

Why Doesn't the Church of Christ Have an Altar in the Auditorium?

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The apostle Paul had something to say on this subject in Hebrews 13:10-13: "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." The answer to the question rests within these verses. The Holy Spirit brought to mind altars in two locations: one frequented by the Jewish priests in the Temple at Jerusalem in the first century and the other so distinct from that one that practitioners of Old Testament worship had no right to benefit from it. The distinction is drawn from what went on inside the gate or walls of Jerusalem and what happened on the cross outside the gate. In order to make it easier for his readers to accept, Paul took them back in time before the Temple was ever built—back to the Tabernacle in the wilderness. The animal victim was substituted for the person who sinned through ignorance. The blood of the designated animal was drained from the animal and brought within the Outer Court of the Tabernacle where the priest sprinkled some of it upon the horns of the altar of incense, which were situated at each of its four corners, before the vail of the sanctuary and poured the rest at the base of the brazen altar in front of the Tabernacle. The fat of the animal was burnt on that same altar, but the remainder of the animal was burned outside the camp. Read Moses' description of this sacrifice.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a soul shall sin through ignorance against any of the commandments of the Lord concerning things which ought not to be done, and shall do against any of them: If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people; then let him bring for his sin, which he hath sinned, a young bullock without blemish unto the Lord for a sin offering. And he shall bring the bullock unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord; and shall lay his hand upon the bullock's head, and kill the bullock before the Lord. And the priest that is anointed shall take of the bullock's blood, and bring it to the tabernacle of the congregation: And the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle of the blood seven times before the Lord, before the vail of the sanctuary. And the priest shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the Lord, which is in the tabernacle of the congregation: and shall pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering, which is at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And he shall take off from it all the fat of the bullock for the sin offering; the fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that is upon the inwards, And the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, which is by the flanks, and the caul above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall he take away, As it was taken off from the bullock of the sacrifice of peace offerings: and the priest shall burn them upon the altar of the burnt offering. And the skin of the bullock, and all his flesh, with his head, and with his legs, and his inwards,

and his dung, Even the whole bullock shall he carry forth without the camp unto a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn him on the wood with fire: where the ashes are poured out shall he be burnt. Leviticus 4:1-12.

An example of the actual performance of this sacrifice is given by Moses, “And he brought the bullock for the sin offering: and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the bullock for the sin offering. And he slew it; and Moses took the blood, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about with his finger, and purified the altar, and poured the blood at the bottom of the altar, and sanctified it, to make reconciliation upon it. And he took all the fat that was upon the inwards, and caul above the liver, and the two kidneys, and their fat, and Moses burned it upon the altar. But the bullock, and his hide, his flesh, and his dung, he burnt with fire without the camp; as the Lord commanded Moses” (Lev. 8:14-17).

“Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate” (Heb. 13:12). His blood was not brought into the Temple but was shed on the old rugged cross outside the Outer Court of the Temple, outside the gate of the city of Jerusalem. Christians are admonished, “Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach” (v. 13). The altar relates to Old Testament worship; the cross to the New Testament. The Old Testament altar was physical; the New Testament altar is spiritual.

The last book of the New Testament pictures not the brazen altar where the sacrifices were burned in the time period of the Old Testament or the golden altar that in Old Testament times stood before the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple but today these altars rest before the throne of God in heaven (Rev. 8:3; 9:13). And, it is the golden altar to which Christians have access in prayer and worship. The Bible says, “And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand” (Rev. 8:3-4). Those who have a physical altar in their auditorium before which they bow forfeit their right to the altar which is before the throne of God. They cannot have both a physical altar and a spiritual altar because the Bible plainly says, “We have an altar, whereof they have no right....” Friends, that is why the church of Christ does not have an altar in the auditorium.