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# The Atonement — The Altar and the Place of Divine Exchange

## The Atonement Explained Through the Altar, the Sacrifices, and the Meeting Place of God's Justice and Mercy

### Atonement: Author



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Moody Wray

**Carl Timothy Wray** is the founder of *The Finished Work of Christ* and the author of hundreds of theological writings dedicated to unveiling the full counsel of God from Genesis to Revelation. For more than four decades he has studied the Scriptures with a singular burden: to reveal the wisdom, order, and redemptive purpose of God through Jesus Christ.

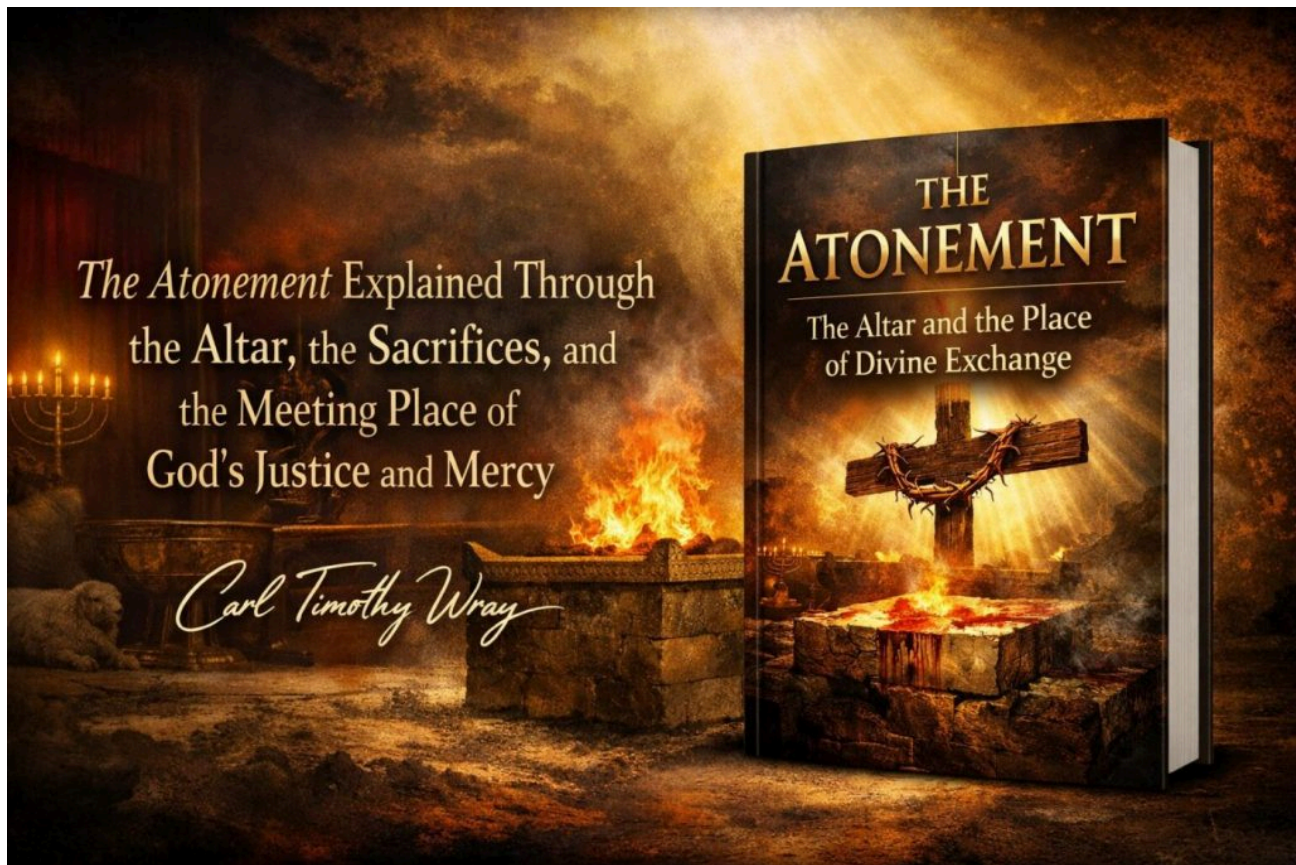
His teachings focus on the Finished Work of Christ, the unfolding plan of the ages, and the divine government revealed throughout the Bible. Through books, teachings, and prophetic exposition, Carl seeks to help believers see the Scriptures as one unified revelation — where every altar, sacrifice, priesthood, and promise ultimately points to Christ and the reconciliation of creation.

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**The Atonement — The Altar and the Place of Divine Exchange** explores one of the most central themes in the Bible: the altar where sacrifice, justice, and mercy meet. Throughout Scripture, the altar represents the divine meeting place where God's righteousness confronts human sin and reconciliation begins. From the early altars of Genesis to the sacrificial system of the Tabernacle and the ultimate fulfillment at the cross of Christ, this book reveals how the altar stands at the heart of God's redemptive plan. By examining the altar, the sacrifices, and the meaning of divine exchange, readers will gain a deeper understanding of how the atonement unfolds across the entire Bible and how the work of Christ fulfills every shadow and symbol of redemption.

This book explains the altar and the atonement in the Bible, exploring the altar of sacrifice in the tabernacle, the Old Testament sacrificial system, and how the altar ultimately points to the cross of Jesus Christ.





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## Atonement: Introduction

From the earliest pages of Scripture, one object appears again and again wherever humanity approaches God.

It is the altar.

Before there was a priesthood, before there was a tabernacle, before the law was given at Sinai, men who sought the Lord built altars. Abel brought his offering to an altar. Noah, stepping onto a cleansed earth after the flood, raised an altar before God. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob built altars throughout the land as they walked in covenant with the Almighty.



The altar stands at the center of the biblical story because it represents the place where two realities meet: the holiness of God and the brokenness of man.

Humanity, created in the image of God, fell into sin and alienation. The relationship that was once pure fellowship became fractured. The Scriptures reveal that reconciliation between a righteous God and fallen humanity cannot occur through human effort, religious striving, or moral reform. Reconciliation requires a divine solution.

That solution unfolds through the language of sacrifice.

The altar is the place where the cost of sin is acknowledged, where justice is honored, and where mercy begins its work. Upon the altar the sacrifice is offered, blood is shed, and the principle of substitution is revealed — life given so that life may be restored.

When God established the tabernacle in Israel, the altar stood at the entrance of the sacred court. No one could pass into the deeper realms of the sanctuary without first encountering the altar. It was the starting point of approach, the place where reconciliation began, and the foundation of Israel's entire system of worship.

Yet every altar of the Old Covenant pointed beyond itself.

Every sacrifice, every offering, every drop of blood spoke of something greater that was yet to come. The altars of Scripture were not the final solution to humanity's problem; they were shadows preparing the world for the ultimate altar where redemption would be fully accomplished.

That altar was the cross.

At the cross of Christ, the language of sacrifice reached its fulfillment. The Lamb of God offered Himself once for all, accomplishing what countless offerings throughout



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only foreshadow. There, justice and mercy met in their perfect expression, and the great exchange between God and humanity was accomplished.

This book explores the altar as the place of divine exchange — the meeting point where sin is confronted, sacrifice is offered, and reconciliation begins. By tracing the altar throughout Scripture, we begin to see how the wisdom of God unfolds step by step, preparing the way for the finished work of Christ.

For the altar is not merely a structure of ancient worship.

It is the doorway into the mystery of redemption.

And in understanding the altar, we begin to see more clearly the depth, order, and beauty of the [atonement itself](#).

## Chapter 1

### The Altar in the Mind of God

#### The First Language of Reconciliation

From the earliest pages of Scripture, the altar appears as one of the first and most significant symbols of humanity's relationship with God. Long before temples were built, long before the priesthood was formally established, men who sought the Lord erected altars. These altars became the meeting place between heaven and earth, the point where the human need for reconciliation encountered the holiness of God.

The altar was not a human invention. It was the unfolding of a divine principle embedded within the redemptive plan of God from the very beginning. Wherever humanity approached God in the ancient biblical world, the altar stood as the visible acknowledgment that something had been broken and that reconciliation required sacrifice.

The altar therefore became the first language of redemption.



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altar, humanity learned that approaching God required surrender, sacrifice, and recognition of His holiness. The altar declared that fellowship with God

could not be restored through human effort alone; it required a divine provision that honored both justice and mercy.

## The Meeting Place of Justice and Mercy

The altar represents the meeting point of two realities that stand at the center of the biblical story: the righteousness of God and the fallen condition of humanity.

God is holy, righteous, and just. His nature cannot overlook sin or ignore rebellion. Humanity, created in His image, fell into alienation through disobedience. The Scriptures reveal that this separation could not simply be dismissed. If God were to restore fellowship with humanity, it must occur in a way that honored His justice while also expressing His mercy.

The altar became the place where this divine balance began to unfold.

At the altar the seriousness of sin was acknowledged. Sacrifice was offered, blood was shed, and the principle of substitution began to emerge. Life was given in the place of life. Through this sacred act, the altar declared that reconciliation carried a cost.

This principle would echo throughout the entire Bible.

## The First Sacrifice in Scripture

The first clear glimpse of this principle appears early in the biblical narrative through the story of Cain and Abel.

Genesis records that both brothers brought offerings before the Lord. Cain brought the fruit of the ground, while Abel brought the firstlings of his flock. Though the text is brief, the event reveals a profound truth that would shape the entire sacrificial

followed.



Abel's offering was accepted, while Cain's offering was not.

The difference was not merely the material of the offering but the principle behind it. Abel's sacrifice aligned with the pattern that would unfold throughout Scripture — the offering of life through sacrifice. Cain's offering, though sincere in its presentation, did not align with the divine order through which reconciliation would ultimately be revealed.

This moment introduces the foundational idea that humanity must approach God according to the pattern that God establishes, not according to human preference.

## The Altar After the Flood

As the biblical narrative continues, the altar appears again at a pivotal moment in human history.

After the flood, Noah stepped onto a cleansed earth that had been washed by divine judgment. The first recorded act of Noah upon leaving the ark was not the building of a house or the cultivation of the land. Instead, Noah built an altar.

Genesis tells us:

"Then Noah built an altar to the Lord... and offered burnt offerings on the altar."

The Scriptures declare that the Lord smelled a sweet savor. This phrase reveals something profound about the altar. It was not merely a place of sacrifice; it was also a place of restored relationship. Through the offering upon the altar, Noah acknowledged both the mercy of God and the seriousness of sin.

The altar became a declaration of gratitude, worship, and covenant renewal between God and humanity.



## The Altars of the Patriarchs

The pattern continued through the lives of the patriarchs. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob each built altars during their journeys with God.

Whenever God revealed Himself, the response was often the same: an altar was built.

Abraham built altars in the land where God appeared to him. Isaac built an altar when the Lord confirmed the covenant promise. Jacob erected altars at places where divine encounters transformed his life. Each altar marked a moment of revelation and covenant recognition.

These altars served as memorials of God's faithfulness and reminders that humanity's relationship with God required reverence and surrender.

The altar therefore became a visible testimony that approaching God required acknowledgment of His holiness and recognition of His authority.

## The Altar in the Tabernacle

When the Lord later established the tabernacle in the wilderness, the altar took on an even more central role within Israel's system of worship.

The brazen altar stood at the entrance of the tabernacle court. Anyone entering the sacred space first encountered the altar before approaching any other structure of the sanctuary.

This placement revealed a profound spiritual order.

Before the priest could approach the laver, before he could enter the holy place, and before anyone could draw near to the presence of God, the altar had to be encountered first.



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on begins at the altar.

The altar declared that sin must be addressed before fellowship with God could be restored. Without the altar, there could be no priesthood, no sanctuary ministry, and no access to the presence of God.

The altar was the starting point of redemption.

## The Altar as a Prophetic Shadow

Yet the altar was never the final solution to humanity's problem.

The sacrifices offered upon the altars of the Old Covenant could temporarily cover sin, but they could not permanently remove it. The blood of animals served as a shadow pointing forward to something greater that was yet to come.

Each sacrifice declared that a more perfect offering would one day appear.

The prophets and apostles would later reveal that the entire sacrificial system was preparing the world for the ultimate sacrifice — the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world.

The altars of Scripture were therefore prophetic shadows pointing toward the cross of Christ.

## The Cross as the Ultimate Altar

At the cross of Jesus Christ, everything the altar represented reached its fulfillment.

Christ became both the priest and the sacrifice. Upon the cross, the language of sacrifice reached its highest expression. The Lamb of God offered Himself once for all, accomplishing what countless offerings throughout history could only foreshadow.



At that altar, justice was satisfied and mercy was revealed.

The cross became the ultimate place of divine exchange — where sin was judged, mercy was released, and reconciliation between God and humanity was accomplished through the sacrifice of Christ.

## The Altar and the Beginning of Redemption

Understanding the altar allows us to see the wisdom of God's redemptive plan unfolding throughout the Scriptures.

The altar reveals that redemption is not accidental or arbitrary. It is structured, intentional, and rooted in the very character of God. It teaches us that reconciliation requires both justice and mercy and that restoration begins where sacrifice is offered.

Every altar throughout Scripture ultimately points forward to the cross.

And in the cross of Christ, the meaning of the altar is fully revealed: the place where God and humanity meet again through the sacrifice that makes reconciliation possible.

The altar therefore stands at the very beginning of the story of redemption — the place where the divine exchange first begins to unfold.

## Chapter 2

### The First Altars of Scripture

#### Altars Before the Law

Long before the tabernacle was built and long before the priesthood of Levi was established, altars appeared throughout the early history of Scripture. These early

altars revealed something profound: the principle of sacrifice and approach to God that would be the law of Moses was ever given.



This shows us that the altar was never merely a ceremonial feature of Israel's religious system. Instead, it was part of a deeper divine pattern embedded within the unfolding plan of redemption.

From the earliest generations of humanity, those who sought the Lord instinctively built altars. These altars became places of worship, covenant recognition, thanksgiving, and sacrifice. They marked moments when heaven touched earth and when humanity acknowledged the holiness of God.

The altar therefore appears not as a later invention of religion but as a foundational element of God's unfolding relationship with mankind.

## The Altar of Noah

The first altar clearly mentioned in Scripture after the fall appears in the life of Noah.

After the floodwaters receded and the ark rested upon dry ground, Noah stepped into a world that had been cleansed through divine judgment. Humanity had passed through a moment of great upheaval, and the future of the human race rested upon the small remnant preserved within the ark.

The very first recorded act of Noah upon leaving the ark was not the building of shelter or the cultivation of the earth. Instead, Noah built an altar.

Genesis records:

"Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar."

This moment reveals the instinctive response of a heart that recognizes the mercy of God. Noah understood that his preservation through the flood was not merely the result of chance but the grace of the Almighty. The altar became his response of worship, and reverence.



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The Scriptures tell us that the Lord smelled a sweet savor from Noah's offering. This phrase reveals that sacrifice offered in humility and gratitude rises before God as an expression of restored relationship.

Through Noah's altar, we see the altar functioning not only as a place of sacrifice but also as a place of thanksgiving and renewed covenant.

## The Altars of Abraham

As the story of redemption continues, the altar appears again in the life of Abraham, the father of faith.

Wherever God revealed Himself to Abraham, Abraham responded by building an altar. These altars marked moments of divine encounter and covenant recognition. They stood as physical reminders that God had spoken and that His promises were being established.

In Genesis we read that when Abraham entered the land of Canaan and the Lord appeared to him, he built an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him. Later, he built another altar between Bethel and Ai and called upon the name of the Lord.

These altars served as testimonies of Abraham's trust in the promises of God. They marked places where Abraham acknowledged God's sovereignty and dedicated himself to the divine covenant that had been revealed to him.

Perhaps the most profound altar experience in Abraham's life occurred on Mount Moriah. There God tested Abraham by asking him to offer his son Isaac. Though God ultimately provided a ram as a substitute sacrifice, the moment revealed the deep spiritual meaning behind the altar.

The altar became the place where Abraham demonstrated absolute trust in the promises of God. It was also the place where the principle of substitution was

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...e again: God Himself provided the sacrifice.

This moment prophetically pointed forward to a greater day when God would provide the ultimate Lamb for the redemption of the world.

## The Altars of Isaac and Jacob

The pattern established by Abraham continued through the lives of Isaac and Jacob.

Isaac built an altar when the Lord appeared to him and reaffirmed the covenant promises given to Abraham. In response to that revelation, Isaac called upon the name of the Lord and established an altar in that place. His altar signified both worship and recognition that the covenant promises were continuing through the generations.

Jacob likewise encountered God in profound ways that resulted in the building of altars. After his vision of the ladder reaching from earth to heaven at Bethel, Jacob recognized that he had encountered the presence of God. Later, when he returned to Bethel after many years, he built an altar and called the place El-Bethel, acknowledging that God had revealed Himself there.

Through these patriarchs, the altar became a recurring symbol of covenant relationship. Each altar marked a place where God had spoken, where faith had been exercised, and where worship had been offered.

These altars stood as reminders that the relationship between God and humanity required acknowledgment of His presence and reverence for His holiness.

## The Altar as a Covenant Marker

Throughout the stories of the patriarchs, the altar functioned as more than a place of sacrifice. It also served as a covenant marker.



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presented a moment when God revealed Himself and when humanity  
in faith. These structures remained in the landscape as witnesses of

divine encounter and covenant commitment.

In a world filled with uncertainty and wandering, the altars of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob stood as testimonies that the living God had entered into relationship with His people.

The altar therefore became both a spiritual and historical marker. It reminded future generations that God had spoken, that promises had been given, and that faith had been exercised.

## The Altar as Worship and Surrender

The early altars of Scripture also reveal another important truth: the altar was closely connected with worship.

Whenever individuals encountered the presence of God, they responded by building altars. These altars became places where worship was expressed through sacrifice and devotion. They represented the surrender of the human heart before the majesty of God.

In this sense, the altar was not merely a place of ritual. It was the outward expression of inward reverence. Through the act of sacrifice, worshippers acknowledged that everything they possessed ultimately belonged to God.

The altar therefore symbolized surrender.

Those who built altars declared through their actions that their lives were devoted to the Lord who had revealed Himself to them.

## The Altar as Preparation for Greater Revelation



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These early altars were simple structures of stone or earth, they carried deep significance.

Each altar pointed forward to a greater revelation that would unfold in the future. The altars of Noah and the patriarchs prepared the way for the more detailed sacrificial system that would later be established through Moses. They were early expressions of a principle that would eventually be expanded and explained within the law.

God was gradually revealing the structure of redemption.

The simple altars of the patriarchs would eventually give way to the altar of the tabernacle, where sacrifices would be offered according to the divine instructions given at Sinai. From there the sacrificial system would continue to develop, ultimately pointing forward to the final sacrifice that would fulfill every shadow and symbol.

## **The Foundation for the Altar of the Tabernacle**

When the tabernacle was later established in the wilderness, the altar became the first structure encountered by anyone entering the sacred court.

This placement reflected the lessons that had already been taught through the early altars of Scripture. Humanity approaches God through sacrifice. Reconciliation begins at the altar. Access to the presence of God requires acknowledgment of His holiness and provision for sin.

The altars of the patriarchs therefore laid the foundation for the altar of the tabernacle.

What began as simple expressions of worship and covenant recognition would later become part of a structured system through which God would teach His people the deeper meaning of atonement.



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## **ar and the Unfolding Plan of Redemption**

As we consider the altars of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we begin to see how the story of redemption unfolds step by step throughout Scripture.

The altar appears again and again as the place where humanity responds to God's revelation. It is the place of worship, the place of sacrifice, and the place where covenant relationship is acknowledged.

Yet these early altars were only the beginning.

They were the first stones laid in a much greater structure that God was building throughout history. Each altar pointed forward to the greater altar that would one day appear — the cross of Jesus Christ, where the ultimate sacrifice would be offered and where the divine exchange would finally be completed.

Through these early altars, God was preparing the world to understand the meaning of atonement.

## Chapter 3

### The Altar of the Tabernacle

#### The Altar at the Entrance of the Sanctuary

When God delivered Israel from Egypt and brought them into covenant relationship at Mount Sinai, He gave Moses detailed instructions for the construction of the tabernacle. This sacred structure was designed to reveal the divine order through which humanity could approach the presence of God.

The tabernacle was not simply a place of worship. It was a living illustration of the principles of redemption, a carefully designed system that taught Israel how reconciliation with God was to occur.

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entrance of the tabernacle court stood the altar.

This placement was deliberate and deeply symbolic. Anyone entering the court encountered the altar before anything else. Before the laver, before the holy place, before the veil, the altar stood as the first structure encountered in the approach to God.

This arrangement revealed a profound truth: reconciliation begins at the altar.

Humanity cannot move toward the presence of God without first confronting the reality of sin and the necessity of sacrifice. The altar therefore became the starting point of the entire tabernacle ministry.

## The Brazen Altar

The altar constructed for the tabernacle is often called the brazen altar or the bronze altar. Its design and construction were given by God with precise instructions.

The altar was made of acacia wood and overlaid with bronze. It was square in shape, with horns projecting from each of its four corners. A grate was placed within the altar to hold the fire and the sacrifices that would be offered upon it.

The use of bronze in the construction of the altar carried symbolic meaning. Throughout Scripture, bronze often represents judgment and endurance. The altar, therefore, stood as the place where sin was judged and where the cost of transgression was acknowledged through sacrifice.

The horns on the corners of the altar also held significance. In ancient Israel, horns symbolized strength and authority. The horns of the altar became associated with refuge and mercy, as individuals seeking forgiveness could cling to them as a plea for grace.

The structure of the altar thus revealed both the seriousness of judgment and the mercy.

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# The Fire of the Altar

One of the most striking elements of the altar was the fire that burned upon it.

According to the instructions given in the law, the fire on the altar was not to be extinguished. It was to burn continually, day and night, as sacrifices were offered upon it.

The book of Leviticus declares that the fire upon the altar was first kindled by God Himself. When the tabernacle ministry began, divine fire came down and consumed the sacrifice that had been placed upon the altar. This fire became the sacred flame that the priests were commanded to maintain continually.

The perpetual fire carried deep symbolic meaning.

It represented the holiness of God and His consuming nature. The fire revealed that sacrifice was not a casual act but a solemn encounter with the holiness of the Almighty. The altar was the place where the offering was presented and where the fire of God consumed what was laid upon it.

This image taught Israel that approaching God required reverence and acknowledgment of His holiness.

## The Ministry of the Priests at the Altar

The altar was the central location for much of the daily ministry of the priests.

Every day sacrifices were brought by the people and presented before the Lord. The priests received these offerings, prepared them according to the instructions of the law, and placed them upon the altar. Blood was sprinkled, portions of the offering were burned, and the smoke rose toward heaven.



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As a daily activity, the altar became the focal point of Israel's sacrificial worship.

The priests acted as mediators between God and the people. They handled the sacrifices, maintained the fire, and ensured that the offerings were presented according to the divine instructions given through Moses.

This constant activity around the altar demonstrated the seriousness of sin and the continual need for reconciliation.

Day after day, sacrifice followed sacrifice.

The altar therefore stood as a visible reminder that humanity's relationship with God required ongoing acknowledgment of sin and the continual presentation of sacrifice.

## The Horns of the Altar

The horns that extended from the four corners of the altar held both symbolic and practical significance within Israel's worship.

In times of distress, individuals seeking mercy sometimes fled to the altar and grasped its horns. This act symbolized an appeal for refuge and forgiveness. By holding the horns of the altar, a person acknowledged the authority of God and sought mercy within the system that God had established.

The horns therefore represented both power and refuge.

They reminded Israel that judgment and mercy were intertwined within the divine order of redemption. The altar was not only the place where sacrifice occurred; it was also the place where mercy could be sought.

## The Altar as the Center of Israel's Worship

Throughout the life of Israel, the altar remained the central element of the sacrificial system, whether in the tabernacle of the wilderness or later in the temple in



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Jerusalem, the altar was the place where sacrifices were offered and where the people's worship was expressed through obedience to the commands of God.

The altar stood as a constant reminder that approaching God required humility and reverence.

It also reminded the people that reconciliation came through the provision that God Himself had established. The altar was not designed according to human imagination; it was revealed through divine instruction. Every detail of its design, placement, and function reflected the wisdom of God.

## The Altar as a Teacher

Beyond its practical function in Israel's worship, the altar also served as a teacher.

Through the sacrifices offered upon it, Israel learned profound spiritual truths. They learned that sin carried consequences. They learned that reconciliation required sacrifice. They learned that life was given so that life might be restored.

Each offering placed upon the altar communicated the seriousness of sin and the grace of God's provision.

The altar therefore functioned as a living classroom where the people of God were instructed in the principles of redemption.

## The Altar as a Prophetic Shadow

Despite its central role in Israel's worship, the altar of the tabernacle was never intended to be the final solution to humanity's problem of sin.

The sacrifices offered upon the altar had to be repeated continually. Day after day, offerings were brought and placed upon the fire. This repetition of the sacrifices themselves were incomplete.



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They pointed forward to something greater.

The altar of the tabernacle was a prophetic shadow pointing toward a future moment when the ultimate sacrifice would be offered. The blood of animals could temporarily cover sin, but it could not permanently remove it.

The entire sacrificial system therefore anticipated a greater fulfillment.

## The Greater Altar to Come

The prophets and apostles would later reveal that everything connected to the altar ultimately pointed toward the sacrifice of Christ.

The cross would become the true altar where the perfect offering was made once for all. At that altar, the Lamb of God offered Himself for the reconciliation of humanity. The repeated sacrifices of the tabernacle would find their fulfillment in the single, perfect sacrifice of Christ.

Thus the altar of the tabernacle was both a functional element of Israel's worship and a prophetic sign pointing forward to the greater altar of redemption.

Through its structure, its sacrifices, and its fire, the altar taught the people of God that reconciliation required sacrifice and that redemption would ultimately be accomplished through the provision of God Himself.

In the unfolding story of Scripture, the altar of the tabernacle stands as one of the clearest symbols of the divine plan of atonement — a plan that would reach its fulfillment in the cross of Jesus Christ.

## Chapter 4



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## Place of Sacrifice

## The Altar as the Place of Offering

At the heart of the altar's purpose was sacrifice. The altar was not merely a symbol of worship or a marker of covenant; it was the place where offerings were presented before God. Upon the altar the sacrifice was laid, the fire consumed the offering, and the smoke ascended toward heaven.

The altar therefore became the place where humanity acknowledged the seriousness of sin and where the cost of reconciliation was visibly demonstrated.

Every sacrifice placed upon the altar carried meaning. It revealed that reconciliation with God required more than words or intentions. Something of value had to be given. The offering represented the worshiper's recognition that sin had disrupted the relationship between humanity and God and that restoration required the surrender of life.

Through the altar, God taught His people that sacrifice was not arbitrary. It was part of the divine order through which reconciliation would unfold.

## The Principle of Substitution

One of the most important truths revealed through the altar is the principle of substitution.

When a worshiper brought a sacrifice to the altar, the animal represented the life of the one presenting the offering. The individual would lay his hands upon the head of the animal before it was offered. This act symbolized identification between the worshiper and the sacrifice.

In this moment, the animal stood in the place of the person bringing the offering.

The life of the sacrifice was given so that the life of the worshiper might be



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his act revealed the seriousness of sin and the reality that reconciliation

required the giving of life. The altar therefore became the stage upon which the principle of substitution was demonstrated again and again.

This principle prepared the way for the ultimate substitution that would occur in the sacrifice of Christ.

## The Cost of Sin

The sacrifices offered upon the altar continually reminded the people of Israel that sin carried consequences.

Sin was not merely a mistake or an imperfection. It was a violation of the divine order established by God. When sin entered the human story, it disrupted the harmony between humanity and the Creator. The sacrificial system therefore revealed that reconciliation required the acknowledgment of this brokenness.

Every sacrifice placed upon the altar represented the cost of sin.

The shedding of blood reminded the people that life itself had been affected by disobedience. Through the sacrificial system, Israel learned that sin could not simply be ignored. It had to be addressed through the provision that God Himself had established.

The altar became the place where this reality was continually demonstrated.

## Sacrifice as Worship

Though sacrifice addressed the problem of sin, it also carried another important dimension: worship.

The offerings presented upon the altar were acts of devotion and reverence toward



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Worshiper approached the altar acknowledging that everything he

possessed ultimately belonged to the Lord. By bringing an offering, the individual expressed gratitude, humility, and surrender.

Sacrifice therefore became an act of worship.

Through sacrifice, the people of God acknowledged His sovereignty and expressed their dependence upon His mercy. The smoke rising from the altar symbolized the prayers and devotion of the worshiper ascending before the Lord.

The altar thus served not only as the place where sin was addressed but also as the place where worship was expressed.

## The Order of Sacrifice

The sacrifices offered upon the altar were not random acts of devotion. They were carried out according to the detailed instructions given by God through Moses.

These instructions ensured that the sacrificial system operated within the divine order established by God. Each offering had specific requirements regarding the type of animal, the manner of preparation, and the way the sacrifice was presented upon the altar.

This structure revealed that approaching God required obedience.

The altar was not a place where individuals could invent their own forms of worship. It was a place where God's instructions were followed carefully and reverently. Through this system, the people learned that reconciliation with God occurs according to His wisdom, not human preference.

## The Repetition of Sacrifice



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most striking aspects of the altar ministry was the continual repetition of

Day after day, offerings were brought to the altar. Morning and evening sacrifices were offered, and additional sacrifices were presented during special festivals and occasions. This constant activity revealed both the seriousness of sin and the limitations of the sacrificial system itself.

The repetition of sacrifice showed that the problem of sin had not yet been fully resolved.

Each offering temporarily addressed the need for reconciliation, but the process had to be repeated continually. The altar therefore stood as a reminder that the sacrificial system was pointing forward to a greater solution that had not yet appeared.

## The Altar and the Heart of the Worshiper

Though the altar involved physical sacrifices, its deeper meaning always pointed to the condition of the human heart.

The prophets later reminded Israel that God desired more than outward ritual. Sacrifice without sincerity could not fulfill the purpose of the altar. The offering presented before God had to be accompanied by humility, repentance, and genuine devotion.

The altar therefore called the worshiper to examine his heart.

The sacrifice represented more than the death of an animal; it symbolized the surrender of the worshiper's own life before God. The act of sacrifice declared that the individual recognized his need for mercy and his dependence upon the grace of the Lord.

In this sense, the altar was always connected to the transformation of the heart.



## THE ALTAR Preparing the Way for Christ

As the centuries passed and countless sacrifices were offered upon the altars of Israel, the deeper purpose of the sacrificial system continued to unfold.

The altar was teaching the people of God that reconciliation required sacrifice and that life must be given so that life could be restored. Yet the repetition of sacrifices revealed that the system itself was incomplete.

The altar was preparing the world for the ultimate sacrifice.

The prophets began to speak of a coming Servant who would bear the sins of the people. The sacrificial lambs offered upon the altar pointed forward to the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world.

When Christ came, He fulfilled everything that the altar represented.

## The Cross as the Final Sacrifice

At the cross of Jesus Christ, the principle of substitution reached its ultimate fulfillment.

Christ became the perfect sacrifice, offering His own life for the reconciliation of humanity. Unlike the sacrifices offered upon the altar of the tabernacle, His sacrifice did not need to be repeated. It was offered once for all, accomplishing what the repeated sacrifices of the old covenant could only foreshadow.

The cross therefore stands as the greatest altar in the history of redemption.

There, the justice of God was satisfied and the mercy of God was revealed. The sacrifice of Christ accomplished the divine exchange that the altar had always symbolized.



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At the cross, reconciliation between God and humanity was fully accomplished.

# The Meaning of the Altar

As we consider the altar as the place of sacrifice, we begin to see the profound wisdom embedded within the redemptive plan of God.

The altar reveals that sin is serious, that reconciliation requires sacrifice, and that restoration comes through the provision that God Himself supplies. It teaches us that redemption is not accidental but structured according to the wisdom and justice of God.

Every sacrifice offered upon the ancient altars pointed forward to the day when the perfect sacrifice would be given.

In that moment, the divine exchange would be completed, and the meaning of the altar would be fully revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

## Chapter 5

### The Language of the Offerings

#### God Teaching Through Sacrifice

When the altar was established in the tabernacle, God did not leave the system of sacrifice undefined. Instead, He revealed a carefully ordered structure of offerings that Israel was to present before Him. These offerings were not random acts of devotion; they formed a divine language through which God taught His people the meaning of reconciliation.

Each offering carried a specific purpose and revealed a particular aspect of the relationship between God and humanity. Through these sacrifices, the Lord instructed Israel in the seriousness of sin, the beauty of fellowship, and the cost of restoration.



The altar therefore became the place where this language of redemption was spoken.

Every sacrifice laid upon the altar communicated a message. The offerings revealed the different dimensions of the human condition and the various ways in which reconciliation with God could be expressed.

Through the system of offerings, God was teaching His people the deeper realities of atonement.

## The Burnt Offering

The burnt offering was one of the most significant sacrifices in the entire sacrificial system. Unlike other offerings, the burnt offering was placed entirely upon the altar and consumed by fire.

Nothing was held back.

The entire sacrifice was given to God, symbolizing complete surrender and devotion. The worshiper who presented a burnt offering acknowledged that his life belonged fully to the Lord. The offering represented total consecration and submission.

The smoke rising from the burnt offering was described in Scripture as a “sweet savor” unto the Lord. This phrase reveals that the offering was pleasing to God because it expressed wholehearted devotion.

The burnt offering therefore symbolized the complete dedication of life to God.

## The Sin Offering

The sin offering addressed the reality of human failure and the need for forgiveness.



When an individual sinned or when the community of Israel recognized a transgression against the law of God, a sin offering was presented upon the altar. This offering acknowledged that sin disrupted the relationship between humanity and God and that reconciliation required divine provision.

The blood of the sin offering was particularly significant. It was applied in specific ways according to the instructions given in the law, symbolizing the cleansing that was required to restore fellowship with God.

The sin offering therefore revealed the seriousness of sin while also pointing to the mercy of God, who provided a way for forgiveness and restoration.

## The Trespass Offering

Closely related to the sin offering was the trespass offering.

While the sin offering addressed the general condition of sin, the trespass offering dealt specifically with offenses committed against others or against the sacred things of God. This offering emphasized the need for restitution as well as sacrifice.

Those who brought a trespass offering were often required to restore what had been taken or damaged and to add an additional portion as a sign of repentance and restoration.

This offering revealed that reconciliation involved not only sacrifice before God but also the restoration of relationships that had been harmed.

The trespass offering therefore highlighted the importance of justice and accountability within the redemptive system.

## The Peace Offering



The peace offering represented a different dimension of the relationship between God and humanity.

Unlike the sin and trespass offerings, which addressed wrongdoing, the peace offering celebrated fellowship and communion with God. Portions of the offering were burned upon the altar, while other portions were shared in a meal between the worshiper and the priests.

This shared meal symbolized restored fellowship and harmony.

Through the peace offering, the worshiper expressed gratitude, thanksgiving, and joy in the presence of God. The offering celebrated the peace that existed between God and the one presenting the sacrifice.

In this way, the peace offering revealed that reconciliation with God leads not only to forgiveness but also to communion.

## The Meal Offering

The meal offering differed from the other sacrifices in that it did not involve the shedding of blood. Instead, it consisted of fine flour, oil, and frankincense presented before the Lord.

This offering symbolized the fruits of human labor and devotion being dedicated to God. The worshiper acknowledged that the provision of the earth and the work of human hands ultimately belonged to the Lord.

The meal offering therefore expressed gratitude and dedication.

It reminded Israel that every aspect of life, including daily sustenance and labor, was to be offered to God in reverence and thanksgiving.



## The Harmony of the Offerings

When considered together, these offerings formed a complete picture of the relationship between God and humanity.

The burnt offering revealed surrender.

The sin offering revealed forgiveness.

The trespass offering revealed restoration.

The peace offering revealed fellowship.

The meal offering revealed gratitude.

Each sacrifice addressed a different aspect of the human experience before God. Together they created a rich language through which the people of Israel learned the principles of redemption.

The altar therefore became the place where this language was spoken again and again through the sacrifices offered before the Lord.

## The Offerings as Prophetic Shadows

While the offerings served an important role within Israel's worship, they also carried prophetic meaning.

Each sacrifice pointed forward to a greater fulfillment that would one day appear in the person of Jesus Christ. The burnt offering foreshadowed the perfect devotion of Christ to the will of the Father. The sin offering anticipated the sacrifice through which the sins of the world would be addressed. The peace offering pointed to the reconciliation that Christ would bring between God and humanity.

The entire system of offerings therefore functioned as a shadow of the greater reality that would be revealed through Christ.

Through these sacrifices, God was preparing His people to understand the meaning of redemption.



# Christ the Fulfillment of the Offerings

When Christ came into the world, He fulfilled every aspect of the sacrificial system.

He lived a life of perfect devotion, embodying the meaning of the burnt offering. He bore the sins of humanity, fulfilling the purpose of the sin offering. Through His sacrifice, reconciliation was accomplished, restoring peace between God and humanity.

The cross therefore gathered all the meanings of the offerings into one perfect sacrifice.

What the altar had symbolized for generations was fully realized in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

## The Altar and the Wisdom of God

The language of the offerings reveals the remarkable wisdom embedded within the redemptive plan of God.

Through the altar and the sacrifices offered upon it, God taught His people the depth of sin, the beauty of forgiveness, and the possibility of restored fellowship. Each offering served as a lesson in the unfolding story of redemption.

When we study the offerings, we begin to see how carefully God prepared the world to understand the sacrifice of Christ.

The altar was not merely a place of ritual.

It was a classroom where God taught humanity the meaning of reconciliation — a lesson that would ultimately be fulfilled through the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.



## Chapter 6

### The Fire on the Altar

#### The Fire That Came from God

Among the most striking elements of the altar was the fire that burned upon it. This fire was not kindled by human hands at the beginning of Israel's worship; it came from God Himself.

When the tabernacle was first dedicated, the Scriptures record a powerful moment. After Moses and Aaron completed the offerings before the Lord, fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice that was placed upon the altar.

The people witnessed this divine act with awe. They fell upon their faces and worshiped, recognizing that the fire of God had accepted the offering.

This moment revealed something essential about the altar: the sacrifice offered there was not merely presented to God—it was received and consumed by Him.

The fire upon the altar therefore represented the presence and approval of God.

#### The Perpetual Flame

After the fire came from heaven, the priests were given a solemn command. The fire upon the altar was never to be extinguished.

The book of Leviticus declares that the fire must burn continually. Day after day, the priests were responsible for maintaining the flame, adding wood to the altar and ensuring that the fire remained alive.

This perpetual fire carried profound meaning.



It symbolized the constant reality of the sacrificial system. The need for reconciliation between God and humanity did not disappear. As long as sin remained, the altar had to remain active and the fire had to continue burning.

The unending flame declared that the relationship between God and humanity required continual acknowledgment of sin and continual dependence upon divine mercy.

## The Fire as a Symbol of Holiness

Throughout Scripture, fire often represents the holiness and purity of God.

When Moses encountered the Lord at the burning bush, fire marked the presence of God. When Israel was led through the wilderness, a pillar of fire guided them by night. When the law was given at Mount Sinai, the mountain itself was surrounded by fire and smoke.

In the same way, the fire upon the altar revealed the holiness of God.

The altar was not merely a place of sacrifice; it was the place where the holiness of God encountered the offering brought by the people. The fire consuming the sacrifice symbolized that the offering had passed through the judgment and purification of God's holiness.

The fire therefore reminded Israel that approaching God required reverence and humility.

## The Fire and the Acceptance of Sacrifice

The fire upon the altar also signified that the sacrifice had been accepted.



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Offering was placed upon the altar and consumed by the flames, it signified that the sacrifice had been received by God. The rising smoke was

described in Scripture as a pleasing aroma before the Lord.

This imagery revealed that sacrifice was not merely an outward ritual; it represented the worshiper's devotion and acknowledgment of God's authority.

The fire consuming the offering demonstrated that the sacrifice had fulfilled its purpose within the system that God had established.

## The Fire as Judgment

While the fire symbolized acceptance, it also carried another dimension: judgment.

The altar was the place where sin was confronted and where the consequences of disobedience were acknowledged. The fire consuming the sacrifice reminded the people that sin could not be ignored. It required a response within the divine order of redemption.

The sacrifice placed upon the altar bore the cost that sin demanded.

In this sense, the fire represented both purification and judgment. The offering passed through the flames, demonstrating that reconciliation with God required the acknowledgment of His righteousness and the seriousness of transgression.

## The Fire and the Responsibility of the Priests

The priests who served at the altar were responsible for maintaining the sacred fire.

Each morning they placed fresh wood upon the altar to ensure that the flame continued burning. This daily task symbolized the ongoing nature of the priestly ministry. The priests were stewards of the sacrificial system, ensuring that the worship of Israel was conducted according to the instructions given by God.



The maintenance of the fire was therefore an act of obedience.

Through their service, the priests preserved the system through which the people could approach God. Their work ensured that the altar remained active and that sacrifices could be offered according to the divine order.

## The Fire Preparing the Way for Christ

Though the fire upon the altar played an essential role within Israel's worship, it also pointed forward to a greater reality that would be revealed through Christ.

The sacrifices consumed by the flames were temporary provisions within the sacrificial system. They addressed the need for reconciliation, but they did not provide a permanent solution to the problem of sin.

The fire therefore served as a prophetic sign.

It revealed that sacrifice must pass through judgment and purification. This principle would ultimately reach its fulfillment in the sacrifice of Christ, who bore the full weight of sin and passed through the judgment required for reconciliation.

## The Cross and the Fire of Divine Judgment

At the cross of Jesus Christ, the deeper meaning of the altar's fire was revealed.

Christ offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the reconciliation of humanity. In that moment, He bore the consequences of sin and endured the judgment that the sacrificial system had symbolized for generations.

The cross therefore became the place where the fire of divine justice met the sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

Through His sacrifice, Christ accomplished what the altar had foreshadowed. The



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at sin demanded was addressed, and the path toward reconciliation was  
humanity.

# The Fire of God and the Transformation of the Heart

While the fire of the altar once consumed animal sacrifices, the message of the altar continues to speak to the hearts of believers today.

The fire of God represents His holiness, His purification, and His transforming power. Just as the sacrifices of the old covenant were placed upon the altar, believers are called to present their lives before God in surrender and devotion.

The apostle Paul later described this reality when he urged believers to present themselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God.

In this way, the fire that once burned upon the altar continues to symbolize the transforming work of God within the lives of His people.

## The Ever-Burning Fire of Redemption

The fire on the altar teaches us that redemption is not a casual matter. It is rooted in the holiness of God and in the seriousness of sin.

Through the fire, Israel learned that sacrifice was necessary and that reconciliation required divine provision. The altar revealed that the relationship between God and humanity could not be restored through human effort alone.

It required the sacrifice that God Himself would ultimately provide.

In the unfolding story of redemption, the fire upon the altar stands as a powerful symbol of the holiness, justice, and mercy of God — a reminder that the divine exchange accomplished through Christ fulfills everything that the altar once represented.



# Chapter 7

## The Altar and the Blood

### The Life Is in the Blood

Among all the elements connected to the altar, none was more significant than the blood. From the earliest sacrifices recorded in Scripture to the offerings of the tabernacle and temple, blood stood at the center of the entire sacrificial system.

God Himself revealed the reason for this in the law given to Israel. The book of Leviticus declares a profound truth:

“The life of the flesh is in the blood.”

This statement reveals why blood was so central to the system of sacrifice. Blood represented life itself. When blood was shed upon the altar, it signified that life had been given in the place of life.

Through this principle, God taught Israel that reconciliation required the offering of life.

The altar therefore became the place where the life contained in the blood was presented before God as the means through which atonement could occur.

### The Blood as Atonement

The Scriptures further explain that the blood was given by God upon the altar to make atonement for the soul.

Atonement involves covering, reconciliation, and restoration of relationship.

Through the shedding of blood, the sacrificial system provided a way for sin to be



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within the divine order established by God.

When the blood of the sacrifice was poured out at the base of the altar or sprinkled according to the instructions given in the law, it symbolized the offering of life before God. The blood represented the payment of a cost that sin demanded.

In this way, the altar became the place where atonement was visibly enacted.

The blood declared that reconciliation between God and humanity was not achieved through human effort but through the life that God allowed to be offered within the sacrificial system.

## The Sprinkling of the Blood

Within the sacrificial rituals of Israel, the blood was applied in specific ways that carried symbolic meaning.

Sometimes the blood was sprinkled upon the altar. At other times it was poured at the base of the altar. In certain ceremonies it was applied to the horns of the altar or carried into the sanctuary.

These actions demonstrated that the blood played a central role in the process of reconciliation.

Each application of blood represented the acknowledgment that life had been given for the purpose of restoring fellowship with God. The altar therefore functioned as the place where this sacred act occurred, where the blood of the sacrifice was presented before the Lord.

Through this process, the people of Israel were continually reminded that life must be given so that life could be restored.

## The Blood and Cleansing



ffered upon the altar also symbolized cleansing.

Sin created defilement that affected both individuals and the community. The sacrificial system addressed this defilement through the application of blood, which represented purification and restoration.

When the blood was applied to the altar or the sacred objects of the tabernacle, it symbolized the cleansing that was necessary for the worship of God to continue within the community.

The altar therefore became the place where purification began.

Through the shedding of blood, the sacrificial system provided a way for the people of God to be cleansed from the effects of sin and restored to fellowship with the Lord.

## The Limitations of Animal Blood

Despite its importance within the sacrificial system, the blood offered upon the altar had limitations.

The sacrifices had to be repeated continually. Day after day, year after year, animals were brought to the altar and their blood was shed for the purpose of atonement. This repetition revealed that the sacrifices themselves were not the ultimate solution to the problem of sin.

The blood of animals could symbolically cover sin, but it could not permanently remove it.

The sacrificial system therefore pointed forward to a greater sacrifice that would accomplish what the repeated offerings of the altar could only foreshadow.

The altar and its sacrifices were shadows preparing the world for a greater reality.



## The Blood of the Covenant

Throughout the Old Testament, blood was also connected to covenant.

When God established covenant relationships with His people, blood often played a central role in sealing the agreement. The shedding of blood represented the seriousness and binding nature of the covenant relationship.

This connection between blood and covenant further emphasized the importance of the sacrificial system. The altar was not merely a place where sin was addressed; it was also the place where the covenant relationship between God and His people was preserved.

Through the blood offered upon the altar, the covenant bond between God and Israel was continually reaffirmed.

## The Fulfillment in Christ

All of these patterns ultimately pointed forward to the sacrifice of Christ.

When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he declared, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." In this declaration, John recognized that Christ was the fulfillment of everything the sacrificial system had anticipated.

At the cross, the blood of Christ was shed once for all.

Unlike the sacrifices offered upon the altar of the tabernacle, the sacrifice of Christ did not need to be repeated. His offering accomplished what the blood of animals could never fully achieve. Through His sacrifice, the power of sin was addressed and the path of reconciliation was opened for humanity.

The cross therefore became the ultimate altar where the perfect blood was offered for the redemption of the world.



## The Blood and the New Covenant

The sacrifice of Christ also established a new covenant between God and humanity.

At the Last Supper, Jesus spoke of the cup as the new covenant in His blood. Through His sacrifice, the covenant relationship between God and His people was renewed and expanded beyond the boundaries of the old covenant system.

The blood of Christ accomplished what the blood of animals had only symbolized.

Through His sacrifice, forgiveness, cleansing, and reconciliation became realities for those who place their faith in Him.

## The Meaning of the Blood at the Altar

As we reflect on the role of blood in the sacrificial system, we begin to see how central it was to the understanding of atonement.

The altar and the blood together revealed the seriousness of sin, the necessity of sacrifice, and the provision of God's mercy. The shedding of blood declared that life must be given so that life might be restored.

Through the sacrificial system, God was teaching His people the meaning of redemption.

Every drop of blood offered upon the altar pointed forward to the moment when the Lamb of God would offer His own life for the reconciliation of the world.

## The Perfect Sacrifice

In the cross of Christ, the meaning of the altar and the blood reached its fulfillment.

The sacrifice of Christ accomplished the divine exchange that the sacrificial system allowed for generations. His blood secured the reconciliation between God and humanity and opened the way for restored fellowship with the Creator.



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Thus the altar and the blood together stand as powerful symbols within the story of redemption.

They reveal the wisdom of God's plan and point us toward the perfect sacrifice through which the atonement was fully accomplished.

## Chapter 8

### The Altar Fulfilled in Christ

#### The Shadow and the Substance

Throughout the history of Israel, the altar stood at the center of worship. Sacrifices were offered daily, blood was shed, and the fire of the altar consumed the offerings brought by the people. Yet the Scriptures themselves reveal that these sacrifices were never intended to be the final solution to the problem of sin.

They were shadows.

The altar, the priesthood, and the sacrifices formed a prophetic system designed to teach the people of God the language of redemption. Each offering pointed forward to a greater reality that would one day appear. The altar was therefore both a place of worship and a signpost pointing toward the ultimate act of reconciliation.

The prophets and apostles later revealed that the substance behind all these shadows was Jesus Christ.

The sacrifices of the old covenant prepared the world to understand the sacrifice of the Lamb of God who would come to take away the sin of the world.

### Christ the True Sacrifice



In the sacrificial system of Israel, animals were brought to the altar as offerings for sin, devotion, and fellowship. These sacrifices symbolized substitution and atonement, but they could never fully remove the burden of sin.

The book of Hebrews later explains that the blood of bulls and goats could not truly take away sin. These sacrifices served as reminders of the human condition and as symbols pointing forward to a greater offering.

Christ came to fulfill what these sacrifices anticipated.

Unlike the animals offered upon the altar, Christ willingly gave Himself as the perfect sacrifice. He was without sin, yet He bore the sins of humanity. In His life and death, He embodied everything that the sacrificial system foreshadowed.

The altar of the old covenant pointed forward to the moment when the Lamb of God would be offered once for all.

## Christ the Perfect Offering

The sacrifices brought to the altar in ancient Israel were required to be without blemish. This requirement symbolized purity and completeness, teaching the people that offerings presented before God must reflect the holiness of the One they approached.

Christ fulfilled this requirement perfectly.

He lived a life without sin, demonstrating complete obedience to the will of the Father. When He offered Himself upon the cross, He did so as the perfect offering — a sacrifice that fully satisfied the demands of divine justice.

In this way, Christ fulfilled the meaning of the altar.



Altar once received the sacrifices of animals, the cross became the place where the perfect sacrifice was offered for the reconciliation of the world.

# Christ the Priest and the Sacrifice

One of the most remarkable truths revealed in the New Testament is that Christ fulfills multiple roles within the redemptive system.

In the sacrificial system of Israel, the priest and the sacrifice were separate. The priest presented the offering on behalf of the people, while the animal served as the sacrifice.

In Christ, these roles converge.

Christ became both the priest who offers the sacrifice and the sacrifice that is offered. Through His life and death, He fulfilled the entire sacrificial system in Himself. He entered into the work of mediation and atonement, offering His own life for the redemption of humanity.

This union of priest and sacrifice reveals the completeness of Christ's work.

He accomplished in one act what the repeated sacrifices of the altar could never fully achieve.

## The Cross as the True Altar

When Christ was crucified, the cross became the true altar where the divine exchange was completed.

At that moment, the language of sacrifice reached its fulfillment. The Lamb of God bore the sins of the world, offering His life for the reconciliation of humanity. The cross became the place where the justice of God and the mercy of God met in perfect harmony.

Every altar of the Old Testament pointed toward this moment.



The countless sacrifices offered throughout the history of Israel were preparing the world to understand the significance of the cross. When Christ offered Himself upon that altar, the meaning of the entire sacrificial system was revealed.

The cross was the culmination of everything the altar had symbolized.

## The Once-for-All Sacrifice

One of the most significant differences between the sacrifices of the old covenant and the sacrifice of Christ is the finality of His offering.

The sacrifices offered upon the altar of the tabernacle had to be repeated continually. Day after day, offerings were presented before the Lord because the problem of sin remained unresolved.

Christ's sacrifice, however, was offered once for all.

The book of Hebrews emphasizes that through a single offering, Christ accomplished what the repeated sacrifices of the old covenant could never fully achieve. His sacrifice addressed the problem of sin in a way that brought lasting reconciliation.

The cross therefore stands as the final altar where the perfect sacrifice was offered.

## The Veil Torn Open

When Christ offered Himself upon the cross, a dramatic event occurred in the temple in Jerusalem. The veil that separated the holy place from the most holy place was torn from top to bottom.

This event symbolized a profound transformation within the redemptive system.



The barrier that once separated humanity from the immediate presence of God had been removed. Through the sacrifice of Christ, the way into the presence of God was opened. The altar of sacrifice had fulfilled its purpose, and access to God was now made possible through the finished work of Christ.

The torn veil declared that the sacrifice of Christ had accomplished what the altar of the old covenant had foreshadowed for generations.

## The End of the Old Sacrificial System

With the sacrifice of Christ, the old sacrificial system reached its completion.

The offerings that had once been required at the altar were no longer necessary. The perfect sacrifice had been offered, and the work of reconciliation had been accomplished.

This does not mean that the altar of the Old Testament was meaningless. On the contrary, its entire purpose was to prepare the world for the moment when the true sacrifice would appear.

The altar had been a teacher.

Through its sacrifices, it taught the people of God about sin, justice, mercy, and redemption. When Christ came, He fulfilled everything that the altar had been pointing toward.

## The Altar Revealed in Christ

As we reflect on the altar in light of the cross, we begin to see the depth of God's redemptive plan.



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s never merely a piece of ancient religious furniture. It was a prophetic  
ting toward the sacrifice of Christ. Every offering, every drop of blood,

and every rising column of smoke declared that reconciliation required sacrifice.

In Christ, the meaning of the altar is fully revealed.

He is the Lamb who was slain, the priest who offers the sacrifice, and the mediator who restores the relationship between God and humanity.

Through His sacrifice, the divine exchange was completed, and the door to reconciliation was opened for all who come to God through Him.

The altar, once central to the worship of Israel, finds its ultimate fulfillment in the cross — the place where redemption was fully accomplished.

## Chapter 9

### The Cross — The Greatest Altar

#### The Fulfillment of Every Altar

From the earliest pages of Scripture to the sacrificial system of Israel, the altar stood at the center of humanity's approach to God. Generation after generation, sacrifices were offered upon altars, and the language of redemption was spoken through blood, fire, and offering.

Yet every altar that appeared throughout the history of Scripture pointed toward a single moment in time.

The cross of Jesus Christ.

The cross stands as the greatest altar in the entire story of redemption. Everything the ancient altars represented — sacrifice, substitution, atonement, and reconciliation — reached its fulfillment in the sacrifice of Christ.



The countless offerings presented upon the altars of Israel were shadows pointing forward to this one decisive act. When Christ offered Himself upon the cross, the meaning of the altar was revealed in its fullness.

## The Divine Exchange

At the heart of the cross lies the mystery of the divine exchange.

The altar had always symbolized substitution: life given so that life might be restored. When the worshiper brought a sacrifice to the altar, the animal represented the life of the one presenting the offering. Through the shedding of blood, the sacrifice stood in the place of the sinner.

This principle reached its ultimate expression in the sacrifice of Christ.

Though He was without sin, Christ bore the sins of humanity. The innocent One took upon Himself the burden of the guilty. The righteous One stood in the place of the unrighteous so that reconciliation with God could be accomplished.

At the cross, the divine exchange occurred.

Sin was confronted, justice was satisfied, and mercy was released. The sacrifice of Christ accomplished what every altar throughout history had foreshadowed.

## Justice and Mercy Meet

The cross reveals the perfect harmony between the justice of God and the mercy of God.

Throughout Scripture, the altar symbolized this delicate balance. Sacrifice acknowledged the seriousness of sin while also expressing the possibility of



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The altar demonstrated that reconciliation required both the  
ment of divine justice and the provision of divine mercy.

At the cross, these two realities meet in perfect unity.

The justice of God is satisfied because sin is confronted and judged. The mercy of God is revealed because the sacrifice of Christ opens the way for forgiveness and reconciliation. The cross therefore becomes the place where righteousness and peace embrace.

This harmony reveals the wisdom of God's redemptive plan.

## The Lamb of God

When John the Baptist saw Jesus approaching, he declared, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

With these words, John recognized that Jesus was the fulfillment of the sacrificial system that had been practiced for centuries. The lambs offered upon the altars of Israel had pointed forward to the coming of the true Lamb who would accomplish the work of redemption.

Christ came as that Lamb.

His sacrifice was not forced upon Him. He willingly offered His life in obedience to the will of the Father. Through His death, the Lamb of God bore the sins of the world and accomplished the work of reconciliation.

The altar of the cross therefore became the place where the Lamb of God fulfilled the meaning of every sacrifice that had come before.

## The Once-for-All Sacrifice

One of the most powerful truths revealed in the New Testament is that Christ's



offered once for all.

The sacrifices of the old covenant were repeated continually. Day after day, animals were brought to the altar because the problem of sin had not yet been fully resolved. The repetition of sacrifice revealed the limitations of the system.

Christ's sacrifice, however, was different.

Through His death upon the cross, the work of atonement was accomplished in a single act. The book of Hebrews declares that Christ offered Himself once for all, securing eternal redemption.

The cross therefore stands as the final altar.

No further sacrifice is required because the perfect offering has already been given.

## The Blood of Redemption

At the center of the cross stands the shedding of blood.

Throughout the sacrificial system, blood symbolized life given for the purpose of atonement. When Christ shed His blood upon the cross, He fulfilled the meaning of every sacrifice that had been offered upon the ancient altars.

His blood secured the redemption of humanity.

The apostolic writings declare that believers are redeemed through the precious blood of Christ, a sacrifice far greater than the blood of animals offered under the law.

Through His blood, reconciliation with God becomes possible.

## The Altar Opened to the World



The sacrifice of Christ also transformed the scope of redemption.

Under the old covenant, the altar stood within the boundaries of Israel's worship. Sacrifices were offered within the tabernacle and later within the temple in Jerusalem. Access to the altar was limited by the structure of the covenant.

The cross changed everything.

The altar of Christ is not confined to a single location or nation. The sacrifice offered there opened the way of reconciliation for all humanity. Through the cross, the message of redemption extends beyond Israel to the entire world.

The altar of the cross therefore becomes the universal place of reconciliation.

## The Victory of the Cross

While the cross is often associated with suffering and sacrifice, it is also the place of victory.

Through His death and resurrection, Christ defeated the powers of sin and death that had held humanity in bondage. The cross therefore stands not only as an altar of sacrifice but also as the place where the triumph of God's redemptive plan was revealed.

What appeared to be a moment of defeat became the turning point of history.

The sacrifice of Christ accomplished the work of reconciliation and opened the way for humanity to be restored to fellowship with God.

## The Meaning of the Greatest Altar

As we consider the cross as the greatest altar, we begin to see how the entire story of Scripture leads to this moment.



From the altars of the patriarchs to the sacrifices of the tabernacle and temple, the language of redemption was gradually revealed. Each offering prepared the world to understand the sacrifice that would one day be made.

At the cross, the meaning of the altar is fully unveiled.

The sacrifice offered there fulfilled every shadow and symbol of the old covenant. The Lamb of God accomplished the divine exchange that the sacrificial system had anticipated for generations.

The cross therefore stands as the greatest altar — the place where the wisdom, justice, and mercy of God meet in the redemption of humanity.

Through that altar, the way of reconciliation has been opened, and the promise of restored fellowship with God is extended to the world.

## Chapter 10

### The Altar in the Kingdom

#### From Stone Altars to Living Sacrifices

Throughout the history of Scripture, the altar stood as the central place where sacrifice was offered and where reconciliation with God began. From the simple altars of the patriarchs to the structured altar of the tabernacle and temple, the altar represented the meeting place between God and humanity.

Yet the coming of Christ transformed the meaning of the altar.

The cross fulfilled everything that the ancient altars symbolized. Through the sacrifice of Christ, the work of atonement was accomplished once for all. No longer would animals be offered upon stone altars as part of the sacrificial system of Israel.



The altar had reached its fulfillment.

With the sacrifice of Christ complete, the focus of the altar shifted from external ritual to the transformation of the human heart.

## The Believer as a Living Sacrifice

The apostles later revealed how the meaning of the altar continues within the life of believers.

The apostle Paul urged followers of Christ to present their bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God. This language echoes the sacrificial system of the Old Testament but reveals a new dimension of worship.

Instead of bringing animals to the altar, believers themselves become the offering.

This does not mean that believers atone for their own sins. The sacrifice of Christ has already accomplished the work of redemption. Rather, the language of living sacrifice describes the life of devotion and surrender that flows from reconciliation with God.

The altar therefore moves from stone structures into the lives of those who belong to Christ.

## The Altar of the Heart

Under the new covenant, the altar becomes an inward reality.

The transformation accomplished through the work of Christ begins within the human heart. The presence of God dwells within believers through the Spirit, and worship becomes the offering of one's life before the Lord.

The altar of the heart represents a life surrendered to God.



Through devotion, obedience, prayer, and worship, believers present themselves before God as offerings of gratitude and service. The outward sacrifices of the old covenant give way to the inward devotion of those who live in fellowship with God through Christ.

In this way, the meaning of the altar continues in a deeper and more personal form.

## The Priesthood of Believers

The new covenant also expands the meaning of priesthood.

Under the old covenant, the priests of the tribe of Levi served at the altar on behalf of the people. They offered sacrifices, maintained the fire, and carried out the rituals of worship within the sanctuary.

Through Christ, believers are described as a royal priesthood.

This means that those who belong to Christ now share in the privilege of drawing near to God and offering spiritual sacrifices of praise, thanksgiving, and service. The priestly language that once applied to a specific group within Israel is now applied to the entire community of faith.

The altar, therefore, becomes the place where the priestly life of believers is expressed through worship and devotion.

## Worship as a Sacrifice

The New Testament continues to use sacrificial language to describe the life of worship offered by believers.

Praise is described as a sacrifice offered to God. Acts of generosity and service are



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ed as offerings that are pleasing before the Lord. These expressions of

reflect the transformed understanding of sacrifice under the new covenant.

The altar of worship is no longer limited to a specific location.

Instead, the lives of believers become the place where devotion, gratitude, and obedience are offered to God. Worship becomes the ongoing response to the grace and mercy revealed through Christ.

## The Altar and Communion with God

The altar in the kingdom also represents communion with God.

Under the old covenant, sacrifices offered upon the altar created opportunities for fellowship between God and His people. Certain offerings, such as the peace offering, involved shared meals that symbolized restored harmony and relationship.

Through Christ, communion with God becomes a living reality.

Believers draw near to God through the finished work of Christ and enjoy fellowship with Him through the Spirit. The altar therefore symbolizes not only sacrifice but also relationship.

It reminds us that reconciliation with God leads to restored communion.

## The Altar and the Life of Devotion

The message of the altar calls believers to lives of devotion and surrender.

The sacrificial system taught Israel that approaching God required reverence and humility. Though the outward rituals of the old covenant have been fulfilled in Christ, the heart of devotion remains central to the life of faith.

Believers are called to live lives that reflect gratitude for the redemption



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d through Christ.

This devotion expresses itself through obedience, service, prayer, and love for others. These acts become spiritual sacrifices offered upon the altar of the heart.

## The Altar and the Kingdom of God

As the message of reconciliation spreads throughout the world, the meaning of the altar continues to expand.

Through the work of Christ, people from every nation are invited to participate in the kingdom of God. The sacrifice offered upon the cross opened the way for humanity to be restored to fellowship with the Creator.

The altar therefore becomes a symbol of the kingdom itself.

It represents the place where reconciliation begins and where lives are transformed through the grace of God. Those who respond to the message of the cross enter into the life of the kingdom and become participants in the unfolding work of redemption.

## The Eternal Meaning of the Altar

When we reflect on the altar throughout the story of Scripture, we see how deeply it is woven into the fabric of God's redemptive plan.

The altar began as a place where humanity acknowledged the need for reconciliation. It became the center of worship within the sacrificial system of Israel. It pointed forward to the cross, where the perfect sacrifice was offered for the redemption of the world.

Through Christ, the meaning of the altar continues in the lives of believers who offer themselves as living sacrifices before God.



Therefore remains a powerful symbol of redemption.

It reminds us that reconciliation requires sacrifice, that restoration flows from the mercy of God, and that the ultimate purpose of redemption is restored fellowship between God and humanity.

From the first altars of Scripture to the cross of Christ and the lives of believers today, the altar stands as a testimony to the wisdom, justice, and mercy of God in the unfolding story of the atonement.

## **The Atonement: By Carl Timothy Wray**



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## Atonement Series

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