52 Days of Building a Second Wall with the Word and Wisdom

**Purpose of the Bronze Altar**

Day 41 – June 23, 2013

From the day we said “Yes” to Jesus and gave our life to Him, we have embarked on a journey with the Lord. Sometimes the journey has been a delight and sometimes it has been a difficult trek. All along the journey Almighty God shapes us into the image He created us to be from the beginning of time. All of our paths are different because He needs to prepare us all differently for the various tasks He has for us to do in preparation for the return of His Son.

The pattern of the Tabernacle takes us through God’s divine plan for preparing us to come closer to the Lord and revealing His purpose for all of His children. Yesterday we saw that our sins keep us separated from Almighty God; but once we accept His free gift of salvation, we were able to enter into the Outer Courts of the Tabernacle through the one narrow gate. **The tabernacle has three main areas: the Outer Court, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place, which correspond to the three realms of experiencing God.**  We will look at the Outer Court today and tomorrow. **Even though God’s desire is for us to come close to Him in the Most Holy Place, we must see the value and purpose of the Outer Court and the Holy Place.** We will look at each of these over the next few days. Let the Holy Spirit open up our minds to receive the wisdom the Lord has put into every detail of the plan of His tabernacle.

The Outer Court was a large outdoor space separated from the camp by tall white curtains. This is where the people would gather to honor the Lord with worship and prayer, and to offer sacrifices to Him. With all the people and the animals they were offering for sacrifice, it was a very noisy place with lots of activity. This is a place with many distractions. The first object in the Outer Court was the large Bronze Altar, where offerings were presented to the Lord and then burned.

The purpose of the Bronze Altar was for animal sacrifice. The practice of animal sacrifice originated in the mind of God and was intended to **provide atonement and forgiveness for sin so that His people could approach Him.** The bronze altar was always open to repentant Israelites so they could be forgiven of their sins; and once again draw near to God.

**Romans 3:23**  “all of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

**The first sacrifice was actually performed by God**, when He killed animals to make a covering for Adam and Eve after they sinned in the garden. After they sinned they realized they were ashamed of their nakedness, so God killed animals and made clothing of their skins for Adam and Eve. There had never been any death in the Garden of Eden, so the death of these animals to cover their shame was to show them how serious their sin was.

**The second recorded sacrifice was offered by Cain and Abel**. Abel offered up to God the first born lamb of his flock, where Cain offered God some grain at the end of his harvest. Cain’s sacrifice was not acceptable to God because it was not a blood sacrifice (blood is necessary to atone for sin), and also because it was not given at the beginning of the harvest, but at the end. The Bible talks much **about offering God our First Fruitsto show Him we trust Him for our provision.**  This can be exhibited in our lives by giving God the first of our day in our quiet times or in our tithing.

There were many different types of offerings given to God on the Bronze Altar, with two main categories: Non-Sweet Offeringswhich deal with man’s sin and shame; and Sweet Offerings that are not offered because of sin, but voluntary out of love and respect to God.

There were three main sweet offerings: Burnt, Grain, and Peace Offerings. With **burnt offerings**, the entire animal was burned to remind the people of their **unconditional surrender and consecration to God.**

With **grain or meal offering**, grain mixed with olive oil and frankincense or unleavened bread was offered to God. Part was burned as a sweet aroma to God’s nostrils and part was given to the priests to eat. **These offerings were an expression of thanksgiving and recognition of God’s sovereignty over them.**

With **peace offering**, animals were sacrificed, but only the fat and the kidneys were burned, and the meat was given to the priests to eat. **This was symbolic of our reconciliation and fellowship with God, and the ensuing peace that He brings to us.**

The two main types of non-sweet offerings were sin and trespass offerings. With a **sin offering,** an animal is killed; its blood is sprinkled in front of the Holy of Holies, smeared on the horns of the altar of incense and on the horns of the Bronze Altar.

***Leviticus 17:11*** *“it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul”.*

The fat and kidneys were then burned on this altar. The rest of the animal was taken outside the camp and completely burned. **This offering was a substitute to make atonement for sin.**

With a **trespass offering**, an animal was killed and its blood is sprinkled on the inside of the Bronze Altar. The fat, kidneys and rump were totally burned, and the rest of the meat was for the priests to eat. **This offering was to offer satisfaction and reparation for wrongs committed against God or others.** If the person offering this sacrifice sinned against another person, they were first to offer restitution and then bring this offering before God.

**Matthew 5:23-24** "Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. “

The sacrificial system foreshadowed the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the spotless lamb. We are declared righteous once for all time by the blood shed by Jesus on the Cross for our sins.

**1 Peter 3:18** “For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit”

Even though our sins, past, present, and future are forgiven by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, we still have a responsibility to **repent** of our sins. **The altar of the church is always open for us to go before God and repent. The altar gives us atonement so we can have access and fellowship with God.**

**We can offer up these same five offerings when we come to the altar of our churches today.**  When we confess our sins and ask for forgiveness, we are offering up sin and trespass offerings. Burnt offerings can be seen when we commit to living a consecrated lifestyle of fasting and separation from the sinful pleasures of the world. When we thank God for His sovereignty in our lives, that He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving; we are offering Him a Grain offering. Peace offerings are when we trust God in all things, and He gives us His peace. This comes from a lifestyle of seeking to know God.

**DIGGING DEEPER:**

We see in the New Testament that **God requires another kind of sacrifice from believers today. God requires us to live lives that are different than the ones we lived before we came to believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior.** We are to offer up our whole lives as a spiritual sacrifice to Almighty God.

**Please read Romans 12:1-2, Romans 8:6-8, 13, and Ephesians 5:1-2.**

Spend some time in prayer asking the Lord to reveal practical ways you can we be a living and holy sacrifice?

Living out this lifestyle takes total reliance on the Holy Spirit to lead and strengthen us every step of the way.

This is our last day to memorize **Psalm 119:105**. Please let this scripture encourage you of the Holy Spirit’s continual presence in your life.