Discovering Exodus: Finding prayer points, testimonies, reflection and journaling questions that will engage your heart with the Father.

Chapter 27: The Altar of Sacrifice, judgment of sin

**□ The Invitation**: Invite the Holy Spirit to show you something new as you read through the chapter. The Father desires to meet with you and share something with you today. You may find it in the reading or you may hear His Voice speaking to Your Spirit in the quiet of this moment.

**□ The Reading:** Read Exodus Chapter 27. Record any thoughts from the chapter, questions you have or verses that the Holy Spirit highlighted to you while reading.

**□ The Focus**: Today’s focus is a reflection. Write your thoughts as you meet with the Father.

Today we will be focused on the bronze altar. This devotional is longer than most because there is such richness in the symbolism.

Stepping through the East entrance, the curtain, the first object in the outer court is seen, the bronze altar. It was the largest piece of furniture in the Tabernacle and it was set up to face the Holy Place (inner court). Along the dust, sand and rock was the bronze altar. There was only one other piece of furniture in the outer court and that was the bronze basin. But, no one could go any further into the outer court without making atonement (which means “at-one-ment” or the state of being one or being reconciled).

Sacrificial animals were offered on this altar and their blood was shed for the sins of the people. Blood was shed from sunrise to sunset each day for the atonement of sins. Imagine that sight, smell and the blood. So much blood. For the Israelites, the altar provided a temporary atoning of sins. “*In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness,” (Hebrews 9:22).*

The word “altar” has two meanings: 1) “Lifted high” or “ascending” and 2) “the slaughter place”. In reference to the bronze altar, the animals were sacrificed and the burning of the sacrifice was a sweet aroma to the Lord as it was “lifted high” before Him. The cross was the slaughter place, or altar of sacrifice for our Savior, the willing sacrifice to take on Himself the sins of the whole world (Isaiah 53). Imagine, every sin of every generation, every person who has ever lived, is living now or will live in the future was placed on Christ. The atoning sacrifice for sin was fulfilled in Jesus’ sacrifice. Hebrews 7:27 tells us, “*Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.”*

There is no more need for a continuous blood sacrifice. After pressing through the curtain, the stark reality is that we are sinners who need a Savior. We are redeemed by His blood once and for all.

The materials used for the bronze altar were acacia wood and bronze. Acacia wood was found in the Sinai Desert. It was a hard, indestructible, incorruptible wood. It could survive the harsh environment because its roots grew very deep. The tree itself didn’t grow very tall. Most Acacia trees only grow to a height of 15-30 feet. The strong odor in the wood of this tree would keep it from disease and animal invasions. Insects would not borough into it either.

The wood itself was a product of the “earth” which speaks to Jesus’ humanity. Isaiah 53:2 says, “*He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground.”* The acacia wood signifies the perfect humanity displayed by Jesus Christ. He was without sin, without blemish, without “spot”, without “wrinkle”, and without any negative thing. His human life withstood all the evil around him. Hebrews 7:16 tells us that Jesus became a “*priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life.”*  Wood is a central theme for Jesus’ life: a food trough at his birth became his bed. His life work was as a carpenter and His life’s physical end would be on a wooden cross (the altar).

There were horns at all four corners of the altar pointing outward at each corner, with a bronze network and a bronze ring at each of the four corners of the network. The four corners represented going into all the world (east, west, north and south) to bring the good news of the gospel to all creation (see Matthew 28:18-20). The horns speak of salvation, strength and power. Luke 1:68-69 tells us how Jesus is foreshadowed in the horns, “*Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.”*

Another interesting event took place at this altar. The horns were a place of refuge. We see in I Kings 1:49-53 that Adonijah found mercy at the horns of the altar. Everything that touches the altar become holy, because the altar itself is holy. Solomon, the new king-to-be replied that if Adonijah is found worthy he will be spared. Adonijah was taken off the altar and sent home. You can read more about the context of this in I Kings 1. In the next chapter of I Kings, we see another example of Joab seeking refuge at the horns of the altar (I Kings 2:28-34). However, the altar of God gave no protection to anyone who broke the law. Joab’s fate was different than Adonijah’s. Solomon’s men killed Joab on the altar because he refused to come down. They buried him on his property in the wilderness. Joab had shed innocent blood and the altar could not be a place of protection for this man. You can read more about the context in I Kings 2. The altar is holy, and communicates holiness to anyone who touches it (if they aren’t holy already). When these men (Adonijah and Joab) grabbed the horns of the altar, each became sanctified. If found guilty, like Joab, he would be killed because of a sacrilege, but if he is innocent, like Adonijah, he protects himself because of the holiness.

The horns are a place of refuge for those of us who believe. As we cling to the cross, the altar provides rescue, salvation, strength, and power.

The two poles used to carry the bronze altar were made of acacia wood. They were overlaid with bronze and the poles were inserted into the rings so they would be on two sides of the altar when it was carried. The poles were a reminder to the Israelites that they were on a journey; that this wilderness was not their home. For us, the poles represent the same thing! We are not to get too comfortable here on this earth. We too are on a journey, like our Israelite ancestors. They traveled in the desert for forty years, to never settle down for any length of time. We too, should not “settle down” here. This world is not our home. Peter reminds us in I Peter 2:11 “*Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.”* We long for another country, a heavenly country; our true home.

Bronze is used in the outer court of the Tabernacle (Exodus 27:19). The outer court was a place of judgment on sin. The bronze altar and the bronze basin were the two vessels in the Tabernacle courtyard. We see that the metal used in the outer court is bronze which symbolizes judgment. Scripture has many references to bronze being used in terms of judgment:

* Judges 16:21 (Samson) “*Then the Philistines seized him (Samson), gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with* ***bronze shackles****, they set him to grinding in the prison.”*
* I Samuel 17:5-6 (Goliath of Gath) “*He (Goliath) had a* ***bronze helmet***  *on his head and wore a coat of scale armor of* ***bronze*** *weighing five thousand shekels, on his legs he wore* ***bronze greaves,*** *and a* ***bronze javelin***  *was slung on his back.”*
* Psalm 107:15-16 (God’s unfailing love) “*Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men, for he breaks down* ***gates of bronze*** *and cuts through bars of iron.”*
* Jeremiah 1:18 (God’s judgment) “*Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a* ***bronze wall*** *to stand against the whole land~ against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land.”*
* Isaiah 48:4 (Stubbornness of Israel) “*For I knew how stubborn you were; the sinews of your neck were iron, your forehead was* ***bronze.”***
* Revelation 1:15 (Feet of Jesus to judge the earth) “*His feet were like* ***bronze*** *glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.”*

The judgment of our sin was placed on Jesus. He bore the weight himself. God’s Word tells us that death is the penalty for sin. Sin must be judged and Jesus willingly laid down his life for us. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “*God made him who had no sin to be \*****sin*** *for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”* \*Sin= sin offering (which was one of the gifts offered on the bronze altar).

There are pans, shovels, a sprinkling bowl, meat forks, fire pans (or censors) used at the bronze altar (Exodus 27:3). These are the five utensils; five representing the number of grace. God’s grace toward us is seen in this altar and the utensils. His grace abounds unto us.

Pans were used to remove the ashes of the sacrifices from the altar. The ashes point to the finished work of Jesus on the cross (altar). John 19:30 says, “*When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished’. With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”*

Shovels were used to move the ashes to a clean place outside of camp. John 19:41 tells us of the clean place that Jesus was place into. “*At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new (fresh, clean, unused) tomb, in which no one had ever been laid.”*

The blood from the sacrifice on the altar was drained into a basin and poured at the base of the altar from the sprinkling bowl. The sprinkling bowl represents Jesus and His blood poured out on our behalf. Hebrews 9:12-13 says, “*He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so they are outwardly clean.”*

Meat forks were used to move the sacrifice on the altar. They represent the hands of those who nailed Jesus on the cross (altar). Luke 23:33 “*When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him (Jesus), along with the criminals~ one on his right, the other on his left.”*

Fire pans (censors) carried the fire from the bronze altar to the altar of incense. This represents the fragrant offering (incense) of intercession that Jesus makes on our behalf before the Father. Hebrews 7:25 “*Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”* John also tells us in I John 2:1 “*My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.”*

Every detail in perfect design, all pointing to the work of Jesus Christ.

**Reflection**:

1. Can you imagine the sight, smells and blood that surrounded the bronze altar. There has always been a need for the atoning sacrifice for sin. Have you received Jesus’ ultimate atoning sacrifice for your sins? What did you experience?
2. If you haven’t, what is keeping you from receiving His grace? If you have questions, is there someone you can talk to about those?
3. DIAGRAM DRAWING: Read through Exodus 27:1-8 for more details.

Draw the bronze altar on the diagram. Do you have a bronze-looking crayon/colored pencil/marker?

\*Draw a square; horns at each corner; 2 poles along 2 sides.

\*You can draw the meat forks, sprinkling bowls, shovels, & firepans next to the Altar of Sacrifice