

**THE ALTARS OF SACRIFICE AND INCENSE:  
"MY SOUL YEARNS FOR THE COURTS OF THE LORD; MY  
HEART AND FLESH CRY OUT FOR THE LIVING GOD"  
REV. CHARLES R. BIGGS**

**SCRIPTURE TEXT:**

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 27:1** "You shall make the altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits broad. The altar shall be square, and its height shall be three cubits. <sup>2</sup> And you shall make horns for it on its four corners; its horns shall be of one piece with it, and you shall overlay it with bronze. <sup>3</sup> You shall make pots for it to receive its ashes, and shovels and basins and forks and fire pans. You shall make all its utensils of bronze. <sup>4</sup> You shall also make for it a grating, a network of bronze, and on the net you shall make four bronze rings at its four corners. <sup>5</sup> And you shall set it under the ledge of the altar so that the net extends halfway down the altar. <sup>6</sup> And you shall make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with bronze. <sup>7</sup> And the poles shall be put through the rings, so that the poles are on the two sides of the altar when it is carried. <sup>8</sup> You shall make it hollow, with boards. As it has been shown you on the mountain, so shall it be made.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 30:1** "You shall make an altar on which to burn incense; you shall make it of acacia wood. <sup>2</sup> A cubit shall be its length, and a cubit its breadth. It shall be square, and two cubits shall be its height. Its horns shall be of one piece with it. <sup>3</sup> You shall overlay it with pure gold, its top and around its sides and its horns. And you shall make a molding of gold around it. <sup>4</sup> And you shall make two golden rings for it. Under its molding on two opposite sides of it you shall make them, and they shall be holders for poles with which to carry it. <sup>5</sup> You shall make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. <sup>6</sup> And you shall put it in front of the veil that is above the ark of the testimony, in front of the mercy seat that is above the testimony, where I will meet with you. <sup>7</sup> And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it. Every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it, <sup>8</sup> and when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it, a regular incense offering before the LORD throughout your generations. <sup>9</sup> You shall not offer unauthorized incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering, and you shall not pour a drink offering on it. <sup>10</sup> Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a year. With the blood of the sin offering of atonement he shall make atonement for it once in the year throughout your generations. It is most holy to the LORD."

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 30:22** The LORD said to Moses, <sup>23</sup> "Take the finest spices: of liquid myrrh 500 shekels, and of sweet-smelling cinnamon half as much, that is, 250, and 250 of aromatic cane, <sup>24</sup> and 500 of cassia, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil. <sup>25</sup> And you shall make of these a sacred anointing oil blended as by the perfumer; it shall be a holy anointing oil. <sup>26</sup> With it you shall anoint the tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony, <sup>27</sup> and the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense, <sup>28</sup> and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils and the basin and its stand. <sup>29</sup> You shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy. Whatever touches them will become holy. <sup>30</sup> You shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests. <sup>31</sup> And you shall say to the people of Israel, 'This shall be my holy anointing oil throughout your generations. <sup>32</sup> It shall not be poured on the body of an ordinary person, and you shall make no other like it in composition. It is holy, and it shall be holy to you. <sup>33</sup> Whoever compounds any like it or whoever puts any of it on an outsider shall be cut off from his people.'" <sup>34</sup> The LORD said to Moses, "Take sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, sweet spices with pure frankincense (of each shall there be an equal part), <sup>35</sup> and make an incense blended as by the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy. <sup>36</sup> You shall beat some of it very small, and put part of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting where I shall meet with you. It shall be most holy for you. <sup>37</sup> And the incense that you shall make according to its composition, you shall not make for yourselves. It shall be for you holy to the LORD. <sup>38</sup> Whoever makes any like it to use as perfume shall be cut off from his people."

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 37:25** He made the altar of incense of acacia wood. Its length was a cubit, and its breadth was a cubit. It was square, and two cubits was its height. Its horns were of one piece with it. <sup>26</sup> He overlaid it with pure gold, its top and around its sides and its horns. And he made a molding of gold around it, <sup>27</sup> and made two rings of gold on it under its molding, on two opposite sides of it, as holders for the poles with which to carry it. <sup>28</sup> And he made the poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold. <sup>29</sup> He made the holy anointing oil also, and the pure fragrant incense, blended as by the perfumer.

## **Scripture Reading/Lesson**

Psalm 65:1-4; Psalm 100:4; Leviticus 4:1-18; Isaiah 6:1-7; Hebrews 9:1-12; 23-28; Revelation 8

<sup>ESV</sup> **Psalm 65:1-4:** TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID. A SONG. Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion, and to you shall vows be performed. <sup>2</sup> O you who hears prayer, to you shall all flesh come. <sup>3</sup> When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions. <sup>4</sup> Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple!

<sup>ESV</sup> **Psalm 100:4** Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!

<sup>ESV</sup> **Leviticus 1:1-9:** The LORD called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying, <sup>2</sup> "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of livestock from the herd or from the flock. <sup>3</sup> "If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD. <sup>4</sup> He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. <sup>5</sup> Then he shall kill the bull before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and throw the blood against the sides of the altar that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. <sup>6</sup> Then he shall flay the burnt offering and cut it into pieces, <sup>7</sup> and the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. <sup>8</sup> And Aaron's sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, the head, and the fat, on the wood that is on the fire on the altar; <sup>9</sup> but its entrails and its legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall burn all of it on the altar, as a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Leviticus 4:1-18:** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup> "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, If anyone sins unintentionally in any of the LORD's commandments about things not to be done, and does any one of them, <sup>3</sup> if it is the anointed priest who sins, thus bringing guilt on the people, then he shall offer for the sin that he has committed a bull from the herd without blemish to the LORD for a sin offering. <sup>4</sup> He shall bring the bull to the entrance of the tent of meeting before the LORD and lay his hand on the head of the bull and kill the bull before the LORD. <sup>5</sup> And the anointed priest shall take some of the blood of the bull and bring it into the tent of meeting, <sup>6</sup> and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle part of the blood seven times before the LORD in front of the veil of the sanctuary. <sup>7</sup> And the priest shall put

some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense before the LORD that is in the tent of meeting, and all the rest of the blood of the bull he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting.<sup>8</sup> And all the fat of the bull of the sin offering he shall remove from it, the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails<sup>9</sup> and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys<sup>10</sup> (just as these are taken from the ox of the sacrifice of the peace offerings); and the priest shall burn them on the altar of burnt offering.<sup>11</sup> But the skin of the bull and all its flesh, with its head, its legs, its entrails, and its dung-<sup>12</sup> all the rest of the bull- he shall carry outside the camp to a clean place, to the ash heap, and shall burn it up on a fire of wood. On the ash heap it shall be burned up.<sup>13</sup> "If the whole congregation of Israel sins unintentionally and the thing is hidden from the eyes of the assembly, and they do any one of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done, and they realize their guilt,<sup>14</sup> when the sin which they have committed becomes known, the assembly shall offer a bull from the herd for a sin offering and bring it in front of the tent of meeting.<sup>15</sup> And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the LORD, and the bull shall be killed before the LORD.<sup>16</sup> Then the anointed priest shall bring some of the blood of the bull into the tent of meeting,<sup>17</sup> and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle it seven times before the LORD in front of the veil.<sup>18</sup> And he shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar that is in the tent of meeting before the LORD, and the rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Isaiah 6:1-7:** In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.<sup>2</sup> Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.<sup>3</sup> And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"<sup>4</sup> And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.<sup>5</sup> And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"<sup>6</sup> Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar [of Incense].<sup>7</sup> And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Hebrews 9:1** Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. <sup>2</sup> For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. <sup>3</sup> Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, <sup>4</sup> having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. <sup>5</sup> Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. <sup>6</sup> These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, <sup>7</sup> but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. <sup>8</sup> By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing <sup>9</sup> (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, <sup>10</sup> but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation. <sup>11</sup> But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent ( not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) <sup>12</sup> he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption....

<sup>23</sup> Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. <sup>24</sup> For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. <sup>25</sup> Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, <sup>26</sup> for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. <sup>27</sup> And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, <sup>28</sup> so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Revelation 8:1** When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. <sup>2</sup> Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

<sup>3</sup> And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, <sup>4</sup> and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. <sup>5</sup> Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake. <sup>6</sup> Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them. <sup>7</sup> The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up. <sup>8</sup> The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. <sup>9</sup> A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. <sup>10</sup> The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. <sup>11</sup> The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it had been made bitter. <sup>12</sup> The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night. <sup>13</sup> Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!"

### **Altars in Redemptive-History**

<sup>ESV</sup> **Genesis 8:20** Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Genesis 12:7** Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Genesis 12:8** From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 17:15** And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The LORD is my banner,

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 24:4-6:** And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel....And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Genesis 22:9** When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Genesis 35:3** Then let us arise and go up to Bethel, so that I may make there an altar to the God who answers me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone."

**Joshua 22:15-34:** And they came to the people of Reuben, the people of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, in the land of Gilead, and they said to them, <sup>16</sup> "Thus says the whole congregation of the LORD, 'What is this breach of faith that you have committed against the God of Israel in turning away this day from following the LORD by building yourselves an altar this day in rebellion against the LORD?' <sup>17</sup> Have we not had enough of the sin at Peor from which even yet we have not cleansed ourselves, and for which there came a plague upon the congregation of the LORD, <sup>18</sup> that you too must turn away this day from following the LORD? And if you too rebel against the LORD today then tomorrow he will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel. <sup>19</sup> But now, if the land of your possession is unclean, pass over into the LORD's land where the LORD's tabernacle stands, and take for yourselves a possession among us. Only do not rebel against the LORD or make us as rebels by building for yourselves an altar other than the altar of the LORD our God. <sup>20</sup> Did not Achan the son of Zerah break faith in the matter of the devoted things, and wrath fell upon all the congregation of Israel? And he did not perish alone for his iniquity.'" <sup>21</sup> Then the people of Reuben, the people of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh said in answer to the heads of the families of Israel, <sup>22</sup> "The Mighty One, God, the LORD! The Mighty One, God, the LORD! He knows; and let Israel itself know! If it was in rebellion or in breach of faith against the LORD, do not spare us today <sup>23</sup> for building an altar to turn away from following the LORD. Or if we did so to offer burnt offerings or grain offerings or peace offerings on it, may the LORD himself take vengeance. <sup>24</sup> No, but we did it from fear that in time to come your children might say to our children, 'What have you to do

with the LORD, the God of Israel? <sup>25</sup> For the LORD has made the Jordan a boundary between us and you, you people of Reuben and people of Gad. You have no portion in the LORD.' So your children might make our children cease to worship the LORD. <sup>26</sup> Therefore we said, 'Let us now build an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice, <sup>27</sup> but to be a witness between us and you, and between our generations after us, that we do perform the service of the LORD in his presence with our burnt offerings and sacrifices and peace offerings, so your children will not say to our children in time to come, "You have no portion in the LORD.'" <sup>28</sup> And we thought, If this should be said to us or to our descendants in time to come, we should say, 'Behold, the copy of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made, not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifice, but to be a witness between us and you.' <sup>29</sup> Far be it from us that we should rebel against the LORD and turn away this day from following the LORD by building an altar for burnt offering, grain offering, or sacrifice, other than the altar of the LORD our God that stands before his tabernacle!"

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Chronicles 6:48** And their brothers the Levites were appointed for all the service of the tabernacle of the house of God. <sup>49</sup> But Aaron and his sons made offerings on the altar of burnt offering and on the altar of incense for all the work of the Most Holy Place, and to make atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Psalms 43:4** Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Psalms 118:27** The LORD is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us. Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar!

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. <sup>6</sup> And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. <sup>7</sup> But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years. <sup>8</sup> Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, <sup>9</sup> according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. <sup>10</sup> And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. <sup>11</sup> And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. <sup>12</sup> And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and

fear fell upon him. <sup>13</sup> But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. <sup>14</sup> And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth...

<sup>ESV</sup> **Revelation 6:9** When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Revelation 9:13** Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God,

<sup>ESV</sup> **Revelation 11:1** Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there,

## **1) WHAT ARE ALTARS?**

a. Altars in Biblical history

- **Redemptive-Historical progression from Genesis to Exodus and the Tabernacle.** Prof. T. Fretheim writes: "With the Tabernacle we move from the 'occasional appearance of God' to God's 'ongoing presence' with the community."- quoted in Longman, 'Immanuel in Our Place', pg. 26.

b. Altars in the Ancient Near East

c. Altars today

- a. Illustration of the man who wanted to place an altar at the front of his congregation.
- b. "Coming forward to the altar"

## **2) WHAT DOES THE BRONZE ALTAR DO (ALTAR OF BURNT-OFFERING)?**

a. Practically

- Showed entrance into God's presence was through blood sacrifice and death.

b. Symbolically

- "Courts of the Lord" in Scripture- Psalm 65:3-4; Psalm 84:2-10; Psalm 100:4; Psalm 116:19; Psalm 135:1-2

<sup>ESV</sup> **Psalm 65:1** TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID. A SONG. Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion, and to you shall vows be performed. <sup>2</sup> O you who hears prayer, to you shall all flesh come. <sup>3</sup> When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions. <sup>4</sup> Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple!

<sup>ESV</sup> **Psalm 84:2-10:** My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. <sup>3</sup> Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God. <sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! Selah <sup>5</sup> Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. <sup>6</sup> As they go through the Valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools. <sup>7</sup> They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion. <sup>8</sup> O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah <sup>9</sup> Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed! <sup>10</sup> For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Psalm 100:4** Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!

<sup>ESV</sup> **Psalm 116:18** I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people, <sup>19</sup> in the courts of the house of the LORD, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD!

<sup>ESV</sup> **Psalm 135:1** Praise the LORD! Praise the name of the LORD, give praise, O servants of the LORD, <sup>2</sup> who stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God!

➤ Sin Offerings

1. Why Continual Sin Offerings?

**In summary from Fairburn's classic 'The Typology of Scripture':** Fairburn writes concerning the continual, ongoing sacrifices in Theocratic Israel: "A certain visible relationship was established under the old economy [Old Covenant] between Israel and God—admitting of being re-established, as often as it was interrupted by sin, through a system of animal sacrifices and corporeal ablutions. But all was, from the nature of the case, imperfect.

***The sanctuary itself, in connection with which the [covenantal] relationship was maintained, was a 'worldly' ["earthly" man-made] one—the mere image [copy or type] of the 'heavenly' or true. And even that was in its inner glory veiled to the worshipper: God hid at the very time He revealed Himself—kept Himself at some distance, even when He came nearest, so that manifestly the "root" of the evil was not yet reached: the conscience was not in such a sense purged as to be made perfect, or capable of feeling thoroughly at its ease in the presence of the Holy One; for 'that' another and higher medium of purification was needed, and should be looked for.***"- Typology of Scripture, Vol. 3, pg. 291.

a. Reconciliation/Atonement

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 30:16** You shall take the atonement money from the people of Israel and shall give it for the service of the tent of meeting, that it may bring the people of Israel to remembrance before the LORD, so as to make atonement for your lives."

**Leviticus 1:3-4:** "If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD. <sup>4</sup> **He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.**

b. Peace with God

c. God's continued dwelling with his people is a special covenantal presence.

- d. Substitutionary “life-blood” required to give sinners life in God’s presence.

***ESV Leviticus 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.***

- e. **Application:** All true worship and drawing near to God must begin with a recognition of our utter dependence upon the grace of God, and our recognition of ourselves as sinners saved only by grace (thus the reason why the Bronze Altar was at the opening or entrance of the courtyard).

- i. **“Start Here with blood”**, then enter into my presence through your representatives.
- ii. **“Recognize your sins first”**, then come unto me all you who are weary, heavy laden, and need rest.
- iii. **“Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand”** is another way of stating this more clearly from the New Testament.
- iv. **“The way back into the special Edenic bliss where I dwell with my people is through blood-judgment-curse.”**

Dr. Vern Poythress wrote in his excellent book ‘The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses’ concerning what happens with the sacrifices at the Bronze Altar:

“The sequence of events in sacrifice can be instructive to Israelites. In a typical case the process begins with the worshiper who brings an animal without defect to the priest. The worshiper has raised the animal himself or paid for it with his earnings, so that the animal represents a ‘sacrifice’ in the modern sense of the word. It costs

something to the worshiper, and a portion of the worshiper's own life is identified with it.

The worshiper lays his hand on the head of the animal, signifying his identification with it. He then kills the animal at the entranceway into the courtyard, signifying that the animal dies as a substitute for the worshiper.

From that point onward the priest takes over in performing the sacrificial actions. The intervention of the priest indicates that a specially holy person must perform the actions necessary to present the worshiper before God, even after the death of the animal. The priest takes some of the blood and sprinkles it on the sides of the bronze altar or on the horns of the altar or on the horns of the altar of incense, depending on the particular type of sacrifice.

All of these actions constitute the permanent marking of the altar as testimony to the fact that the animal has died. For the most important sin offerings, blood is brought into the Holy Place to the altar of incense. For the Day of Atonement, once a year, the high priest brings blood into the Most Holy Place [Holy of Holies] and sprinkles the atonement cover, to make atonement for the people. All these actions with blood recleanse the tabernacle and its furnishings when they are polluted by sins and uncleanness in Israel." –Poythress, pg. 44.

2. **What Kind of Sin Offerings at the Bronze Altar?** Different sins and different circumstances made for different kinds of sacrifices (see Leviticus chapters 1-7 for example).

- a. **The Sin Offerings** (Leviticus 4-5):
- i. A specific sin in the life of a person or the congregation that had upset the unity between God and man dwelling specially and covenantally together.
  - ii. The people were to be ever conscious of their sins before a Holy God.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Leviticus 4:1-4:** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup> "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, If anyone sins

unintentionally in any of the LORD's commandments about things not to be done, and does any one of them, <sup>3</sup> if it is the anointed priest who sins, thus bringing guilt on the people, then he shall offer for the sin that he has committed a bull from the herd without blemish to the LORD for a sin offering. <sup>4</sup> He shall bring the bull to the entrance of the tent of meeting before the LORD and lay his hand on the head of the bull and kill the bull before the LORD.

**Distinctions:** Remember to make distinctions between the continual sins on the Bronze Altar (night and day sacrifices) that continually covered the people's sins and the special, once-a-year Day of Atonement presented on God's Holy Throne on the "Mercy Seat" on top of the Ark of the Covenant.

**Application:** Specificity when repenting of our sins, not merely generally repenting, but specific repentance for specific sins (Do the sins include others? Etc).

**b. The Trespass Offering (Guilt Offering)-Similar to sin offerings**  
(Leviticus 4-5)

**c. The Burnt-Offering:** Atonement for the sins of the people in general- - continuously offered or offered morning and evening for the covenant people of God. "Sin offering" was more for individual sins and "Burnt offerings" were more for the congregation of Israel, the covenant people of God.

**Leviticus 6:8-13:** The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>9</sup> "Command Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the burnt offering. The burnt offering shall be on the hearth on the altar all night until the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it. <sup>10</sup> And the priest shall put on his linen garment and put his linen undergarment on his body, and he shall take up the ashes to which the fire has

reduced the burnt offering on the altar and put them beside the altar.  
<sup>11</sup> Then he shall take off his garments and put on other garments and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place. <sup>12</sup> **The fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not go out. The priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and he shall arrange the burnt offering on it and shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings.** <sup>13</sup> **Fire shall be kept burning on the altar continually; it shall not go out.**

<sup>ESV</sup> **Deuteronomy 33:10** They shall teach Jacob your rules and Israel your law; they shall put incense before you and whole burnt offerings on your altar.

**Application:** Importance of the gospel of Jesus Christ continually being preached to ourselves and to each other. Jesus is our only hope as our Great Sin Offering.

Importance of public confession as a congregation and public absolution or forgiveness because of the Person and Work of Christ.

**d. The Peace-Offerings/Grain-Cereal Offerings/Fellowship Offerings**

(Leviticus 2-3)

- i.** Thanksgivings or praise
- ii.** Vows
- iii.** Free will offerings of gratitude

**Poythress writes on the different types of sacrifices:** “The differences between the types of sacrifices are largely a matter of degree, and so we must be careful not to distinguish the types too sharply. In particular, the sin offering and the burnt offering serve quite similar purposes. *But the different types do seem to emphasize different aspects in the process of communion with God.* The sin offering and guilt offering emphasize punishment or retribution for sin. The burnt offering emphasizes consecration to God, which includes utter destruction of sin and uncleanness. The grain offering emphasizes payment of what is due in thanksgiving to God. Fellowship offerings emphasize enjoyment of God’s presence and blessing.”- Poythress, pg. 49.

- Approaching God on his terms: God takes worship seriously:
  1. Not the works of your hands
  2. Not your best efforts
  3. But “by the blood of the Lamb”

### **3) WHAT DOES THE ALTAR OF INCENSE DO?**

#### a. Practically

- Provided sweet-smelling aroma when the foul smell of the sacrifices would fill the Tabernacle-Tent.
- The incense was a mixture of ancient expensive spices and fragrances like frankincense.
- Called “the Altar before the LORD”. It was the altar closest to the veil to the Holy of Holies (sometimes listed as if in the Holy of Holies because of its nearness: I think this represents the way our prayers are offered in God’s presence even though there seems to be a distance between us and God).

<sup>ESV</sup> **Leviticus 16:18** Then he shall go out to the altar that is before the LORD and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar all around.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Revelation 9:13** Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God...

#### b. Symbolically

- “Horns of the Altar” in Scripture-This symbolizes and represents our utter dependence upon God and the connection between the Bronze Altar in the outside courtyard and the Altar of Incense inside the Holy Place: blood is required for atonement and peace with God, and this is required in order to have God receive our prayers and answer them.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Leviticus 16:18** Then he shall go out to the altar that is before the LORD and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar all around.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Psalm 118:27** The LORD is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us. Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar!

<sup>ESV</sup> **Revelation 9:12** The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come. <sup>13</sup> Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God...

- Prayer is central to our approaching God (the Altar of Incense was in the center toward the West in front of the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies). Only prayerful, utter dependence upon God would cause us to draw near to the very throne and covenant-glory-presence of God himself.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Psalm 141:2** Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!

In Isaiah 6, we are told that Isaiah's sins are atoned for by the coals on the Altar of Incense, again showing the vital connection symbolically of the Bronze Altar where the blood is shed, and the Altar of Incense where the blood is sprinkled in the presence of God:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Isaiah 6:1-7:** In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. <sup>2</sup> Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. <sup>3</sup> And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" <sup>4</sup> And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. <sup>5</sup> And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" <sup>6</sup> Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar [of Incense]. <sup>7</sup> And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."

**Application:** Incense was to be offered regularly and continually upon the Altar of Incense before God's mercy seat; we are told in the New Covenant that those who are in Christ are to "pray unceasingly".

- Approaching God on his terms: God takes worship seriously:
  1. Not in the strength of man.
  2. Not in your feeble gifts.
  3. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the LORD" –Zechariah 4:6
  4. But "through prayer and supplications...and utter dependence prayerfully upon God"

***The prayers of God's people is ultimately answered in Messiah-Jesus (Luke 1:11-14):***

And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. <sup>12</sup> And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. <sup>13</sup> But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. <sup>14</sup> And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth...

**4) HOW DOES CHRIST MINISTER AT GOD'S ALTARS IN THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY?**

- a. He shed his blood for us- Hebrews 9:24-28

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 3:23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. <sup>26</sup> It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Hebrews 9:24** For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. <sup>25</sup> Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, <sup>26</sup> for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. <sup>27</sup> And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, <sup>28</sup> so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

- b. Making our prayers effectual to God.
- c. Ever interceding for us his people.
- d. The Altar of Bronze reminds the people of God that Jesus has once and for all shed his blood for us and the Altar of Incense reminds us that our prayers are heard and effectual.

***The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much!***