

***"We have an altar..."*** (v. 10)

Here the author contrasts **the brazen altar** (Exodus 27:1-8) at the entrance to the tabernacle (Exodus 40:6, 33) where animals were sacrificed (Leviticus 16; Hebrews 9:12-13) with **the Christian's altar**, which is not a literal altar but rather the spiritual antitype to which the physical type (the brazen altar) pointed.

**The Christian's altar is the Lord Jesus Christ himself in his person.** It is not the cross upon which he died – there is no mention of the cross in 13:9-16, only the mention of Jesus suffering outside the gate. The altar is not the Lord's Table, although we do eat of this altar.

Just as the brazen altar was the way of approach to God for His people under the old covenant (Exodus 29:43), so Christ is the way of approach to God for His people under the new covenant (John 14:6; Hebrews 4:14-16; 10:19-22).

The brazen altar was at the entrance to the tabernacle. The Christian's altar – the Lord Jesus Christ – is "within the veil" (6:19) in "the presence of God for us" (9:24).

The brazen altar could not make those who came to it perfect or cleanse the conscience (Hebrews 7:18-19; 9:9; 10:1). Perfect righteousness and a purged conscience can be found only in the altar which is Christ Jesus (9:11-14, 24-28; 10:10-14).

***"...whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle."*** (v. 10)

The priests ate from the remainder of the sacrificed grains and meats offered in front of and upon the brazen altar (Leviticus 6:14-16; 7:1, 6, 15; Numbers 18:8-10).

Christians are God's priests under the new covenant (1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6), and the bread which we eat is the flesh of the Son of God which he gave for the life of the world (John 6:51).

When the author speaks of those "*which serve the tabernacle*," he is speaking of those Jews in his present who think they can approach God by the means of the old covenant system of rituals and sacrifices. He says that these Jews "have no right to eat" from the altar which is Christ so long as they are seeking access to God by any other means than Christ. Thus, they are excluded from the life found only in the Lord Jesus Christ, because they are looking to the physical "clean and unclean" foods under the old covenant (13:9b; 9:10) to make them pure, rather than to the spiritual food which is Christ. The author is making a direct appeal to the Jews to whom he is writing to forsake old covenant legalistic system and look to Jesus who alone and establish the heart with grace.

Eating from this altar is the spiritual act where, by faith, we are spiritually nourished when we come to Christ and believe on Christ (John 6:35). Eating is believing.

***"For the bodies of those beasts...wherefore Jesus also"*** (vv. 11 – 12)

Having contrasted the brazen altar with the altar which is the Lord Jesus Christ, the author turns to a comparison of the sacrifices made on each of these altars.

There is a similarity between the sacrifice of animals and the sacrifice of Christ. Just as the bull was burned “outside the camp” (Lev. 16:27), so Christ suffered outside the camp (John 19:17-20).

But there is a major distinction between the sacrifice of animals and the sacrifice of Christ. The sacrifices under the old covenant purified “the flesh” (the physical body – 9:13), they could not sanctify the sinner in a way that made God accessible to him (9:13-14; 10:1-4). The sacrifice of Christ sanctifies the sinner wholly and completely, opening access to God (13:12; 7:25; 10:19-22).

Here the author echoes what he said earlier: “We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all” (10:10) and in 10:29 he affirms that believers are sanctified through Jesus’ blood.

***“Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach”*** (v. 13)

The exhortation is to endure the ridicule and ostracization they are presently experiencing from those who are hostile to Christianity. Many of these Jewish believers have “suffered the loss of all things” (Philippians 3:8), the seizing of their property, the loss of their employment and livelihood, and excommunication from the synagogue and their families (10:33-34). The writer once again exhorts them to look to Jesus “who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds” (12:3).

***“For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.”*** (v. 14)

They are strangers and aliens, pilgrims on a journey to their permanent city – the heavenly Jerusalem. In the meantime, they are not to ground their hope in how they fare or how they are treated in this present world. The writer has already held up Moses as the example they should follow of one who “esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt” (11:26), forsaking Egypt, enduring as seeing Him who is invisible (11:27).

### **The Christian’s Sacrifices**

Here the author presents two sacrifices with which “God is well pleased” (see 13:16b):

- ***“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually...”*** (v. 15)

- The author is echoing Psalm 50, specifically verses 9-13 where God says he is not pleased by the sacrifice of animals. Note especially the connection between Psalm 50:13 and Hebrews 9:13.
- In Psalm 50:14-15 and 23 God says it is thankfulness and praise that he desires. Those who praise him are the recipients of his deliverance and salvation.
- This “sacrifice of praise” is defined as ***“the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”*** “Giving thanks” is THE characteristic evidence of those who are genuinely redeemed and takes the form of prayer, praise, and singing (Ephesians 5:19-20; Phil. 4:6; Colossians 1:12; 2:7; 3:15-17; 4:2; Rev. 4:9; 11:17). Compare Romans 1:21.

- ***“But to do good and to communicate (share) forget not”*** (v. 16)

- This is clearly sacrificing to meet the material needs of others (Romans 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13; Phil 4:18). This sharing was included in “the fellowship” offering in Acts 2:42 (further defined in Acts 2:44-45), but also includes each individual believer being aware of and supplying the needs of their fellow believers (Romans 12:13).