

On the Covering of the Holy Vessels Numbers

4

by John Nelson Darby

This sermon explores the significance of the coverings of the holy vessels in the context of Christ's nature and His role in the divine and earthly realms.

Scripture: Numbers 4:5

Topics: "The Nature of Christ", "Spiritual Covering"

Description

John Nelson Darby explores the significance of the coverings of the holy vessels in Numbers 4, emphasizing how each item reflects different aspects of Christ's nature and ministry. He illustrates that the ark, table, and candlestick each have unique coverings that symbolize Christ's humanity, divine righteousness, and the manifestation of the Spirit. The badgers' skins represent protection from evil, while the colors used--blue, scarlet, and purple--highlight the heavenly, royal, and human aspects of Christ. Darby concludes that these coverings serve as a reminder of Christ's perfection and the need for believers to embody these qualities through the power of the Holy Spirit as they journey through life. Ultimately, the sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing Christ's multifaceted nature in our spiritual walk.

Transcript

The character of the thing that was carried had a different effect in the display of its covering, according to the nature of what was covered. If I think of the ark, I shall have a certain character of display; if I think of the table, it will be another; and of the candlestick, another. When Israel set forth, the ark was first covered with the veil, that is, Christ Himself with the veil of His humanity; then came the badgers' skin, and, outside, the cloth of blue. This is the order: Christ's perfect humanity over the ark; then badgers' skins to protect it; and outside that, the cloth of blue. The heavenly man comes out, the special character.

The badgers' skin was inside in this case, because Christ kept His perfection absolutely free of all evil, and so the heavenly came out manifestly. In us it is morally to be realized in the power of the Spirit of God.

There was of course no evil in Christ to come out, but as man here, the perfect One. He uses, for instance, the word to baffle Satan - in that is the badgers' skin - just as I ought to keep Satan off through grace. Thus we need the badgers' skin outside in going through the wilderness.

Then came the table of shewbread, with a cloth of blue on it first, then the dishes, bread, etc., all covered with a scarlet cloth, and badgers' skins outside; the table itself - the gold or the divine part - covered with the blue, the heavenly; then the cloth of scarlet covers the twelve loaves. Scarlet is royalty, and twelve is connected, we were seeing, with administration on earth. The badgers' skins are outside, because it is a display in a human instrument.

The shewbread is the manifestation of the thing in man, but divine righteousness was under it, the gold. The scarlet will meet the result of that - royalty, though not seen yet; or, rather, scarlet seems to be human glory, purple being proper royalty.

Next the candlestick was to be covered entirely with a cloth of blue, then with badgers' skins, and put on a bar. Here there is no scarlet; because it was the manifestation of the Spirit, and there is no royalty or glory of man to come out in this.

261 There is on the golden altar a cloth of blue and badgers' skins outside, in the same way as the candlestick; that is, purely the heavenly character, the result of intercession, with the badgers' skins as protection.

On the brazen altar they spread a purple cloth and badgers' skins. The altar met the claim of earthly righteousness. Christ met our failure on it; but there is nothing heavenly in it. This was to meet us on earth. The purple, royalty, is with the altar.

We have three colours; blue or rather bluish purple tekeleth, which was on the table, the candlestick, and the golden altar; tolaath, scarlet or crimson on the loaves; and argaman, reddish purple on the brazen altar. All relate to the person of Christ or the display of what He is. The first appears to be that which was heavenly or the divine in man. The table shews divine righteousness in character, the base of human order and administration; so the candlestick with its spiritual perfection; and the altar giving us intercession within. All on the journey were thus covered. What we know of them has this character in going through the wilderness. The loaves were covered with scarlet, that is, displayed royalty in perfect administration itself. So over the ark there was first the veil, Christ's human nature, then guarded on the earth in spotlessness, untainted, by the badgers' skin, and the result was the heavenly or divine in man manifested here. The reddish purple answers to the brazen altar of sacrifice, and points to the more heavenly royalty, the One exalted as the consequence of self-sacrifice to God. It is lordship glory or reign, but not so much displayed from heaven, and displaying it as brought there in answer to suffering. It was more as conferred on man than displayed in him, though it will be displayed. The transfiguration displayed it, not the lowly Saviour.

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