

The Tabernacle The Brazen Altar - The Death Signified

The Altar Was The Place of Death

To the best of my knowledge there was only one time when a death was postponed despite being associated with the altar. However, it was not a sacrifice to God, but the man Adonijah (1 Kgs. 1:50-51) had sought by subtly to wrest the kingdom from Solomon before David the king had died (1 Kgs. 1:5-41). Adonijah had called a great feast proclaiming himself king, but when he heard David had made Solomon king he and his associates fled from where they were feasting. Thinking his life would be spared, Adonijah took hold on the horns of the altar (1 Kgs. 1:50). Because of this action Solomon had to act in accordance with the scriptures and let him live: "Thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die" (Ex. 21:14; 1 Kgs. 1:51-53).

In his case mercy was shown at the altar but mercy was never shown to an animal. On the other hand, Joab laid hold of the horns of the altar and refused to leave it. He was hoping that the scripture would apply to him (1 Kgs. 2:28-34).

For an animal to be brought to the altar meant it was going to die. What a picture of our Lord for whom no mercy was shown by sinful man. I had a German shepherd, it was a lovely animal, but one day I had to get it put to sleep. How barbaric would I have been had I deliberately then kicked it, slapped it, abused it in every way, and been utterly without sympathy for it. Heartlessness, pitiless, callous, cold, could all be applied to such a one, yet this is exactly what was done to Christ by stoney hearted men.

When we think of the Lord and His relationship to the altar, one truth presented is that to provide salvation for humanity. He must be a real human being. This made it necessary for Him to have a body (a spirit cannot die but a body can) which brings into focus the condescension and incarnation of the Lord.

A wonder of wonders is that the Lord being God cannot die, yet the man who died was God and never for an iota of time or degree was there a diminishing of His deity. Truly has the hymn writer written: "Tis mystery all, the Immortal dies". This is beyond human comprehension. His death was a miracle because death is the result of inherited and personal sin (Rom. 5:12-13), but in Christ there was no sin and none committed by Him. When He was born He was "that holy thing" (Lk. 1:35). During His earthly sojourn He never sinned, therefore sin had no hold on Him. Death was not a natural happening for Him as it is for us. He died, but let us be clear, the death of our Lord was a supernatural happening!

I state without reservation that the death of Christ was not a suicide death, He was not a victim of circumstances of His own making, His death was not the result of loss of blood, a broken heart, from shock due to loss of blood and fluid, traumatic shock from his injuries, or from agony of mind producing the rupture of the heart. Was there loss of blood? Undoubtedly! Did He know agony of mind? Undoubtedly! A man without inherited sin and without sin committed could not have a death, for death is the result of sin (Rom. 6:23). There can never be a medical reason put on the death of our Lord for our Lord was never a dying man. He said: "No man taketh it from me . . . I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (Jn. 10:18). In a mighty victorious act He deliberately entered the strong man's house (Matt. 12:29); He "gave up the ghost" (Jn. 19:30); and entering death broke the power of Satan and rose triumphant from the dead (Mk. 16:9). His death was a deliberate work of the Godhead, planned from eternity past, and had definite purposes, some of which are:

Procuring redemption	Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18-19
Procuring peace	Col. 1:20
Purifying from sin	1 Jn. 1:7
Providing access	Heb. 10:19

The Tabernacle
The Brazen Altar - The Death Signified

Pledging fellowship	1 Cor. 10:16-17
Proclaiming justification	Rom. 5:9
Proffering victory	Rev. 12:11

The work of our Lord is viewed from a variety of terms. The ones I am aware of are:

His death is viewed as:	References
A justification	“Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (Rom. 5:9). We are justified “by His blood” (Rom. 5:9); “by His grace” (Rom. 3:24); “by faith” (Rom. 5:1); “by works” (Jam. 2:21), and “by Christ” (Gal. 2:17).
A reconciliation	“Reconciled to God by the death of His Son” (Rom. 5:10)
A substitution	“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20)
A baptism	“I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” (Lk. 12:50)
A blotting out	That which happened at the moment of salvation. Our completeness in Christ. We were buried with Him in Baptism, and risen through faith. “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross” (Col. 2:14)
A burnt offering	“He shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering” (Lev. 1:4)
A chastisement	“The chastisement of our peace was upon Him” (Isa. 53:5)
A Cleaning	“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 Jn. 1:7) “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed (3068, also Jn. 13:10) us from our sins” (Rev. 1:5)
A covenant ratification	“Now the God of Peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work” (Heb. 13:20)

The Tabernacle
The Brazen Altar - The Death Signified

His death is viewed as:	References
A cup to be drunk	<p>“And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou <i>wilt</i>” (Matt. 26:39)</p> <p>“Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (Jn. 18:11)</p>
A curse	<p>“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed <i>is</i> every one that hangeth on a tree” (Gal. 3:13)</p>
A death for us	<p>“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8)</p> <p>“Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3)</p>
A debt cleared	<p>The parable of the Lord in the house of Simon. The creditor, one owed him 500 pence and the other 50: “He frankly forgave them both” (Lk. 7:42)</p>
A deliverance	<p>“Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father” (Gal. 1:4)</p> <p>“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated <i>us</i> into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13)</p>
A drink offering	<p>“Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He has poured out his soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isa. 53:12)</p>
A healing	<p>“By His stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:5)</p>
A killing	<p>“But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance” (Matt. 21:38)</p> <p>“And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses” (Acts 3:15)</p>
A lifting up	<p>“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (Jn. 3:14)</p>
A peace offering	<p>“If his oblation be a sacrifice of peace offering” (Lev. 3:1)</p>

The Tabernacle
The Brazen Altar - The Death Signified

His death is viewed as:	References
A Propitiation	<p>“Whom God hath set forth <i>to be</i> a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God” (Rom. 3:25)</p> <p>“He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our’s only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 Jn. 2:2)</p>
A ransom price paid	<p>“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mk. 10:45)</p> <p>“Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Tim. 2:6)</p>
A redemption	<p>“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7)</p> <p>“In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14)</p>
A sacrifice	<p>“Be ye thereof followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour” (Eph. 5:1-2)</p>
A sin offering	<p>“The flesh of the bullock . . . it is a sin offering” (Ex. 29:14)</p>
A Smarting	<p>“He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it” (Prov. 11:15)</p>
A smiting	<p>“Yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten” (Isa. 53:4)</p>
A sowing a seed	<p>“Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (Jn. 12:24)</p>
A taking away	<p>“Behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29)</p>
A trespass offering	<p>“He shall bring his trespass offering” (Lev. 5:6)</p>
A will	<p>“For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.” (Heb. 9:16-17)</p>
A wounding	<p>“But He was wounded for our transgressions” (Isa. 53:5)</p>
An exodus accomplished	<p>“They spake of His decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem” (Lk. 9:31)</p>

The Tabernacle
The Brazen Altar - The Death Signified

His death is viewed as:	References
An Offering	<p>“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14)</p> <p>“Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.” (Heb. 10:5)</p> <p>“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once <i>for all</i>” (Heb. 10:10)</p>
As a bruising	“He was bruised for our iniquities” (Isa. 53:5)
As a fountain	“In that day there shall be a fountain opened . . . for uncleanness” (Zech. 13:1)
As a removal	“As far as the East is from the West, so far hath He removed our transgressions” (Psa. 103:12)
As a sinking	“I sink in the deep mire, where there is no standing” (Psa. 69:2)
As a travail	“He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied” (Isa. 53:11)
As an abandonment	“My God , My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Psa. 22:1)
As an affliction	“Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall” (Lam. 3:19)
As an overflowing	“I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me” (Psa. 69:2)
As the foundation for our forgiveness	<p>“In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according tot he riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7)</p> <p>“Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins” (Acts 13:38)</p>
As the foundation for destroying Satan’s power	“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14)
As the foundation for our spiritual resurrection	“When we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace ye are saved” (Eph. 2:5)
As the foundation for translating	“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: (Col. 1:13)
Became my Surety	“Jesus was made a surety” (Heb. 7:22; Gen. 43:9; Prov. 11:15)
To destroy the works of the devil	“For . . . the son of God was manifested . . . He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 Jn. 3:8)

The Tabernacle The Brazen Altar - The Death Signified

Since the blood of our Lord cleanses us from sin, what exactly does that mean? Under law people could be defiled physically by touching a dead body, or physical ailment. God is holy, therefore all defilement has spiritual overtones even though defilement is an amoral thing, for instance, touching the bone of a dead person. Today we are defiled by spiritual deadness and personal corruption. For the ancient Israelite to be cleansed he had to offer a sacrifice which must be without corruption in them, and no blemishes in them (Lev. 22:25). The sacrifice had to be “perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein” (Lev. 22:21). Note the emphasis on the word “in”. The word translated “corruption” is only used twice in the scriptures, Lev. 22:25 and Isa. 52:14 where we read: “His visage was so marred more than any man”. On the cross the Lord bore the penalty for the righteous removal of my sin, but God knew such a truth would be too big for me to understand. Therefore, He seeks out illustrations from my world to help me see the fulness of salvation, thus He will speak of sin being a guilt which I need to have eradicated, a debt that needs to be cleared, and a defilement that needs to be cleansed.

The holiness of God is such that He cannot tolerate filth of the flesh or spirit (2 Cor. 7:1) therefore, for man to be able to approach God, his offering must not only be acceptable to God but effective in giving the individual fitness before God. Thank God for such passages as:

- a) “Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 6:11)
- b) “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 Jn. 1:7)
- c) “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own Blood” (Rev. 1:5)
- d) “These are they . . . and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14)

What differences there are between the virtue of the Old Testament Sacrifices and that of Christ.

O.T. Sacrifices	Reference	Christ's Sacrifice	Reference
Never take away sin	Heb. 10:4	Sanctified by the offering of the body of Christ once for all	Heb. 10:10
Could not ease the conscience	Heb. 9:9	Purge the conscience	Heb. 9:14
Continual sacrifices	Heb. 10:11	One sacrifice for sins forever	Heb. 10:12
Only the High Priest could enter the Holiest	Heb. 9:25	Boldness to enter	Heb. 10:19
The High Priest carried animal blood	Heb. 9:12	Christ went in by virtue of His own Blood	Heb. 9:12; 25
It was a yearly “redemption”	Heb. 10:1	Procured an eternal redemption	Heb. 9:12
Ratified the law covenant	Heb. 9:20-21	Ratified the New Covenant	Heb. 9:15-17
Purified the pattern of things in Heaven	Heb. 9:23	Purified the Heavenly things	Heb. 9:23
Could never make the comers perfect	Heb. 10:1	Perfected forever	Heb. 10:14
God had no pleasure in them	Heb. 10:6	I come to do Thy will	Heb. 10:7

The Tabernacle
The Brazen Altar - The Death Signified

Happily we can sing:

No blood, no altar now, The sacrifice is o'er!
No flame, no smoke ascends on high,
The lamb is slain no more,
But richer blood has flowed from nobler veins,
To purge the soul from guilt, and cleanse the reddest stains.

We thank Thee for the blood, The blood of Christ, Thy Son:
The blood by which our peace is made,
Our victory is won:
Great victory o'er hell, and sin, and woe,
That needs no second fight, and leaves no second foe.

We thank Thee for the grace, Descending from above,
That overflows our widest guilt,
The' eternal Father's love.
Love of the Father's everlasting Son,
Love of the Holy Ghost, Jehovah, Three in One.

. . . *Horatio Bonar*

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

Rowan Jennings, Abbotsford, British Columbia