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INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Third Quarter—Lesson V.—July 29.
THE TABERNACLE.—EX. 40: 1-16.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them.—Rev. 21: 3.

On the first day of the first month: the month of Abib, afterwards called Nisan, covering parts of our March and April. This month was the beginning of their religious year. The tabernacle was set up on their New Year's Day.

THE TABERNACLE. It is a movable dwelling of Jehovah. Tabernacle of the tent of the congregation: rather, the tabernacle, the tent of meeting.

ITS DESIGN. The plan of the tabernacle and of its furniture was designed by God, and revealed to Moses on the Mount. It was intended to symbolize and teach the great truths of the Jewish religion. And no one but God could know what would best express the truths he wished to teach. A human mind would have been certain to be ignorant of or to misinterpret the truths. The tabernacle was to comprise three main parts,—the tabernacle more strictly so-called, its tent, and its covering. These parts are very clearly distinguished in the Hebrew, but they are confounded in many places of the English version. The tabernacle itself was divided into two parts,—the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Around the whole was the court. THE TENT was of goats' hair, the common material for tent coverings. The foundation was a framework of wood.

THE COVERING was to be of red ram-skins and sealskins and was spread over the goats'-hair tent as an additional protection against the weather.

THE TABERNACLE PROPER was a structure of wood covered with gold, having two sides and a back, but without floor, roof, or front. The ground served for a floor. The tabernacle was 30 cubits long and 10 wide and 10 high. If we reckon a cubit at 18 inches, this would give a length of 45 feet, and a width and height of 15 feet. The walls on three sides of this structure were made of 48 upright acacia planks 15 feet long and 27 inches wide, entirely overlaid with gold. On the lower end of each board were two tenons, each of which fitted into a solid silver socket. These sockets, 96 in number, weighed a talent each, or about 100 pounds avoirdupois, worth \$1648 each, or \$165,000 for the whole splendid foundation. This silver was obtained from a tax of half a shekel, or 30 cents, levied on each adult man. On each plank were several gold rings through which ran rods of gold-covered wood to hold the structure together.

THE HOLY PLACE was the room of the tabernacle nearest to the entrance, and was probably 30 feet long and 15 feet wide. In this room were the golden candlestick, the altar of incense, and the table of shew-bread, and the priest entered it every day for service. The Holy of Holies, the second of the two rooms, was 15 feet square, separated by a veil from the Holy Place, and contained only the ark of the covenant with its mercy-seat and cherubim. Here was the peculiar dwelling-place of Jehovah, and it was entered only by the high priest once a year, with the most solemn ceremonies.

Teachings of the Tabernacle. The Epistle to the Hebrews is the Holy Ghost's commentary on the tabernacle and its services. It is the key to the Pentateuch and to a great part of the Old Testament. Everything about the tabernacle pointed to Jesus Christ. That which was intended to be set forth was what has often been styled "the plan of redemption." In other words, the Hebrew people were to be trained into Christianity, and familiarized with the essential ideas and principles of the Messianic scheme of salvation through this tent of worship in the desert.

The tabernacle symbolized the abiding presence of God with his people. He came and dwelt among them. It taught us the way by which man may have access to God. It was the place of light, of guidance, of worship, of communion with God. It symbolized the holiness of God by the difficulty of approach through the court to the Holy Place, and the Holy Place to the Holy of Holies, in which were the tables of the law and the mercy-seat of love. Its most costly and pure foundation pointed to Jesus Christ, the foundation of all true religion and worship. Everything most beautiful and most costly was used in the tabernacle, to express the esteem in which religion and religious institutions should be held in the nation. They should have the first place. Every common thing was transfigured by consecration to God, as the body is transfigured by the indwelling soul. Each heart should be a tabernacle of the Holy Ghost. Each home should be a tabernacle where God abides, as Jesus in the

home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus. Each church should be a tabernacle of the Holy Spirit, the centre of worship, the place of sacrifice, the means of making known the true God.

THE ARK OF THE TESTIMONY.—Ver. 3. And thou shalt put therein: in the second room, or Holy of Holies. The ark of the testimony. This was a chest of acacia wood 2½ cubits (3 feet 9 inches in length and 1½ cubits (1 foot 3 inches) in height as well as width, plated within and without with gold. It was encircled with a band of solid gold, wrought into figures of leaves and flowers, and had at each corner a ring of solid gold. Through these rings passed bars of acacia wood, overlaid with gold, with which to carry the ark; and these bars were never taken out. The lid of the ark was of solid gold, and was called the mercy-seat. Upon it were two golden figures of winged cherubim, with their wings stretched out over the ark, and their faces turned toward one another. What these forms were, we do not know; but it is supposed that they were imaginary combinations of various animal forms (Ezek. 1: 5-14; Rev. 4: 6-8). Within the ark were deposited the two tables of stone engraved with the ten commandments, which were called "the tables of testimony" or simply "the testimony," because they testified of the character and will of God; whence the ark was sometimes called "the ark of the testimony" (according to Heb. 9: 4, the ark also contained Aaron's rod that budded, and a golden pot of manna). The ark was deposited in the Most Holy Place, and was the only furniture in the apartment. Before it hung the elegant embroidered veil, behind which none might pass or look, except once a year, on the day of atonement, when the high priest entered alone into the sacred apartment, to sprinkle the mercy seat with the blood of atonement. Cover the ark with the veil: the one just described, which was hung across the tabernacle and separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place.

Teachings of the Ark. The ark may be taken as symbolical of the Divine Presence, or the divine plan in human life. The law was placed in the ark to show that the centre and heart of all things is righteousness. On this God's throne is founded. According to righteousness he rules all things. Over the law was the "mercy-seat or propitiatory," because Jehovah there revealed himself, especially on the great Day of Atonement, as 'God pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin.' No one can reach righteousness except through the atoning mercy of God. The cherubim symbolized the whole redeemed people of God, and God's abiding presence with them.

In the ark, beside the law, we find Aaron's rod that budded,—the symbol of life from the dead, the resurrection and the life,—and the golden pot of manna, symbol of the bread of life.

THE TABLE OF SHEW-BREAD.—Ver. 4. And thou shalt bring in the table of shew-bread. Around its edge ran a band of solid gold wrought into figures, like that upon the ark; and at some distance beneath it was a strip of plated acacia wood, bearing another similar band of wrought gold. Like the ark, the table was furnished with golden rings at the corners, and bars of plated acacia wood for carrying it. The things that are to be set in order upon it. The table was furnished with two vessels for bread, two for frankincense and probably two for wine all of gold. Upon the two platters were twelve loaves of bread, six upon each, representing the twelve tribes; and on the top of each pile was a small saucer of frankincense. The bread was renewed every Sabbath, the stale loaves being eaten by the priests upon the spot.

Teachings of Shew-Bread. This bread represents Christ, "the living bread" which came down from heaven. No soul can be truly healthy that does not feed on Jesus Christ.

THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICK.—Ver. 4. And thou shalt bring in the candlestick: The golden candlestick was composed of a straight stem, rising perpendicularly from a base, and having on either side of it three curved arms. The stem and arms were ornamented with representations of almond flowers, pomegranates, and lily blossoms, repeated as there was room for them, the top ornament being in every case a lily blossom, which held a hemispherical lamp. It was made of a talent of pure gold, which, at £4 an ounce, would be worth \$28,000. And light the lamps thereof. Upon the lamp-stands were seven golden lamps; the ancient lamp being simply a bowl. The lamps were lighted at the time of the evening oblation. They are directed to be kept burning perpetually. The rabbis say that the central lamp only was alight in the daytime.

Teachings of the Golden Candlestick. There was no window in the tabernacle. All natural light was

excluded from the room in which the priests ministered. They lived and walked in the light, when darkness brooded over the desert outside; the light of the candlestick represented the light of God. God in Christ is the light of the world. Christ and the church are both seen here. The base and stock represent Christ. The branches represent the church. There was only one lamp-stand, denoting the unity of God's people; but it had various branches and lamps, denoting their multiplicity in unity; and the number was seven, the symbol of their completeness. God's house must be radiant because of the Divine Presence; "for he is light."

Each heart should be a "candle of the Lord," lighted by him, shining in the dark places.

THE GOLDEN ALTAR OF INCENSE.—Ver. 5. Thou shalt set the altar of gold for the incense. This was in the form of a box, a foot and a half square, and three feet high, with a projection like a horn at each upper corner. It was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Upon it the priests burned incense at the time of morning and evening prayer. The incense was burned, not directly upon the altar, but in a censer which was set upon the altar, the censer being a shallow pan of gold, hung from chains of gold which were held in the hand. The hanging of the door: i. e., the curtain at the entrance to the tabernacle. This veil was suspended on five pillars, overlaid with gold. Teachings of the Altar of Incense. This altar is a beautiful and instructive type of Christ, our great Intercessor, the incense of whose prayers burned continually. The incense was a type of the prayers and worship of God's people, kindled by the flame of the Holy Spirit, going up in sweet odors to heaven, from a pure and true heart. We cannot reach this altar whence true prayer arises, except by the altar of atoning sacrifice, and the laver of purification, and by the light of the golden candlestick.

THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING.—Ver. 6. The altar of the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle. This was often called the brazen altar, because it was covered with bronze. It measured seven and one-half feet in length and breadth, and was four and one-half feet high. The hollow interior was apparently filled with earth, smoothed on the top like a hearth. On it were burnt the whole burnt-offerings, and all those parts of the other animal sacrifices which were offered to the Lord. Teachings. This altar symbolized the atoning sacrifice of Christ. It stood before the tabernacle, to teach us that no one can enter the holy place of heaven and heavenly life, no one can reach God, and dwell in his abiding presence, except by the sacrifice of Jesus, to whom all the sacrifices pointed. Its benefits extended to all. None but priests could enter the tabernacle, but all had access to this altar.

THE BRAZEN LAVER.—Ver. 7. The laver between the tent and the altar. This was a large copper vessel standing upon a pedestal, the whole resembling a huge vase. It was filled with water for the use of the priests, who washed their hands and feet, not in it, but in water drawn from it, every time they set foot within the tabernacle. The laver was made of the mirrors of the women, whose devotion appears in this surrender of the most indispensable article of feminine toilet. These mirrors were made of copper, with a slight admixture of tin, and highly burnished. Teachings. This water for washingsignifies the moral cleanliness required of all who will come into the presence of God.

THE COURT OF THE TABERNACLE.—Ver. 8. Set up the court round about that is, the curtain enclosing the court. The court was 150 feet long and 75 feet wide, having the tabernacle in the middle of its western end. The screen around it was made of plain white linen, and was 7½ feet high. At the eastern end of the court, the curtain was dispensed with for a space of 30 feet in the middle of the end, and its place was supplied with a finer curtain, embroidered with colors and gold, which when dropped closed, the entrance to the court. Hang up the hanging: rather, hang up the entrance-curtain.

Teachings. The court signifies the separation of God's people from the world, for no Gentile could enter this court; and also the preparation needed before entering into the sacred mysteries of religion. There can be no sudden leap from worldliness into the highest experience of God's love and truth. These various barriers are not so much barriers as golden stairways. We cannot reach the goal without climbing; but the stairway is not to hinder, but to aid, our climbing.

THE DEDICATION OF THE TABERNACLE.—Vers. 9-11. And thou shalt take. The instructions for this anointing had been previously given, and are repeated here.

The anointing oil: was a fragrant compound of olive oil, myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, and cassia, and was

to be used only for holy anointing: And it shall be holy: i. e., set apart exclusively for sacred uses.

Teachings. Some things should be set apart exclusively for religious purposes; some days, as the Sabbath; some hours, as the hour of prayer; some money, as gifts to God's cause; some places, as the church. By this setting apart, the people were taught the meaning of holiness, consecration, setting apart for God; and by contrast, the nature of sin. This setting apart is to teach that all things really are holy, and should be consecration to God.

THE DEDICATION OF THE PRIESTS.—Vers. 12-16. And thou shalt bring Aaron and his sons. To consecrate and set them apart to the priest's office. Hitherto there had been no regular priesthood, but the patriarchal system had been preserved, under which every man was priest of his own household; but now the priesthood was conferred by divine direction upon Aaron and his male posterity, the head of the family being always the high priest. Wash them with water: bathing the entire body. He that would serve God must first be made pure himself, "by the washing of regeneration and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit." Put upon Aaron the holy garments. The garments of the high priest were undergarments of white linen; a long dress, or tunic, reaching from the neck to the feet, embroidered with colors and gold, and bound around the waist with a similarly embroidered girdle; an outer tunic reaching to the knees, called the robe of the ephod, woven of blue, with merely openings for the neck and arms, and with a fringe at the lower edge of golden bells alternating with colored pomegranates; the ephod; and for the head, an embroidered cap, having upon its band, over the forehead, a gold plate inscribed with the words, "Holiness unto the Lord," which was attached by means of blue lace. The garments of the subordinate priests were similar, but without the ephod and its robe, and without the golden plate on the head. And thou shalt anoint them: setting them apart for holy and special service of God. They were to perform the necessary work of the tabernacle and the sacrifices, to lead the people in regular daily and weekly worship, and to teach them the statutes of the Lord. An everlasting priesthood. The meaning is, that the priesthood should descend from one generation to another perpetually. And the efficacy of this first anointing should extend to the whole future line, so that they need not from one generation to another receive successively the consecrating unction. With the high priest the case was different. As he was elected, it was fit that he should, upon entering into office, be anointed.

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