

THE ALTAR #1

THE ALTAR-A PLACE TO MEET WITH GOD

1Ki 18 ¹ And it came to pass *after* many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth. ² And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And *there was* a sore famine in Samaria.

¹⁷ And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, *Art* thou he that troubleth Israel? ¹⁸ And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.

²¹ And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD *be* God, follow him: but if Baal, *then* follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

³⁰ And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And **he repaired the altar of the LORD *that was broken down***. ³¹ And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: KJV

Israel has endured a 3 year drought. There has been no rain. God had a reason for the drought. Israel had turned their back on God. We shall study this chapter in Israel's history to learn how to get out of a drought. It all started with an altar.

I. THE REASON FOR AN ALTAR

A. Thanksgiving

Noah built an altar in Gen. 8 20 to thank God for his sparing mankind and for the future.

B. To call upon the name of the Lord

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob- Gen. 12:7,8

C. As a memorial- to remember what God has done.

Moses- Exo 17:15

D. To deal with sin and intercession for people.

In the tabernacle and temple a **brazen altar** was there do bring **judgment on sin**. Another altar once getting past the sin issue was for the offering of incense (praise and worship) on it.

If we could summarize all the above, the purpose for the altar was **to establish and keep a relationship with God.**

II. THE RUIN OF THIS ALTER

V-30... the altar of the LORD *that was broken down*

A. The people had allowed other God's to be worshipped.

They were worshipping **Baal. V-21**

Idolatry is connected to witchcraft.

Rev. 9²⁰ But the people who did not die in these plagues still refused to repent of their evil deeds and turn to God. They continued to worship demons and idols made of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood—idols that can neither see nor hear nor walk!²¹ And they did not repent of their murders or their witchcraft or their sexual immorality or their thefts. **NLT**

1Co. 10¹⁹ What am I trying to say? Am I saying that food offered to idols has some significance, or that idols are real gods?²⁰ No, not at all. I am saying that these sacrifices are offered to demons, not to God. And I don't want you to

participate with demons. ²¹ You cannot drink from the cup of the Lord and from the cup of demons, too. You cannot eat at the Lord's Table and at the table of demons, too. **NLT**

They had coexisted with their enemies. God warned them of marrying outside of the faith. He said the daughters would take their husbands into idolatry. It happened.

B. The altar was broken down because of neglect.

Other people can look at your altar and tell that you have been lax in your pursuit of God.

Getting away from God is a gradual process. It is amazing how far we can drift away by just neglecting going after God.

C. The altar was broken down because no time was given to it.

How we spend our personal time is a reflection of what is priority with us. It is in our schedule today to spend time with God? Do you know where you are going to read in your Bible in the morning? Do you meditate on the Lord throughout the day?

This is where we are at in America right now.

The greatest structure that we can build in America is not to rebuild the world trade center, It's not in New York. It's in every city, and in every church and in every home. It's the structure called the altar.

It wasn't torn down by a terrorist attack, There is no terrorist that could destroy the altar, It was torn down through neglect, and decay, and rejection, in favor of a more comfortable and less painful and humiliating way,.

Only humble people can pray.

Only weak people can pray.

Only Poor people can pray.
Only Helpless people can pray.
Only needy people can pray.

The Greatest sin of America is pride.
It's not a symbol of national pride that we need in America today, It's a symbol of national humility and total dependence upon God

III. THE REPAIR OF THE ALTAR.

V-30... And he repaired the altar of the LORD *that was broken down*

Why did Elijah have the people to come near him?

A. To see how to revive the faith.

He wanted them to see how to revive the faith and worship of their fathers' God.

He takes them back to the beginning of blessing. It started when Jacob wrestled with God and was marked for life!
The blessings started with God.

B. He wanted to remind them of what happened at this altar previously.

What had really happened here? The last time in the bible that the altar was built was when Saul built an altar to himself.

Carmel- Literally as the LXX. render [,] **a hand**; probably because the trophy or **monument of victory was in the shape of a large hand, the emblem of power, erected on a pillar**. These memorial pillars were anciently much in use;

and the figure of a hand, by its emblematical meaning, was well adapted to preserve the remembrance of a victory. ¹

When Saul left there he went to Gilgal. It is here that he will lose the kingdom. He offered allowed Agag and the best of the flocks to live. He had directly disobeyed God's instruction.

It is in **1Sameul 15** ²³ For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from *being* king. KJV

The altar is not for PRIDE, but for God.

C. He wanted them to rediscover their first love.

Thou shalt have no others Gods before me.

What is it like when we lose your first love?

1. When my delight in the Lord is no longer as great as my delight in someone else, I have lost my first love.
2. When my soul does not long for times of rich fellowship in God's Word or in prayer, I have lost my first love.
3. When my thoughts during leisure moments do not reflect upon the Lord, I have lost my first love.
4. When I claim to be "only human" and easily give in to those things I know displease the Lord, I have lost my first love.

¹ *The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge : Five Hundred Thousand Scripture References and Parallel Passages.* Oak Harbor : Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995, S. 1 Sa 15:12

5. When I do not willingly and cheerfully give to God's work or to the needs of others, I have lost my first love.
6. When I cease to treat every Christian brother as I would the Lord, I have lost my first love.
7. When I view the commands of Christ as restrictions to my happiness rather than expressions of His love, I have lost my first love.
8. When I inwardly strive for the acclaim of this world rather than the approval of the Lord, I have lost my first love.
9. When I fail to make Christ or His words known because I fear rejection, I have lost my first love.
10. When I refuse to give up an activity which I know is offending a weaker brother, I have lost my first love.
11. When I become complacent to sinful conditions around me, I have lost my first love.
12. When I am unable to forgive another for offending me, I have lost my first love.

D. He wanted the people to see a restored Israel.

They were not intended to be divided, as they were now, but to be one nation. He is reminding them of their unity in covenant. God sees them as whole not fragmented.

He repaired this altar with *twelve stones, according to the number of the twelve tribes*, v. 31. Though ten of the tribes had revolted to Baal, he would look upon them as belonging to God still, by virtue of the ancient covenant with their fathers:

The covenant of God with Abraham is being kept.
The covenant of the N.T. church will be kept. His promise is not to a fragmented part of the church but to the whole.

Why not believe that God wants to restore His entire church instead of just a few. All it takes for the fire to fall is for one person to understand that God wants to bless the whole church!

Did only some of Israel get manna, shoes, clothes, quail, and cloud by day and night? No, God's blessing was for all!

What does our altar look like? Is it ablaze with the fire of God? Are we frequenting that place of intimacy with God? Let's rebuild the altar.