

## EXODUS 27:1-8 (THE BRAZEN ALTAR)

You've heard our eight verses today which deal with the Brazen altar, also known as the Altar of Burnt Offering. Having heard them, are you seeing pictures of Christ and His work in them? When the Israelites came into the courtyard of the tabernacle, this would be the first thing they would see.

It was situated in this way to teach them a lesson. They were unable to come near to God without first sacrificing to atone for their sins. In other words, blood shedding *is required* for access to God. Without it, there is no access.

If nothing else, this should alert us to our need for a sacrifice before approaching God, or being accepted by Him. And yet, very few people and cultures today offer any type of sacrifice to Him, and those that do are doing it wrong. If this is so, then how can we expect that God will hear our prayers and allow us restored access to Him? The placement of the altar is given for a reason. Can we just ignore it?

The answer is that we do have a Sacrifice, and it is a suitable One indeed. If we have come to the foot of Calvary and placed our sins there, then we have done exactly what this ancient altar only pictured. We have had our sins removed in order to be acceptable, once again, to God.

In Isaiah 1-5, the prophet proclaims woe on the people 9 times. Woe to you for this and woe to you for that. However, in Isaiah 6, the prophet had a vision of the Lord in divine splendor. In his anguish at his own sin in comparison to God's glory, he cried out -

“Woe *is* me, for I am undone!  
Because I *am* a man of unclean lips,

And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;  
For my eyes have seen the King,  
The LORD of hosts." Isaiah 6:5

He understood then and there that he was doomed because of his fallen state. The sins of the others had been forgotten and all he could see was his own deplorable condition. But then something happened which forever changed his view on salvation -

**Text Verse:** "Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal *which* he had taken with the tongs from the altar. <sup>7</sup> And he touched my mouth *with it*, and said:

'Behold, this has touched your lips;  
Your iniquity is taken away,  
And your sin purged.'" Isaiah 6:6, 7

As we will see today, the altar of sacrifice is Christ. The sacrifice which was consumed on the coals of the altar merely portrays His work for the poor sinners of the world. The burning coal reflects the holiness of God which consumes all that offends Him.

An exchange was made in Christ to take away our offense. It is this marvelous piece of furniture, made of wood and bronze, which depicts Him. Everything about it will reveal some aspect of His work for us. And how much I have missed in preparing this sermon I can only guess. But what I have gleaned, I now present to you. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

## I. Grace, Strength, and Judgment (verses 1 & 2)

### 1 "You shall make an altar

The instructions for the altar of sacrifice are now given. This is a specific altar which is specific for the tabernacle. Thus, there is an article in front of "altar." It is *ha'mizbeakh* - "**the** altar." Unfortunately many translations don't highlight this.

Like the description of the tabernacle itself, the things inside the tabernacle were detailed first. Only then were the hangings and structure around that furniture then noted. The same is true here with the details of the altar coming before the details of the court which surrounds it.

The *mizbeakh* comes from the word *zabakh* which means "to slaughter for sacrifice." This type of altar was first seen in Genesis 8:20 when Noah built an altar to the Lord after the flood.

### 1 (con't) **of acacia wood,**

Again acacia wood is selected for this altar and so I will again remind you of its properties. It is a very slow growing tree that would be readily available in the area of Sinai. Its heart wood is dark reddish-brown and it is beautiful when sanded and polished.

It is like cypress in Florida which is resistant to decay because it deposits in its heartwood waste substances which turn into preservatives. This renders it unpalatable to insects. It is also dense and difficult to be penetrated by water and other decaying agents. Thus it is considered an incorruptible wood.

The acacia wood pictures the incorruptible nature of Christ's humanity. As it is an altar for sacrifice, it will picture Christ in a way that any of us will be able to grasp.

<sup>1 (con't)</sup> **five cubits long and five cubits wide**

The dimensions are specific and have not been seen in any of the other furniture yet constructed. The number five needs to again be explained. Bullinger says that...

"*Five* is four *plus* one (4+1). We have had hitherto the three persons of the Godhead, and their manifestation in creation. Now we have a further revelation of a People called out from mankind, redeemed and saved, to walk with God from earth to heaven. Hence, Redemption follows creation. Inasmuch as in consequence of the fall of man creation came under the curse and was "made subject to vanity," therefore man and creation must be redeemed. Thus we have:

Father

Son

Spirit

Creation

Redemption

These are the five great mysteries, and *five* is therefore the number of GRACE."

EW Bullinger

The altar of sacrifice is then a point of grace for the people of Israel. It further then points to the grace of God in Christ. This altar of sacrifice is a point of grace in the process (and pictures) of redemption. The width and the length are both five cubits, thus it is grace multiplied. In our modern measurements, this altar would have been almost three yards wide. It's not a teeny little altar, but one

which would be big enough for the animals which would be sacrificed and burnt on it.

**1 (con't) —the altar shall be square—**

Surprisingly, the idea of something square has never been mentioned in Scripture until now. It is the word *raba* and comes from the word *arba* which simply means, "four." As the sides are equal distance and there are four sides, then it is *raba*; square.

**1 (con't) and its height shall be three cubits.**

Rather than being another multiple of five, the height is but three cubits. The number three in Scripture identifies "that which is *solid, real, substantial, complete, and entire.*" The altar is a total of 75 cubed cubits and the idea is that the sacrifice to be made here is that of substantial or complete grace. This is where the atonement sacrifices, and other sacrifices, for the people will be made.

Scholars, both ancient and modern, are perplexed about the altar because it doesn't square with instructions for the earthen altar which was detailed in Exodus 20. However, as we discovered then, those altars were used wherever the people were for slaughtering their animals. They could be in a town or in the country.

This is an entirely different altar, unique to the tabernacle, and which is used in connection with the rites of the tabernacle service. It serves an entirely different purpose than the earthen altars. In the tabernacle, God would dwell among His people, manifesting Himself to them and speaking to them through the high priest.

As He so dwelt among them, so they were to honor Him with their devotions. But, this wasn't in the tabernacle itself. It was within the surrounding courts. It was to this point that they would come, bring their sacrifices, and have their gifts sanctified to the Lord. Upon entering the courts, this was the first piece of furniture to be encountered. In this was a lesson for the people that they could not approach God except through a sacrifice.

This altar will generally be known as the altar of burnt offering. It stands in the open air of the court so that the smoke of the sacrifices would then rise and scatter. In this manner, they would be considered as an aromatic offering to God, and as a sweet smelling sacrifice.

## **<sup>2</sup>You shall make its horns on its four corners;**

This altar, and others which will be noted later, were to have horns constructed on the four corners. The *qeren*, or horn, has only been seen so far in Genesis 22:13, where Abraham lifted his eyes and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket.

This word, *qeren*, comes from the verb *qaran* which means "to send out rays" or "to shine." The idea is that rays shine out and appear like horns. Likewise horns protrude out like rays of light.

In the Bible, the horn is a picture of physical strength and power. And so, "Subsequently, horns were put on the altars to focus the symbolic presence and power of God" (HAW). The horns going out in all four directions are symbolic of the power of God going out to the four corners of the earth.

The tabernacle was situated facing east and this altar would be squared up with that. Therefore, one horn would point northeast, one northwest, one southwest, and one southeast. Thus, the omnipotence of the Lord is seen in the horns.

Before moving on, one more new word is brought into Scripture here. It is *pinnah*, or corner. It means "an angle" and so the word is also figuratively used to signify a chief, a bulwark, a stay, or even a tower. It is something which provides, as it were, stability.

<sup>2</sup> (con't) **its horns shall be of one piece with it.**

These horns were to come up from out of the altar. They were not to be removable, but as if one piece with it and protruding out, just as a horn would protrude from an animal itself. These horns would serve one purpose of binding the sacrificial animal to them so that they wouldn't thrash about. This is seen in the 118th Psalm -

"Save now, I pray, O LORD;  
O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity.  
<sup>26</sup> Blessed *is* he who comes in the name of the LORD!  
We have blessed you from the house of the LORD.  
<sup>27</sup> God *is* the LORD,  
And He has given us light;  
Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.  
<sup>28</sup> You *are* my God, and I will praise You;  
You *are* my God, I will exalt You." Psalm 118:25-28

What is certain is that the blood of the sin-offering was smeared on them. This is seen several times in Leviticus 4, such as this -

"The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, put *it* on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour its blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering." Leviticus 4:25

This blood of the sacrificial animal was smeared on them to prove the death of the animal and to petition the all-powerful God to show mercy through the substitutionary sacrifice; one life being traded for the sins of another. These would be for both original sin and the unwitting sins of the people, committed in ignorance.

Because of this, these horns on this altar were considered a place for requesting mercy. Two examples of exactly this are found in the book of 1 Kings. The first is concerning Solomon's brother who had committed an offense in trying to illegally assume the kingship from his father -

"Now Adonijah was afraid of Solomon; so he arose, and went and took hold of the horns of the altar. <sup>51</sup> And it was told Solomon, saying, "Indeed Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon; for look, he has taken hold of the horns of the altar, saying, 'Let King Solomon swear to me today that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.'"

<sup>52</sup> Then Solomon said, 'If he proves himself a worthy man, not one hair of him shall fall to the earth; but if wickedness is found in him, he shall die.'

<sup>53</sup> So King Solomon sent them to bring him down from the altar. And he came and fell down before King Solomon; and Solomon said to him, 'Go to your house.'" 1 Kings 1:50-53

The second example is found in King David's general, Joab -

Then news came to Joab, for Joab had defected to Adonijah, though he had not defected to Absalom. So Joab fled to the tabernacle of the LORD, and



took hold of the horns of the altar. <sup>29</sup> And King Solomon was told, “Joab has fled to the tabernacle of the LORD; there *he is*, by the altar.” Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, “Go, strike him down.” <sup>30</sup> So Benaiah went to the tabernacle of the LORD, and said to him, “Thus says the king, ‘Come out!’”

And he said, “No, but I will die here.” And Benaiah brought back word to the king, saying, “Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me.”

<sup>31</sup> Then the king said to him, “Do as he has said, and strike him down and bury him, that you may take away from me and from the house of my father the innocent blood which Joab shed. <sup>32</sup> So the LORD will return his blood on his head, because he struck down two men more righteous and better than he, and killed them with the sword—Abner the son of Ner, the commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, the commander of the army of Judah—though my father David did not know *it*. <sup>33</sup> Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab and upon the head of his descendants forever. But upon David and his descendants, upon his house and his throne, there shall be peace forever from the LORD.”

<sup>34</sup> So Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up and struck and killed him; and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness. 1 Kings 2:28-34

In the first instance, mercy was granted because Adonijah's sin was considered at that time unwitting. However, Joab had continued in his sin and was unrepentant in his murders. Therefore, mercy was granted to the former, and none was to be found for the latter.

<sup>2</sup> (con't) **And you shall overlay it with bronze.**

Like the other furniture thus far, this wood was to be overlaid, but instead of gold, bronze was to be used. As we have already noted, bronze symbolizes judgment. This judgment can be positive or negative. If positive, it results in purification and justification. If negative, it results in punishment or even death.

However, there is the truth that in order for there to be positive judgment for a sinful person, then there must be death of an innocent in his place. Therefore, the positive judgment still carries with it a negative aspect.

The overlaying of this altar is said by many scholars to be done in order to keep the wood below it from burning, or to make it light enough to carry. But neither of these ideas is correct. If the Lord was concerned about its structure being compromised, he would have just had the thing made out of solid bronze.

And if He was concerned about its weight, he could have instructed it to be made in pieces, like portions of the tabernacle itself. Rather, He is using these materials to make a picture of Christ and His work for us. Each detail is given for this reason.

*An altar for sacrifice, so you shall make  
It will be of wood; covered in bronze it shall be  
To it your sacrifices and offerings you shall take  
And they shall be brought there and presented to Me  
So shall you make the altar, as I instruct you  
And so it shall be made according to the words I say  
Each detail you shall make, thus you shall do  
Here on the mountain, I will show you the way  
An Altar of sacrifice, so I shall make  
He will be a Man, of Adam's seed  
To Him, shall you all of your faith take  
For in Him there is forgiveness for every misdeed*

## II. Precise Details (verses 3-8)

**<sup>3</sup> Also you shall make its pans to receive its ashes,**

Two words of note here are *siyr* or "pans," and *dashen* or "to receive its ashes." The word *siyr* has only been used once so far, when the people complained about not having the pots full of meat that they had left behind in Egypt. The word *siyr* means both "pot" and "thorn." The idea is that a pot is used to boil something up, and a thorn is something that rapidly springs up. So you can see the connection between the two words. In this instance, the *siyr* or "pans" are used to receive the ashes.

However, *dashen*, or "to receive its ashes," is a rare verb which means to be fat or to grow fat. It doesn't seem to fit unless we see that this comes from the word *deshen* which means "ashes" but specifically the ashes from fat. Therefore, it is the residue from the animal fat which is collected by these pans. This would literally be rendered, "to cleanse it from fat."

**<sup>3 (con't)</sup> and its shovels and its basins and its forks and its firepans;**

Other than the firepans, none of these have been seen yet in Scripture. The *ya*, or shovel, comes from the word *ya'ah*, or "away." One gets the idea directly. The shovel is used to move something away from where it is at. In this case, the shovels would be for shoveling out the ashes from the altar.

The *mizraq*, or basins, comes from *zaraq*, which means "to scatter." These bowls will be used for receiving and then dispensing the blood. The *mazleg*, or fork, indicates a flesh-hook. These would be large bronze implements for handling the flesh of the sacrificial animals and arranging their parts on the altar. From 1 Samuel 2:13, we see that these were three-pronged forks.

And finally, the *makhtah*, or fire-pan, were first seen in Exodus 25:38 concerning the snuff dishes of the menorah. The word comes from *khathah*, "to take." Thus they would be the implements used for the ashes of the sacrifice that needed to be removed from time to time. Each thing has a specific purpose in the sacrificial process.

<sup>3 (con't)</sup> **you shall make all its utensils of bronze.**

Like everything associated with this altar, these implements were to be made of bronze. Thus, all of what occurs is given to symbolize judgment. In the case of the altar, it is for judgment on sin in order to restore a propitious relationship with God.

<sup>4</sup> **You shall make a grate for it,**

The grate, or *makber*, is introduced here. It is a rare word, found only six times, all in Exodus, and all referring to this item. It means "a grating" as can be deduced from the word. It comes from, *kabir*, which means quilt or something that is plaited or intertwined. That comes from another word which gives the idea of abundance.

<sup>4 (con't)</sup> **a network of bronze;**

The grating is further described using the term *ma'aseh resheth*, "a working of net." This new word, *resheth*, means just that, a net, as is used for catching something.

<sup>4</sup> (con't) **and on the network you shall make four bronze rings at its four corners.**

Like the other furniture so far described, this one also has rings which are attached to it. In this case, they are attached directly to the grating and in the four corners of the altar.

<sup>5</sup> **You shall put it under the rim of the altar beneath,**

The word translated here as "rim" is *karkov*. It is only used twice and both times is it used for this same altar. It is a word which is spoken to Moses as if it would be immediately understood what it was, but there is no other word for us to adequately connect it to. Etymologically, it means "ledge" or "compass," and so it is generally believed to be a rim which went around the entire top of the altar. But, there is no reason to assume that it couldn't go all the way around the bottom of the altar as a rim for holding the boards together. Further, we read this in Leviticus 9 -

"Then Aaron lifted his hand toward the people, blessed them, and came down from offering the sin offering, the burnt offering, and peace offerings." Leviticus 9:22

After making his sacrifices, Aaron "came down" from where he was making them. And so it appears that this *karkov* is a framework around the bottom upon which one could step. If this is so, it may help us see why it is instructed that the network should be "under the rim of the altar beneath."

<sup>5</sup> (con't) **that the network may be midway up the altar.**

The grating is to be "midway up the altar." With all of this information now in place, it is completely unknown what this grating was for or what it looked like, or even where it was. Some say it is the hearth of the altar. In other words, it is the grate for the fire, or where the parts of the sacrificial animals were for burning, just as we would use a grating in our modern barbecue grills.

If so, this is on the inside and one-half ways up. This would allow for the fire to breathe. Others describe this as a grating that is affixed to the outside of the altar, going from the bottom to the middle. Others say it is a network on the outside going from the middle to the top, just below the rim. Doing an image search on the altar will show every possible variation.

What seems likely to me is that this network is an entirely separate piece from the altar itself. It is a meshwork upon which the wood of the altar is actually placed, thus forming a whole unit. The rings then are on the outside, having gone under the ledge and up the side. Thus, by carrying the bronze net at its rings, the entire altar can be carried.

If this is so, then in order to clean the residue which fell through the net, the entire altar would simply need to be picked up, everything shoveled out, and then set back down in its place. It would be a simple job to perform. In this, the grate is the hearth, and it would also be the support for carrying the altar.

<sup>6</sup> **And you shall make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood,**

Like all of the other furniture within the tabernacle, this piece also is to be carried on poles. And like the others, the poles are of *shittim*, or acacia wood. They carry

the same connotation as of the other times they are mentioned. But there is a difference...

<sup>6</sup> (con't) **and overlay them with bronze.**

The metal for the altar and rings is the same as the metal for covering the poles. Everything about this altar, including its poles, signifies judgment.

<sup>7</sup> **The poles shall be put in the rings,**

Depending on how one perceives the design of the altar and of the grating, these may be the same rings described in verse 4 or different rings. If the grating is on the inside, but not as I suggest, then they are either different rings, of which the instructions say nothing, or they are connected through holes in the wall of the altar - again, of which the instructions say nothing.

If the gratings are outside, then they would be the same rings. However, there is then no explanation as to how the sacrifices were burned, because there would still need to be gratings for the wood and offerings. But the details for these gratings would have been surprisingly left out. This is unlikely.

No matter what, the poles are intended for rings. I am of the opinion that they are the same rings mentioned in verse 4 and which are one with the grating which is inside the altar and which goes under the altar and up the side at the corners to accommodate the poles. If this is so, it then explains the next words...

<sup>7</sup> (con't) **and the poles shall be on the two sides of the altar to bear it.**

The altar, the grating, the rings, and the poles become one unit to be carried. The altar was easily transported and was light enough for it to be done so by men as they walked.

<sup>8</sup> **You shall make it hollow with boards;**

The word "hollow," or *navav*, is brought in here. It is seen just four times. It comes from a root which means "to pierce." Therefore, one gets the idea of "hollow." It is also used to mean "an idiot" one time in Job. Such is the man with a hollow head! His thinking is vain and there is nothing substantial about him or his character.

The "boards" here are not the same word used to describe the boards of the tabernacle. These are known as *lukhot*. It is the same word used to describe the tablets on which the Ten Commandments were engraved. These then would be slabs and they imply strength and solidity.

As the entire altar was to be hollow, it supports the idea of it being supported from below and yet carried on rings from its midpoint. The boards would be joined together and then overlaid with bronze, but something of this size would need additional framework to keep it together unless it was supported from below while being carried. If it had additional framework, it would then become very heavy to carry.



**\*8 (fin) as it was shown you on the mountain, so shall they make it.**

This is now the third time that Moses has been told that he is to complete the work according to the pattern he is shown on the mountain. Nothing is being left to chance and every detail is to be precisely completed. Therefore, none of this is according to human wisdom or design. Instead, it is divinely inspired.

This repetition implies that there are other details which are not recorded, but of which Moses was aware of. Because of this, everything that is recorded is given for our benefit and to understand what is on the mind of God.

And as these words are given on Sinai, which means The Bush of the Thorn, we can know that the work of Jesus, culminating in His cross and crown of thorns is being described for us in one way or another. Understanding this, let's evaluate the verses in hopes of finding out what God wants us to see.

*Where can I go to be freed from my sin?  
What place can I go where I can stand without guilt?  
Without atonement, for sure I am done in  
But for this reason, I hear that Christ's blood was spilt*

*He went to the cross to die for sin; how could it be?  
There on Calvary an exchange was made  
He died in my place, yes, He died even for me  
What a marvelous God; what an unbalanced trade*

*All of my wrongs for His righteousness!*

*Through Him I am freed from all of my guilt  
Forever to God my soul will praise and bless  
For the day when on Calvary, Christ's blood was spilt*

### **III. Wonderful Pictures**

First and foremost, this altar is a type of Christ. In the New Testament, the book of Hebrews directly equates Christ with the altar, meaning the altar of sacrifice. And more specifically, it refers to the sacrifice upon the altar -

"We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat." Hebrews 13:10

The wood, as has already been noted, pictures Christ's human nature. The word in Hebrew for the altar describes a place in which a slaughter for a sacrifice is made. This is what occurred in the giving of Christ for us. He is that place of sacrifice in the grand plan of God's redemption of man.

The dimensions seen were those of grace multiplied - 5x5. This is actually referred to twice by Peter in the New Testament. In his letters, he says -

"Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord..." 2 Peter 1:2

This is what is received through the sacrificial offering of Christ. We received his grace, and we receive His peace through the giving of His life. Christ, the Altar of sacrifice, is God's point of grace in the process of redemption.

The coequal measurement of all four sides points to the redemption of creation, four being the number of that which is created. Paul speaks in detail concerning the redemption of all creation in Romans 8. This is wrought through the work of Christ's sacrifice.

The three cubits in height point to the complete sufficiency of what Christ will do in His sacrifice. Nothing is wanting. Instead all that is necessary to complete the forgiveness of sins is entirely realized in Him. As it can be said, Christ, the true Altar had to be capable of dying while at the same time being "One upon whom death had no claim" (S. Ridout).

The horns of the altar denote the power of God in Christ which is realized throughout the four corners of the earth. His sacrifice is sufficient to redeem any and all people who come to Him for forgiveness of their sins. His omni-presence and His omnipotence are thus symbolized in these horns.

That the horns are in the corner, and not on the sides, indicates stability and permanence. There is assurance in the sacrifice which is found in Christ.

That the horns are of one piece with the altar shows that though Christ is Human, His power is unlimited. It thus implies His deity. The power of God is tied into the Man, Jesus.

The bronze of the altar points to judgment. As Christ is the Altar, then it points to the judgment of sin in Christ. Paul explains this exactly in 2 Corinthians 5 -

"Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,<sup>19</sup> that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

<sup>20</sup> Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." 2 Corinthians 5:18-21

The bronze of the judgment, covering the burnable wood, shows that Christ's humanity could not have borne all of God's wrath unless it was supported and covered by God's divine power. Again, it is a hint at the divine/human nature of Christ. He is fully human and capable of dying, and yet fully God and thus able to endure the judgment of the cross. Wood and bronze - Man yet God.

The implements which are associated with the altar all point to the sufficiency of Christ's work. Everything that is necessary to accomplish the forgiveness of sins and to completely remove every vestige of our fallen lives is pictured in these various items.

The blood, the fat, in fact the entire sacrifice is completely cleansed through the use of these bronze implements. Through Christ, the sacrifice is complete in every detail and the judgment on sin is absolute. Nothing of our former selves is left. Instead it is all carried away through the judgment He suffered on our behalf.

These implements, and what they signify, reflect the words of Christ on the cross - "It is finished" (John 19:30). The sacrifice is complete and the forgiveness is provided. The death of the Substitute has realized that for which it was intended.

The grating, which is a network of bronze, pictures the ability of Christ to completely capture and remove the sins of His people. The word for net is used 22 times in the Old Testament and it is generally in a negative sense of capturing something. It comes from a root which means "to possess."

The net then pictures the capturing of sin through the sacrifice of Christ. From there it is burnt up and entirely removed. As this grating is at the midpoint within the altar, it thus signifies the inward sufferings of Christ as He received God's judgment for our sins. For those who understand this, it is a terrible reminder of what He endured for us.

Surprisingly, it is to this grating that the rings are attached. The rings carry the same connotation as they previously did with the other furniture. They picture the four gospels which depict the sacrificial work of Christ. They are what tie us to the true Altar of sacrifice, which is Christ. They are permanently tied into His work which is sufficient to redeem all of creation, thus again the number four - as in four rings - is given. The details are specific, because the details point to Christ.

That the grating and network is explicitly said to be under the rim of the altar shows that the judgment for our sins is under Christ, who is the Altar. The sin is removed in Him and it forever remains so. It is completely taken away.

The poles, or *bad*, of the altar carry the same meaning as they did before concerning the Ark of the Covenant. The number two in the Bible indicates that there is a difference in things - they contrast, and yet they confirm. There is male and there is female. They contrast, and yet they confirm the scope of humanity.

There are two poles which together support the one altar. The altar pictures Christ and thus the poles represent the two testaments which present the work of Christ. They are what makes Christ mobile to the world as their word carries the work of His sacrifice. Each contrasts - the law and grace, but each support the whole and confirms the message.

Isaiah speaks of His sacrifice *to come*; Hebrews explains the Sacrifice *which came*. These two testaments are bound by the four gospels, all of which reveal the marvelous work He fulfilled.

Finally, the last verse concerning the altar is specific - "You shall make it hollow with boards." The word for "boards" is unusual in that it almost always refers to the tablets of the Ten Commandments. It indicates a slab and thus it implies solidity.

This pictures Christ's unwavering and steady work for His people, steadfastly and resolutely accomplishing the fulfilling of the Ten Commandments for us, even though it meant that He would die in the process. Through this solid and unwavering determination, He brought man's sin into judgment once for all time.

Finally, that the altar is explicitly said to be hollow is not without significance. This pictures Christ, in His humanity, emptying himself in order to become our atoning sacrifice for sins. This is explicitly referred to by Paul in Philippians 2 -

"Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Philippians 2:4-8 (ESV)

As you can see, every detail is selected to give us hints into the Person and work of Christ. Without His sacrifice, we would be utterly cut off from God. This is what the Bible teaches. We cannot approach Him without first coming to Him through

a sacrifice. Even the Old Testament shows us this numerous times and in numerous ways.

In the tabernacle, the veil shows us of our separation from God because of sin. In the altar we see that death is the consequence of sin. However, in the altar we also see that which speaks of sin forgiven. Arthur Pink gives his thoughts on this -

"Nature knows nothing of this: break her laws, and you must suffer the consequences; repent, but she knows no mercy and shows no pity. Science is equally powerless: it endeavors to relieve the effects entailed, but has no remedy for the disease itself. Divine revelation alone makes known an adequate provision—the Cross of Christ. There the uncompromising judgment of God dealt with sin; not by punishing the sinner, but by smiting the sinner's Substitute..."  
A.W. Pink

Before we finish, I'll give you one example from the time of Solomon. He had assumed the kingship of Israel and He sought the Lord. The Ark of the Testimony where the Lord said that He would meet with Moses was already in Jerusalem, but Solomon didn't go there to seek the Lord.

Instead, he went to Gibeon where the tabernacle was. It was there that the bronze altar which is being described now still was. Solomon understood that to seek the Lord, he had to first go through a sacrifice. Here is that account -

Now Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom, and the LORD his God *was* with him and exalted him exceedingly.

<sup>2</sup> And Solomon spoke to all Israel, to the captains of thousands and of hundreds, to the judges, and to every leader in all Israel, the heads of the fathers' *houses*. <sup>3</sup> Then Solomon, and all the assembly with him, went to the high place that *was* at Gibeon; for the tabernacle of meeting with God was

there, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness.

<sup>4</sup> But David had brought up the ark of God from Kirjath Jearim to *the place* David had prepared for it, for he had pitched a tent for it at Jerusalem.

<sup>5</sup> Now the bronze altar that Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made, he put before the tabernacle of the LORD; Solomon and the assembly sought Him *there*. <sup>6</sup> And Solomon went up there to the bronze altar before the LORD, which *was* at the tabernacle of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it.

<sup>7</sup> On that night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, "Ask! What shall I give you?" 2 Chronicles 1:1-7

It is stories like these that show us that we must come to God, not directly, but through a sacrifice. As Christ is the end of the law, the entire Old Testament sacrificial system is ended. Therefore, it is only through Christ, whom these ancient things picture, that we can approach God. Without Him, God will neither hear nor respond.

But through Christ, we have full and complete access to the throne of grace. Let us take this to heart. If you have never come to God through the offering which He made - the offering of His Son, then your prayers will not be heard. Your sin has caused a wall between you and Him which must first be broken down.

Let me tell you how to get that fixed so that you can have full and complete access to God through Christ the Lord...

**Closing Verse:** "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. <sup>2</sup> And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma." Ephesians 5:1, 2



**Next Week:** Exodus 27:9-21 *It is a lot of detail to tackle...* (The Court of the Tabernacle) (75th Exodus sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **Christ, Our Altar**

You shall make an altar of acacia wood

Five cubits long and five cubits wide

The altar shall be square, as is understood

And its height shall be three cubits, so I decide

You shall make its horns on its four corners

Its horns shall be of one piece with it

And you shall overlay it with bronze

So shall you do; so I to you submit

Also you shall make its pans to receive its ashes

And its shovels and its basins and its forks, and its firepans too

You shall make all its utensils of bronze

Such as I now instruct to you

You shall make a grate for it

A network of bronze; so shall it be

And on the network you shall make four bronze rings

At its four corners, as instructed by Me  
You shall put it under the rim  
Of the altar beneath, so you shall do  
That the network may be midway up the altar  
This is the design as I am instructing you

And you shall make poles for the altar  
Poles of acacia wood  
And overlay them with bronze  
So shall it be; so it is understood  
The poles shall be put in the rings  
The poles shall on the two sides be  
Of the altar to bear it  
Stick closely to these instructions from Me

You shall make it hollow with boards  
As it was to you on the mountain shown  
So shall they make it, according to My words  
To them shall these instructions be made known  
In the altar God's wisdom in Christ is revealed  
Each detail selected to show us of Jesus  
And through His offering, a joyous destiny is sealed  
Surely God in Christ has done marvelous things for us

And so we praise You, O King of the ages  
Our hearts are filled with Your beauty and Your glory  
Marvelous things You have revealed in the Bible's pages  
Marvelous things in this wonderful redemption story

Hallelujah and Amen...