



THE
Bronze Altar
and the Oneness of God

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THE BRONZE ALTAR & THE ONENESS OF GOD IN CHRIST

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A booklet presenting the typology of the tabernacle's bronze altar as a revelation of Jehovah manifested in the flesh — the incarnate God who, in a single Person, is Father, Son, High Priest, Sacrifice, and Redeemer.

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Introduction: Purpose and approach

This booklet sets out to show, by typology and Scripture, that the bronze altar of the tabernacle is a divinely given picture of the oneness of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. The tabernacle's sacrificial system, centered on the bronze altar, anticipates the incarnate Jehovah — God manifested in the flesh — who, in one Person, unites the divine and human natures to accomplish redemption. The aim is not sectarian polemic but a careful, Scripture-centered presentation of the typology and its theological implications: one God, acting in Christ, accomplishing reconciliation.

Altars and Covenant in the Old Testament — A Brief Overview

From Noah onward altars mark covenant encounters (Genesis 8–9; 12; 15; Exodus 24; Joshua 8; 1 Samuel 7). Altars function as places where God meets people, where blood and sacrifice ratify covenants, and where atonement is symbolized. Some altars are piled stones or pillars (memorial/witness), others are for burnt offerings: in all, they denote meeting, exchange, and covenant relationship between God and humanity. The bronze altar in the outer court: form, function, and symbolism

- Location and construction: The bronze altar stood in the outer court of the tabernacle (Exodus 27:1–8). It was the first object encountered by worshipers approaching the sanctuary.
- Functions: Burnt offerings were made there; blood rituals were carried out on and around it; it was the locus where sin was confronted and where substitutionary offerings were presented prior to approach into the inner courts.
- Symbolism: The altar symbolizes the necessity of sacrifice and shed blood for covenant fellowship. Because it was the entrance to the God-ordained approach to holiness, it signifies that access to God demands an atoning offering. The bronze altar therefore typifies the one true atonement that opens the way to God.

Typology: The bronze altar as Christ's atoning death

- The bronze altar is a divinely instituted type (picture) of Christ's atoning death. Animal sacrifices prefigured and pointed forward to the true, once-for-all sacrifice of the God-Man, Jesus.
- Its position in the outer court is theologically significant: it is the place where the consequence of sin is taken up and judged so that people might be brought nearer to God. Christ's death performs what

the sacrificial system foreshadowed but could not finally accomplish: complete atonement and access to God (Hebrews 9–10).

- Christ is the true Altar and the true Sacrifice: by his death the purpose of all other altars is fulfilled.

The Incarnation:
Jehovah manifested in the flesh
(scriptural foundations)

The typology is grounded in the claim that the Person who fulfills the altar's picture is the very Jehovah of covenant:

- Isaiah 7:14 / Matthew 1:23 — “Immanuel,” God with us.
- Isaiah 9:6 — messianic titles that associate divine attributes with the coming Child, including “Everlasting Father.”
- John 1:14 / Colossians 2:9 — “the Word became flesh” and “in him dwells the fullness of deity bodily.”
- 2 Corinthians 5:19 — “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself,” indicating that the work of reconciliation is God’s work in the Person of Christ.
- 1 Timothy 3:16 — summary statement: “He who was manifested in the flesh...”

Taken together, these passages present Jesus as God manifest in human nature — the incarnate Jehovah

who carries divine authority and presence in a human Person.

The High Priest in the Flesh: Jehovah dies as a man

- In the Old Covenant the priest stood between God and people and offered sacrifices at the altar on behalf of the people. The typology reaches its fulfillment when the Mediator is not merely a human priest but God incarnate who acts both as Priest and as Sacrifice.
- Hebrews 2:14–17 and Hebrews 4:14–16 teach that Christ partook of flesh and blood, was made like his brothers, and can sympathize and intercede as High Priest. The uniqueness here is that the High Priest is at the same time the eternal Lord who offered himself.
- The theological claim expressed here is: the eternal Jehovah assumed human nature; in that human nature he experienced death on the altar (Calvary). In that sense the deity that dwelt in the incarnate Person offered himself in and through humanity. This is the practical meaning of the phrase “deity died in humanity” — the eternal God acting in the human nature of Christ submitted to death in order to accomplish redemption (Philippians 2:6–8; Hebrews 2:14–18).

The blood offered by the Eternal Spirit (Hebrews 9:14) and the ransom price

- Hebrews 9:14 reads: “how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” This verse links the spotless self-offering of Christ, the agency of the eternal Spirit, and the cleansing efficacy of Christ’s blood.
- The phrase “through the eternal Spirit” emphasizes divine agency in the offering: the offering is not merely a human act, but an act of the one God operating in and through the incarnate Mediator.
- Romans 3:25–26 and 1 Peter 1:18–19 emphasize Christ’s blood as propitiation and ransom. The bronze altar typology and Hebrews’ theology together show that the ransom price is the blood of the incarnate God-Man, presented by the eternal Spirit, accomplishing reconciliation.

One Mediator, one Altar, one God: 1 Timothy and the unity of God’s work

- 1 Timothy 2:5–6: “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all.” This text asserts the oneness of God and the uniqueness of Christ’s mediatorial role: the Mediator is “the man

Christ Jesus,” a human Person who stands between God and men and accomplishes redemption.

- 1 Timothy 1:15–17 and 1 Timothy 3:16 reinforce the singularity of Christ’s saving work and the manifest presence of God in the incarnate Person.
- From the typological viewpoint: there is one altar (the point where the sacrifice is presented), and Christ is the one Person in whom God’s redemptive act is fulfilled. The oneness of God’s saving action is therefore expressed concretely and historically in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Practical Implications for Worship, Baptism, and Proclamation

- Worship: If the bronze altar points to the incarnate Jehovah who offered himself, worship becomes centered on the Person and work of Christ — gratitude for substitutionary death, confidence in access to God, and devotion to the risen Lord who is also our High Priest.
- Baptism and name: Because the reconciling work is accomplished in the one Mediator who is God manifest in the flesh, public profession and baptism should honor the Name and Person who accomplished redemption. Historically, some traditions emphasize the invocation of the Name of the Lord Jesus in baptism to align with this conviction.
- Proclamation and evangelism: Gospel witness

focuses on the one Person who is both divine and human, whose blood brings about reconciliation. The altar typology shapes how we explain salvation: not a mere moral example, but a divine offering enacted in history by the incarnate God.

Conclusion

The bronze altar in the outer court is a divinely instituted picture pointing to the decisive act of God in Christ. When we understand the altar typologically and read the New Testament witness, we see a coherent testimony: the God who met his people in covenant is present in the incarnate Lord; in the human nature of Jesus the eternal God offered himself, through the agency of the eternal Spirit, to pay the ransom and secure reconciliation. The altar's symbolism, the covenantal background, and the New Testament exposition together invite believers to behold the oneness of God revealed in Christ: one God, one Mediator, one sacrifice, one access to the Father.

Scripture list for further study (selected)

- Old Testament types and altars: Genesis 8–9; 12; 15; 22; 28; 31; Exodus 24; Joshua 8
- Tabernacle: Exodus 25–31; 35–40; Exodus 27:1–8; 30:1–10; Leviticus

- Incarnation and deity of Christ: Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:14; Colossians 2:9; Philippians 2:5–11; 1 Timothy 3:16
- God in Christ and reconciliation: 2 Corinthians 5:19; Romans 3:25–26; 1 Peter 1:18–19
- Priesthood and atonement: Hebrews 2:14–17; Hebrews 4:14–16; Hebrews 9:11–14; Hebrews 9:24–28; Hebrews 10:10–14
- One Mediator texts: 1 Timothy 1:15–17; 1 Timothy 2:5–6
- Gospel narratives and sayings: Matthew 1:21–23; John 10:30–38; John 14:10–11

1. Study questions and reflection prompts
2. Read Exodus 27:1–8 and Hebrews 9–10. How does the bronze altar’s role in the tabernacle help explain the necessity of Christ’s sacrifice?
3. Meditate on 2 Corinthians 5:19 and 1 Timothy 2:5–6. How do these passages together shape your understanding of who accomplished reconciliation and how it was accomplished?
4. Consider Hebrews 9:14 in light of John 1:14 and Philippians 2:6–8. How does the language about the “eternal Spirit” and the incarnation help you think about divine agency in the atonement?
5. What pastoral implications follow if we affirm that the incarnate Jehovah offered himself in human nature? How does this affect preaching, worship, and pastoral care?

6. How would you explain to a friend the difference between saying “deity died in humanity” and denying the eternal, undying nature of God? (Hint: clarify that the claim is that the eternal God acted in human nature which experienced death, not that the divine essence was annihilated.)

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