

Message Three

The Rebuilding of the Altar of God—the Altar of Burnt Offering

Scripture Reading: Lev. 1:3-11, 13-14, 17; 6:9, 12a, 13; Num. 28:2;

Ezra 1:2-3, 5; 3:2-3, 6a;

Psa. 43:4a; Eph. 5:2; Rom. 12:1

I. “They built the altar of the God of Israel to offer burnt offerings upon it, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God”—Ezra 3:2b:

- A. For the recovery of the house we need the recovery of the altar—1:2-3, 5; 3:2-3:
 - 1. The first thing to be recovered for the church life is the altar—Rom. 12:1:
 - a. Before we can have the church life, we must put everything on the altar—Psa. 43:4a.
 - b. We must put all that we have, all that we are, and all that we can do on the altar for God’s satisfaction; this is the start of the church life.
 - 2. The problem is that we have come back from Babylon to Jerusalem, yet at Jerusalem we may still keep many things for our own interests; we may not offer everything on the altar for God’s interests and for God’s satisfaction—Rom. 12:1:
 - a. We should not come back to Jerusalem yet maintain our life as it was in Babylon.
 - b. The life in Jerusalem must be absolutely for the Lord’s interests.
- B. The altar of burnt offering typifies the cross of Christ—Exo. 27:1; 40:6; Heb. 13:10:
 - 1. In His economy God gives us one person—Christ—and one way—the cross—1 Cor. 2:2:
 - a. The cross is the center of God’s operation in His economy—Gal. 1:4; 2:19-21; 3:1, 13; 5:24; 6:14.
 - b. God governs everything by the cross and deals with everything by the cross—Col. 1:20-22; 2:11-15.
 - 2. The cross is the base, the ground, of all spiritual experiences; all spiritual experience begins from the cross—Gal. 2:20; 6:14; 1 Cor. 2:2:
 - a. In order to progress spiritually, we need to pass through the cross daily—Matt. 10:38; 16:24; Luke 14:27.
 - b. If we want to have a proper church life, we need to experience the cross—Eph. 2:14-16.
 - c. Through the cross we need to become nothing, to have nothing, and to be able to do nothing; otherwise, what we are, what we have, and what we can do will become a substitute for Christ—1 Cor. 1:17-18, 23.

II. “They began to offer up burnt offerings to Jehovah”—Ezra 3:6a:

- A. The burnt offering signifies Christ’s being absolute for God’s satisfaction—Lev. 1:3-9:
 - 1. The burnt offering, which was wholly for God’s satisfaction, typifies Christ as God’s pleasure and satisfaction—Eph. 5:2.

2. The burnt offering typifies Christ not only in His living a life that is perfect and absolute for God but also in His being the life that enables God's people to have such a living—John 5:19, 30; 6:38; 7:18; 8:29; 14:24; 2 Cor. 5:15; Gal. 2:19-21.
 3. The burnt offering is Christ Himself, and we are one with Him; thus, the burnt offering is also our oneness with Christ—1 Cor. 6:17.
- B. The burnt offering is for God's food that God may enjoy it and be satisfied—Num. 28:2:
1. Although God is almighty, He cannot provide Himself something to eat; His food must come from His people—v. 2.
 2. Christ is God's food, but He is not God's food in a direct way; rather, Christ is God's food served to God by us.
- C. The Hebrew word translated "burnt offering" literally means "that which goes up" and denotes something that is ascending to God; this ascending refers to Christ—Lev. 1:3, 10, 14:
1. The only thing that can ascend to God from the earth is the life lived by Christ, for He is the unique person to live a life that is absolutely for God—John 6:38:
 - a. Christ as our burnt offering is completely for God, absolutely for God—4:34; 5:30; Heb. 10:8-10.
 - b. Whatever the Lord Jesus was, whatever He spoke, and whatever He did was absolutely for God—John 6:38; 5:17, 36, 43; 8:28; 10:25; 12:49-50.
 2. By laying our hands on Christ as the burnt offering, we are joined to Him—Lev. 1:4; 1 Cor. 6:17.
 3. As Christ lives in us, He repeats in us the life He lived on the earth, the life of the burnt offering—Gal. 2:20.
- D. The burnt offering is "a satisfying fragrance to Jehovah"—Lev. 1:9, 13, 17:
1. The Hebrew words translated "satisfying fragrance" literally mean "savor of rest or satisfaction"—v. 9.
 2. The satisfying fragrance is a savor that brings satisfaction, peace, and rest; such a satisfying fragrance is an enjoyment to God.
 3. Because Christ lived a life that was absolutely for God's satisfaction, His living was a satisfying fragrance, a sweet savor ascending to God for His pleasure and satisfaction—Eph. 5:2.

III. In Leviticus the first offering that is mentioned is not the sin offering or the trespass offering but the burnt offering—1:3:

- A. We need Christ first as our burnt offering because our first situation before God, our first problem related to God, is not a matter of trespasses but of not being for God:
1. God created us to be His expression and His representation—Gen. 1:26.
 2. God created us that we might be for Him; He did not create us for ourselves, but as fallen human beings, we live for ourselves, not for Him.
- B. The burnt offering means that as those who were created by God for the purpose of expressing and representing Him, we should be for nothing other than God—vv. 27-28; cf. Psa. 73:25; Mark 12:30.

- C. We need to realize that we are not absolutely for God and that of ourselves we cannot be absolute; therefore, we need to take Christ as our burnt offering—Lev. 1:3-4.

IV. To live a life of the continual burnt offering is to be a living sacrifice—Rom. 12:1:

- A. The burnt offering is a type of our consecration, of our offering ourselves to God as a living sacrifice; the meaning of consecration is to offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice—Lev. 1:3-4, 8-9; 6:9, 12a, 13; Rom. 12:1.
- B. The daily burnt offering in the Old Testament typifies that, in the New Testament, we who belong to God should offer ourselves daily to God—Num. 28:3-8.
- C. Today, in our Christian life and church life, there is the need for the continual burnt offering—Lev. 1:3-4, 8-9; 6:9, 12a, 13.

V. We need to worship God the Father with Christ as the burnt offering for God's satisfaction to fulfill His desire—1:3, 9b; Num. 28:2; John 4:23-24:

- A. God wants us to worship Him with Christ as the reality of all the offerings; the offerings are for pleasing God and making Him happy—vv. 23-24.
- B. Proper worship is a matter of satisfying God with Christ as the burnt offering—1 Pet. 2:5; John 4:34; 5:30; 8:29:
 - 1. When we worship the Father with Christ as the reality of the burnt offering, a fragrance well pleasing to God will ascend to Him for His satisfaction—Lev. 1:9; John 4:23-24.
 - 2. Since God is satisfied with our offering to Him Christ as the reality of the burnt offering, He will render His sweet acceptance to us; this is the significance of the burnt offering—Num. 28:2.