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The Link

NORTH ROAD CHAPEL

BIDEFORD

THE TABERNACLE OF GOD

Part 18

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. 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 offering 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.”
(Exodus 30:17-21)

A study of the Tabernacle, its construction, layout, furnishings and equipment is not only fascinating, its foreshadowing and portrayal of New Testament truth and doctrine is profound. The Laver is no exception; indeed, this is a subject of tremendous importance. The location of this piece of equipment was the outer court of the Tabernacle, midway between the Brazen Altar and the Golden Altar (or Altar of Incense). The Brazen Altar was immediately inside the gate of the outer court, which was the **only** entrance. At the opposite end of the outer court was the Tabernacle itself and within the Holy Place of that elaborate tent, was the Altar of Incense. The Brazen Altar speaks of sacrifice and the Altar of Incense speaks of worship. The Laver, however, was different in that it was not an altar, but a receptacle; its purpose was not for sacrifice, it was for washing. Full instructions were given to Moses concerning this vessel: *“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein”* (Exodus

30:17-18). Unlike many other articles in the Tabernacle, no measurements were given, neither was its capacity stated; the only details concerning its manufacture was, it must be of brass with a foot (singular). The Laver is mentioned eight times in Holy Writ, 'with its foot'. This indicates that it would have been set upon a central column or stand, not a vessel on legs as some depict it, or a large flat pan as others suggest. It is very disturbing to read how some commentators describe and interpret the Laver. The details given to us in the Pentateuch are of the utmost importance, for they have great spiritual significance, the import of which is destroyed if mishandled. The key to a right understanding of this subject is, cleansing by blood and washing by water. This is clearly distinguished in the Old Testament types, yet upon this crucial point, some appear to confuse the issue. The essential identification must be: the Brazen Altar – **blood** (cf Leviticus 8:14,15), the Laver – **water** (cf Exodus 30:18,19).

Under the ordering of the Mosaic economy, designed by God Himself, man could approach unto his Maker by one way only; that was the gate at the east end of the outer court where the Brazen Altar was situated. At this entrance, the worshipper was immediately confronted with an area which was soaked in the blood of sacrificial victims which were being offered. Here it was that sin was dealt with, for "*without shedding of blood is no remission*" (Hebrews 9:22). There was no further advance or approach to God apart from a substitutionary blood sacrifice for sin. An Israelite, having come this way and conscious of his sinfulness, became aware of the intrinsic value **to God** of the blood of the substitute, as it prefigured the blood of His own incarnate Son to be shed in due time. That Israelite, having by faith appropriated the cleansing efficacy of the blood of a sacrificial sin offering, now desires true fellowship and communion with God and to worship Him in spirit and in truth. This is the consequence of his encounter at the Brazen Altar; it has implanted an inner urge for the conscious presence of God. He must move on to the Altar of Incense, which was within the Holy

Place. To reach this Golden Altar meant coming by way of the Laver, for this vessel was strategically positioned between the two altars. This brings us more objectively to our subject, its New Testament prefiguration and practical applications.

“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 offering made by fire unto the Lord: so shall they wash their hands and their feet” (Exodus 30:19-21). The emphasis here is that the Laver, as set between the two altars, was specifically for Aaron and his sons; it is the priests who are in view. They are those who have been to the Brazen Altar of sacrifice and are now going to the Golden Altar of worship, but on the way they must needs come to the Laver; **not** for sacrifice but for washing. The guilt of sin had been settled at the altar of brass. There it was that cleansing was effected by the blood of sacrifice, thus typifying the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, which cleanseth us from all sin (cf 1 John 1:7).

In this matter of washing at the Laver, it is the hands and feet that are specifically mentioned. This emphasis is most important for it signifies that in their regular work and daily walk, Christians are constantly dealing with men and women who are dead in trespasses and sins, and although they may not be aware of it, their very company can defile. Unconsciously, they have an influence which is not Godward. Unregenerate men and women are alien to God; further to this, *“the whole world lieth in wickedness”* or *‘the wicked one’* (1 John 5:19 and alternative rendering). The earth upon which we live and work is corrupted by sin and iniquity; it is awaiting the judgment of God, when the very planet will *“melt with fervent heat”* (2 Peter 3:12). We are pilgrims and strangers on the earth, a sanctified people, constituted priests unto the God of heaven, whose name is holy. But we cannot pass through this present evil scene without our hands and feet

becoming stained and polluted. Our very presence in this world and our legitimate daily contact with the unregenerate inhabitants of the world make it unavoidable. This day to day contamination however, in no way affects our perfect standing before God. We have been to Calvary's cross, as typified by the Brazen Altar. At that place there was made "*one sacrifice for sins for ever*" (Hebrews 10:12). "*By one offering He (Christ) hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified*" (Hebrews 10:14). This is the justification of a true believer, which can never be affected; such a person has everlasting life, that life is hid with Christ in God (cf Colossians 3:3). With regard to the **penal** consequences of our sins, the wrath of God has been poured out in its full and ultimate fury upon Christ, the sinner's Surety and Substitute. Our sins are blotted out and remembered no more (cf Isaiah 44:22 and Jeremiah 31:34). This pertains to **sacrifice** and to **blood**.

In contrast the Laver speaks of constant washing from daily contamination, which in no way affects our eternal security, but it does affect our regular communion with God. Let no Christian think that he or she does not become defiled in the day to day walk and has no need of the Laver, for such a thought is a deception of the Devil. What is more, apart from the washing of which the Laver speaks, we cannot enter into our priestly privileges or discharge our priestly duties. It is our privilege and our duty to be at the Golden Altar, offering up spiritual sacrifices. "*Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*" (1 Peter 2:5). "*By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name*" (Hebrews 13:15). This is the very reason why God has brought us to the Brazen Altar and put away our sins through the blood of Christ, and made us kings and priests unto Himself, that we may worship Him in this wilderness scene. Because it is a wilderness, the Laver is necessary, yea, vital. For this reason it was positioned in the outer court of the Tabernacle, setting forth a fundamental principle for the

people of God of all future ages. The profound teaching concerning this piece of equipment demands thorough investigation. It is recorded of Moses, “*He made the Laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the looking-glasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation*” (Exodus 38:8). Strange as the content of this verse may appear, it is one of the most vital pieces of information contained in Holy Writ for a correct understanding of the truth set forth by the Laver. The ladies’ mirrors in those days, were not manufactured of glass backed by quicksilver; they were highly polished discs of brass or copper. The purpose of a mirror is to reflect and reveal the person looking into it. These brass looking glasses used by the Hebrew women had been brought out by them from Egypt, and as they looked into them, they saw their natural persons. Manufactured looking glasses never reveal the true person, what he or she is inside; man can only look upon the outward appearance but God looketh also upon the heart (cf 1 Samuel 16:7).

Moses took these brass discs, which those women had probably used with vanity and pride, and made the Laver. It most certainly was a very great quantity which he melted down, for the Laver was no small article. When it was completed, it was filled with water and this gives the picture of a large, highly polished, brass vessel upon a central brass column, filled with pure, clear water. An ancient Jewish historian states that there were twelve taps or spouts around the container which enabled the priests to draw off water upon their hands and feet. This cannot be verified but it is more plausible than some other suggestions. The salient point however, is that as the priests came to this shining brass reservoir and looked into its crystal clear water, what a reflection was given! Great stress must be laid as to its content; it was not blood, it was **water**. There is some confusion on this point; the matter in hand is not an altar or sacrifice, it is a mirror and water. The New Testament counterpart to the Old Testament Laver in the Tabernacle, is not difficult to identify. Some well known Scriptures should give the

confirmation: “*Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed*” (James 1:22-25); “*Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you*” (John 15:3); “*Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word*” (Ephesians 5:25,26); “*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*” (Hebrews 10:22); “*Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit*” (1 Peter 1:22). Mirrors and water speak of the **Word of God**; Christ, the living Word, revealed to us in the written Word by His Holy Spirit. The washing of regeneration and the cleansing from the guilt of sin by the blood of Christ is a once-for-all operation, and that is done for us; in it we are passive; we are cleansed by another, our Substitute and Redeemer. “*Salvation is of the Lord*” (Jonah 2:9), wrought by God, the Holy Spirit through the Word.

With regard to the Laver it is different, in that we are active, we come **ourselves** to wash: “*Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat*” (Exodus 30:19). This is not a once-for-all exercise, it is regular and constant. The sinner who is cleansed from his sins needs to continually wash from the daily defilement which he picks up from the world. Our Lord said to Peter, “*He that is washed (regenerated) needeth not save to wash his feet*” (John 13:10). Wherewith can this be done? “*By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word*” (Psalm 119:9). It is the coming to the mirror of the Word, not just to see and learn the truth, but to be changed by it; we are purified by obeying the truth (cf 1 Peter 1:22); “*Ye are clean through the Word*” (John 15:3). This is the washing which is typified by the Laver. To remove the dust and defilement of

the wilderness from off their hands and feet, the priests of Old Testament times came not to the altar to cleanse them with blood; they came to the Laver to wash in water; in New Testament terms, it is Holy Scripture. This is God's provision for regular washing for His people on their earthly pilgrimage in this age. We are to appropriate His Word to every detail of our lives: "*He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked*" (1 John 2:6).

There is a phrase which is sometimes used, particularly by those inclined to Pentecostal teaching, when any have gone astray or fallen into sin; it is, 'I have put it under the blood'. Others who consider themselves more orthodox, speak of being 'cleansed afresh in the blood of Calvary'. Expressions of this nature are not in keeping with the doctrine of Holy Scripture. The blood of Christ is eternally efficacious to the regenerate sinner; by that blood he is justified (cf Romans 5:9). Justification is a once and for all transaction, it is the sovereign act of an immutable God and can never be rescinded. To come again to the cross, appealing to the blood for fresh cleansing, is equivalent to asking for another justification. Once a child of Adam has experienced the grace of God in salvation, that person is **in Christ**, and as such, is clothed in His righteousness; that is the believer's justification which can never be taken from, or added to. The life and death of the Surety has effected this to the eternal satisfaction and glory of Divine holiness and justice. That which must be the concern of every Christian in his earthly pilgrimage, with its many snares and defilements, is not justification wrought by blood; rather must he be concerned with his sanctification, meaning purity of heart and life. The Christian whilst upon earth, is still in a body of flesh which is prone to sin and failure. God's provision for the washing of our fleshly bodies of humiliation is pure water (cf Hebrews 10:22), which is His Word (cf John 15:3). By the Word, the mind and heart is purified, cleansed from secret thoughts, which in turn vitally affects the hands and feet. What need there is for this constant regular washing!

Talking to a Christian who had divorced his wife and was about to marry another woman, this question was put to him: ‘Is all this right; is God being glorified by such violation of His mandate?’ He replied, ‘I have put it all under the blood’. It must be said, had that man been regularly washing at the Laver of Holy Scripture, he would never have gone down that road, for the mirror of God’s Word would have revealed his error; therein are contained perfect guidelines for any and every situation. After conversion and the blood cleansing of Calvary, we frequent the Laver for the ongoing washing; the progressive sanctification through the truth, which is the Word of God. To violate that which is contained therein, and then to come back and say, ‘I have put it under the blood’ is a complete reversal of truth. It is only by obedience and compliance with the Word of God, that the believer is kept pure from defilement and can thus come to the Golden Altar of worship. David said, “*By the Word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer*” (Psalm 17:4). If we are to worship the God of heaven, it must be in the beauty of holiness, but we cannot engage in such an exercise with any defilement of the flesh or the world upon us. What an unspeakable insult it would have been to Jehovah, had those priests of old by-passed the Laver and gone into the holy place with defiled hands and feet! That Laver was in the outer court in order that the washing could take place before they drew near to the Golden Altar for worship.

How sharp and pointed a lesson this is! What do we, as individual believers know of this? Do we come to the Laver of the Word for regular washing? As we look into the mirror of God’s Word, we see ‘this’ wrong with our conduct, the ‘other thing’ which should have no place in our lives and yet another ‘blemish’ which calls for purging. This is the washing, it is the rubbing out, the bleaching of all defiling stains, and it is to be done constantly for we shall always pick up further contamination. As those blotches and polluting stains are mirrored in the sparkling purity of the Laver of Divine truth, we dare

not approach our God in worship until they have been eradicated. This is the meaning of those words, “*Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup*” (1 Corinthians 11:28). Whilst this refers directly to the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper, it certainly is not exclusive to that service. The principle applies to **all** aspects of life and communion with God.

The subject of the Laver is a most sobering one; yet should we not magnify the grace of God for such a wonderful and full provision to counteract all the defilements of the way? God help us to use more and more the great revealing mirror of the Laver of Holy Scripture which is ever full and overflowing with the crystal clear waters of Divine purity. By this **Word of Truth** does the believer know that ongoing, practical sanctification of which our Lord spoke in His High-Priestly prayer in John, chapter seventeen.

W. H. Molland (1920 – 2012)
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...no dimensions were prescribed for the Laver, nor are we told the quantity of water which it contained... The measurements of all the other vessels are given. The absence of any here in connection with the Laver and its water plainly denotes that an **unlimited** provision has been made by God for our cleansing. In Christ and His Word is sufficient to minister to our every need. Second, no directions were given to Israel concerning the covering of the Laver while they journeyed from camp to camp... Does not the absence of any covering to this vessel strikingly accord with its typical character? Does it not tell us that the purifying Word is ever available, and that we need to use it daily in all our wilderness journeyings! Thus, we see again, that the omissions of Scripture (which the carnal mind would regard as defects) are profoundly significant.

A. W. Pink (1886 – 1952)

THE HOLINESS OF GOD

One solemn lesson the Laver was well calculated to teach, is the holiness of that God to whom the priests were permitted to approach. A little imperceptible dust, unavoidably contracted in their path through the wilderness, was sufficient to render them unfit for His service, and would have exposed them to destructive judgment, had they attempted to minister before Him without its having been previously cleansed away: *“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 offering made by fire unto the Lord: So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not”* (Exodus 30:20).

It was not only that gross defilements would unfit them for their ministry, and call down vengeance on their heads, but the slightest contact with an unredeemed world, a speck upon the hand or foot, rendered them obnoxious to the fire of judgment, if they ventured unwashed into the presence of the Lord. This may well direct our thoughts to the holiness of that God ‘with whom we have to do’ (cf Hebrews 4:13). His judgments are not against the great open enormities of vice only, which we see around, or the manifest defilements which we can recognise, but His controversy is with the flesh itself, be its developments what they may: whether from thence have proceeded the open grossnesses of sin, which even men can notice and condemn, or whether there is the evil thought within, in some almost unknown and unnoticed form, still it is the flesh, and in that a man cannot please God; all its desires, motives, and exercises are nothing else than, *“enmity against Him; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be”* (Romans 8:7).

Any outward contact with death, or, as in this case, the hands and feet accidentally sullied, rendered the priests defiled: with us, before we were converted, it was the inward source of corruption, which no

external cleansing could remove, that made us unfit for the presence of God – a corruption that manifested itself in all the varied exercises of thought and imagination which external scenes and associations excited, or which developed itself in the grosser works of the flesh, either actually committed or inwardly cherished. As we read in the Epistle of James: *“Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death”* (James 1:14-15).

Again, ignorance of the defilement was no proof that it did not exist; the priests were to wash whether they knew themselves to be soiled or not. The Laver was not to be neglected because they might fancy themselves clean. So as to man: whether conscious of it or not, he is unclean and unfit for God; he is not the judge of his own condition, neither is his conscience the true index of his state: God alone is the judge of that; and He has provided the precious blood of Christ, a witness on the one hand of what His estimate is of the sinner’s ruin, and on the other, the full and eternal remedy for all that ruin.

Lastly, no washing would have sufficed save that which was conducted at the vessel appointed by God to hold the purifying waters. If, having their eyes partially opened to their unclean condition, the priests had sought to purge themselves at some washing-place of their own construction, instead of at the Laver, they would have exposed themselves as much to the wrath of God as if they had altogether neglected His commands. He had provided a vessel constructed according to His own will, and which He knew would fit them for His own service. Had they sought another, it would have proved that they either despised His commands, or undervalued what He had furnished for their use. In either case they would have been guilty of a direct insult against the holiness, majesty, and wisdom of God. God has lifted up the Son of Man on the cross, that cleansing and life might be the result to every one that believeth.

H. W. Soltau (1805 – 1875)

MANY WATERS

There is a significant and instructive progression to be found in the typology of the Old Testament. The Laver that belonged to the Tabernacle was of an unspecified size. No precise measurements are given. It is reasonable to assume however, that to facilitate its transport from place to place with the Hebrews in the wilderness, its principal dimensions must have been in the range of a few cubits. Over four centuries later, Solomon was instructed in the building of the Temple which would supersede the Tabernacle. Once again, a vessel for the purpose of washing was provided in the outer court, adjacent to the altar: “*And he made a molten sea, ten cubits from the one brim to the other: it was round all about, and his height was five cubits: and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about*” (1 Kings 7:23). This was on a different order of magnitude altogether, to the extent that it is not called a Laver, but rather a ‘Sea’, holding as it did over 9,500 imperial gallons of water.

If the Laver stands as a type of sanctification, and the Word of God by which it is effected, then here is a depiction of the abundance and greatness of that provision. The perpetuity of God’s sanctifying grace was illustrated in the Tabernacle by the way in which the Laver was conveyed wherever the people moved, so there was never a want of water for washing. In the Temple, the same principle is seen in the vast capacity of the ‘Sea’ that was made, far exceeding that which had gone before.

The progression continues still further: another four hundred years after the days of Solomon, a vision was given to the prophet Ezekiel that was an even better metaphor of spiritual truth. He saw no Laver or Sea in that Temple, but rather: “*behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood*

toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house” (Ezekiel 47:1). Within a mile of its source this remarkable stream had widened into an impassable river, concerning which it was observed: “at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea... And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh... their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many... And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine” (Ezekiel 47:7-10,12).

Greater than any Laver or Sea, this allegorical Temple has an ever-flowing river springing forth from within. What a glorious similitude is here given of the sanctifying, vivifying Word of God! That Word which proceeds from the Lord Himself, and though it flows through the inhospitable desert of this fallen world, brings life and cleansing and healing wheresoever it goes. Not only is life imparted, but also sustained by this river, as upon its banks trees are nourished and made ‘ever green of leaf and fruitful’, with fruit that ‘shall remain’. Thus many Biblical analogies are united in the language of this prophecy (cf Isaiah 41:17-20, John 5:39, Matthew 13:47-48, Psalm 1:3, John 15:16). Such is the nature and power of the Word of God, which issues forth from His presence in the sanctuary, runs in its Divinely-ordained course through time and history, to the ultimate culmination in Glory. There too, that river and its effects can be traced, as John records: “*he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal,*

proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:1-2). Not without reason is the voice of the Lord, in which He speaks His Word likened to the ‘sound of many waters’ (cf Ezekiel 43:2, Revelation 1:15, 14:2).

The way in which the language of Scripture develops from the Laver of Moses’ day, through the Sea which Solomon made, to the vision which Ezekiel received, epitomises the manner in which God graciously unfolds His truth to man – ‘line upon line, and precept upon precept’ (cf Isaiah 28:10, 13). Just as children must be taught with examples of increasing complexity, suited to their understanding, even so does our Heavenly Father graciously expound His eternal verities, *“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”* (Ephesians 4:13). This has been His Divine policy through the ages toward humanity: *“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son”* (Hebrews 1:1-2). As the Apostle states, that which was a ‘mystery’ at the time when the world began has now been made manifest. The Everlasting God commanded that it should be so – first by imparting the Scriptures by the prophets, then in the preaching of Jesus Christ, and ultimately the spread and establishment of the Gospel, making it known to all nations. This He has done, to the end that those who hear might believe, and come, in the obedience of faith. (cf Romans 16:25-27).

“ King Eternal, may Thy mercy
Move our souls Thy grace to adore;
Streams all-flowing, love abounding,
Satisfy for evermore.” (Cook)

R. J. Steward

THE SOUL'S ETERNAL DESTINY

The course of time is perpetual and inexorable. The earth ceaselessly rotates upon its axis and the planets of our Solar System continually revolve around the sun in their God-ordained orbits. The effects of this constant progression, and onward motion of the universe, are witnessed hour by hour. The language of Psalm 19 cannot be surpassed, as the divinely inspired author extols the glories of God's creation: "*Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof*" (Psalm 19:4-6).

The results of these mighty acts of God's handiwork are manifold: day follows night, night follows day, weeks become months, seasons quickly change. The passing away of one year brings the coming in of the new. The phases of the moon are all in perfect and exact timing. In Bideford – situated on the Torridge Estuary – another visible evidence of this order may be observed daily in the ebb and flow of the tide. Here, the difference between high and low tides is one of the largest in England. Whenever one crosses the river, the water is either coming in or going out, bringing benefit to the variety of species which are dependent upon it.

Another obvious proof of the ongoing course of time is life itself. We mark the gift of new life, the vigour of youth, maturity, the decline of health, the end of life. This is a constant theme of Scripture, which reminds us: "*As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more*" (Psalm 103:15-16); "*For all flesh is as grass,*

and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away” (1 Peter 1:24); “*Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*” (James 4:14). Hymn-writers have captured the same message in verse:

“Time like an ever-rolling stream
Bears all its sons away...”

“Time, what an empty vapour ‘tis,
And days how swift they are;
Swift as an Indian arrow flies,
Or like a shooting star.” (Watts)

“We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
And wither and perish;
But nought changeth Thee.” (Chalmers-Smith)

There is, however, one other absolute certainty which the unbelieving world seldom considers, namely: the eternal destiny of the soul. Of all the different aspects mentioned, this is by far the most vital. Time, life, and the eternal destiny of our souls are, in this earthly sphere, inseparably linked together.

When God formed Adam from the dust of the ground, He breathed life into him, and man became a living soul (cf Genesis 2:7). Henceforth, the entirety of Adam’s race have an immortal soul that never dies, nor can be extinguished. The certain fact of life is that as soon as we begin to live, we all begin to die, physically. Every single person born of woman into this world (until our Lord’s return) will suffer the death of the body. Death is the dire consequence of sin (cf Genesis 2:17). “*Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death*” (James 1:15). Yet this is not the end of existence. God’s Word states: “*it is appointed unto men once to*

die, **but after this the judgment**” (Hebrews 9:27). As the passing of time is certain, so is death, and the judgment of God, and the eternal destination of the soul. The Bible is absolutely clear upon this point. It comes from the mouth of the Almighty God – the Creator of heaven and earth and everything therein – the living God who cannot fail or lie. The soul’s destiny is one of eternal bliss, or eternal woe: “*Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation*” (John 5:28-29). The solemn and searching truth is that the time of that appointed event is set. Every moment the clock ticks, every time the sun rises and sets, it is a day nearer to that hour of our passing from time into eternity – to the final abode of our never-dying souls.

Satan in his guile and cunning devices blinds the minds and eyes to the reality of this certain fact. He does everything in his power to distract humanity from meditating upon it. “*The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not*” (2 Corinthians 4:4). The so-called ‘pleasures’ of this world, its entertainments, pastimes, and busyness, still hold millions in the bondage of sin and Satan’s captive sway. The mindset of ‘let us eat, drink and be merry’ prevails among the masses. The devil being the father of lies causes multitudes to disbelieve the truth of the eternal destiny of the soul. Hell as eternal punishment is no longer a terror to them. Thus many unbelievers have engraved upon their headstones ‘At Rest’, or ‘At Peace’. God has spoken: “*There is no peace... unto the wicked*” (Isaiah 57:21). It is only the Lord’s people who will enter into eternal rest; that hope is laid up for them alone. Others have their mortal remains burned and scattered with no fixed marker, symptomatic of the attitude: ‘that’s the end of me’. How tragic to witness the current rise in persons taking their own lives in suicide, even asking members of the medical profession to end life for them, in the false belief that suffering will thereby be terminated.

The eternal state and destiny of the soul is fixed: that of everlasting joy, or everlasting misery. One or the other awaits the whole of humanity. A commentator upon Matthew 3:10 states: “A [solemn truth] is the nearness of judgment to every unconverted individual. To his eye – its vision dimmed by other and diverse objects – it may appear far remote. Damnation may seem to linger, judgment to tarry. Sentence executed against an evil work may appear delayed. But this is an illusion of the mental eye, a deception of Satan; a lie which the treacherous and depraved heart is eager to believe. Never was a snare of the devil more successful than this. But death, judgment, and hell are in the closest proximity to man; nearer than he has any conception of. His path winds along the very precipice that overhangs the billows of quenchless flame. Let him assume what position he may, high or low, fortified or unguarded, from that position there is but one step between him and death, between death and judgment, between judgment and a fixed and a changeless destiny” (Octavius Winslow, 1808 – 1878). Whether we are working or resting, in calm or tempest, the course of the soul continues unremittingly toward its final end.

Many will soon be celebrating the ‘New Year’; but by definition, another year of this short life has passed, and all are twelve months nearer to the eternal destination of their souls. The sands of time are forever sinking, never to be recalled. Unlike the hourglass, we cannot upturn or recycle a single grain or second to live again. Many spend New Year’s Eve in mirth, merriment and frivolity. Far better to use the occasion for prayer, humbly seeking God’s mercy and forgiveness in a true state of repentance.

The Lord’s teaching on the subject of eternity in Luke 16:19-31 is one of the most searching of all His discourses. Between Heaven and Hell a great gulf is fixed, so that not a single soul can pass from one place to the other. It is an impossibility. Not even a drop of water could be conveyed from Heaven to cool the condemned rich man’s tormented

tongue. The Book of Revelation depicts Heaven as that abode that is full of radiance and light. The Lord Jesus Christ is the light thereof (Revelation 21:23). There is no need of the sun, for His glory and majesty outshine it by far. Yet so great is the dividing gulf between the two realms that not a single ray of heavenly light can penetrate into Hell. That is the place of outer darkness and blackness for ever (cf Jude 13). Revelation likewise teaches that Heaven is full of praise. A great company of angels and innumerable saints from every nation, kindred and people are singing: “*Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever*” (Revelation 7:12). Yet not a single strain or note of that vast choir will be heard in Hell. The sound of that dreadful place is one of wailing and gnashing of teeth (cf Matthew 13:42).

The contrast between time and eternity is incalculably great, but to consider one grain of sand in relation to all the sand that is upon the sea shore will give some concept of the difference between the two states of existence. Yet it is events occurring now that define the soul’s place in eternity. Those who, by the grace of God, have been brought through faith to believe in Jesus Christ are saved, and redeemed from the consequences of sin, that is, eternal damnation. By virtue of God’s mercy and everlasting love, they can point to a time in this life when they were born again by the quickening of the Spirit, and look forward to the unending ages of glory above. In the brief while that remains, they are instructed to serve the Lord, to sound the alarm to the unconverted, and call upon those who are on the broad road that leads to destruction to repent and believe the Gospel. For a time is quickly coming, when the door of God’s mercy will be shut, and the day of grace expired.

“There is an hour when I must stand
Before the judgment-seat;
And all my sins, and all my foes,
In awful vision meet.

There is an hour when I must look
On one Eternity;
And nameless woe, or blissful life,
My endless portion be.

O Saviour, then in all my need
Be near, be near to me!
And let my soul, by steadfast faith,
Find life and heaven in Thee.” (Reed)

To those whose present course is toward an eternal destiny of torment, the call of the Gospel is: *“Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon”* (Isaiah 55:6-7). *“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”* (Hebrews 2:3).

R. D. Steward (Snr)

Saturday 24th October 2015 was a joyful occasion in the life of North Road Chapel, when the church, together with family and friends assembled for a special service at which Miss Joanna Broome received the ordinance of Believers’ Baptism. The meeting was blessed with a powerful sense of the Lord’s presence as the words of 1 Peter 3:21 were considered, and His example and commandment then practically obeyed. Joanna’s recent association with the fellowship in Bideford, and a deepening personal exercise prompted her request for baptism – the first at the Chapel in ten years. She was received into membership the Lord’s Day following. The church returns thanks to God for further adding to the number ‘such as should be saved’.

Recordings of the service are available from the usual address (see cover).

EDITORIAL

‘Resolution’ is not the work of a moment. By the dictionary definition, it includes: ‘the quality or state of being determined or resolute’. Here is a virtue much to be commended to the people of God. The believers’ mental attitude and way of thinking is as much a part of their Christian faith as their words and deeds. They are called upon, not to be vacillating, indecisive and ‘blown about by every wind of doctrine’, but rather to be ‘steadfast, unmoveable’, and ‘in understanding be men’. The Lord’s people are instructed to ‘bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ’, and to be ‘renewed in the spirit of their mind’; the irresolution and thoughtlessness of unbelief superseded by minds that are stayed and fixed upon God. The Apostle exemplifies this, when he describes being ‘fully persuaded’ regarding the promises of God, and ‘determined’ to know Christ and the verities of the Gospel. But how are the saints to cultivate such a mindset within themselves? Only the intervention of Divine grace will achieve it: “*For it is God which worketh in you both to **will** and to **do** of His good pleasure*” (Philippians 2:13). Then let prayer be made for His gracious help and enablement as a New Year dawns, that the testimony of every true child of God might be, concerning their Lord:

“Thee, only Thee, resolved to know
In all I think, or speak, or do.” (Wesley)

Preliminary Announcement

ANNUAL BIBLE CONVENTION

Saturday 4th June 2016 D.V.

Preacher : Mr G. Chewter