

## LESSON FOUR

# THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING

TEXT: EXODUS 27:1-8; 38:1-7

There is a beautiful picture in the placement of the six pieces of furniture placed in the Tabernacle. By drawing a straight line from east to west, and also one from south to north, passing through each article of furniture, you would see that it was laid out in the form of a cross.

Beginning in the east at the first piece of furniture, the Brazen Altar, and drawing a straight line west, you would pass through the Laver, the Altar of Incense and the Ark of the Covenant. Then, from south to north, the line would join the Candlestick and the Table of Shewbread.

As Jesus Christ is seen in the Tabernacle, we may deduct the following. The head of Christ (represented by the Ark) now is crowned with glory and honor. All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily. Under the feet (the Brazen Altar) is the sacrifice, now complete.

### **A. THE BRAZEN ALTAR:**

Considering the commandment of God that no steps were to be built leading up to an altar, we suggest that there was probably a sloping ascent, perhaps a ramp, leading to the Altar. God forbade the use of steps and hewn stone when an altar was built (Exodus 20:25,26) because He did not want to see any flesh (characteristic of pagan feasts and ceremonies) when the priest carried out his ministrations.

The word “altar” itself has two primary meanings:

1. It means “lifted up,” “high,” and “ascending.”
2. It also means “slaughter place” to the Hebrew understanding. In the Greek, it carries the thought of being a place for “slaying and burning of victims.”

Jesus certainly can be seen in the meanings. He was “lifted up” in order to draw all men unto Himself, and Calvary was surely a “*slaughter place*.” Isaiah saw that Christ would be as a lamb led to the slaughter.

## 1. ITS POSITION:

The place of this altar was “*before the door of the Tabernacle of the Tent of the Congregation*” (Exodus 40:6). It was immediately fronting the entrance of the Tabernacle, even as the Altar of Incense was directly on the way into the Holiest.

It was impossible to enter the Tabernacle without passing the Altar of Burnt Offering. Christ is the only Way and Repentance is the choice God made for humanity to know the joy of sins forgiven.

## 2. ITS FORM:

The Brazen Altar was four-square (Exodus 27:1). The four sides were of equal length, five cubits each. The height was three cubits. Perhaps these numbers have significance:

- a. Five, the most prominent number in the whole of the Tabernacle, is the number of the grace and mercy of God. On the cross Jesus suffered five wounds: His feet, His hands, and His side.
- b. Four is Christ's number of exposure or revelation. The four Gospels perfectly tell the story of who He really is, the incarnate Son of God.
- c. Three is the number of manifestation as it relates to Salvation. God manifested Himself in three different ways in providing Salvation for mankind.

## 3. ITS MATERIAL:

The two materials used in the construction of the Altar were:

- a. SHITTIM WOOD (Exodus 27:1) is white, durable, “incorruptible” wood. It speaks of Christ's sinless and incorruptible humanity.
- b. BRASS (Exodus 27:2) overlaid the Shittim wood. This metal resisted the fire of the sacrifice and made it able to endure the consuming fires of the sacrifice.

It was in the Outer Court where sin must be judged. The blood of the animal sacrifice performed the sacrificial cleansing. The Brazen Altar was overlaid within and without with Brass, signifying the fact that

when sin is judged in our lives, the external and internal is meant to be cleansed and made holy.

#### 4. ITS HORNS: (Exodus 27:2)

There were to be four horns on the Altar, one situated at each corner. It was to these horns that the sacrificial animals were tied (Psalm 11:27). The bullock, the sheep, or the goat was bound with cords to that altar to die.

Jesus, as our great substitutionary sacrifice, did not have to be tied with visible cords, for he was bound with invisible. Love (John 13:1), Obedience (Philippians 2:8), zeal (Psalm 69:9), and joy (Hebrews 12:2) bound Christ to the cross. The primary message of the Brazen Altar is the Cross.

#### 5. ITS VESSELS: (Exodus 27:3)

- a. PANS — Used to carry forth ashes to a clean place outside the Camp (Leviticus 6:10,11).
- b. SHOVELS — Used to pick up the ashes and for tending the fires.
- c. BASONS — Used to pour the blood at the Altar and for sprinkling the blood (Hebrews 9:12; 13:20).
- d. FLESH HOOKS — Used to arrange the sacrifice on the Altar.
- e. FIRE PANS — Used to carry the coals of fire from the Brazen Altar to the Golden Altar.

These five vessels remind us of the five-fold ministry which God has set in the church as a means to bring saints to an acceptable position in Him. There were also five Levitical Offerings burnt on the Altar: The Burnt Offering, The Meal Offering, The Peace Offering, The Sin Offering, and The Trespass Offering (Leviticus 1-7).

#### 6. ITS GRATE:

The Altar had a grate or network of interwoven strands of Brass that was to be placed in the “midst ” of the Altar. This means that this grate would be at the one and one-half cubit level. Whatever its spiritual significance, its practical purpose was to hold the body of the sacrificial animal above the fire while being consumed.

Jesus Christ was crucified between two thieves placing his cross “in the midst” of the three crosses (John 19:8).

#### 7. ITS COVERING IN TRANSIT: (Numbers 16:36-40).

When Korah rebelled, they made Brazen Censers. Inviting the wrath of God upon them, the ground opened up and swallowed these rebels. Their Brazen Censers were then made into a flat plate to cover the Brazen Altar while Israel traveled. This covering was forever a sign to Israel that rebellion against God and His leadership would be met with swift judgment.

### **C. THE BRAZEN ALTAR IN TRANSIT:**

Upon the first brass covering would be placed a second. Upon this would be placed the cloth of Purple with the five vessels upon it. Then a third covering, Badger's Skin, would cover all.

The Brazen Altar was the only piece of furniture to be covered with purple during transit. Jesus was clothed in purple at His crucifixion (Mark 15:17).