

Exodus 27

We are still in the section of Exodus where Moses is receiving all of the instructions for building the Tabernacle, the Sanctuary and all the “furniture” that it contains.

Exodus 27:1-8 NKJV "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*.

That’s a pretty good description of the Altar. Bronze or brass is always a symbol of judgement. And the Hebrew word for Altar means “slaughter” or “kill”. The idea behind the word is “killing place”. We know that the Altar was for the “Burnt Offerings” for sin. The word for “burnt offerings” is sometimes spoken of as a holocaust, that is, it pictures the ascending smoke of the burning flesh.

The altar was a 7.5 square foot structure and about 4.5 feet tall. Like the other things for the Tabernacle it too could be carried by poles. There was a grate of brass for the inside on which the animal was placed. The horns were also used to tie the dead animal down. As the animal was consumed by the fire, the ashes went through the grate and into the pans that were placed underneath. Shovels and large forks were used in the preparation or cleanup of the sacrifice. Forks were also used to separate out some of the meat that was given to the priests.

The animal was killed and the blood poured out from its neck into the basins. These were used to smear the blood on the horns of Altar. The blood may have been sprinkled onto the sides of the Altar or poured out at its base. The horns symbolized the “strength” of the atonement made on the altar.

An interesting side-note: After the rebellion of Korah in Numbers 16 (he and his family were jealous of Moses’ leadership), after the LORD swallowed up the family of Korah and consumed those who followed them, Moses took the incense censors that the rebels were holding while they were consumed and he ordered that they be pounded flat and became a covering on the sides of the altar! This became a reminder to all who approached the altar that the LORD was against all those who came against His anointed servants, Moses and Aaron.

More on this in a moment.

Exodus 27:9-19 NKJV "You shall also make the court of the tabernacle. For the south side *there shall be* hangings for the court *made of* fine woven linen, one hundred cubits long for one side. (10) And its twenty pillars and their twenty sockets *shall be* bronze. The hooks of the pillars and their bands *shall be* silver. (11) Likewise along the length of the north side *there shall be* hangings one

hundred *cubits* long, with its twenty pillars and their twenty sockets of bronze, and the hooks of the pillars and their bands of silver. (12) "And along the width of the court on the west side *shall be* hangings of fifty cubits, with their ten pillars and their ten sockets. (13) The width of the court on the east side *shall be* fifty cubits. (14) The hangings on *one side of the gate shall be* fifteen cubits, *with* their three pillars and their three sockets. (15) And on the other side *shall be* hangings of fifteen *cubits, with* their three pillars and their three sockets. (16) "For the gate of the court *there shall be* a screen twenty cubits long, *woven of* blue, purple, and scarlet *thread, and* fine woven linen, made by a weaver. It *shall have* four pillars and four sockets. (17) All the pillars around the court shall have bands of silver; their hooks *shall be* of silver and their sockets of bronze. (18) The length of the court *shall be* one hundred cubits, the width fifty throughout, and the height five cubits, *made of* fine woven linen, and its sockets of bronze. (19) All the utensils of the tabernacle for all its service, all its pegs, and all the pegs of the court, *shall be* of bronze.

The Sanctuary was surrounded by a curtain of fine linen. The curtain was 150 feet long by 75 feet wide. There was a "gate" or curtain at the entrance that was 30 feet wide.

It had four purposes:

1. To keep people out who were not allowed near the Sanctuary, altar or laver.
2. To keep wild animals out
3. Symbolic demarcation between the Holy Presence of God and the "outside" world.
4. The single gate was the only "way" of approach to God.

While much of the entire structure was bronze (judgment), there were silver caps on the pillars that held the curtains. Silver is symbolic of redemption. The Sanctuary and later the Temple building were off limits to but a few. The courtyards became the place where the rest "met with God", especially in the Temple times. The courts were part of many Scriptures. For example,

- *Blessed is the man You choose, and cause to approach You, that he may dwell in Your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, of Your holy temple. (Psa 65:4)*
- *My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. (Psa 84:2)*
- *For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. (Psa 84:10)*
- *Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. (Psa 100:4)*

Exodus 27:20-21 NKJV "And you shall command the children of Israel that they bring you pure oil of **pressed (beaten = KJV) olives for the light, to cause the lamp to burn continually.** (21) In the tabernacle of meeting, outside the veil which *is* before the Testimony, Aaron and his sons shall **tend** it from evening until morning before the LORD. *It shall be* a statute forever to their generations on behalf of the children of Israel.

The evening and morning ritual was to ensure that the lamps stayed lit all of the time. The Holy Place was shrouded with linens and skins so that no natural light could enter.

The "beaten" oil was considered the best oil by the ancient Jewish writers. The olives were beaten (or pressed) with a pestle in a mortar, and **not ground in a mill**, that so it might be

quite clear; for being bruised and beaten, only the pulp or flesh of the olive was broken, but being ground in a mill, the pits were broken and ground, and so the oil not so pure.

For all three of these topics, the Altar, the Courtyard and the Oil, there are more spiritual understandings. Remember, these were sacred things but also, for the Jews, they were part of the rituals of the Levitical priesthood. This was the place where the Israelites met God. But it is also a picture of what was required to meet with Him, who could meet with Him and when they could meet with Him.

But the system was a picture of something greater, something eternal. The old way was never intended to be "forever". And, because of the fleshly nature of man, it soon became less about the hidden truths of salvation and more about getting through the rituals.

1 Samuel 15:22-23 NKJV So Samuel said: "Has the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *And* to heed than the fat of rams. (23) For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from *being* king."

Isaiah 1:9-15 NKJV Unless the LORD of hosts Had left to us a very small remnant, We would have become like Sodom, We would have been made like Gomorrah. (10) Hear the word of the LORD, You rulers of Sodom; Give ear to the law of our God, You people of Gomorrah: (11) "To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" Says the LORD. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats. (12) "When you come to appear before Me, Who has required this from your hand, To trample My courts? (13) Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies— I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. (14) Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing *them*. (15) When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood.

(And several other prophets also wrote similar words of rebuke from the LORD)

The entire structure was symbolic of God, His presence, His Holiness, His Judgment, His Mercy and ultimately, the Person and Work of His Son.

The altar is both the means and the Person of sacrifice: Jesus. It is the cross on which He was placed and pierced through to have His blood poured out for the forgiveness of sin. The altar and Jesus were the place with the wrath of God was appeased and His righteous requirements for sin were satisfied.

Stephen spoke of this before he was stoned to death:

Acts 7:42-53 NKJV Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the Prophets: 'DID YOU OFFER ME SLAUGHTERED ANIMALS AND SACRIFICES DURING FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL? (43) YOU ALSO TOOK UP THE TABERNACLE OF MOLOCH, AND THE STAR OF YOUR GOD

REMPHAN, IMAGES WHICH YOU MADE TO WORSHIP; AND I WILL CARRY YOU AWAY BEYOND BABYLON.'

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(47) But Solomon built Him a house. (48) "However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: (49) 'HEAVEN IS MY THRONE, AND EARTH IS MY FOOTSTOOL. WHAT HOUSE WILL YOU BUILD FOR ME? SAYS THE LORD, OR WHAT IS THE PLACE OF MY REST? (50) HAS MY HAND NOT MADE ALL THESE THINGS?' (51) "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers *did*, so *do* you. (52) Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, (53) who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept *it*."

Let's look at a couple of other relevant passages:

Hebrews 8:1-5 NKJV Now *this is* the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, (2) a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. (3) For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore *it is* necessary that this One also have something to offer.

Hebrews 9:2-28 NKJV (2) For a tabernacle was prepared: the first *part*, in which *was* the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; (3) and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, (4) which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which *were* the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; (5) and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

(6) Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing *the services*. (7) But into the second part the high priest *went* alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and *for* the people's sins *committed* in ignorance; (8) the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing.

(9) **It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—** (10) concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. (11) But Christ came *as* High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. (12) Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. (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?**

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(18) Therefore not even the first *covenant* was dedicated without blood. (19) For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, (20)

saying, "THIS IS THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT WHICH GOD HAS COMMANDED YOU." (21) Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. (22) And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. (23) Therefore *it was* necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. (24) **For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;** (25) not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another— (26) He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (27) And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, (28) **so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.**

That's what this is all about. A picture of the spiritual; a picture of the heavenly and a picture of the ONLY way into the presence of God. Did the old covenant sacrifices work? Did the spilling of the blood of animals take away sin?

Hebrews 10:1-4 NKJV For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. (2) For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. (3) But in those *sacrifices there is* a reminder of sins every year. (4) **For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.**

What did their blood do? The blood covered the sin and by grace, provided forgiveness. But Christ:

Hebrews 10:5-10 NKJV Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU DID NOT DESIRE, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME. (6) IN BURNT OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICES FOR SIN YOU HAD NO PLEASURE. (7) THEN I SAID, 'BEHOLD, I HAVE COME— IN THE VOLUME OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME— TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD.'" (8) Previously saying, "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING, BURNT OFFERINGS, AND OFFERINGS FOR SIN YOU DID NOT DESIRE, NOR HAD PLEASURE IN THEM" (which are offered according to the law), (9) then He said, "BEHOLD, I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD." He takes away the first that He may establish the second. (10) By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.

His perfect blood was required but it was His obedience that sealed the Eternal covenant between Father and Son. "I have come to do Your will of God".

Next is the courtyard. While it had the purpose of separating the sacred from the profane, what is significant today is that because of our Savior and High Priest, we don't have to stop there. We have the privilege of entering into God's very presence. The veil is torn and the curtains removed. Paul wrote to gentile believers about this as well:

Ephesians 2:13-18 NKJV But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (14) For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, **and has broken down the middle wall of separation, (15) having abolished in His**

flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, (16) and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. (17) And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. (18) For through Him **we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.**

And lastly, as we have learned before, pure oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. In the earthly tabernacle, God never wanted the lamps of the Menorah in the Holy Place to lose their fire. Only by a continual supply of oil and trimming of the wicks could keep them burning. We can only continue to be on fire for God if we are continually supplied with the oil of the Holy Spirit and are “trimmed” by God to bear even more light. The trimming and the preparation of the oil are symbolic of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives as He applies pressure to mold us into the image of the Son of God.

2Corinthians 4:6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:8 For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Matthew 5:16 NKJV Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.