

Today we would like to examine and draw lessons from two pieces of furniture which were in the tabernacle. The tabernacle was a portable worship center which God instructed Moses to build. It was a giant object lesson pointing us to redemption in Jesus Christ.

In March during the Sunday School hour, we examined the brazen altar, the brass laver, the table of shewbread, and the golden altar of incense.

Today's message will be more teaching than preaching as we look at the **Golden Candlestick** and the **Ark of the Covenant**.

The first piece we will look at is the...

Golden Candlestick

stood in front of the south wall of the Holy Place. It was formed from a single piece of gold weighing 75 lbs—Some scholars think it was hollow which would make it an incredible piece of skilled goldsmithing. Bez/a/le/l, the chief worker, was given special skill by God's spirit to craft it.

In Ex. ch 31 v 3, God told Moses, speaking of Bez/a/le/l:

"I have filled him with the spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship."

This is a reminder to us that all our skills come from God.

We can only serve him as we allow his spirit's power to energize and fill us.

The candlestick consisted of:

a Base

a Center Shaft

3 Side Shafts on each side

-a total of 7 shafts

Each shaft contained 3 types of decorations.

The bowls were shaped like almond flowers. There were also almond buds and blossoms. There were a total of 69 of these.

The bowls on top of each shaft contained oil and a wick which was lit to provide light.

The gold went through 2 processes of refinement.

1- Burned to refine and purify, burn out dross

2- Forged, pounded, beaten into a beautiful piece of furniture.

-speaks of our Holy Lord who was refined, beaten, and pounded by suffering for us.

Isaiah says, "He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

Peter speaking of Christ says, "who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, by whose stripes we are healed."

Keneth Wuest commenting on the word Peter uses—"stripes"—says,

The word "stripes" in the Greek presents a picture of our Lord's lacerated back after the scourging He endured at the hands of the Roman soldier. The Romans used a scourge of cords or thongs to which later were attached pieces of lead or brass, or small, sharp-pointed bones. Criminals condemned to crucifixion were ordinarily scourged before being executed.

The victim was stripped to the waist and bound in a stooping position, with the hands behind the back, to a post or pillar. The suffering under the lash was intense. The body was frightfully lacerated. The Christian martyrs at Smyrna about AD 155 were so torn by the scourges that their veins were laid bare, and the inner muscles and sinews and even the bowels were exposed.

The Greek word translated "stripes" refers to a bloody wale trickling with blood that arises under a blow. The word is singular, not plural. Peter remembered the body of our Lord after the scourging, the flesh so dreadfully mangled that the disfigured form appeared in his eyes as one single bruise.

He did it for me! He did it for you!

Not given measurements of the candlestick—no limit to God's (Light) (Mercy) (Grace) extended to us through Christ.

Estimated 4' ½ to 5' tall, appo. 3' wide

Tended morning / evening by priests- refilled bowls with oil, trim, adjust wicks- always lit—Never allowed to go out.

Our fellowship with Christ is never unavailable. Christ's light is always available. We will never enter into a situation where we cannot be reached by Christ's light.

The priests tended the lamps—We are a kingdom of priests responsible for taking the glorious light of the gospel to the world around us.

Oil for lamp- only purest oil used.

Olives were picked just before ripening. Beaten with rods to bruise and break them.

Not crushed in mill or press. This beating yielded only the purest oil—practically smoke free. Christ was beaten & broken but not crushed. Just last week we celebrated his victory over death. His resurrection is a guarantee of ours. Oil symbolic of Holy Spirit- He is pure, holy. Just like oil produced the light by being in the lamp, God the Holy Spirit produces Christian light in us.

Seven lamps (Divine # of completion) symbolized that Christ's light is complete/full. We will never need any light that we cannot get from Christ.

Paul uses the word "complete" in Col. 2:10 when he says "and ye are complete in him (Christ); which is the head of all principality and power."

The Greek word for complete is a very vivid one: (play-yo-o)

Some of its meanings are:

To be stuffed with food, gorged (can't take another bite)

To cram a net with fish

To level up a hollow

To completely fill up a vessel

To perfectly supply where there is a need

The light from the candlestick completely filled up the Holy Place. Christ completely fills and supplies us with his light today for service and communion with him.

Today as the church and the Christian holds forth God's light to a dark, sinful world, we need to remember how much more brilliant will be the light at his throne.

Only light in Holy Place- Christ only light in this dark world.

Light in scripture has moral implications.

1 John 1:5 says "God himself is light." So the light represented Israel's God-given role of providing light to nations around them. So they might see the true God.

Isaiah 42:67-

"I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness. I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness."

Christ tells us in N.T:

"You are the light of the world, a city set on a hill cannot be hid, nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house, let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven." -Matt 5:14-16

Paul tells us in 2 Cor. 3:18 that we are mirrors reflecting the light of Christ to a dying world around us. Does your life reflect Christ to those you come in contact with?

Candlestick was not light, but it carried the light.

We are not the light- We carry Christ's light.

John 1:8-9- John the Baptist- "He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

Light points out what is hidden-(sin) Light gives direction-(to God)

Does your life, Does my life point out men's sins? point men to the savior?

Do our lives bring glory to our heavenly father?

S.F. Coffman has written, Quote,

“Holy light doth fill this place, Spirit light our way to guide;
In the presence of thy face sin & darkness ne'er can hide
Heaven's gleaming, fullness streaming, life and truth for man is found;
Light pervading, never fading, lighting all the world around.”

-End of Quotation

The candlestick's branches all connected to the main stem

John ch 15 speaks of us as branches abiding in the vine.

We draw our sustenance from Christ. All our strength comes from Christ who is the true vine.

The light from candlestick was inferior to the natural sunlight.

Today our light reflected to a dark world is inferior to the glorious light of his presence when we will meet him in glory.

Paul speaks of a light shining in a dark place.

Branches spread all ways- God's light reaches furthest corner of the globe.

Candlestick very valuable- 75 lbs- exquisite craftsmanship.

When the Roman general Titus conquered Jerusalem in 70 AD, his soldiers carried the candlestick back to Rome as a spoil of battle.

Today it is carved on the Arch of Titus in Rome.

The second piece of furniture to be examines is...

Ark of the Covenant

stood in the inner room of tabernacle, the Most Holy Place.

Behind the veil- 15' high by 15' wide, embroidered with cherubim symbolizing God's protection.

Only the High Priest could enter Most Holy Place only once a year (Day of Atonement).

Only with the blood of a sacrificial animal. The High Priest pushed back the veil only one time each year. The veil distinctly marked the point of separation between a Holy God and a sinful people.

Christ our great High Priest tore down that barrier on the cross.

Mark's gospel says, "And Jesus cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."

This was an act of God's power-

The veil in the temple when Christ died was massive and thick.

60' high, 4" thick, 30' wide; Made of 72 squares sewed together.

So heavy it took 300 priests to manipulate it.

It has been suggested that 2 teams of oxen could not have torn it.

But God tore it from top to bottom with a touch of his power.

The torn veil symbolizes our unhindered access to God today

In the time of the Tabernacle-

Only High Priest could approach God, only once a year. Everyone who wanted to worship or approach God had to do it through the priest.

We don't need to go through a priest.

We are a kingdom of priests. We have been invited to go into God's presence through Christ anytime.

Heb. writer says-

"Therefore brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."

A.B. Simpson writes, Quote,

“Beloved, has the veil been rent in twain for you by the death of self? If so, your heart is a holy tabernacle, and there is no barrier between you and the throne of God.” -End of Quotation

The Ark of the Covenant was the only piece of furniture in the Most Holy Place.

made of acacia wood / overlaid with gold; 45" long, 27" wide, 27" high
Staves to carry, covered with gold, never removed

The ark contained 3 items:

1- the Tablets of the Law-

Symbolic of people's sin and rebellion- They had continually broken the law.

The tablets of the law continually testified against them.

symbolic of God's law written on our hearts today.

Heb 10:16b- "I will put my laws upon their hearts and upon their mind I will write them."

2- Aaron's rod that budded

Symbolic of Christ's resurrection. The budding rod showed God's power. It confirmed God's choice of Aaron as high priest. Christ's resurrection demonstrated God's power. It confirms & guarantees our resurrection

3- Golden Pot of Manna

Never spoiled- Manna in wilderness spoiled if kept for more than 24 hours- This never spoiled

Symbolic of Christ's purity—never defiled with sin—never yielded to sin's temptations.

Symbol of spiritual food- Christ is our spiritual food- completely supplies our needs

The Mercy Seat

Top of the ark was a solid gold cover. On each end of the mercy seat was a cherub—The cherubim faced the lid with their wings spread toward one another. It was here, on the mercy seat, between the golden cherubim that God chose to dwell

In the box under the mercy seat was the law—The Israelites had broken that law. That law was a constant source of condemnation before a holy God.

God could always see the broken law, but the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat by the High Priest completely hid the people's sins from God—covered over them—made atonement for them.

Today Jesus says to his Father about our sins-

“Punished, Pardoned, Ransomed, Laid on me—Father, forgive them! Put that on my account—Put my righteousness on their account.”

David sings-

Blessed is the man whose sin is covered (The word for Mercy Seat)

A.B. Simpson, Quote,

“O Beloved, this is the meaning of salvation. Covered forever by the blood of Jesus, by the righteousness of Jesus!” -End of Quotation

The Mercy Seat is rich in symbolism of God's mercy, his grace, and his forgiveness. It also speaks of the privilege of communion and fellowship on the ground of Christ's atonement and intercession.

God said to Moses-

“There will I meet with thee and I will commune with thee from between the cherubim.”

Aren't you glad that even though we are sinful God forgives us and invites us to come into the throne room of his presence and there we can commune with him?

Ark spoke to Israel of at least 3 things...

1- God's Nature:

God's glory filled the Most Holy Place.

The glory cloud hovered over the tabernacle. When it was time to

move, God's glory moved off the tabernacle toward the direction Israel was to go.

Symbolizing an active, living, guiding God opposed to the dead Gods of the heathen

The ark also spoke to Israel of...

2- God's Presence

God dwelt between the cherubim.

Israel thought of the ark as God's throne and his footstool.

Here God met the people through the High Priest. The ark went before the people when they traveled, symbolizing God's presence.

In Numbers ch. 10, we are told that the ark journeyed in front of the Hebrews for 3 days. We are told that this was to seek out a resting place for them.

The ark was a tangible piece of furniture that the people could see to remind them of God's presence. Today we have God the Holy Spirit, within us, to remind us of God's presence.

The ark also spoke to Israel of...

3- God's Forgiveness

The law in the ark was a constant reminder of the people's sinfulness.

The Mercy Seat sprinkled with blood was a constant reminder of God's forgiveness.

The Hebrew word "kap/por/eth" = to cover, to atone for, to make propitiation

The translators of the Septuagint about 200 BC identified the word kap/por/eth as a place of atonement where God's grace covered over the law.

The Mercy Seat was the place where atonement and forgiveness was complete.

God was propitiated (or Satisfied) at the altar.

He was expiated (or Reconciled) at the Mercy Seat.

This grace & mercy is seen most clearly in the ritual of the day of atonement described in Lev. 16:

Aaron the high priest washed his entire body and dressed in special clothing.

5 animals were selected. offering for Aaron's sin. Then Aaron took incense into Most Holy Place. Then the blood was sprinkled upon the mercy seat.

Then he confessed Israel's sins, iniquities, transgressions over the scapegoat. The scapegoat was released into the wilderness.

Then he bathed again, changed into regular garments and offered 2 rams as a sacrifice for himself, the priests, & the people.

-Showing us in type God's grace, as he allowed Israel's sins to be covered over for another year, by the blood sprinkled on the Mercy Seat

Aren't you glad that your Great High Priest made one eternal offering for sin, that when he forgives your sins they are forgiven. No more continual offerings for sins—no more putting off of sins—They are gone.

If you have not been reconciled to God, why tarry? Right now recognize your sinful condition, by faith come to the mercy seat through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and be declared righteous through His grace.

What comfort to have a blood-bought mercy seat in which to retreat from the stormy winds of this world that blow against our Christian walk. **Hugh Stowell** caught a vision of the sublime privilege which is ours to come before the mercy seat and find comfort in time of need. In 1828 he penned the words to a hymn:

From every stormy wind that blows, From every swelling tide of woes.

There is a calm, a sure retreat - 'Tis found beneath the mercy seat.

There is a place where Jesus sheds the oil of gladness on our heads,

A place than all besides more sweet - It is the blood-bought mercy seat.

David Levey writes, Quote, "Oh, Christian friend! No longer is the mercy seat open but once a year! No longer do we need an earthly high priest to intercede in our behalf! No longer must sacrifice be slain for us! But the veil has been torn away. God bids us to come boldly unto the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace in any time of need. Accept the invitation! Rejoice in the privilege! Come, bask in the glorious presence of the Lord which is eternally offered and open to you!" -End of Quotation

If you are here today without salvation through this great High Priest Jesus Christ, we invite you to stand or come forward as we sing 2 verses from #375 in the black book.