

ALTARS – Pt.1: PATRIARCHS, CHURCH



This whole teaching is inspired by a talk I had with Pastor Erustus. He brought out many things that I wanted to take the time and teach to all of you. I'm laying the foundation in this message on altars. In the next few messages, we will really begin to get into the meat of the matter and learn more about our altars today.

Generally when we think of altars, that is a-l-t-a-r-s like in a church, not a-l-t-e-r-s like in a programmed person, we tend to think of them in a church setting. I want you to understand better about God's altars and where they are and how we serve on them.

We learn through reading the Old Testament that sacrifices to cover sin were offered before God gave the law.



Once Adam and Eve sinned against God by disobeying, God took the life of an animal to cover their nakedness (**Gen.3:21**). That is a picture of covering their sin. It seems that sacrifices began at that time and they must have learned what God required because the world was now in a sinful state and fallen state.

In the Old Testament they brought sacrifices to cover their sin year after year. When Jesus was crucified, died and then resurrected, He became the sacrifice for whoever would believe in Him. He washes the sins away of every true believer and we no longer have to make those animal sacrifices. Jesus is the final and only sacrifice for sins.

Abel and Cain brought sacrifices to God before the law was given (**Gen.4**). So even though it is not recorded in the Bible for us, we know they were taught by their parents how to make sacrifices and offer them to God. This would have been done on an altar.

Cain of course did his own thing and did not bring a proper sacrifice (**Heb.11:4**). Cain brought some of his crops or vegetables as a sacrifice to God. It was not accepted because this was not a first fruits kind of offering. It was a sacrifice for sins and blood has to be shed as **Heb.9:22** tells us.

Let's move to the time after God flooded the world because of sin.

Gen.8:14-9:1 - And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried. And God spake unto Noah, saying, Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. Bring forth with thee every living thing that *is* with thee (release all the animals), of all flesh, *both* of fowl, and of cattle (livestock), and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth (that scurries along the ground); that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth. And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him: Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, *and* whatsoever creepeth upon the earth (everything that moves on land), after their kinds, went forth out of the ark. And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast (animal), and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done (I will never again destroy all living things). While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.



So we see Noah with his family gathered round him, making the sacrifices to God on an altar that he built. He is the patriarch of the family. This is a family altar. Notice they knew about sacrifices, what were considered clean and unclean animals. What was an acceptable sacrifice and what was not. They also knew about burnt offerings. This was all before the law. Noah is worshipping God and thanking Him for preserving their lives through the worldwide flood.

Not far behind Noah and this altar, we see another Patriarch that erected altars to God. Let's look at the time when God called Abraham out of his country to come and serve God and go where He wanted him to go which was to Canaan. This next passage is about what happened after Abraham moved by faith, left His country and followed God.

Gen.12:7-8 - And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed (offspring) will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him. And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, *having* Bethel on the west, and Hai (Ai) on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.



So we see that Abraham who grew up in a pagan, gentile, idolatrous family, knew about altars and he, being the patriarch and priest of the household, built an altar to worship and sacrifice to the Lord on.

When he moved to different places, he would erect an altar to worship God in offering sacrifices and offerings to Him. As you read the Old Testament you learn that in the places that God appeared to them they would usually set up an altar. Where they pitched their tents and settled and lived, they would erect an altar and worship at that altar calling on the name of the Lord.

Abraham built an altar and Isaac served on it and then later Jacob offered sacrifices to God on it. This kept the altar active. Abraham was the priest of his home serving on God's altar.

Kennedy built an altar to the Lord when she was little. She got some bricks we had in the yard and put them together and got some sticks and twigs and put on top of them and then she tried to put our cat, Jack on the altar. He would not stay on it. She told me since Jack would not stay on the altar that she guessed she would have to be the sacrifice and she went and laid on the bricks. When you raise your children up in God's Word, they will do things like this. These are special memories to us and can you imagine how precious that is to God? Read God's Word to your children and when they can read, let them read to you. Get them a toddler Bible and as they mature, get them Bibles that grow with them. When you do this, they will reenact Biblical stories and it will be such a blessing to you as well as to God.

The next passage is about a time just after the Lord helped the Israelites to win a battle:

Exod.17:14-15 - And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this *for* a memorial in a book (on a scroll), and rehearse *it* in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out (blot out) the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi (The Lord is my banner):

Jehovah is not God's name but it is a deception that the unsaved Jews who practice witchcraft have taught the world. I did a teaching titled "Deception of God's Name" you might want to listen to it if you did not know that already.

They say Job was one of the oldest books of the Bible and as the patriarch and priest of his family, he had an altar where he made sacrifices, worshipped and served God (**Job 1:5**).

In reading the Old Testament you find that they would build altars in places where they had visions, where God moved on their behalf, where they had victory in battle, where God spoke to them etc.

The next passage of Scripture is right after the Lord gave Moses the law.

Exod.20:24-26 - An altar of earth thou shalt make unto Me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record My name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. And if thou wilt make Me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone

(use natural, uncut stones): for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it (using tools to cut or shape the stones will defile the altar). Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto Mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.

All of these altars had been made of uncut stone, no tools were used to make these altars up to this point. Then in Exodus chapter 27 we learn of the altar God instructed Moses to make for the Tabernacle, it was of acacia wood overlaid with brass. In Exodus 37 we see the description of the altar of incense that was just outside of the holy of holies or the holiest place of all where the ark of the covenant was kept, that altar was overlaid with pure gold.



In the OT a high priest served on God's altar. L: the high priest burning incense on the golden altar of incense that was just outside of the Holy of holies where God's ark of the covenant was. R: The high priest entered into the Holy of holies once a year on the Day of Atonement to make atonement for his sins and for the nation's sins.

When Samuel was old and could not make the circuit of going to all of the cities to minister any longer, he built an altar in Ramah where he lived (**1 Samuel 7:17**).

The next passage is just after King David was tempted by satan to number the military which was a sin against God. Israel was to look to God and trust in Him alone for their protection. Let's see what happened after he did that.

1 Chron.21:8 to 1 Chron.22:1 - And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant (please forgive my guilt); for I have done very foolishly. And the LORD spake unto Gad, David's seer, saying, Go and tell David, saying, Thus saith the

LORD, I offer thee three *things*: choose thee one of them, that I may do *it* unto thee. So Gad came to David, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Choose thee either three years' famine; or three months to be destroyed before thy foes (enemies), while that the sword of thine enemies overtaketh *thee*; or else three days the sword of the LORD, even the pestilence, in the land, and the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel. Now therefore advise thyself what word I shall bring again to Him that sent me. And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand (s) of the LORD; for very great *are* His mercies: but let me not fall into the hand (s) of man. So the LORD sent pestilence (a plague) upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men. And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld, and he repented him of the evil (He relented of the evil), and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite (Araunah the Jebusite). And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders *of Israel, who were* clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. And David said unto God, *Is it not* I *that* commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but *as for* these sheep, what have they done? Let Thine hand, I pray thee, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued. Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the LORD in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite (Araunah the Jebusite). And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spake in the name of the LORD. And Ornan (Araunah) turned back, and saw the angel; and his four sons with him hid themselves. Now Ornan (Araunah) was threshing wheat. And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshingfloor, and bowed himself to David with *his* face to the ground. Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of *this* threshingfloor, that I may build an altar therein unto the LORD: thou shalt grant it me for the full price: that the plague may be stayed from the people. And Ornan said unto David, Take *it* to thee, and let my lord the king do *that which is* good in his eyes: lo, I give *thee* the oxen *also* for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat (grain) offering; I give it all. And King David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take *that which is* thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost (nor offer burnt offerings that cost me nothing). So

David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight. And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and He answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering. And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof. At that time when David saw that the LORD had answered him in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there. For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, *were* at that season in the high place at Gibeon. But David could not go before it to inquire of God: for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the LORD. Then David said, This *is* the House of the LORD God, and this *is* the altar of the burnt offering for Israel.



Here is a rendition of that scene with King David kneeling down and praying to God to spare the people. I like the example that King David set. He would not take anything for free in service to God but he would sacrifice something from himself personally and did not haggle and try to get a discount but paid full price for it. This is true worship and how we should be today as well. It should cost us something to worship and sacrifice to God.

If you read further you can see where King David began to gather and prepare materials to build the Temple of God. He was not allowed to because he was a warring King and God said he had shed too much blood (1 Chron.22:8-9). His son, King Solomon would be the one to actually build it.

The altars that were erected for corporate worship, for the Tabernacle and for the Temple service were not just placed anywhere they decided. God was placing His name there and they were to place their corporate altars where God instructed them to or allowed them to. It was only by God's Word or by His revelation that they placed His corporate altars of worship, else wise they would have been an abomination to God.

In my research I have learned that the Israelites at this time had already been in a famine for 3 years because of the matter with the Gibeonites. So this would have been adding 3 more years of famine if King David would have chosen that option. Also, In 2 Samuel 24:23 it speaks of Araunah as a king offering the threshing floor and instruments to King David. The Geneva Bible mentions that some writers have stated that Araunah was king of Jerusalem before King David conquered it.

To me I always think the satanists got the idea of 3 wishes from this passage about God giving King David 3 choices in which to choose how he and the people would be punished. The sins of the king or ruler do affect the people.

CLOSING

It is very important to understand about God's altars. Where they are today, and how we serve Him on them. Did you know your home has a family altar? Next week I'm going to begin talking about what happened to the family altar, where is it today and how do we serve God on it.

PRAYER