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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.—The Rev. Dr. Reid has received the following contributions: Foreign Mission—Kirkwall, North-West Indians, Indore Mission, \$10; J. M., Gana-noque, Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund, \$1.

Sabbath School Teacher.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

June 14, } THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST. { Heb. 9: 1885. } 1-12.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."—Heb. vii. 25.

INTRODUCTION.

The design of the Epistle as noted in the last lesson, is to show that the Christian is superior to the Jewish dispensation. It begins by showing that Christ the Founder is superior to men or angels. Moses was to Christ as a servant to a son. The writer then emphasizes the importance of giving heed to His words, for they are unfailing, and disobedience will result in the loss of the heavenly rest, as it resulted in the loss of Canaan to the disobedient Jews. He then discusses the Priesthood of Christ, and shows His superiority to the Jewish priesthood. He is an eternal Priest, once for all offered sacrifice, and entered into the heavenly sanctuary. All the sacrifices of the Jewish Tabernacle were but types of His more perfect economy, which is the subject of this lesson.

EXPLANATORY.

There is much material in this lesson for study, but the intention of the writer of the Epistle is not to give an explanation of the types, but simply to state their existence, and to point out their inferiority to the antitype.

I. Tabernacle.—Called by different names: "Tabernacle of Testimony," "Tent of Meeting," "Habitation," etc. It was the meeting place between God and His people. It was divided into two rooms—the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies—and an outer court in which was the brazen altar, in which the sacrifices were offered, not mentioned here.

(1) Holy Place.—In this there were three pieces of furniture, each of which was typical, ver. 9. "which was a figure for the time then present." What the special significance of each part was, is not revealed in the Scriptures, and it is, therefore, impossible to speak with confidence. A great deal of ingenuity has been exercised on these types, extorting from them meanings for which no authority can be adduced. It is insecure travelling when we get beyond what is written. In these notes we shall suggest such explanations as seem to commend themselves as least fanciful.

(2) Candlestick.—Golden stick with seven lamps. It was very beautiful—three branches on each side of the central stem, all of which were richly carved with almond flowers, pomegranates and lilies. The light represents a holy life, and the olive oil that supplied it, the Holy Spirit. The meeting of God with His people had that object in view—"That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." Rom. viii. 4.

(3) Table of Shewbread.—The twelve loaves, representing the twelve tribes, were arranged in two piles, six in a pile. It was called the "Bread of Presence," that is, in God's presence. It was changed every Sabbath.

It may have represented offering gifts to God giving a portion of our substance—representing His claims upon our possessions as well as our hearts and lives.

(4) Altar of Incense.—This also was in the Holy Place. It was a golden altar upon which incense was always burning, representing prayer that should ever rise in His presence, and with which He is well pleased.

II. Holy of Holies. This was separated from the Holy place by the veil, which was rent asunder at the crucifixion. It was very costly, made of blue and purple and scarlet and fine linen. Threads of gold were woven in, and cherubims wrought upon it. It was very rich, in keeping with the inside of the Holy of Holies, which was all overlaid with gold.

The Holy of Holies, as the name implies, was the very centre of the Tabernacle—the home of Jehovah—all else led to this, as the highest spiritual attainment.

(1) Golden Censer.—This was a fire-pan which the High Priest used when he entered into the Holy of Holies, for burning incense. The coals were taken from the altar, thus indicating that we should always come into the presence of God with prayer and thanksgiving, and that in order to be acceptable we must be touched with a live coal from off the altar.

(2) Ark of the Covenant.—This is the only piece of furniture mentioned in Exodus as belonging to the Holy of Holies. It was a chest of shittim wood, length two and a-half cubits—height and breadth, one cubit and a-half each. It was entirely overlaid with gold. The lid, called mercy seat, was solid gold, and out of the same piece were beaten the cherubim that overshadowed it. Their wings met over the mercy seat and the other two reached the walls on either side. It was on this mercy seat between the cherubim that the Shekinah, the symbol of God's presence, dwelt. It was there that the sins of the people were forgiven. The mercy seat, the Throne of Grace, is the only hope of the Christian still.

(3) Tables of the Covenant.—These were the two stones upon which the law was written. They are called "Tables of the Covenant," because it is by obedience to them that the people can hope to secure the blessing promised by God. But they were under the mercy seat. The law was constantly broken and would condemn, were it not for the mercy of God that was dispensed through the blood sprinkled upon it.

(4) Manna.—How long this was in the Ark is not known. It was placed there as a reminder of resources of divine care in the wilderness. He can always provide for His children.

(5) Rod that Budded.—An interesting incident recorded in Numb. xvii. 1-11. Another very remarkable miracle, proving that God makes choice of His servants and that He can give life to the dead.

III. Priesthood.—The priests were the representatives of the people, and for them offered sacrifices on the altar, and, in the Holy Place, attended to the candlestick, altar of incense and table of shewbread, but they never went beyond the sacred veil. Any who dared to do so must die.

The High Priest alone went into the Holy of Holies, and he only once a year, in the great day of atonement. He offered sacrifice for himself first. That was a bullock, with the blood of which he sprinkled the mercy seat. He then offered a goat, the blood of which he sprinkled on the mercy seat in behalf of the people. He thus gathered up in himself, in his representative character, the whole people. But how strongly it shows the distance between the people and Jehovah. One man, and he only once a year, could enter into His presence.

IV. The Antitype, ver. 9-11.—We see here how Christ fulfils the types and for shadows gives reality.

(1) That was a worldly tabernacle, this is "a more perfect tabernacle not made with hands." The work of Christ in the soul by the Holy Spirit was there represented by the candlestick, altar and shewbread.

(2) The High Priest approached God by the blood of animals, Christ by His own blood.

(3) The High Priest entered annually, Christ once for all.

(4) The High Priest went into an earthly Holy of Holies, Christ into an heavenly, secured to us eternal redemption—good things to come.

(5) The gifts and sacrifices could not make perfect, as pertaining to the conscience. But Christ can cleanse the conscience and make perfect. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

What the sacrifices of the Old Testament did for the soul is a much discussed question. Some say they were only intended to secure external decency, and did not touch the conscience. But if not they could not be types of Christ, for a type foreshadows the antitype. They must have differed in their effect only in degree from the work of Christ. They did not give a clear enough knowledge of Christ to ease the conscience and make the spiritual life as clear and strong as in the New Testament times. When Christ came "He brought life and immortality to light."

What a blessing to live in our time! If we could have no clearness of perception of salvation, how unhappy we would be as death drew nearer.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

1. We cannot be saved without shedding of blood; Old and New Testaments teach that.
2. Holiness needed to enter into the presence of God.
3. Our redemption is eternal, and not from year to year.