

The Tabernacle of Moses

Lesson 6 – The Brazen Laver

Exodus 30:17-21 KJV And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, **[18]** Thou shalt also make a laver *of* brass, and his foot *also of* brass, to wash *withal*: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. **[19]** For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: **[20]** When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD: **[21]** So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, *even* to him and to his seed throughout their generations. (Cf. Exodus 38:8)

I. INTRODUCTION—MOVING OUT OF THE HOLY PLACE

In the outset of this study we started with the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies which sat alone in this small enclosure. In a clear reflection of the Cross, the Ark was at the head of the Cross. Its staves on the sides (Ex. 25:13), the cherubim on the ends (Ex. 25:18), and the Mercy Seat faced the east (Lev. 16:14).

Then we went into the Holy Place and studied the three pieces of furniture there. Directly in front of the veil was the Altar of Incense which was at the “heart” of the Tabernacle. Its position was before the veil (Ex. 30:6), it was before the Ark (Ex. 40:5), and it is spoken of as being before the Mercy Seat (Ex. 40:22). Our prayer is always the relationship portion of our walk with God. It is the where the feeling and passion of our walk with God develops. It is purely for relationship and not to be confused with a place revelation. The Word of God is the place of revelation and prayer merely illuminates what is already found in the Word of God. Anything that can be perceived as a revelation from God when gained in prayer *must* be aligned with the Word of God. If that revelation cannot be validated by the Word of God, it has to be dismissed because it will ultimately lead to deception. This is the same trick the devil used with Eve in the Garden of

Eden. He caused her to doubt what God had said. We have a Bible that gives us the words of God and any path that leads away from what the Bible states has to be characterized as deception.

The Table of Showbread was on the north side and would have been to the right of the Holy Place as one faced the veil (Ex. 40:22). It was reflective of the power of the Word in the believer's life. The Golden Candlestick was on the opposite side being the south and would have been in the left-side of the Holy Place (Ex. 40:24). The Golden Candlestick was the place where the anointing oil brought light to the Holy Place. It is typical of Jesus Christ as the light of the world.

Coming out to the Outer Court from the Holy Place, one immediately encountered the Brazen Laver. It sat between the tent of the Holy Place and the Brazen Altar (Ex. 40:7). Just beyond the Laver toward the gate of the Tabernacle was the Brazen Altar.

Our approach started with the Ark follows the pattern of God's grace which was how that God revealed it to Moses. The revelation progressed in a fashion namely from God to man. Any time that this approach is taken, it is a reflection of the sovereign grace of God and proves that God is approaching man. This is the great reflection of the grace of God; Him reaching for us. As grace reaches for a man, his faith is activated to believe the God can save him.

If one takes the approach, beginning with the Brazen Altar and moves toward the Ark, this is the path of faith. It is man going toward God through the sacrifices and he progresses step by step or line upon line and precept upon precept to reach the great revelation of God. Faith is involved in believing that the grace of God is open toward all men.

II. THE BRAZEN LAVER

A. It's Form—A Laver—Exodus 30:18

The Laver was basically a large bowl that held water for the priests. It is important to notice that there are no measurements given to the laver. This

describes the far reaching ability of God to cleanse the vilest of sins and to cover them. This laver was seated on a pedestal of sorts that the KJV gives the translation as a “foot” that it rested on. So this vessel was a washing place for the priests as they performed their ministry in the Tabernacle. In the Tabernacle of Moses it served only as a cleansing for the priests. When Solomon’s Temple was constructed there were also lavers added for the cleansing of the sacrifices.

It would be important also to note that all of this cleansing process was taking place in the outer court of the Tabernacle. Everything that took place outside of the Holy Place and Holy of Holies had to do with judgment. The ministry of fellowship with God only took place *after* the offerings of the sacrifices and the cleansings. There is no true fellowship without repentance and water baptism in Jesus’ name because all of this is preparing the heart to receive the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost brings us into a true relationship with God in the fullest measure.

B. It’s Content—Brass—Exodus 30:18

The Laver was made out of brass. The materials for this came from the free-will offerings of the people and from the brass mirrors of the women. This is a change from the gold that was prominent in the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place. Gold was symbolic of deity and was typical of glory, costliness, and its precious nature. Now we go to a place where there is no covering and the exposure to the elements. In this outer court the two primary types of metals that is encountered is brass and silver. Silver speaks of redemption but brass speaks of judgment. Brass could be described as a metal that typified firmness, incorruptibility, and durability.

Biblically when there is an expression of strength, indestructibility, or even judgment we note:

- **Gates of brass**—Psalm 107:16
- **Bars of brass**—1 Kings 4:13
- **Fetters of brass**—Judges 16:21
- **Shoes of brass**—Deuteronomy 33:25
- **Helmet and Coat of brass**—1 Samuel 17:5

- **Serpent of brass**—Numbers 21:8-9
- **Censers of brass**—Numbers 16:36-40

Furthermore when there were visions concerning the Son of man, the Lord was described as having feet like polished brass:

- Daniel 10:6
- Revelation 1:15

Both of these references show to us the power and strength of Him who is to execute judgment upon the nations. In the brass of the Laver and Altar it would be acceptable to look to the great power of purpose and endurance that the Lord exhibited bearing the wrath of God and the judgment on behalf of sinners. The Bible states that “He endured the cross, despising the shame” (Heb. 12:2).

God’s judgment will always be upon sin but just as God has a judgment to execute on man, He is never without a remedy. God will use the Word of God to expose areas of our lives that are not acceptable because they do not conform to God’s high and holy standard. To ignore such a condition is to live in a state of sin that is un-confessed. When a sinner first is exposed to God, he understands that his own heart is far from what God accepts and is pleased with. There the convicting voice of God has to be either accepted or rejected.

If the priests would have entered the Holy Place without cleansing they would have been immediately judged by God when they entered. Judgment always begins at the house of the Lord (1 Peter 4:17) because God desires to have a holy people to serve Him. His church has always been set aside from the world as they offered spiritual sacrifices unto the Lord (1 Peter 2:9). Despite those who want to want to toss all judgment and discernment to the wind, the Bible teaches that we must judge our actions. If we judge ourselves, we would not be judged (1 Cor. 11:31-32).

C. It’s Uniqueness—Cleansing—Exodus 30:19-21

The uniqueness of the Laver becomes clear when one notes that this is the only article of the Tabernacle where no sacrifice was offered or was there any offering presented and sweet savor offered. The sole purpose of the Laver was for the priests to wash their hands and feet. It only removed the soiling that would disqualify the priest from their holy service to the Lord. The clear indicator for the Laver was that cleansing was always a preparatory work for service. Their lives depended on their obedience.

The Laver also typified the finished work of Calvary in that by providing a place for the cleansing of the flesh by the water—the corruption of the flesh was removed. The Laver becomes Christ crucified—His blood cleansing us—as Acts 2:38 declares that baptism is for the remission of sin. But it must also be added that for the priest to go only as far as the Laver would never fully accomplish the aspect of Atonement because until the blood had found its way to the Mercy Seat, Atonement was still incomplete. For those who want to hold that the blood is applied at the Laver forget the significance of the blood making it all the way to the final place of the Mercy Seat thus obtaining redemption for the children of Israel.

Concerning the power of the blood, consider the words of John in the Revelation:

Revelation 1:5 KJV And from Jesus Christ, *who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,*

Revelation 7:14 KJV And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, *These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

The Laver then being a picture of baptism was for the remission of sins. It was the burying of the old man of sin. When men of the Bible begin to see themselves as God saw them, they shrank back and realized that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Consider what these men had to say about themselves:

- **Job**—A religious man and perfect in his outward walk and he was deemed by God to be perfect. Yet at the same time he understood the inner workings of his heart and mind and realized that he was really corrupt in heart. When he came into the presence of God his reaction was what all men must realize about themselves.

Job 42:5-6 KJV I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. [6] Wherefore I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes.

- **Isaiah**—The royal prophet who prophesied with great power but before his career began he had to discover something about nature of his inner man.

Isaiah 6:5 KJV Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

- **Daniel**—Another man greatly used of God but when he saw a vision that mirrored that of what John saw in Revelation, his response was also that of humility.

Daniel 10:8 KJV Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.

- **Peter**—He was also convicted by his conscience when he came into the presence of the Lord.

Luke 5:8 KJV When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

All of these examples prove to us the necessity of understanding the real condition of the heart and that we are in need of the cleansing power of the water of the Word (Eph. 5:26). However, simply seeing the condition of the human heart will never create the necessary change. There has to be an active following of the commands of the Scriptures.

This experience at the Laver where the priests cleansed was a necessary component of further service in the Tabernacle. To omit this step would have led to the death of the priest. When one carefully understands the typology between the Laver and New Testament instructions toward baptism, the only response can be the same as the Ethiopian in Acts 8:36, “See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?”

Prior to the book of Acts, Jesus had spent a time of instruction with Nicodemus. In John 3, Jesus clearly articulated the process of the New Birth which involved in part, being born of the water. To be born of the water could only take place with the water baptism exhibited later by the apostles in the book of Acts. It occurred by immersion in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16).

Another picture that is important to note is when the sword pierced the side of the Lord after His death on Calvary. Scripture witnesses the fact that blood and water came forth (John 19:34). Blood and water will always be an aspect of our salvation. Water, in the context of the Laver, has important connections with New Testament salvation.

Consider that water was seen in connection with ceremonial cleansings in the following ways:

- The waters of separation and the ashes of the red heifer—Numbers 19
- The water in consecration to priestly ministry—Leviticus 8:6
- The water in the cleansing of the leper—Leviticus 14:1-8
- The divers washings of the Law—Hebrews 9:10
- Israel baptized in the cloud and the Red Sea—Exodus 13-14; 1 Corinthians 10:1-2
- Israel’s experience at the Jordan river—Joshua 4:19; 5:10

Consider the following from *The New Birth* by David Bernard (p. 136):

... the following typological references to water baptism: (1) the Red Sea crossing; (2) washing and sprinkling of Israel at the giving of the Law; (3) the laver in the Tabernacle courtyard; (4) washing of priests at their consecration; (5) washing of animal sacrifices; (6) washing and sprinkling of lepers who were healed; (7) washing of the ceremonially unclean; (8) washing of spoils of war and warriors' clothing; (9) Noah's flood; and (10) circumcision. Some additional examples are: (11) the Levites, who ministered before God, were consecrated by the sprinkling of the water of purification (Numbers 8:7); (12) on the Day of Atonement the high priest had to wash twice (Leviticus 16:4, 24); (13) Naaman the leper received healing after he dipped seven times in the Jordan River in obedience to Elisha's command (II Kings 5:10-14).

In the New Testament, baptism is not an option it is a command (Acts 2:38; 2:41; Hebrews 6:1-2; Mark 16:16; Romans 6:1-4; Colossians 2:12-13; Matthew 28:19-20). If we are going to be obedient to the words and commands of Jesus Christ then we will want to be baptized (Acts 2:36; 22:16; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:20-21).

The lessons of the Laver could be summed up in these points:

- It is symbolic of the necessity of water baptism to the New Testament believer—Acts 2:38.
- It is symbolic of the necessity of cleansing before entering the presence of God and being saved—Romans 3:23-25.
- It is symbolic of the necessity of having a clean spirit as we are ministering in the New Testament church—Titus 3:5; 2:14; Psalm 51:10; 1 Cor. 6:18.
- It is symbolic of the need for continuous cleansing while we are serving God—Heb. 9:14; James 4:8; 1 John 1:9; 3:2-3.

III. CONCLUSION—THE MINISTRY OF THE LAVER

While the activities that took place at the Brazen Altar were concerned with reconciliation, the washings at the Brazen Laver prove the work of separation or sanctification. The water would cleanse the priest and prepare him for service. When a priest was initially tapped for service he would be completely bathed at the Laver and also on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would have a

complete bath for service. This is a powerful type concerning the working of the need for continual cleansing.

The priest could not touch the altar or the Tabernacle without washing or they would die.

The priest could not sit down and was continually walking on the sand floor of the Tabernacle. So their hands and feet were continually being washed in the Laver. Hands refer to their work and the feet refer to their walk.

God is serious about holiness and about the constant nature of the cleansing that must take place in our lives. When these points are considered and the following Scriptures are contemplated there is a greater understanding of the necessity of the washing of regeneration.

Romans 8:8 KJV So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Romans 8:13 KJV For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

2 Corinthians 7:1 KJV Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

2 Peter 3:11 KJV *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,*

It very well could be that one of the reasons that many Christians live powerless and defeated lives is because they have been so defiled by worldliness and compromise that it stifles and destroys our worship and our witness to others. To continue in that particular element of life would endanger a man of being entirely cut off from the voice of God.

1 John 5:16 KJV If any man see his brother sin a sin *which is* not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. **There is a sin unto death:** I do not say that he shall pray for it.

The OT priest had to wash his feet because the works of the Law called for it and his life depended on it. We are to only wash our feet and this daily cleansing can only come from the application of the Word of God and the power of the Holy Ghost.

John 13:10 KJV Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash *his* feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

Psalms 119:9 KJV BETH. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed *thereto* according to thy word.

John 15:3 KJV Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

John 17:17 KJV Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Ephesians 5:26-27 KJV That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, [27] That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

1 Timothy 4:5 KJV For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

Therefore the Brazen Laver points directly to a point of sanctification (or holiness, righteousness, separation, etc.). It brings us into a place of positional and practical holiness. Positional holiness took place when the saint was baptized in Jesus Name by immersion. Practical holiness is the day to day living for God that takes place through our involvement in the cleansing with the Word and with fellowship with God in the Spirit. Without this relationship, there is no fellowship with God and our lives become barren and ineffective.

Leviticus 19:2 KJV Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God *am* holy.