

AUGUST 17th
GOD'S STOVE

“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. 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.” EXODUS 27:1-2

“The length of the court shall be a hundred cubits, the breadth fifty, and the height five cubits, with hangings of fine twined linen and bases of bronze. All the utensils of the tabernacle for every use, and all its pegs and all the pegs of the court, shall be of bronze.” EXODUS 27:18-19

There's nothing quite like a fireplace that's bringing full heat in the dead of winter. On those cold mornings and nights, the fire warms us as we gather close to the fire. But the fire must continue to be stoked with fresh wood before the other wood turns to ash. Vern Poythress in his "Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses" describes the altar of the Tabernacle as "God's stove." Leviticus 6:12-13 state what Poythress is describing: "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. Fire shall be kept burning on the altar continually; it shall not go out." What does God show us here when He prescribes an altar and the outer court?

It's essential for us to see one distinct difference between the altar, court, and the Holy Place (and Most Holy Place). Have you noticed the big difference yet? Try finding it for yourself. Okay, I'll give you the answer to the quiz...it's a difference of metals. The Tent of Meeting is made solely of gold material that covers the acacia wood. But what do we find with the altar, its utensils, and the outer court? Silver and bronze. What is God telling us here? There's a difference between the court of heaven (the Tent of Meeting), the altar, and the outer court. Outside of God's presence, we stand as muddled by our sin and by the sin of the world. The outer court smells like the earth, while the inner court of God smells like holiness and purity. But that's not all that God is telling us. According to Phil Ryken, while the Tent of Meeting is only roughly 1,000 square feet, the outer court was 10,000 square feet. He describes it as roughly the size of four full size tennis courts. Try picturing this Tabernacle and Court from the sky. The Tent of Meeting is rather small, 10% the size of the outer court. However, the Tent of Meeting does not stand alone. Scripture describes a fence that goes around the Tent of Meeting, which is the outer court. What point is God trying to make here? That even as God cannot be approached in the Most Holy Place, there still is a place where people can draw near Him, and this is welcome to all. This is what the Psalmist describes in Psalm 84 when He says that "one day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere." To be near God is treasured! This is the same for us as men. That God invites us into relationship is the greatest treasure.

Now we move to the altar. It is the largest piece of furniture in God's design, measuring seven feet wide, seven feet long, and four feet high. God instructed a grate to be placed above the altar, most likely acting as a grill to allow for the fat to drip down when the sacrifice was burned. How does this point to God's holiness and Jesus' sacrifice? A.W. Pink unpacks it for us: "It was at the Brazen-altar that the holiness and righteousness of God were displayed: His hatred of sin, and His justice in punishing it." As the Israelites came near God's presence, they were reminded perpetually of their sin and God's punishment for it. The shed blood offers forgiveness, but it was a daily reminder because the "blood of goats and calves can never provide a removal of sin." The blood only covers. But God. The Father sent a sacrifice, once for all that would be powerful enough to remove sin and provide perpetual presence before a holy God. Only through Jesus can we enter God's presence. Only God can be just and the justifier of our sin! Praise God for His perfect holiness and mighty salvation!

**Spend some time thinking about Jesus blood being shed for us. Thank the Lord for the privilege of entering His presence boldly because of Jesus' blood.
For Further Reading: Psalm 84**

