

ASHES

Dear friends;

I have been meditating on God's command to "weep between the porch and the altar" I wanted to know What is there about that particular place that designates it as where we must weep?

I searched SOP and found that it is synonymous with deep humility and earnest pleading with God but I still wasn't clear about just what is to be found there - then I was guided to this information on what was to be found exactly between the 'Porch' (Entrance to the sanctuary) and the 'Altar'. What is there? A PILE OF ASHES! Please see excerpts below:

Excerpt from Jesus in His Sanctuary by L. Harding.

Implements and Utensils Used at the Altar

The six implements used at the altar were also made of copper (Ex 27:3). They consisted of (1) knives for slaughtering and cutting up the sacrifices, (2) basins for catching and holding the blood, (3) flesh-hooks for arranging the parts of the victims on the flaming logs, or sorting "sodden flesh" (1 Sam 2:13-17), (4) rakes and shovels (from a root to take or carry away, cf. Jer 52:9) for sifting and removing the ashes, (5) fire pans called "censers" (Ex 38:3; Num 16:17) for bearing the cinders to the designated "clean place" outside the encampment, and (6) "snuff dishes" or coal pans (Ex 27:3; Lev 16:12). During the forty years of wandering, copper braziers or pans were used by the priests for carrying the sacred fire from one camping place to the next.

To remove the ashes from under the altar grid the priest was required to dress in white robes similar to those worn on the day of atonement. Having raked out the ashes, he arranged them into a pile "beside the altar at the east part" (Lev 6:10, 11; cf. Tamid 1:4), that is, facing the entrance to the Tabernacle. (NOTE- this is 'between the porch and the Altar!) Ashes "signify that a whole and ample sacrifice" (4T 121) has been made. In fact, the Hebrew word "accept" means "turned to ashes" (Ps 20:3, margin). These ashes thus stood as a monument to the victim's complete immolation and acceptance before the Lord.

"Ashes" are often used in Scripture as a metaphor for humiliation (2 Sam 13:19), contrition (Dan 9:3; Matt 11:21; Luke 10:13), mourning (Est 4:1, 3; Job 2:8); Jer 6:26), worthlessness (Job 13:13; Isa 44:20), ignominy (Ezek 28:18; Mal 3:21), distress and sorrow (Ps 102:16; Lam 3:16; Isa 61:3), and loathsomeness (Job 30:19). The Hebrew word for ash (eper) comes from a root meaning light, flying or agile, and conveys the idea of vapidity. These concepts must be added to our understanding of the pile of ashes standing before the altar. There they silent cry out that all man's ways, symbolized by the immolated victim, have come to nothing when exposed to the fires of God's presence.

The Ashes from the Altar

This heap of ashes was left between the altar and the entry veil to the court for some time, to signal to the worshipers that the substitute sacrifice had been totally consumed. It was also evidence of the Divine acceptance which devoured the Lamb of God. These ashes were not to be hurriedly removed from the Sanctuary court, because God wished that the encouragement they gave, as well as the warning they presented, should sink into the thinking of the celebrants. Over these cinders the inscription "It is finished!" (John 19:30) was typically written. These ashes also pointed to the inevitable fate of the impenitent. Asaph recorded that he first realized this when he entered the court and observed this mound of ashes. He immediately realized that it was the monument to "their end" (Ps 73:17). (The wicked)

Ashes

Having moved the ashes from the altar, the priest doffed his special robes and donned his regular garments (Lev 6:10, 11). After an appropriate time had elapsed he carried them in a pan "without the camp into a clean place" where the individual sin-offerings were burned. This location was to teach that Christ did not die for the Hebrew people alone, but for the whole world (Heb 13:11, 12). This location "outside the city wall" was, in effect, an extension of the altar, for on it the bodies of special sin-offerings were burned (Lev 16:27; 6:30). Like these ashes, Jesus was taken down from the altar of the cross, and for a time, laid in a cave close by His place of slaughter to be observed by the universe and considered by all who had witnessed His crucifixion.

The ashes of consumed incense from the golden altar, and the burnt out wicks from the candelabrum, were mingled with the cinders of the copper altar at the time of their removal. This suggested the interrelationship of these three ministries. At dawn the fire from the copper altar had been used to light the lamps and ignite the incense, and now, at the close of the day, the ashes were evidence that illumination and intercession had fulfilled their tasks which were made possible by the altar fire."