

Sam. Popoola

“Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thy inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O LORD, which thy hands have established” Ex.15: 17. The word sanctuary can be seen as having two direct interpretations and three implied ones. In some respect, the Sanctuary refers to the **“Holiest of All”** in the tabernacle of Moses (Lev.16: 33). In some other respect, it refers to the entire tabernacle (Ex.25: 18). On the other hand, the entire concept of the Sanctuary is symbolic, speaking to us in type and shadows. In this regard, man is central in God’s thoughts. This is to be understood in both singular sense as well as man in the corporate expression. Besides, the word Sanctuary in the most general sense will refer to any place with regards to God’s dwelling, (Ex.15: 17).

When we understand that man is central in God’s thoughts, plans and purposes, then it will not be difficult to see God desiring for man to be His sanctuary, His dwelling place. In this respect the entire tabernacle of Moses paints the picture for us of how the ordinary man in his unregenerate state, stark in his sins can progress step wise in a divinely laid down pattern and conform to God’s pre-determined image and likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ. If a man conforms to the image and likeness of God’s own Son, the man in question can be said to be God’s Sanctuary. The tabernacle of Moses therefore, paints for us the picture of hope for any man, however written off by other men as hopeless; it paints for us the picture that there is no amount of damage done to any single person’s life, which cannot be repaired. It projects the thought that every man however bad can have his life salvaged by God and become a divine instrument in His Hand. The sanctuary shows the graphic outline of how the Holy Spirit takes an individual step-wise from the unregenerate state of sin and death through to the place of perfection and glory. It also is a graphic display of the progression of God’s people as they grow into him in all things.

The entire tabernacle, divided into its three compartments, has seven distinct pieces of furniture. In the finished picture, we see the two inner compartments opening up to become one single (Holy) place. This picture was depicted at the hour Jesus died to tear apart the veil of our flesh as symbolised by the veil of the temple in Jerusalem that was torn into two. Looking at the type and shadow, the outer court or the first compartment in the tabernacle of Moses contains two pieces of furniture. They are the Brazen Altar and the brazen laver.

“THE BRAZEN ALTAR- “And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be four square: and the height therefore shall be three cubits” Ex.27: 1. The altar is from the root meaning to kill, to slay, to slaughter or to offer (as in sacrifices). It has a reference to the place where a sacrifice is made. It is a place for offering. In the type and shadow the animal for sacrifice is killed on the brazen altar. The brazen altar is made of shittim wood and covered with brass. Brass appears only twice in all of the seven pieces of furniture of the tabernacle and the two times it occurs is in the outer court. Brass is symbolic of judgement.

On the brass altar the sin and the self-life of the offerer are symbolically judged on his offering on the altar. The brass altar points to the cross. It was a shadow of the cross, on which Jesus died. Jesus is our sacrifice as he lay on the cross.

Our sin was laid upon him on the cross. **“Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us”** I Cor.5: 7 and **“by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified”** Heb.10: 14. Christ being our sacrifice becomes real when a man comes to Him in brokenness, repents of his sin and gladly accepts Him as God’s provision and offering for sin. Remission for sins is only possible through the sacrifice of his blood. Remission is pardon; it means forgiveness along with freedom from debt and punishment. The blood that Jesus Christ offered provides for remission of the past sins removes the guilt of sin and gives complete victory over the nature of sin. There is no other sacrifice, which can be this, effective except God’s only provision and arrangement for man. There is no such sacrifice, which has such power and such an active life, as to be able to give peace and freedom from guilt as well as give power against and over sin. We are **“justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God...”** Rom.3: 25. **“Without shedding of blood is no remission... now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh... 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...”** Heb.9: 22; 10: 18.

God’s redemptive provision is once and for all time. A man comes to accept this provision by faith. Two great events affect the destiny of all men in some respect. Every man has his life tied to the event at Eden. The effect is completely negative. That singular event brought man into death and degradation. It brought shame and reproach to man and man became bestial in every respect. The second great event was at Calvary. What Eden did to man Calvary set out to undo. What man lost in Eden, Calvary set out to restore. Man has devised several means by his own effort to undo the effect of Eden on him. Such devices and means of reaching his creator, an attempt to correct the error of Eden, have rather worsened his position than helped it. This is because what happened at Eden was of universal nature; it joined all human race to it. To reverse the effect of Eden, it takes a work also of universal nature and this is Calvary which God himself instituted. The Brass altar in the tabernacle of Moses was just a prophetic pointer to God’s plan of redeeming man through the cross of Christ. If the truth must be told, there is no other provision, however appealing to human mind that can right the wrong of Eden except as a man comes to meet with Christ at Calvary. The step is simple as we can see in the type and shadow. Faith is accepting and identifying with God’s arrangement and confessing it as such. Faith is submitting to, believing in God’s provision, and receiving the same as a personal benefit. **“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation... whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed”** Rom.10: 9-11. To be born again involves faith in God that He offered His son for the purpose of redemption in a personalised way. This faith says that God is true and His testimony is true.

“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of

God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” I John 5: 9-12. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil...” John3: 16-19.

“An altar of Shittim wood” Wood figures man as being central in God’s plans and purposes. **“Behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood...”** Jer.5: 14. Paul presenting the spiritual Body of Christ as a building of which Christ Himself is the foundation, those who make up the building are variously represented as gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay and stubble I Cor.3: 11-12. Writing to Timothy he said, **“in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver but also of wood...”** II Tim.2: 20. The use of wood, to make this altar, points to humanity. The central message is that every man ought to come to meet Christ at the cross where his sin is to be judged unto justification. **“Wood”** derives its meaning from the same root word which translates to a **“tree”**. Trees also speak of men in scriptures. The fact of the use of **“Shittim”** wood particularised the message of the cross. **“Shittim”** means **“to pierce” “to flog”**; it means a **“scorge”**. These are the experiences of Christ in regards to the cross. Shittim wood emphasises the humanity of Christ in the work of redemption. Jesus is God in human form to take the judgement of sin of human race upon himself.

The brass altar is to be **“foursquare”**. This is to reveal the universal applicability of the message of salvation through the cross. Four is a number of universality. There are four cardinal points- North, south, east and west. Each side of the altar measures five cubits. Five is a number of redemption (Num.3: 44-48). It speaks of grace, which is a gift or favour unmerited. It is also a number of Ministry. (Eph.4: 8,11; Ps.68: 18). The height of the altar is three cubits. Three prefigures resurrection. **“After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up...”** Hos.6: 2. Three is a number of resurrection. Jesus died and resurrected the third day. Five, being a number of grace, points to man being enabled of God through grace to submit in horizontal measurement; death to sin and death to self-life is symbolised by the horizontal measurements-five cubits. The law is, if a man conforms to the number of grace by submitting to the demands of the cross, he will also respond to the law of resurrection life; the quickening of the Holy Spirit automatically follows a **“dying”** at the cross. Any genuine repentance is always followed by a quickening by the Holy Spirit and this reflects in the **“life”** with power and testimony that follows. Any one who has a genuine encounter with the cross has some real **“Power”** released in him. This manifests in a God-given confidence, boldness, faith and an inner **“unction”** which causes to lay afloat of the world and its allurements, sin and all that symbolises Satan and all powers of darkness. It is a mystery but it is real. Nothing can fight it but as it submits to it **“for we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth”** II Cor.13: 8. At the brazen altar, a man receives justification. Justification is making just as if a man had never sinned. This is only possible through the redemptive provision in Christ.

Sin is forgiven. Righteousness is imputed. Sense of sin guilt is healed. Knowledge of sin is destroyed and power to live and walk in righteousness is quickened within. Justification is by faith. In one step of repentance, all the sins of the past are forgiven in one quick work of the Holy Spirit.

In another sense of the symbolism of the brass altar, it is a landmark for a Christian. The priest normally begins his priestly work at the second furniture (the brazen laver) before he comes to this first furniture (the brazen altar). In the New Testament economy, every believer is a priest (I Pet.2: 9). When a believer comes to identify with the brass altar, his life is to be seen as the sacrifice to be slain in a willing offering. The life of the sacrifice to be killed is the sin nature and the self-life of the believer. This is to be seen as one willingly surrendering to God his old life. Long after a man is born again, there are conflicts between the new creation man and the old life, which manifests itself through the soul man and his flesh. **“This I say then walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would”**. Gal.5: 16-17. The works of the flesh are listed in Gal 5:19-21. A number of these are what many tongue talking believers are yet to overcome. It does not make them not to have been born again. It only suggests that there is a progress to be made beyond the point of the first encounter. There is to be a second, third and...touch as we progress in Christ. These several touches are effective the more willing we are to freely lay down certain things which we have power to lay down of our own. Paul spoke about **“mortifying”** and he spoke about **“Putting-off”** Col.3: 5-9. There are things that we must do because we have the power to do them after we have gotten born-again. It only requires our will power, self-discipline and determination; the grace is always available. When we put these into use, then we are in a position to **“mortify”** and **“put-off”** at the **“brass altar”** where we become **“dead”**. **“It is a faithful saying: for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him... that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness...if ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead...”** II Tim.2: 11-12; I Pet.2: 24; Col.2: 20. When a believer reacts positively under pressure, whatever the nature and character of that pressure, it is only suggestive of the active life of the old man which needs a taking to the brass altar (the cross), a willingly laying down without struggle as the knife of brass is allowed to cut its throat. A believer will usually have a **“priestly”** need, on a regular basis, to **“minister”** at the **“brass altar”**. This is if he is making spiritual progress, until he rises in complete resurrection power; and enters into perfection - in the image and likeness of his person when by experience, we are in a position to demonstrate the full resurrection power and life over all negative forces ever known to man. **“For as much then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God...for he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works... let us labour therefore to enter into that rest...”**

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” I Pet.4:1-2; Heb.4:10; I John 3: 2.

