

The Altar of Burnt Offering



And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof shall be three cubits. And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof: his horns shall be of the same: and thou shalt overlay it with brass. And thou shalt make his pans to receive his ashes, and his shovels, and his basons, and his fleshhooks, and his firepans: all the vessels thereof thou shalt make of brass. And thou shalt make for it a grate of network of brass; and upon the net shalt thou make four brasen rings in the four corners thereof. And thou shalt put it under the compass of the altar beneath, that the net may be even to the midst of the altar. And thou shalt make staves for the altar, staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with brass. And the staves shall be put into the rings, and the staves shall be upon the two sides of the altar, to bear it. Hollow with boards shalt thou make it: as it was shewed thee in the mount, so shall they make it. Exodus 27:1-8

The sacred tent was enclosed in an open space called the court, which was surrounded by hangings, or screens, of fine linen, suspended from pillars of brass. The entrance to this enclosure was at the eastern end. It was closed by curtains of costly material and beautiful workmanship, though inferior to those of the sanctuary. The hangings of the court being only about half as high as the walls of the tabernacle, the building could be plainly seen by the people without. In the court, and nearest the entrance, stood the brazen altar of burnt offering. Upon this altar were consumed all the sacrifices made by fire unto the Lord, and its horns were sprinkled with the atoning blood.²²

This Altar was where all offerings and sacrifices were presented to God. The people were not allowed to make these offerings at any personally-chosen location away from the Tabernacle. (Deuteronomy 12:5-8)

Not only the sanctuary itself, but the ministration of the priests, was to “serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things.” Hebrews 8:5. Thus it was of great importance; and the Lord, through Moses, gave the most definite and explicit instruction concerning every point of this typical service. The ministration of the sanctuary consisted of two divisions, a daily and a yearly service. The daily service was performed at the altar of burnt offering in the court of the tabernacle and in the holy place; while the yearly service was in the most holy.

No mortal eye but that of the high priest was to look upon the inner apartment of the sanctuary. Only once a year could the priest enter there, and that after the most careful and solemn preparation. With trembling he went in before God, and the people in reverent silence awaited his return, their hearts uplifted in earnest prayer for the divine blessing. Before the mercy seat the high priest made the atonement for Israel; and in the cloud of glory, God met with him. His stay here beyond the accustomed time filled them with fear, lest because of their sins or his own he had been slain by the glory of the Lord.

The daily service consisted of the morning and evening burnt offering, the offering of sweet incense on the golden altar, and the special offerings for individual sins. And there were also offerings for Sabbaths, new moons, and special feasts.

Every morning and evening a lamb of a year old was burned upon the altar, with its appropriate meat offering, thus symbolizing the daily consecration of the nation to Jehovah, and their constant dependence upon the atoning blood of Christ. God expressly directed that every offering presented for the service of the sanctuary should be “without blemish.” Exodus 12:5. The priests were to examine all animals brought as a sacrifice, and were to reject every one in which a defect was discovered. Only an offering “without blemish” could be a symbol of His perfect purity who was to offer Himself as “a lamb without blemish and without spot.” 1 Peter 1:19. The apostle Paul points to these sacrifices as an illustration of what the followers of Christ are to become. He says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Romans 12:1. We are to give ourselves to the service of God, and we should seek to make the offering as nearly perfect as possible. God will not be pleased with anything less than the best we can offer. Those who love Him with all the heart, will desire to give Him the best service of the life, and they will be constantly seeking to bring every power of their being into harmony with the laws that will promote their ability to do His will.²³

What problem has our sin caused for us?

Isaiah 59:2

If we stay separated from God, we will die forever and there is nothing we can do to change that. God did not want that to happen so He did something. He provided the solution.

Whom did Abraham say would provide the lamb?

Genesis 22:8

Who is the Lamb of God?

John 1:29

Who first loved who?

1 John 4:19

What did God do because He loved the world?

John 3:16

What word is used to describe what Jesus was when God sent Him to this world out of love for us?

1 John 4:10

What does *propitiation* mean according to the dictionary?

In Genesis 32 we have an illustration of a propitiation. Jacob was returning to his homeland after being gone for many years hiding from Esau's anger over his deception in getting the birthright. He was afraid that Esau would take revenge on him, so he sent gifts ahead to try to regain Esau's favor. (Genesis 32:20) Those gifts were a propitiation.

God has demonstrated amazing love for us. We humans have offended Him by our rebellion and sin, but instead of us trying to do something to get Him to think well of us again, He sent us a propitiation, His Son

Jesus, to try to win us back into a good relationship with Himself. The altar of burnt offering is a symbol of this great loving act of God.

The altar of burnt offering and the sacrifices and offerings that were brought there are a symbol of the first phase of God's process of saving us. It is called justification.

How does a dictionary define *justification* or *justify*?

Justification happens when God takes the guilt of our sins and places it on our substitute, Jesus. This erases the record of all our past sins and we stand before God as if we had not sinned. We are pardoned. This is the first phase, but there is more to come.

What comes as a result of our justification?

Romans 5:1

Who can accuse us after God has justified us?

Romans 8:33

When God pardons the sinner, remits the punishment he deserves, and treats him as though he had not sinned, He receives him into divine favor, and justifies him through the merits of Christ's righteousness. The sinner can be justified only through faith in the atonement made through God's dear Son, who became a sacrifice for the sins of the guilty world. No one can be justified by any works of his own. He can be delivered from the guilt of sin, from the condemnation of the law, from the penalty of transgression, only by virtue of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ. Faith is the only condition upon which justification can be obtained, and faith includes not only belief but trust.

The sinner is represented as a lost sheep, and a lost sheep never returns to the fold unless he is sought after and brought back to the fold by the shepherd. No man of himself can repent, and make himself worthy of the blessing of justification. The Lord Jesus is constantly seeking to impress the sinner's mind and attract him to behold Himself, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.²⁴

What did the horns represent on the altar of burnt offering?

Amos 6:13, Habakkuk 3:4

The blood of certain sacrifices was put on the horns of the altar of burnt offering. This shows the ability of the blood of Jesus which was combined with God's power, represented by the horns, to take away our sins.

Why was this altar of brass and not of gold as was the furniture in the Tabernacle? What does brass represent in the Bible?

Jeremiah 6:28

The furniture in the courtyard and the activities that took place there represent this earth and the ministry of Jesus on this earth. The Holy Place and Most Holy Place represent the Priestly work of Jesus in Heaven. When Jesus came to this earth, he took on sinful human flesh which was represented by brass.

Whose nature did Jesus take when He came to this earth?

Hebrews 2:16

Why did He take our sinful human nature?

Hebrews 2:17-18

Hebrews 2:9

Jesus took on our sinful nature with its weaknesses, which He inherited from His human mother, Mary, but he did not commit any sin. He was our sinless sacrifice, represented by the lamb, the perfect lamb without blemish. He wants to give you His perfect life so you can be saved.

He is not only willing to forgive us but also gives us the power to do and be all that He asks of us. He saves us *from* sin, not *in* sin. We no longer need to live a life of sin but can be overcomers through His power, represented by the horns of the altar. Won't you accept His perfect sacrifice for you? Accept Him as your Savior today. Confess your sins and ask His forgiveness. Dedicate your life to Him.