

The Blood of the Altar

“And the priest...shall pour out all the blood thereof at the bottom of the altar” (Leviticus 4:30).

“And the priest shall take of the blood...and put it upon the horns of the altar” (Leviticus 4:34).

“And he shall sprinkle of the blood...upon the side of the altar” (Leviticus 5:9).

Some time ago, I was privileged to visit the Old Stone Presbyterian Church near Ringgold, Georgia. Organized on September 2, 1837, before the Cherokee Indians were removed from the area, it is said to be the first church organized by white settlers in Catoosa County. The church building, made of sandstone quarried locally, was actually built in 1850, and remained a Presbyterian church until 1920. In recent years it has been used by various denominations.

I admit I was interested in the old church for several reasons. The church, which has some of the original pews and the original altar, was started by a group of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians from North Carolina. Also, Elisha Hoffman, a well-known preacher and songwriter, preached in the facility. It is thought that in this building, his wonderful song, “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms,” was introduced to the Christian public.

Another intriguing fact about the church is that it served as a hospital in the Civil War to both Confederate and Union troops during the battle of Ringgold. Blood stains from wounded and dying soldiers still mark the floor of this historical marker. Blood stains also marked the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. Found in three places at the altar of burnt offering, the blood of innocent sacrifices depicted the precious blood of the coming Redeemer.

The blood at the base of the altar suggests that there is atonement in the blood of Christ! Having applied the blood in several places, the priest poured out the remainder of the blood in the basin at the base, or “the bottom of the altar.” His actions prefigured the Lord Jesus giving His all for sinners like you and me. In reference to pouring out His life for His own, Jesus said to His followers, “This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20).

The blood on the horns of the altar suggests that there is authority in the blood of Christ! The horns of a bull, or the horns of a ram, represent the animal’s power or authority. When the Psalmist declares that the Lord is “the horn of my salvation” (Psalm 18:2), it is a reference to the Lord’s strength or authority in salvation. The blood sprinkled on the horns of the altar reminds us that there is power, saving power and sanctifying power, in the blood of Jesus.

The blood on the sides of the altar suggests that there is access in the blood of Christ! The last text mentioned above literally indicates that the blood was sprinkled on all the sides of the altar. Whether their tents were on the east, west, south or north side of the Tabernacle, by virtue of the blood of the sacrifice, the people were welcome to approach their God. Ah, through Christ, and in His blood, believers “have access . . . unto the Father” (Ephesians 2:18).