



## The Value Of Your Altars

**Genesis 13:1-5 KJV** And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. [2] And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. [3] And 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; [4] Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD. [5] And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents.

### I. INTRODUCTION—Van Gogh

More than anything, Vince wanted to be an evangelist. He was only twenty-five, a century ago, and he wanted to devote himself to his fellow man and the Word of God. It was this passion that brought young Vince, in the spring of 1879, to the coal fields of southern Belgium. It was there in a little mining town, that Vince outlined the rest of his life on the back of an old, faded, and wrinkled envelope.

Perhaps it was the young minister's total selflessness that first captured the respect of the crusty old miners in the tiny Borinage community. In a mine disaster, scores of villagers were injured and no one fought harder to save them than Vince. Day and night, he nursed the wounded, fed the hungry, and clothed the poor. There were times that he even scraped the slag heaps to give his small church fuel to warm the congregation. After the rubble was cleared and the dead were buried and the sick were made well, the townspeople turned to the Dutchman and adopted him as their spiritual leader.

Every Sunday they overflowed Vince's services to hear this young unassuming man preach passionately the literal Word of God. He would dress in an old soldier's coat and trousers that were made of sacking. He took his meager salary and gave it to the needy and continued to preach. Then came a disagreement with a church official and young Vince was dismissed from the pastorate of the small church. He was devastated. The career that meant everything to him had been reduced to nothing in just a matter of minutes. There were long weeks of despair that followed. He seemingly could not shake the depression of the event that had shaken his entire being. He lost his allegiance to his God. He lost his devotion to the Word of God and soon was just drifting through life.

One afternoon, Vince noticed an old miner, who was bending beneath the enormous weight of a full sack of coal. In that instant, the fire flamed in Vince, although it would prove to be ruining to his old desire to be an evangelist. In that instance, Vince recognized the desperation and burdens of these people and understood that it would be shared by his own soul. Fumbling through his pockets, the Dutchman pulled out an old tattered envelope, and then a pencil. He began to work. Not on a sermon seed, nor an outline, nor did he jot a Scripture down, he began to sketch. The weary figure on the paper was crude at best, but he labored over and over until he finally completed the project.

Beginning that day, Vince was to capture for the world the torment, triumph, and dignity of the people that he lived with. There was now a new passion, although an improper one. There was a new found job, sadly a lost ministry. The monumental ministry was never born because the preacher became an artist. You know him as Vincent Van Gogh . . . a man of improper priorities.

?I am preaching about, The Value of Your Altars. They have the ability to define you and to set you apart and pull you into spiritual greatness if you will just allow them to do so.

- **John Knox** shook Scotland with his prayers but he was a man who knew his priorities.
- **Jonathan Edwards** became the father of the Great Awakening because he knew his purpose.
- **Charles Finney** brought revival during the Civil War because he was focused.

[· John Wesley](#) preached to the miners in the Virginian coal mines with great success because of commitment.

?Could it be that Van Gogh might have been the key to revival in Holland?

-We will never know because he stumbled into a hidden talent that was much less significant than reaching men for the cause of Christ. A distraction that hindered his purpose.

?The Bible, the most brilliant Book that man has access to often uses methods of comparison to illustrate spiritual principles. One of the ways that this is accomplished is to take two characters in a similar setting and similar time reference and show the ways of God.

[· Cain and Abel](#)

[· Moses and Aaron](#)

[· Samuel and Saul](#)

[· David and Solomon](#)

[· Abraham and Lot](#)

?A long look at the lives of Abraham and Lot gives men an understanding in the importance of "Pitching His Tents and Building His Altars." (Genesis 12:8)

?There have always been men who walked with God and there have always been men who walked with men.

[· David walked with God but Joab walked with David.](#)

[· Paul walked with God but Demas walked with Paul.](#)

[· Abraham walked with God but Lot walked with Abraham.](#)

## II. ABRAHAM, THE BUILDER OF ALTARS

### A. The Significance of Your Altar

?The altars in our lives are not to be haphazard. They are to be carefully constructed. The altars are not built merely in places of crisis and stress but the altar is to be daily place that we go to allow God to shape us to reach our world.

?The altar was the first thing that met the priest on his way to the Holy of Holies in the old Tabernacle. The altar was the centerpiece of the Temple that Solomon constructed. The altar is not only a place of sacrifice but it is also a place of judgment. The altar is a place of worship and devotion but it also is a place of blessing.

### B. Abraham's Altars

?There are five great altars in the life of Abraham. They ranged throughout all of his years. There were certain altars that he went to more often than others. There is one altar that he went to just once but it was enough for God to see what kind of man that Abraham was.

#### 1. Shechem—Genesis 12:5-7

**Genesis 12:5-7 KJV** And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.[\[6\]](#) And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite *was* then in the land. [\[7\]](#) And 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.

?Shechem was the first altar of Abraham. He built his altar soon after his calling of God to leave Ur of the Chaldees. First altars are always important to men. They carry the memory of those first moments that God began to stir the heart and gently voice His will for our lives.

?The meaning of the name, Shechem, is shoulder. Biblically, when we began to study the significance and type of shoulder, we understand that the shoulder is meant for bearing burdens.

**Isaiah 10:27 KJV** And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.

?Abraham learned first that his altar was to be a place where he left his burdens. What burdens do you have? It is a burden of sin, of guilt, even failure. Whatever your burden may be, the best place to leave it is at the altar.

## 2. Bethel's Two Altars—Genesis 12:7?8; 13:3?4

**Genesis 12:7-8 KJV** And 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. [8] And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, *having* Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.

**Genesis 13:3-4 KJV** And 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; [4] Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called upon the name of the LORD.

?Abraham would build two altars at Bethel during his lifetime.

- The first one was built after God had extended a covenant to Abraham.
- He came the second time to Bethel after his failure in the land of Egypt.
- He came to Bethel after a famine.
- He came to Bethel after lying to Pharaoh about the identity of Sarah.
- He came to Bethel blessed with cattle, silver, and gold.

-But regardless of a man's social position in life, he must have an altar.

?The name Bethel means house of God. The house of God is the altar that Abraham came to most. Our greatest altars are in the house of God. The altars in the house of God are those of repentance, of consecration, of blessing, and of spiritual direction.

## 3. Hebron—Genesis 13:18

**Genesis 13:18 KJV** Then 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.

?After Abraham had separated himself from Lot and his herdsmen, Abraham built another altar. There are times when our lives become cluttered with the Lots who rob us of our spiritual blessings and directions. When the time of separation finally does come, when all of the distractions have been discarded, we need to build an altar.

?Once that Abraham had gotten rid of Lot, now the full will of God was about to begin in the life of Abraham. Did that mean that all of his troubles would disappear? Not from any stretch of the imagination but Abraham was moving toward the place that God could use him.

?By the way, the meaning of the name of Hebron is league, confederacy, or alliance. Once all of the clutter gets out of our lives, God will be able to establish the partnership that we long for.

?But there are those who trudge through life. . .

- Hauling Lots.
- Coaxing Lots.
- Pushing Lots.
- Persuading Lots.
- Urging Lots.
- Badgering Lots.

. . . . trying to get a grasp on God.

?An altar at Hebron is waiting for those who are willing to rid themselves of the Lots that they think are so important.

#### 4. Moriah—Genesis 22:2

**Genesis 22:2 KJV** And he said, Take now thy son, thine only *son* Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

?It was to be Abraham's final altar.

- It was to be the altar that shaped him for the rest of his life.
- It was an altar that he shrank back from.
- It was an altar that he had to climb a mountain to reach.
- It was an altar that would crush the heart of Sarah and pierce the heart of Isaac.

?There will altars in our lives that will have the same magnitude. It will hurt to make the trek to this altar.

- Moriah demands all of our commitment.
- Moriah is the place where God can call preachers.
- Moriah is the place where He calls missionaries.
- Moriah is a place where He calls pastors wives.
- Moriah is a place of sweet triumph.
- Moriah is a sacred place.

-Can you understand the value of your altars? What are you holding back???

### III. LOT, THE MAN WHO PITCHED TENTS

#### A. Contrasts—Abraham and Lot

?In looking at the composite lives of Abraham and Lot it becomes very easy to isolate the difference in a man who is willing to invest in altars rather than tents.

- Abraham built his altars, Lot pitched his tents.
- Abraham had his own altars, Lot borrowed Abraham's altars. (Not one single reference of Lot building his own altar.)
- Abraham walked by faith, Lot walked by sight. His eyes lingered too long on the well watered plains of Jordan.
- Abraham was generous and selfless, Lot was worldly and greedy.
- Abraham looked for a city whose builder and maker was God, Lot found a city built by men and destroyed by God.
- Abraham became an heir of the world through righteousness; Lot's last mention in Genesis finds him in a deserted cave with all of his possessions.

?We would even be left to wonder about the salvation of Lot except that Peter mentions him a final time in one of his epistles.

**2 Peter 2:6-8 KJV** And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned *them* with an overthrow, making *them* an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; [7] And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: [8] (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds;)

#### B. Contrasts—Altars and Tents

?Lot was concerned about his tents more than his altars. Lot gravitated toward Sodom because there were no altars in

his life. There are some deficiencies in tents that are not found in altars.

?**Tents have to be pitched thus meaning that they are but temporary dwellings.** Altars have to be built for they are permanent places in our lives.

?**Tents have to be supported by ropes and poles they have to be held up.** Altars are there to support you. A tent will never hold you up but an altar will.

-**Tents are made with inferior materials such as cloths and tarps and they will have to be patched up.** An altar is forever, because if the commitment of the builder is true it will never have to be patched up.

?**A tent is where man lives but an altar is where God lives.**

?**A tent was the place of Noah's sin and of Sarah's laugh of doubt,** but it was at an altar where the fire of God fell for Elijah.

?There is no comparison between tents and altars. Yet, even now some are trying their best to hold up their tents. Please see the value in your altars!

### C. Tents In Our Times

?Tents really haven't changed much over the years. Men still try to pitch the same tents that Lot pitched.

-There are those here who have been borrowing the altars of their parents, altars of their pastor, altars of their youth workers, but it has been a miserable existence. Why don't you give up and get your priorities right and value the altars?

-There are some who have been eyeing the well watered plains of Jordan and finally you have gotten a tent up. It is a tent of a bright future, a career, but that career needs to include God. Right now you think you can exclude God, but you are fooling yourself, your tent is going to fall. Your career has to have an altar.

-There are some who are looking toward the world for the girls and the guys. You are building a tent with that relationship. Some have found a tent of illicit relationship and right now everything is just fine, but sin when it is finished still will bring forth death.

-There are some here who are so cold spiritually all because you have forsaken past altars. Conviction is calling this very minute. It's time to find some old landmarks.

### IV. CONCLUSION

It happened in Europe several years ago. There was a massive collision and derailment of two trains. Torn, lifeless bodies were everywhere. It was a grim scene that greeted the rescue workers on that cold morning. It was evident from the start that there would be few survivors if any at all. The rescuers worked on tirelessly with the bent steel and soft flesh trying to save as many as possible.

As they worked on during the day, it seemed as if one frozen picture captured the entire feeling of the mishap. A young mother's lifeless body had shielded her small three-year old daughter. Somehow, the young child's body had missed death because the mother had wrapped her own body around that of her child. As the rescuers worked, they pulled the small girl from the arms of her dead mother. Amazingly, the small child did not cry or even whimper upon the separation from her mother.

They took the tiny child to the hospital for X-rays and found that there were only a few minor scrapes and bruises. The little girl endured all of the tests and examinations of the physicians without any agitation. It was then that the doctors began to notice a tiny balled up fist. The child was apparently holding something. Perhaps, it was something that could assist them with identifying the child.

They began to attempt to coax the little girl into opening her hand but all to no avail. Finally, after understanding that the child was not going to open her hand, they pried the little fingers away from an object. The child immediately began to scream and cry. She had not cried when the rescuers took her from her dead mother's arms. Nor had she cried in the back of the ambulance. She had not even cried during the battery of her tests. But when she lost her small piece of penny candy her little life was shattered.

?There are some here who have allowed something in their lives, a small piece of candy, to get between you and

Calvary. Some here have taken out the same tattered envelope that Vince started with and have begun to sketch. Your tent has proved to be bigger than your altar.

?There are some old landmarks calling you back to a place of fresh commitment.

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