

The Altar

Exodus 27:1-8

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. 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. 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 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. 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.

I. Origin

A. The first altar was built by Adam although we do not have a proof of that.

1. But we find that his first two sons also built altars, Abel to sacrifice his animal on and Cain to burn his grain upon.

B. The reason for the altar was that man is sinful and unless an innocent animal was offered up for the sinner, the sinner could not approach God.

1. In the case of the Israelites, it was a system of sacrifice as sin offerings. In the sacrificial system, man understood that he had forfeited his life through sin. Life was returned to him by the forfeiture of the life of the animal he brought. Burnt offerings on the altar suggested man's total commitment to God. Maxie Dunnam and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, *Exodus*, vol. 2, *The Preacher's Commentary Series* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1987), 303.

C. Abraham was a very prolific altar builder.

1. Ge 12:7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

2. Ge 12:8 And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.

3. Ge 13:4 to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

4. Ge 13:18 Then Abram moved his tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to the LORD.

5. The final time it is recorded that Abraham built an altar was when he built one on which to offer his son Isaac.

- a. Ge 22:9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.
 - b. This occasion was where God shows them the substitutionary principle for the ram was offered in place of Isaac.
- D. So then it is no surprise that God gives them command to build an altar for the tabernacle.
- 1. Because without a substitutionary sacrifice they cannot approach God.

II. Position of the Altar

- A. It was in the first place as one entered the tabernacle.
- B. This meant that you could not enter without a sacrifice.
 - 1. The furniture in the outer court is made of brass which represents judgment of sin. The sin question must be settled in the court before entrance can be made into the Holy Place. J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Commentary: The Law (Exodus 19–40), electronic ed., vol. 5 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 74.

III. Commanded

- A. This was not an idea developed by man but a command from God.
- B. It was a picture of the substitutionary death of Jesus on the cross.
 - 1. All the millions of animals offered in sacrifice had their fulfilment in the sacrifice of Jesus.
 - 2. That is why we do not offer sacrifices today.
 - 3. Jesus was the one that fulfilled God's plan.
 - 4. Ephesians 5:2 (NKJV) 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.
 - 5. Hebrews 9:13-14 (NKJV) 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?

IV. Misused

- A. Presumptuous sin.
- B. But what a solemn lesson is read out to us from these horns of the brazen altar! In

Exodus 21:14, God says, "But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour to slay him with guile, thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die." For the presumptuous sinner, and the hypocritical deceiver, the atonement of Jesus itself provides no shelter, while he continues such. It is of no avail for a person to say, "I am trusting in the blood of Jesus," while presumptuously continuing in sin, or hypocritically professing repentance. "Thou shalt take him from Mine altar, that he may die," is the stern command of Divine inflexible justice. Solemn thought! How many a soul has gone on for years, clinging with vain hope to a mere profession of faith in Jesus, lulled into a false peace, with a spirit unsanctified and a soul unsaved, to perish at last. Thus was it in type with Adonijah. "And Solomon said, "If he will show himself a worthy man, there shall not a hair of him fall to the earth: but if wickedness shall be found in him, he shall die" (1 Kings 1:52). So it turned out. "King Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada: and he fell upon him that he died" (1 Kings 2:25). Types of the Tabernacle.