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**Session 13**

***God of Freedom, Week 7b***

**Exodus 30:17-38**

**11-12 December 2023**

**The Bronze Basin –** The washing that took place at the bronze basin points us toward the concept of *sanctification*. When the priests were initially consecrated to the priesthood, they were washed all over. But from then on, they only had to wash their hands and feet before serving in the Tabernacle each day. Note that the basin was made out of bronze mirrors, so every time the priests washed their hands in the basin, they could look down and see themselves. Recall that James 1:23 refers to the Word as the “perfect law of freedom” that acts as a mirror, reflecting our condition back to us.

**Blood and Water –** So the first thing someone would see upon entering the Tabernacle would be the bronze altar, where *blood* sacrifices were offered, and just beyond that was the bronze basin, where the priests washed themselves clean with *water*. So every time someone moved through the Tabernacle, they were in essence reenacting the Exodus from Egypt. (The death—blood—of the Egyptian firstborn prompted them to allow the Israelites to leave, and then the Israelites passed through the water of the Red Sea.) The same progression had occurred in Moses’ life when he was delivered through blood at his birth, and then saved from water when he was placed in an ark in the Nile. Jesus Himself walked through the same picture when He was born physically and later baptized. Then when His side was pierced at His crucifixion, both blood and water poured out as the Church was being born. Why is this connection of water and blood so important? It is a picture of our salvation. (1 John 5:6-8) So just as the priests were washed all over just once, and afterwards needed only to wash their hands and feet, so we are cleansed from our sin once by the blood of Christ, and then just need to repent and be cleansed from ongoing sin in our lives in the process of sanctification.

**Symbol of Chaos –** Water is also often a symbol of chaos in Scripture; specifically the *sea* represented chaos. So the bronze basin in the Tabernacle hearkened back to the crossing of the Red Sea. It is interesting that the statement is made in Revelation that in the new earth, “there will be no more sea.” So disorder will be totally removed…and there will be no more need for our sanctification, because it will have been fully achieved! We will be finally removed from the very presence of sin.

**Anointing Oil and Incense –** Why did the Lord put such strict restrictions on the use of the anointing oil? God was telling His people that this particular aroma should bring to mind only one place, one person and one purpose. This was the oil that set apart something for the Lord, whether it was a utensil or a human being. Another aroma was layered over the smell of the anointing oil and that was the incense, which had its own unique formula, not to be copied or used elsewhere. The smell of the incense was also to bring to mind one place and one particular moment. Remember that God is a *jealous* God. We tend to think of jealousy as a negative character attribute, and it is among humans. But the reason that

jealousy is bad for us is that when we are jealous, we want what someone else has so we can be more awesome. God, on the other hand, does not want what someone else has: He is jealous because He alone is *worthy* of worship. For anyone to take what is rightfully His is despicable.

**Salt –** The covenant God had with His people in the Old Testament was often referred to as “a covenant of salt,” and some of the burnt offerings were sprinkled with salt. The salt remained after the rest of offering burned away, and so salt was considered to be *a symbol of God’s steadfastness and perseverance* in His covenant toward His people.

**The Significance of Smell –** There are certain smells that trigger memories for us. Smell has a powerful impact on us, reminding us of a particular person or taking us back to a particular time or place in our memory. The apostle Paul reminded his readers that Christ followers are a fragrance to everyone around them (2 Corinthians 2:15-16). We are now the royal priesthood, bearing the aroma of life to those whom God is drawing to Himself, and the aroma of death to those who are perishing.

**A Fragrant Offering to God –** There was another reason for having a pleasant fragrance permeate the holy places in the Tabernacle. Remember how bad the outer courtyard would have smelled because of all the animals being sacrificed there. But inside the holy place, the priest would see how these same sacrifices appeared to God. The sacrifices were difficult and costly and messy, but to God they were fragrant offerings. The bronze altar and the altar of incense were similar in design and construction, but very different in the materials with which they were overlaid. The golden altar of incense inside the holy place—symbolic of heaven—tells us the truth about what is taking place on the bronze altar outside in the courtyard, which represents this present earthly life. The smell of death is everywhere around us as we walk this life. When we obey the Lord because we love Him and present our bodies as living sacrifices, our reasonable act of worship day after day, our acts of sacrifice often appear not very pretty…rather messy…confusing…and at times even fearful. But if we could see the heavenly reality, we would know that what seems to us to be the smell of death is actually the fragrance of life rising to the nostrils of God and that it pleases Him.

**Parallels to 1 Peter**

Though I did not find a direct parallel to the golden altar of incense or the bronze basin for cleansing, I did find a reminder that God does see and value our service and acts of sacrifice for Him and that someday we will see these things as God sees them. 1 Peter 1:5-7 says, *“You are being protected by God’s power through faith for a* ***salvation…ready to be revealed*** *in the last time. You rejoice in this, though now for a short time* ***you have had to struggle in various trials*** *so that the genuineness of* ***your faith—more valuable than gold—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”*** Holman Christian Standard Bible