

"THE ALTAR OF SACRIFICE!"

TEXT: Exodus 38:1-7; Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Kings 1:50; 2 Sam. 24:24

INTRO:



The entire design of the tabernacle is one large sermon, not only the building's design but even the furnishings ... and even the types of materials used in making the tabernacle and its furnishings! We've already discovered from the last message that there was but a single entrance to God within the design, the eastern gate. Jesus is that door or gate, the entrance to God. Now that we have entered the proper way, where are we? What is the first thing we come

to once inside? (See picture) God has a very important message for those who are now in the door by what awaits them as the first point of contact!

The first thing to greet us after entering the door is the **ALTAR OF SACRIFICE!** Perhaps for some Christians they would have preferred to find the **TABLE OF SHEWBREAD** where God makes provision for us ... but we find ourselves first at a place of sacrifice!

PROP. SENT: Nothing of real value comes to us without real sacrifice! Those things that do come to us without real sacrifice we don't appreciate or we are indifferent to. A Biblical faith is one that recognizes a priority of sacrifice and the willingness to give rather than to get.

TRANS. SENT: Any faith worth its salt understands the imperative for sacrifice. A sacrificial character is a must for those who approach the presence of God! There was no way to bypass the **ALTAR OF SACRIFICE** on the way into God's presence in the tabernacle!

***Self-preservation is natural ... but self-sacrifice is supernatural!**

I. MATERIALS OF THE ALTAR Exodus 38:1-7

A. The "Stuff!" Ex. 38:1-7

1. **"Acacia" wood** was the basic material of the altar ... this is a very unique wood!
 - a. It is a tree that grows in the desert under severe conditions, one of the hardest trees on earth!
 - b. The wood from this tree is nearly indestructible!
 - c. It is almost completely immune from insects and rot.
 - d. The grain is very gnarled and twisted as well as very hard ... very durable.
2. This wood was chosen for its quality of being nearly indestructible, a shadow of the Christ who is eternal!

3. The wood was then covered with brass or bronze. This material symbolized judgment in the Old Testament.
 - a. Indeed, nearly all the metal used outside the tabernacle itself was made from bronze ... demonstrating that outside the dwelling of God is found judgment!
 - b. The altar by its appearance reminded the believer of God's judgment. It was on this altar that the sacrificial animal was presented for God's judgment to be removed from the believer as he began his journey toward God's presence!
 - c. Thus it was the place of sacrifice! Its ultimate expression found again in Christ who took our judgment and who also was the sacrifice!
4. There were 4 horns on the altar ... used to bind the sacrificial animal to the altar, a horn on each corner of the altar.
5. There was no way to approach the presence of God within the tabernacle and bypass this altar ... it stood as the first thing after entering the courtyard!
 - a. It was a must "stopping" place!
 - b. You did not dare continue toward God without coming first to the place of sacrifice! If you did you would have been considered "impure!"

B. The Symbolism

1. The wood of the altar symbolizes the quality of our sacrifices to God ... it must be of high grade quality, no cheap wood could have survived the constant fires of the altar of sacrifice, neither will "cheap" sacrifices for Christ!
2. The bronze stood for judgment ... the world will judge our Christianity by the way we live sacrificially too ... *a faith that is not worth sacrificing for is not a faith worth living for!*
3. There was no way of avoiding this altar of sacrifice ... you practically ran into it once you entered the only entrance to the courtyard. There is no such faith for a Christian that does not include "sacrifice," it cannot be avoided!
4. Any attempt to bypass this place of sacrifice ended in death!
 - a. Anyone that thinks they can live for God without a need for sacrifice will only find a dead Christianity!
 - b. God requires sacrifice!
5. The order of approach to God cannot be ignored ... this was the first stopping place after entering the gate ... the place of sacrifice!

II. MESSAGE OF THE ALTAR 1 Kings 1:50

A. The Search

1. The approach to God includes this place of sacrifice, any other route that bypasses this altar will not lead to God!
2. Today you will hear much preaching that attempts to draw people into Christianity that promises of all kinds of earthly "goodies" ... preaching a Christianity that expects no sacrifices by the individual is a hollow Christianity!
3. There is too much "shallow" Christianity now in the world ... Christians who only want but do not give!

4. Jesus clearly taught us sacrifice by His own statement, *"I came not into the world to do my own will ... but the will of Him who sent me!"*
5. The search for the real God will always bring us first to the place of sacrifice!
6. *"Sacrificial giving"* is the very character of true Christianity!
 - a. In our lifestyle.
 - b. In our faith.
 - c. In our resources.
 - d. In our heart attitudes.

B. The Service 1 Kings 1:50; 2 Sam. 24:24

1. In the Old Testament if someone needed God's protection he could run to this altar and take hold of the *"HORNS OF THE ALTAR."*
 - a. 1 Kings 1:50 is an example: Adonijah took hold of the horns of the altar for protection. (He lived ... Joab who was not innocent however was killed – 1 Kings 2:28)
 - b. *"Taking hold of the horns of the altar"* symbolized your becoming a willing bound sacrifice ... since the horns were used to bind a sacrifice!
 - c. It literally meant you made yourself the sacrifice on that altar by your own will!
 - d. Thus someone who did this was treated very carefully ... they were examined to be sure they were really innocent of guilt and only then were they dealt with! A judgment was rendered over them only after careful consideration of the facts.
2. **2 Sam. 24:24** -- David wished to build an altar of sacrifice to worship the Lord, he clearly states that he could not accept for "free" the land and the sacrifices from Araunah; he would not offer a sacrifice to God that cost him nothing!!
 - a. Cheap Christianity does not work!
 - b. A commitment to Christ that is without sacrifice is no commitment!
 - c. There are enough worldly calls that promise: *"AT NO COST"* ... this doesn't work in the kingdom of God!

ILLUS: MANY PRODUCTS ADVERTISE AS "NO COST ... NO OBLIGATION" -- KNOWING THAT WE WILL BE ATTRACTED TO THEIR PRODUCTS THIS WAY. WE WANT SOMETHING FOR NOTHING BUT THE COSTS ARE THERE, THEY ARE HIDDEN OR POSTPONED, BUT THEY ARE THERE! DON'T BE FOOLED, ANYONE THAT PREACHES TO YOU A CHRISTIANITY THAT IS WITHOUT COST OR OBLIGATION IS SELLING YOU A FALSE FAITH! – SOURCE UNKNOWN

3. These sacrifices were very real, they were not just the appearances of sacrifice!
4. A dynamic faith is very real; it will not just have the appearance of sacrifices.
5. Our service to God includes frequent sacrifices but the value this gives to our witness is very powerful!
6. Jesus' sacrifice of Himself was the greatest and costliest ... but it also brought to us the greatest and most valuable gift, eternal life! There was no easy cheap way to give the finest gift.
7. Your faith and the quality of your spiritually will only be as good as the sacrifices you make because of it!
 - a. Those whose faith always seems vital and real are those who have

learned the service of sacrifice!

b. There are no good substitutes for this kind of faith!

8. The message of the altar is clear: ***"YOU CAN'T BYPASS THIS PLACE OF SACRIFICE AND EXPECT TO FIND YOURSELF IN GOD'S PRESENCE!"***

III. MANIFESTATION OF THE ALTAR Rom. 12:1-2

A. **The Sacrifice** Rom. 12:1

1. Paul spells it out clearly in the New Testament, ***"...offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God..."*** 12:1
 - a. Paul speaks out clearly what is symbolized by the altar of sacrifice ... we are to be a living sacrifice!
 - b. One difference however, the Old Testament sacrifices were killed ... since Christ paid the price of death we do no need to physically die anymore, thus we are to be "living" sacrifices!
 - c. One problem with this, unlike a dead sacrifice living ones tend to want to crawl off the altar ... especially when they feel the heat!
 - d. This is when we need to take hold of the horns of the altar ... to keep from leaving the altar of sacrifice! We too must be bound to the altar, instead of with ropes we need to be connected by God's love for others!
2. Notice that Paul says that ***"this is our spiritual act of worship."*** 12:1b
 - a. The basis of spirituality is in sacrifice ... even in worship!
 - b. ***Too many of us think of a "good" worship service as coming from what we got OUT of the service! But in truth a good worship service happens from what we PUT INTO the service!***
 - c. No wonder the Bible uses the term; ***"A SACRIFICE OF PRAISE!"***
 - d. A dynamic worship service is not so much what I get ... as much as what I give!
 - e. "Sacrifices:
 - (1. Of praise.
 - (2. Of our material resources ... tithes & offerings.
 - (3. Of time.
 - (4. Of talents.
3. The goal therefore is not to GAIN ... but to GIVE!
 - a. Ironically however when we give we do gain!
 - b. And the sweetest gains come from giving!

B. **The Secret!** 12:2

1. How do I find God's will? This is a question that most Christians ask at some point, Paul tells us the secret here on how you can know and do the will of God!
 - a. The world preaches "GIVE ME" ... we are not to be conformed to the world's mentality.
 - b. We are to be transformed in our minds from "GIVE ME" to "I GIVE ME" and when we transform our thinking to GIVING -- to SACRIFICE we will discover in the process that we will DEMONSTRATE GOD'S WILL!
2. In fact we will ***"TEST AND APPROVE HIS PERFECT WILL!"***
3. Too many Christians misunderstand God's will ... they think of it in terms of "What do I do now?" ... or "What does God want me to do exactly?"
 - a. ***The will of God is an attitude and when this is right the choices we***

make will be right ... thus we will always do the Will of God!

- b. **The Will of God is found in a basic quality ... that of sacrifice! When we really give of ourselves we quite literally *"TEST AND APPROVE"* what God's will is everyday ... and in every way!**
- c. **Thus His perfect will plays itself out in our everyday life and we will LIVE IN His will as we walk!**
- d. **The right heart will make the right choices ... Jesus ALWAYS did the Will of His father AND He always considered Himself as a sacrifice!**
4. **We can't miss God's best in our lives if we indeed have approached God by way of the altar of sacrifice!**
5. **Those that begin with the altar of sacrifice end up in the very presence of God! Those who bypass this altar of sacrifice bypass the highest quality of faith and they will miss out on the real presence of God in their lives!**
6. **The secret to dynamic faith and knowing the presence of God in a powerful way is via the altar of sacrifice! HAVE YOU BEEN THERE YET?**

CONCLUSION: Once through the door (Jesus Christ), the first stop for a believer on their way into fellowship with God was the altar of sacrifice! Too many Christians want to bypass the altar of sacrifice and find the table of showbread first, the place of provisions. We are not allowed to bypass the place of sacrifice first!