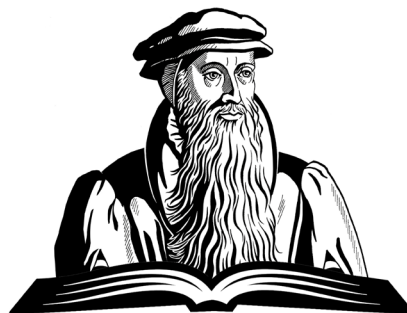


# The Tabernacle of Moses

Video Lecture Series  
by Rev. A. T. Vergunst

*Lecture 8 ~*  
**THE LAVER**



**The John Knox Institute**  
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# The Tabernacle of Moses

## Video Lecture Series

by Rev. A. T. Vergunst

1. Introduction
2. The Temple Theme
3. Setting and Organization
4. The Courtyard Fence
5. The Courtyard Gate
6. The Brazen Altar—part 1
7. The Brazen Altar—part 2
8. The Laver
9. The Tabernacle Building
10. The Lampstand
11. The Table of Shewbread
12. The Altar of Incense
13. The Ark of the Covenant

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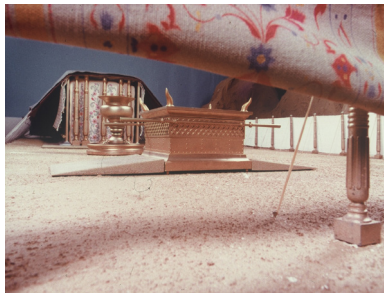
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### Lecture 8 ~

### THE LAVER

Welcome. In this study, we will focus on the second piece of furniture found in the courtyard of the Tabernacle. I recommend that you take the time to read through Exodus 30, verses 17 and 21; chapter 38, verse 8; and chapter 40, verse 7. And may God bless us with his Spirit to understand, and embrace the gospel truth as set forth in the Laver.

Well, before we look at the details of this Laver, let's re-remind ourselves of the main picture of the entire Tabernacle structure and its ceremonies. God pictures before us in this structure two distinct yet related subjects. First, the courtyard. It pictures the sinner's only way to, or the approach to God. The Gate, through the Fence, the Brazen Altar, and the Laver, laying out the foundation for this approach to God. None could bypass. If communion with God was desired, you needed to stop by all of them.



Secondly, the Tabernacle building, with the Holy, and Holy of Holies, it kind of pictures the believer's communion with God. This communion is portrayed in the details of the Holy, and particularly, the Holy of Holies.

So, reflecting on these two main truths, do not forget, friends, that these objective pictures need to be also a personal, and they need to be spiritual and experiential truths. When the Holy Spirit works out salvation in our hearts, we will experience all these various truths displayed in the Tabernacle, but maybe always not so clearly put together. For example, you will have experienced a growing desire to be brought near to God, but you know that there's a hindrance. What is that? It's that Fence. You know that you've broken God's law, and that hinders reconciliation—a fence. God's holy and God's just being is a barrier stopping you from approaching him. But the Spirit of God discovers to you, there's a Gate—there is a way. There's a way open for us to come to God in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. And how beautiful is the Savior that invites us to come to him, assuring us, "I will not cast you out."



And the Gate is wide, as you saw—open for all-sized sinners. Yet in those moments of hope, when you see that Gate, you will still be facing the fact of your sins and your guilt. What about that? We can't simply ignore them and hope for the best. God is a righteous God. He demands the law to be honored, as you also would demand if you were sinned against. And a broken law



demands a just punishment—a fair one.

So, facing this reality, the Israelite was guided to the Brazen Altar. That Altar, which we saw before, was nothing less than Christ Jesus pictured on the cross. Has God not made him precious, as the Priest, able to save us to the uttermost? Has the Spirit of God enabled you to place your trust in him alone? Have you already, by faith, tasted the peace and the pardon obtained through the Mediator's unblemished life, and yet sacrificial and atoning death? Well that's not where our spiritual journey ends. It's where our spiritual battle to be holy gets real. For let's ask, are you now pure? Are you holy? Are you without sin? Are you always, and in all things like Jesus Christ? Or must you say, "Oh that I may experience his power to behold."

Well, friends, then let's follow Shema in our thoughts, as his eyes fell upon the next object in the Tabernacle. Shema observed something behind this big Altar, right before him. It appeared to be a beautifully shaped piece. It shined brightly in the sunlight. It kind of looked like a giant wash basin. His eyes followed one of the priests with blood-spattered hands, and dusty feet, and he was walking towards the wash basin. Carefully and thoroughly, he cleansed himself, after having been busy with the slaughtering and the sacrificing of the lamb at the Altar.

Just then, his eyes spotted another priest, who walked in right through the Gate, and Shema saw that he went straight to the wash basin, even before he did anything else within the Tabernacle courtyard. And only after that washing, he joined the others in doing the priestly work. And while he was watching, he saw an older priest come in. He was accompanied with a few younger men.



And very solemnly, they walked towards the basin behind the Altar, and he noticed that they did not just wash their hands and their feet, but he noticed that they washed their entire bodies with this water in the wash basin. What happened to them? And why did their entire body need to be washed?

Well, in the meantime, a few of the Levites came through the Gate, and they were carrying together a large container with water, with which they replenished the wash basin. "They must do this several times each day, as it looks like this wash basin is heavily used," Shema observed. "I must check this out a little closer." And he tried to walk closer to the Laver, but suddenly, a priest blocked his way. "Young man," he said, "you're not allowed to go any further into the courtyard. This is only permissible for the priests and the Levites." Obediently, Shema backed off and, in the meantime, he asked the priest if he could please explain to him the details of that wash basin. And gladly, he did. So Shema learned that the wash basin is called "the Laver."

It was probably not more than about a meter-and-a-half tall, for it also had to be transported when they travelled. The exact shape and the dimensions are never specified in the Bible, so we don't know exactly what it looked like. Most likely it was like an oversized large bowl standing on a pedestal, into which the priests would dip their hands and wash their feet and hands, and if needed, their body. Ac-



cording to Exodus 38, verse 8, the Laver was made from the looking glasses, or what we would call their mirrors. In the ancient days, glass was not yet invented. The people used brightly polished brass for a mirror. So how interesting, that what we may often use for vanity purposes, God turns into a holy purpose.



So as Shema observed, The Laver was placed behind the Altar, but before that you actually entered the Tabernacle. Right in between the veil and the Altar. To be honest, doesn't it seem much more logical to put the Laver first? Don't we usually wash before we approach an important person? Will we not be sure that we look pure and proper before that we go and approach to speak to him? And yet, God commanded Moses to put the Laver second, not first. The message is clear.

Our sins need to be confessed and atoned, before we will be made holy. Or to say it really theologically, justification precedes sanctification, though both are intimately connected together, as twin graces. For although confession and atonement are requisite in our approach to God, so is holiness. Hebrews 12:14 clearly states this in these words: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see God." So this is like Jehovah's instructions to Moses, in Exodus 30, verses 19 to 21, where it reads: "For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: 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 altar to minister, to burn offerings made by fire unto the LORD: so they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations."



So what is now God's message to us in this Laver? In the first place, the Laver is a visual of a rich part of the gospel. Usually we limit the gospel to the Lord Jesus Christ in his life, and his death, and his resurrection. But friends, the gospel is also about the Holy Spirit's ministry to sanctify us sinners. What is more impossible for us sinners than to become holy like Jesus? No, no, not just to look like it, not just to act like it, but to actually be holy. And where we fail, there the Holy Spirit succeeds. It's his work to sanctify sinners. He turns sinners into saints, or rebels into good citizens of God's kingdom. And this work of the Spirit begins in the great miracle of regeneration. Jesus spoke about that in John 3, as the new birth. This new birth is required if we will ever see, or ever enjoy the kingdom of God. And Jesus explained that that new birth was the work of the Holy Spirit. In John 3:8, he says, "The wind bloweth where it listeth"—or where it wants—"thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." In Titus 3, verse 5, we read the reference to the Holy Spirit in salvation—we are not saved "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."

Now the Laver illustrates that. It illustrates a cleansing and a washing away of the pollution of

our sin. And that's also God's work of salvation. At the Brazen Altar, the guilt is carried away in the death of the substitute. In the Laver, the pollution of sin is removed through the ministry of the blessed Spirit of Christ. To put it in a different picture, Jesus provided, in his atoning work on the cross, the title for heavenly communion. And the Spirit provides, in his heart-renewing work, the fitness for heavenly communion. Now to say it in a different picture, Christ's righteousness is the wedding garment of the bride, but the Spirit's ministry prepares the heart of the sinner to be the bride of Christ. And therefore, it's so important that we notice that the Brazen Altar stands before the Laver. That's not just random order. No, it's a theological must.

It is on the basis of Christ's merits that the Holy Spirit is poured out. Now, we can glean this



from various Scriptures. Take, for example, John 7, verses 37 to 39, as Jesus invited thirsty sinners to come unto him, and if they would trust in him, they would receive the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38 says the exact same thing. Peter preaches, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of [our Lord] Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." The Spirit is promised upon belief in the finished work of Jesus Christ. In other words, first the ministry at the Altar,

then the ministry at the Laver.

So this brings me to the second main teaching on the Laver. God magnifies the holiness for his law in the Laver. Everywhere God exalts holiness as the attribute of all attributes. Scripture often speaks about worshiping him in the beauty of holiness. And everything in the Tabernacle, as I said before, stresses the holiness of Jehovah. That's why every priest first needed to be completely washed, when he entered the Temple to do his sacred work. And it wasn't only necessary at the very first initiation into the priesthood, as Shema saw happen, when a few young priests walked in with the elderly priest. No, each day, as they began their priestly work, but also throughout the day, they had to continually wash themselves, hands and feet, regularly at the Laver. Why? Fellowship with God without holiness is not possible. Let's not think that this is only Old Testament theology. Hebrews, chapter 10, verse 22 tells us what is for us today phrased in Tabernacle symbolism: "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."

The third aspect of the Laver is about the Laver and the water. Both are symbolic pictures of the sacred Word of God. The Laver acted like a mirror. The priests could see themselves in that. As he stood there, it revealed the smudges and the splatters on their faces, that needed to be washed. And so, as I use the Word of God daily, it acts like a mirror. It discovers to me where I need to be cleansed. Hebrews 4:12 reads: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, [and dividing] the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." It searches us out. In other words, the Word is able to judge or to reveal the hidden thoughts and the intentions of our heart. See how important the role of the Word of God is in the life of sanctification?

But not only is it the revealer of our sins, as a mirror does to our physical blemishes and filthiness, no, the Word of God is also the means for cleansing us from the pollution of our sins, as water does to our bodies. Several New Testament passages will show us that we are washed by the water of the Word. Take John 15:3—Jesus says, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have



spoken unto you.” In John 17:17, Jesus prays, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” In Ephesians 5:26, we read the phrase, “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.”

So the constant use of the Laver illustrates to us the constant use every believer should make of the Word of God. The Word is sanctifying. And the sanctifying truth is beautifully stated in 2 Corinthians—and notice again the reference to mirrors: “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

So in conclusion, I invite you to consider that unforgettable scene in John 13:8. Jesus is on the floor before Peter. He objected to having his feet washed. Jesus answers him patiently, “If I wash thee not, thou has no part with me.” Now the Lord did not mean that if he didn’t get to wash Peter’s feet, that Peter could have no relationship with him, or didn’t have a relationship with him. No, Peter was a believer blessed by God the Father. That relationship was permanent. Well, what did Jesus say? “If I don’t wash your feet, Peter, we cannot have the fellowship or the communion at this table.” Sin hinders communion, friends, and therefore, it needs to be washed daily. So at once, Peter make a complete U-turn, and he went overboard, when he says, “Lord, not my feet only,...but my hands and my head.” And Jesus’ response is significant, and it reminds us of the Brazen Altar and the Laver. Listen to verse 10: “He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.”

Now in the Greek, there’s two different words used for the word “washing.” The first “wash,” is a Greek word, which means “to bury one’s body completely.” This refers to God’s active justification upon faith. All the guilt of sin is completely washed away in the sacrifice of the Lamb. Now what’s happened here was pictured at the Brazen Altar. But the second word “washed” in that sentence has in the Greek the meaning of “rinse off.” Now as we walk through our life, a pardoned and justified believer will daily soil himself with new sins of thoughts or words. Even with the best efforts, we will continue to live with an indwelling world of sin, as we are surrounded with temptations and fall each day. Therefore, each day we need to come unto the Lord Jesus, to the spiritual Laver, to have ourselves again washed, and these daily sins need to be confessed before God. They need to be washed away in Christ, in order to maintain this communion and this fellowship with God. So, was John also thinking of this, when he wrote in his letter, “And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin. And if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins”—the Brazen Altar—“and cleanse us from all unrighteousness”—the Laver.

So may God bless these teachings, and deepen our understanding of the gospel, and deepen our enjoyment of the fellowship with God, all through Jesus Christ and his Holy Spirit. Thank you.

