

LESSON X.

INSTITUTIONS.

The Sanctuary.—The primitive sanctuary was simply the altar of earth, or of rough, unhewn stone, upon which sacrifice was offered (Gen. 8: 20; 12: 7-8; Ex. 20: 24-25). Such an altar stone was called by Jacob, Bethel, "God's house." In the wilderness the Israelites dedicated a large tent, or "tabernacle," to the worship of God. The tent was 45 feet long and 15 feet wide, and, like the shepherd's tent, had two apartments, an outer and an inner. The outer apartment, 30 by 15 feet, was the holy place, the inner, 15 by 15 feet, the holy of holies. In the holy place stood the altar of incense, where daily sacrifice was offered, and in the holy of holies rested the ark of the covenant. This was a wooden chest overlaid with gold and containing the stone tablets of the commandments, or "the testimony" (Ex. 40: 20). The tabernacle was surrounded by a large court containing the altar of burnt offering. The temple of Solomon was built upon the same general plan as the tabernacle. The main building was 90 by 30 feet, with a porch in front 30 by 15 feet. It was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., and rebuilt, after the restoration from exile, in 516 B.C.

The Priesthood.—In primitive times it would seem that any man had the right to approach his God with sacrifice and prayer (Gen. 4: 3, 4; 28: 18). The head of the family was priest of his own household or might make one of his sons priest (Judges 17: 5). Moses set apart the Levites, members of his own tribe, to be priests of the nation, making his brother Aaron and his sons chief priests. Their duties appear at first to have been threefold: (1) to minister at the altar, (2) to consult the oracle or cast the sacred lot (Ex. 28: 30; Num. 27: 21), and (3) to exercise judgment (1 Sam. 4: 18; Deut. 17: 9). The prophet Malachi speaks of them as teachers of the law (ch. 2: 4-7). In later times their ministry in the temple, in offering sacrifice and conducting the worship of the people, became their chief duty.