

THE PRESENT TRUTH

Bishop Stephen D. Lewis

Ceasing Resistance

THE BRAZEN ALTAR

The Altar Call. We have heard the altar call of Jesus, "Come unto Me." We have entered the gate, and have come to the altar for pardon and acceptance. How sweet are the promises: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I John 1:9. Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." John 6:37.

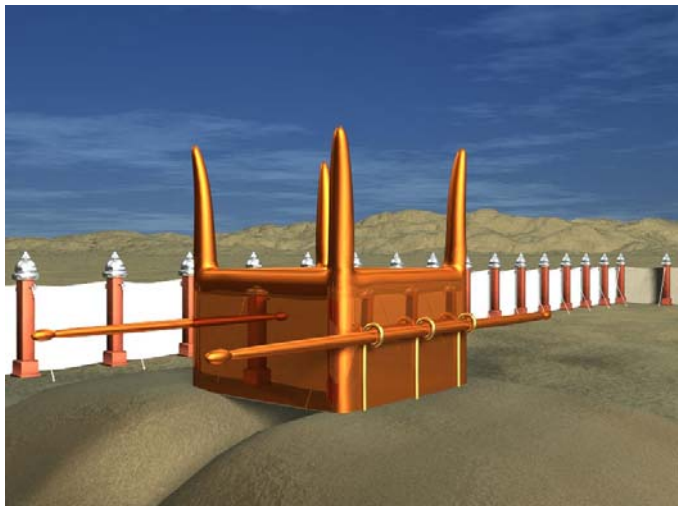
God Placed His All on the Altar. What is this on the altar? And what does it all mean? It is a lamb "without blemish, a male of the first year." Ex. 12:5. Its innocent life has been sacrificed, and it will soon be entirely consumed by the altar fire. This lamb represents Christ, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29. It represents Jesus who from His first year, and even before His birth, was dedicated by God to be the Saviour of the world. Luke 1:35. He was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Rev. 13:8. At that time, He gave His life to be completely consumed for our salvation. The fire, which came out "from before the Lord," Lev. 9:24, is of God's own kindling, thus showing that God not only accepts but shares the sacrifice. The fire "shall never go out," Lev. 6:13; it shall burn day and night, representing continual atonement, continual mercy, and continual acceptance for the repentant sinner.

Morning and evening continually, at the stated hour for worship, as the priest placed the lamb on the altar, all Israel bowed in prayer with their faces toward Jerusalem, accepting Christ as their sacrifice and dedicating anew their all to live for Him and serve Him. This was the "continual burnt offering." Ex. 29:38-42. It was a "whole burnt sacrifice." Dent. 33:10.

"I Surrender All." That the lamb was of the first year suggests the text: "Remember now Thy Creator in the days of thy youth." Eccl. 12:1. When a person decides to become a child of God, he accepts Christ and Him Crucified as the offering for his sin. Are we willing to give Him all our sins to be burned on the altar - the sins which He has purchased with His blood - all our follies, all our bad habits, all unprofitable reading, all evil associations, all harmful amusements - everything that spoils or hinders soul growth? Are they all on the altar? Let us give them all up, for they do us only harm, Though the mistakes of our life may be many, and the sins of our heart may be more, let us truthfully say: "All to Jesus I surrender, I surrender all." Let us make sure of this, for only thus can God accept the gift or the giver.



But this offering means still more than giving up our sins to be burned. We must give our bodies - our lives, "a living sacrifice," Rom. 12:1, - all our time, all our talents, all our physical powers, all our income, all our affections - all must be laid on the altar to be consumed entirely for Him, to be used as He shall direct. Only thus do we truly love God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind and with all our strength. "This is the first and great commandment," Mark 12:30; Matt. 22:38. It is the first step on The Path to the Throne of God. Nothing but complete consecration can be acceptable.



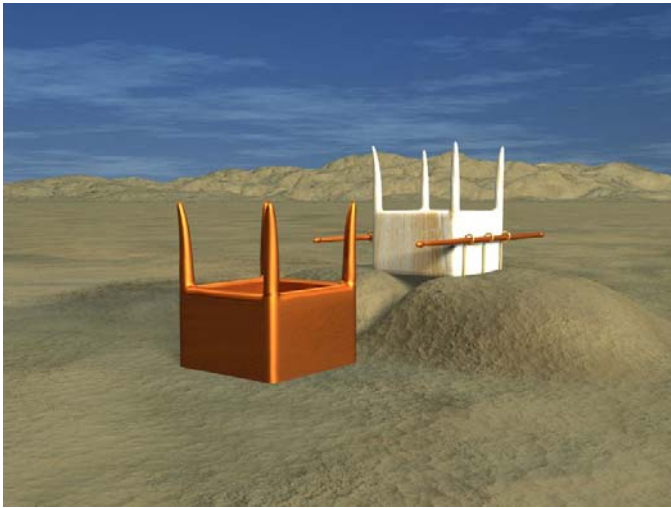
The Christian Soldier's Strength. Christ has chosen us to be soldiers, and each one can be "a good soldier of Jesus Christ." I Tim. 2:3,4. In this warfare we have nothing to fear, for - "God is able to make all grace abound toward you." II Cor. 9:8. "He is able to succor them that are tempted." Heb. 2:18. "He will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." I Cor. 10:13. "He is able also to save them to the uttermost." Heb. 7:25. "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us." Dan. 3:17. "He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." Phil. 3:21. "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Eph. 3:20. "He is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy," Jude 24. Through "the word of His grace, (God) is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." Acts

20:32. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." II Tim. 1:12. I am "fully persuaded that, what He has promised, He is able also to perform." Rom. 4:21, Italics supplied.

Reconciliation. After entering the gate, the altar experience is the next step on the Path to the Throne of God. Without it we shall continue to follow "fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." I Peter 2:11. We shall continue to "love the world" and "the things that are in the world." We do not truly love God, and under such circumstances His law becomes a yoke of bondage. I John 2:15,16.

But when at the altar we surrender all, when we yield all our powers of body, mind, and soul, to live for Him and to labor for Him, we are no longer at enmity with God. God "hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ" - "reconciled by the death of His Son...by whom we have now received the atonement," the at-one-ment. 11 Cor. 5:18; Rom. 5:10,11. "You that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death." Col. 1:21,22. Now we are no longer His enemies, but His friends. Reconciliation brings harmony with God and with all His requirements, so that the follies we once loved, we now hate.

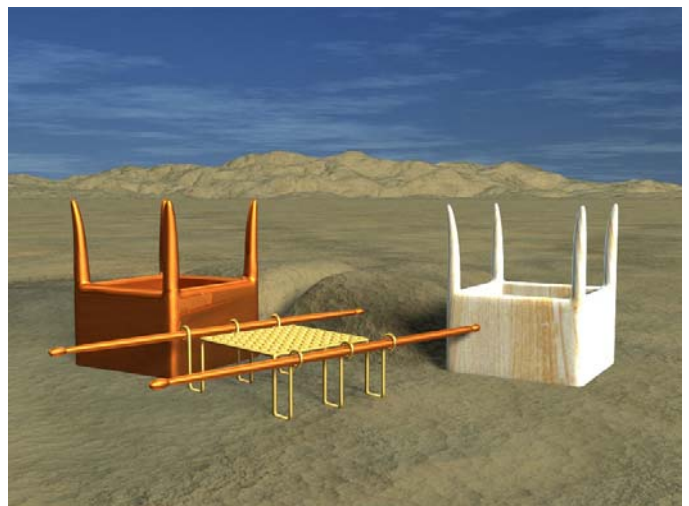
The Altar and the Vessels Thereof. Ex. 27:1-8; 38:1-7. Look now at the altar itself. "Five cubits was the length thereof, and five cubits the breadth thereof; it was four square; and three cubits the height thereof." Ex. 38:1. It was "hollow with boards" overlaid with brass. At the four corners thereof were four horns of the same.



"To the midst of the altar" - half way between the top and the bottom - was "a grate of network of brass." At the four corners of the grate were four rings of cast brass, to be places for the staves. The staves also were of wood overlaid with brass. Just above the grate was "the compass of the altar." Ex. 27:5; 38:4. The Bible does not say what this compass was nor what it was for but, according to the best information now available, it seems to have been a narrow platform encompassing the altar, on which the priests walked when placing the firewood and arranging the parts of the sacrifice. As the feet of Christ were "like unto fine brass," Rev. 1:15, so the feet of the earthly priests walked on a platform of brass. The approach to the compass was not by steps, Ex. 20:26, but by a sloping ascent to the altar on the south side. Aaron "came down" from offering. Lev. 9:22. In its making, every detail of the altar was to be exactly "as it was showed" to Moses "in the mount." Ex. 27:2,6-8.

All the vessels thereof were of brass, - "his pans to receive his ashes, and his shovels, and his basons, and his fleshhooks and his firepans." Ex. 27:3. Some of the basons were doubtless for washing the sacrifices, others for receiving the blood to be ministered in the sanctuary. The shovels were used to remove the ashes from the altar and the grate; the fleshhooks for handling the sacrifice, the firepans, or brazen censers, held the sacred fire when the altar was carried from one place to another in the wilderness wanderings. J.F.B. Com. on Ex. 27:3. As brass represented suffering, so the altar as a whole was a symbol of Christ and Him crucified. In its parts several symbols are worthy of attention: the wood, the height of the grate, the four horns, and the brass.

The Boards of the Altar. The altar was made "hollow with boards." The staves and the horns were of the same. Wood in the sanctuary represents humanity - either our humanity or the humanity of Christ, or both - usually both. Our humanity with all its mistakes is called "wood, hay, and stubble." "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." 1 Cor. 3:12,13. How thankful we should be that the wood of which the altar was made was completely overlaid and protected with brass, because the path to victory not only for Christ but for His



followers leads through suffering. "Yea . . . all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecutions." II Tim. 3:12. As the brass protected the boards from being consumed by the fire, so Christ will be our companion and protector all the way to the throne of God. He will never leave us nor forsake us.

Height of the Grate. This presents another interesting thought in the salvation that Christ is working out for man. The height of this network of brass on which the atonement offerings were laid to be consumed, is the same as the height of the mercy seat—one and one-half cubits. God's mercy is as great as His justice. In Christ mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Ps. 85:10.

The Four Horns of the Altar. Horns are the chief weapons and ornaments of animals that possess them. Hence, the word horn is often used to signify strength, honor, and victory. S.B.D. As strength, Moses' prophecy concerning Joseph reads: "His horns are like the horns of unicorns; with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth." Deut. 33:17. As honor, Job says, "I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin, and defiled my horn in the dust." Job 16:15.

As power and victory, Daniel gives us an illustration with the ram and the goat. The ram with two horns did "according to his will, and became great," and the goat with "a notable horn between his eyes" "smote the ram. and brake his two horns!" so that "there was no power in the ram to stand before him." Dan. 8:4-7. When Israel forsook God, Jeremiah said, "He hath cut off in His fierce anger all the horn of Israel." Lam. 2:3. When Joab was in trouble, he "fled unto the tabernacle of the Lord, and caught hold on the horns of the altar." I Kings 2:28. This was like taking hold on Jehovah's strength for protection. And of Christ it is written, "He had horns coming out of His hand: and there was the hiding of His power." Heb. 3:4.

When the sacrifice, which represented Christ, was brought into the court, it was bound "with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." Ps. 118:27. Likewise, if our sacrifices are bound to the horns of the altar, the power of Christ will make them acceptable and effectual. As the gate with its "four" pillars represented Christ in His gracious invitation "Come unto Me," so the four horns of the altar, reaching out in four directions, represent His worldwide invitation and the power of His sacrifice to provide salvation to the four corners of the earth.

The Brass of the Altar. While, as already noted, brass is a symbol of strength and endurance, it also signifies condemnation or judgment. In the curses, or judgments, for disobedience, God says to Israel, "If ye will not . . . hearken unto Me, then I will make your earth as brass: . . . for your land shall not yield her increase." Lev. 26:18-20. "Thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass." Deut. 28:23. Equally fruitless will be our service for Christ, if the love of God is not our inspiring motive, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass." I Cor. 13:1.

Brass also represents victory through suffering and sacrifice. At the altar Christ won the victory through sacrifice. He was made "perfect through sufferings," Heb. 2:10, - not perfect in character, for He was always that, but perfect as our Redeemer, since "He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted. Only thus could He sympathize with those who fall under temptation; only thus could He be made "a merciful and faithful High Priest," Heb. 2:17,18, the Captain of our salvation.

Brass and "Fine Brass." Brass, which is an alloy of copper and zinc, is formed only in a furnace, a "furnace of earth." It is written, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." Isa. 48:10. When John saw Christ officiating as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, His feet appeared "like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." Rev. 1:15. Fine brass, mentioned only twice in the Scriptures, was brass of so superior quality that its value was greater even than gold. How infinite in value was the fine brass that illustrates the feet of Christ, as for us He walked on this earth through the fiery furnace of affliction! Who, more than our Redeemer, suffered the just for the unjust? The entire fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is a vivid picture of Christ, the "man of sorrows," the man who was "acquainted with grief," He who was "wounded for our transgressions," "who was "bruised for our iniquities," He on whom the Lord hath laid "the iniquity of us all," and who finally, though "He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth," yet "He made His grave with the wicked." Only "fine brass" could illustrate the sufferings of Christ. It is even written, it pleased the Lord to bruise Him" - Isa. 53: 10 - even His own beloved Son. Why all this? - It was for me; it was for you. With His stripes we are healed."

"Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. With His stripes we are healed." DA 25.

As we stand before this altar, let each one ask himself, "Can I be a partaker with Him of His sufferings?" Christ vanquished the enemy, and we too may be overcomers if we never forget that "In all their afflictions He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them." Isa. 63:9. Although Christ was made an offering for sin, victory is His. As a result of His sacrifice, "He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days . . . He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Although He

made His grave with the wicked, God will "divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong." Isa. 53:10-12. Christ not only Himself suffered death at the altar, but there He tasted death for every man. Heb. 2:9; there He "exhausted death." This is strength! This is stability! This is endurance! This is victory!

Meeting Encouragement Under Trial. As we enter into His suffering, how inspiring are these words: "God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him. Not Enoch, who was translated to heaven, not Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was a greater or more honored person than John the Baptist who perished alone in the dungeon." "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." Phil. 1:29. And "of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor." Desire of Ages Pg.225

How, then, should we regard any so-called sacrifice for God? "We are never called upon to make a real sacrifice for God. Many things He asks us to yield to Him, but in doing this we are but giving up that which hinders us in the heavenward way. Even when called upon to surrender those things which in themselves are good, we may be sure that God is thus working out for us some higher good." Ministry of Healing Pg.473.

THE LAVER AND HIS FOOT

The Mirror Laver. After giving ourselves in complete consecration to Christ at the altar, we next go to the laver for cleansing. The laver was located between the altar and the door of the holy place, in the first square of the court. Because here was typified Christ's life of humiliation and suffering for our salvation, both the laver and his foot, like everything else in the court, were made of brass. But unlike the rest, these were made of the polished brass mirrors - "the looking glasses of the women . . . which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." Ex. 38:8. "These women, like Anna, Luke 2:36,37, were women of pious character and influence, who frequented the court of the sacred building, and whose parting with their mirrors was a symbol of their renouncing the world - renouncing the instrument of personal vanity for the sake of a higher beauty of holiness." JFB Com. A mirror reveals imperfections or uncleanness. God's law is likened to a mirror. "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty . . . is like a man beholding his natural face in a glass." James 1:25,23.

The Laver for Cleansing. The laver was not only a mirror to reveal uncleanness, but a bath for the removal of all defilement. The laver held the water, which was supplied from "the rock." Ex, 17:3,6. Here the priests washed their hands and their feet preparatory to any service at the altar or

in the sanctuary. This was very important, a matter of life or death. The penalty for indifference, or failure to obey this divine requirement is twice stated; it was absolute and unconditional - "that they die not." Ex. 31:20,21. David referred to this cleansing when he said, "I will wash mine hands in innocency; so will I compass thine altar O Lord." Ps, 26:6. No less important is God's command to us: "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." Isa. 52:11.

The Two Parts of the Laver. Wherever the laver is mentioned, it is always the laver "and his foot also," Ex. 30:18, indicating two distinct parts. No specific description is given as to size or shape of either the laver or his foot, but in Solomon's temple the laver was round, II Chron. 4:2. it seems evident that the laver was a bowl of considerable size. Perhaps large enough to hold a day's supply of water. The washing was not in the laver, but at the laver, "Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat," 1 Ex. 30:19, or more literally there from. This indicates that the water for washing was drawn from the laver by some sort of faucet, and evidently the priests washed in this flowing water.

The foot, in which the laver itself rested, received the water actually used in washing. Some pictures represent one priest washing another's feet using a small basin containing water as if dipped from the laver. This, however, cannot be, for the Bible nowhere mentions any vessels for the laver.



It was the duty of the Levites to keep the Laver filled, and to dispose of the water in its foot. Their faithful service kept the laver always full, always ready for immediate use. This unfailing supply of water represented the free and unlimited supply of the cleansing power of Christ's salvation, which was purchased at the altar at such infinite cost.

Justification Begun at the Altar. When the sinner responds to the pleadings and the wooing of the Holy Spirit, he enters the court. Here he sees on the altar a sacrifice, a lamb, this lamb represents Christ, "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." 1John 1:9.



When we confess our sins and accept the sacrifice, Christ takes the sin upon Himself and suffers their penalty while the sinner goes free. "If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." John 8:36; Gal. 5:1. He is reconciled (to God) by the death of His Son." Rom. 5:10. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation (a reconciliation) through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Rom. 3:25. This is the first step in justification, symbolized in the court of the earthly sanctuary.

Justification Continued at the Laver. Christ is faithful and just not only to forgive our sins but to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The only place where cleansing was done was at the laver. Immediately after the death of Christ (symbolized at the altar) were His burial and resurrection of which baptism is a memorial. Our burial in the water

corresponds to the burial of Christ; our rising out of the water corresponds to His resurrection. "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: knowing this, that our old man (the man of sin) is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed." Rom. 6:6; see Eph. 4:22-24. We are born again of water and of the Spirit, "begotten . . . unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." I Pet. 1:3.

At the altar our past sins are forgiven; at baptism they are washed away Acts 22:16, and we are cleansed. When we are cleansed - washed, or loved - the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us - declared to be ours. We are then accounted just. Rom 5:24.

Ambassadors for Christ. Being reconciled and fully justified we are "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Eph. 2:19. With this new relationship we accept new responsibility. God now commits unto us "the ministry of reconciliation," and we become "ambassadors for Christ," beseeching others "in Christ's stead" to be reconciled to God. II Cor. 5:18-20. Thus from the very beginning of our Christian experience we are to become "laborers together with God." I Cor. 3:9.

"There was a day when I died, utterly died: died to George Mueller, his opinions, preferences, tastes and will; died to the world, its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame even of my brethren and friends. And since then, I have studied only to show myself 'approved unto God.'