

Sermon Series Notes

REDEMPTION

A STUDY IN EZRA



"Building An Altar To The Lord" (Ezra 2:1-3:6)

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I. THE TEXT

2:62 God is a record keeper

* All the names here; Malachi 3:16; Num.21:14 the Book of the Wars of the LORD; Rev.20:15 If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

* How to know if my name is written in the book of life?

- The Word (narrow path)
- Witness of the Spirit (Rom.8:16)
- Works (James 2:17-18)

2:68-69 When God desires to do a new work, he needs people willing to give. Refer back to 1:5-6.

II. THE LESSON: THE PRIORITY OF AN ALTAR TO THE LORD

A. The Altar Was The Priority

* See Gen.8:19-20; 12:7-8; 13:3-4 (after going to Egypt); 13:18; 26:24-25; 35:6-7; Ex.17:15; 24:4-5; Joshua 8:30; Judges 6:22-24; I Samuel 7:15-17; II Sam.24:25.

* Mentioned some 400 times in the Bible

* What is an altar?

- A place of worship where I offer something to God. A place where God offers something to/for me. A place that keeps God as the main focus of my life.

* The altar was to be ready and available around the clock (Lev.6:12-13).

B. What Does A New Testament Altar Look Like?

* It is not limited by geography

- John 4: 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem. 21 Jesus declared, "Believe me,

woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem 23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

* It involves NT sacrifices

- Heb.13: 15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise--the fruit of lips that confess his name.

16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Consider more than a morning sacrifice

- See OT notes on burnt, fellowship, grain, sin, & peace offerings.

* Though not limited by geography, we should find a regular place for a personal altar.

- Mark 1: 35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

- Luke 5: 16 But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

- The greatest transactions of a man's life are made, not in a church, but behind closed doors.

- In order to grow in grace, we must be much alone. It is not in society that the soul grows most vigorously. In one quiet hour of prayer it will often make more progress than in days of company with others. It is in the desert that the dew falls freshest and the air is purest.

- A personal altar will make God very personal in one's life. Then they learn to relate to God, hear from God directly, and not through others

C. What Does A Personal Altar Look Like?

* Thanksgiving/Praise (Ps.100:4)

* Prayer

- Rev.8: 3 Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne.

4 The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand.

- The Lord's Prayer

- Learning to listen in prayer (Read "The Hidden Heart Attack Trigger").

* The Word

- Deut.27:2-8; the Word was to be connected to the altar

- Matt.4: 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

- Bible reading plan

- The importance of response (James 1:22)

* A Journal?

- Show some of my journals?

* Physical Expression

- Psalm 95: 6 Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;
7 for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.
- My physical expression in worship began at Peppertree Village
- Heb.11: 21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.
- Psalm 63: 4 I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.
- Psalm 119: 48 I lift up my hands to your commands, which I love, and I meditate on your decrees.
- Psalm 134: 2 Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the LORD.
- I Tim.2: 8 I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.

D. Building A Family Altar

* The men I have talked to over the years who have never had a family altar.

* Deut.6: 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.
7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

* Deut.11: 18 Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.
19 Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.
20 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates,
21 so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the LORD swore to give your forefathers

* Describe the Hodges family altar; my testimony of Wendy starting the family altar
Hindrances that could keep one from building an altar to the Lord

E. Hindrances To Building An Altar To The Lord

1. Caught in the routine of life
- These People had been living a fairly comfortable, routine life in Babylon for 70 years!
2. An impure heart
- Jer.29:13; Prov.2:1ff; Mark 12:28-31/Deut.6:5; no other gods
3. An uncircumcised heart
- Luke 10:38-42; You can have a ministry for the Lord but not a personal altar to the Lord.
- Must cut away the good but unnecessary things that crowd out God;
Priorities must be evaluated.

4. No discipline

5. The fear of the peoples around you (3:3)