



*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

(John 14:6)

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

(John 5:24)

*I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*

(John 11:25-26)

I have often said, and still believe it to be true, a Christian can in no wise grasp the depth of beauty and meaning of the Gospel without a solid foundation in Old Testament study. The New Testament, and the Old Testament, are not two different books, in a sense, but rather the same story of God's works from the beginning to the end; and each is full of the beauty of our Lord Jesus Christ! He is the WORD, and all of the WORD!

When we consider the Tabernacle of the Wilderness, we often consider it merely a matter of historical meaning and of no significance insofar as the Gospel is concerned. If we do so, we err greatly, for the Tabernacle is given as an earthly picture of the spiritual reality of the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a complete picture of Him in all of His majesty and grace. However, this devotion is dedicated to only one article of furniture of the Tabernacle which is in the outer court thereof – the Brazen (or Bronze) Altar – the Altar of Burnt Offerings! But let us first consider a general outline of the Tabernacle.

It had an outer court and a gate opening to the east. As you will recall, our Lord entered Jerusalem from the Eastern Gate for the last time before His sacrifice. He is also expected to come again in the same way that the sun rises from the east. Just inside the Eastern Gate of the Tabernacle there was an Altar of Sacrifice. The sacrifice was the first object of obligation for all entering the place of God. Without a sacrifice, there would be no entry. Next was the formal enclosure of the Tabernacle. It was a structure covered in a most indecorous mantle of goat's hair. From the outside, there was nothing attractive

about the Tabernacle. It was, in its full expression, a full shadow of our Lord. *2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. 3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.* (Isaiah 53:2-3)

Inside the Tabernacle proper were curtains of fine linen and silk, and walls covered in gold plating. The first entry into this enclosure was the Holy Place where only the priests were allowed after having first approached the Laver of Washing just before the entrance. This Laver was used to wash the hands and feet of the priests, and allowed them to see the mirrored image of their face in the Laver. This is comparable to our Prayer of Humble Access in the Anglican worship service of Holy Communion. The Laver could be compared to the Word of God as a mirror of man's soul. It reflects our frail image of helpless beings without the grace and mercy of God. We see the wicked works of King David as both murderer and adulterer. We see ourselves even in Paul and Judas. But we also see that David repented and was the Apple of God's Eye. *For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.* (James 1:23-25)

Next in order of the Tabernacle Proper was the Holy of Holies. Only the High Priest was allowed into this area once a year on the Day of Atonement. In approaching the entrance from the Holy Place, the High Priest must pass between the Table of Shewbread representing the Body of Christ (on the right) and the Seven-pronged Candelabra (on his left representing the Light of the Holy Spirit in the Churches). He then would approach the Altar of incense whose smoke arose to the Heavens representing the prayers the High Priest there offered on behalf of the people rising to Heaven (like Christ [our High Priest] as an intercessor). He then entered the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies) in which was the Ark of the Covenant containing the Ten Commandments, Manna, and the Rod of Aaron. Just above the Ark of the Covenant was the Mercy Seat. Mercy always triumphs over judgment. Were it not for the mercy of God, engendered by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, we would yet be lost. This room (15 ft by 15 ft) was completely dark. That was the place wherein God met with man. The mysteries of God have not been revealed to man except in those matters which are necessary for his salvation.

All of these points are mere general descriptions of the Tabernacle. It would take many books to cover, in detail, the full meaning of each article of furniture and space of it. The Tabernacle represents the fullness of the Gospel to us. It represents the works of Christ in its design and function. It represents the Church as a dwelling place in which God lives by His Spirit. *And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.* (Eph 2:20-22)

It represents the Christian believer as *"the Temple of God."* *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?* (1 Cor 6:19)

There are too many ways in which the Tabernacle reveals the Person of Christ to list in a short devotion; however, let us consider that Brazen Altar as His foremost symbol. Without a sacrifice, no man can see God. That sacrifice was made by our Lord. He is the Lamb of God, without blemish, who was sacrificed from the Foundation of the World. Remember, we are all guilty of sin. None are without that blemish of poison from Adam's blood. *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* (Romans 3:23) And what

sentence is passed upon all who sin? *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* (Romans 6:23) That penalty MUST be paid. It could never be satisfied by the death of another sinner. Only a spotless and unblemished Lamb would suffice – the Lamb of God.

Since the Brazen Altar is the first object we confront on entering the Tabernacle, we must have a sufficient sacrifice if we will meet God. That Brazen Altar is Christ. No need to worry about the Laver of Washing, or the Shewbread Table, or the Candelabra, or the Altar of Incense, if we have not been covered by that sacrifice of entry. The only access to the Mercy Seat of God is by way of that Brazen Altar.

Thank goodness for those verses that follow Romans 3:23 – *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.* (Romans 3:24-25)

Since the sacrifice of Christ is a full and sufficient sacrifice for our sins, the true church no longer has an altar. An altar is for making sacrifices, and our sacrifice has already been satisfied in Christ. He has become our High Priest, and He it is who has torn the curtain separating us from the Most Holy from top to bottom by His sacrifice. *And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the TOP TO BOTTOM.* (Mark 15:37-38) We have not altar, but we do have the Lord's Table at which we commune together with our Lord. *But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?* (Heb 9:11-14)

Churches today strive to have the most elaborate of buildings, and ones which will put to shame any neighboring church. The investment alone for such buildings would provide sustenance for many missionaries on foreign fields. Yet, most of the mainline churches spend more on buildings and salaries than upon the poor and lost. The director of missions on foreign fields for most churches is a plush and high salaried position that requires little interaction with the poor and dirty souls for whom they claim to care.

The Brazen Altar is not something that we make tiny miniatures of to wear around our necks. It illustrates death. In order to be of Christ, we must take up our crosses daily and follow Him. In fact, as He died for our salvation, we, too, must die to self. We must accept that sacrifice that admits us to God's Holy Presence and, in so doing, we die to self, time-after-time, by putting the interests of Christ and His people above our own desires. It is difficult to deny self, but we must. When we have learned to deny self for the interests of Christ, it will become a righteous habit easy to follow. His cross is not burdensome as some would claim, but easy to be borne. After all, it was His blood that was shed there for many. It is HIS sacrifice we claim for our justification.

Have you approached that Brazen Altar?