

The Four Altars

- Altars in the Bible signify places of worship and sacrifice, and the lives of Bible characters in the Old Testament are often marked by the altars they made.
- Altars can teach us much about our worship today, because worship is not just an ACT, it is a LIFESTYLE!
- Worship is the means by which I enter the presence of God, but it is also the means by which I welcome God to enter into the affairs of my life, my family, my church, my city and my world.
- **Psalm 22:3 (KJV)** But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.
- **Psalm 22:3 (NKJV)** But You are holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel.
- **Psalm 22:3 (Japanese literal translation)** The praise of Israel builds a big chair for God to sit on.
- My worship determines the dimensions of my forward advancement along the pathway of discipleship – I will advance no further than my worship (lifestyle) grows!
- **We have an unalterable need for an altar!**
- God's Word provides four examples of this in the life of Abraham:

The Altar of Salvation

Genesis 12:6-7 ⁶And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. ⁷And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

- When Abraham first received his promise from God, “the Canaanite was then in the land.” The flesh still ruled! Abram, a young man from an idolatrous culture, had to step out on faith and obey a God he had never seen! God honored him, even though there were adversaries!
- Faith is stepping out on nothing and landing on something!
- Our salvation begins with faith, because we can’t receive anything from God except by faith!
- **Hebrews 11:6** But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.
- **Hebrews 11:1** Now faith is the substance (FOUNDATION) of things hoped for, the evidence (PROOF) of things not seen.

The Altar of Determination

Genesis 13:3-4 ³And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; ⁴Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

- After Abraham had his remarkable experience with God at his first altar, he made a trip to Egypt (a type of the world). Why? We’re not told, but we do know that it ended in disaster – he almost lost his wife there to Pharaoh’s harem! He also found out how fearful and weak he was on his own.
- Egypt was not part of the territory God intended for Abraham! When he finally determined to come back to his “promised land,” he returned to “the place where his tent had been at the beginning” and he put down his stakes. This was his altar of NO RETURN!

- This is an altar every Christian must come to at some point. Our arrival there doesn't mean there will never again be trials, tests or stumbling. But once the stake is driven, once the altar of determination is constructed, you will never again return to the world – NO MATTER WHAT!
- Those who refuse to build this second altar inevitably end up backsliding away from their first love!
- IT'S ALL IN YOUR DETERMINATION! If your human will was strong enough to resist God before you got saved, it is certainly strong enough to resist the devil now that you are filled with God's Spirit!
- I have decided to follow Jesus!
The cross before me, the world behind me!
Though none go with me, still I will follow!
Take this whole world, but give me Jesus!
- **Hebrews 11:15-16** ¹⁵And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. ¹⁶But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.
- Build your altars of no return! In your beliefs! In your convictions! In your marriage! In your home! In your life mission!

The Altar of Occupation

Genesis 13:17-18 ¹⁷Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee. ¹⁸Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.

- Abraham had been given the promise that the land would be his, but then the Lord called him to actually pace it off – TO MEASURE OUT THE DIMENSIONS OF GOD'S PROMISE!

- It is one thing to have a PROMISE and quite another thing to have a POSSESSION! And the only way to get from one to the other is to PURSUE!
- When Joshua prepared to enter his promised land the Lord told him that he could have whatever he would FIGHT for!
- **Joshua 1:3** Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.
- The word “tread” in this verse is “barak,” which means “take up your weapons and fight for it!”

The Altar of Dedication

Genesis 22:9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

- The final altar in the life of Abraham was the “altar of the unexpected,” where God did something that seemed totally against the promise He had made. In Abraham’s mind, things were moving backwards – BUT HE STILL TRUSTED GOD!
- **Daniel 3:17-18** ¹⁷If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. ¹⁸But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.
- This is often the most puzzling part of God’s work in us ... to apparently “kill” His own promise! But with God, there is always a resurrection! And having an altar that says “no matter what” is the secret of living for God with JOY!

NOW I KNOW

He left his father's land, and boyhood dreams were in the past
He held his son, God's promise, what more would his Friend ask?
"To yonder's mountain, Abram, take the fire and take the wood"
So, trusting still, they climbed the hill, knowing that what came would come
for good.

And when the altar was all finished and the wood was all in place
He looked with love and sadness into his young son's face
"God has asked this of me, there's no less that I can do,
I have withheld nothing – I never dreamed He'd ask for you."

And then the wind blew softly, God leaned close and whispered low
"If I ever wondered how you loved Me, now I know."

I had left this world behind me and my dreams were in the past
But I held a few choice treasures – what more would my Friend ask?
"Go to yonder's mountain, take the fire and take the wood"
So, trusting still, I climbed the hill, knowing that what came would come for
good.

When my altar was all finished and the wood was all in place
I looked with fear and trembling into ... my own face!
"God, what are You asking? There's no less that I will do.
I'm yours for whatever – all I have belongs to You."

And then the wind blew softly, and my Best Friend whispered low
"If I ever wondered how you loved Me, now I know."

The mansions were all finished and the gold was all in place
I looked in awe and wonder into the Lamb's dear face
And then I cast my crown before Him and I bowed myself down low
If I had ever wondered how He loved me ... now I know.

IS YOUR ALL ON THE ALTAR?

You have longed for sweet peace, and for faith to increase,

And have earnestly, fervently prayed;
But you cannot have rest or be perfectly blest,
Until all on the altar is laid.

Would you walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,
And have peace and contentment always;
You must do His sweet will to be free from all ill,
On the altar your all you must lay.

Oh, we never can know what the Lord will bestow
Of the blessings for which we have prayed,
Till our body and soul He doth fully control,
And our all on the altar is laid.

Who can tell all the love He will send from above,
And how happy our hearts will be made,
Of the fellowship sweet we shall share at His feet,
When our all on the altar is laid.

Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid?
Your heart, does the Spirit control?
You can only be blest and have peace and sweet rest,
As you yield Him your body and soul.