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The Bronze Basin in the Tabernacle: Christ, Our Cleanser **30:17-21 and 38:8**

The bronze basin in the Tabernacle: Christ our cleanser DIG: What could be the symbolism of the priest's regular washing? What effect on their relationship with God was this washing intended to make? What abuses is this practice open to (see Mark 7:1-23)?

REFLECT: How have you been washed clean (see Hebrews 10:19-25)? What affect does this have on your relationship with God?

There were seven pieces of furniture in the Tabernacle, and the bronze basin would be the second piece that the worshiper would come to. Before the worshiper could approach God he had to be cleansed by water or he would die.

One day, when we are in heaven, the streets of gold will reflect the purity of the redeemed. A sea of glass will show the faultless beauty of **God's** children, who will be glorified and transformed into the very image of our **Lord**. There will be no more curse, no more sin, no more pain, no more tears and no more night. We will worship our crucified and risen **Lord** for all eternity in **His** presence. But until that day comes, we need **Christ**, our **Cleanser**, in a very real sense.⁵⁵²



Then ADONAI said to Moses His servant: Make a bronze basin, with its bronze foot stand, for washing. It was placed **between the Sanctuary and the bronze altar (30:17-18).** The **bronze basin** was to sit on top of a foot **stand**, which would serve as a place for **the priests** to **stand** as they washed **themselves**. No description is given of the shape or size of either the foot **stand** or **the bronze basin**. But both parts were probably round, with **the bronze basin** being held up by a **bronze foot stand** with a tapered neck like a giant goblet.

Aaron and his sons were **to wash their hands and feet with water from it (30:19).** It was, therefore, easily accessible to the priests whenever they needed to wash their hands and feet before entering the Sanctuary or approaching the **bronze altar**. It was probably somewhat small, because it was not intended to wash the entire person. **Whenever they entered the Sanctuary, they needed to wash with water so that they would not die (30:20a).** Also, when they approached **the bronze altar to minister by presenting an offering made to ADONAI by fire, they needed to wash their hands and feet so that they would not die.** The repetition here is for emphasis and underscores the fact that the washing was a duty that *had to be* performed. The scope of the command was emphasized by the idea that it was **to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come (30:20b-21).**

Washing the body with **water** was a frequent symbol of ritual purification in the TaNaKh (**Leviticus 8:6, 14:8, 16:4, 24-26, and 17:15**). It was a sign of cleanliness, and only those who were ritually clean could approach **ADONAI** either in the Sanctuary or at **the bronze altar**.⁵⁵³ Repeatedly, **God** told **Moses** that Aaron and his sons should **wash their hands and feet in the bronze basin, so that they would not die.** Without that cleansing, **they** dared not enter the Sanctuary to worship. There was no shedding of blood in **the bronze basin**, yet **the priests** dared not worship without cleansing.⁵⁵⁴ The lesson for us is clear. We must approach **ADONAI** with **clean hands and a pure heart (Psalm 24:3-4).**

They made the bronze basin and its bronze foot stand from the mirrors of the women who served at the entrance to the Tabernacle (38:8). Ancient **mirrors** were metallic. The mirrors of the Egyptians were made of a mixed metal, chiefly copper, and were polished to the extent that you could see yourself in its reflection. They were usually small in size, and in general shape what would now be called hand **mirrors**. They were made with great skill with handles of wood, stone, or metal and were artistically shaped and highly ornamented. The Egyptian **women** were in the habit of carrying a mirror in one hand when they went to their temples to worship. It may be that the Hebrew **women** imitated this custom when they brought their **mirrors** to **the entrance to the Tabernacle**.⁵⁵⁵ Because

the **bronze basin** points to **Christ, the Messiah**, it is striking to observe that in the gospels, the ones we see ministering to **Him** were devoted **women (Luke 8:2-3)**. It was a woman who washed **His** feet with her tears. It was a woman who anointed him.⁵⁵⁶ And it was **women** who were found at his grave on the day of **His** resurrection.

The command to the priests to **wash their hands and feet** in the **bronze basin** had great significance. It meant that the very ones who were to minister in the Sanctuary and at the **bronze** altar were themselves in need of cleansing from their own sinful hearts and deeds. Therefore, **the bronze basin** points to judgment and pictures **Christ** as **the Judge**. We find **Him** saying: **The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son (John 5:22)**. And again: **He (God the Father) has given Him (God the Son) authority to judge because He (Jesus) is the Son of Man (John 5:27)**.

The writer to the **Hebrews** explains that the believer, in a symbolic way, enters into the Holy of Holies by the blood of **Christ** (see my commentary on **Hebrews**, [to see link click Ch - Let Us Draw Near to God](#)). There is no longer any need for a priesthood to mediate for believers, because **Messiah** is our perfect **High Priest**. Believers, therefore, can **draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:22)**. **Washing** with **water** reminds us of the requirements of the priests. And we, as the priesthood of believers, **have been washed by the blood of Christ (First Corinthians 6:11)**. This is the **pure water** that the writer to the **Hebrews** talks about. That **water** symbolically cleanses us from all sins. As Paul says: **Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up on its behalf, in order to set it apart for God, making it clean through immersion in the Word, so to speak (Ephesians 5:25-26)**.

When we get to the book of **Revelation**, there will be no **bronze basin** in the true Tabernacle in heaven. **The bronze basin**, the only piece of furniture in the Tabernacle without any specific size dimensions, will become **a sea of glass (Revelation 4:6a)**, because at that time we will no longer need to be cleansed of our sin.