

The Laver

As we have seen, when anyone enters the gate of the Tabernacle, the first thing he encounters is the Brazen Altar -- showing the necessity that for one to get right with God, a sacrifice is required. The Brazen Altar was the place where a person, *through a sacrifice*, would attain a new relationship with God.

The *second* object one comes upon in his journey into the courtyard -- standing between the Brazen Altar and the outer veil of the Tabernacle proper -- is the Laver. The Hebrew word that is translated as, "*laver*," in our Bibles, simply means, "*a large basin to wash in.*" Its modern equivalent might be the word, "*lavatory.*" The Bible student knows very little about the construction of the Laver because no information is given in Scripture concerning its shape or size. However, we do find some definite information about the materials from which it was to be made. Exodus 38:8 states, simply, "*He made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the looking-glasses (mirrors) of the women.*"



When studying concerning the Laver, and the various suggestions that man think it might of looked like, we find a variety of shapes and sizes – a multitude of different designs and configurations. Some feel that the laver was simply a large brass tub on a simple stand, while others feel that, perhaps it was more intricate, elaborate, and more complex than just plan, smooth, brass.

All we really know concerning the Laver, as far as God's Word is concerned, is that it was made of brass that had been melted down from the mirrors of the women. It was constructed of pure metal (brass) and was to be a reservoir for the water that

the priests used to wash their hands and feet before going into the Tabernacle. They did into wash *in* the Laver, but they washed with water *from* the Laver.

Whenever the priest entered near the Tabernacle he had to wash his feet – and, evidently, from what Scriptures seems to imply, he had to wash whenever he passed the laver (Exodus 29:4). The Brazen Altar typifies regeneration, while, "*washing at the Laver*" typifies sanctification – daily cleansing. Titus 3:5 states, "*He save us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit.*"

[Interestingly, the word "*washing*" is the exact same Greek word as the word, "*laver.*"]

The New Birth is not repeated again, however, daily cleansing is repeated again and again – over and over!

The Material of the Laver

Highly polished brass – (copper) - mirror were used by the ancient Egyptians, and the Israelites women brought these mirrors out of Egypt. It is significant that this laver was made of mirrors, since mirrors are what one uses when he is concerned about what he looks like on the outside. Pride causes one to look into a mirror on a daily basis because he worries about what people might think. There is nothing wrong with looking nice and neat, just as long as one does not become more concerned with how he looks on the outside to other people than how he looks to God on the inside.

The Position of the Laver

This Laver stood between the Brazen Altar and the Tabernacle (Exodus 30:18). At the Brazen Altar – that prefigured the sacrifice of Christ – sins were forgiven through the blood sacrifice. The Brazen Altar was the place where the sinner came into new relationship with God.

Scripture teaches us that the moment one accept the sacrifice upon the Alter of Christ's cross, he is saved. However, this is only the beginning of one's relationship with God. Salvation begins at the cross, but it does not end there. After the Altar comes the Laver of cleansing. At the Altar one is justified, at the Laver, he is sanctified, cleansed day by day.

Aaron and his sons were instructed to wash their hands and their feet before entering into the Tabernacle – where God's presence dwelt (Exodus 30:20). They must be cleaned before service of worship.

To serve God one must be cleansed from sin on a *daily* basis, and thus it was required of the priests that before they could serve others at the Brazen Altar or in the Tabernacle proper, they must first wash themselves at the Laver. The position of the laver teaches that even the best of God's children -- in this case the Old Testament priests – need cleansing on a regular basis after redemption (or salvation). This truth is one of the first things that all Christians should be taught. *They will sin after they are saved!* However, they should also be taught what to do when they do sin. 1 John 1:8-9 teaches, *"If we claim to be within sin, we deceived ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He (Jesus Christ) is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us (cleanse, or wash, us) from all unrighteousness."*

The Procedure At The Laver

The Lord was very specific about the procedure at the Laver, because He said in Exodus 30:19, *"For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat."* The people who were to wash at the Laver were the priests. God then adds verse 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 alter to minister, to burn offerings made by fire unto the Lord."*

The Laver teaches us that in order to serve the Lord most effectively one must not only be saved but also be cleansed from all sin. What a solemn warning God gave to

the priests about not properly following this procedure of washing at the Laver -- *“that they die not!”*

This awesome warning is for all who would serve the Lord. Serving God has always been a serious business with very high standards. 1 Peter 2:5 states, “YOU (that is, every born again believer) *also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*” Verse 9 continues, “*But YOU are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that YOU may declare the praises of Him who called YOU out of darkness into His wonderful light.*”

The unmistakable spiritual truth taught by the procedure at the laver is that those who serve the Lord – and that is every believer – must be CLEANSED of sin.

The Purpose Of The Laver

The priests were in constant contact with dirt because there was no floor either in the courtyard or the Tabernacle proper. They lived in a dirty world, yet to serve God they must be clean.

Around the Tabernacle the priests of God applied water daily for cleansing. For believers today cleansing comes from the application of God’s Word, according to what Jesus said to His followers in John 15:3, “*You are already clean because of the Word I have spoken to you.*” Ephesians 5:25-27 teaches, “*Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the Word, and to present her to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*”

As the believer examines his hands (symbolic of his service) and his feet (symbolic of his walk) as seen in the Word of God, he is conscious that his need for daily cleansing from the defilement of sin. The Laver was filled with “*pure water,*” representing God’s Word (See Ephesians 5:26; John 13:3 and 17:17).

God’s Word points out the sin that is in our life and, as we apply its teaching, we are cleansed. It is interesting that the Laver was made of mirrors, for James uses a person looking into a mirror to describe our walk, when he states in James 1:22-24, “*Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholds himself, and goes his way, and straightway forgets what manner of man he was.*”

However, James 1:25 promises, “*But whoso looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the Word, this man shall be blessed in his deed.*”

The reason that so much of what we do is so ineffective is that we are “soiled” in our daily walk and need to be clean before God -- if we are “*to be blessed in what we do.*” **We should heed this truth!**

A believer who is not clean cannot have a deep level of spirituality with God. A priest could not enter the Tabernacle proper without first washing at the Laver. In the Holy Place was the Table of Shewbread -- (representing spiritual food) -- the Golden Lamp-stand -- (representing spiritual enlightenment) -- and the Altar of Incense -- (representing prayer). The reason that so many Christians do not find enlightenment and food as they read God's Word and do not have power in their prayer life is because, in some way, their life is soiled by this world's dirt. As a result, they are out of fellowship with God. Therefore, they cannot enter the Holy Place but are still in the outer courtyard - *spiritually speaking!*

The Laver teaches something else - it teaches that God's people must not only be cleansed from the open vices of the flesh that even the world would condemn, but also the unnoticed sins of the heart - such as anger, bitterness, envy, pride, greed, etc. Often when we come to "*the Laver*" of the Word of God, we feel clean until we let God - through His Word - cut away the false piety and expose *the real thoughts and intents of the heart* - (Hebrews 4:12).

We need to pray as David prayed in Psalm 139:23-24, "*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*"

Remember, however, that a mirror cannot cleanse us, likewise God's Word reveals our defects, but it does not remove them. God's Word reveals our sin, but does not cleanse us. The Laver contained water for cleansing, so the Bible points us to the cleansing power - "*and the blood of Jesus, God's Son, purifies us from all sin*" (1 John 1:7).

Keep in mind the special peculiarity of the Laver. It was different from any other furniture of the Tabernacle in that it had *no specified form or measurement* given in Scripture by God. The exact size of every other article of furniture is given in Scripture, but with the Laver - that has to do with cleansing -- this is not so! There is no limit to its size, or the amount of water that it might hold, given anywhere in Scripture.

Why is this?

Why would God's Word give the measurement and details of the Laver?

What could the absence in Scripture of the details of the Laver mean?

All references in Scripture to the laver, unlike the other furniture of the Tabernacle, are lacking in detail. There is no mention of any accompanying utensils, but, with all probability, bowls were used for washing. The other furniture had either a bar or staves used to carry them - but none is mentioned for the Laver. There is no mention of a covering for travel and, unlike the other furniture; no size - or even its shape - is indicated in Scripture.

The reason the Laver is not described in the Bible, no doubt, is because cleansing, in our walk, is *limitless* in its application! The priest, walking bare footed on the ground

and killing the sacrifices, must wash at the laver *every time* he passed, which would have been several times during the day's activities. The fact that "cleansing" for the child of God has no limit is, no doubt, the reason that God gives no limit to the size of the Laver.

How interesting that the brass to construct the laver was obtained from the Jewish women who donated their mirrors to the service of the Lord (Exodus 38:8). They were willing to give up their prized possessions that they had taken from a spoil of the Egyptians before they left the land of bondage.

Think about this! -- These mirrors revealed their *natural* beauty! How they must have delighted to see their reflections in these highly polished brass mirrors. Brass is the Bible type of judgment for sin. For it was by these that these Jewish women (and no doubt the men too) judged their outward appearance. They gave up that *outward* judging for the *spiritual* judging and willingly turned these mirrors over to the work of the Tabernacle. The mirrors were used to construct the Laver for the washing of hands and feet. These women gave up the desire for natural beauty – *outward adorning* – in preference to that beauty that comes from within – (Read 1 Peter 3:3-5).

Mirrors, the material from which the Laver was originally created, indicate the intense desire of mankind to appear beautiful *outwardly* to impress others and attract attention to self. But the purpose of Christ's redemption is to change all that, applying beauty to the soul, when the most important desire becomes adorning the *inner* man. When the beauty of the Lord of hosts shines forth from the life, the attention of onlookers will be attached to Christ, Who is altogether lovely.

The Laver is a type of the Word of God – God's mirror – into which we look and judge ourselves. It is the mirror of God's Word that we see our own reflection and it is also within its pages that we see the remedy provided for our cleansing.

The picture seems quite clear: When one arrives at the Laver, the Brazen Altar has already been experienced. (It is for the sinner's cleansing) However, the Laver is for the child of God. One meets God first at the Cross and is cleansed by the blood of the sacrificed Lamb of God, Christ Jesus. Then, afterward one must come daily for cleansing by the water of God's Word -- represented by the Laver.

- The Brazen Altar is for saving and shows what *Christ* is, however, the Laver is for cleansing in one's Christian walk and shows what *we* are!
- At the Brazen Altar one learns that what Christ *has done* meets the need of the sinner, while the Laver, one learns that what Christ *is* meets the need of the Christian.
- The Brazen Altar reminds one that only Christ's blood can make one *safe*, while the laver reminds one that only God's Word can make one *sure*.

The Laver was located at the door of the Tabernacle. Here was a copper basin situated before the "Tabernacle of the congregation" -- or the Holy Place -- where the Table of Shewbread was. We will see in our study that the Table of Shewbread speaks

so beautifully of the experience of feasting with the Lord, however, before that can take place, there must be the experience of cleansing.

Before the believer is entitled to come to the breaking of bread at the table in the Holy Place he is commended to “*examine himself, so let him eat, for if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged*” (1 Corinthians 11:28, 31).

God commanded the priests to go “*thereat*” -- (not “*there in*”) -- at the side of the Laver. Evidently they would use smaller basins, taking water out of the larger basin to wash themselves. If a priest would cleanse his hands and feet *in* the Laver, the water would become polluter for the next priest. The Word of God must not be defiled by man’s imaginations, doctrine, opinions, or explanations, but rather it is to be clear, pure, and clean. It is illumined to our hearts by the Holy Spirit undefiled – We wash *thereat!*

The Laver is a type of God’s Word, giving a reflection of ourselves whereby we can judge ourselves, however, it also contains the water whereby we are to cleanse ourselves. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, “*Now are ye clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you*” (John 15:3). And, we also read, that the Lord Jesus gave Himself for His Church that He might cleanse it by the word of the Word (Ephesians 5:26).

David declared in Psalm 119:9, “*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?*” -- then he gives the answer -- “*by taking heed thereto according to God’s Word.*” The Lord Jesus requested in His prayer to His Father concerning His followers, “*Sanctify them -- (that I, “cleanse them”) -- by Thy truth; Thy Word is truth* (John 17:7). David refers to washing (at the Laver) as an illustration of innocence (See Psalm 26:6).

The priests were to wash their *hands* and their *feet* – a type of showing that God’s people are to have clean hands and feet. “*Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His holy place? – He that hath clean hands and a pure heart*” (Psalm 24:3-4). Our work (*hands*) and our walk (*feet*) are to be cleansed by the water of God’s Word! No one can live in the filth of sin and expect to live in fellowship with God.

The priests did not stand off from the Laver to admire it, nor did they just speak of its beauty, its attractiveness, or its usefulness – but they obeyed the commandment of the Lord and *used the water the Laver contained to cleanse themselves*. Likewise, it is not enough that we admire God’s Word, talk at length about it, approach it, look at it, know its history, its characteristics, and know all about the miracles contained in it – even able to quote from it, and expect that *this is all that is necessary to cleanse us*.

THE LAVER DOES NOT WASH ANYONE, but for it to be effective there must be application of the water the Laver contains. Self-examination (self-judgment) is not merely thinking about the Word of God, but it is *applying* the water of the Word to our hands and our feet. Then will we be rightly worshiping God in the Holy Place.

Even though the priests had met God at the Brazen Alter of sacrifice and had been cleansed of their sins, yet, ever afterward, there was daily defilement that must be washed away. And, so, even though we have been cleansed of our sins by accepting the

Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, we must keep on being cleansed by the Word of God daily, in order that we may walk with God and have intimate fellowship with Him.

The words of Jesus, *“He that is bathed does not need to wash, except his feet, he is completely clean,”* are an example of this truth. When Christ was on earth, the custom of people was to bathe at home, however, they found it necessary to wash their feet often because their sandaled feet become soiled from walking through miry streets. Just so, the Christ, who has been cleansed whenever he accepts the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse him from his sins, however, is walking through the world, his *feet* contracts defilement and needs cleansing often.

Hebrews 10:22 teaches this same truth when it states, *“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”*