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**Session 12**

***God of Freedom,* Week 7a**

**Exodus 27:1-21 *and* 30:11-38**

**4-5 December 2023**

**The Bronze Altar –** Notice that as you move toward the outside of the Tabernacle, the building materials are less costly (e.g. bronze versus gold overlays). The first object that could be seen by someone entering the Tabernacle from the outside was the large bronze altar where animals were sacrificed. And for most Israelites, that was the *only* thing they ever saw inside, because only the priestly family could enter beyond the outer courtyard into the holy place. So someone would bring an animal to be sacrificed, present it to the priests and have it offered on his behalf, and then he would leave: he had NO ACCESS to the rest of the Tabernacle.

**Christ’s Is a Far Better Sacrifice –** As we read Hebrews 9:11-4, we see that Christ’s sacrifice is better than the ones made in the Tabernacle in at least four ways:

* Christ’s sacrifice was once for all.
* Christ entered the heavenly Holy Place by means of His own blood, not that of an animal.
* He secured an *eternal* redemption that totally removes sin, not just cover it temporarily.
* Christ’s sacrifice is able to purify our consciences from dead works.

**The Outer Courtyard –** The outer courtyard would have been filled with many, many people bringing animals to sacrifice. Think of the sounds of hundreds of animals, the smells, the vast amount of blood pouring out, etc. It would have been, as Jen said, “an assault on the senses.” Also notice that the layout of the Tabernacle is reminiscent of what happened on the mountain when the people had to remain at the base while the leaders were allowed to go partway up and only Moses was able to enter the presence of God: the common people were restricted to the outer courtyard, while the priests were allowed to serve in the Holy Place, but only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies, where the presence of God was.

**Two Realities Pictured –** Scholars tell us that the things that happened inside the holy places of the Tabernacle picture for us a *heavenly* reality, while the sacrifices offered in the outer courtyard picture for us an *earthly* reality.

**Inferior Sacrifices –** If we are “rule-followers”, we tend to go back to ways to try to earn God’s favor, even though we know mentally that Christ’s sacrifice was perfect and complete, totally satisfying God’s demands. We can do acts of righteousness, hoping that God will be pleased with us, forgetting that we are *already* completely accepted in Christ. On the other hand, if we are among those who reject rules and tend to do life on our own terms, we engage in self-destructive practices that are the modern day equivalent of trying to drag ourselves up onto the horns of the altar. In either case, we are aware at some

level that a sacrifice must be made, and we are determined that the sacrifice be US, until the Spirit of God illumines our hearts with the truth that Christ IS the final, perfect sacrifice and our consciences are cleansed by that sacrifice.

**One Entrance –** The entrance to the courtyard of the Tabernacle faced east, hailing back to the time when Adam and Eve were thrown out of the Garden of Eden toward the east. Now God is providing a way for man to reenter His presence. This eastern entrance is the only gate in the entire complex. This points us to the truth that Christ is THE gate or door to gain access to God.

**Oil for the Lamp –** We have already seen how the golden lampstand reminds us of the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden and also points toward the Tree of Life that we will experience in the New Jerusalem. As with other images that were foreshadowed in the Garden of Eden and find their culmination in the New Jerusalem, the significance of the lampstand gets bigger and bigger in our understanding: it is *a massive picture of fruitfulness*. The lamp was fueled with clean, beaten olive oil. This would have been almost smokeless, providing a really clean burn. There are many parallels to Christ in this imagery:

* Christ was pressed down with the weight of our sin when He was praying among the olive trees in the Mount of Olives.
* We receive the gift of the Spirit as a result of His being crushed. (Oil in the Bible is almost always linked to the work of the Holy Spirit.) This enables us to become lights to others in the midst of the darkness surrounding us.

**The Census Tax –** This tax was meant to bring to mind the recent Passover events and the fact that they were ransomed out of Egypt. Recall that when the Passover occurred, it was the firstborn of the Israelites that was spared while the firstborn of the Egyptians died. But now the ransom is expanded to everyone. The amount of money to be given by each person was not significant, so it wasn’t the token *amount* that was important but what it reminded them of. Each time they paid this tax, it would cause them to remember the Passover and their ransom. But what about us today? How do we “pay the census tax” or temple tax? Recall that Jesus Christ is our ransom. As Peter reminds us (see the “Parallels to Peter” box below), we have been ransomed out of the futile ways of our past so that we can walk in the ways of the Lord.

**Parallels to Peter**

Here is the passage to which Jen Wilkin alluded:

*And if you call on Him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that* ***you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers****, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.* 1 Peter 1:17-19