

## *The Altar in the Outer Court*

*“And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof shall be three cubits . . . and thou shalt overlay it with brass” (Exodus 27:1, 2).*

When Reverend Wade Huntley, pastor of Holly Springs Baptist Church in Rutherfordton, North Carolina, performed the double wedding ceremony for Donnie and Ronnie Hodge, identical twins, he was presented with quite a problem. Which one was Donnie, and which one was Ronnie? So when he came to the end of the ceremony, he said to them, “Whichever one is Donnie and whichever one is Ronnie, you may kiss your bride!”

Even though I preached many meetings for Pastor Huntley, and was aware of the Hodge twins all these years, I must confess that at times I’m was never sure to which one I was speaking. Looking out from the pulpit, I knew Brother Donnie sat on the front row on my right, and Brother Ronnie sat a few rows back on my right. So I distinguished them as to where they sat in the church building.

In the Scriptures, the two altars in the Tabernacle in the Wilderness are distinguished by their appearance as “The Brazen Altar” and “The Golden Altar.” I like to refer to them by their location, calling them “The Altar in the Outer Court” and “The Altar in the Holy Place.” Having entered through the gate in our study of the Tabernacle, we now devote our attention to “The Altar in the Outer Court.”

*The structure of the altar points us to Christ and His cross!* The altar in the outer court was constructed of “shittim wood” (Exodus 27:1), or the wood of the acacia tree, all of which was overlaid with “brass” (Exodus 27:2). The wood, a natural substance, is to be paralleled with Christ’s humanity. In the light of other texts (see Numbers 21:9; Revelation 1:15), the brass must be associated with the judgment He would endure “in His own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24).

*The size of the altar points us to Christ and His cross!* Being “five cubits long and five cubits broad” (seven and one half feet by seven and one half feet), and “three cubits” high (four and one half feet high), the brazen altar was the biggest article of furniture in the Tabernacle. Being large enough for all the other furniture to fit inside, it confronts us with the importance of the cross. All aspects of worship are to be associated with Christ’s redemptive work.

*The situation of the altar points us to Christ and His cross!* When one came through the gate into the outer court, the outstanding item before him was the brazen altar. Before the laver and all the other articles of furniture was the altar of the court. The cross is the ever-looming, preeminent object in the eyes of the believer. No progress can be made in the path of devotion until we see the significance of Christ’s death.