

The Importance Of Having A Personal Altar

Definition of an Altar:

Altars are places of sacrifice, worship, covenant, divine encounter, and consecration. Altars represent moments where people express their devotion, thanksgiving, or seek forgiveness from God. They often mark important events where God intervenes in the lives of individuals or nations.

A place of sacrifice: Altars are used for sacrifices, symbolizing atonement for sin and thanksgiving. In the Old Testament, sacrifices offered at altars represent purification and point toward Christ's ultimate sacrifice.

A place of worship: Altars are physical places where people honor and worship God. It shows surrender and submission, acknowledging God's power and goodness.

A place of covenant: Many altars are built in response to God making or reaffirming a covenant. Examples include Abraham's altars, where God promises to bless his descendants. They are symbols of God's promises and human commitment.

A place of encounter: Altars mark places of divine revelation, where God reveals Himself to His people. For example, Jacob built an altar at Bethel after his vision of the ladder reaching heaven. These are sacred spaces that recall God's intervention.

A place of consecration: Building an altar is a way to dedicate a moment or place to God. It symbolizes the setting apart of something as holy. Noah's altar after the flood is a good example of thanksgiving and dedication to God for His provision.

A symbol of communion with God: Altars also represent fellowship, where people seek God's presence. Peace offerings, for example, signify reconciliation and community with God.

God honors altars when they are built with the right heart and purpose. He accepts sacrifices offered on altars, showing His forgiveness and blessing. For instance, when Noah built an altar after the flood, God responded with a covenant not to flood the earth again. Elijah's altar on Mount Carmel, when fire came from heaven, is another example of God honoring a true act of worship and faith.

God also reveals Himself at altars, manifesting His presence. At Solomon's temple dedication, God sent fire to consume the offerings, showing His approval and filling the temple with His glory.

Altars are sometimes built in repentance. When David built an altar to stop a plague, God accepted his offering and stopped the plague. These are moments where God's mercy is shown in response to sincere acts of devotion.

In the New Testament, the concept of the altar is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. His death on the cross is the ultimate sacrifice, the final altar where God's judgment and mercy meet. Believers no longer need to offer physical sacrifices; instead, they offer their lives as "living sacrifices" to God. Christ's sacrifice brings forgiveness, access to God, and eternal fellowship with Him.

Overall, altars symbolize a meeting point between humanity and God, where worship, sacrifice, and covenant are made. They are deeply honored by God when approached with sincerity and faith, and in the New Testament, they point to Christ's perfect work on the cross.

Every earthly altar points to the ultimate altar of Christ's sacrifice. When we return to the altar, we're not returning to a place of condemnation, but to a place of grace, mercy, and redemption through Jesus.

- I. **Biblical Altars to Review**
 - A. **Cain and Abel** Genesis 4:3-4
 - B. **Noah's Altar** Genesis 8:15-22
 - C. **Abraham's Altars** Genesis 12:7,8; 13:18;22:9
 - D. **Isaac's Altar** Genesis 26:25
 - E. **Jacob's Altars** Genesis 28:10-22, 33:20;35:1,7
 - F. **Moses** Exodus 17:15; 24:4
 - G. **Gideon's Altar** Judges 6:24
 - H. **Solomon's Altar at the Temple** 2 Chronicles 7:1-3
 - I. **Elijah** 1 Kings 18:30-38
- II. *The Ultimate Altar*
 - A. *The Cross of Christ* Hebrews 9:11-15; 13:10-12
 - B. *The Sacrifice* Romans 12:1
- III. *The Altars in Heaven* Revelation 6:9-11; 8:3-4

How God Honor Altars

1. By Accepting Sacrifices

- Throughout the Old Testament, when sacrifices were offered on altars in obedience to God's commands, He accepted them as a pleasing aroma (Leviticus 1:9). This acceptance of sacrifice symbolized God's forgiveness, blessing, and communion with the offerer. For example, when Noah offered sacrifices after the flood, God made a covenant never to flood the earth again (Genesis 8:21).
- **Honoring Example:** God honored Elijah's altar on Mount Carmel by sending fire from heaven to consume the offering, demonstrating His power and truth over Baal (1 Kings 18:38).

2. By Making Covenants and Promises

- Many altars were built to commemorate God's promises, such as Abraham's altars at Shechem and Bethel (Genesis 12:7-8). God honors these altars by keeping His promises and reaffirming His covenant with those who build them.

- **Honoring Example:** In Genesis 22, when Abraham built an altar to sacrifice Isaac, God provided a ram as a substitute, affirming His covenant with Abraham and promising to bless his descendants.

3. By Manifesting His Presence

- God often reveals Himself at altars, powerfully manifesting His presence. For example, after Solomon prayed and offered sacrifices at Solomon's temple dedication, fire came down from heaven to consume the offerings, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple (2 Chronicles 7:1).
- **Honoring Example:** God appeared to Jacob at Bethel, where Jacob built an altar to commemorate that place of divine encounter (Genesis 35:7).

4. By Stopping Judgment

- In some instances, altars are built as part of repentance, and God responds by stopping judgment or sending deliverance. For example, after David built an altar on the threshing floor of Araunah to stop a plague, God answered by halting the plague (2 Samuel 24:25).
- **Honoring Example:** Gideon built an altar after God's angel called him to deliver Israel from Midian, and God confirmed His promise of victory with a miraculous sign (Judges 6:24).

Conclusion:

- *Altars in the Bible have always been places where God met with His people, where sacrifices were made, covenants were sealed, and lives were changed.*
- *From the earliest altar Noah built after the flood to the ultimate altar of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, altars symbolize surrender, worship, and covenant.*
- *Today, we don't need physical altars, but our hearts are now the altar where we meet with God, offer our lives, and experience His transforming power. Let's continually come before God's altar with gratitude, offering our whole selves in worship and surrender.*