

person defiled by death wished to become clean, he must first purify himself on the third day in order to be clean on the seventh. This is the simple, powerful message at the heart of Jesus's first sign. Unless we associate ourselves with the things of the third day, the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, we will not be clean on the seventh day when he returns to set up his Kingdom. John 3:5 clearly tells us how to associate ourselves with the third day: we must be baptized into the death of the Lord. We must drink of the wine of the new covenant, which is also typified in this first

sign. Then, and only then, do we enter into God's grace (Tit. 3:4-7). He will then cleanse us on the seventh day, that is, the day of his Kingdom.

We are imprisoned in 'bodies of death' (Rom. 7:24), we are unclean. If we reject God's remedy for purification—belief, repentance and baptism into the awesome sacrifice of His only beloved Son—we will be cut off on the seventh day. This is what the sign warns us of, clearly and simply. Accept the Lord's sacrifice, for there is no other way.

(To be continued)



Encounter

Reprinted items from earlier issues, chosen by the Publishing Editor

The Law given through Moses*

24. The leper (concluded)

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THE VERY significant and peculiar ceremony in the final cleansing of the leper, to which reference was made at the end of the [last article](#), was in putting a spot of oil in addition to the blood on the thumb of the right hand, the great toe of the right foot and the tip of the right ear. We noted in the [last article](#) that the ceremony with the leper so closely resembled the sanctification of the priests as to enforce the conclusion that there was an especial element of ritual prophecy in the matter.

The leper needed more ceremonial in his cleansing than was required in the offerings for sinners, not because he was accounted more guilty, but because he was a type of stricken humanity. In his restoration he was a type of the elect of God called to be kings and priests in the age to come, and so needing a sanctification such as was ordinarily reserved for the priest—ears to hear, feet to walk and hands to work, all dedicated to the Divine service by the blood of the atoning sacrifice.

But what is the significance of oil in this matter? And why is it that we do not read of oil being put on ear, thumb and toe of the high priest and his sons? The tabernacle and all the holy emblems it contained were anointed with

oil. Oil was sprinkled on the altar (Lev. 8:11) and was poured on the head of the high priest and sprinkled on his garments and on the garments of his sons (v. 30); but ears, hands and feet were not anointed in this special manner as with the cleansed leper.

There surely cannot be any doubt that the anointing with oil typified the Spirit of God. The association of ideas is perceived by all the attentive readers of Scripture. The words 'Messiah' and 'Christ' are only the Hebrew and Greek equivalents of our word 'anointed'. In ancient Israel, kings and priests were anointed with oil in the hope and expectation that they would be anointed with the Spirit of God. The symbol did not necessarily insure that the Spirit of God would follow. Just as in our day a man may be buried in baptism without rising to newness of life or ever being 'in Christ' in the true sense, so in ancient Israel there were some anointed kings and priests who never had the Spirit of God, and never received Divine approval.

Nevertheless the anointing bore this clear meaning. When men looked for the coming of

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Messiah it meant that they expected the advent of a leader who in the supreme sense would be the anointed of the Lord. The Spirit would rest upon him, making him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. He would not be dependent on the sight of his eyes or the hearing of his ears, but with Spirit power he would be able to judge righteously (Isa. 11:1-10).

WITH this thought in mind, the symbols under review become exceptionally interesting. The high priest and his sons were consecrated for Divine service. The high priest was anointed with oil as a leader on whom the Spirit of God might be expected to come. The sprinkling of oil on garments and on the altar surely indicated that the Spirit of God hovered over the tabernacle. A real presence in the holy place was clearly indicated in the words of invocation found in some of the psalms: "Thou that dwellest between the cherubims" (Ps. 80:1). It was obviously a reference to the promise made to Moses, that above the mercy seat, between the cherubim, the presence of God would be (Ex. 25:22), and it was from here that the voice of the Divine messenger was heard (Num. 7:89).

Taking the cleansed leper as the type of men who have been delivered from the bondage of sin and death and will enter the Kingdom of God, we can see reason for the delay, the repeated washings and then the final offering. Not only will ears, hands and feet be consecrated for Divine service, as with the high priest and his sons, but the Spirit of God will be with those who are given power over the nations. Their ears, endowed with a Divine capacity of discernment, will be attentive to the cry of mortal subjects, their feet quick to respond and their hands strong to help. As Isaiah put the matter: "they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (40:31).

In that day not only will the Spirit of God hover over the tabernacle, into which ordinary men could not enter, but it will be for the blessing of all nations and the open revelation of the glory of God. Thus, when the cleansed leper was restored back to favour, he was brought to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. There, in the open, ear, hand and foot were alike sanctified and anointed, and oil was poured on his head. There, in the open air, oil was sprinkled seven times before the Lord. There is no parallel

to this in all the other offerings. It suggests that, when the leprosy of mankind is cleansed, the Spirit of God will be revealed in a manner far more open and abundant than ever in the history of the past.

Among the testimonies that may occur to us in confirmation of this thought, we may take the promise of a time when "a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment" (Isa. 32:1), and when an outpouring of the Spirit from on high will turn the wilderness into a fruitful field (v. 15). Or we might remember the very definite promise in Isaiah 44:3, or the assurance that, when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him (59:19).

Perhaps this thought is presented in the most definite form by the prophet Ezekiel. The vision of the cherubim, presented in the first chapter and elaborated in other parts of the prophecy, may be difficult to understand, but a reader cannot fail to perceive the broad outline of meaning. The living creatures described by the prophet are clearly vehicles for the expression of the Divine Spirit. "Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels" (1:20).

This vision of living creatures, with strength, swiftness and human intelligence, is mentioned several times in the book of Ezekiel. They ran and returned like a flash of lightning. They had the appearance of wheels within wheels, and their rings, "so high that they were dreadful", were "full of eyes round about". "They had the likeness of a man", and they had wings joined together, a symbol expressing the concepts of swiftness and unity (vv. 5,9,14,16,18).

The vision exactly agrees with Isaiah 40:31 already quoted. Accepted servants of God endowed with the power of everlasting life will convey the Spirit of God through all the earth. The Divine Presence will then no longer be confined to the "thick darkness". As the living bird used in the cleansing of the leper was set free in the open field, and the oil symbolising the Divine power of healing was sprinkled seven times from the door of the tabernacle, so in the promised day of blessedness the Spirit of God will be for the guidance and help of all who are then permitted to live.

In later chapters of his prophecy Ezekiel speaks of the cleansing of Israel. Rebels will be purged

out; those who survive will be cleansed from all their “filthiness”, and brought into the covenant. Then he gives a clear indication of when the Spirit of God will come to them. It will not be in the early stages of their restoration, for in the great vision of the political resurrection in Ezekiel 37:1-14 under the figure of dry bones we are told that, even after the bones have come together and have been covered with flesh and skin, still there was no breath (spirit) in them (v. 8). The word here rendered ‘breath’ is *ruach*, precisely the same word as we have for ‘spirit’ in other passages. After the final drastic purging, however, when the partially restored but godless nation has been invaded by Gog and the “many people” with him, God will intervene to bring a great salvation. Then He will gather others from their captivity, and will pour out His Spirit on them, and hide His face no more from them (39:29).

WE may glance at some other details that may be part of the ritual prophecy. The running water was suggestive of a washing away of all impurity. The cedar wood, scarlet and hyssop used for sprinkling suggest the rod of correction, human nature and a healing herb—all appropriate symbols for the application of the cleansing blood. The repeated washing of clothes and body and the shaving off of all hair express a repudia-

tion of the flesh as well as a cleansing. Some readers may think that they see significance in the eight days which had to elapse before the final restoration, but it is better to avoid the risk of attempting to see too much.

The outstanding rites in the cleansing of the leper are in the sacrifice offered, the living bird set free in the open field, the repeated washings; in the unique sanctification and anointing of ear, hand and foot; and finally in the sprinkling of blood and oil at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, in the open air before all the people.

If we attempt to put the ritual prophecy into plain language we shall only be repeating promises which have been before us as long as we have attempted to study the Word. When the leprosy of mankind has been cleansed there will be an extension of the blessings promised to Abraham. Through the blood of the covenant the Spirit of God will be for the guidance of all nations. The elect of God, forgiven, cleansed and transformed, will provide the vehicle for the Spirit to move through all the earth. Spirit beings freed from all defilement, with ears, hands and hearts sanctified and anointed, will be quick to hear the call of those in need, and with changed strength, swift flight and strong hands, will administer the healing power of the Spirit to those still in the flesh.