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Exodus: Delivered By God, For God / Grace; Priest in Absolution; A High Priest / Exodus 27:20–21; Exodus 28:1–2; Hebrews 8

The Light that shines as a perpetual statue before God in the Tabernacle speaks of the Great High Priest and His continual ministering in the presence of God as He represents His people.

Introduction

Over the last several weeks we have immersed ourselves in the instructions of God to the Israelite people regarding the construction of the Tabernacle, it's compound, it's structure and it's implements. We have seen how each element described for us in the pages of scripture are types and shadows that point us forward to Christ. From the beginning of the instruction, in Exodus 25:10 to the final verse we looked at last week, Exodus 27:19, each piece looked forward to the coming of Christ and the truth that because of His work on the cross, we can enter into the presence of God. This culminated in our understanding of the righteousness displayed by the wall surrounding the courtyard and that was built and upheld by the silver collected in the offering of atonement, which reminds us that the atoning work of Christ provides the righteousness that is given to us by grace through faith and enables us to enter into the presence of God.

As you may remember, in the past we have talked about the threefold office of Christ, that of Prophet, Priest, and King. Thus far in the tabernacle we have witnessed the foreshadowing of the role of prophet, God's representative before man, in each element. We have come to a point, however, where we are now making a transition in what scripture is teaching us about Christ.

The second office of Christ, that of Priest, is our representative before God. While we have studied the elements within the Tabernacle and what those elements teach us about Christ and His coming down, or His condescension, to us, God becoming flesh and dwelling with, or tabernacling, with His people, we have also touched on the fact that the

Israelites needed a representative before God, that could enter His presence and represent the people, but only after the appropriate and proper atonement had been made so that the representative was declared righteous before God.

These representatives were chosen and ordained by God and beginning in verse 20 of Exodus 27 and continuing to the end of chapter 30, we see God instructing Moses in the details regarding the priesthood. Before, however, He begins to give Moses the specifications for the office of the priesthood, we come to a short, but important, transition text that serves as the connective tissue between these two sections of scripture.

It is this transitional piece that forms our text for this morning. Alongside Exodus 27:21 - Exodus 28:2 we are also read Hebrews 8 and utilize the teaching there to assist us in our understanding of the main text for this morning, so If you will, find Hebrews 8, put a finger there, and flip over to Exodus 27 starting in verse 21:

Text

Please stand as we read together the Holy, Inerrant, Infallible, Authoritative and Sufficient Word of God:

Exodus 27:20–21 LSB

“And you shall command the sons of Israel, that they bring you clear oil of beaten olives for the light, to make a lamp burn continually.

“In the tent of meeting, outside the veil which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall keep it in order from evening to morning before Yahweh; *it shall be* a perpetual statute throughout their generations for the sons of Israel.

Exodus 28:1–2 LSB

“Now as for you, bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, to minister as priests to Me— Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron’s sons.

“You shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty.

Hebrews 8 LSB

Now the main point in what is being said *is this*: we have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the holy places and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.

For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; so it is necessary that this *high priest* also have something to offer.

Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law;

who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned *by God* when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "SEE," He says, "THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN."

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.

For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second.

For finding fault with them, He says,

"BEHOLD, DAYS ARE COMING, SAYS THE LORD,

WHEN I WILL COMPLETE A NEW COVENANT

WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND WITH THE HOUSE OF JUDAH;

NOT LIKE THE COVENANT WHICH I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS

IN THE DAY WHEN I TOOK THEM BY THE HAND

TO LEAD THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT;

FOR THEY DID NOT CONTINUE IN MY COVENANT,

AND I DID NOT CARE FOR THEM, SAYS THE LORD.

"FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL

AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD:

I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS,

AND UPON THEIR HEARTS I WILL WRITE THEM.

AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD,

AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

"AND THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN,

AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, 'KNOW THE LORD,'

FOR ALL WILL KNOW ME,

FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM.

"FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES,

AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE."

When He said, "A new *covenant*," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

Father, our heart is drawn out in thankfulness to You. We are thankful for your grace, that You came to us in Christ. We are thankful for the influence and assistance of the Holy Spirit and for the intercession of Christ. We are reminded of your grace and mercy in the sweetness of our Christian service, as we contemplate eternity in your presence, your continued provision in our life and for the simple fact that You and You alone have raised us from death to new life. Father we do not seek the favor of men for it is fleeting where Yours is eternal. Lord we desire to serve you, in whatever way that

you require of us, regardless of the trials, tribulations or persecutions that we may face. May we never cease to find Your grace sufficient for our lives and may we never confine ourselves to seek you on occasion but to acknowledge you in all things, to glorify you in all things, to make Your way ours. To this end, Lord, establish us in Christ, settle us, give us assurance and certainty that we are His and He is ours that our hearts will be filled with joy and peace. Father we ask all of this in the blessed name of Jesus, Amen.

The Eternal Light

A few weeks ago we discussed the instructions given to Moses regarding the construction of the lampstand. During those instructions we briefly mentioned that this lampstand was maintained before God at all times so it is interesting that God choose this point in the text to interject verses 20 and 21. Again it would be very simple to read these short two verses continue on in the text dismissing these verses as nothing more than a simple transition; however, to do so, is to miss out on the richer fuller meaning and purpose. So we must ask the why regarding this simple but powerful statement.

The section of scripture that we have been studying regarding the Tabernacle, with all of the types and shadows that are represented, overwhelmingly has one main thread that is being demonstrated before us. In other words, all of these types come together to teach and demonstrate to us the main truth or main idea that has been present from the tenth verse of 25 right up until the nineteenth verse of 27, one that I have already mentioned briefly and that is that truth of God coming down to His people. Consequently, I also mentioned earlier that the section of the text that we are about to enter carries the main idea or truth of His people coming into Him, but in order to do so, in order for His people to enter into His presence, there is some preparation that must be done and that preparatory work is shown in verses 20 and 21 starting with the provisions made for the maintenance of the lamp and service of the priests.

He begins with the provision made for a perpetual light to be within the sanctuary. Before the priest could stand before God for the benefit of the people, God must first be satisfied by having His claims met. This statement ties all the way back to creation. Genesis 1:1-3

Genesis 1:1–3 LSB

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

Note that before the earth was formed, before a creature was made, light had to come first. The same order holds here in Exodus, before one person, in the role of priest, could come before God there had to be light. This progression, along with what we have already learned of the types and shadows, should naturally take us to another light, that of Christ. Before Christ could enter in on our behalf, in His role as Priest, He had to, fully and finally satisfy the righteous demands of the Holy God. In other words, before He could serve as our Great High Priest, He had to first suffer the cross, then, and only then, could He step into His role and intercede before the Father for each of us.

Thus far the teaching of scripture regarding the tabernacle has taken us from the holiest place, the central point, outwards, to the altar, where the sacrifices were made, which set the stage for the lamp to continuously burn before God. AW Pink is helpful here:

Gleanings in Exodus Chapter 47: The Priesthood

Thus provision having been made through Christ's atonement for "the lamp to burn always," i.e. for the unsullied holiness of God to act without compromise in His gracious dealing with poor sinners, the way was then clear to make known the provisions which Divine mercy had made for reconciled sinners to draw near to God within the veil.

To be able to grasp the use of the lighting as a transition we must first understand that the necessity of the light was not for the benefit of God but for His glory and our benefit. The creation of light in Genesis was for the creation of this world and everything in it. The light of the lampstand was not so that God could see, but for His people to see the path to Him. Christ, the true light, came into the world for but one purpose, to be the light in a dark place, illuminating the one and only way to enter into the presence of God.

Here in Exodus, we see that before the priest can properly enter, indeed

before the priesthood can ever be introduced, it is necessary that the light burn, but not just burn, continuously or perpetually burn. Christ is the light that lit the way and the Holy Spirit is the light that is continuously burns in the lives of believers. Notice in verse 20 that the people were called to bring "clear oil of beaten olives for the light". For the Israelites to provide the oil for the lamp to continually burn was their "skin in the game, as it were, the witness of their personal interest and investment in the service of God.

It is only after the provision is made for the light to be lit that scripture first describes the tabernacle using the term "tent of meeting" as seen in verse 21. This is a fact that should not be missed by the church, which was only formed after the true Light entered into the presence of God. One of the arguments of cynical people regarding the church and membership points to the very limited teaching of Christ regarding the church. Based solely upon the "red letter words" of Christ they believe that God has very little to say about the church. What Christ did say in Matthew 16:18 "... upon this rock I will build My church..." is spoken in the future tense, not the present or the past, meaning that the church of Christ, the bride of Christ was an entity yet to be created.

When we turn to the book of Ephesians and read in Ephesians 1:20-23

Ephesians 1:20-23 LSB

which He worked in Christ, by raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*,

far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

And HE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,

which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

we see that the giving of the church to Christ occurred only after God "raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His (the Father's) right hand". Acts 2:33

Acts 2:33 LSB

"Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having

received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this which you both see and hear.

telling us that the provision to the church of the Holy Spirit was again only done AFTER the Son had returned to the presence of the Father. Please do not miss the importance of this truth. Christ is the light that has entered, the lampstand lit continuously before the presence of God and the Holy Spirit is the light within the life of the believer, continually lighting our path and guiding us into that presence.

The Priest

This introduces us to the office of priest. Notice in verse 21, immediately following the command to the sons of Israel we see Aaron and his sons. Previously in scripture we have been introduced to Aaron and we have certainly talked about Aaron and his sons and the Aaronical priesthood in here prior to this morning, but this is the first time that scripture actually mentions them in connection with each other and in the service of the Tabernacle. Note that although the people are to supply the oil, God is defining and setting aside a specific office of His people for the purpose of ministering to the lamp and ensuring that it continues to burn. From here through the end of the book of Exodus we will see Aaron and his sons mentioned 24 times. This speaks to the importance of the role they are playing in the lives of the people of Israel.

Just as it is necessary for Aaron and his sons to tend to the light in the presence of God, so too is it imperative for our sakes that Christ continues to intercede in the presence of the Father on our behalf. This raises a question in the minds of some believers, if the work of Christ on the cross was sufficient and if the words of Christ, when He cried out from the cross "it is finished" are true, then why does He need to continually stand in the presence of God on our behalf. This is a very important question and in the remainder of our time this morning I pray that our understanding of the answer is illuminated by the Holy Spirit as we seek the answer in Holy Scripture.

As we have worked through the various descriptions given to us thus far regarding the Tabernacle, we have enhanced the discussion by speaking about how these pieces are utilized by the priesthood, but you may have

noticed that the text does not mention them, in fact, as AW Pink points out

Gleanings in Exodus Chapter 47: The Priesthood

nothing whatever had been said of any human agents or ministers appointed to officiate in the tabernacle service and to delight themselves in the dwelling place of God among men, amidst the heaven-given shadows and emblems of the eternal verities which we have previously contemplated.

The introduction of, function of and reality of the priesthood is too often ignored in the Christian life. Many are not willing to dig into the depths of these truths. One commentator, writing in the early 1800's writes:

Gleanings in Exodus Chapter 47: The Priesthood

To a large portion of those who would be regarded as intelligent Christians, and who are something more than mere routine readers of the Bible, the types of the Tabernacle, with its priesthood, service, and offerings, are barren of comfort and edification. Yet it is generally acknowledged that they are pictures by which God, in His condescension, would teach His children things otherwise all but incomprehensible. It is generally admitted, also, that the key to unlock these treasures of spiritual truth lies ready to the hand of every student in the New Testament.

Although this quote is now almost 200 years old, the situation has not gotten better, but has actually worsened. Milk feedings continue in the church today and Christians who should be growing into maturity are starving because they are not being properly sustained in their walk. It is necessary, however, to dig deeper, to seek these truths, taking the time to carefully unpack the beauty, not only of God's overall plan of salvation, but the intricate details which simply enhance the beauty, wonder and awe of the sovereign decree of the Most High.

Another commentator writes:

Gleanings in Exodus Chapter 47: The Priesthood

Notably is this the case with the subject before us. What hazy and inadequate ideas concerning priesthood are entertained by the average believer. That the Lord Jesus is the great High Priest of His people, he knows, but as to the place of Christ's priesthood, the nature of its activities, its relation to other truths, especially to redemption; the design accomplished by it. the blessings secured from it, the portion which the

saint enjoys by virtue of it, are most indefinitely defined in the minds of most.

And so we return to the question at hand, if the work was sufficient, if the words were true, then why must Christ continue to stand in the presence of the God on behalf of the people of God and the answer is simple, yet complex. The simplicity of the truth is shown here in verse 21 while the complexity is revealed over time.

First of all, we need to be reminded that the work of Christ on the cross accomplished all that it was designed to accomplish. This was to secure our place before God, to atone for the sins of His people, to provide the righteousness we would need to enter into His presence. This is the grace, the unmerited favor of God, given to His people through faith in that work. Christ death fully and finally secured our place, but, there is more to the story.

Over and over in the New Testament, the words of Christ and the words of the Apostles under the direction of the Holy Spirit speak of living a life worthy of that salvation. The grace which brings enabled us to enter into the presence of God now sustains us there in that presence, the priesthood was about maintaining the peoples relationship with Yahweh, not about securing it. Christ secured our place before the Father in His role as prophet and His atoning sacrifice on the cross, He maintains our relationship to the father in His role as priest. AW Pink is again helpful:

Gleanings in Exodus Chapter 47: The Priesthood

Its need arises from the fact that the sinful nature remains in those who have been bought with a price. It is to meet the failures of a people who when they would do good evil is present with them: this evil which causes them to offend in "many things" (James 3:2), makes the priestly ministry of Christ so essential.

A thorough student of the scriptures will note that Aaron is a very interesting choice made by God for the person who would serve as priest. All throughout the book of Exodus, Moses has been the mediator between God and man, yet, God chose Aaron. You may recall that both Moses and Aaron are of the Levitical tribe, this in and of itself is interesting because in Genesis 49:5-7 we read that the tribe of Levi was under a curse:

Genesis 49:5-7 LSB

“Simeon and Levi are brothers;

Their swords are implements of violence.

“Let my soul not enter into their council;

Let not my glory be united with their assembly;

Because in their anger they killed men,

And in their self-will they hamstrung oxen.

“Cursed be their anger, for it is strong;

And their wrath, for it is cruel.

I will divide them amongst Jacob,

And scatter them in Israel.

Not only was he the “lesser” of the brothers, from the tribe of Levi, but while God is choosing Aaron, he is among the people leading them in worship to an idol, a golden calf.

This demonstrates for us the magnitude of the grace of God, it was a gift to Aaron in allowing him to serve as priest, and it was a gift to us in the form of Christ, our Great High Priest, only by the marvellous grace of God

One may also take note of the meaning of Aaron, which is very high and he stood, not just over his house, but all of Israel as the high priest. This makes Aaron himself a type and shadow of Christ, who was the Great High Priest. The addition of the adjective great elevates the importance of Christ’s priesthood as that above all others. Along with this, all of Aarons son’s names are interesting to note, Nadab means willing, Abihu means my Father is He, Eleazar is the help of God and Ithamar means the land of palm. One commentator has this to say about these names:

Gleanings in Exodus Chapter 47: The Priesthood

these four words afford a little prophetic intimation of characteristics attaching to the House of which the Son of God is the Head: deriving its life

from God the Father, and all its power and help from Him; following in the footsteps also of its blessed Master, in yielding willing and not constrained service to God; and like the palm trees, lofty in righteousness, and ever bringing forth fruit

Psalm 92:12–14 LSB

The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree,

He will grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

Planted in the house of Yahweh,

They will flourish in the courts of our God.

They will still yield fruit in old age;

They shall be rich and fresh,

Lastly we need to note the structure of the pronoun in the original language. In the LSB translation we use it is not as easy to see because it reads "Exodus 28:1 ""Now as for you, bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, to minister as priests to Me—Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons." In the original language the description here is clear that although there are multiple people listed, and indeed throughout history there would be many more, there is but one priesthood. It should not take one long to recognize the repeated use of the singular. We have already talked about the truth of the one way, when we see one people, when we look at who God choose for Himself and finally we see one priesthood.

Just as the priesthood of Aaron was inseparable from the people of Israel, so too is our Great High Priest inseparable from His church, how wonderfully this demonstrates for us that Christ ministers in the presence of the Father for His people and for His people alone.

Conclusion

Brothers and sisters, as we have seen, every detail of the Tabernacle—the elements, the priesthood, the perpetual light—was not merely an ancient

ritual, but a divine foreshadowing of the work of Christ. The light that burned continuously in the sanctuary was not for God's benefit, but for ours—a picture of the true Light, Christ Himself, illuminating the only path into the presence of the Father.

It is only by His atoning sacrifice that we may stand before a holy God, and it is only by His continued intercession that we are sustained in that presence. The priesthood of Aaron was a shadow, but Christ is the substance—the Great High Priest who entered not into a man-made sanctuary, but into the true heavenly temple, where He ever lives to make intercession for His people.

And this brings us to the final question we must all consider: If God has made such a provision—if Christ, the true Light, has come, and the Holy Spirit now dwells within His people—then what excuse remains for those who refuse to walk in that Light? Are you trusting in your own righteousness, or are you wholly resting in the intercession of Christ, our Great High Priest?

This is not a question that allows for neutrality. The lamp burns continually before the Lord; the invitation into His presence remains—but the question is, **will you come?**

Let us pray.