

Exodus 27:1-8, 30:18-21–The Great Altar and Outside Things of the Tabernacle

Calvin, TSK, Lexicon, Gaebelin, Schultz, Sailhamer, Poythress, Edersheim, Clarke, Barnes, Bush, Poole, Trapp, Gray, Geneva, JFB, Delitzsch, Henry
Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: The first thing a worshiper would meet as he went to the tabernacle was **the curtains that marked off the courtyard**. Upon entering the courtyard, he would see the **Great Bronze Altar**. After the Great Altar, and before the entrance to the tabernacle, was the **big bronze laver**.

You will hear about these 3 things today as we conclude our teachings from the tabernacle.

Our headings are:

The Bronze Altar of the Tabernacle

The Bronze Laver of the Tabernacle

The Courtyard of the Tabernacle

Our goals are: **That you will recognize that the blood of the Savior was shed, one time for all times, so you who were once estranged from God, could come back into fellowship with him and live in his house again.**

The Bronze Altar of the Tabernacle

1 "You shall make an altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits wide — the altar shall be square — and its height shall be three cubits.

1. The Great Altar was made of acacia wood and was 7.5ft square and 4.5ft high.

It was a place where sacrifices were made for the people in general and especially for the priests before they could go into the tabernacle and approach God.

So this Great Altar served as a mediator between God and man. The sacrifices on this altar satisfied the claims of a holy God.

Of course the **blood of bulls and goats ultimately could not forgive sins**, but Jesus came to be sacrificed for the sins of those who were estranged from God. So when these sacrifices were made, the offerer **had in view the coming sacrifice of Jesus**.

Hebrews 9:13 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, 14 **how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God**, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Just as the sacrifices on the Great Bronze Altar brought the priests into the tabernacle where he would have access to God, so does the sacrifice of Jesus bring those who plead his sacrifice before the Father, into the household of God.

2 "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.

2. Four horns were made at the four corners of the Great Bronze Altar as part of the construction.

a. The horns represented a place of help and a place of sanctuary. So if someone accidentally killed another, in order to be protected from the avenger, he would run there and hold on to the horns of the altar and could not be killed.

b. There were 4 horns at the 4 corners of the Great Bronze Altar symbolizing that refuge was available for all God's people from all parts of Israel and, ultimately, the world. Three tribes of Israel were on each side of the tabernacle.

c. But the horns only became a place of refuge when the blood of the sacrifices was put on it.

Exodus 29:12 "You shall **take some of the blood of the bull and put it on the horns of the altar** with your finger, and pour all the blood beside the base of the altar.

And in fact, **these horns were used to tie down the animal about to be sacrificed.**

The meaning then is:

The protection of the one who held on to the horns of the altar was tied to the sacrifice made. Psalm 118:27.

These horns appear again as a place of refuge in the Lord Jesus – except he had enough horns for the whole world!

Revelation 5: 6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, **having seven horns** and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

Isn't it exciting Jesus was himself nailed on his extremities to hold him to the cross...in his two hands and his two feet?

3. The Great Bronze Altar, which had wood on the inside, was overlaid with bronze.

There are some who argue the altar could not have been made of wood otherwise it would have burned up. But because it was overlaid with bronze, a very hard alloy, and **because there was no oxygen for the wood to burn,** it could not therefore be burned up. Furthermore, this altar was a **temporary movable altar!**

3 "Also you shall make its pans to receive its ashes, and its shovels and its basins and its forks and its firepans; you shall make all its utensils of bronze.

4. All the utensils of the Great Altar were made of bronze and so I like to call it the Great Bronze Altar.

a. **The pans received the ashes** of the burnt animals.

b. **The shovels were used to scrape up ashes** and put them in the pans.

c. **The basins were for catching the blood of the animals being sacrificed** so the blood could be sprinkled on the altar.

d. **The forks or fleshhooks were used to turn the animals' flesh to make sure it was properly burned** and for the priests to use to take part of the sacrifice that God prescribed for them to eat.

e. **The firepans were likely used to carry burning coals or fires** to the Altar of Incense in the Holy Place.

4 "You shall make a grate for it, a network of bronze; and on the network you shall make four bronze rings at its four corners. 5 "You shall put it under the rim of the altar beneath, that the network may be midway up the altar.

5. The Great Bronze Altar had a grate so the ashes of the burnt animals would fall through and be collected underneath.

6 "And you shall make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with bronze. 7 "The poles shall be put in the rings, and the poles shall be on the two sides of the altar to bear it. 8 "You shall make it hollow with boards; as it was shown you on the mountain, so shall they make it.

6. There were rings attached to the sides of the altar and acacia poles, overlaid with bronze, were made to carry the altar.

The Great Altar was relatively light and movable as it was made of boards. The permanent altar was made with stone.

7. The Great Altar, as with everything else about God's tabernacle, had to be made exactly as God said.

8. Lessons:

a. Notice the orderliness of worship. Nothing was done in a haphazard way. This is a warning to modern innovators!

b. There is a better altar for you today – the altar where Jesus was sacrificed. You eat of him by faith so you can live. (Others reject that altar outside the city (the altar was outside of the tabernacle) and so they have no right to eat of Christ.)

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

And just as any who touched the Great Bronze Altar after all the sacrifices were made was declared to be ceremonially holy, anyone who touches the Lord Jesus, is declared to be truly holy. (Jesus said that the altar purified the gift given to God!)

c. When you come to Christ and hold on to him, you are safe from the terrors of hell and the Devil who want to destroy you. Jesus is the horn of salvation! Jesus is the Lamb with 7 horns...not just 4.

The Bronze Laver of the Tabernacle

1. The bronze laver was a large pot, probably suspended on wood, containing a large quantity of water.

Exodus 30:18 "You shall also make a **laver of bronze, with its base also of bronze, for washing.** You shall put it between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. And you shall put water in it,

19 "for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it. 20 "When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the LORD, they shall wash with water, lest they die. 21 "So they shall wash their hands and their feet, lest they die. And it shall be a statute forever to them — to him and his descendants throughout their generations."

2. The priests were required to use this water for their purification purposes.

After the sacrifices were made, the priests had to be ceremonially washed before entering in the Tent of Meeting, the tabernacle. This washing was not a literal or a total washing, like a bath, but a ritual washing.

Isn't this remarkably like baptism? Baptism doesn't save but is symbolic of your salvation. You can even see the mode of baptism. You don't have to go under water. Baptism is not a bath. It is a symbol!

3. If a priest were unclean because he did not wash and he entered the tabernacle to go before God for the people, he was killed.

4. Lessons:

a. Thank God for the sensible sign of baptism which reminds you your sins were washed away by the blood of the Lamb. And it is sort of interesting: After the blood of the altar came the water!

b. Thank God you are now incorporated into the House of God after the sacrifice was made and you were baptized. It is a privileged place to be. Live like you are a priest in the House of God.

The Courtyard of the Tabernacle (Exodus 27:9-19)

1. The courtyard of the tabernacle was a perfect oblong, 150ft by 75ft. (Exodus 27:9-19)

2. The courtyard was determined by a fence of curtains, of various colors, and held up by strong pillars.

The fence was about 7.5ft tall. **And there was lots of linen!**

3. The courtyard, which was marked by the fences of curtains, had 4 purposes:

a. It was a barrier to **prevent forbidden non-believing foreigners from approaching God.**

b. It **kept wild animals – unclean animals – from coming to the Lord.**

c. It was a visual **reminder to God's people of their separation from the world** and their closeness to a holy God.

d. It was a **reminder that there was only 1 way to God as there was only one gate.**

4. Lessons:

a. There is a clear distinction between the world and believers and you see this in the courtyard which was a type of the church.

The church, as shown by the separation with the curtains, is **distinct from the world.**

The church is **in the world,** even though it was separated.

The church is **stable and hangs on solid strong doctrines.**

The church is protected with the **covering of Christ's righteousness that is credited to her.**

Revelation 19:8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

b. So your life and worship must be notably different from the world. Don't change worship to accommodate the cravings of others or stroke their egos.

c. Your soul must yearn for the courts of the Lord...and it would yearn if you think of what the Lord has done for you!

Psalms 84:2 My soul longs, yes, even faints For the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

Conclusion:

On the Great Bronze Altar sacrifices were made for God's people. When the sacrifices were made for the priests, **they were then washed with water from the large laver and were able to enter into the tabernacle.** **God's people were able to come close to him in the courtyard, but non-believing people were kept out.**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Thank God Jesus was that sacrifice, nailed in his two hands and two feet for you and you could be protected from the Destroyer who was after your soul.

2. Thank God he incorporated you and your children into his family by holy baptism. You don't have to do battle alone anymore. You don't have to be a loner. You've got brothers and sisters. You all have one Father!

3. Thank God he keeps you and fellow believers close to him. You are safe and have communion with him. Psalms 100:4 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise...

4. Invite others to come through the blood of the Lamb, the one who doesn't have 4 horns...but 7 – that number of completion-into the family of God. His blood is enough for everyone.

Finally: Christ was sacrificed for sinners **who would eat of him- receive into your heart** what he did. Would you eat of him and live? Or will you reject him and die and spend eternity paying for your sins yourself? The choice is yours. Make the right one.