



Two Men At An Altar

1 Kings 1:50-53 50 And Adonijah feared because of Solomon, and arose, and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar. 51 And it was told Solomon, saying, Behold, Adonijah feareth king Solomon: for, lo, he hath caught hold on the horns of the altar, saying, Let king Solomon swear unto me to day that he will not slay his servant with the sword. 52 And Solomon said, If he will shew himself a worthy man, there shall not an hair of him fall to the earth: but if wickedness shall be found in him, he shall die. 53 So king Solomon sent, and they brought him down from the altar. And he came and bowed himself to king Solomon: and Solomon said unto him, Go to thine house.

1 Kings 2:28-31 28 Then tidings came to Joab: for Joab had turned after Adonijah, though he turned not after Absalom. And Joab fled unto the tabernacle of the LORD, and caught hold on the horns of the altar. 29 And it was told king Solomon that Joab was fled unto the tabernacle of the LORD; and, behold, he is by the altar. Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, Go, fall upon him. 30 And Benaiah came to the tabernacle of the LORD, and said unto him, Thus saith the king, Come forth. And he said, Nay; but I will die here. And Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me. 31 And the king said unto him, Do as he hath said, and fall upon him, and bury him; that thou mayest take away the innocent blood, which Joab shed, from me, and from the house of my father.

THESE ARE THE ONLY TWO SCRIPTURAL INCIDENTS INVOLVING THE ANCIENT JEWISH LAW OF SANCTUARY. CUSTOMS REGARDING THIS LAW AND THE ALTAR ARE DETAILED BELOW:

1. GOD ORDAINED THAT THE BRASEN ALTAR SHOULD HAVE FOUR HORNS.

Exodus 27:1-2 1 And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof shall be three cubits. 2 And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof: his horns shall be of the same: and thou shalt overlay it with brass.

- The altar's dimensions were 7.5 feet by 7.5 feet by 4.5 feet high.
- Horns, the chief source of attack and defense for animals that have them, are figurative of power.

Psalms 18:1-3 1 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, the servant of the LORD, who spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: And he said, I will love thee, O LORD, my strength. 2 The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. 3 I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

2. THESE HORNS WERE THE PLACE WHERE THE BLOOD WAS APPLIED.

Leviticus 4:34 34 And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and put it upon the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and shall pour out all the blood thereof at the bottom of the altar:

The sacrifice was also bound to the horns of the altar.

Psalms 118:27 27 God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.

- This shows in type that the blood (Christ's sacrifice) is our only source of power for salvation.
- This thought is encompassed in the prophecy of Zacharias after his son John the Baptist was born.

Luke 1:68-69 68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, 69 And hath raised up

an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;

3. THE FIRE ON THE BRASEN ALTAR WAS NEVER ALLOWED TO GO OUT.

Leviticus 6:13 13 The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out.

This shows in type that the sacrifice (the blood) must be offered continually.

1 John 1:7 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

4. A CRIMINAL, IF HIS CRIME WAS ACCIDENTAL, COULD FLEE TO THE SANCTUARY AND HOLD ON TO THE HORNS OF THE ALTAR FOR SAFETY.

Exodus 21:13-14 13 And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee. 14 But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.

Until the late 1960's, England had a similar law: A man who had committed a crime could go into a church and claim sanctuary; the law could not touch him as long as he remained in God's house.

THE STORY IN FIRST KINGS:

David is now old and feeble, almost at the time of his death; Adonijah (his son) and Joab (his nephew) plot to set themselves up as the next rulers of the kingdom.

- **ADONIJAH:** a son of David, heir to the throne after the deaths of Ammon and Absalom
he had been set aside in favor of Solomon
he claimed the throne as David lay on his deathbed
Solomon's mother Bathsheba and the prophet Nathan defeated his plot
Solomon was crowned king and Adonijah fled to the altar
- **JOAB:** a nephew of David (son of his sister Zeruah) and captain of David's army
he was a deceitful and totally ruthless man
in battle with Abner, Joab's brother Asahel was killed
later in peace time Joab deceptively killed Abner by driving a dagger under his rib
he was the one who secured the death of Uriah the Hittite for King David
he was the one who killed Absalom in a brutal way, against King David's orders
David offered command of his army to Amasa (Absalom's supporter) to pacify him
this offended Joab so he treacherously killed Amasa by driving a dagger under his rib
Joab supported Adonijah in his bid for the throne
when he heard of the failure of their plot, he fled to the altar also

NOTICE THE DIFFERENCE! Adonijah is spared, but Joab is killed right in the Tabernacle.

WHY? Joab's crimes of murder were premeditated; this negated the Law of Sanctuary.

There is a **LEGAL** difference between these two men, but there is also a **SPIRITUAL** difference!

God sees the heart, and with foreknowledge of the situation, directs circumstances for our example.

1 Corinthians 10:11 11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

EXAMPLE: Cain and Abel in Genesis 4

Hebrews 11:4 4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

“The narrative shows Abel lovingly and trustfully reaching out toward God with substitute blood, in order to be in covenant oneness with God; while Cain merely proffers a gift from his earthly possessions. Abel so trusts God that he gives himself to him. Cain defers to God sufficiently to make a present to him. The one shows unbounded faith; the other shows a measure of affectionate reverence.” (THE BLOOD COVENANT, by Rev. H.C. Trumbull, page 211)

THERE IS A SIMILAR DIFFERENCE IN ATTITUDE BETWEEN ADONIJAH AND JOAB!

- Joab is found merely BY the altar, and he DIES there!
- Adonijah is found ON the altar, and he is SAVED there!

IT IS POSSIBLE TO DIE WITHIN SIGHT OF THE ALTAR!

To be on the altar would mean enduring the blood, the remains of the sacrifices, and most of all the continual heat from the coals ... **but it was worth it to be saved!**

- MY FLESH REBELS AGAINST THE ALTAR!
- Adonijah had the spirit which said, “My hope is built on nothing less ...”

Romans 12:1 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Paul is saying, “I beg you brethren, STAY ON THE ALTAR!” Be a LIVING SACRIFICE!

ILLUSTRATION: William Parent’s dedication prayer for Emily Rae in 1988 ... “Today, we place this child upon the altar, and we promise that we will never take her off.”