

## Heb 13:10-16 The Christian Altar (part 2)

Today is part 2 of the Christian Altar, which is Christ Himself. All the altars of the OT, particularly the brazen altar from the tabernacle, are all types of Christ, the One who fulfills those types. Last week, we considered 3 general truths about the Christian Altar: 1) An altar of holiness, 2) An altar of sacrifice, and 3) An altar of provision. Today, I have two more truths and some applications. It is 1) An altar of permanence, and 2) An altar of reproach.

1. Altar of permanence. I get this truth from the entire passage. In the context of Hebrews, he is merely saying in another way that the old Mosaic sacrificial system was fulfilled in Christ. And those who “eat” of that altar (the altar under the old Mosaic Covenant) have no right to eat of the one of which we “eat” as Christians, which is Christ himself. I spoke of this truth last week. They are two different altars. The first “altar” has been abolished. But the other altar is permanent. In Christ, we have a lasting, eternal altar. Look at v. 14: **“For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.”** For the Hebrews of this letter, those who continue to “eat” from the altar provided under Mosaic law, (the brazen altar from the tabernacle with all its sacrifices, and even the same altar rebuilt within the Temple in Jerusalem) will eat to their destruction. Why? That altar has served its purpose. Now, they must turn to Christ, the heavenly altar! Christ is the only lasting, eternal, altar!

I think back to those who were in danger of turning back to the system of the old covenant. In 6:4, we read: **“For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.”** And in 10:26: **“For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.”** He was saying, “if you are still going to that ‘altar,’ to find forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God, you will perish. For the blood of bulls and goats cannot cover your sins.” That old sacrificial system of Mosaic Covenant was not permanent. It was given for a time. It was a shadow and a type of the true fulfillment. Its purpose was to point to another altar, a permanent one.

Let me ask, *“From which altars does this world eat?”* Islam eats from an altar of works as they do their best to keep the 5 pillars of their faith, hoping at the end of the day, God will accept them. Judaism still eats from the old altar, also hoping God will forgive their sins as they try to live under that old covenant. Hindus and Buddhists also eat from the “altar” of works as they bring their sacrifices and prayers to various places of worship and as they also try to live as good as they can in the process. Even those who are not that religious still think and speak often of their works. They compare themselves with others that are, in their opinion, worse people.

Brothers and sisters, this world is eating at the altar of self-righteousness and good works. But, we eat from another altar, in fact, the ONLY altar that offers food that sustains, that remains, that is eternal, is the Lord Jesus. Jesus says, **“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh”** (John 6:51). Jesus says to the woman at the well: **“Everyone who drinks**

of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:13-14). Today, there is only one, permanent altar from which we must “eat.” This is the Lord Jesus. And we eat by faith, as we trust Him.

2. Altar of reproach. Look at vv. 11-13. **“For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.”** Here, the application is clear. Jesus suffered and died. Therefore, if we are to follow him, we also must suffer persecution, suffering, and even give our lives. I will come back to this application in a few minutes. But before we do, let’s consider some important truths from these verses regarding the reproach of Jesus.

In these verses, the author speaks of the old sacrifices under Mosaic Law as a picture of the sacrifice of Jesus. These verses speak of the cross, the sacrifice of Jesus, which is called his “reproach.” So, what does reproach mean? Well, it is not a positive happy word. It means to show disappointment or displeasure against someone. It can mean disgrace or dishonor. It can mean to rebuke or to bring a scandal against a person. Some of the synonyms are: berate, call down, castigate, chastise, dress down, lambast, reprimand, scold, tongue-lash, and upbraid. Well, all of these things (and more) are what Jesus experienced on the cross.

To understand the meaning of reproach, we must focus for a moment on the words “outside the camp.” Again, v. 13: **“Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.”** To understand this, we must go back to v. 11 as our picture. **“For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned ‘outside the camp.’”** Here, the author is thinking of Israel’s time in the wilderness. As they travelled, what did this look like? Their “camp” was the ground where they set up their tents, with the tabernacle in the middle. And the priests would bring the sin offerings of those animals to the holy place and the brazen altar. And on the Day of Atonement, they would do the same. For most of the offerings, the priests were allowed to eat the leftover parts of the animal that was sacrificed. But, for certain sin offerings, they were not allowed to eat those parts, but instead took those OUTSIDE THE CAMP where they would burn them completely up. (unintentional “sins” of the priests – Lev. 4:1-12; ignorant “sins” of the people – Lev. 4:12-21; Day of Atonement – Lev. 16). The same happened with the Temple later at Jerusalem as they would burn these parts outside the city.

My question: Why outside the camp? Why so important “outside the city” of Jerusalem? Well, to the Israelite, there was nothing worse than to be put out of the camp or the city. To be put outside the camp meant that you were separated from God’s people, from God’s tabernacle, from God’s protection, from God’s pleasure. To be put outside the camp meant that you were “unclean” or “unholy.” Do you remember some examples of who were put outside the camp? Lepers. Lev. 13:45-46 says: **“The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean.’ He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.”** Criminals. In one case of blasphemy we read

in Lev. 14:14-16: **“Bring out of the camp the one who cursed, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and let all the congregation stone him. And speak to the people of Israel, saying, Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him. The sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.”** The defiled. In Num. 5:3 we read: **“You shall put out both male and female, putting them outside the camp, that they may not defile their camp, in the midst of which I dwell.”** It was a place where filth was deposited. Deut. 23:12-14: **“You shall have a place outside the camp, and you shall go out to it. And you shall have a trowel with your tools, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig a hole with it and turn back and cover up your excrement. Because the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and to give up your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy, so that he may not see anything indecent among you and turn away from you.”**

Brothers and sisters, the worst place on earth was outside the camp, and later outside the city of Jerusalem. It was the opposite of holiness, the opposite of favor, the opposite of good will. It was a place of reproach . . . Brothers and sisters, that was the place the incarnate Son, the Holy One of God went for you and me! **“He was numbered with the transgressors”** (Is. 53:12). **“He became a ‘curse’ for us”** (Gal. 3:13). There, **“God forsook him”** (Matt. 27:46). There it **“pleased the Father to crush the Son”** (Is. 53:10). John 19:16-18: **“So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.”**

To go outside the camp is to go where Jesus is. First and foremost, for us . . . to go outside the camp is to take our sins where they will be “burned up” forever, never to be found again. This is expiation from last week. (All our sins are burned up! Can you imagine!)

To go outside the camp is to go the place of God’s wrath, his displeasure, his contempt, his reproach. But, when we get there, waiting for the displeasure of God to fall upon us, we find that ALL of his wrath has fallen upon someone else . . . Jesus (v. 12). This is propitiation. This is the cross of Christ. The Apostle John says: **“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”**

Oh, to go outside the camp! There, we will find all the blessings of God in Christ for now and all eternity!

But there is so much more meaning here. This also means that our hope lies not in the old Mosaic covenant with all its sacrifices, but upon the one-time, permanent sacrifice of Christ, who suffered “outside the camp.” And to suffer outside the camp also means that the gospel of Christ is now “outside” the camp of OT Judaism. It has now come to the world and continues to go to the world until all the elect of God are brought in. So, to go outside the camp is also to go to the world . **“As you go, make disciples of all nations . . .”** To go outside the camp is to go find grace and truth in Christ. **“For the law came through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus**

**Christ.**” (John 1:17). To go outside the camp is to follow Jesus with all the persecutions and sufferings that he bore for us. In the context of Hebrews it means to associate with our brothers and sisters all over the world. “Heb. 10:34: **“For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a ‘better possession and an abiding one’”**”

To go outside the camp also pictures what we find in v. 14: **“For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.”** All the OT types and shadows are fulfilled in Christ. And Christ has inaugurated the new creation. Already, we are seated with Christ in the heavenly places, but we still wait for a “city to come,” the coming of the Lord Jesus, the general resurrection of the dead, and the new creation of heaven and earth. All of this stands or falls upon the reproach of Christ as He was crucified outside the camp! With this in mind, let me end with a couple applications and some closing comments.

Application 1. We serve an altar of worship. We worship God continually with heart and lips that praise the name of God in Christ. To go outside the camp is to worship continually because of the one-time sacrifice of Christ. V. 15 says, **“Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of the lips that acknowledge his name.”** I think of the woman at the well as she says to Jesus, **“Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.”** Jesus said to her, **“Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father”** (John 4:20–21). What is the evidence that you have “gone outside the camp?” Your heart is filled with praise and your lips follow your heart!

Application: 2) We serve an altar of good works. Look at v. 16: **“Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.”** This application follows from Rom. 12:1. Paul says: **“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”** We don’t bring animals to sacrifice on the altar. We have a holy, permanent, altar, who is Jesus. He is the priest. He is the sacrifice. He is the altar. And now, our worship is 24/7. Our worship is one of good works. And now, we are not saved by our works. We are saved by faith. But, our works are acceptable to God because God has accepted the sacrifice of his son. And in Him, our works are the works of Christ. And this is called “spiritual worship” for the Christian.

I have a couple comments in closing, with two passages of Scripture.

At the end of the day, to go outside the camp and bear the reproach of Christ, is to follow Jesus. Wherever He goes, there we also go. Whatever He does, that also we do. In Matt. 16:24-25 Jesus says to us: **“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”**

I love the unity of the Bible. It is very helpful to always use similar passages to help us understand and apply what we are reading. And Paul reinforces what we are reading here in Heb. 13, particularly v. 14: **“For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.”**

At the end of the day, our motivation is still a city that is to come. Let me read Phil. 3:12-21 in closing.