



## Exodus 27:1-8

# The Altar of Burnt Offering

The LORD God is a holy God and He must have a holy people.

The sacrifices of Hebrew worship vividly pictured the sinfulness of man and the holiness of the LORD God.

Why the need for all these bloody sacrifices we encounter in Hebrew worship? Sin. Sin is ugly. Sin is just as bloody as the sacrifice. If you think the bloody sacrifices are repulsive to sensitive people, think how repulsive our sin is to a holy and righteous God. Sacrifices and offerings were essential to worship offered to God from the time of Abel. God gave Moses specific instructions governing these offerings at Mt. Sinai.

The *mizbeach* or "slaughter place" was the brazen altar (Exodus 27:1-8). It stood at the entrance to man's approach to Yahweh. It was the first thing the worshipper saw as he approached the Tabernacle. It was just within the gate, easily accessible, unavoidable and unmistakable. Every man who passed through the courtyard had to pass by the bloodstained altar for animal sacrifices, or he could not enter. Man can approach God only by means of the sacrifice.

## The Need for the Sacrifice

Every sacrifice was that of a life standing in the place of another. The priest made "atonement" for the people by offering the sacrifice. The word "atonement" means, "to expiate," from "to cover, to cover it over before God." It took away the power of sin to come in between God and man. Neither does it mean to cause a sin not to have occurred, nor to treat it as not existing. That would be impossible, because of the reality of sin. The fact is "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The object expiated is the soul of the sinner. The blood covered the soul of the sinner from the holiness of God. The power to make atonement was in the blood of the sacrifice. Each of these sacrifices in the Old Testament anticipated the substitutionary atonement or sacrifice of Christ.

Sinful man has no access to God except as a sinner atoned for by blood. Because Yahweh is holy we can say, "all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrew 9:22). Sin is a deadly serious spiritual disease. We live in a day when people take sin lightly as if it is a case of flue. It is not in the eyes of God. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). "The soul that sins will surely die" (Ezekiel 18:4). Sin is serious business.

The fire that burned continually on the brazen altar completely consumed the

The fire that burned continually on the brazen altar completely consumed the sacrifices. It was a bloodstained reminder of sin. The continually smoking sacrifices were a constant daily reminder of just how bad our sins are in the sight of God. It is ugly and distasteful because our sins are ugly in His sight. "He (God the Father) who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). That is how repulsive our sin is to God.

## Jesus on the Altar

Jesus Christ is the brazen altar, the offering for sin and the Great High Priest all at the same time. The cross was an altar for the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world.

Jesus is our all-sufficient Savior. He gave His all upon the altar of sacrifice for you and me. He held back nothing. The fires of the holy wrath of God burned against Christ as our substitute for sin. The Divine wrath was being wrought out against Him. He was receiving the judgment of sin, not for His own sins, but ours.

Christ became our representative for sin and died in our place. "He [God the Father] made Him [Christ the Son] who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). When Jesus died on the cross, all of our sins were imputed to Him. Our sins were charged to His account. Christ had no personal experience with sin. It is just like the Jewish worshiper who placed his hands on the head of the animal and confessed his sins. God treated Christ as though He had actually committed those sins. He didn't die for His own sins; He died for my sins. Jesus died as my representative in my place on the cross. "The wages of sin is death." He died my death. Christ has paid for all of my sins and your sins. Because we have trusted Christ as our Savior the LORD God no longer holds our sins and trespasses against us. Moreover, God has put to our account the very righteousness of Christ!

It reminds us of Isaiah 53:4-5, 10, 12.

Surely our griefs He Himself bore,  
And our sorrows He carried;  
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,  
Smitten of God, and afflicted.  
But He was pierced through for our transgressions,  
He was crushed for our iniquities;  
The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him,  
And by His scourging we are healed. . . .

But the Lord was pleased  
To crush Him, putting *Him* to grief;  
If He would render Himself *as* a guilt offering,  
He will see *His* offspring,  
He will prolong *His* days,

He will prolong *His* days,  
And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand. . . .

Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great,  
And He will divide the booty with the strong;  
Because He poured out Himself to death,  
And was numbered with the transgressors;  
Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,  
And interceded for the transgressors.

The guilty sinner had forfeited his life by sinning. He would either have to die to pay his sin debt or find an acceptable substitute. The innocent must die for the guilty party. Christ went to the cross and bore the intense fire of the judgment of God against sin. Sin was judged and the wages of sin was paid in full.

The writer of Hebrews asked, "how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14).

If the Israelite rejected the sacrifice at the brazen altar he shut himself off from the mercy and grace of God and suffered his own death for sin. Whoever rejects Jesus Christ as the perfect sacrifice for his sins is forever cut off from God and suffers eternal punishment for his own sins. However, every sinner who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

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Series: Christ in the Old Testament

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