

Numbers - Commentaries by Henry William Soltau

The Tabernacle, the Priesthood and the Offerings, Floor of the Tabernacle, The (5:17)

Numbers 5:17

The bare desert formed the floor of the tabernacle; a singular contrast to the glorious curtains, and golden boards and vessels. To the priests who entered the holy place, and to the High Priest on the day of atonement, who within the veil, sprinkled the blood under the cloud of glory that rested on the mercy-seat, it must have seemed singularly out of place, that a dwelling, designed for such holy uses, and so resplendent with costliness, beauty, and glory, should have been pitched in the howling wilderness, on the naked ground. But such was God's appointment. The dust of the earth, of which man was made, and to which the sinner, man, was to return-dust, which was the serpent's food-and dust, which betokened death and ruin, formed the floor of God's dwelling-place. This anomalous connection of beauty and barrenness; of preciousness and worthlessness; the incorruptible with the perishable; of glory and vanity; affords a very striking type of the present dispensation.

The heavens have been opened over our head. We worship and hold converse with God in the highest glory. And yet our members are here upon this earth; and we walk in the midst of a groaning creation, in a world defaced by sin; marred by the presence and power of death; still lying under the curse, and traversed as to its whole length and breadth, by the serpent's path, The blessed work of Christ, and the mighty power of His resurrection, have as yet accomplished nothing with regard to this lower creation. Redemption, instead of effecting any improvement in things around us, has delivered us out of this present evil world; has translated us out of the power of Satan, who rules and reigns here, into the kingdom of God's dear Son. The power of Satan, the state of men in general, and the condition of creation itself, remain totally unaffected by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The devil goes about still as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He is still the god of this world-the prince of this world-the prince of the power of the air. The whole world lieth in the wicked one; and man's heart has not received one gleam of heavenly light. He remains even in grosser darkness; notwithstanding the wondrous cross and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. One universal groan reaches the ears of the Lord of Hosts from the whole creation, resulting from the vanity-death-bondage of corruption, to which it is subject. And we ourselves, by reason of the very intercourse with God, into which we have been brought by the blood of Christ, and because of the very hope of glory, which through the Spirit's power we already taste by anticipation, even we ourselves, groan within ourselves, feeling what a wilderness this is through which we are hastening; and eagerly waiting for the time, when these vile bodies shall be made like the glorious body of our risen Lord. No wonder the Lord's people have such strange and mingled experiences, in one sense, they are already raised with Christ: in another, they yet expect the resurrection.

By faith they can say, that even now they are seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: and yet they find themselves toiling in the midst of a restless, unprofitable, heartless world; and having to wage a ceaseless warfare with the rulers of darkness. With truth they are able to declare, that they have already died, and that their life is hid with Christ in God: and yet, at the very same time, they have to put to death their members upon the earth, which are full of sin and uncleanness. Already, by the help of the Holy Spirit, (the first-fruit of the land of glory,) they behold a new creation, altogether of God, stretching out, with its unspeakable joys and glories, everywhere around them. Yet still they sojourn in a world where Satan's seat is, and where all is old, and full of decay and corruption. They are even now, created anew in the image of their glorious God: but the old man, with its affections and lusts, is yet present, and has constantly to be resisted. They are not in the flesh, but in the spirit; for the Spirit of Christ dwells in them: but alas! daily and hourly, the flesh continually lusts. Heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; but strangers and pilgrims: kings and priests, yet beggars and outcasts: possessing all things, and having nothing: utterly helpless, and yet able to do all things, through Christ that strengthens them: with (as it were) heads in the glory, and feet in the wilderness. Such are the experiences of the people of God, during the present dispensation, whilst the tabernacle of glory is connected with the wilderness-path.

The floor of the tabernacle is only once mentioned, (Num. 5:17,) in connection with that remarkable ordeal to which a wife was to be subjected, if the spirit of jealousy came upon her husband. The priest was commanded to take holy water in an earthen vessel, and to put into it some of the dust that formed the floor of the tabernacle. He then wrote certain fearful curses in a book, and blotted them out with this water, so that it was as it were pervaded with these curses. The suspected wife stood uncovered before God, with the jealousy-offering in her hands, consisting of the tenth part of an ephah of barley-meal, a memorial to bring iniquity to remembrance; and she solemnly pronounced Amen, Amen, to the curses. A handful of the offering was then burnt upon the altar, and the woman drank the water, which if she was guilty, became bitter within her, and caused corruption and curse to be made manifest in her body. The jealous husband taking this course, freed himself from any participation in her iniquity. The woman if guilty, alone bore it, and was a curse among her people.

May not this be looked upon in two aspects? First, as a type of Israel, once the wife married to Jehovah, now suffering under the fearful judgments of His wrath, the fury of His jealousy, because of their departure in heart from Him, and because of their guilt in putting to death His own Son; that death, like the barley meal-an offering of memorial, calling their iniquity to remembrance, instead of purging it away:-an evil and adulterous generation, which though secretly conscious, to a certain extent, of its own rebellion against God; has yet boasted itself in the law, and said Amen, Amen, to the curses pronounced against the very iniquity which it has committed.

Secondly.-Is not this type to be interpreted also by contrast? The Husband, instead of clearing Himself from the iniquity of His wife, by allowing her to drink the bitter water, has Himself taken the cup, and drained it to the dregs. God, in the fire of His jealousy, because of man's departure in heart from Him, mingled a cup of wrath and indignation, and placed it in the hands of His own beloved Son. " The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? " O what a draft did that cup contain! holy water, mixed with dust and curses, God's holy indignation against sin; a hatred and antipathy to it in every shape, which none but Himself, the Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty could feel and know,

concentrated as it were, in that fearful cup.

Death, the penalty on sin, with all its kingdom of terrors; and curses pronounced to the full because of a broken law; these were the ingredients mixed by the hand of God, and given by Him to His own beloved Son to drink; in order that we, who have indulged our sinful lusts, and gratified our self-will, and reveled far off, might escape the holy vengeance due to us as sinners. On the cross, Jesus drank of "the wrath of the Almighty." He was "filled with bitterness, and made drunken with wormwood." " His heart was melted like wax: all His bones were out of joint." The "hot displeasure" of God, as a fire, burned within Him. He was "brought into the dust of death." The Spirit of God, in the Psalms, seems to have selected language, expressive of excruciating bodily suffering, in order to represent to our souls the fearful agony of spirit, which the blessed Lord endured, when Himself bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. He refused the vinegar and gall at the hands of man, when He had tasted it. But He drank "the water of gall," and "the wine of astonishment," from the hands of God. Believers are often too apt to dwell exclusively on the bodily sufferings of our blessed Lord on the cross, instead of contemplating, as far as we are permitted to do, the unspeakable sorrows of Jesus in His soul under the stripes of God, "when it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him; when His soul was made an offering for sin, and He poured out His soul unto death." May we not, with deep reverence, view many passages in the Psalms in this light; and transfer the expressions we find there, respecting sufferings in the bones, the loins, the throat, &c., to the soul and inward mental feelings and untold woes of the blessed Lord; when He tasted death on behalf of the wife of His affections-the Church-rescued out of an adulterous world, and to be presented ere long, to Himself, without spot or blemish, or any such thing.

The Tabernacle, the Priesthood and the Offerings, Riband of Blue, The (15:32-41)

Numbers 15:32-41

As a confirmation of the typical import already proposed respecting the color, Blue, it may not be amiss to insert here a short exposition of Num. 15:32-41, a peculiar ordinance, giving directions concerning the dress of the children of Israel. One of that people had been found transgressing a commandment of God by gathering sticks on the sabbath-day. He had, by this act, violated the direct precept, "Thou shalt do no manner of work:" and had he been allowed to carry out his purpose, he would have broken another statute, "Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations on the sabbath-day." For this offense he was stoned to death; an early example of the severity of that law under which Israel had voluntarily placed themselves, and which they had promised to obey. He perished without mercy: for the law knew no grace. It demanded strict obedience; and no plea of necessity or of ignorance could be allowed in mitigation of its fearful penalty. It was on this occasion that the following directions were given by God: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a riband of blue: and it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart, and your own eyes." Ignorance of God is the fruitful source of disobedience. The sabbath-breaker (who was but a specimen of the whole nation) had sinned because he had forgotten God and the great redemption out of Egypt, in which God had made Himself manifest, both as to His holiness and His mercy. The Law made righteous demands on those who were under its covenant. It was "holy, just, and good." But, in its precepts, it made not a full display of God's blessed character of mercy. Grace and truth did not come by it: they came by Jesus Christ; and there would be no power to fulfill the righteousness of that law, or even to remember it, unless the heart were first instructed in the goodness, love, and compassion of God. A little intimation of this blessed truth (which was afterward fully revealed under the new covenant) is given us in the command respecting the riband of blue. That heavenly color, figuratively directing the beholder to the gracious character of God, was to be the ornament of his dress. The skirts of his clothing were to remind him, as he walked, that he belonged to God, who was holy, and who had redeemed him out of Egypt by the blood of the lamb, and through the waters of the Red Sea, unto Himself. The Law, written and engraven on stones, had proved ineffectual as to securing obedience. Even its threatenings of judgment prevailed not to restrain the willful purposes of the heart, which, by nature alienated from God, only despised His judgments, and found an additional zest in sinning presumptuously against His word. It might be, that some intimation of His grace, kept constantly under the Israelite's eye, would remind him of those commandments of which he had proved himself forgetful.

This seems to be the purport of the fringe of blue riband. But, like all ordinances addressed merely to the senses, we know how it failed. The Pharisees enlarged the blue riband, in order that men might praise their scrupulous adherence to the letter of the law. They did it, to be seen of men; not that they might themselves look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord. They fashioned their dress, in order to attract the notice, and gain the approbation of others; to get a character for sanctity, and separation from the world; and they had their reward. They were held in reputation among men. So, in modern days, a peculiar garb may be assumed, an outward appearance affected, an ascetic life practiced, which will gain human applause; and he who adopts such will be hailed as a heavenly man. But, if the heart be not first right with God; if the affection be not set on things above, and that on the ground of resurrection with Christ, and the life hid with Christ in God; all these outward observances are mere Pharisaical displays, and nourish, instead of mortifying, the flesh.

The every-day garments of the Israelite were to be adorned with this memorial of the God who had redeemed him, and to whom he especially owed his allegiance. The believer is constantly to keep in view his heavenly origin, and to remember, he is not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. He should gaze continually on the face of Him, who has manifested the love of God in giving His life for his redemption. God, in the gift of Jesus, has proved that love is inseparable from holiness; and if we reflect His character, we shall, in our ordinary ways, display something of the grace and purity, which pre-eminently shone forth from the Son of God. As holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, we have to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, and thereby we shall be more and more conformed to His likeness, and adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. The heart first, and the eye next, can only be kept from lusting after the things of the world and of the flesh, by being fixed on heavenly things.

The touch of faith drew out cleansing virtue from the border of His garment, who was truly the Heavenly One; and as we, by faith, hear, see with our eyes, look upon, and handle, the Word of life; as we exercise our every spiritual sense in contemplating Christ; so shall we be practically holy, and have the adorning of the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, but which will be made manifest in the meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price: "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in

every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." " As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.-Col. 1:10, Col. 2:6.

The Blue color in the vail, and other hangings of the Tabernacle, may therefore, without assuming any fanciful interpretations, represent the gracious and holy character of God, who is Love, as displayed in the Lord Jesus.

The Scarlet

As blue is peculiarly the color of the heavens, so, scarlet is the gorgeous color belonging to earth. The flowers, the produce of the soil, display its brilliant tints. We do not look above to find it: but it meets our eye when we contemplate the flowers of the field. The Word of God also employs this color as an emblem of royalty. The beast, and the woman in the Revelation, are both represented as scarlet. Not that the scarlet of itself, denotes evil; but because the kingdoms of the world were held under their regal sway And, when the Lord Jesus was, in mockery, hailed as king, the soldiers of imperial Rome clothed him with a scarlet robe.1 Matt. 27:28.

This color, in the Vail, seems therefore to typify the perfect human kingly glory of the Lord Jesus. He was, by birth, of the royal line of David; David's son, as well as David's Lord. He was born King of the Jews; having title to the throne, and sovereignty of the world, not only by descent, but He was truly a king, by virtue of his own intrinsic excellency.

At his creation, Adam had dominion conferred on him by God. All things of this earth were put under him. But he debased himself by giving credit to one who was classed as of the beasts of the field; for it is written of the serpent, to whom man yielded his allegiance, that " he was more subtle than any beast of the field, which the Lord God had made." Gen. 3 l. Adam was not indeed deceived, as Eve was; but he participated in her sin, and thus both parents of the human race forever lost their legitimate place of authority.

A true king would neither come in his own name, nor accept his kingdom from any, but from God. Too exalted for ambition; satisfied with the favor of God, and owning no other as Lord over him; contented to be His servant, in meekness and righteousness would he triumph. Combining mercy and truth in all his actions, and uniting boldness and courage with pitifulness and courtesy, he would scatter away all evil with his eyes, and would plead for those who are appointed to destruction. Liberal of heart and having a bountiful eye, he would give bread to the poor and needy. Unerring with his mouth as to judgment, a divine sentence would ever proceed from his lips. In the light of his countenance would be life; and his favor, as a cloud of the latter rain. These are some of the leading features of the royal character, portrayed in the Word of God: and such was the Son of Man.

The blind beggar discerned, in the despised and rejected One, the true Son of David. He saw the royal color; whilst others, who had eyes, perceived it not. And the woman of Canaan put Israel to shame, for she, though a dog, recognized her royal master. Once, for a moment only, the multitude owned their meek and lowly King. They caught a transient glimpse of His majesty and glory. But soon they lifted up, in shame and dishonor, on the tree, Him whom they had welcomed, a little while before, as their rightful sovereign. Never did His glory shine forth more resplendently, than when His crown was thus trampled under foot. Never did the Royal One so prove His own majesty, as when disowned by all, and even cast off by God. The exaltation of the cross was His one step to the throne of God. He manifested Himself, when hanging on the tree, so glorious and so worthy, that no place was high enough, but that at the right hand of Jehovah: no name sufficiently dignified, but " the name that is above every name."

The true dignity of man was blessedly maintained and exhibited by Christ when tempted of the devil, as recorded in Matt. 4:1-4. Eve, when surrounded by all that bespoke God's care and kindness, mistrusted His love, and believed the insinuated lie of Satan, viz that God had withheld the best fruit lest she should become, by eating it, like Himself. Her ambition was stirred; she desired to be greater than she was. Her eye also was attracted by the beauty of the fruit, and her heart received the whisper of the enemy. She gave credit to the devil in preference to God. She took and ate, and gave to her husband, and he did eat: and the dignity and honor of the creature, Man, was voluntarily surrendered to the unclean apostate spirit, Satan. " Dust thou art," was all that could now be said of the fallen lord of creation: and there was no power in him to regain his lost greatness.

Let us now mark the contrast displayed by the Son of God. In a wilderness, surrounded by wild beasts, an hungered, and apparently deserted by God, Satan desired, if possible, to induce the blessed Lord to act independently of His Father; to provide Himself with the bread which He needed for His sustainment, by a simple act of His own power. But he answered the tempter, not by asserting His dignity, as being Himself God, but by keeping His own subject place as man. He proved Himself thus above the control of the circumstances in which He was placed, and above yielding even to His own need. Again assailed by the enemy with the suggestion as to whether God's Word were true, and therefore, would it not be well to test its faithfulness? He not only maintained His perfect reliance on that Word, but proved His obedience to its commands. And when, as a last device, the tempter spread out before Christ such a vision of earthly glory as human eyes had never beheld, and sought, by that enticement, to allure Him from His allegiance to God; the Lord, taking, for a moment, His kingly seat of judgment, drove the wicked one from before Him; at the same time preserving His humble, yet happy position as a worshipper of the Most High. Throughout this wondrous scene the kingly color, the scarlet, is most manifest.

Two Hebrew words are united in all the passages in Exodus relating to the Tabernacle, where our word, scarlet, occurs. The first of these, (tohlahgh,) is translated worm in the following texts: " The son of man, which is a worm." Job 25:6. " I am a worm, and no man." Psa. 22:6. " Fear not, thou worm, Jacob." Isa. 41:14. The other word, (shahnee,) is of doubtful signification. Some suppose it to mean double-dyed. In the margin of Prov. 31:2;1, double garments is the rendering suggested instead of scarlet, where the Hebrew word occurs. In Isa. 1:18, both words occur separately. " Though your sins be as scarlet, (shahnee,) they shall be white as snow: though they be red like crimson, (tohlahgh,) they shall be as wool." In this verse, perhaps, the first word, (shahnee,) is used to imply the depth of the dye; and the latter, (tohlahgh,) its glaring color, red. Others suggest, that the two words used together, express the kind of insect, (coccus,) from which this color was extracted. It is remarkable that our most brilliant dye is procured from it.

Is there not some deep instruction to be gained from these Hebrew words? On the one hand, do they not teach us, that, however gloriously attired through human agency, however dignified with human greatness, the robe of honor, after all, is but the produce of a worm, and covers but a worm? And we read in Isa. 14:11, that the king of Babylon, who is hereafter to be clothed with regal splendor and dignity

heretofore unknown on earth, so as to exceed even his predecessor Nebuchadnezzar, the king of kings, in greatness and glory, will be brought down to the grave, where the crimson worms will be his bed and his covering.

On the other hand, does not this word worm, or the scarlet color derived from it, instruct us as to the humiliation of the blessed Lord? He made Himself of no reputation, when He took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. He who was equal with God, was found in fashion as a man. The blue of the heavens was connected with the scarlet of the worm. And at length, on the cross, in the depth of His self-abasement, and under the judgment of God, He exclaims, "I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." But what a glorious display of the perfect Man was this! How that dazzling color has been, as it were, expressed so that now we behold it on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

Purple

If we were to place the blue and the scarlet side by side, without the intervention of some other color, the eye would be offended with the violent contrast; for, though each is beautiful in itself, and suitable to its own sphere, yet there is such a distinction, we might almost say opposition, in their hues, as to render them inharmonious if seen in immediate contact. The purple interposed, remedies this unpleasing effect: the eye passes with ease from the blue to the scarlet, and vice versa, by the aid of this blended color, the purple. The blue gradually shades off into its opposite, the scarlet; and the gorgeousness of the latter is softened by imperceptible degrees into the blue. The purple is a new color, formed by mingling the two: it owes its peculiar beauty alike to both: and were the due proportion of either absent, its especial character would be lost.

The order of the colors, blue, purple, scarlet, repeated at least twenty. Four times in Exodus, is never varied. The scarlet and the blue are never placed in juxtaposition throughout the fabrics of the Tabernacle. Does not this intimate a truth of an important character? Would the Spirit of God have so constantly adhered to this arrangement had there not been some significant reason for it? Are we not hereby taught a very precious fact respecting the Lord Jesus? He is God and Man: and we can trace in the Gospels all the fullness of the Godhead, as well as the dignity and sympathy of the perfect Man. But, besides this, in His thoughts, feelings, words, ways, and actions, there is an invariable blending of the two. Many mistakes and errors would have been avoided, in the Church of God, if those, who have undertaken to write or speak on this subject, had been subject to the definite words of Scripture, instead of adopting abstract reasonings upon the divinity and humanity of the Son of God., The Christ of God is the object of our faith; not a nature, or natures, but Himself. He was born of the Virgin, though HE eternally existed as the Son of God: HE died on the Cross, though He is the Mighty God. The importance of this little word HE, cannot be over-rated. The Apostle John was so intimately acquainted with his Lord, that in his first epistle, he constantly refers to Him, without mentioning His name; as if assured that the hearts of his readers would be so filled with the same blessed object that occupied him, that they would at once know to whom he alluded. See especially 1 John 3:2-7.

In contemplating Christ, it is well ever to remember the first syllable of His name, as given us in Isa. 9:6. "WONDERFUL:" and part of this marvel is, that in Him are combined the deep thoughts and counsels of God, with the feelings and affections of man. In Him there is no incongruity; in the days of His flesh, and on the cross itself, He was "the same," the "I AM," the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever. He could say, whilst on earth, "The Son, which is in the bosom of the Father." When speaking to Nicodemus, in that memorable meeting by night, He said, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven." And subsequently, when some of His disciples murmured at the difficulties raised in their carnal minds by His words of life, His answer was-"Doth this offend you? What, and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?" (John 6:61,62.) Such words as these, from the lips of the Son of God, should silence our fleshly reasonings, and cause us to bow down and worship, instead of attempting to fathom that which is unfathomable. Vain of our own conceit, we try, with our puny resources, to sound the depths; and fancy, when we have run out our little line, that we have reached the bottom. We cut and square systems of divinity, and stamp, with our imprimatur, as orthodox, the theology of this or that divine; and all the while, lose sight of HIM, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Man can applaud his fellow; for, in so doing, he praises himself. He can approve the sayings of another; for, thereby, he constitutes himself a judge. And thus, in the divinity of the day, we shall find that creeds, confessions of faith, and writings of the Fathers, really assume the place of the Word of God; and orthodoxy consists, not in holding what God says, but in subscribing to articles drawn up by fallible man.

Three instances are recorded in the Gospels, of the dead being raised to life by Christ: Jairus's daughter, the widow of Nain's son, and Lazarus of Bethany. Together, they afford us a complete display of His mighty power: for, in the first case, death had only just seized its victim; in the second, the sorrowing mother was on her way, to commit the body of her only son to the grave; in the third, the corpse had already been deposited some time, and had become corrupt in the tomb. In each of these remarkable scenes, the colors of the Vail may be traced. We can have no hesitation in recognizing the Blue, in the manifestation of the love of God, when His blessed Son, at the entreaty of the sorrowing father, went to the house, to heal the dying child. On the way, the message came to the ruler, "Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?" Little did they, who spake these words, understand who that Master was; or the depths of trouble, in which He would be overwhelmed, in order that the dead might live. They knew not that God was present with them, manifest in the flesh: but He at once stilled the fear of the damsel's father; thus doing what none but God could do; commanding peace into his bosom, in the very presence of death. Again, the voice of the Mighty God sounds forth, to hush the boisterous grief of those who had no hope, saying "Weep not: the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." But they perceived not who it was that thus spoke. Death was to them a familiar sight; they knew its power: but they laughed Christ to scorn. Ought not the believer exactly to reverse this? In the presence of the Lord, he may well laugh death to scorn. Lastly; how were the power and the grace of the One from heaven made known, when He spake those words-"Damsel, I say unto thee, arise!"

Let us now turn to the scarlet in this beautiful picture. Who but the Son of Man, would have pursued the path of kindness and sympathy, notwithstanding the rude scoffs, with which His ready love was met? and who, but one that knew what exhaustion and hunger were, would have added, to this mighty miracle, the command "Give her something to eat"? And does not this also exhibit to us the purple? With sympathy and love for the child, deeper than the mother's, and yet present in the scene as one who was Lord in it, and above it; He can call the dead to life, and at the same moment, enter into the minutest want of the little maid. The mere human beings who were present, even the very parents, were so overpowered with what they had witnessed, and with the joy of receiving back the dead one to life, that their human sympathies failed. None but God could thus have abolished death: and none, but He who was God and Man, could so have combined

power, majesty, grace, sympathy, and tenderest care.

The next instance already alluded to, depicts in few but full sentences, the beautiful tints of the Vail. Unsolicited, the Son of God went to the city where He knew the stroke of death had fallen, and had inflicted another wound upon a heart already stricken with grief. He timed His visit so as to meet, at the gate, the mournful procession, bearing to the grave the only son of a widowed mother. If any hope of God's interference had at one time cheered her whilst she watched her dying child, all such hope must now have fled. A little interval only remained, and the earth would close over her lost son. But attracted by the very extremity of the case, He, who declared the Father, drew nigh. With the authority of God, He touched the bier, and arrested the bearers in their progress to the tomb. Struck by a sudden consciousness that they were in the presence of One who had a right to stop them on their way, they stood still; they did not, like the attendants on the dead in the former case, laugh Him to scorn; and therefore, they had the blessing of witnessing His mighty act. He commanded the young man to arise from the bier, as He ordered the child to arise from her bed; and in like manner He was obeyed. " He, that was dead, sat up, and began to speak." Here, then, the heavenly color was evident; so that even they that looked on, said, " God hath visited His people." But the heart of Christ was occupied with the mother as well as with the son. As the voice of the risen youth reached His ear, He knew how the widow felt as she heard it. Himself undistracted by the exercise of His life-giving power, yet fully occupied in sympathy and grace with the yearning of the mother to embrace her son, and thus to assure herself of the reality, which even the evidence of her eyes and ears scarcely enabled her to credit, He gave completeness to the scene by delivering him to his mother. Here was the perfection of human sensibility, such as no man could have exhibited in such circumstances, unless that man were also God.

But perhaps the most- complete manifestation of " the Word made flesh" is to be found in John 11, if we except, as we must always do, the Cross, where all was marvelously concentrated. It seemed to the sisters as if the Lord had strangely disregarded their urgent message: for, He still abode at a distance, and allowed not only death to bereave them of their brother, but the grave to close upon his remains. His very reply to their announcement. (" Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest, is sick,") contained in it a paradox which they were unable to comprehend, and which the subsequent circumstances apparently falsified; for, His answer was, " This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." And yet He tarried till death had, for four days, retained its victim.

Thus, love and truth in Him who is Love, and who is the Truth, for a while appeared to have failed; but in reality the glory of God was the more to shine forth in His Beloved. It was, to Mary and Martha, as if the Vail had suddenly lost its colors. The short suspense, however helped them to discover fresh and deeper beauties in that curiously wrought fabric.

What mingled feelings occupied the heart of Christ, when, seeing the grief of Mary, and of those around, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled! He grieved over their unbelief and ignorance of Himself: and yet He wept in sympathy with them, and sorrowed for the very sorrow which His presence might have prevented. Who could have shed tears in such circumstances but Christ? Had a mere man been gifted by God with the power to raise the dead, he would be so eager to exhibit that mighty power, and thereby to still the mourners' grief, that he would be unable to weep whilst on the way to the grave. He must be more than man who could display what man in perfection is. The tears of Jesus are precious, because they are those of true human feeling: but they are most precious because they flow from the heart of Him who is the Mighty God. And when those tears plenteously fell from His eyes, all questions as to His love were at an end; and even the Jews exclaimed, " Behold, how He loved him." Again another groan burst from Christ as He drew nigh to the sepulcher: for, not only was his heart sorely pained because of the inroad that death had made in this once united family, tearing asunder the most cherished human relationships; but it may be also that the cave, with its door of stone, presented to Him in anticipation the sepulcher to which he was fast hastening, and that fearful death upon the tree where He for a season was to experience the forsaking, even of His God, whose bosom had been His dwelling-place from all eternity. This second time He groaned in Himself.

As with authority He had touched the bier, so now He commanded that the stone should be removed. But Martha interposed her objections; and though she owned Christ as Lord, and had heard, from His lips, the wondrous words, " I am the Resurrection and the Life," yet she believed not that there could be a remedy for one who had already seen corruption. It was then that Jesus reminded her of the message he had returned when they sent to inform Him of Lazarus's sickness that it should not be unto death, but for the glory of God, by answering, " Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?"

God's glory was ever His object: and to accomplish that, He had been content to bear the questioning of those dear to Him, who could not understand why He had not at once come to their aid.

The sepulcher was now laid open; and Jesus lifted up His eyes from that receptacle of death to the heaven above, resting His spirit in the bosom of His Father, and audibly expressing His dependence on Him, before he cried, with a voice of almighty power, " Lazarus, come forth." What a wondrous blending was here of subjection and authority, of obedience and command, of " the opened ear," and of the great " I Am."

The dead, hearing the voice of the Son of God, came forth. The corrupting corpse stepped out in life. What a moment of astonishment and delight must that have been to the sisters, as well as to their brother! But here again the Lord alone entered into the minutest details of this astonishing act of His power. He saw, or rather felt, (for He loved Lazarus,) that His friend was still encumbered with the relics of the grave; and He left it not till others awoke from their surprise, to perceive the clothes that bound and troubled the risen one, but gave another command, " Loose him, and let him go."

Jesus is the second man from heaven, made like unto His brethren, yet not of the earth, earthy; that Holy thing born of the Virgin, partaker of flesh and blood, yet incorrupt and incorruptible; in Him are inseparably united God and Man; yet He is the One Christ, manifesting that which is altogether new, viz.: the perfect blending of all that is of God, with all that is proper to man. Nor can we ever contemplate Him, unless we keep in view the mystery of His person. God, in sending His beloved Son, has given to man and angels a new object of attraction. He enables us to behold the brightness of His glory; yet in such a manner, that we are not terrified or struck down by the sight. We can also look upon man in perfect union with God. All such expressions as, " the Divinity being in abeyance," "the Divine nature sustaining His human nature," " Divinity enshrined in humanity," and the like, are attempts to explain to human understanding, that which can only be received by faith: they are the efforts of intellect to grasp that which is beyond human scan; and in measure falsify the great truth, " The Word made flesh."

The Jew saw no beauty in Christ to admire: he could only perceive an afflicted man of sorrows. The believer, at the same moment beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. The type we have been considering especially teaches these truths: for, all the colors were curiously wrought with the fine linen, so as form one mass of cherubim; a vail instinct with life and power, manifesting glory and beauty.

It will be seen that, in Ex. 36:35, the word "with" is in italics before "cherubim:" the vail being so fashioned as to present nothing but cherubim. Much has been written on these emblematical figures; and the reader will find the subject more fully expounded in the work on the Holy Vessels before mentioned, under the article, " The Mercy-Seat." Many have supposed that the Church is symbolized by the cherubim in Exodus. But the fact of their forming the vail seems to preclude this interpretation. As the vail shadows forth Christ in the flesh, we cannot suppose that any type would be given representing the union of the Church with Him then; as, before death, the corn of wheat abode alone: it must die, in order to bring forth fruit. The union of the believer with Christ is in life, quickened together with Him; seated in heavenly places in Him. He was the substitute in death; but He is the last Adam, the head of the new family, and source of its existence in resurrection.

The lion (one of the four faces of the cherubim) is classed with the king, against whom there is no rising up, in Prov. 30, 30, 31; and is also described as going well, and being comely in going; and as strongest among beasts, turning not away from any. Majesty, strength, and courage, are therefore here typified.

The ox, in addition to its well-known character for patient enduring labor, is also recognized in Scripture as knowing its owner; herein it may prefigure the persevering resolution of Him who unflinchingly set His shoulder to the arduous work committed to Him by His Father, and who always recognized His Father's will, and delighted to do it.

The way of an eagle in the air is alluded to in Prov. 30;19. as too wonderful to be known: referring probably to the astonishing extent and accuracy of its vision as to things of earth, when poised aloft; and to its swiftness of flight when the object of its search is discovered. Fit emblem this of Him, whose eyes search the depths of the heart, and who is as rapid in discovering where the lawful prey is, as in delivering it from the power of the destroyer.

These three faces, combined with the human face and form, completed the cherubim: for all this power, labor, activity, and quickness of perception, were put forth under the control and guidance of perfect wisdom and sympathy. Wings were also spread abroad over the surface of the vail, proceeding from the cherubim; denoting the heavenly origin and unearthly ways of the Son of Man, who was " from above," and who could say, even while here, " The Son of Man, who is in heaven."

The vail, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, and cherubim was made" of cunning work," or, as it might be translated, "the work of a deviser." It was skillfully wrought with wisdom and cunning device; a matchless fabric, copied from a heavenly pattern, and never again to find its equal on earth: type of Him who said " A body has Thou prepared me." Gabriel's words to Mary betoken the wonder of Immanuel's birth. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee. Therefore also that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." She conceived in her womb, and brought forth a son, and called his name Jesus. He was the Son of the Highest, and to Him, the Lord God gave the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever: and of His Kingdom there shall be no end. (Luke 1:28-35.) Wondrous mystery! the Virgin's Son, and yet the Son of God: the Son of the Highest, and yet inheriting the throne of His father David: the Child born, the Son given; His name, Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace: Jesus, Immanuel, to whom every knee shall bow, and who is the object of the church's contemplation and worship on earth; and the subject of eternal song in glory forever. May we ever be filled with reverence and godly fear, when speaking or meditating on Him. The precincts of the tabernacle are holy ground: and before we view the great sight of God manifested in the flesh, we must loose the shoes from off our feet.

The Hebrew word, translated Vail, is, according to Gesenius, derived from an unused verb signifying to break, and in a secondary sense, to separate. It is called the Vail of the covering. (Ex. 39:34: XI. 2 1.

Num. 4:5.) It was hung up, in order to separate between the holy place and the most holy, and also to cover or hide the ark, (Ex. 26:33; and Ex. 40:3.) And when the tabernacle moved, the vail was taken down, and thrown over the ark as its first covering. As long as the Lord Jesus was in the flesh, His very presence on earth declared the impossibility of any one approaching God excepting Himself, or unless having His perfectness.-He stood as the Perfect Man, who alone was fit to appear before God; the standard weight of the sanctuary. Any one, weighed against Him, was found wanting. His perfect righteousness placed in dark shade the uncleanness of all men. The measure of His stature declared the utter insignificance of all human attainments. His fullness proved man's emptiness. The white and glistening purity of His character, exceeding white as snow, put to shame the filthiness of all that was born of woman.

Thus, the very display of the Perfect One on earth, showed the impossibility of any approach to God, unless some way could be devised, whereby the sinner could draw near, clothed in garments equally unsullied. Man, both Jew and Gentile, had made it plain that he was by nature a sinner, and had come short of the glory of God: and the presence, amongst men, of One who was fit for that glory, only rendered the melancholy fact more apparent. The vail, as it hung on its golden pillars, precluded entrance into the holiest: the ark and mercy-seat were hidden, instead of being laid open to public gaze.

The whole ritual of Jewish worship, under the law, was one that served to maintain the distance between God and the creature. Bounds were set about Sinai, so that not even a beast must touch it: and the people felt, their safest place was far off. One tribe alone was permitted to encamp around the tabernacle: one family alone of that tribe was singled out to be allowed to enter the holy place: and one man alone of that family had access to the holiest; and that, only once a year, and with such preparations, and fearful ceremonies, as must have inspired him with dread, lest, in the very act of approach, through some omission, he might incur the judgment of the Most High.

The incarnation of the Blessed Lord, and His subsequent sojourn here, presented in themselves no gospel to the sinner: the requirements of a holy God were only made more manifest. A vail unrent, a mercy-seat without blood, might indeed exhibit what the glory of God required, but could not advance the ruined sinner towards that glory, or throw open the way of access.

Numbers 10:1-10

"The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them; that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps. And when they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And if they blow with but one trumpet, then the princes, heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee. When ye blow an alarm, then the camps that lie on the east parts shall go forward. When ye blow an alarm the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall take their journey: they shall blow an alarm for their journeys. But when the congregation is to be gathered together, ye shall blow, but ye shall not sound an alarm. And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets: and they shall be to you for an ordinance forever throughout your generations. And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies. Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the Lord your God."-Num. 10:1-10

It may be well to consider this type in connection with what has been said respecting the silver sockets: as the appointment of these trumpets seems to owe its significance to the fact, that they must have been made of silver atonement-money.

It is true, that all the silver paid in half-shekels as ransom-money was used in forming the hundred sockets, and hooks, and capitals of the court-pillars. But there was an additional numbering, recorded in Num. 3:40-51, in which the first-born of males of Israel were numbered, amounting to 22, 273. For these the Levite, were substituted. But the number of the Levites was less by 273 than the first-born of the tribes. God accordingly directed that these 273 first-born Israelites, should be redeemed at the price of five shekels a head, " after the shekel of the sanctuary:-the shekel is 20 gerahs." Here was another source from which silver was derived for the use of Aaron and his sons, in the service of God. How at every turn in the history of this people, the great subject of redemption is made prominent! Type is crowded upon type, expressive of the one great aspect of redemption, viz: Substitution.

The life of the Passover-lamb in Egypt was substituted for the life of each family of Israel, gathered in each house, under the shelter of the blood. Again: God claimed Israel's first-born as His, because He had substituted for them, in destruction, the first-born of Egypt.

Every sacrifice on which the hand was laid, betokened substitution. The atonement-money was another aspect of the same truth. The Levites were substituted for the first-born: and lastly, five shekels a-head was a price substituted for the redemption of those, on behalf of whom there were no living Levites to minister before God.

How blessedly all this crowd of types finds its substance in Christ, the Lamb of God, the all-sufficient substitute provided by God.

The two trumpets were to be made of silver, of one piece, that each might give the same sound; and though that sound was, by doubling it, to be increased in power; yet the note given forth from each trumpet was to be precisely the same, in perfect unison. One clear shrill blast was to rouse the camp, either to assemble themselves together before the tabernacle of the Lord, or to march on their journey. These are first specified (v. 2) as the two great objects for which the trumpets were made: and, as the chapter proceeds, they enlarge into four principal occasions on which these instruments of silver were to be employed.

First: " When they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee At the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And if they blow with but one trumpet, then the princes, which are the heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee." v. 3, 4.

The sound of these silver trumpets was to be the voice to assemble Israel to their king or leader Moses, at the door of the tabernacle. The call was sent forth from instruments made of the silver redemption-money. They sounded out a cheerful yet solemn note, summoning Israel, as redeemed and numbered for God, to assemble in great congregation in the presence of the Lord; and to hear from the lips of His servant Moses, words of encouragement, direction, or reproof. The very sound that fell upon their ears, reminded them of the fact that they were God's people; redeemed at a price; numbered as His own; delivered from the bondage of Egypt, to be the servants and soldiers of the Most High.

The exhortation in Heb. 10, " not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together," is based on the same truth. Believers individually, having the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and personally clean through the precious blood of atonement, are upon that ground, to draw near to God in the holiest; and next, upon the same ground, to assemble in congregation for worship, prayer, praise, and mutual exhortation. They gather around the High Priest over the house of God, within the veil; in contrast with Israel, who gathered themselves to Moses at the door of the tabernacle. Let us bear in mind, that we meet not in order to gain access to God, nor to make a way of approach to Him, but because we have been already redeemed, and because the way has been made open into His presence by the death of Christ. The voice of the Great Shepherd calls us together; the voice that speaks peace and salvation to our souls. Silvery sounds of grace and truth proceed from His lips, poured into them from His heart. He preaches righteousness in the great congregation, and refrains not His lips. And when He sounds at last the great trumpet of redemption, the blessed and mighty blast of which will reach every ransomed ear, He will gather around Him by that sound, the great and glorious company that no man can number, redeemed out of every kindred, and nation, and tongue, at the cost of His precious blood. Then will the great congregation at length be assembled, in the glorious tabernacle not made with hands; and the eternal song of praise be raised to our God, by the Lord Himself, the chief musician; and one vast Hallelujah chorus from heaven and earth will echo the joyful sound.

The law was given by Moses, and was accompanied with sounds of terrific majesty. The trumpet waxed louder and louder, and the voice of words was so appalling that the people intreated that the word should be spoken to them no more, and even Moses said, " I exceedingly fear and quake." Here was truth proclaimed, apart from grace; righteousness; apart from mercy. But grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. In Him these two attributes of God marvelously blended. Like the two trumpets of silver which were sounded together, and produced one harmonious note; so the testimony borne by God's blessed Son, and manifested by Him in His death on the tree, was ever one of mingled grace and truth; peace and righteousness; love and holiness; mercy and judgment.

Secondly: " When ye blow an alarm, then the camps that lie on the east parts shall go forward. When ye blow an alarm the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall take their journey: they shall blow an alarm for their journeys. But when the congregation is to be gathered together, ye shall blow, but ye shall not sound an alarm. And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets: and they shall be to you for an ordinance forever throughout your generations." v. 5-8.

The same sound that summoned Israel into the presence of God, for worship or instruction, also aroused them for the march. The notes given forth by the silver trumpets on both occasions were identical, though they were sounded after a different fashion: for in the case of their journeys, the priests were to blow an alarm. There might be no foe apparently at hand. The path over the desert might seem to be straight-forward and plain enough. Nevertheless, they were always to set out on their fresh march under the sound of an alarm. For the foe was at hand, although they might not know it. The way was difficult and dangerous, although it might appear smooth. Just so is it with the Church of God, and with the individual believer. Every fresh step in the way, every change, is attended with danger and temptation. Satan, the unperceived enemy, hovers about the path of the saint. He lays fresh snares, and digs new pit-falls, at every turn. The soldier of Christ has to march on in careful watchfulness, not ignorant of the devices of the foe, conscious of his own high calling, as a redeemed one of the Lord; and therefore fearing lest he should sully his spotless garments, or dishonor the great Captain of his salvation.

An allusion to this is apparently made in 1 Peter, 1. 17-20. The apostle exhorts the saints, upon two grounds, to pass the time of their sojourning here in fear; because they could call God their Father, invoking Him to their aid on that account; and because they had been redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. As strangers therefore and pilgrims, he exhorts them to march to the sound of an alarm; not under fear of wrath or judgment, but in godly fear, reverence for Him whom they could call their Father, and remembering the vast price that had been paid for their redemption.

And so it will ever be. The more we estimate the cost at which we have been ransomed, and the love of Him who spared not His own Son, the more we shall walk carefully and watchfully in the midst of this ensnaring world. The sighs, and groans, and agonies of Christ on the tree-sounds of redemption; will cause us to walk circumspectly, and with godly fear, even though no danger may seem to be imminent.

Thirdly: " If ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppreseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets: and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies." v. 9.

There are only two occasions recorded, in which these trumpets of silver were used in war. The first, Num. 31:6, when Israel avenged themselves on the Midianites; a thousand of each tribe being selected to go forth against the foe, accompanied by Phinehas the son of Eleazer the priest, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand.

The other instance is 2 Chron. 13:12. The enemy in this case, was no longer a Midianite host, or a Canaanite nation; but alas! it was a portion of Israel opposed to Judah. Abijah the king still preserved the worship of the true God, and set the battle in array against Jeroboam, although the latter numbered an army of double the size. Jeroboam relied on his idols of gold, and the multitude of his host; Abijah trusted in the presence of the living God, and His priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against the foe. Jeroboam was able completely to surround the army of Abijah, so that the battle raged, both in front and in the rear. But in this extremity, they cried unto the Lord, and the priests sounded with the trumpets: and as the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass that God smote Jeroboam, and all Israel, before Judah.

These are instructive scenes. Perils arise both from open adversaries, and from false brethren; from Satan's hosts, manifestly opposing truth, and from Satan, transformed into an angel of light; and his ministers, as ministers of righteousness. The sound of the silver trumpets was to alarm Israel, when marching in seeming security. The same sound was to alarm God, when Israel was about to be overpowered by the foe.

In like manner, the fact that we are redeemed by the blood of Christ, is ever to be ringing in our ears, to make us careful and watchful on our journey. And when we feel the oppression of the enemy; when the rulers of the darkness of this world attack us in our own land, and seek to overwhelm and overpower us; we have but to claim God as our Father, Christ as the Captain of our Salvation; and let the cry of distress sound in the ears of the Lord of Hosts, and the victory is surely ours. We shall be remembered before the Lord our God, and be saved from our enemies."- " Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."- " Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus."- " In all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us."- " Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Fourthly: " Also in the days of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace-offerings, that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the Lord your God." v. 10.

The ear of the true Israelite must have been habituated to the blast of these silver trumpets. He had been called into the presence of God by them; He had marched to their sound in the wilderness; God's aid had been invoked through them, to his rescue in the midst of the battle. Days of joy, and solemn days, when he had to afflict his soul before the Lord, were ushered in by the same holy notes: and each fresh period of time, as the month opened with the new moon, was marked by the like musical tones falling on his ear. Scarcely a day therefore would be past, without his thoughts being re-awakened to the fact that he had been redeemed to God. And as the burnt-offerings, and peace sacrifices, periodically presented on God's altar, preserved a constant odor of a sweet savor before the Lord; the blowing of these trumpets over these offerings was intended to remind Israel, that the value of these sacrifices was theirs; and to call God's attention to the blessed fact, that they were accepted as His people through the shedding of blood, and the substitution of another in their stead.

In like manner, the whole life of a redeemed sinner is to be pervaded by one constant thought, that he is not his own, but belongs to God. A redemption-sound is to be mingled with his hours of joy, or of sorrow. And if he takes note of time in its rapid flight, it should be that he may learn to redeem it, by rendering himself a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to the Lord, which is his reasonable service. Is not this truth in type, presented by the beginnings of months marked out in Israel's history, by the blowing of the silver trumpets over the sacrifices.

The expression, "redeeming the time," apparently implies more than merely using the time profitably. It has the thought in it, of buying back the past by means of a right use of the present. And is not this ever the way of grace? God would have us profit by past neglect, failures, and sins.

He not only mercifully averts, through the blood of Christ, their sad results in judgment; but through a deeper acquaintance with the value of the cross, gained by the humbling retrospect of the past, He desires that we should be better able to occupy the present moment to His glory. Vain regrets profit nothing. But the believer may profit much by retracing past mistakes and sins, and marking the abundant grace and wisdom, in which God has met every short-coming and folly. Love for Him will be thus increased. He that has had much forgiven will love the more. Misspent time may be redeemed by wise and diligent use of precious experiences thus gained. Even as unconverted sinners, we have each passed through our own peculiar training, which if rightly understood, serves to fit us for some especial work for God. What would Paul the apostle have been, had he not previously spent his days as Saul of Tarsus, the persecuting Pharisee?

Surely each believer will have his own peculiar joy in the work of Christ for himself, as he will have to record his own peculiar history of evil.

May our souls, our lives, be filled with the remembrance of the price that has been paid for us; and may we be able, in some measure to say with Paul, " The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

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