
Words of Truth

Hebrews 13:10-13

By: Brian A. Yeager

“We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach” (Hebrews 3:10-13).

The first time we read about an altar in the Scriptures was in the days of Noah (Genesis 8:20). After that, there are around four hundred times altars are mentioned in what is known as the Old Testament. The Greek term [θυσιαστήριον] that appears here in our study is only recorded twenty-three times in the New Testament. This term simply is referring to a place of sacrifice (Strong’s # 2379). We know that Jesus offered Himself as the ultimate sacrifice and therefore there is no more offering for sin (Hebrews 9:1-10:18). So, when Christians here are told that they have an altar, what is that referring to?

Later in this text, we will read about sacrifices that Christians still offer even till this day (Hebrews 13:15-16). We also read in other texts that we give our bodies as a living sacrifice to our Lord (Romans 12:1). The saints in Philippi were said to have offered an acceptable sacrifice when they financially supported the Apostle Paul (Philippians 4:10-18). We are priests that offer up “spiritual sacrifices” (I Peter 2:5). So, what or where is the altar for those things? It is not a physical place (John 4:20-24). Isn’t it obvious? It is your heart. We do the will of God from our hearts (Romans 6:17 and Ephesians 6:6). It is not the works of the flesh (Romans 2:28-29). We draw near with a true heart even when assembling in a public place (Hebrews 10:22-25). Jews, who still held to the Law of Moses, could not offer such sacrifices because their hearts were not opened to the Lord (Acts 28:17-29 and Romans 2:1-5).

Under the Law of Moses the Levites had rights to some of the meat that were sacrificed and the offerings given (Leviticus 6:16-18, Numbers 5:9-10, Numbers 18:8-20, Deuteronomy 18:1-5, and I Corinthians 9:13). This right was theirs because of their service to God. Now, the law has changed as well as the priesthood (Romans 7:1-6 and Hebrews 7:1-8:13). This change no longer has the sacrificial law of the past. As noted already, Jesus was the sacrifice.

To further the point of the context, those to whom this letter was written were reminded of the parts of the sacrifices of old that were burnt outside the camp (Exodus 29:14, Leviticus

4:16-21, Leviticus 9:1-11, and Leviticus 16:27-28). What was burned outside the camp was essentially the waste. It was not meant for the Lord or man. Think about that. Ponder it. The illustration made from this is powerful.

Jesus was the sin sacrifice (I Corinthians 5:7, II Corinthians 5:21, Ephesians 5:2, and Hebrews 7:27). The inspired Apostle Peter wrote: *“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you... For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit”* (I Peter 1:18-20 and I Peter 3:18).

Jesus was not sacrificed on an altar in the temple. Rather, this is where He was put to death: *“When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar. Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst”* (John 19:13-18). “Golgotha” (Mark 15:22-24) was said to be a place outside of Jerusalem (Thayer). This is where they led Jesus away to. Outside of the camp. This is likened unto a place wherein the waste would be taken.

Then the lesson was driven home to these Jewish Christians. They needed to go outside of their system. They could not cling to Jerusalem, the temple, the Law of Moses, etc. If they wanted to follow Jesus they needed to realize that was a journey outside of the system they loved and were accustomed to. They had to embrace the freedom from the Old Law in Christ Jesus and salvation that came with that (Acts 13:38-39 and Romans 8:1-3).

Then they had to embrace the fact that walking away from the system of the Law of Moses and the traditions they had embraced had a price. Like Jesus, they would face certain reproach for going outside those gates (Luke 6:22 and I Peter 4:12-14). We have already seen this addressed, in part, in this letter (Hebrews 10:32-33). This price was too heavy for some Jews who believed (John 12:36-43). On the other hand, some were literally willing to die outside the gate for the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 6:8-7:60). That suffering is the price one must be willing to pay if necessary. Furthermore, and you will have to read the whole context of the reference I am about to cite, suffering for Christ is very beneficial (I Peter 3:8-4:19). So, don't be like the Jews of old and hold on to a human system of faith.