The Brazen Altar – Christ our justification part 1
By Charles Feinberg

This is the second in the series on the tabernacle in the wilderness, God's panorama of redemption, messaged by Dr. Charles Lee Feinberg professor of Old Testament, Dean at Talbot Theological Seminary in La Mirada California. Subject of our study at this time in this message is the "Brazen" or more accurately the bronze altar, the bronze altar. We find the bronze altar specified the instructions for it, given in Exodus Chapter 27 verses 1 to 8. The first of the places will see some others in the course of our consideration. This passage reads, Exodus 27:1 to 8 “and thou shall make an altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits broad. The altar shall be four square and the height there shall be three cubits and thou shall make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof. Its horns shall be of the same and thou shalt overlay it with bronze and thou shall make its pans to receive its ashes and its shovels and its basins and its flesh hooks and its fire pans. All the vessels there of thou shall make a bronze and thou shall make for it a great of network of bronze and upon the net shall thou make four bronze rings in the four corners thereof. And thou shall put it under the compass of the altar beneath that the net may be even to the midst of the altar. And thou shall make staves for the altar. Staves of acacia wood and overlay them with bronze 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 boars shall thou make it as it was shown in the mound. So, shall they make it? And then in the 38th chapter of Exodus the first seven verses we have the altar a burnt offering before us again.

We read, and he made the altar burnt offering of acacia wood. Five cubits was the length thereof and five cubits the breadth thereof. It was four square and three cubits the height thereof. And he made the horns thereof on the four corners of it. The horns that were of the same and he overlaid it with bronze and it made all the vessels of the altar. The pots and the shovels and the basins and the flesh hooks and the fire paths. All the vessels thereof made (inaudible) of bronze and he made for the altar of bronze great of network under the compass there of beneath unto the midst of it, and the words this great of network was halfway up the altar. In the very middle of the altar and he cast four rings for the four ends of the great bronze to be places for the staves and he made the staves of acacia wood and overlaid them with bronze and he put the staves into the rings on the side of the altar where with to bear it. He made the altar hollow with boards.

Someone has well said Christ is found everywhere in the Old Testament just as the scarlet line is found everywhere in the cordage of the British Navy. Cut it where you will, Christ is as much in the tabernacle where contending we're maintaining he's as much in the tabernacle as he is in the explicit prophecies. For instance, of an Isaiah or of a Micah or of a Hosea or of a Zechariah, he is everywhere in the Old Testament.
Moses, in the law, in the prophets. Yes, and in the writings, in the Psalms, the second Psalm beautifully speaks about God's anointed one and the anointed one is his king whom he will place upon his holy hill of Zion.

Dr. AC Dixon, one-time pastor of the Moody church in Chicago once said, "A friend described to me a painting that hung on the walls of his boyhood home. When you first saw it, it was a beautiful landscape with trees and streams, houses and people. But while you looked at it all these beautiful things began to form around a central feature. It began to form into a human face on a closer inspection you saw the whole picture was intended to give the face of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now said Dr. Dixon the devout reverent student of the scriptures is constantly having experiences like this. He sees in the Bible trees of faithful, streams of truth, landscapes of loveliness in both deed and character, but they are all so arranged in their relation to Christ as to bring out the features of his character. This is eminently true friends of the tabernacle teaching in dealing with the furniture of the tabernacle. We begin with a brazen or more particularly the bronze altar. The reason we do not hold particularly to the word brazen because brass is an alloy. It's not found free in nature. Better translation then would be the bronze altar. The bronze altar is mentioned five times in Exodus. We read Exodus 27:1 to 8, we read Exodus 38:1 to 7. This is also mentioned the alters also mentioned in 39 verse 39. Thirty ninth chapter in the 39th verse, mentioned in the 4th chapter in verse 6 and 10. And then later in that chapter in 40th chapter verse 29 there's more than one mention. There are several mentions in exodus of all the holy vessels of the tabernacle. We can learn something of the Alder's leader history from certain passages in Kings and Chronicles. The altar figure largely in the religious spiritual history of Israel. In the time of David, we have a word concerning it in First Chronicles 21 verse 29. In the reign of Solomon second Chronicles 1:5 and 6 speak of the bronze altar, in Ahaz's time in second King 16, 14 and 15th verse, in the period of Hezekiah in Second Chronicles 29th chapter verses 27 to 35.

In noticing the instructions of God for the tabernacle we see he gives them from the holy of holies outward beginning with the 25th chapter of Exodus. God gives the instructions for the making of the furnishings of the tabernacle from the holy of holies outward. That's from God's point of view, but from man's point of view the bronze altar must come first. Man could never jump over all. He couldn't bypass all these other appointments and immediately come in to the Holy of Holies. No, not even the high priest, he could do that only once a year. So God may speak of these things from the holy of holies outward to the outer court, but from man's point of view his greatest need, his first need in approaching God is the bronze altar.
You see you have here beautifully indicated just the contrast exactly the same contrast you have in the Apostle of Paul to the Ephesians. In Ephesians it's God spoken of first? You don't have man actually spoken to, charged, exhorted, and joined until the fourth chapter. I beseech you therefore brother to walk worthy of the calling where with your call. Well what Paul had been doing in those first three chapters. He's been speaking of that wonderful work of redemption which shall be to the praise of the glory of the grace of the father. To the praise of the glory of the grace of the sun. To the praise of the glory of the grace of the Holy Spirit, so Ephesians is strictly from God standpoint. First God then what man has to do and how man comes into the picture and the reckoning. In Romans however you have it as it were from the bronze altar viewpoint, from man's viewpoint. Man comes with his sin. He comes to the altar first. And so the sin question is very prominent in the first three chapters of Romans. Paul shows in the first instance that all the pagan world, all the ungodly heathen world is under the condemnation of God because they have sinned, they have violated that which they knew of the revelation of God in creation and then the entire non-Jewish world might have been in some instances moral. But it was under God's condemnation too because it sinned against the revelation of God in conscience.

And then all the Jewish world was guilty as well. Equally guilty because it had sinned against the revelation of God in commandments. So, whether it's sin against the revelation creation or in conscience or in commandments all are equally sinful. And we read before laid the charge they are both Jew and Gentile. They are all under sin. For all have sinned and come short of the glory God. So, Ephesians, from the holy of holies outward, Romans gives us the picture from man's viewpoint of the bronze altar and going inward. Hebrews 13:10 reminds us very pointedly I believe the last chapter of Hebrews that we to have an alter and our relationship to it. Choosing the altar of course in a wonderful sense, but in a figurative sense. So, Hebrews 13:10 will not close the epistle. The epistle doesn't close before we have we have an altar of which they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle.

Now the altar, the bronze altar, was the first thing, the first piece of furniture that was met after the Israelites passed through the gate of the court. It showed immediately that none can approach God except through sacrifice through the sharing of blood. Here all the sacrifices were slain during the year throughout the year except on the day of atonement when there was the offering up of the two goats for the sin offering. All my friends how God would show us unmistakably incontrovertibly. God will show us with a word of warning that no one can come to him. You cannot approach God one single step except you come through the altar. It's got to be by the way of the cross. The way of the Cross leads home, the way the cross leads home. If the way of the cross, we miss we have no other way. It's the only way, it's God's way. What a
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warning it is for those who want to come through the bloodless way of Cain. He made shipwreck of life, this life, and the life which is to come because he tried to bypass, and it was to his own destruction to his own eternal sorrow and loss. He tried to bypass the way of approaching God by means of blood, by means of sacrifice of which the bronze altar so eloquently speaks.

Now this altar was overlaid, covered, with bronze. More correctly even copper, that's a fire resisting metal, and wherever you find bronze, often translated in the King James Version as brass. When you find it's [inaudible] with reference to the ministrations in the Levitical orders reference to the Mosaic law, or however you find it, it speaks of judgment in the light of man's responsibility before God. Has to be a metal that will be able to take the fire because fire represents that God in his purity, in his justice, in his Holiness. Hebrews 12:29, "For our God says the sacred writer, our God is a consuming fire." Not to consume man, but to consume his sin, consume. Consume all that is displeasing in his blessed holy site.

You'll notice the very first things stated in Exodus 27:1 about this bronze altar is it's to be of acacia wood. King James version gives you not Acacia but of S.H.I.T.T.I.M, which is the Hebrew word without translation. We have the word Shi Tim. and though shalt make an altar of acacia wood. That is a very durable wood. It grows in the desert; it's of a lasting quality. Speaks of that which comes from the earth. If this whole Tabernacle is God's Panorama redemption as it centers in the person, the work of our Lord Jesus Christ then what could this wood that comes from the ground speak of? It seems to me it speaks of the humanity of our Lord Jesus. He grew up as a tender plant before him and as a route out of a dry ground it was no form, no comeliness in him so that when we saw him that we should desire him. The humanity of our Lord Jesus in which he bore the righteous judgment of our God, that does not mean that his deity was not there, but deity cannot die. It was because deity had taken up humanity, 100 percent humanity with a 100 percent deity. You see it's the humanity of our Lord Jesus on the cross that made it possible for the God man to die, it's the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ that makes that work he accomplished on Calvary efficacious and valid effective for a whole world of sinners.

The measurements given for the altar are five cubits long; remember a cubit as a foot and a half, about that, 18 inches. Five Cubits long and five brawn and three high. It was so large friends that all the vessels of the holy place could have been contained in it. It’s been well said within the one great sacrifice of Christ on the cross every other has been comprehended and not only subtle, but when we think of Romans 8:32. All our blessings in the Christian life are connected, inseparably connected, with the death of Christ. If God spared not his own son but delivered
him up for us all, how shall I not also with him freely give us all things? All the other things, all the other blessings, all the other privileges are just and also compared to the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the great preacher Dr. Spurgeon once said, "It's as though God loved us more than his son he would not spare his son. God spared not his son in order that he might spare us Marvelous Love. Oh, it will take eternity for us to comprehend all the facets all the beauties all the glories of it. But thank God it will be understood in eternity." We know that from First Corinthians 13 we shall know even as we are known.

Now the altar was four square that means all of the sides were exactly alike. Five Cubits long and five brawn. The four sides of it were exactly alike. The sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ is alike to all the four corners of the earth north south east and west. It reveals for all. Here is the heart, here is the nerve, here is the motivation, here is the impelling propelling force in missions. Christ died for all, he included all, all the world over must hear it. They need to hear it; they are in desperate need of this marvelous work of the Lord Jesus Christ on Heaven's sacrificial altar. God's altar is Calvary, he was lifted up there between heaven and earth as a fit for neither place, but that's where God saw to it that sin was put away. Christ appeared at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Now this altar had horns. Exodus 27:2, "And thou shall make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof." There were four horns. The sacrifices were bound to horns of the altar. Naturally, no sacrifice, no animal, could enter into this situation couldn't be asked its wish in the matter; it didn't have a will in the matter. That's the beauty of it in Hebrews that our Lord Jesus Christ in the tenth chapter there did have a will. He said, "Low I come to do thy will." It was different from any other sacrifice in the world. But these animals weren't asked there will and of course being desirous of preserving their own life they wouldn't want it. They would not have wanted to be sacrificed. So, Psalm 118:27 gives us the picture of why we need the horns of the altar. So, the sacrifices could be bound, they could be kept there. Psalm 118:27 reads, "God is the Lord, let shown his light" and what areas specially, bind the sacrifice with cords. This is what they did. "Bind the sacrifice with cords unto the horns of the altar."

Christ too was bound on Calvary, but not by the nails, not by any human agency at all, not by human venom. He was bound there by love, love. He had himself bound by love. Strong cord so that when they mocked him and ridiculed, remember it was the religious folk, oh how they said he trusted in God that he should never let him deliver him saying that he delighted in him our fathers trusted God and God did something on their behalf. If you claim to be so godly, so pious, so dependent on the Lord let them deliver you. He even shouted, "If you are the son of God come down from the cross and will believe in you." Oh yes, the world wants a Christ without a cross and Christ without the cross is
only our condemnation. He is not our justification, but he didn't come down. He didn't budge one inch. Not because he couldn't do so physically, he could have dismissed that cross and all of his persecutors, all of his revivers, he could have dismissed the world even.

Infinite blessed son of God that he was, but he was bound there. He didn't move an inch because he was held so tightly by Love's strong cords. And then in Leviticus six we have something indicated there. The book of Leviticus of course is the instruction book if you will. It's the working manual of the Levites, that's why it's called Leviticus, that which relates to the Levites. There we have something stated concerning the ashes. Notice Leviticus 6 and verse 9 commands Aaron and his son saying this is the law of the burnt offering. It is a burnt offering because of the burning upon the altar all night under the morning and the fire of the altar shall be burning in it and the priest shall put on his linen garment and his linen breeches shall be put upon his flesh and take up the ashes. Here's the important feature for the moment. The ashes which the fire had consumed with a burnt offering on the altar. And he shall put them beside the altar. He shall put off his garments and put on other garments and carry forth the ashes. This must be an important feature. Carry forth the Ashes outside the camp unto a clean place and the fire upon the altar shall be burning in it. It shall not be put out and the priest shall burn wood on it every morning and lay the burnt offering in order upon it and he shall be burnt there on the fat of the piece offering. The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar. It shall never go out, never go out.

Now the ashes were to be carried to a clean place. They speak of a Finnish sacrifice. Ashes when the priest or the godly Israelite looked at the ashes, he saw that the sacrifice had been offered, that it was completed. And you remember our Lord Jesus in a wonderful, wonderful burst of victorious word came forth. In John 19:30, "It is finished." Three words in English, but in the original Greek it was one word, tetelestai, it is finished. What was the use made of these ashes? They were kept for the sprinkling of the unclean. They were kept till that there might be continuous cleansing when needed all the while afterwards. You remember first John 1:7, "That if we walk in the light as he is in the light," we're not said to be the light; we are not told to attain me the light. No no no. If we walk in the light as he is in the light he is the light we have fellowship, one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ God's son cleanse us, because that walking in the light shows up our shortcoming, our failure, our sin. Any matter of grief to the Lord and the blood of Jesus Christ God son cleanse us from all sin.

We've mentioned the great. See verse 4 Exodus 27 a great network of Bronze. It was placed that way as to be in the midst of the alter, it indicates that. It is to be in the very middle of the altar that the Net may be even to the midst of the altar verse 5. Why is this indicated and why does it have to be repeated later on in Chapter 38 verses 1 to 7? Because there was to be no escape for the victim Christ in Gethsemane and you
remember, pray for the cup to pass, but since it could not be otherwise be yielded to the Father's will he said, "Shall I say keep me from this hour, it was to this very hour that I've come. This is the purpose of my ministry. This is the purpose of my coming into the world. Oh, therefore father, not my will, but thine be done." Oh how though that sentence, how that verse almost more than any other in the Bible puts us to shame how often we want our will or against God's will in opposition, in stubborn resistance, lack of submission. But he the Blessed One nevertheless and I believe he said that nevertheless within just a winging of an eye in the twinkling of an eye after he had said the other. Not that the cup shall pass if it's not thy will. Lord if it's not thy will, not my will, but thine be done. And at the altar with the place where the censors received their fire in order to burn before the Lord. We read of that in Number 16:37-38. Senses were a sign that God could only be approached in the way of his own choosing. It has to be through a sacrifice through the altar. What a lesson that is for so many of the isms and schisms and the ASMs and spasms of our day. And although the Great was halfway down in the altar if you will recall the instructions, the measurements concerning the mercy seat, then you'll find that all the great was half way down in the altar. It was still as high as the mercy seat. One and one-half cubits.

The cross of Christ is on a level with a righteous throne, the righteous demands of Christ. It met those demands fully. God said of the day without it is there of us are truly die, Christ died. The soul that's in it must die. The wages of sin is death. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 5:12, "For it is by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, so that it passed upon all men for that all sin." Then he took the wages of sin upon himself. You see in himself, Christ could never, never have died unless he had taken sin upon him. He never had sin in him. All through his life there was no sin in him or on him. When he went to the cross, there was still no sin in him, but there was all of the sin, yours and mine, all of the sin of the world on him, put on his heart, put on his life, put on his precious physical body to suffer for you and me. You would notice that we have a statement in verse 6 of Exodus 27 concerning staves, that's the plural of the word staff in just common ordinary English. It's a poll then they we're told to make polls for the altar. Polls of acacia wood overlay them with bronze. Well why do we need those? Well those polls, staves, are to be put into rings and the rings will be on both sides. Why? To carry, to carry the altar, because the altar wouldn't be just in one place alone, it had to be with them, they needed that altar wherever they went. All through the wilderness journey for a generation of time. Yes, the staves showed it. Its temporary nature, it didn't stay in any one place permanently and also showed its adaptability to the then present need wherever it was taken. It was taken by these staves wherever it was needed. It was there. There for Israel's wonderful instruction for their use, for their blessing.
Now noticed in verse 8, "Hollow with boars shall thought make it, hollow with Boers." Although all mighty filled with grace and glory. The wonderful object with a father and with the Holy Spirit of the praises of Cherubim and [inaudible], and holy angels from all eternity.

Although almighty our precious savior the Lord Jesus Christ emptied himself and became the dependent one. Gave up the visibility of his glory, the independent use of his attributes he laid them at God's disposal. It is true what we read in 2nd Corinthians 13, "He was crucified through weakness, he was willing to empty himself in that sense." And now none of this was allowed to be done according to man's incite or according to man's reasoning’s. We read as it was shown the in the Mount as we saw in the first study in the tavern. Everything had to be according to the precise regulation’s specifications of God. If you ever seen builders working on any building. They're always talking about the specs, the specs. Well they're not talking about any type of glasses. No no no, they're not talking about something that comes from an optician. They're not talking about spectacles; they're talking about specifications, that's what they mean by S.P.E.C.S, specs. And that is exactly what Moser's was told to do and as he gave it to Bezalel and Oholiab of the ones who made the tabernacle as it was shown in the mount, so shall they make it.