

WE HAVE AN ALTAR!

Intro. - The Apostle is writing to Jews who were tempted to “draw back” into Judaism. This was due either to the draw of the old and familiar types, or because of persecution.

- Vs. 9: It is good that the heart be established with grace, not meats. Then comes our text.

I. WHAT IS THIS ALTAR

- A. A clause that has been fearfully perverted.
 1. Scripture has been and is often used and twisted to make it say what one desires.
 2. Deceived by the mere sound of word, the idea is taught that as the Israelites of old had a literal and material altar, we Christians by Divine appointment have a material altar. An altar calls for a sacrifice:
 3. Our text used for the invention of “the mass” with an unbloody sacrifice made by priests.
 4. The altar of our text is opposed to, set in contrast to the visible and material altar of Judaism. That was only a type.
 5. The aim of the Spirit is to show the excellence of Christ in his person and work over the types & shadows of the old.
- B. The Old Testament type. The idea of an altar:
 1. Noah coming out of ark built not a house for himself but an altar. Only by Christ can we present our sacrifice of praise.
 2. Abram coming into the promised land erected an altar. A symbol of dependence upon and worship of God.
 3. Jacob “built an altar and called it God, the God of Israel” (Gen. 33:20). It is in Christ that we are eternally secure.
 4. Moses built an altar and called the name of it the Lord my Banner (Ex. 17:15). In Christ we overcome our enemies.
 5. It is especially the brazen altar in the tabernacle, made of wood and overlaid with brass (Ex.27:1-8).
 6. This altar was the **way of approach** to God, where God promised to meet his people (Ex. 29:43).
- C. The New Testament antitype: Matt. 23:19
 1. Many writers make the altar to be the wooden cross on which Christ was nailed the altar.
 2. This is incorrect and leads to many mistakes.
 3. Christ himself in his glorious person, is our altar, the antitype to the brazen altar.
 4. This is that which gives infinite worth to the sacrifice. This is why the writer has pointed out the glory of Christ’s person.
 5. Christ is the true Brazen-altar, Laver, Alter of incense, Candlestick, Table of shewbread, Mercyseat, and Ark of the Cov.
 6. Our altar unlike the altar of Judaism is inside the veil. Christ by his sacrifice entered into the holy of holies. We enter.
 7. Christ the true altar supplies us with spiritual meat: grace whereby the heart is established before God!

II. THE SACRIFICE OF THE ALTAR

- A. The sacrifice on the Great Day of the Atonement.
 1. Our text is speaking of the Old Testament sin offerings.
 2. It is especially the sin offering on the Day of Atonement.
 3. On this day, two goats were taken, one for the scapegoat, the other “unto Jehovah”.
 4. One was killed, taken out, burned. The other, led outside to wander. Neither was eaten!
- B. The many sacrifices: meal offering, trespass offering, thank offerings
 1. The Jewish altar foreshadowed not only Christ as sacrifice for sins, but also the life-sustenance of his people
 2. Of the many sacrifices laid on the alter, only part was consumed by fire, the rest was reserved as food for the priests, or for the offerer and his family.
 3. This food was to be considered as sacred and the eating of it as a great religious privilege.
 4. Yet the Jews who want to hang on to these OT types after Christ’s once for all offering are profited nothing!
 5. The Christian is provided with far more excellent food for the soul.
- C. A more excellent food for the soul!
 1. The distinctions of the law were inadequate for justification and peace w/ God.
 2. The sacrifice of atonement for sin provided no food for those who offered it.
 3. Jesus’ once for all sacrifice is all sufficient, an end to the types and shadow of the law.
 4. The Christian has spiritual food far more holy and precious than any Israelite ever had: **Christ is our food!**
 5. Christ has not only propitiated God, but he is the nourishment of his people.
- D. “That he might sanctify the people with his own blood” (vs. 12).
 1. Who? Jesus: His personal name as man.
 2. For whom? The people: not the whole human race, but God’s people, Christ’s sheep.
 3. Even as the OT altar was only for Israel, so our altar is only for believers in Christ Jesus.
 4. Sanctify: not merely expiate our sins, but also purchasing us and renewing us and nourishing us.
 5. Christ as our altar has separated his people from the world, consecrated them to God, so that we are acceptable to him.

III. OUR PARTAKING OF THE ALTAR (I Cor. 10:18)

- A. The right to partake. Christ is the nourishment of our souls!
 1. Does not belong to those who serve at the temple, who go back to the types and shadows.
 2. Belongs to those who receive Christ as the fulfillment of those OT offerings by faith.
 3. By faith we cling not to the outward symbols but lift our hearts up to Christ who is now physically in heaven.
- B. We partake of Christ. (Lord’s Supper is not specifically mentioned here, but is implied.)
 1. Our sins are all blotted out!
 2. We are permitted to feed upon a Sacrifice of the highest and holiest kind.
 3. We are furnished with grace, rejoicing in our salvation in Christ and our fellowship with God.
 4. Our altar is now within the veil, whereby we have access to enter God’s presence!