

The Court and the Altar: A Place of Approach

Exodus Chapter 27

As we continue our journey through the Tabernacle, we move from the internal glory of the Holy Place out into the courtyard. If you were standing in the camp of Israel, looking toward the center, you would see a perimeter of white linen curtains. This was the outer court, a space one hundred and fifty feet long and seventy-five feet wide.

These curtains stood seven and a half feet high—just high enough so that no one could tip-toe or peep over the top. There was only one way in, and that was through the gate. It reminds us of what Jesus said: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*

The Altar of Judgment

The first thing you would encounter upon entering that gate was the brazen altar. It was made of acacia wood, seven and a half feet square and four and a half feet high, completely overlaid with bronze.

In the scriptures, bronze is always a symbol of judgment. This is where the sacrifices were burnt. Before a priest could ever enter the Presence of God, the issue of sin had to be dealt with at the altar. There were four horns on the corners, carved directly into the structure.

This points us directly to the Cross. The Bible doesn't teach a "limited atonement" where Jesus only died for a select few. Jesus Christ literally took our place. When He shed His blood on that cross, He paid the price for the sins of the whole world. He was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and that bronze altar was a shadow of the finished work of Christ.

The Oil for the Light

In the final verses of this chapter, the Lord gives a command regarding the oil for the lampstand:

"And you shall command the children of Israel that they bring you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to cause the lamp to burn continually." (Exodus 27:20)

This wasn't just any oil; it was "pressed" or "beaten" oil. To get the clearest, purest light, the olive had to be crushed. Does that sound familiar? Isaiah tells us that Jesus was *"bruised for our iniquities."* Out of His suffering came the light of the world.

The priests, Aaron and his sons, were tasked with keeping those lamps burning from evening until morning. It was a "statute forever." We see in history what happens when men become negligent with the light. Remember young Samuel? He was sleeping in the tabernacle when he heard a voice. Eli the priest was old and his eyes were dim, and the "lamp of God" was about to go out. The Lord had to raise up a new voice because the leadership had failed to tend the fire.

Practical Application: Tending the Fire

The lesson for us today is simple: The fire must be maintained. The Holy Spirit is often represented by oil in the Bible. While we are sealed by the Spirit the moment we believe, we are commanded to be *continually filled* with the Spirit. Are you tending the lamp of your heart? Or have you allowed the "oil" to run low through neglect, busyness, or worldliness?

The Challenge for Believers: I want to challenge you this week to look at your "altar." Have you moved away from the simplicity of the Cross? We don't need new rituals or complicated systems. We need to stay close to the sacrifice of Jesus. Don't let your light grow dim. Spend time in the Word, stay on your knees, and let the Holy Spirit provide that "pure oil" so that your life remains a witness in a very dark world.

An Invitation to Life

Perhaps you're reading this and you feel like you're standing outside those linen curtains. You know there's a holy God, but you feel separated from Him.

The Good News is that the gate is open. Jesus Christ shed His precious blood on the cross to wash away every sin you've ever committed. But He didn't stay in the grave! The resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord. He is alive today and He is calling your name, just as He called Samuel.

You don't have to clean yourself up to come to Him; you come to the Altar to *be* cleaned. If you want to know the peace of God and the certainty of eternal life, simply turn from your way and turn to Him.