

Face to face and the Laver

THE TABERNACLE

Meditations on its Typical Teachings - Exodus 25- 40

The Laver - Exodus 30: 17-21; 38:8; 40:30-32. The laver is unique among the vessels of the Tabernacle in that we are given no indication of its size, shape, weight or method of transport.

This is particularly fitting when we see the laver as an apt figure of the Holy Scriptures in their searching and cleansing effects. Who could ever accurately measure and define the worth, weight and scope, and the far-reaching effects of the Holy Word of God, the Bible?

The laver was suitably placed in the court between the brazen altar and the Sanctuary, for the priests must wash their hands and feet at it before they ministered at the altar, or engaged in priestly service in the Holy Place. Whenever the vessels of the Tabernacle are listed, mention of the laver is always reserved till last. The other vessels relate to the various aspects of priestly service for God, whereas the laver provided the necessary cleansing for the priests who were engaged in that service, and it is therefore somewhat distinct.

The Brass used in making the laver was not taken from the large offering of brass from which all the other brazen items of the Tabernacle were made (Ex. 38:8, 29-31). It was made from the brazen mirrors of the women, thus the ideas of reflection and examination are introduced. This turns our thoughts to James 1:23,24, where the hearing or reading of the Scriptures is likened to a man beholding his natural face in a mirror - as J. Sterling put it in her excellent hymn:

O, wonderful, wonderful Word of the Lord!
Our only salvation is there;
It carries conviction down deep in the heart,
And shows us ourselves as we are.

As well as this, when Paul wrote the first letter to the church at Corinth, among many other things, he rebuked them for their careless and intemperate conduct as they came together to eat the Lord's Supper. He reminded them of the profound and sacred significance of the Supper, using the Lord's own words, spoken in the upper room with His disciples. Then he added, "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show (or announce) the Lord's death till He come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But **let a man examine himself**, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup" (1 Cor. 11:26-28). Not only do the Scriptures show us our outward features that we express in word and action, but they also reflect the inner man, revealing to us the true nature of the thoughts and intents of our hearts (Heb.4:12).

Water was to be put therein - Ex. 30:18. This reminds us of various places where the Scriptures are spoken of as water for cleansing. For example: Paul writes in Eph. 5:25-27, "...Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the Word." In John 15.3 the Lord Jesus says to His disciples, "Now ye are clean through the Word that I have spoken unto you." And in Psa. 119:9 the question is asked and answered, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word." How encouraging to see that as well as revealing our defilement, the Word of God also has a cleansing effect on us, assuring us too, that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to **cleanse** us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and feet thereat. Wherever in the tabernacle ritual we find Aaron acting alone, we have before us in type, some office or service of the Lord Jesus as our Great High Priest as He ministers now in the presence of God for us (Heb.9:24). But whenever his sons are associated with him, we have typified priestly privileges and responsibilities in which we share as holy priests with Him (1 Pet.2:5; Rev. 1:6; 5:10). We must always remember of course, that our Lord Jesus was always

sinless and undefiled and could never need cleansing. But it was necessary that Aaron wash his hands and feet that he may become typically, what our Lord is actually.

The importance of this washing is stressed, first by the frequency of mention (4 times in Ex.30:17-21,3 times in Ex. 40:30-32). This prefigures the Lord's clear statement to Peter in John 13:8, "If I wash thee not thou hast no part (or fellowship) with Me." Here we learn that true conscious fellowship with Him is impossible while going on in defilement and sin. As the conversation with Peter proceeds, the Lord Jesus explains to him that all the disciples except Judas the betrayer had been cleansed with an initial bathing that need not be repeated, and we learn from other scriptures that this is true of every believer. Paul describes the salvation that believers possess in Titus 3:5-7, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the **washing of regeneration**, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Appealing to the Corinthian believers to live in a manner worthy of this, Paul reminds them of what some of them were before they were saved, and then says, "**But ye are washed**, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (I Cor. 6:11).

From this we see that this initial cleansing is a divine work which makes a radical change in a person, as we read in 2Cor. 5:17,18, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

But as we endeavour to serve the Lord as a holy priesthood, offering up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, or as a royal priesthood, showing forth the praises of Him Who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light (1 Peter 2:5,9), we must come to the laver of the Word if we are to enjoy His fellowship and blessing.

As we read the Scriptures with a desire for daily cleansing, we find that there are spots of defilement that we must deal with as they appear. James exhorts us in chapter 1:27, to keep ourselves "unspotted from the world." This world through which we are passing to that "better country" is both defiled and defiling. While there is a legitimate use of the things of this world (I Cor. 7:31), we are warned in I John 2:15,16, "Love not the world, neither the things which are in the world. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Jude speaks of "the garment spotted by the flesh" (v.23), and from such scriptures as Galatians 5:19-21 and Mark 7:21-23 we learn how defiling the works of the flesh really are. When we become aware that we have allowed these things into our lives, and we confess them to the Lord, we have the assurance from I John 1:9 that He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to **cleanse** us from all unrighteousness.

That they die not - Ex.30:20,21. This solemn caution was twice repeated, reminding the priests that carelessness in this matter of cleansing as they handled the holy things of God was very serious. This is echoed for us in I Cor. 11:30 where the apostle Paul cites the neglect of self-examination before partaking of the Lord's supper as the cause of some of the sickness and death among the Corinthian believers.

In 2 Corinthians 6:16-18, Paul tells us of our heavenly Father's promise to be with us in a special way when we are careful about these things, then he says, "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 Cor. 7:1).

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