



THE ALTAR  
AND THE TABLE.

In Address

DELIVERED IN FREEMASON'S HALL,

BY

J. DENHAM SMITH.



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## THE ALTAR AND THE TABLE.

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LEVITICUS iii. 7.

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**O**NLY especially favoured ones could enjoy certain things under Moses; there were differences of enjoyment, degrees of nearness and access to God; none of the priests could go into the Holiest—none of the people into the Sanctuary. “But *all* things are ours,” as contrasted with the things under the law. So that whatever there is of preciousness in the subject before us, which pertained to the offerer under Aaron, or to Aaron, himself, is blessedly ours. Aaron, as we know, could go into the holiest but once a year, and these feasts, about which we are now to speak, could only be by perpetual offerings; but by Christ our one offering we are for ever made nigh, and can feast in the very innermost scene of the

Divine Presence. What a subject opens up to us here; and how one thanks God, beloved, for this Book of Leviticus, this book of our souls' access to Him. It is here, more than anywhere else, we see Christ displayed to us in all the wondrous details of His life and death, His Person and work; also ourselves as believers, in all our enjoyment of Him, and of God through Him. Such enjoyment, as in a mirror is presented to us here.

The peace-offering is that which sets forth the fellowship of God's children, according to the value of the sacrifice; it includes fellowship with God, with Christ, and with one another; for the offerer could invite others with him to the enjoyment of the feast which was spread upon the table. There was first an altar, on which the offering was put, and then after that, a table on which the offerer and his friends could eat.

I shall first of all draw your attention to *the Altar* itself; next, to *the Table*; and thirdly, to the connexion existing between the two.

First, the ALTAR as seen in Lévi. iii. 3 to the end.

It is an offering made by fire unto the Lord. "The fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that is upon the inwards, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, . . . Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar upon the burnt-sacrifice; it is an offering made by fire of a sweet savour unto the Lord."

The animal whence the fat was taken was to be perfectly clean, without spot or blemish; the fat itself we believe denoted the intrinsic perfectness of the inner being of the blessed Lord. Beloved, I go to this altar, and I see the inner being of the perfect One represented, all laid open before the Lord; the law was written in His heart: "I delight to do Thy will, O God." He was equally perfect, both as man and as God; and it is at the altar that, instead of my depravity, I see Him—Christ, who is accepted for me by God, set over against all my sinfulness, and I have there in Him that which is "a sweet savour unto God."

But the victim, ere it was presented as a sweet savour offering, was to be perfectly clean: if

needful, it was washed and rinsed, and rinsed and washed, until not a single particle of what was foreign to it remained upon it. All this denoted, as to the Lord, His own intrinsic perfectness. Well may we say, each one of us, "Not me, but Christ!" For could such an offering be a fit representation of me? that is, in myself, born in sin, shapen in iniquity, with sin still remaining in me; for in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. Is it not of the heart by nature that the Lord speaks, when He says: "Out of the heart (yours and mine) proceed murders, thefts,"—a black, unutterable fount of evil? We have truly, on being born again, another heart—seat of a new spring of existence, and of new affections; but the old fount still remains. We are not now, as formerly, in the flesh; but the flesh is in us. Said the bride, speaking of herself, "I am black," but of herself in Christ, "I am comely."

It is all Christ, beloved, which we have here, and Christ for us before God. We have only to stand still and see the provision made for our

need by God. The offerer had nothing to do with himself, as to adding anything to the value of the offering; it was not a matter of his own attainment, his own feeling, his own mortification, his own sufferings, or his own merits. No, he had only to touch, to put his hand upon the offering, and the whole value of it was at once imputed by God to him, yea, all its preciousness and all its perfectness; the *sanctification*, as well as the salvation, was all his in Christ. Do you understand, beloved? for how blessed is all this to those who *do* understand. For here we have a perfect sanctification in Christ Jesus, which, when the soul realizes and enjoys, gives daily power for that personal sanctification, (separatedness from sin,) after which so many fruitlessly strive—hoping to attain, by their own sufferings, or their own mortifyings, that which can only be attained by the right apprehension of and living in the consciousness and power of, the value of that one offering, which, in all its essential perfectness, was laid once and for ever on the altar of God for us.

Again, I say, how precious is all this to the soul that knows it! Oh, dear believers, fill your eyes with a sight of Him thus, the Christ of God, who is our only true peace. Let the heart rest in Him, and enjoy all that God in His love and grace has provided in Him. The heart can never rest in itself, not even the renewed heart; but how different when joined to Christ. "If ever I make of Christ and myself two," said Luther, "I am gone." It is the spirit of antichrist to separate from Christ. And if ever we look for any blessing *in* ourselves, we fail of having it. Looking at all Christ is, we have all in Him. Oh, again I say, fill your eyes with a sight of Him, in whom ye *are* washed, ye *are* justified, ye *are* sanctified.

You must remember that it was *all* the fat which was laid down upon the altar; there was *nothing* kept back; so that when the Lord could say: "I may tell all my bones, they look and stare upon me," the whole of His perfectness gave value to that death which was presented to God for us, yea, which value God imputes to us, and which is ours

before God, as over against all our conscious or unconscious sinfulness. And it is thus—Christ *Himself*, who is now in the presence of God for us—*He* was laid for us on the true altar, and is our true peace-offering. The peace we have with God is all through Him. He is our peace. There is no condemnation. He has perfectly justified us, having satisfied all claims which were against us. This He did when He died on the cross, or, as here presented, on the altar.

And now, having looked at the altar, let us glance for a moment at the TABLE. In speaking of the table, you will not understand me as meaning that known as "*the Lord's table*," though that also is preciousy linked in with the altar. On the table here, the offerer could restfully feed on that which he had previously offered. It denoted, as I have already intimated, that happy realized *enjoyment* of Christ which we now have with God, and with one another. There would have been no table—no feeding on Christ for ourselves, beloved, if there had been no altar; the cross



in saving us having perfectly satisfied God, we are now enabled to feed on Christ, as it were to spread a table, where, in feasting on Him, our communion is with the Father, and with the Son.

The offerer was taught to feast upon the offering, the breast and shoulders excepted. Affections and power were for Aaron and his sons, and for the priest who had offered the offering; but, as I have said, in our case "all things are ours;" for Christ is ours—we have all in Him. The precious food of the offering was put down on the table; the offerer could say, "Come and dine." He could say, "Come, let us feast together." God had eaten, so to speak, from the same, and we may now feast where God feasts. How wonderful is all this! A feast is a scene of plenty; it is also a place of rest and enjoyment. It is not so much for imparting, as receiving; we have only to receive it, yea, to live upon it. Do we thus receive Christ?

You will observe, there was no atonement at the feast; that had been previously made; accordingly

there was no more conscience of sin. As to the state of his soul, the offerer was privileged to the full enjoyment of the value of that on which he feasted, and of that into which he had already been brought, viz : peace with God. It was as if he had said, "God wants me to be happy ; being saved, let me enjoy the salvation ; being justified, let me enjoy my condition. Peace has been made with God ; let me now indulge in that peace ; yea, let me feed on God's offering of peace." Oh ! wondrous peace ! for the peace we have is peace *with* God, nay more, it is the peace *of* God, nay, the very *God of peace* Himself, which is more than peace. Peace truly is one thing, a blessed thing ; but God Himself is much more ; it is not only His peace, but Himself, which we have.

Beloved, let us never be content without this realized enjoyment of Christ. Let our ever-growing delight be in the thought, that in Christ Jesus our Lord we all have our one offering, one atonement, one mediator, one Christ, bringing us who were poor, lost, miserable sinners, first of

all to Himself, and through Himself into *God*. Oh, who that sees this could desire greater blessedness! Oh, infinite, eternal, ineffable portion—in Christ, in God! and feasting where God feasts—*on Christ*.

But now mark, thirdly, the connexion which existed between the Altar and the Table. The offerer could only feast on first and second days removed from the altar, (see Lev. vii. 16.) If he wanted to feast on the third day, he should offer another victim. The feast of the Table was not to go on after the remembrance or the energy of the altar had spent itself. Beginning in the Spirit, he was not to end in the flesh. Alas this, in our very praises, our worship, and in our service, we often do. We are never to lose sight of *the death* of Christ; we are never to be independent of the cross; all our enjoyments are to have perpetual connexion with the death by which they were procured: thus in heaven, that which satisfied God at the cross will be held in eternal

remembrance. It is there we shall ever sing, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood"—linking the cost at which we were redeemed for ever in with the joy of our being thereby made "kings and priests unto our God, to whom be glory for ever and ever." So that the "*two days*," in which the energy of the altar was sustained, will run on and continue with us throughout an endless eternity. What will heaven be but the long and deep indulgence of what we now desire? As we sing,—

"Fain would I, Jesus, know Thy love,  
Which yet no measure knows—  
Would search the depth of all Thy wounds,  
The secret of Thy woes.

Fain would I strike the golden harp,  
And wear the promised crown;  
And at Thy feet, while bending low,  
Would sing what grace has done."

The eye and the hand blessedly connected; as the eye sees, the hand will be instinctively upon the lyre,—each sight of that once pierced side, that once

marred brow, will be a fresh incentive to a new outburst of song.

You understand, this is the long and lasting connexion between the death of Christ and our eternal blessedness—between the hole of the pit, whence we have been digged, and the height of the glory to which we are brought. There is a similarly blessed connexion shown us between the cross and the throne, as in Heb. v. 7, 8, where it is said, “Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered, and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him.” It was by the cross on which He suffered that He obtained for us eternal redemption, and having satisfied God thereon, He is called to the throne, as in the verse which follows: “*Called,*” or as we are reminded the word is, *greeted!* wel-

comed! "by God to His throne, a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec."

Yes, the scene of His priesthood is there, at the throne in heaven, where He is gone in for us, and where He is *greeted*—welcomed; and where we also, because of the value of His sufferings, are greeted and welcomed in Him.

" Oh this is life, oh this is joy,  
My God, to find Thee so."

We can never dissociate *our* heaven from *His* sufferings. And, oh, *those* sufferings! Ah, dear friends, they *were* sufferings; all others are but a name; *they* were a deep reality; who but Himself will ever know them? and who but Himself could tell them? "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" It was *God* forsaking Him (God as Judge) which caused such unutterable anguish. Not the Father, as many suppose, forsaking the Son; no, as Son He never lost communion with the Father, not even at the cross. As Son—at the immediate approach to it in Gethsemane—He

could say, being in most blessed communion, “*Father*, if it be possible;” and on the cross, “*Father*, forgive them;” and again, “*Father*, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.” It was God, as Judge, righteously dealing with sin, (pouring out its full judgment,) who forsook Christ on the tree.

This we say was unutterable anguish,—not of body, though that was great, but of soul. It was His soul that was charged with sin. The most solemn, awful, and mysterious word perhaps in the whole Scripture, is that where it is said, “When Thou shalt make His *soul an offering for sin.*” It was His *soul* that was troubled—“Now is my soul troubled.” It is this, beloved, we are never to forget. His death saved us; but saving us was not the chief thing. By His death Christ manifested and glorified God; it was this that was so precious to God, because of the value (through death) of Christ to Him; as He says, “Therefore doth my Father love Me, because I lay down my life.”

Ah, dear friends, it is knowing thus God's estimate of His death, that we have such happiness, such rest, such joy in feeding on Christ, feeding as did the offerer at the table, feeding on that which hath already been enjoyed by God Himself, and which now He hath provided for us. And we are each to receive it just as Abraham did, when Melchisedec came out, after victory, to bless him, giving him bread and wine; he had only to *receive*; so we are simple recipients, gratefully, adoringly taking at the hand of God what He has provided for us through our own divine Melchisedec.

And now with what thoughtfulness and intelligence of soul should we look at the *one* only condition which God has assigned to this realized enjoyment with Him; for it is conditional. *Salvation* is unconditional; well for us it is so, else how could we be saved? But it is not so with our realized fellowship—communion.

We read, the defiled or unclean person could



not eat. An unclean person may be an Israelite ; but he could not enjoy this offering with defilement on him ; he could not enjoy fellowship with God ; if he would enjoy fellowship with God, he must resort to other provisions first ; for his *sins* there was the sin-offering ; for his *trespasses* the trespass-offering. He may release his soul from its burdens as to these, and then, with no conscience of sin, this feast may be enjoyed. Thus we who are the children of God *are clean* as to atonement—salvation ; but if our soul be defiled by evil unconfessed, if our feet are soiled in our walk, and not washed, we have no happy communion with God ; we have no joy in His presence ; at His Table all is rest, all is perfectness, and in the power of death and resurrection, we must be meet for the scene ; that meetness is Christ, as we have seen. The cross *has* dealt with all our sins. In resurrection we see sin, sins, self, all left behind, and our souls in fellowship with God, according to the value of that before God which has put

them all away. But it is by the Spirit we are to live in the power of this. To be "*filled* with the Spirit" is the true way of being emptied of sin, and emptied of the world.

"Filled! yea, filled to overflowing;  
 Gracious Spirit! what so precious to my soul  
 As Thy sweet presence! what so effectual  
 To exclude all else—the strivings  
 Of this 'present evil world,' 'the flesh,' 'the devil,'  
 All so ready to intrude upon the heart  
 Which Thou alone shouldst fill;  
 Oh, fill, fill, fill my soul,  
 Leaving no room for aught beside."

And yet it is remarkable, that along with this being filled with the Spirit, this enjoyment of Christ as in the peace-offering (chap. viii. 13), it was appointed that *leavened* cakes should be offered; now leaven is the type of *evil*, it is the type of our sin; and yet, as we have seen in the same chapter, verse 19, only those who were "*undefiled*"—*clean*, could be owned of God as offerers. There seems to be a contradiction; but there really is none; for the leaven here is not *allowed* sin—it is not sin

having dominion, but sin in the flesh—the sin which is still *in* us; but which, while the soul is abiding in Christ, lies in abeyance; though not dead in itself, we are dead to it; such is the scope of Rom. vi.; as to its *presence*, sin is still in us, we are never without it; in such sense we may say, each of us, “My sin is ever before me.” Unless, then, we may enjoy the peace-offering as *sinner*s, we can never enjoy it at all. It is well, beloved, to know this, and to own it before God, that we *are* poor sinners, and in ourselves *still vile* and corrupt; unless we are aware that we are such, as saved ones, we could never know peace in our souls, or have rest before God. But then, though sin is still in us, it is *not to be allowed*. We are not to sin that grace may abound. It is our nature, as born of God, it is the nature of the *new man* not to sin; and we who are born of God are to be dead to it. Sin is not to have dominion over us; hence we are to be clean, “undefiled.” Should we sin, should we be defiled, because living in

some allowed evil, we cease to enjoy our communion with God. Our fellowship is interrupted, and our place for the time is not at the Table, feasting on Christ; but with the other provisions mercifully arranged by God for us; we require to have renewed in our souls the continued value of the trespass-offering, and must seek anew the power in our souls of the sin-offering. Confession is ours; for "if we *confess* our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;" thus our communion becomes renewed; the Spirit no longer grieved, again enables us to worship and enjoy God according to the value of the perfectness and preciousness of Christ.

And that perfectness and preciousness, like the love of His heart, are unchangeable. Hence it is the Solomon's song truth, which is so precious to one who has failed. Said a beloved saint to me not long since, "I am never low or unhappy in my soul, that that song has not a power to re-

store me.” So is it; the Bride may be disturbed in her soul—disconsolate—hurrying after watchmen—writing bitter things against herself; but He is just the same. Her verdict of herself is a gloomy one; but His thoughts of her, how gracious! how reassuring! how restoring!

“My love.”

“My dove.”

“My fair one.”

“My undefiled.”

Such love have all His saints.



PRECIOUS Saviour! Thou hast linked us  
 In Thy deep, unchanging love ;  
 There in spirit Thou wilt keep us,  
 Happy in Thyself above.  
 There remaining, and confiding,  
 Love unbounded Thou dost prove.

Blessed is each sweet endeavour  
 Of our souls Thy grace to own ;  
 Blessed, too, the Father's favour,—  
 Love of Father to the *Son*,  
 Ever flowing, flowing to us,  
 Through Thyself, His perfect One.

Sweet it is, with sins forgiven,  
 Yea, with bitter conflicts o'er,  
 Still to find in Thee our heaven,  
 Still to find Thy love the more ;  
 Grace abounding, never ending,  
 Is in Thee a plenteous store.

Blessed Lord ! what times of sorrow  
 Do our failings oft ensure,  
 As to-day, the same to-morrow,  
 Till the dark'ning cloud is o'er,  
 But Thy pity, wondrous pity,  
 Meets us in the contrite hour.

O ! to keep for ever near Thee,  
 Go no more from where Thou art ;  
 Know Thee, trust Thee, never grieve Thee,  
 Love Thee with adoring heart.  
 Sweet communion ! still enjoying,  
 Freed from sin's condemning smart.

Thus should aught again oppress us,  
 Lead from Thee, as oft we're led,  
 From Thy love which doth so bless us,  
 While some wayward path we tread,  
 Thou wilt keep us, gently lead us,  
 Feed us as Thy flock are fed.

Endless pleasures soon await us,  
 Tears no more shall dim our eyes,  
 Thou Thyself wilt come and take us,  
 To our home beyond the skies ;  
 Full redemption ! in a moment !  
 Ours eternal, as we rise.

Blessed goal ! with rapture gaining,  
 All we e'er desired before,  
 In the rest of God remaining,  
 Ne'er to sin, or grieve Thee more ;  
 But for ever, and together,  
 Scan Thy love unchanging o'er.



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