

THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.” —GALATIANS 2:20

In the shadows of the Old Covenant we find hidden the realities of the New Covenant. Although we are given “confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus” (Hebrews 10:19), we enter it not glibly or cheaply, but through a predetermined pattern that God gave Moses on Mount Sinai. This pattern is now obsolete but the principle remains the same.

The most visible feature in the courtyard surrounding the tabernacle was an altar where sacrifices and offerings were made to God on a fire that never went out. There were two purposes in this. There were the burnt, guilt, sin and fellowship offerings that atoned for sin. These were mandatory. Through the shedding of animal blood, sin was covered and the guilty were set free. This did not take away sin, but covered it until the blood of the unblemished Lamb was shed for every sin ever committed. The altar points to the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

On the Cross of Christ two things took place: Christ died for us and we died with Christ. We identify ourselves as “crucified with Christ” as a present status. With my sin atoned for, I now consider there to be no value in my sin, so I must also consider there to be no value in myself. All that derives from the old nature is as condemned as my sin is condemned, for as Paul says, “I know that

good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature” (Romans 7:18). Anything that has its origin in me and not in God is of the flesh, and the flesh cannot please God. The reason I recognize myself as crucified with Christ is because Jesus is not only my substitute in death, but in life.

In addition to sacrifices and offerings atoning for sin, there were also grain offerings, which were brought voluntarily. This represents the offering of the person, their body and possessions. These were generally presented along with an animal sacrifice in order to show the connection between forgiveness for sin and the full consecration of the person to God. This was the twofold function of the altar: the blood offering to deal with sin and the grain offering to deal with self. It was at this altar that any approach to fellowship with God could commence. Under the New Covenant, it is the Cross of Christ that is the starting point of a relationship with God. In availing ourselves of the full measure of the cross in regard to both sin and self, we will begin to experience the fullness of God’s purpose for us and in us.

PRAYER: Dear Father, thank You so much for the Cross of Christ where we are forgiven and cleansed to live a new life in You.

TO REFLECT UPON: Do I live with the realization that my sin and old self has been crucified with Christ?