Exodus 30:1-9 (Armistead Mason Barry) 53341

Christian Truth: Volume 20, Brazen Altar, Brazen Laver, Gold Altar (30:1-9)

Exod. 30:1-9;

My subject is three distinct parts of the tabernacle. We have the brazen altar, the brazen laver, and the golden altar, or the altar of incense.

Let us think of a stranger coming upon the congregation of the children of Israel, and seeing all their living conditions. They would be very much astonished at seeing those people living out in the desert like that without seemingly anything to support them. He sees them go out to gather something every morning—the manna. Suppose this person represents a poor sinner. If Christians were going on as they should be, an unconverted person would be (-mite surprised to see them feeding on something they know nothing about, just like the Israelites who were feeding on the manna, a type of Christ. Then there was the smitten rock where they drew water; and the rock followed them. "That Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4). How lovely if 17-21; 38:1-3, 8

God's people are getting their refreshment from that pure stream-that water that flows from Calvary. Also, they have a central object. Everything is arranged around it; it is the center for the tribes.

The next thing he sees is a place set apart by linen curtains, like a fence around the tabernacle. If God's people were going on with the true Object that was intended, others would soon discover that there was an Object-the One represented in that pure white linen-the purity of the Lord Jesus. As he approached nearer he discovered an entrance way. That is made of the same material, but there is some beautiful embroidery—blue, purple, and scarlet. First, the sinner sees something of the perfection of Christ. Like the thief on the cross—"This man hath done nothing amiss" (Luke 23:41). Then he sees something of His glory—"Remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom" (v. 42). The blue speaks of His heavenly kingdom. The stranger would feel that there was a holiness connected with that center, which would make him feel he was unworthy to enter that enclosure. It is like the one who said, "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isa. 6:5).

But let us say he goes further. Within the enclosure he sees that something is going on. He gets sight of the brazen altar. The priests are engaged there offering a sacrifice. He sees the victim slain and the blood carefully caught. What does the brazen altar speak of? It speaks of the cross on which the Lord of glory died.

Perhaps you have observed the altar was made of brass. The brass speaks to us of judgment, or divine righteousness tested by judgment. So when we think of the cross which this altar represents, we think of the judgment which God meted out to that Holy Substitute that was there bearing the guilt of sinful man. The fire goes up, and the victim is burned on that altar.

Now we are going to change the thought of the stranger coming in, for one who believes on the victim on that altar. We have been "made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13). Now instead of being strangers to God, we have become priests unto God. We are "a holy priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:5). "Hast made us unto our God kings and priests" (Rev. 5:10).

I trust everyone here has accepted that Sacrifice on Calvary. If your sins have not been judged at the cross, they will be judged for all eternity in the lake of fire. Accept the work of the cross of Calvary.

That brings us to another vessel made of brass—the brazen laver. We get the description of this in two portions of Exodus. It was between the brazen altar and the tabernacle. The first thing that met the eye was the brazen altar—a type of the cross. Then there was the brazen laver for the priests to wash in in connection with their service. It was not blood in that laver. The blood was all poured out at the bottom of the altar. All the work that our souls will ever need was accomplished at the cross. But though we have found peace with God, in the Lord Jesus Christ, what provision have we if we fail?

We get instructions for this, in type, in the brazen laver. Again, we have the thought of judgment, but what a different thought of judgment! At the altar it was the judgment of my sins, but the laver conveys the thought of the need of the judgment of myself as one who has been washed in the precious blood of Christ. I do not need the repetition of the washing of the blood of Christ. Never is that repeated, but continual cleansing is needed; and God will provide for it.

"Christ... loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:25, 26). There it is. "The washing of water by the word"—the Word of God. So the fact that the laver was made of brass tells us that when we sin, there is need for self-judgment. When the Apostle writes to the Corinthians, he tells them, "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." 1 Cor. 11:31. Because of unjudged failure, we bring ourselves under the chastening of God.

We fail, and the way of being restored is seen in that brazen altar—self-judgment. It is easy to judge someone else and to spare ourselves. The reason that David was a man after God's heart, was because he judged himself. God says, That is a man after My own heart—he confessed his sin with Uriah right after he sinned. If there is not self judgment, it gets us out of communion, and we drift into the world. The water in the brazen laver is a type of this precious Book I •hold in my hands.

We need to read the Word daily so that we might have that cleansing that is so needful. As we read and let the Word speak to our hearts and consciences, it exercises us. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word." Psalm 119:9.

In connection with the two altars you get the exact measurements, but there is no measurement for the laver. Why? The Spirit of God would teach us there is no limit when it is a question of the restoration of the soul. Think of Peter denying his Lord on the very night of His going to the cross!—but the Lord restored him, so that in a few days he stood up and told the Jews they had denied the Holy One and the Just. There is no sin for which there is not restoration. The cleansing enabled them to go on in their priestly service.

The golden altar was inside the tabernacle. It was not to be used for a burnt sacrifice. The victim was burned on the outside, on the brazen altar. This altar was distinctly for offering sweet incense. There was this difference, that the altar within the tabernacle was overlaid with pure gold. Outside, everything is characterized by brass, and inside by pure gold. Gold speaks of divine righteousness. The thought of judgment is not there. The load of judgment is all outside. But inside, we are in the immediate presence of God. Everything is resplendent with the glories of Christ. Is there anything to be judged in the Christ of God? Nothing whatever! And there is nothing to be judged in us when it comes to our acceptance in the presence of God, for Christ is our righteousness. Here the priests offered sweet incense. There were special instructions about the kind of incense and fire. There was to be no strange incense and no strange fire.

Where did the fire come from that burned the incense? It was taken from the brazen altar. That was where the victim had been burned.

The Lord is worthy of our highest note of praise. Suppose we just presented His beauties in manhood; would that satisfy God? No; you must bring in His death too, or it becomes strange fire.

It is precious to think of Christ in all His beauty, but let us never forget that that One lay in death for our sins. He is the One who: was there on the cross, the One upon whom God's judgment fell. Many popular hymns are full of rhythm; but they are full of strange fire if the death of Christ has no place in them. If it just shows Christ as a man who lived a perfect life, it is strange fire. Let us be sure our worship is connected with the death of Christ. God would have us realize that our highest service now and hereafter is the service of worship and praise.

"And His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads" (Rev. 22:3, 4). After every other service is over, the service of praise and worship of the Father and the Son will go on throughout eternity. And it is our highest service down here, too. God wants worship from our hearts. Do you want to give something back to the One who has done so much for you? You can. What a privilege to remember Him in His death for us! But there is a fitness required, for we cannot be there as true worshipers if we have a bad conscience.

The brazen laver was between the brazen altar and the golden altar. We need that special cleansing, through the washing of water by the Word, that we may come into the Lord's presence and "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Heb. 13:15). "Continually" -God wants continual sacrifice of praise. As soon as failure comes in, the praise ceases; and when self-judgment comes in, the praise can start again. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

How we need that fitness to be in the Lord's presence! It is not fitness as to our right to go into His presence, but the state of soul that can offer that sweet incense, that can offer the loveliness and fragrance of Christ. How acceptable it is to the heart of the Father!

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