

# We Have an Altar!

## Overview

And when I say that as a church, I don't mean we have this place that we reserve. I call this the altar area. But when the Apostle said in Hebrews 13, we have an altar that we can partake in, we can receive as we give ourselves unto the Lord, be it through praise, through worship.

There's something that feeds us. The Old Testament priest would go to the altar, he'd do his task, and he got to sustain his personal needs by the flesh that came from that altar. Jesus said on the night that he was betrayed, he took bread, he said, you need to eat my flesh.

Now he was talking about not his physical body, but he was talking about himself being the sacrifice. Like a priest would order the sacrifice in the Old Testament, then he'd get to eat off that altar. Jesus is now saying to his disciples on the night he's betrayed, this is the beginning when you are going to eat of the sacrifice that I'm going to give for your sinfulness.

We have an altar. We go in Genesis then, chapter 12, still, and verse 8, and he removed from there, from Shechem, unto a mountain on the east side of Bethel, house of God, and he pitched his tent. And having Bethel on the west, Hai on the east, there he built an altar and called upon the name of the Lord.

So before Jacob ever went to that same place and laid down to sleep and experienced that vision of angels ascending and descending and hearing the voice of God as the Lord made promises to him before Jacob had ever been there, there's Abraham, and he calls that place the house of the Lord, Bethel. There he builds an altar, and so we would call that the altar of prayer. Abraham journeyed and then went on southward.

And then I'm going over a chapter to the 13th chapter of Genesis to find another altar, and it's in verses 14 and reading on. And the Lord said to Abram after that lot had separated from him, lift up your eyes and look upon the place that you are northward, southward, eastward, and westward, for all the land which you see, to you I will give it, and to your seed forever. United Nations does not believe in this book, and we find out that our own prime minister—sorry, if this goes off the air, I don't care.

Our own prime minister is saying that Israel really has no right to that part of the world. That's what the Gazan people want. That's what they're after.

They want them all dead. They don't want a two-nation solution. They were given that, and they refused it.

So everything that's going on in the world today is nations are lining up against Israel, they're lining up against the Word of God, and that's a treacherous place to walk. If there's anybody still watching on the internet, I got one amen. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall your seed will be numbered.

Arise and walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it, for I'm giving it to you. And Abraham removed his tent and came and dwelt in the land of memory which is in Heron, and there he built an altar. So that is the altar of peace.

Peacefully, he settles down in this very special place. He built an altar to celebrate the peace that the Lord said, here you'll be, this is what I've given you. And then I'm moving on to Genesis in chapter 22, and I'm going to read from verse 9. And they came to the place which God had told them of, and Abraham built there an altar.

This place is called Moriah. This is the story of Abraham taking his son Isaac, and the Lord had said to him before he headed out with Isaac and a couple of servants, you're going to build an altar on a place that I will show you, and there you're going to offer your son to me as a burnt offering. Remember the meaning of the burnt offering.

That must have been difficult for Abraham to be heading out, not just to kill his son, but to obliterate his very memory. He was going to return to Sarah if he were to follow through, and Sarah would say, where's Isaac? The Lord told me to kill him. Did you bring his body back at least to bury? No, the Lord told me to burn him.

We've got to forget him. This is hard for our minds to wrap around, isn't it? But you see, this is how God worked with Abraham. In Ur of the Chaldees, which is somewhere between Iraq, Iran, and that part of the world, he was a very wealthy man.

He had land, he had everything, and the Lord came between Abraham and what God had blessed him with. God had blessed this man immeasurably, although he was not a follower of the Lord our God. The Lord had to get him to convert over and to follow after the Lord, and the Lord did that by visiting him and causing him to understand.

I am that I am, the Elf of the Omega, the beginning and the ending, and I'm coming between you and everything that you have. And Abraham was supposed to leave empty-handed and head out, but it says that Lot gathered up a pile of stuff and took it with him. The Lord came between Abraham, his family, his country, his language, the culture, everything.

Then the Lord gives him a promise. A miraculous thing happens, and God gives him a son whose name is Isaac. In your seed, all the earth will be blessed.

So Isaac emerges as the seed of promise. Abraham had to be proud of him, but then the Lord comes between Abraham and the promised seed. The Lord comes between Abraham and the pride of his life.

This is how God often works in our life. He comes between us and the things that we cherish the most. He was testing Abraham.

He was testing him. So now we see Abraham coming to the Mount Moriah in Genesis 22. I was reading, and I took my pause for a moment.

I will multiply your seed as the stars. I really have missed my place now. David, what are you doing? They came to the place first night.

David just woke up. Applause, applause. They came to the place which Abraham, which God had told him about.

And where was this place, by the way? This was actually the very place, was the place we know now as Jerusalem, the Temple Mount. That's where God showed him, take your son up on this mountain and kill him there. Abraham built an altar in Jerusalem on the Temple Mount, the most fought over place in the entire world.

We've heard about wars that took place in Vietnam, in Japan, all over Europe, but there's no piece of ground in the entire world where more armies and more blood has been shed than this place called Mount Moriah. The world is against the Lord God, and the world loses more than one, says a man. Five, six, seven, eight, nine.

He came to pass. David lost his place. Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

How old was David, Jr.? We were pastoring this tiny church. We were planting a brand new church in the city of London. My son was maybe five years old.

And I said, Davy, tonight's service, you have to help your daddy do his sermon. Okay, dad. He's all excited.

I said, well, you're going to be Isaac, and I'm going to be Abraham. He wasn't catching on yet. And I had, I had a knife that I used to fillet fish, very sharp, very pointed knife.

And like this thing looks ugly, and it, and it's in a leather sheath. And so as Abraham, I put on a bathrobe, and I see you people kind of hugging each other, and you're freezing to death. I just looked, and it's set for 69.

I, you'll thaw out in a few minutes. Trust me, when you get outside, you'll wish you could be back in here. And so I, I built this little altar.

I don't remember what I used, had branches and whatever. And as we're, and I told my son, you just do what your daddy says, okay. I'm Abraham, you're Isaac.

Remember that? And I said, I'm not going to hurt you. I got him up to the, to the platform. I turned him, told him to turn his back to me.

I tied his hands behind him. This kid breaks into a sweat like a racehorse. And I picked him up, and I laid him on the branches.

And then he sees me gripping a hold of my knife. And I remember saying to the church, this kid is scared to death. What's daddy going to do with his knife? How did Isaac feel? And how did Abraham feel? When Abraham put his hand to the knife, he was not putting on a drama.

He was not doing something for an audience. There was only one audience, and that was the Lord God. And God was saying, do it.

Do it for me. Prove you can be a man of faith. I'm going to make you the father of many nations, and I'm going to use this seed.

Trust me now. He was saying to Abraham, you're going to see the resurrection from the dead. You're going to see in a prophetic manner, the raising of the Lord Jesus Christ from the altar.

And millions are going to come to know the Lord, Abraham, because your faith. Pull out the knife and draw his blood. Abraham pulls out the knife, and as he's about—Isaac wasn't five years of age.

Isaac was a young man, and I won't venture to think through how old he was. I did read what historians believe. We'll leave that out.

He was a young man. And could have Abraham manhandled him? What do I know? I believe that Isaac was such a beautiful sufferer as he trusted his daddy, and his daddy had to say, God is faithful, son. God is faithful.

What I'm about to do is scaring the living daylights out of us, but we're going to trust God to the end. I poke in here for just a moment to tell you a story about the district superintendent of Western Ontario, who was in a hospital in London, and he was about to undergo open heart surgery, and of all the pastors—I can't explain this—of all the pastors that he would call to, all the pastors were told, don't go. Don't go and see this man.

He was our pastor, the guy over all churches. He sent word, David Forrest, I want you to come. And when I went to see my pastor, the general, the superintendent of our assemblies, he laid there, and he's getting ready.

They're going to take him down the hall in any moment, and he said, David, here's what I told my sons this morning. My sons, who are mature young men, family men of their own, stood here weeping over their dad, realizing I might not come off that table alone. And he said, I told my sons, I've been preaching, and you've been hearing your dad preach about trust in God, and about heaven to gain, and hell to lose.

And sons, this is the proof that of our faith is real. Trust God no matter what happens. He said, I told my sons, we preach it, now we have to live it.

That impressed me to the end. So here we are now, Abraham saying to his son, you got to trust God, trust God, trust God. And as he lives tonight, the Lord says, stop now.

And as he turns, there's an animal. And the son was untied, and the son was set free. It's a picture of us being set free, because now Isaac was not just one person.

He was a whole world population, wasn't he? In your seed shall all the earth be blessed, all nations. It wasn't one person who came off that altar. It was us.

It was us in him. That turned out to be an altar of provision. And Abraham called that place Jehovah-Jireh.

Jehovah-Jireh is a banner that should be hanging over the city of Jerusalem. The Lord always provides, and never you doubt it. God instructs Israel in Exodus chapter 20 and verse 24.

God says, an altar of earth you will make unto me, and you'll sacrifice thereon your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In all places where I record my name, I will come unto you, and I will bless you. So there's the Lord saying, build an altar.

I haven't preached a message for a long, long time. I used to preach this message in camp meetings all across Canada, that it's time to rebuild the altars. An altar in those times usually was built out of earth.

There were times when they built it out of rocks. But if they did it out of earth, it was to indicate that when it was complete, when the altar had been set up, built of dirt, there was nothing about it that you could say, look what I did. There's nothing beautiful about it.

If you had a camera, you would never have taken a picture. It's a pile of dirt. You did the best you could to make it reasonable.

But there was nothing humanely exquisite about it. The altar is not a place of exquisite, and it's not a place where we can be proud of ourselves. The altar is a place of contrition.

It's a place of brokenness. It's a place of coming before God and saying, I need thee. Oh, I need thee.

Every hour I need thee. Oh, bless me now, my Savior. Dear Jesus, I come.

The altar, the altar is a place where your soul is fed. There was a historical habit in my church years ago, and I'm going to venture to say, without any hesitation, it had to be the habit of this church. Sunday morning was a great service of worship, singing the great hymns of the church.

The odd time we'd get spiritual and sing a chorus. Sunday nights was the revival service. Sunday nights, I remember Bob Clark leading the service, in Old Central Tabernacle in Hamilton.

And when he led, both his hands would be going, and he led like this. And to me, the whole world was in that church. I was a little taut.

Somebody would help me, and they had my feet on the back of the pew, so I was higher than anybody. I was just a cricket. And I remember seeing a sea of people, but all the hands were being waved.

And oftentimes, people would pull up, the ladies would pull out a hanky. Always hoped that it was a clean and never used. Other people would pull out a fresh Kleenex, and they'd start singing a song.

We are able to go up and take the country and possess the land from Jordan to the sea. Oh my goodness, the celebration. It was high.

There was clapping. There was shouting. It was absolutely glorious.

We were singing praises. It was an altar that evening. Every Sunday night was an altar of praise.

Then the preacher would get up there, and he'd stretch out his tonsils and preach like a man from another world. And if he preached on Armageddon, I'd get saved. If he preached on hell as a hot place, I'd get saved again.

I got saved pretty well every Sunday night. I was under conviction. What kind of sins had I done? I don't know.

I was a nasty kid. I was guilty of something. If an evangelist came to town, and they were hoping that the first night there'd be a break, that somebody would get saved, I'm sure the pastor must have said to the evangelist, don't worry.

Little Davey Forrest will be the first to the altar. Just sing that song. Come to the altar.

And oh, I would go to that altar, and I would kneel there, and I would call upon the name of the Lord. I learned that from the book. Abraham built an altar, and he called upon the name of the Lord.

And you know what happened to me on Sunday nights? I got my soul refreshed. I didn't understand half of what was going on. I didn't know who the Apostle Paul was.

I didn't know anything about the Trinity, but I knew I was going to heaven. I knew my grandma was there. I knew my mom and dad were going there, and I was excited, and I wanted to be a part of it.

I didn't understand it, but I tell you, it fed my soul. And I can tell you every Monday morning when Lionel Kerr, who lived one block from me, would come and knock at my door, and I would go out, and we'd start walking to school together, he invariably would say, so you want to tell me about church last night, don't you? I would tell Lionel Kerr every Monday morning, you missed it again. Lionel never stepped inside our church.

But I wasn't trying to convert him. I was so excited. You see, there was a joy that was within me, because you see, I'd been at the altar that night.

I had an altar that I got to receive from, that I got to taste of Jesus, and it's an altar that anybody else from on the other world, they had no right, but I had a right, because I was twice bought by the blood of Jesus Christ, born again, filled with the Spirit. I loved Jesus with all of my heart. And where did I learn by theology, and where did I learn to walk with God? Those altar times.

The songs that were sung at that altar were not like the little ditties that are sung in churches now. Take me to the river so I can hop and dance and jump. Dear Lord, what's that all about? No, we came to the altar, and we cried out, I need thee, I need thee.

Oh, I need thee. Oh, bless me now. We sang about the Holy Spirit, songs that were saying, Holy Spirit come, fill me now, fill me now, refresh me again.

We had a long list of songs that we would actually sing to the Holy Spirit, and we would call upon Him. I remember the night that I got the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I don't even think it was a Sunday night.

I think it was a Tuesday night or a Wednesday night. And there was a preacher there, and he had been a boxer, a Canadian boxer, and he had won trophies. I don't even remember his name, doesn't matter.

And he'd retired from boxing and felt a call to preach. So there we were on a Tuesday or Wednesday night, and he preached that night about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And that night, I think there were 14 or 15 of us young people 14 or 15.

I think all of us were guys at that altar. I remember crying out to the Lord, I need you, Lord Jesus. I need to be filled with your Spirit.

I want to be strong for you. And when the Holy Spirit hit me that night, I think I was like a scud missile blasted off of Cape Canaveral. The pastor, Alan Mallory, said to me, I never saw anybody get the baptism like David Forrest.

He said, my knees left the ground for about 15 minutes. He was an evangelist. You know what evangelists do? Their words are like bubble gum.

And so, but he said that what he saw happen to me just absolutely transformed his thoughts. All of us young people, it happened at an altar, the value of the altar. We have an altar.

It's not a place. It's not a physical place. It's a posture.

And I suggest to you that every time we come into this building, our habit is now Sunday mornings at 11. I think of this as an altar. A few weeks ago, I said, this is a gate.

Now it's an altar. We've progressed, I guess. This is an altar that others have no idea of.

You know, we could have people from other churches come in and watch us on a Sunday morning like we did this morning. And they think, these people are all popcorn. They're crackers.

What is this all about? They don't understand us. And that's okay. We're not asking them to.

There's such a beautiful sense of the presence of the Lord at the altar. The altar is not this. The altar is where you sit right there.

It's got to do with the position of the heart. Now we need to sing a song. I want us to sing a song.

And yet Siegfried, I have no idea what we should sing. But you're never without a story. And you're never without a song.

I'm known as the storyteller, but I can't hold a lick to you. Can you play that little fellow there? His name is Roland. I want you to meet Roland.

This is Siegfried. And Roland, you be nice to him, okay? Let's stand. Black ones and white ones.

Oh, let's start it. All to Thee, my blessed Savior. All to Thee I freely give love and trust Thee.

In Your presence daily I surrender all. I surrender all. I surrender all.

All to Thee, blessed Savior, I. We have another moment. Just, not in your imagination, but just in your heart right now, build an altar. And then put yourself on that altar.



Your whole person to just say, everything that I am, all my ambitions, all my hope, all my dreams, and all my failures, we put it all on the altar to You. All on the altar of sacrifice laid. Let's sing this song as we approach an altar within our own hearts.

I surrender all. I surrender all. All to Thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender all.

This evening or tomorrow morning, whatever is your habit, when you open this book and very gently, thoughtfully read over the words and let them sink into your heart, you're at an altar. In your private devotional moment, when you lift your heart and your voice is unto the Lord, you're at an altar. Hebrews 13.

We have an opportunity. We have an altar. Remember the Old Testament priest? If he didn't show up for work, he didn't get to take the harvest of that altar.

He couldn't take flesh home if you didn't show up. So the option is mine and it's yours to show up. Royal priesthood, partake of the altar of your own doing.

Surrender all to Him. Jesus, help us to appropriate these words and these thoughts to each and one of our hearts. Help us, Lord, to approach the altar with sobriety, with sincerity, but help us to approach the altar with a sense of expectancy.

We have an altar that when we visit that altar and spend time with you, there's something rich, wonderful, satisfying that we come away with. Thank you, Lord Jesus.

Amen and amen.