, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne". This is our Lord's promise to His Church, given to John the Apostle upon earth. Then in chapter 4 he was lifted into heaven and saw the throne and those upon it. Every single detail there had a great spiritual meaning. If we had time we could spend a whole week on this subject alone, in order to get what would be only a glimpse of the Sanctuary and the Throne.

Let us look at this central throne, with the twenty-four seats around it. Twenty-four Elders sit upon the seats, with crowns of gold upon their heads. Seven lamps of fire burn before the throne and cherubims stand round about it. Over all is a rainbow. Now in the Bible the rainbow is the symbol of God's covenant. In the Book of Genesis we read that after the Flood Noah saw a rainbow, and there God made a covenant with Noah, that he might not again fear lest a flood come upon the earth (Gen. 9.13). The rainbow was a symbol, confirming God's covenant with him.

As you know, there are seven colours in the rainbow, violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange and red. God made seven covenants with mankind. His first covenant was with Adam. Even though Adam had failed and had disobeyed God, yet God made a covenant with him, promising that the Saviour would come of the woman's seed (Gen. 3.15). Because of that covenant of God with Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ came to this earth. Then God's second covenant was with Noah. God said, 'I will not again destroy the earth with a flood' (Gen. 9.15). To-day the earth is full of sin, worse even than then. But because of His covenant with Noah, God has been long-suffering and patient. Were it not so this earth would have been destroyed long ago.

God's third covenant was with Abraham: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed", (Gen. 22.18). The Lord Jesus Christ came from the seed of Abraham, and all nations are blessed in Him. His fourth covenant was with Moses: 'A Prophet like unto thee will I raise up' (Deut. 18.18), and Christ Jesus came, "faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house" (Heb. 3.1-2). Fifthly, He made a covenant with David concerning the throne, to establish His everlasting covenant upon him, and upon his seed (Psa. 89.34, 28-29, 33-35). This again pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ. Sixthly, a covenant was made with God's Son Himself. "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance" (Psa. 2.7, 8). Seventhly, He has made "a better covenant" with every believer. "I will put my laws into their mind, and on their heart also will I write them. . . . And their sins will I remember no more" (Heb. 8.6, 10, 12, 13).

It is because of these seven covenants, that we will have a right to share His throne. It is because of God's covenant and promise that we shall be lifted so high. The devil may come and tell you: 'O foolish man! how can you become so great? How can God give you such a high position?' But the rainbow gives the answer. Because of the covenant of the loving, covenant-keeping God, we shall be there.

Then John saw seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. They speak to us of the perfect work of the Holy Spirit. In Romans 8 we read of the sevenfold work of the Holy Spirit. He indwells the believer (verse 9); He quickens (verse 11); He leads (verse 14); He becomes in us the pledge of sonship whereby we can call God our Father (verse 15); He witnesses in our hearts that we are the children of God (verses 16-17); He intercedes for us according to the will of God (verse 27); and He helps our infirmities giving us power to overcome every weakness and to become more than conquerors through Him that loved us (verses 26 & 37). It is because of that perfect work of the Holy Spirit that we shall be there in heaven. It is not because of any human effort; but because of the work of those seven lamps of fire — the indwelling Holy Spirit in His fullness. The indwelling Spirit will deliver us from bondage to the flesh (verse 9). The quickening Spirit will overcome mortality and corruption (verse 11). The guiding Spirit of God leads us day by day (verse 14). The Spirit of adoption takes away every fear, and daily gives us a deeper love for and knowledge of God (verse 15). The witnessing Spirit helps us to realise the fixed plan of God for us as His children and heirs (verses 16-17). The interceding Spirit teaches us to pray according to the will of God (verse 27). And finally, the Comforter leads us on from victory to victory till we are seated with Christ in His heavenly throne (verses 26, 37).

Behind the throne John saw the rainbow with seven colours. Before the throne he saw the seven lamps of fire. Behind us is the covenant of God. Within us is the Holy Spirit working. Thus has God made full provision for His Church,

John also saw twenty-four seats and twenty-four Elders. These may be twelve of the Old Testament saints, and twelve of the New Testament saints, and we are told that both those of the Old Testament and those of the New have to be perfected together. In Hebrews 11 we are given a list of Old Testament saints, and then we are told that they cannot be perfected without us who believe in Christ (verse 40). So here we see twenty-four seats—twelve on the one side, the Throne in the centre and twelve on the

other side—and on the seats twenty-four Elders, all with crowns of gold. Now the crown cannot be worn by those who are defeated, but only by those who have endured and conquered and overcome (James 1.12; 1 Cor. 9.25). The Christian's life is like that of a man running a race. Those who have to run in a race must be very careful how much they eat, how much milk, cream and sugar they take, for if they become too fat they cannot run, as they soon get out of breath. If they are determined to win the race, they have to be temperate, and to train regularly every day. Only thus can they win the crown. In the same way, we must also live such a life of watchfulness, of diligence and faithfulness, that we may in the end be given a crown.

We are told in 1 Thessalonians 2.19 that the souls which we win to the Lord become to us a crown of rejoicing; and in 2 Timothy 4.8 we see that the crown of rejoicing is given also to those who love the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ—to those who are looking for His second coming. In John 19.2, the soldiers put a crown of thorns upon Jesus. Because they did so there is no crown of thorns for us, but we must be willing to suffer shame for the Lord Jesus Christ on earth, and never be ashamed to do what God tells us. In the book of Revelation everything is summed up in a crown of gold. The twenty-four Elders seated in heaven speak of God's perfect order fulfilled in His Sanctuary. Those who follow faithfully God's plan and order will one day sit with Him in His throne.

As we saw, the Sanctuary was divided by the veil into two parts, the inner telling us of our heavenly vocation, and the outer telling us of our earthly vocation. We have now to say a word more about our earthly vocation.

We have seen that each board was 10 cubits long. The number 10 in the Bible is the number, of maturity—spiritual maturity and responsibility attained through testing and trial. It is those who come out triumphant in the ten days of tribulation who will be given the crown of life (Rev. 2.10). When you are prepared to go through any trial or any tribulation without turning back then you are prepared for the crown. Spiritual maturity does not come by head knowledge. You may have much true knowledge, but it is only after hardships, trials and tribulations that you become spiritually matured, and your life here on earth is your training ground. In the Book of Genesis we see how Jacob had to go through ten years of trial in the house of his father-in-law. The father-in-law had thought to deceive him, but Jacob came out triumphantly. Thus the number ten tells us of that maturity that comes to us through test and trial.

In five terrible blows Job lost all that he had; his children, his possessions, his own health even. In ten bitter words his wife reproached him, and ten times he was reprovved. Nine times his friends reprovved him instead of comforting him, but the tenth time the Lord Himself reprovved Job. Through it all he reached spiritual maturity. Then in blessing God gave him double all he had before. Thus again the number ten is the number of earthly testing with a view to responsibility and maturity.

Now I may preach to you about the overcoming life, and give you every verse from the Bible about the subject, but I might fail myself before God in some matter. It may be a matter of money or something else. Then God has to pull me up. It is not theory that qualifies, but the experience that is gained by coming out triumphantly through the tests that God sets for us. That is why God brings into our lives different trials and testings in order to prove us. Some fail, but others are triumphant. In Numbers 14, 22

and 23 we see men who were given ten chances, yet they failed. In the same way everybody will be tested and tried till they come to maturity and are able to be given responsibility in the House of God. How can spiritual responsibility be given to those who are childish? Upon earth, by giving bribes, a man may become more powerful and influential, but you cannot do this in spiritual things. There is no earthly recommendation accepted in heavenly places. It is only your own triumphant spiritual life down here which will qualify you to have spiritual responsibility up there.

Those wooden boards, that were 10 cubits high and $1\frac{1}{2}$ cubits wide, each had two sockets underneath — sockets of silver for their support. God could have used gold for the sockets but He chose to use silver. Why? Because silver is, as we saw, a symbol of Redemption in the Bible. It is a symbol of the price our Lord Jesus paid to redeem us to Himself. When the people offered the ransom money, the rich could not give more and the poor could not give less (Exod. 30.15)! Thus nobody can say: 'I am better than my neighbour', for all of us are equally precious to God. He has paid one price for all and all have the same right and the same access to His throne.

The number two in the Bible is a symbol of unity in fellowship (Matt. 18.19). Each board had to rest upon two sockets; otherwise it would not be steady. The two silver sockets were placed here to make the board strong, firm and steady. One secret of remaining firm in spiritual life is to recognise that in spiritual things you stand on the same foundations with your fellow believers. It is your steadfast oneness in Christ — your standing together, all of you agreeing on earth and praying with oneness, worshipping with oneness — that is the testimony to your share in the Sanctuary. Inward hatred or jealousy or envy brings strife, and there cannot be any strife in the House of God. The two tenons resting on the sockets of silver tell us that we have each been bought by the same redemption price, and are each equally precious to the Lord.

17

THE TIE RODS

Uniting the boards of the Tabernacle there were four rods or bars of wood, overlaid with gold, which were put through golden rings on the boards to bind them together. Four of these rods could be seen from the outside. The fifth rod was made to go through the middle of the boards from end to end, to keep all the boards united (Exod. 26.26-29). All the boards, put together speak of the whole Church throughout the world. These five tie rods speak of five spiritual bonds which bind believers together into one. To have real spiritual unity in the Church of God, we require five things. And just as there were four rods of shittim wood which could be seen from outside and one central rod, so there are four outward bonds and one hidden central bond to unite us all. We shall look at the four in a moment. The central hidden bond is the life of the Lord Jesus Christ which binds together all believers throughout the world.

Some people are trying to bind Christians together by man-made constitutions. No church constitution — not even the constitution of the Church of South India — and no man-made constitution whatever can truly bind together the Church of God. It is the inward flow of abundant life in the heart of the believer which binds us, and nothing else can. If the life of the Lord Jesus Christ flows in me and flows in you, we are bound together. But if we are not living in the Spirit, there will be disagreement and factions. The Church of Christ cannot be bound by earthly man-made laws; constitutions are often only made for the sake of the power and authority they give, an authority like that of the Brahmins over the Hindus. Christians who want power over their fellow-Christians might truly be called 'Christian Brahmins'. They make laws to bind people, saying in effect: 'If you do this or that we will excommunicate you. If you listen to the Word of God and obey God in this or that matter we will deprive you of Church fellowship.' Such bonds must be broken. But the inward bond of life in Christ will never be broken for with that bond we are bound to every believer in the world.

Earthly bonds are very weak. They will not stand any strain. But spiritual bonds cannot be broken. You see how the work began in the days of the Apostles. There, in Acts 2, three thousand people were baptized, and at once they began to grow steadily. Yet they were mostly very poor people and had to face much persecution, from the Jews as well as from the Greeks and Romans. The Jews were proud of their religion, the Greeks of their culture and education, and the Romans of their Empire; and all these three powers were set against the early believers. These did not have much money and they had no influence behind them; yet the Word of God began to grow and multiply, like fire that went on spreading. And there was a wonderful love among them all, whether they were Gentile converts, or Jewish, or Samaritan. They were not bound together by any man-made organisation or rules. They did not start a Jerusalem Mission, an Antioch Mission, or any other Mission; yet we find among them a true spiritual oneness and unity.

What were the common bonds which bound them? The inward bond of the life in Christ was there first of all, it is true. That is what made them Christians. But there were also four outward bonds. They are mentioned in Acts 2.42. We are told that "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." That is how they grew spiritually in the grace of God. Now, let us see, one by one, how these bonds can bind us together as Christians.

First there was the Apostles' doctrine (see Gal. 1.10-12; 1 Cor. 2.3-5). They did not preach or teach by man's wisdom. They did not go about to please men. Whether the people liked it or not, their business was to give God's message with God's wisdom and God's power. That is the Apostles' doctrine — the pure Word of the living God, the message of the mighty and true God — and that is why in every place the same teaching was given. How many today are giving man's wisdom and seeking to change thereby even the meaning of the Bible. There are some Bible Schools and Seminaries where the teaching given weakens the faith of those who attend them, who afterwards go forth to please and serve men instead of God.

Once a missionary and one such 'trained' Indian preacher went into the Bazaar to preach the Gospel. After a time the missionary reproved him: 'Sir' he said, 'speak more loudly'. And the man replied, 'Sir, this is a Rs. 25/- voice, but if you will pay me Rs. 100/- I will speak four times louder!' So we have the Rs. 25/- voice, the Rs. 75/- voice, the Rs. 125/- voice, and the Rs. 300/- voice. Such men are only serving money, money, money and not God. They cannot give God's message. Their tongues and lips are tied, for they are out to please their Bishop, or the Chairman of their Mission, or someone else. They kill their consciences and do things to please men. That is why you hear so little of God's Word these days. And when man's word is preached, instead of God's, souls are kept in spiritual bondage.

In a place in Northern India there is a Bible School, and on one occasion the young preachers were expected to give a sermon as a test. One young preacher gave a very good sermon, and the Principal asked him, 'Please tell me how many books you consulted to prepare that sermon'. 'Sir', he replied, 'I consulted thirty-two books to prepare my sermon'. 'Now tell me', said the Principal 'how much time you spent studying the Bible in order to prepare your sermon.' The young man replied: 'Sir, I was so busy with the other books, I had no time for the Bible.'

That is how many preachers prepare sermons. Such a preacher will go into his drawing room and find a very nice comfortable easy chair, hold a cigarette in one hand, have a pot of tea before him, rest one leg upon the other, and in that posture begin to look at books, and write his sermon. He begins on Monday and goes on till Friday; then for twenty-five minutes on Sunday morning he preaches what he has prepared, calling it God's message. What blindness! What darkness! These are the words of men, and not the words of God. They are from men's minds and not from the mind of God.

But the Apostles travelled upon their knees for God's message, and spoke, as God's mouth-pieces, the whole counsel of God—the full Bible. They were not concerned only with a few favourite passages, but with the whole Scripture. This is the Apostles' doctrine and only such teaching and preaching can bring true unity among Christians.

Secondly there is fellowship. First we have fellowship with the Son, our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1.9). Then we have fellowship with God the Father (1 John 1.3). Lastly, we have fellowship among ourselves and with all those who walk in the light of God (1 John 1.7). That is fellowship. It begins with the Father and the Son, and what we have received from God the Father and God the Son, we share together among ourselves. In the early morning upon our knees we talk with God; at midday we talk with God; and before we go to bed we talk with God and He talks with us. Then when we meet our fellow-believers in the street, or at home, we share what we have been receiving. That is true fellowship.

Coming together for gossip or for scandal, or for drinking coffee or tea, or for smoking—these things cannot edify or inspire. They are not fellowship. But the things of God edify, educate and uplift us altogether. The unconverted gossip and waste time talking about earthly things, and when women come together they enquire: 'Oh, where did you buy that sari? Where did you buy that nice blouse? How much did you pay for that necklace?' That is not fellowship, it is only gossip. But when you speak of God, and of the things of God and heaven, that is true fellowship. Tell others how God hears and answers your prayers; how He converts, and how He heals. Whenever those early believers came together they were able to share their spiritual experiences, and that is how they were comforted by each other. They forgot their sorrows and trials when they saw how God was working among them. This is the divine plan of comfort.

All of us feel discouraged and downcast at times, but God has given us fellow-believers to comfort and strengthen and cheer us. Do we see that kind of fellowship these days? Many so-called Christians who come for a meeting are looking at the watch or the clock the whole time. Then, the moment the service is over, they go outside and the men start smoking, and the women start giving their version of all that is happening in the city or the suburbs. That is not fellowship; that is nothing but scandal and gossip. People may be living in the same street or even in the same compound, but they can have no real peace and joy if they do not know what is true fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and with others in Him.

In love and fellowship there is power and strength. By coming together as one body we forget our sorrows and poverty. By bearing each other's burdens we fulfil the law of Christ. By praying together in His Name we bind Satan (Matt. 18.18, 19).

Thirdly, there is the breaking of Bread. When the believers came together Sunday by Sunday, they remembered the Lord's death "till He come". (See 1 Corinthians 11.23-34). They were told to judge themselves before they partook of the Lord's Table. They could not take part in the Table unless their hearts were right with Him. They could not take part in the breaking of bread unless they were living at peace among themselves. They could not take part unless they were truly 'born again' — unless they could testify : 'O my Lord, my heart is fixed, I am waiting for Thee' — unless they were prepared to meet the Lord Jesus face to face.

We can see from the Scripture a deep significance in the breaking of bread. In Luke 24.13-32 we read that the Lord Jesus Christ walked with two disciples on the way to Emmaus, and beginning with Moses, He went through all the prophets opening up the Scriptures. Those two disciples were walking on the road on the day of the resurrection, looking very sad, because they did not know what to think of all the

things that had happened. When the Lord Jesus Christ came alongside them and began to talk to them, they could not recognise Him. Even when he began to expound to them about Himself from Moses and the prophets, they could not know Him fully. Yet their hearts were burning within them as they came to_ the village, and when the Lord Jesus was about to go away, they said: 'Please stay -with us for the night'. So He went in with them, and they sat at meat. Only then, when He broke the bread after giving thanks, their eyes were opened and they recognised their Lord. Then suddenly He vanished away.

That is one significance of the breaking of bread. In it we should get a closer revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. We can read about Him every day, and pray to Him; yet we do not know Him as we ought to know Him. How great and wonderful He is, and how small and weak we are! His divine plan is that, by the breaking of bread, we might come closer to our Lord and see Him as He ought to be seen, thus entering into the very heart of God, and understanding the height and depth, the length and breadth of His love.

How terrible is the case when it is mere formality to take part in the Holy Communion! There are so-called Christian Churches in India where, before the Holy Communion, the Priest puts on his flowing silk garments and repeats prayers and phrases for an hour. Meanwhile some people will stay outside in the compound smoking, until the bell rings for the ' host' to be distributed, Then they go inside and take part in the Holy Communion.

There was once a man and his son in the compound on a Sunday morning. While the Priest was praying the father was quarrelling with somebody outside. Then the bell rang inside the Church for Communion, and the father said to his son : 'I will go inside for Holy Communion, and you please stay here and go on quarrelling on my behalf, till I come back. Then you can go inside'. That man went inside and kneeled down very respectfully and ate the ' host'. Then he came outside again, saying: 'Now my son, you go inside; I will carry on the quarrel!' That is what some people call Holy Communion, and that is where formalism leads you.

How can Holy Communion in such a spirit bring unity? It will rather bring hatred and dis-union. God's Word says that those who eat and drink unworthily come under condemnation. They will be punished by God. That is why many become sick and some die (1 Cor. 11.29, 30). Some people think that by taking part in communion on Easter or Christmas or New Year morning, there is extra blessing. Never I There is no such magic or charm in these emblems. Listen to what the Bible says: 'Those who eat and drink unworthily, eat and drink damnation to themselves'. That is why you find spiritual weakness in many Christians who disregard God's command. You will find people living in fornication and adultery and sin, kneeling down and taking part with hearts full of covetousness and hatred. How can you take part in that condition?

No, there is no magic in the bread and the cup. They merely testify to us that we are the Lord's. Our hearts should be able to say: 'O Lord, Thou hast redeemed me by Thy Blood, and I have peace in my heart. Because of this I am ready to eat and drink at Thy Table with a pure heart and clean hands; a heart filled with joy and with love for everybody. This bread speaks of Thy body; this cup of Thy blood. Reveal Thyself to me more fully, Lord. I am ready, Lord, to see Thy face.' That is the true meaning of the breaking of bread.

When God's children take part worthily, there will be unity and love amongst them. Remember it is the Lord's Table and not man's (1 Cor. 10.16). He, and not man, is the Host. At the Lord's Table all believers are equal. No man can say: 'I am better than so and so', for, however much power or authority you have been given by God, yet at the time of breaking of bread, you are no more nor less than a simple believer, and can only say 'O Lord Jesus Christ, I am nothing but a sinner saved by Thy grace'. In this way at the Lord's Table, all the believers understand the one life, one body, one Church, in which all share. Every man-made difference is broken, and we have a bond which keeps His children together.

God wants oneness, and that bond of unity should be peculiarly manifest at the Lord's Table. There all believers become one and Christ alone is preeminent. Then only can true love prevail, and Christians begin to bear one another's burdens and those who are fighting to be reconciled. If there is sin, it is confessed and washed away, and believers are found looking forward together to the coming of Christ. The true and strong bond which binds us together is the bond of mutual love springing from our common life in Christ. That bond is for eternity, and by it believers are bound together throughout the world, whatever their nationalities may be.

Then fourthly—"the prayers". The early believers used to spend whole nights in prayer. They never fought the enemy by earthly weapons, even though they were cast into prison. When they were being persecuted or hated, they began to pray (Acts 16.25). By prayer they conquered the enemy. How different it is to-day. Even so-called Christians seek to conquer by threats. 'If you do not fulfil our rules, then we will take certain actions against you', they say, and they seek to bring pressure by these means.

But we must learn our lesson from those early believers. They had to face many trials and many foes, but it was only by prayer that they fought, and it was only by prayer that they conquered. They won, not by fighting and quarrelling, but upon their knees in prayer. In this way believers everywhere were brought together and united by the bond of prayer, and in this lay their strength.

We have seen the four 'outward' bonds. If these four things are manifested in assemblies everywhere we shall see union and strength. Let us go over them again. They are, firstly the Apostles' doctrine, secondly fellowship, thirdly the breaking of bread, and fourthly prayer. We can dispense with none of these.

But the chief and most important bond is that indwelling life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Read Ephesians 3 and mark very carefully the whole chapter, noting that these words were spoken to believers in Ephesus who had grown much spiritually. So Paul said: 'I have been thanking God on your behalf, and now I am praying for you who are far away. I am praying that the Lord Jesus Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith'. But, you ask, 'Was not the Lord Jesus Christ living in them already?' Ah I there is a great difference between coming and living in a house, and taking possession of it. You may stay as a guest in any house, but you cannot have full liberty to do as you please in that house. When you own the house, however, you have freedom and authority in any part of the house at all times. That is how our Lord ought to live in us. He must occupy every sense and every faculty of our being. When that is true of us all, then we will know the full range of the love of God. Then "with all saints" we will comprehend that love.

Paul tells us that the real comprehension of God's love is only possible when all of us are brought together. It cannot be comprehended by our living alone, in ourselves and unto ourselves. If you are confined by the barriers men make between Christians and Christians, your appreciation of God's love will also be narrow, and your attitude to your fellow-Christians will be narrow. You have to ride above all those barriers to be able to love God's children in other parts of the world with a big heart.

But to make this possible, the Lord Jesus Christ must not only dwell in our hearts but must fully occupy all our being. That is the hidden rod going through the boards from end to end. When the Lord Jesus Christ becomes Lord of our being, we cannot help but love everybody because the love of the Lord Jesus Christ goes out from us to all His children. But unless that is so, Telugus will only love other Telugus; Tamilians will only love Tamilians; white people will love white people; black people will love black; and so on. That is not the love which comprehends "with all saints." That is not divine love. When a true believer meets another believer he will never ask the question: 'What is your caste or occupation?' The love of Christ will bind them together immediately, because the life of Christ has taken full possession of both their hearts. May He make strong this hidden bond in the lives of us all.

18

THE HIDDEN THINGS

We have not space to deal with all the remaining details of the Tabernacle—the table of shewbread, the laver, the great altar of burnt offering and its instruments, and the various sacrifices. We shall stay therefore with the heart of the Sanctuary, the Most Holy Place. In it, as we have seen, the only piece of furniture was the ark of the testimony: a box of shittim wood, measuring $2\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ cubits, overlaid with gold and having a solid gold lid or cover—the Mercy Seat—upon which, and of one piece with it, were two golden cherubim. What was the purpose of this box?

Hebrews tell us that in it, hidden from the sight of men but preserved in the presence of God, were three things relating to Israel's history as a people: "The golden pot that had the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant" (Heb. 9.4; and see: Exod. 16.33; Num. 17.10; Exod. 25.16). Let us now look at these three things.

In Exodus 16 we are told how the manna was given to the children of Israel. From the day on which they journeyed into the wilderness until the day they entered the land forty years later, they had a daily supply of bread from heaven. This manna, which looked like dew and tasted like wafers with honey, had to be gathered at sunrise and there was always enough to satisfy all the people. It was reckoned that an omer was the average quantity sufficient for a man, and so one omer was put in a golden pot in the Ark of the covenant as a witness that God has made an abundant and sufficient provision of heavenly food for every man. There is no need for anyone to go hungry in the House of God.

The manna was a shadow or type of the true Bread that God would one day send into the world. It speaks to us of the Lord Jesus who has Himself become our Bread of Life (John 6.47-50). It was a miracle in the eyes of the children of Israel that they should find bread falling from heaven every day for forty years. Nobody knew how it was made or how it came. They simply had to obey God's instructions about gathering it morning by morning.

Each Israelite had to gather for himself; he could not be lazy and get another to gather for him. In the same way, ours has to be a personal feeding upon Christ. The Lord Jesus has become our daily Bread, and, like the manna, we have to feed upon Him first thing in the morning. It is those who are accustomed to begin their day on their knees who understand how to feed upon the heavenly Bread, by faith, according to their need.

The golden pot in the Ark reminds us that the proper preservation of the Bread is in a golden vessel. We have already seen that gold in the Bible is a symbol of the divine nature. Those who are not born again have not the divine nature, and no matter how many times they read the Bible they cannot retain what they read; it is soon forgotten. God's Word can never be kept in an unspiritual mind. But those who are born again

become like the golden pot. Outside there is just the earthen pot, the flesh, but inside is the golden pot, the divine nature. Once you have been born again, whatever you learn from the Word you will have in your possession for all eternity. Even though you may forget it for a while, yet there are things written in your heart by the Holy Spirit which are of lasting value, and which He calls to remembrance in times of need.

God's Word must be made to dwell in us richly, so that there is manna in our pots. It comes into our hearts for a double purpose; to teach and to admonish. This is our duty: to allow it to teach and to admonish us, and then to help others by sharing with them what we have been taught by the Lord. A man does not become perfect and thoroughly furnished unto all good works until he himself is taught and reprov'd and instructed by all the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3.16 & 17). If God's Word lives in you, it will instruct and correct you, and others through you. Whenever you proclaim God's Word you have to "speak and exhort, and rebuke, with all authority" (Titus 2-15); and it requires a golden pot for this. Those who are trying to keep God's Word in unregenerate human vessels have no right to rebuke or teach or correct. They only try to find fault and their fault-finding does harm rather than good.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Word. He became flesh so that the words of life might reign in you, and that is the reason why, when you are born again, you have a new appetite for the Bible. The manna was not tasty, but it was strengthening. Sometimes the Word of God is difficult to understand and does not please our natural senses, but it is given for our spiritual strengthening. We have become golden vessels in which the Word of God may dwell. Let us give that Word unquestioning obedience.

Secondly, in me Ark there was the rod of Aaron which had budded. We are told in Numbers 17 that Aaron's rod budded and blossomed and brought forth almonds, and it remained in that condition in the Ark. When the elders of Israel had murmured against Moses and Aaron and had questioned their authority (Num. 16.1-3), God had confirmed by this miracle of the blossoming into life of the dead rod that He had ordained them to the position which they held, and that it was by divine power and authority that they acted. It is only by divine resurrection power that people can become God's servants. Many claim to have divine authority for their work, but there is no sign of the blossom of the almonds.

The rod in me Ark, with its blossoms and fruit, was a reminder of the kind of service that God wanted. There were 250 princes who were ambitious to become like Moses and to lead the people. They thought they had every qualification to lead God's flock, but God could not use them. He chose only Moses and Aaron, because they had been proved and tested for long years in the wilderness before they were given this great responsibility.

And so it is with all God's servants. They have to be prepared through hardships and a wilderness experience, until they really know the power of resurrection in their lives. When we first come to God we are like an ordinary dry rod, and for long we may see little fruitfulness, but as we give ourselves wholly into His hands and allow Him time to work, we burst forth into new life.

There is a story of a beggar who for many years had played on a violin. People used to drop an anna or two into his box as they passed by. One day, a man who was passing asked for the loan of the violin and played such sweet music on it that very quickly he collected a good sum from the crowd that gathered, and gave it to the beggar. That old beggar had had the violin for many years but had only played squeaky notes and had never collected more than a few annas. When the real musician played it he played the beautiful sweet notes of a master. When you place your life completely in God's hands and are willing to die to yourself, then the power of resurrection can work in you to bring forth blossoms and almonds—everlasting fruit. This is the message of Aaron's rod to us

Thirdly, in the same Ark were two tables of stone. In Exodus 40.20 they are called "the testimony". The original tables had been broken. Moses was a prophet of God, who spoke to God face to face. God gave him the commandments on two tables of stone, but, when Moses was carrying them down the mountain, he saw the congregation worshipping an idol and giving way to sin. In his anger, he smashed those tables of stone. The second time God called Moses up on to the mount. He wrote the commandments again on two other tables of stone and instructed Moses to go and put them into the Ark, for they were not safe in his hands. Even the greatest prophet could not preserve the Word of God; it had to go right into the Ark for safe-keeping. God was showing that it was not through great teachers or prophets that His Word would be preserved, but only through the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Lord Jesus is given the first place, then and then only does God's Word bring forth life.

Many people depend on teaching only. They love to attend many meetings, to have many books and many teachers, but they will not give the Lord Jesus the first place in their hearts. That is our danger. Even though we hear many good sermons, yet we may be living a defeated life. This can only be remedied when we learn the lesson that our life is hid with Christ in God (Col. 3.3). Let the Lord Jesus take control, and then hide in Him, and there will be abundant life.

When the tables of stone were in Moses' hands they were dropped and broken, but when they were in the Ark they were preserved. You have to learn the secret of hiding in the Lord Jesus. No doubt, God does use teachers to help you, but the Lord Jesus must have the first place in your heart, in your home, and in your business, so that He gets all the glory and all the honour. You must stay in the background so that others who see and talk to you may glorify Him. This should ever be your purpose. When you pray, you have to learn how to exalt Him. This is the object of our time of Worship on Sunday mornings that He may be magnified and adored. Then there will be increasing growth in your life. When you beg and ask constantly in prayer, there is no growth; but glorify Christ, and there is increase.

Are you hiding in the Lord Jesus wherever you go? Is He being magnified—and not you—through your conversation, your clothes, your way of life? Some times God uses painful experiences to bring you into that hiding-place. He begins to break your friendships; He may take away the home, the parents, the husband or wife, the children whom you love so much. He may upset the plans you have been making. The tables of stone in Moses' hand were broken. Yet at the time they were most precious to him. From that day, Moses' self-dependence was broken; that is why he became so meek. He always remembered the day when in a rage he broke those stones, and that incident made him truly humble. That is how God breaks you.

Some of you are very hard to break. It is so difficult for you to change your ways because you always want to go your own way. But Moses learned the secret of success through being himself broken. In the life of every believer there are events which may be very humiliating to you, and you wonder afterwards why you behaved in such a manner; but in them God was breaking and humbling you, and making you meek like Moses. Then alone will you really hide in the Lord Jesus and find He is everything to you. From then on, you will depend not on others, nor on yourself, but on Him alone. Paul was taught this lesson in the wilderness, and God seeks to teach it to you too.

May God help you to know more fully what is the meaning of these things which were hidden inside the Ark.

19

THE LIVING ONES

One with the Mercy Seat there were the two golden cherubim (Exod. 25.18-20). These cherubim appeared also in the embroidered work upon the ten curtains of the Tabernacle (26.1) and upon the veil before the Most Holy Place (26.31). Thus upon and above and before the Mercy Seat were cherubim — and yet we are not told what they looked like. We have to turn to other parts of the Bible to learn more about them, notably to the book of Ezekiel, and then again to the book of Revelation, where they are called “living ones”.

They concern Ministry. Turn to the first chapter of Ezekiel. God had a very important message which He wanted Ezekiel to convey to the nations, but before he could understand it, God gave him a vision of the cherubim. Only as he kept that vision in view, could he convey the Lord's message to the people in its fulness. When we are born again we too have a ministry to fulfil and it is as we learn the meaning of the cherubim that we understand what the nature of that ministry is.

We read in Ezekiel 1.1 that the prophet was “among the captives”, men who had become slaves in Babylon because of their sin and disobedience and the sin of their whole nation. He was by the river Chebar when the heavens were opened to him and God showed to him why the people had become captives, how they could get back their lost possessions, and how God would judge the nations. We read that “the hand of the Lord was there upon him” (v.3); in other words he became identified with God in His message. Before Ezekiel could speak on behalf of God or be a true witness, prophet, or servant of God, he had to become identified with God, and that spiritual identification was demonstrated to him through the meaning of the cherubim.

Verse 4 of this chapter tells us that “a whirl wind came out of the north”. The north speaks of the direction from which God executes judgment. The whirlwind speaks of great speed. God was showing to the prophet that what He was saying would speedily come to pass. Then a fire came out of this whirlwind—the fire of the judgment of God—and out of this fire came living creatures. These living creatures had feet that were straight, the soles of their feet were like a calf's feet, and they shone like barnished brass. The calf is a symbol of service for God, and in order to be a true servant of God, Ezekiel had to have straight feet to walk in the path that God commanded him. There could be no crookedness in his path; his ‘yea’ had to be ‘yea’ and his ‘nay’, ‘nay’; no idle word was to come from his lips. The feet were as brass, signifying that, just as our Lord Jesus bruised the head of Satan under His feet, so we, by our obedience to Him, will bruise Satan under our feet (Rom. 16.19 & 20).

Although these living creatures looked so impressive and inspiring, yet they had the form of a man (verse 4) and the hands of a man (v.8). For though Ezekiel was only a man, God wanted to accomplish through him a great ministry. When we are born again, God calls us to a heavenly ministry, and yet He knows that we are just human beings. We still have to eat, sleep and take rest and have all the limitations of the

human body. In spite of this, God wants to use us to accomplish His eternal plans. This is only possible as we are identified by faith with Him in all His movements and the working of His plans. This is the meaning of the 'hands of a man.'

How much, for example, can be wrought by a single man through prayer. When people learn the secret of how to pray, and how to agonise in prayer, how much power is released through them to all parts of the world! Such people may be simple, ordinary folk, with no special gifts or talents; yet, through their prayers, the heavens are opened and towns and cities are blessed. This is just one example of how God can work through us when we are identified with Him. So Ezekiel saw that, if he became one with God, then God could work through him all His plans and prophecies.

The living creatures also had wings (verse 8) and these speak of free motion. Birds fly freely through the air wherever they like to go without fear of obstacles in their way. God has given us, too, spiritual wings so that, as one with Him, we may move unrestrictedly through the whole universe of God. When we begin our Christian lives we are only concerned about ourselves and our immediate families. But as we grow spiritually we think of those about us: our neighbours, then those in the city or province or country. Gradually we find our thoughts travelling over the whole world to see how God is working in other lands. Then we are interested to know what God will do after this world comes to an end. Our minds consider the heavens themselves, the New Creation that is to come. That is what happens as we grow spiritually; and that is why the devil so often tries to limit us by getting us absorbed in earthly and passing things. God plans that we should be no longer limited by our human way of thinking. With those wings the cherubim could go anywhere throughout God's universe to accomplish His purposes, and that is how we have to obey God. Thus, through the Church His heavenly plans will be accomplished everywhere.

Then we see that these four living creatures had their wings joined together (verse 9). This meant that, wherever any one creature went, the other three had to follow. That speaks of true spiritual unity. Together they had to move and together they had to rest. They could not just go independently, each in the direction he chose. They could go only as a single unit. And that is how the Church of Christ has to work. We cannot speak and work as we like in His service. When we understand God's full purpose for His Church, we find we can no longer act independently, but only in full fellowship with other believers and fellow-workers with whom we have been called to live and share responsibility. We all like to be independent; we do not like to be questioned about our actions; we do not like others to interfere with what we are doing. No matter what our calling is, whether we are teachers or pastors or preachers or evangelists, as human beings that nature is in us. Do not think that, because you know your Bible well, you are free from inward weaknesses. Each of us has some weakness or failing; self is still there, and it must be broken.

God was showing Ezekiel that, though he was to speak as one solitary man, yet he was speaking on behalf of heaven. When God's people make mistakes they bring reproach on heaven. Ezekiel could not do or say just what he liked, because he was speaking on God's behalf, and God's interests were involved in his conduct. And that is true of us also. The fact that the wings were joined together typifies the spiritual unity which God demands of us. Although these living creatures had differing features (verse 10), yet when it came to their movements they were all joined together to go in one

direction. As you grow spiritually, you should see this spiritual oneness amongst you as God's co-workers. When there is difficulty in getting along and working together with others, that means that you are still carnal; you are still just babes in Christ. But as there is spiritual growth, so there will be oneness, harmony, liberty and peace. Again note that it is spiritual and not worldly oneness. Those who have not seen God and do not know His purposes and plans, cannot be one with you. Those who know God and have His Spirit within work with you. The four creatures going straight forward spoke of eternal life. They could not go backwards, only forwards (verse 12). There must be constant growth as we move forward with God.

You will remember that when the Children of Israel were marching or camping in the wilderness, they were always in four groups, on the North, South, East and West. They had four standards or four banners, on which were the four faces of Ezekiel's cherubim: a lion, a man, an ox, and an eagle. (Compare Ezekiel 1.10 with Numbers 2.17.) Three of the twelve tribes were grouped under each of the standards which were raised on the four sides of the Tabernacle. This gave the order by which God ordained that they should march or encamp, and He never varied it. The four faces on the four banners always reminded the Israelites of God's eternal plan for His people. Supposing the people changed the order, and, instead of Judah, Benjamin went first, what would happen? God could not go with them. God could only go with them when they marched in His revealed heavenly order, and it is as you discover for yourselves the revealed plan of God that you will know victory.

These four faces of the cherubim reminded Ezekiel of the way in which the people had in fact failed God and had changed His order for their lives and service. The Jews as a nation had failed Him, and from very early days "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Jud. 21.25). That was their condition when Ezekiel was sent to them—confusion, disorder and barrenness because they had set aside the revealed order of God and defiled His dwelling place. (See Ezekiel, chapters 8 and 9.) And today we find the same conditions prevailing. Man has brought in his own thoughts, improvements, refinements, and by setting them in the place of God's Word, has brought chaos and strife, confusion and barrenness among God's people. Thus, just as the four faces reminded the prophet of the changelessness of God's Word, so must we be reminded. Let us consider each of them.

The first face, that of the man, reminds us that the Lord Jesus became a Man; He who was King of kings was crucified in weakness for us, and we have to humble ourselves and learn meekness from Him. Who are we to glory in our own works? No, the Cross of Christ must work deeper and deeper in us to make us truly humble, for only thus can we be identified with the purposes of God.

The second cherub or living creature had the face of a lion. In Genesis 49.10 it was prophesied that 'the sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come'. Zedekiah was the last king of Judah, (2 Kings 25.7) and after him there was no king, until the Lord Jesus came who was called "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev. 5.5). He came as the Lion, God's true King. All the other kings who had reigned over the house of Judah had failed, but the Lord Jesus, the true King of Righteousness, is come to reign. Now His Kingdom is to come on earth. No other kingdom, however good it be, will stand forever. There is no hope

whatsoever in earthly kingdoms. But we do believe in the coming back of the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ. He must come to reign and to bring true peace on earth, and we have to get ready for that. It is only as we identify ourselves with Him now in everything that we shall be with Him when He comes back to judge and to reign

The third creature had the face of an ox. The ox was used by the Levites either as a burnt offering or a sin or peace offering. Those who could not afford an ox, brought a lamb or dove, but the sacrifice needed was an ox. The Lord Jesus Christ died on your behalf as your sin — and burden-bearer. Generally speaking, people use bullocks or oxen to pull carts and carry burdens, and by these humble, patient animals we are reminded of the completeness of the sacrifice that the Lord Jesus made of Himself in order to carry our burdens and our sins. You cannot carry your own burdens, but He can if you will let Him. If you are still trying to carry your own burdens and worries and troubles, pray, and go on praying, until the burden is rolled away on to Him. Then you will find how much strength you receive from Him. He offers rest to the heavy-burdened, but it only comes as we cast our cares on Him. He can be touched with our infirmities, because He knew all these trials when on earth. So let us take our place in Him as our sin-and burden-bearer.

The last of the creatures had a face like an eagle. The eagle is a bird which does not age quickly. It is thus symbol of eternal youth (Psa. 103.5; Isa. 40-31). When you get old, you cannot do all you used to do. The eagle we may say, stays young, for even in its old age it does not stop and walk, but still flies high and goes great distances. This means that when we are truly identified with the Lord in all His heavenly workings, we remain fresh and have a constant supply of energy. Even if we die, the work which we have begun in the Name of the Lord Jesus will go on to completion. Provided it has been started in the energy of the Lord Jesus Christ, it goes on and cannot come to an end.

Then, we are told that the appearance of these creatures was “like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning” (verses 13-14). Fire throughout the scriptures reminds us of judgment, and here we have a solemn warning. Paul in 1 Corinthians 3 tells us that every man's work will be tried by fire. All that we have ever done upon earth, either through word or deed, will be fully tested and proved by fire; if it abides there will be the reward, but if it is burnt up there will be loss. We must therefore learn to discriminate between earthly and heavenly works, between what is just the fruit of our own human effort and what is Spirit-energised. The former will perish in the day of judgment, and only that which has been initiated and carried through by heavenly resources can be acceptable to God. How careful we have to be in regard to the spending of our energies, our time, our money, because God is going to test all our works by fire. That which is promoted by the Holy Spirit will last for all eternity; that which is done with human zeal soon fades away. So when we are true servants of God we are like the burning, naming fire, and that is the kind of service that He accepts.

In Revelation 4 John the Apostle had a similar vision of the living creatures, and he too saw lightnings and lamps of fire before the throne of God (verse 5). The symbolism is the same. God was about to pour out His last judgments and plagues on those who

had rebelled against Him. Those seven lamps of fire are called “the seven Spirits of God” and speak of the complete and perfect work of the Holy Spirit. His work is in us, and when He works among us fully and freely, then God is able to carry out His plans through us. Those judgments are to be executed through the glorified Church. We may often ask why God did not destroy Satan on the very day he rebelled, and why there is this long delay in judging him. The answer is that God wants His judgments to be carried out through His Church; His love for His people is so great that He wants to give them His authority in this. But to exercise that authority, we must ourselves be constantly tested and proved by fire and so refined. It is in the furnace of affliction that we are chosen (Isa. 48.10). The saints of God may have to go through extremes of suffering, sometimes physical and sometimes mental, that the Divine plan may be brought to fulfillment.

Malachi tells us that the same fire which will consume the wicked will also bring healing to those who walk in the path of God (Mal. 4.1 & 2). The same rays of the sun which kill the germs of disease bring life and healing when absorbed by the leaves of plants and trees. So, when we become part of the living creatures, we must be prepared for the divine fire to go up and down in us, so that everything is completely, thoroughly and perfectly refined.

Then too, these living creatures moved like lightning. As God's fire, covering the earth, bringing judgment to the wicked but gathering out the chosen, so they had to work swiftly, like lightning through God's universe. Our part in the New Creation involves swift movement in obedience to God. “Whither the Spirit was to go they went” (verse 12). Thus in verses 15-21 we read of their wheels. We do not know their height, but we are told that they were very high, and that the wheels were within a wheel. These living creatures with their huge wheels and wings were all moving as one—they could not be separated. When the living creatures moved the wheels moved with them, and when the living creatures stopped, the wheels stopped. They moved or stood still at the Holy Spirit's command. We have already seen that wings speak of heavenly movement, but wheels here speak of our commission and our activity upon the earth. The wings and the wheels moved simultaneously and that is how we also have to work with God. Our activities on the earth, whether it be our preaching, our teaching, or our simple service to others in need, must be governed by the divine activity in heaven of which we become aware in the quiet place with God. There are some who are visionaries and dreamers, who have wings but no wheels, no testimony on the earth. On the other hand there are those who do much that seems good and praiseworthy on this earth, but have no contact with heaven. God cannot accept either kind of ministry. We have to have wheels and wings. We have to draw our life from heaven while our feet are on the earth. This is a great mystery—but by it we can enjoy both heaven and earth at the same time.

And there were eyes all around the wheels (verse 18). The wheels moved with the help of the eyes. The eyes could see and interpret what was happening in heaven, and could watch that the wings and the wheels were moving in the same, and not contrary directions. Even while we are on this earth we have to work in perfect oneness with God by knowing how and where He is working and what He is saying. God may speak through outward calamities, famines, earthquakes, wars, pestilences, or He may speak inwardly to us through our own failures and disappointments. We have to listen carefully to what He has to say to us, and to be quickly obedient to the Spirit's

promptings. When we truly move with God's movements, all our activities and motions will be governed by the One on the throne above.

Thus the prophet Ezekiel saw the visions of the cherubim whose meaning was not yet fully revealed to Moses. For Ezekiel was called to proclaim God's judgments one by one against all the nations who had done wickedly. But at the same time he had to proclaim God's mercy and kindness to those who had waited patiently for the Lord, and that is why, in his later chapters, we have a beautiful picture of God's renewed Dwelling Place among His people.

The final judgment of God's perfect love is to be revealed through the cherubim. "Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. . . . Stir up thy strength, and come and save us. . . . Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved" (Psa. 80-1-2, 19). Thus the cherubim over the mercy seat, and embroidered on the curtain and the veil are symbols of God's love and mercy to the flock of which He is the Shepherd. As His judgments against evil are poured forth, we, His servants, are to be identified with Him in His perfect heavenly plan.

20

THE GLORY WITHIN

“So Moses finished the work. Then . . . the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Exod. 40.33, 34). “The glory of the Lord is risen upon thee” (Isa. 60.1)

In the Most Holy Place there was no natural light. Unless God fulfilled His promise and took up His abode there, the Sanctuary would remain in total darkness. But God had said, “There I will meet thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony” (Exod. 25.22). Putting His trust in that word, Moses fulfilled the divine plan to the letter, and then in Numbers 7.89 we read that “He heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy seat that was upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubims.” Thus Moses was faithful as a servant in all His house (Heb. 3.5).

Please turn now to the story of Stephen. He was before the Council and the charge had been laid against him. It was now Stephen's turn to speak. “And all that sat in the council, fastening their eyes on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. . . . And he said, . . . The Lord of glory appeared unto our father Abraham” (Acts 6.15; 7.2).

Here we have a transfigured man, a man in whose face a wonderful new light is seen. Then in a verse just below we are given the explanation of it in his own words: “The God of glory”. And Acts 7.55 confirms it again: “He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God.”

But note that this transfiguration, this glory, is discovered in a man called to be a servant. It comes at the end of a life (though in this case a short one) of service to the Lord and to His Church. And remember too that that service was, at least to begin with, a very prosaic and ordinary one. So it was evidently not Stephen's person, or even his history, that made these men so angry. It was the power of God, manifested in him now in a new way, that caused them to fear. They were bringing false charges against him, but his face shone — which is just the opposite of what we should expect! Flattery, and not criticism, is what usually has this effect. What they saw was the reverse of nature. It was glory — what God means by glory. That is to say, it was something they could not understand and it had the effect of putting those men under judgment. Therefore: “they were cut to the heart and they gnashed on him with their teeth” (Acts 7.54). They could not face this servant at the end; they could not tolerate his presence among them.

Now the first thing we have to be clear about is that, with God, glory always comes at the end of a history. We may have many wonderful experiences in life, and we may see God at work in wonderful ways and be tempted to say, ‘This is glory’. But God says: ‘Not yet’. There is something better; something much more wonderful ahead.

Years ago, when I was in England and studying in London, I went one day to see the Lord Mayor's show. This takes place every year in November when the new Mayor of London takes office, and as his great procession passes through the streets of the city many who can spare the time stop work to go and see it. It was a wonderful sight. First, there were military bands of the different regiments, and then a whole series of displays carried on cars showing various trades and industries. After these there were more bands, some on foot and some on horses; then followed the Royal Life Guards and the Pikemen of the Tower of London in old-fashioned uniforms; and, at last, after a long, long time, came the horse-drawn coaches carrying the official persons.

The first of these had in them some splendid looking men in fine clothes with attendants and marks of rank, but when I asked the people around me they said these were just the junior officials. Then one by one they came, in one gorgeous coach after another; a whole procession of large and pompous gentlemen dressed in long robes and wigs and cocked hats, and carrying golden chains, swords, maces and other insignia of office. Each one was more impressive than the last, and was bowing in acknowledgement of the cheers of the crowds, and with each new coach, I thought, 'Surely this is the Lord Mayor' and the people around me said, 'Not yet'. At last, seated alone in a coach and flanked by more soldiers and retinue, an even larger gentleman appeared, and as the crowds shouted and clapped I said to someone, 'Surely this is he!' 'No, that is the retiring Lord Mayor', they said and I waited again. Only after more bands and a further array of guards and liveried servants came the brilliant gilded coach containing the new Lord Mayor of London in person — and the show was over. I had waited all that time and seen so much to amaze me, and yet when the real thing came for which I had waited, it had outshone all the rest.

Yes, glory is like that. It is always the end of a series. This is clear from Moses' experience. First he saw the Lord in the bush (Exod. 3). Later at Sinai he went with the elders of Israel into the mount and they "saw the God of Israel" (Exod. 24); and a little later he went alone into the cloud upon the mountain and the glory of the Lord appeared (Exod. 33). There he received certain instructions and on his return with them we are told that the "skin of his face shone" (Exod. 34). But there was something more yet, and only when the instructions had been carried out in detail, and the Tabernacle, God's dwelling place, had been set up, it is said that the "glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Exod. 40). That is fulness of glory, and it relates to the fulfilling of God's purpose. The same thing was true when the Temple of Solomon was completed (2 Chron. 5.14); and we can say that the term 'glory' is only used in scripture— at least in relation to men and the earth—when a divine pattern and plan has been fulfilled. Glory is not a vision or a wonderful sensation. It is always something related to a plan of God; and if we are ever going to come into the knowledge and experience of glory, it is essential that we fully come into line with the divine pattern and plan.

"We were eye witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a Voice to him from the excellent glory. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (2 Pet. 1.16-17). Here it was the Voice which they heard which constituted the true glory. The blazing light and the shining garments were not it; they were only subsidiary to it. God put the emphasis upon His Word. 'Don't be carried away, Peter, by what you see. Hear Him' (Matt. 17.4-5). Hear Him, and carry out His commands.

It took me a long time to discover the meaning of this. For long after I was saved I was running around giving my testimony and witnessing—but never hearing the voice of God. Only after two years or more was I brought up abruptly and made to learn the lesson. Oh, there is all the difference between devising schemes for God and hearing and being governed by the voice of God.

We can see the same principle at work in the life of the Apostle John. In John 1.14, speaking of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus, he says, 'We beheld his glory'. In those early days of his discipleship John saw a little, and what he saw took hold of him and began to work through him and in him.

Years later in Patmos he saw something still more wonderful, when he met the risen Lord and heard Him speak. Why was he given this experience? It was that he should convey a message from God to the seven churches in Asia. But what did he pass on? Not just what he saw; not merely a description of the "one like unto a Son of man", but the message spoken by that One; and that message was eventually the whole book of the Revelation. You see, to be shown God's glory is not to be given something for our personal gratification, so that we talk ever afterwards about the experience. It is with a view to a ministry for the whole Church.

How much we are taken up with gifts, with testimonies, with the various outward things of Christian work and witness! I used to pray for the gift of pinging and of playing the violin, thinking them necessary as qualifications for an evangelist. I thought that God depended on those things and others like them, and how wrong I saw! Singing and playing the violin will not save a soul! What we need is to hear the voice of God and to know what He is saying, so that we can convey His message to men.

We must come into the divine order. John is revealed to us in his Gospel as a man walking in the closest relationship with his Lord. With that behind him as a history, he is now to be entrusted with a message to the churches. For this purpose he is shown the glory, in order that he may speak to them with authority.

Come into the divine plan for the whole church and you will know what glory is! Working for 'my group', 'my party', 'my mission or movement', to get more members and impress yourself on others — that way no glory is ever seen. Only when God's dwelling place is completed — only when all that is represented spiritually in the Old Testament by the Tabernacle and Temple has been secured in the hearts of men — only then does the glory of the Lord come in.

As we saw in the last chapter, John had a greater vision still in Revelation 4 and 5. He was shown the glory of the Lamb in the throne. Of course that was wonderful in itself; but the vision was related to the messages of judgment and tribulation that follow. Chapters 6 to 20 contain these messages and it is their relation to the vision in chapters 4 and 5 that is important. That vision tells us that the view of earthly events that follows is a heavenly one — from the Throne — and that it is the Lamb in the throne who is ruling in them throughout. What a reassurance this knowledge brings to our hearts when we see God's terrible judgments begin to come to pass!

Finally, in chapter 21 John is shown the Holy City, new Jerusalem, "having the glory of God". It is not now something seen and enjoyed, nor yet something spoken of. It is not even something reflected, as in the face of Moses or Stephen. Now it is something possessed. God's goal has been reached, His plan fulfilled. His people have His glory. Yes, glory always results from the fulfillment of a divine plan.

A little child has ambitions. He hopes one day to be a policeman, a soldier, or an engine-driver. Then as he grows older and his horizon expands he is led on to higher ideals. We are God's "little children." He sent His Son to save us. Why? Not just for our material advantage, or our health, or to give us a better time, but in order to bring us into the perfect plan of God. At first our grasp of this fact is small and limited, but by His grace it begins to dawn upon us. Alas that so many go on for so long with a little child's idea of our spiritual life. We need to hear the voice of God that we may fit into the plan of God and find our place in the structure of the City of God.

God wants men and women who will apply themselves wholeheartedly to this matter. David could say of the pattern of the Temple, "All this have I been made to understand in writing from the hand of the Lord" (1 Chron. 28.19). That is no less possible in our day, if we will take the Scriptures seriously and count upon the Holy Spirit to instruct us.

Then again, in 1 Chronicles 29 we read of the people's contributions to the Temple, and in verse 8 it says: "They with whom precious stones were found gave them to the treasure of the house of the Lord". Nothing was private. Everything was made available to God, even at personal cost, and He had first choice of all. That happens when the divine pattern is governing everything. The fears and trials of the battles they have passed through, the hardships and exertions through which they have gone to collect this treasure, are all forgotten in the joy of bringing it into the House of God.

Let me be quite clear about this. I am not speaking about decorating earthly buildings or contributing to earthly institutions. Over most of these, God's verdict is 'Ichabod — the glory has departed' (1 Sam. 4.21). No, the treasures spoken of here are 'living stones'. They are born again believers, men and women who, coming into Christ, and giving themselves wholly to Him, are being built up into "a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2.4-5). It may be a costly and painful process to fashion us and fitly frame us together so that we may become a habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph, 2.22). But let us be found faithful, for the end of that process is glory. It is a Holy City, God's dwelling place, "having the glory of God".

THE END