

3 -- THE CLEANSING LAVER

(New Beginnings)

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So far through our study of the sanctuary, we have learned that in God's amazing plan to save our fallen race, the first step is to come to the curtain, which is a symbol of coming to Jesus just as we are. Then upon entering the outer court, we are confronted by the brazen altar which pointed to the incredible sacrifice that Jesus made on our behalf when He gave His life, and we are invited to accept this sacrificial death on our behalf. We then turn our attention to the laver. The laver was a large bronze water basin located in the courtyard, between the altar of burnt-offering and the tabernacle. Like the altar, both were made of brass (Exodus 30:18). The brass of the laver was made from the looking glasses of the women (Exodus 38:8). Let's go forward to discover the lessons God wanted to teach His people here.

1. What service was conducted at the laver?

Exodus 30:18, 19 You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base also of bronze, for washing. ... for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it.

Note: The laver was a bowl filled with water. The washing was not done in the laver but from the laver. The foot, or base, received the water used in washing.

2. What was the significance of this washing?

Exodus 30:20, 21 When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the LORD, they shall wash with water, lest they die. ... So they shall wash their hands and their feet, lest they die. ...

Note: The laver was for the priests to wash their hands and feet for the removal of all defilement in preparation for service at the altar or in the tabernacle. It was a matter of life and death. It was an absolute and unconditional requirement, for every aspect of the priest's work was an object lesson for the people to teach them God's plan of salvation. To teach it wrong would place the lives of the people in jeopardy.

3. The work of being reconciled to God (being justified), which began at the brazen altar, continues at the laver.

Psalms 51:7 ... Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Note: King David spoke of this cleansing. This cleansing is from sin, a work that began at the brazen altar.

4. How does Paul explain the outer court's symbolic meaning and relevance to us today?

Hebrews 10:19, 22, 23 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, ... 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. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

Note: Here in Paul's words we find the symbols of blood and water employed to symbolize the process of reclaiming a repented sinner. The individual, who believes and accepts God's forgiveness, is forgiven and their sins washed away! (Psalm 51:2)

5. What does Jesus do for us when we confess our faith in Him and accept His atoning work for us?

Romans 10:9 ... if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Revelation 1:5, 6 ... from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Galatians 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

Note: When we confess our sins, our past sins are forgiven. We now choose to walk in the newness of life in Jesus, turning away from our old life of sin (2 Corinthians 5:17,18).

6. After coming to Jesus and by faith accepting His death for my sins, what am I counseled to do next?

Acts 22:16 And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Note: Here we find that baptism is God's appointed symbol of the repented sinner's sins having been forgiven and washed away. When we are baptized, we are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19), by immersion, where "there was much water" (John 3:23 and Acts 8:38). This is a critical part of the new birth experience Jesus told Nicodemus about in John 3.

7. What does the word "baptize" mean?

Colossians 2:12 (KJV) Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead.

Note: The Greek word "baptize" means "submerge," "plunge under," or "immerse." A person has not been baptized unless he has been completely submerged, or buried, in water. This word "baptize" is always used in the Bible in reference to the sacred ordinance of baptism. The Greek words for "sprinkling" or "pouring" are never used.

8. What example did our Savior leave us regarding baptism?

Mark 1:9, 10 (KJV) ... Jesus came ... and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opened,...

9. How did Philip baptize the treasurer of Ethiopia?

Acts 8:38, 39 So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.

10. What other truths are symbolized by baptism?

Romans 6:4(KJV) Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Note: Baptism symbolizes Christ's death, burial and resurrection. There is first death to self and sin, then burial of the old life of sin in the water and finally resurrection from the water to a new life in Jesus. Baptism by immersion fits the symbolism perfectly. The life of sin dies, then there is brief suspension of breath while the person being baptized is leaned backward into the water until the body is fully covered, or buried, in the water. Then the person is raised up out of the water, taking a fresh breath as a newborn baby, to live an entirely new life in Jesus, symbolizing the resurrection. No other form of baptism fits this Bible symbolism.

11. What blessed ceremony can be compared to baptism?

Galatians 3:27 (KJV) For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Note: Baptism is the symbol selected by Jesus to show to the world that we have chosen to give our lives to Jesus. It is the outward demonstration of what has already taken place in the heart. The confession is a public one, demonstrating to all that we love Jesus and are not ashamed of Him. Thus, baptism is like the marriage ceremony. The Bible says, "For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is His name." Isaiah 54:5 (KJV). As a woman takes her husband's name in marriage, so Christians take the name of Christ, thereafter to be called Christians. Both ceremonies must be based on love and commitment if they are to be meaningful. Baptism is as essential to the Christian life as a wedding is to a marriage.

12. How important is baptism to Christians today?

Mark 16:16 (KJV) He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

John 3:5 (KJV) Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Note: Washing at the laver in Old Testament times corresponds to the ordinance of baptism, and it is clearly mandated by Scripture as essential. However, when baptism is impossible, as it was for the thief on the cross, Jesus' life covers that person.

13. What command did Jesus give to His people just before His ascension?

Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

14. After this altar and laver experience, what are we called?

John 1:12, 13 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Note: The outer court experience teaches us about justification. What is justification? It is victory over the record of sin. It is the judicial act of God, by which He pardons the sins of those who believe in Jesus, and then treats them as righteous in the eye of the law. It is God, viewing and treating the forgiven sinner as if he/she had never sinned. This process began at the altar of burnt-offering with the shedding of blood of animals, all pointing to Jesus our sacrifice. When we accept His sacrifice for us, Jesus applies the record of His spotless, righteous life to our broken and bankrupt life. He then takes the record of our sinful life and applies it to Himself! This is justification. This is grace. It is a free gift of God extended in love to the hopeless, helpless sinner. This ceremony, conducted at the laver, pointed forward to Jesus' death, burial and resurrection, of which we partake in baptism: death to the old sinner and the symbolic resurrection of the new man or woman in Jesus. This experience is the beginning of a new life with Jesus.

15. What is this wonderful conversion experience called?

John 3:7 You must be born again.

Note: This glorious experience is referred to as a new birth, or conversion, because, as of that moment, we have a new past. Now we begin a fresh new life in Jesus, as does a newborn infant. It's the fantastic experience of beginning life anew without one blot of guilt on our record by God's wonderful grace.

16. But doesn't the baptism of the Holy Spirit replace baptism by immersion?

Acts 2:38 (KJV) Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Note: No! Notice that while Peter was preaching (Acts 10:44-48), the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening, many of whom had not been baptized. But even though they had already received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Peter insisted that they be baptized in water as well.

17. Is baptism connected with joining a church?

Acts 2:41 (KJV) Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Acts 2:47 (KJV) Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Note: After birth, a baby must be placed in a family for nurturing, protection, and growth.

18. When Jesus was baptized, what did His Father say?

Mark 1:9, 11 (KJV) And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. ... And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Note: When any of God's children repent of their sins and are baptized, He is well pleased.

Your Response to Jesus:

If you have never demonstrated your decision for Jesus through the rite of baptism, and it is your desire to begin preparing for this sacred rite so God can say of you, "Thou art my beloved son (or daughter) in whom I am well pleased," please answer below with a "Yes, I want to follow Jesus."

Answer _____