

# Hebrews 13:10-11 Commentary

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CONSIDER JESUS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

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## The Epistle to the Hebrews

| INSTRUCTION<br>Hebrews 1-10:18                   |  |                                  |                                      | EXHORTATION<br>Hebrews 10:19-13:25                |
|--|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Superior Person<br>of Christ<br>Hebrews 1:1-4:13 | Superior Priest<br>in Christ<br>Hebrews 4:14-10:18 |                                  |                                      | Superior Life<br>In Christ<br>Hebrews 10:19-13:25 |
| BETTER THAN<br>PERSON<br>Hebrews 1:1-4:13        | BETTER<br>PRIESTHOOD<br>Heb 4:14-7:28              | BETTER<br>COVENANT<br>Heb 8:1-13 | BETTER<br>SACRIFICE<br>Heb 9:1-10:18 | BETTER<br>LIFE                                    |
| MAJESTY<br>OF<br>CHRIST                          | MINISTRY<br>OF<br>CHRIST                           |                                  |                                      | MINISTERS<br>FOR<br>CHRIST                        |
| DOCTRINE   |  |                                  |                                      | DUTY  |

DATE WRITTEN:

ca. 64-68AD

See [ESV Study Bible "Introduction to Hebrews"](#)  
(See also [MacArthur's Introduction to Hebrews](#))

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Hebrews 13:10 We **have** an **altar** from **which those** who **serve** the **tabernacle have no right to eat** ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [echomen](#) (1PPAI) [thusiasterion](#) ex [ou phagein](#) (AAN) [ouk echousin](#) (3PPAI) [echousian](#) (3PPAI) [oi te skene latreuontes](#). (PAPMPN)

**Amplified:** We have an altar from which those who serve and worship in the tabernacle have no right to eat. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** We have an altar from which those who serve in the tabernacle have no right to eat. ([Westminster Press](#))

**ESV:** We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat.

**NLT:** We have an altar from which the priests in the Temple on earth have no right to eat. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**NIV:** We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat. ([NIV - IBS](#))

**Phillips:** We have an altar from which those who still serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** We have an altar from which they have no right to eat who are serving the tent ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Young's Literal:** we have an altar, of which to eat they have no authority who the tabernacle are serving

**WE HAVE AN ALTAR FROM WHICH THOSE WHO SERVE THE TABERNACLE HAVE NO RIGHT TO EAT:** [echomen](#) (1PPAI) [thusiasterion](#) ex [ou phagein](#) (esthio: AAN) [ouk echousin](#) (3PPAI) [exousian](#) [oi te skene latreuontes](#) (PAPMPN):

- **altar:** 1Co 5:7,8 9:13 10:17,20
- **serve:** Nu 3:7,8 7:5 )

**Note:** Since this section can be somewhat difficult to understand, there are comments from several conservative sources which naturally leads to some repetition, but hopefully this repetition will give you a better understanding of Heb 13:10-14.

What the writer is saying is that the Levitical priests (who hold to the Old Covenant sacrificial system) have no right, no permission, to "**eat**" at our **altar** (the Cross of Christ). While what it means to "**eat**" is debated (see some thought below), don't miss the point that the Levitical priests cannot place their faith in both the Old Covenant of the Law and also the New Covenant of Grace. If they hold to the old system, they have no part, no right, to partake of the the new system.

So in this section, the writer again takes up his central theme of the sacrifice of Christ, which contrasts with and is superior to the Levitical (animal) sacrificial system. Recall that he had just exhorted his readers to "**be strengthened by grace not by foods**" (Heb 10:9-note) and now proceeds to continue the thought by making an allusion to **eating**, albeit in the present **context** it is not eating literal foods, but "eating" the "spiritual food" provided by Christ.

**Thomas Constable** explains that "Believers under the Old Covenant ate part of what they offered to God as **apeace offering** (Lev 7:15-18-note). However believers under the New Covenant **feed spiritually** on Jesus Christ Who is our **peace offering**. (Ed: Ro 5:1-note, Eph 2:14-note) Those still under the Old Covenant had no right to partake of Him for spiritual sustenance and fellowship with God since their confidence was still in the Old Covenant. ([Hebrews Commentary](#))

**Phillip Hughes** - Under the Mosaic dispensation the priests were entitled to retain as food for themselves the flesh of certain animal sacrifices and also the cereal offerings that were presented (as explained, for example, in Lev 7:1-38-**see commentary**, especially

Lev 7:6-note); but there were other sacrifices of which they were **not permitted to eat**, such as the **sin offering** described in Leviticus 4:1-5:13-commentary. and—a consideration of special significance in our understanding of the present passage—the great annual sacrifices for sin offered on the **Day of Atonement** (Lev. 16:1-34-note). The close association of the **altar** with the **sacrifice** that is offered on it, and of the eater with both, is evident from the question addressed by Paul to the Christians in Corinth: "*Consider the practice of Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices partakers in the altar?*" (1Co 10:18; cf. also the question, posed in a different context, of 1Co 9:13: "*Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings?*"). The particular ritual which our author has in view here is, once again, that of the **Day of Atonement** (Ed: Hughes deduces this from the fact that **Heb 13:11** speaks of the "blood is brought into the holy place" something that was permitted only on the Day of Atonement, Lev 16:1-34-note), when, on this day of the year alone, the blood of the victim slain on the altar is brought into the sanctuary, that is, the holy of holies, by the high priest. Yet those who serve the tent, namely, the priests of the Levitical order, **have no right to eat of this**, the most portentous (prodigious, wonderful) of all the Jewish sacrifices; for on this day the bodies of the sacrificial animals are **totally burned outside the camp** (See Lev 16:27-note). ([A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews](#)) (Bolding, italics, Scripture references added)

**We have** (2192)(echo) is in the **present tense** indicating this "**altar**" is their continual (even permanent) possession. So it behooves us to understand what is the **altar** which they (and we as fellow NT believers) possessed, a question which will be dealt with in the following discussion. The fact that the writer introduces the concept of an **altar** in his argument (for the superiority of the New Covenant), suggests that some detractors were claiming that Christianity had **no altar** and was therefore **inferior** to Judaism. **F F Bruce** amplifies this thought commenting that indeed "Christians had none of the visible apparatus which in those days was habitually associated with religion and worship—no sacred buildings (Ed: Temple), no (Ed: Brazen) altars, no sacrificing (Ed: Levitical) priests. Their pagan neighbors thought they had no God, and called (NT believers) atheists; their Jewish neighbors too might criticize them for having no visible means of spiritual support."

**Philip Hughes** adds that the criticism from the Jewish antagonists that believers in Messiah had "**no visible means of spiritual support**" (especially **no altar**) "evokes the rejoinder (an answer in reply) from our author that **we have an altar** (Heb 13:10), namely, the Cross on which the sacrifice of the Son took place (Ed: Keeping in mind that the OT Tabernacle and Temple **Brazen Altar** is seen by most conservative writers as a foreshadowing of the NT Cross of Christ), and that this (Christ's crucifixion) is the reality which answers to the shadow of the high-priestly offering on Israel's Day of Atonement (cf Col 2:17-note); and, further, that there is this significant distinction, in addition to the important differences mentioned earlier in the epistle, that whereas the Levitical priests have no right to eat of their sin offerings, we Christians, who together constitute a holy priesthood (1Pe 2:5-note), enjoy the privilege of partaking (Ed: By faith) of Christ's sacrifice, which is the **true and perfect sacrifice for sin** (Ed: The once for all sin offering of the Lamb of God to which ALL of the OT animal sin offerings pointed!). ([A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews](#)) (Bolding and Scripture references added)

**An altar - What is the altar to which the writer was referring?** Clearly it is not the altar in the Temple, for he has repeatedly demonstrated that the Old Covenant order is ready to disappear (Heb 8:13-note) (and the Temple itself would in fact be demolished by the Roman General Titus in 70AD, not many years after the writing the epistle to the Hebrews). If we think about the OT symbolism in the Tabernacle (and later the Temple), the **Brazen Altar** was the first piece of furniture one encountered when coming through the one door (Jn 10:9), the one and only way into the outer courtyard (cp Jesus = one way - Jn 14:6, cp Acts 4:12). The **brazen altar** was the site of the blood sacrifice of the blemish free animal and was a picture of the ultimate blood sacrifice of Jesus, which was necessary because the blood of bulls and goats would never take away sin (Heb 10:4-note, Heb 9:9-note, Heb 9:13, 14-note). In short, the **brazen altar** was a depiction or symbol or type of the ultimate sacrificial altar, the **Old Rugged Cross** which bore the sinless body of the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29).

It should be noted that while some commentators see the Hebrews 13:10 reference to the **altar** as a reference to the Cross, others see it as a reference to Christ the Sacrifice on the Cross. **F F Bruce** resolves this by explaining that "The word **'altar'**" is used by **metonymy** for "**sacrifice**"—"as when, e.g., we say that a man keeps a good table, meaning thereby good food."... The Christian **altar** was the **sacrifice of Christ**, the benefits of which were eternally accessible to them. Material food, even if it was called sacred, perished with the using; in this new and spiritual order into which they had been introduced by faith, Christ was perpetually available, "the same yesterday, and today, yes, and for ever." (Heb 13:8) ([The Epistle to the Hebrews New International Commentary on the New Testament- F. F. Bruce](#))

**Spurgeon** adds that "Those who cling to the external and ceremonial observances of religion have **no right** to the privileges that belong to those who come to the spiritual altar; they cannot share that secret. Those whose religion consists in outward rites and ceremonies can never eat of the spiritual altar at which spiritual men eat, for they do not understand the Scripture and they still serve the Mosaic tabernacle."

**Those who serve the Tabernacle** - Referring to the priests who served in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem (Herod's Temple at that time). These Jewish priests who continually performed the ritualistic Temple services (Heb 7:27-note, Heb 10:11-note) had no right

to eat of or to assimilate the significance of the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb of God. They preferred imperfect sacrifices of animals to the once for all perfect sacrifice of the Lamb of God. They missed the fact that the Tabernacle in which they served was a **symbol** (Heb 9:9-note) that was to point to the sacrifice of the Messiah on the Cross.

**No right to eat** - This implies that **believers** in Christ do have a right to eat at this altar. But the question that arises is **how do we "eat" at this altar**, the altar of the Old Rugged Cross on which the Lamb of God was slain? Most conservative commentaries favor the interpretation that we "eat" at this altar when we trust in Christ's propitiatory (satisfying the righteous demand of God for justice), substitutionary sacrifice, a trust which is shown to be genuine by our obedience to Him (because we now have a new power to obey - Ezekiel 36:27-note). A few commentaries suggest that this may have been an allusion to Jesus' words in Jn 6:53,54. Finally, some writers see this as an allusion to the believers partaking of the Lord's Supper.

**John Brown** disputes the idea that this passage points to the **Lord's Supper** - The sentiment of the Apostle is not—We are allowed to eat the Lord's Supper, which no Jew, nor Jewish priest, continuing such, can have a right to do. It refers not to the Lord's Supper, but to that of which the Lord's Supper is an emblematical expression. Nor is it merely—We have a sacrifice, on which we spiritually feed, of which no Jew, no Jewish priest, continuing to be so, can participate. But, we are allowed—really, though spiritually—to feast on the propitiatory sacrifice for our own sins, and for the sins of all the people of God, which, even emblematically, the Jewish people and priests were not permitted to do. ([Hebrews Commentary](#))

**Phillip Hughes** adds that "The sacrifices of which those Aaronic priests partook imperfectly prefigured the all-availing sacrifice of him who is the Lamb of God and were incapable of effecting more than a ceremonial and external cleansing; whereas the one sacrifice of which we partake purifies us inwardly from all sin (Heb 9:9f, Heb 9:13f, Heb 9:26; Heb 10:1-4, 10-14; cf. 1Jn 1:7, 9). Their eating was physical; ours is spiritual. Their eating, further, was partial, and it was limited, because there could be no eating of their sin offerings, which were incompetent to convey what they portended (foreshadowed, foretold) since the brutish victims were unfitted to take the place of sinful mankind, and it was only with the provision by God of the totally sufficient sin offering of his incarnate Son that such eating at last became a possibility and a reality. Our eating, by contrast, is total and unrestricted. ([A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews- Philip Edgcumbe Hughes](#))

**Spurgeon** rightly reminds us that "We have a sacrifice, which, being once offered, avails forever. We have "one greater than the temple" (Mt 12:6), and He is to us the mercy seat and the High Priest. Take it for granted that all the blessings of the law remain under the Gospel. Christ has restored that which He did not take away, but He has not taken away one single possible blessing of the law. On the contrary, He has secured all to His people (**Ed**: in the New Covenant, the Law is written on our hearts - Heb 8:10). I look to the Old Testament, and I see certain blessings affixed to the covenant of works, and I say to myself by faith, "Those blessings are mine, for I have kept the covenant of works in the person of my Covenant Head and Surety. Every blessing that is promised to perfect obedience belongs to me, since I present to God a perfect obedience in the person of my great Representative, the Lord Jesus Christ." Every real spiritual boon that Israel had, you have as a Christian."

**R Kent Hughes** adds that "We are all ministers. And the glory of Christianity is that we have an altar - we have an old rugged cross. And there the Savior, Jesus Christ, serves inexhaustible helpings of **grace** (cp He 13:9-note). Do you want your **heart** to be strong? Do you want to be a strong person who has the resources to love each other (Heb 13:1-note), and take in strangers (Heb 13:2-note), and care for prisoners (Heb 13:3-note), and stay married or single and chaste (Heb 13:4-note), and not love money (Heb 13:5-note)? ([R. Kent Hughes Hebrews- An Anchor for the Soul, Volume 2](#))

**Then stay close to the altar and eat  
and eat and eat again -  
the grace of God.**

**Hebrews 13:11** For the **bodies** of **those animals whose blood** is **brought** into the **holy place** by the **high priest** as an offering for **sin**, are **burned outside the camp** (**NASB: Lockman**)

**Greek:** [on gar eispheretai](#) (3SPPI) [zoon to haima peri aamartias eis ta hagia dia tou archiereos, touton ta somata katakaietai](#) (3SPPI) [exo](#) (3SPPI) [tes paremboles](#).

**Amplified:** For when the blood of animals is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin, the victims' bodies are burned outside the limits of the camp. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** For the bodies of the animals, whose blood is taken by the High Priest into the Holy Place as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp. ([Westminster Press](#))

**ESV:** For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a

sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp.

**KJV:** For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.

**NLT:** Under the system of Jewish laws, the high priest brought the blood of animals into the Holy Place as a sacrifice for sin, but the bodies of the animals were burned outside the camp. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**NIV:** The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. ([NIV - IBS](#))

**Phillips:** When the blood of animals was presented as a sin-offering by the High Priest in the sanctuary, their bodies were burned outside the precincts of the camp. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** for the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the Holy of Holies by the high priest concerning sin are burned outside the camp. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Young's Literal:** for of those beasts whose blood is brought for sin into the holy places through the chief priest -- of these the bodies are burned without the camp.

## FOR THE BODIES OF THOSE ANIMALS WHOSE BLOOD IS BROUGHT INTO THE HOLY PLACE BY THE HIGH PRIEST AS AN OFFERING FOR SIN ARE BURNED OUTSIDE THE CAMP

- **bodies:** Ex 29:14 Lev 4:5-7,11,12,16-21 6:30 9:9,11 16:14-19,27 Nu 19:3 )

### OT "SHADOW" OF JESUS' CRUCIFIXION IN Heb 13:12

**R Kent Hughes** explains that "The logic goes like this: the sacrifices offered on the Day of Atonement were a prophetic type for the sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29). On the Day of Atonement a bull was slain to atone for the sins of the priest and his family, and a lamb likewise was sacrificed for the sins of the rest of the people. The blood of these sacrifices was taken into the Holy of Holies, but both the carcasses were taken outside the camp and burned up (Lv 16:27). Therefore, those (those who served the tabernacle - Heb 13:10) under the old sacrificial system could not partake of this great offering as a meal. But Jesus, the ultimate atoning lamb, was sacrificed outside the camp—outside Jerusalem's walls, on Golgotha—as an offering to God. This means two great things: (1) All those who remained committed to the old Jewish system were excluded from the benefit of partaking of Christ's atoning death. And, (2) Jesus' death outside the camp means that He is accessible to anyone in the world who will come to Him. Jesus planted His Cross in the world so all the world could have access. And there he remains permanently available! ([Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul. Volume 1. Crossway; Volume 2](#))

**Spurgeon** - The priest was not allowed to burn the bull itself upon the altar, but he was commanded to take up the whole carcass—its skin, flesh, head, and everything—and carry the whole outside the camp. It was a sin offering, and therefore it was loathsome in God's sight, and the priest went right away from the door of the tabernacle, past all the tents of the children of Israel, bearing this ghastly burden upon him. He went until he came to the place where the ashes of the camp were poured out, and there—not upon an altar, but on wood that had been prepared, upon the bare ground—every single particle of the bull was burned with fire. The distance the bull was carried from camp is said to have been four miles. The teaching of which is just this: when the Lord Jesus Christ took the sin of His people upon Himself, He could not, as a substitute, dwell any longer in the place of the divine favor, but had to be put into the place of separation, and made to cry, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani" (Matt 27:46)?

As discussed above, the writer is referring to the [Day of Atonement](#) (Lev 16:6, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 24, 27, 30, 32, 33, 34)...

But the bull of the sin offering and the goat of the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, **shall be taken outside the camp**, and they shall **burn** their hides, their flesh, and their refuse in the fire. (Lev 16:27, cp Lev 4:21).

**John** records a parallel passage noting that "They took Jesus therefore, and **He went out** (outside the gates of Jerusalem), bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, [Golgotha](#). (Jn 19:17)

**Edwin Blum comments:** These words fulfill two Old Testament symbols or types (**See related discussion on Typology = Study of types**). Isaac carried his own wood for the sacrifice (Ge 22:1-6) and the sin offering used to be taken outside the camp or city (cf. Heb 13:11-13). So Jesus was made sin (2Co 5:21-note). ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary. 1985. Victor](#))

**John MacArthur adds:** In keeping with Old Testament law (Nu 15:36) and Roman practice, executions took place **outside the city**. Therefore Jesus went out of Jerusalem to the place of execution. That too fulfilled Old Testament typology. According to the Mosaic law, the sin offerings were to be taken outside the camp of Israel. Ex 29:14 reads, "But the flesh of the bull and its hide and its refuse, you shall burn with fire outside the camp; it is a sin offering." Leviticus adds... Lev 4:12; 16:27. Noting the theological significance of Jesus, the final sin offering, being executed **outside the city**, the author of Hebrews wrote... Heb 13:11, 12. ([John 12-21 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

**Outside the camp** - several of the following notes discuss this topic (this exact phrase 28x in 27v in NAS) -

Ex 29:14; 33:7; Lev 4:12, 21-**note**; Lev 6:11-**note**.; Lev 8:17-**note**.; Lev 9:11; Lev 13:46-**note**.; Lev 16:27-**note** (**good note by Richard Phillips**).; Lev 17:3-**note**.; Lev 24:14, 23-**note**.; Nu 5:3-4; 12:14-15; 15:35-36; 19:3, 9; 31:13, 19; Dt 23:10, 12; Josh 6:23; Heb 13:11-[note](#) Heb 13:13-**note**. and "outside the gate" in Heb 13:12-**note**.