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The Link

NORTH ROAD CHAPEL

BIDEFORD

THE TABERNACLE OF GOD

Part 11

“Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubims of cunning work shalt thou make them. The length of one curtain shall be eight and twenty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: and every one of the curtains shall have one measure. The five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and other five curtains shall be coupled one to another. And thou shalt make loops of blue upon the edge of the one curtain from the selvedge in the coupling; and likewise shalt thou make in the uttermost edge of another curtain, in the coupling of the second. Fifty loops shalt thou make in the one curtain, and fifty loops shalt thou make in the edge of the curtain that is in the coupling of the second; that the loops may take hold one of another. And thou shalt make fifty taches of gold, and couple the curtains together with the taches: and it shall be one tabernacle.” (Exodus 26:1-6)

Three articles of furniture were to be found in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle: the Table of Shewbread and the Golden Candlestick (addressed in previous articles) and the Altar of Incense (yet to be considered). Following the order of the details as given in Scripture, and arriving at Exodus chapter twenty-six, a specification is given here for the Tabernacle itself – that is to say, the fabric of which the tent was composed.

It is noteworthy that the Holy Spirit-inspired description begins with the roof of the structure, before the framework. A narrative of human origin would doubtless have begun with the ground flooring, followed by the sides, then the roof, and finally the contents within. But here, as is so often the case, God’s ways prove to be the very opposite of man’s. The Divine account of the Tabernacle’s outer form commences with

the uppermost parts: *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts”* (Isaiah 55:8-9).

The roof – or, better styled, ‘covering’ – consisted of four layers of material; four huge sheets of different fabric laid one on top of the other. The first, visible from within and forming the interior ceiling was described in the passage from Exodus 26:1-6. Above this was a covering made of goats’ hair. The third layer consisted of rams’ skins dyed red. The final outer layer was of badgers’ skins. The present article will consider only the first, innermost covering.

The magnificent cloth which formed the inward ceiling was in four colours, and is called ‘fine twined linen’. The base was therefore white, but into it were to be woven the colours blue, purple and scarlet, in such a manner as to create a picture of cherubim in its design. This was obviously a tremendous feat of weaving, not only because of the intricacy of the work, but also the overall size: 42 feet (13 metres) by 60 feet (18 metres) in total. In order to facilitate the fabrication of so large an item, it was to be woven in ten sections (called ‘curtains’) of equal size – each 42ft x 6ft – which were joined together in two sets of five.

The final connection of these two pieces (each now measuring 42ft x 30ft) was effected by a row of fifty gold ‘loops’ (or eyelets) along the edge of the first section, and fifty gold ‘taches’ (or loops) on the edge of the second. Thus a covering was created of sufficient size to form the ceiling of both the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. Should any priest, in the performance of his duties look upward, he would see by the light of the Golden Candlestick this cunning work, in colours of blue, purple and scarlet; and the likenesses of cherubim gazing down.

While the practical details are themselves of interest, the Divine inspiration and record of them serves a deeper purpose. They are all historically and factually accurate; but still further, they carry spiritual significance. Though earthly in its origin, the Tabernacle points to the New Covenant; it is a pattern of heavenly things. In all these Old Testament descriptions, spiritual truth is to be sought and found, for they are ‘figures of the true’ (cf Hebrews 9:24).

What then is the relevance of this remarkable covering, and the facts pertaining to it? Notice first that this particular item is specifically called ‘the Tabernacle’. The innermost set of curtains, joined together in the manner described, is emphatically designated ‘the Tabernacle’. “*Moreover thou shalt make **the tabernacle** with ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubims of cunning work shalt thou make them*”; “*And thou shalt make fifty taches of gold, and couple the curtains together with the taches: and **it shall be one tabernacle***” (Exodus 26:1, 6); “*And he made fifty taches of gold, and coupled the curtains one unto another with the taches: **so it became one tabernacle***” (Exodus 36:13). This is in contrast to the other coverings, such as that of goats’ hair, which is referred to simply as ‘the tent’ (cf Exodus 26:11-13). The term tabernacle may be interpreted as ‘dwelling place’, which expression is used numerous times in Scripture to denote **the place of God’s abode** (e.g. 1 Chronicles 6:32, Psalm 76:2). It was within the confines of those woven linen curtains that God pleased to ‘dwell’ amongst, and meet with His people. This was the real and actual ‘Tabernacle’, in every sense of the word.

Let attention next be given to the material and colours of the inner covering. It was **fine linen** – which in Holy Writ is invariably connected with ‘purity’. For example: “*And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints*” (Revelation 19:8). The pure whiteness of fine linen is a depiction of righteousness – and this was the fabric appointed

as the basis of the Tabernacle covering. ‘**White**’ was the background colour. This sets forth in type the spotless humanity of Christ. The Bible states that He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners (cf Hebrews 7:26). He did no sin, He knew no sin, and in Him there was no sin (cf 1 Peter 2:22, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 John 3:5). This was the foundation and Divine prerequisite for His work of salvation. Only one who was sinless could die as a substitute for sinners, and effect their deliverance from sin: “*the just for the unjust*” (1 Peter 3:18). This was essential, and only Christ was so qualified. This was the base colour. Unsullied righteousness was the background to His whole life as a man upon earth – holy, flawless, impeccable humanity – fine linen, white and clean.

Then came the **blue**; the celestial colour. Recall a previous event in the life of Moses: “*and 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 his clearness*” (Exodus 24:10). In the colour blue is prefigured the **Heavenly** One – the Son of God. Seeing the blue against the background of white aptly depicts God manifest in flesh (cf 1 Timothy 3:16); Emmanuel, God with men (cf Matthew 1:23); the second man, the Lord from heaven (1 Corinthians 15:47).

The next colour mentioned is **purple**. This is the royal colour. It is emblematic of kingship. The Saviour and Redeemer of His people was, according to the flesh, of the royal line of David. One of the first questions asked in the New Testament was “*where is He that is born King of the Jews?*” (Matthew 2:2). John the Baptist, Christ’s forerunner, issued this proclamation: “*the kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Matthew 3:2); ‘at hand’, because the King Himself was in their very midst. In His sufferings, God so ordained that He should be crowned with thorns and arrayed in a robe of purple, and even upon the cross His kingly character could not be obliterated, for it

was written over the Saviour's head in three languages (cf John 19:19-22). Christ is the King immortal. When upon earth, assuming the form of a servant, He never ceased to be the sovereign. Woven into the fine linen of His holy humanity were the purple strands of eternal kingship.

Then there was **scarlet**, emblematic of Christ's blood shed for the putting away of His people's sin: "*For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin*" (2 Corinthians 5:21). It was the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son which alone can effect remission:

"What could wash away my stain?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
What could make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus." (Lowry)

That blood was freely given for guilty sinners. God grant that every reader of these words might know and prove its sin-purging efficacy:

"Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power?
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour?
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?" (Hoffman)

God be thanked for the strands of scarlet woven into that covering depicting Christ's sufferings and death, for it is only through His blood that sinners are redeemed.

So in this curtain is to be seen white speaking of righteousness, blue of heaven, purple of kingship, and scarlet of suffering and death; all primarily typifying the Lord Jesus. But there is a sense in which this typology applying to Christ may be extended to His people. That which is spoken of the Head is also, through Divine grace, true of His members the Church. Firstly, every redeemed person is clothed in Christ's perfections; His spotless life is imputed to them; they are

justified before a Holy God; they are enrobed in the fine linen of His flawless righteousness. Secondly, they are a **heavenly** people. They are said to be seated with Christ in heavenly places (cf Ephesians 2:6). The colour of blue is woven into them, for they are destined to bear (according to 1 Corinthians 15:49) the very image of the heavenly – and that for all eternity.

What then of purple? The people of God constitute a **Royal Priesthood** (cf 1 Peter 2:9); they are made kings and priests unto God (cf Revelation 1:6), and shall reign for ever and ever (cf Revelation 22:5)! Oh the wonder of it – that the colour of purple should be upon them in this sense. In respect of the scarlet, it is true that: “*Christ... hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh*” (1 Peter 3:18), such that there remains no more suffering for sin on the believer’s part. Nevertheless, this does not remove the colour scarlet from the curtain.

The others hues have their relevance, and so does this one. No true Christian will ever endure the wrath of God due to his sins, for this Christ has suffered vicariously; but other Scriptures make clear: “*For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake*” (Philippians 1:29); “*...that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death*” (Philippians 3:10); “*but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy*” (1 Peter 4:13); “*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*” (Romans 8:18). The Lord’s people are called upon, here below, to ‘**take up the cross** and follow Him’. All these colours are wonderfully combined together, and form one glorious body of truth for the children of God.

There is still more to be seen in the detail of this ‘covering’. It was, as described, made in two large sections, clasped together by a series of golden loops and taches. When the complete sheet was placed, tent-like, over the Tabernacle, these hooks and eyelets ran in a line from left to right in the ceiling, at the point where the Holy Place ended, and the Holy of Holies began. From them there could be hung perpendicularly, a ‘vail’, forming a vertical partition for the inner chamber: *“And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony: and the vail shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy”* (Exodus 26:33). Unless and until that vail was removed, it would not have been apparent to any onlooker that the inner ceiling of the Tabernacle was in fact made of two parts, joined together.

When Christ, the Mediator of the New Covenant came, and announced from the cross that His atoning work was finished, the Old Covenant era ended, and the dividing vail (then in the Temple) was rent in twain from top to bottom. All which had formerly been hidden by it, was now made manifest. God’s purposes with His people were made clear. Speaking of Jews and Gentiles, the epistle states: *“but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby”* (Ephesians 2:13-16).

The work of Christ set forth the glorious truth that both Jews (who could not keep the Law) and Gentiles (who had not known the Law) are saved by the same grace; the same means; the same Saviour. The true people of God, in Old and New Testament ages alike, are but two

parts of one whole; two sections of one Tabernacle; inseparably connected by the golden ties of God's sovereign grace.

Now for a concluding thought upon that amazing ceiling of the Tabernacle. It was the canopy beneath which those who were priests came and ministered. Here was the Table, the Candlestick, and the Altar of Incense. From this sacred spot fragrance ascended unto God through the faithful service of the priests. When Aaron and his sons went into the Holy Place and looked upward they saw that marvellous work with all its spiritual significance. And they also saw, looking down upon them, the figures of cherubim wrought in the cloth – angelic beings whose great concern is the holiness of God. What an application lies here to the churches of Jesus Christ today, when- and wherever they assemble together for public worship!

The Tabernacle's inner covering speaks of the angels of God, and their interest in the mystery of Christ and His Church. They are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation; they are ever-present encompassing the believer; they are intimately concerned with the activities of the people of God. As the apostle states: "...unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; **which things the angels desire to look into**" (1 Peter 1:12). "*To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Ephesians 3:10-11).

Sinless angels are ever desirous to know more of the manifold wisdom of God and of His eternal purposes for His Church. For there were never any purposes of grace extended unto the angels which fell – only to fallen humanity. Hence the ongoing desire of these 'powers in heaven' to search out more of the spirit of Christ, concerning sinners of earth. Thus the cherubim were depicted in the covering of the

Tabernacle as perpetually looking down and observing all that occurred there. This is a very sobering doctrine, and one which the modern church has all but lost sight of: that those sinless angelic hosts, which are set upon the holiness of God and are the executioners of Divine justice, are constantly watching the conduct of the Lord's people, and listening to all that is said when they assemble.

This is one of the reasons why the Apostle Paul wrote by inspiration to the church at Corinth concerning the Headship of Christ, and how it is to be demonstrated in the corporate gatherings of believers. Men should never have their heads covered, whilst women ought not to have their heads uncovered, when meeting together for worship. Whatever Christendom in general may practise, whatever loose evangelicals may say, whatever 'reformed' men may connive at, this is the edict of the New Testament, and a most serious matter. For the relationship between Christ with His Church is concerned – of which relations between men and women are analogous. Men are charged with holding authority in the church; women are charged with making a practical acknowledgement of it.

*“For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head **because of the angels**”* (1 Corinthians 11:10). The meaning is, that women are to set forth by a simple physical demonstration the power and authority of Christ; over His church in general, and every member in particular. It symbolises both Divine lordship and human submission. The glory of the Great Head is in focus, and the ministering spirits of God are ever on duty, guarding His holy character and watchful for obedience to His Word. They, though sinless, cover themselves in the presence of God (cf Isaiah 6:2). Because of those angels (says the Spirit of God through the Apostle) the church must be constantly vigilant to show, in this manner, her subordination to Christ the Head.

Those who gather in the name of the Lord, to worship Him in spirit and in truth, will be anxious to observe ‘whatsoever things He hath commanded them’. When this is done in a Biblical fashion, Christ will be present in their midst, His holy angels hovering over and around, intensely interested in the saints and their devotions. The angels themselves never cease to be engaged in the worship of God, and do so without the slightest element of defilement or sin. And when the Lord’s people assemble together, they mingle their human praises **with** the hosts of heaven – a fact appreciated by those hymn-writers who said:

“Come, let us join **our** cheerful songs
With **angels** round the throne...” (Watts)

“With His seraph-train before Him,
With His holy Church below,
Thus unite we to adore Him,
Bid we thus our anthems flow.” (Mant)

Because of this, none should dare to gather in a manner which contravenes the Divine mandate, but rather ‘worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness’.

All this, and very much more, is set forth in the typology of that magnificent covering which was called ‘the Tabernacle’. God grant that whensoever His people meet as a Royal Priesthood, they might be conscious of the verities here set forth. They are beneath the shadow of the Almighty, Christ in all the wonder and splendour of His mediatorial work and kingship, with the attendance of His holy angels. Such assemblies do themselves comprise a ‘tabernacle’ – a dwelling place of God, and ‘holiness becometh His house for ever’. May God search the hearts of every reader with this solemn truth.

W. H. Molland (1920 – 2012)

THE COUPLING OF THE CURTAINS

The Tabernacle had two divisions, called respectively the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies; the one being separated from the other by a very thick veil. But the utmost care is taken to couple the curtains and tenons and taches. Under one covering, overshadowed by the same cloud, and filled by the same glory, were these two compartments, until the veil that separated them was rent (cf Matthew 27:51).

The curtain-coupling signifies the essential oneness of the Hebrew and Christian Churches. The Great High Priest Himself declared that the saints of the Old Testament [age] desired to penetrate the veil which concealed from them the mysteries within. Yet were they one, coupled together by the mystic bonds of faith and hope and love; and when the veil was rent, the compartments of Hebrew and Christian became one in Christ Jesus.

In Hebrews 9 [the Apostle] says further that the outer room also typifies the visible Church [in] the world... and that the inner room was a peculiar type of heaven, whither the Forerunner hath for us entered; and if so, the twice-repeated caution to couple the curtains plainly indicates the essential unity of the Church Militant and Church Triumphant. Over both is the covering of God's omnipresence. Over both is the banner of His love waving. Between them and us hangs the veil, but each Christian has his turn to pass within. And as during His first advent the veil was rent, so in His second advent will the other veil be riven.

“One family, we dwell in Him,
One Church above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death” (Wesley)

J. S. Excell (b. 1850)

COVERING

“...we need to acknowledge the presence of the angels in the **local congregation**. Hebrews 1:14 speaks of the work of the angels in relation to the people of God. It is reasonable to assume that part of the ministry of the angels involves their attendance at public worship, where, in relation to the believers, they are ‘instructing and comforting their souls under Christ and the Holy Ghost’ (Matthew Henry). The angels are given ‘charge’ over us to ‘keep’ us in all of our ways (cf Psalm 91:11). In the light of this, the presence of the angels should restrain Christians from all improprieties in the worship of God. Whether man or woman, we should be constrained to behave in the congregation so as to express reverence for God, and acceptance of the rank in which He has placed us...

...it would be an act of rebellion to break that Divine harmony and order which especially shows itself in worship, where the angels mingle with the earthly worshippers. Equally, it would be foolish to ignore the plain example of the holy ones who keep their first estate, and serve in the heavenly sanctuary. The picture presented by Isaiah 6:1-2 is a case in point. In this solemn scene, the angels veiled their faces in token of profound humility. If sinless creatures are careful to approach the God to whom they are subject in this way, with what reverence and godly fear should we appear in the presence of Him who is our Sovereign! On no account should we seek to set aside those precepts which He has laid down for acceptable worship.”

T. Nelson (*‘The Head Covering: What saith the Scriptures?’*)

“As the angels of God met Jacob... [they] do come into the assemblies of the saints. Paul tells us that the woman ought to have her head covered in the assembly “*because of the angels*”, that is, because they are there to see that all things are done decently and in order.”

C. H. Spurgeon (1834 – 1892)

TWENTY COMMANDMENTS

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest.” (Exodus 34:1)

At the very commencement of God’s Moral Law stand Ten Commandments; the ‘Decalogue’ with which the Divine transcript of righteousness begins. Those ten statements, simple yet profound, are an epitome of the whole Law. Upon this ten-fold foundation is built the entirety of God’s commandments by Moses. Graven upon stone by the finger of God, in token of their Divine origin and changeless perpetuity, they are first God-ward, and secondly man-ward in their application. These two sections were beautifully summarised by Christ, thus: *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets”* (Matthew 22:37-40). While of their binding and enduring nature, He stated: *“verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5:18-19).

Yet the remarkable fact of the matter is that, on the summit of Sinai, these fundamental Commandments were given **twice**. Having been imparted by God on the first occasion, they were afterwards declared a second time. This was no mere act of necessity, or a reaction to circumstances, but an event of great significance – the reason and relevance of which is the substance of this article.

It is important to know the historical context in which the Ten Commandments were given. The record of it is well known to any reader of the Scriptures – how that the multitudes of Israel came out of Egypt, through plagues and deaths, signs and wonders, sea and cloud, until they arrived, after three months’ journey, in the wilderness of Sinai (cf Exodus 19:1). There it was that God met with them, and announced His Covenant: “*Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation... And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do*” (Exodus 19:5-8). This was a ‘conditional contract’, a ‘covenant of works’, for the sealing and ratification of which, God and Moses would convene on Mount Sinai.

The descent of the Almighty to that place was an event of earth-shattering magnitude, the effects of which are graphically described: burning fire, blackness, darkness, tempest, “*And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake*” (Hebrews 12:18-21). Into the foothills went a select company from among the people, and beheld a part of the glory of God (cf Exodus 24: 9-11), but to the higher reaches went Moses alone, and was for forty days receiving all the Law as contained in Exodus chapters 19 – 31. “*And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to Me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them*” (Exodus 24:12).

Meanwhile, down in the camp, events took a deprecable turn into sin and idolatry. Within less than six weeks, the multitude of the people, aided and abetted by their leaders, had made for themselves a Golden

Calf, a false system of religion, and were pursuing it with hedonistic abandon. And all this in the very shadow of God-inhabited Sinai.

The Exceeding Sinfulness of Sin

Thus is portrayed in this incident the gross magnitude and power of sin. For the backdrop to this scene of iniquity and immorality is nothing less than fire-crowned Sinai, shaking at the presence of Deity. “*And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking*” (Exodus 20:18), which phenomena persisted for the duration of Moses’ absence – and yet in no way impeded or restrained the people from their descent into wickedness.

So determined and obdurate is sin, that it will persist despite all the terrors of the Law. The Word of God, His blueprint of holiness, has been in the possession of humanity for millennia. In its pages may be read, far more clearly than in any swirling smoke, more vividly than in consuming fire, all the fearful penalties of sin. Therein is the wrath of God revealed: “*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*”; “*For the wages of sin is death*” (Romans 3:23, 6:23); “*the wicked shall be turned into Hell*” (Psalm 9:17); in denial or defiance of all such verities, man continues in sin. It is so potent a principle, that he will sin even by the light of Sinai’s flames; on ground which trembles with its quaking.

Neither is an acknowledgement of God, nor a measure of revelation, sufficient to turn an individual away from the course of sin. Aaron, by whose instrumentality the Golden Calf was forged, and who made blasphemous declarations concerning it, had but days before ‘seen the God of Israel’ (cf Exodus 24:9-11), as had his two sons and seventy elders with him. The multitude of the people had all witnessed first-hand the plagues in Egypt, seas divided, foes defeated, waters healed, manna descending, and a continual fiery-cloudy pillar. But not all that weight of Divine evidence, in its glorious total, stayed their hands from iniquity for a moment.

‘Modern’ man is likewise inexcusable. The reality of God and His being is writ large in Scripture, in providence, in history, in nature: “*Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse*” (Romans 1:19-20). Yet sin continues to exalt itself even against the knowledge of God (cf 2 Corinthians 10:5).

The Absolute Inability of Man

Here is another truth illustrated by this account. In the prelude to these scenes upon and before Mount Sinai, God decreed a Covenant with Israel, to which they readily committed themselves (cf Exodus 19:5-8); it was an arrangement which made their blessings to be conditional upon their obedience; called by theologians the ‘Sinaitic’ or ‘Mosaic’ Covenant. For how long was it successfully observed and maintained? Some argue, until the Fall of Jerusalem in 70AD; others say to the time of the Jews’ carrying away into Exile in 586BC; still others for the point in history when civil war divided the nation, after the reign of Solomon. The reality is far sooner, and more sobering. The Covenant was breached before Moses had even returned from the mount. The contract was reneged upon before the terms and conditions had been fully disclosed! Within forty days of their initial resolution, the people had completely gone back on their word. The Ten Commandments were scarcely engraved in the stone before other gods had been worshipped, idols made, the Lord’s name blasphemously traduced, His holy day rejected, and lies, lust and immorality abounded. In symbol of which abysmal failure, Moses “*cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount*” (Exodus 32:19). The Law was broken, the Covenant was in pieces, Canaan was forfeit, God was departed. Here is a true measure of human inability; of total depravity; of man’s utter incapacity to do that which God commands. A situation which has not changed, from Eden to the present day

The Wondrous Efficacy of Intercession

As the whole future of the Hebrews seemed to hang in the balance, with all their hopes imperilled, Moses is observed to step forward once again, now to intercede with the Lord on behalf of a sinful, failed nation. That closeness of relationship with God which Moses enjoyed he used, not to personal advantage, but for the sake of all the people. In this act is Moses to be seen very particularly as a type of the Saviour: “consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, **Christ Jesus**; Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all His house... And Moses verily was faithful in all His house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after” (Hebrews 3:1-2, 5). Moses life and work bore witness to that of Christ, who would come afterward.

When the people could not bear to hear, much less begin to keep, God’s holy Law, Moses was raised up as a Mediator for them. In a similar way, said the Almighty: “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him” (Deuteronomy 18:18). The fulfilment of these prophetic words in Christ is attested to by the Apostles (cf Acts 3:20-24).

Thus Moses spake with the Lord, face to face, and as a man unto his friend (cf Exodus 33:11), pleading God’s eternal Word and promises, jealous for His honour, desirous of His presence, yearning for His glory; even offering up himself and his own life in the stead of the people (cf Exodus 32:32). At length the Divine response was given: “And He said, My presence **shall** go with thee, and I **will** give thee rest... I **will** do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in My sight, and I know thee by name” (Exodus 33:14, 17). The intercession prevailed. Likewise Christ, “is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

The Abounding Grace of God

Thus the Lord renewed His Covenant with the people. But the language of it was different. No mention of the Hebrews, of their part or duty, is made: “*And He said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see **the work of the Lord***” (Exodus 34:10). The inability of man having been so profoundly displayed, the Covenant would henceforth be the work of God. In place of the onerous conditions previously stated, He now says: “*I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy*” (Exodus 33:19).

Then in one further demonstration of amazing grace, God instructs Moses: “*Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest*” (Exodus 34:1). Here is a giving of commandments, a writing of ordinances – and yet it is all a marvellous token of the **grace** of God! For despite the prevalence of sin, and the inability of man, and the perpetual disobedience of which he is guilty, God still patiently and graciously persists in the giving of His Law, and the declaration of His Word.

How justly might God have forsaken forever the Garden in which Adam sinned, withdrawing His presence and His Word from rebellious, blighted humanity, never to commune with man again. Yet He comes to Eden in the cool of the day of the Fall, and calls unto sinful Adam, saying ‘Where art thou?’ (cf Genesis 3:9). What grace was in that enquiry!

Similarly, the Lord might well have quit Sinai on account of the people’s idolatry, and left them to perish in the wilderness without any Law or commandment to direct and guide them in the way. But such

was not the case. He condescended to inscribe the words a second time. Still today, His people are often to be found, the shattered fragments of a broken Law at their feet, to whom He graciously says. ‘take fresh tables; I will write it again’. And again, and again. Indeed He goes still further in this New Testament age: *“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and **write them in their hearts**: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more”* (Hebrews 8:10-12).

There are numerous commentators in the present age who wrest the Scriptures to a destructive end (cf 2 Peter 3:16) making ‘Law’ and ‘Grace’ the enemies of one another; never considering that they are the works of the same God, with whom is neither variableness nor shadow of turning; no contradiction or conflict; who does not repent, or alter the thing that is gone out of His mouth.

For the true people of God, to be in possession of His Word is to have tasted that the Lord is gracious (cf 1 Peter 2:2-3). To follow in the way of His Commandments is to fulfil their God-given purpose: *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:10). And those who thus walk, in the sight of all men, *“are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ... written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart”* (2 Corinthians 3:3). May every believing reader aspire to have such a testimony as this, to the honour of God, and to the praise of the glory of His grace.

R. J. Steward

EDITORIAL

The purpose of any ‘covering’ is twofold. It is designed to preserve and protect that which is within, and to prevent or prohibit that which is without. Even so, the ‘coverings’ made for the Tabernacle served this dual function, delineating and beautifying the Holy of Holies, and the Holy Place; while keeping away the elements of the weather, invasive forces and prying eyes.

The Lord’s people stand in need of a ‘covering’, in order that their souls might be kept in safety, their faith fail not; and that the foes and hazards arrayed against them might be restrained. And such a provision is made for them, which Scripture describes in amazing breadth and detail.

*“For He shall give **His angels** charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways”* (Psalm 91:11). Superior far to the embroidered cherubim of the Tabernacle, the angelic hosts of heaven are appointed to minister unto the heirs of salvation.

The Lord speaks of **His Spirit** as a covering (cf Isaiah 30:1). Even as the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters at the first, so now He abides upon the saints, to comfort, guide and intercede, infusing their prayers and indwelling their hearts.

Of the **Son of God** it was prophesied: *“And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land”* (Isaiah 32:2). He provides shelter from our enemies, but also from Divine vengeance due to sin: *“He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness”* (Isaiah 61:10); indeed, *“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered”* (Psalm 32:1), for such

an one is safe from the accusations of Satan, and the wrath to come, being accepted in the Beloved.

Concerning **God the Father**, the Psalmist writes in delightful metaphor: *“He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust: His truth shall be thy shield and buckler”* (Psalm 91:4), here is not preservation only, but also peace and tenderness and paternal affection and the full reward of God (cf Ruth 2:12).

Wherever the Tabernacle went, the covering curtains were sure to be there also, and never absent. Likewise that spiritual covering afforded by God to His people is ever-present. It was upon them from the womb (cf Psalm 139:13), and has since been with them, keeping them in **all** their ways. Whether in the day of battle (cf Psalm 140:7) or of pestilence; whether faced by noonday heat or the terrors of midnight (cf Psalm 91:5-6) the Divine coverage afforded to them is absolute and entire.

Well might wondering saints ponder how, or why such a complete provision is theirs. The Lord Himself supplies the answer: *“Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him My salvation”* (Psalm 91:14-16).

ANNUAL BIBLE CONVENTION

7th & 8th June 2014 D.V.

Saturday 3.30 p.m. & 6.00 p.m. Tea served 5.00 p.m.

Lord's Day 11.00 a.m. & 6.30 p.m.

a cordial invitation is extended to all