

BOOK OF 1 KINGS
THE ALTAR OF THE LORD-PART 1
1 KINGS 18:21-30

Introduction

We have been looking at this dark time in Israel's history. God's people were in a crisis situation! We said that anytime and anywhere and on any level that sin reigns there is a crisis situation! Whether it be in a nation (as we see here), a community, a Church, a family, or an individual life!

Proverbs 14:34—"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

The times of God's blessing had long past as there had been over 100 years of wickedness and Israel's kings doing evil in the sight of the LORD!

We saw last week how the spiritual condition of the nation was shown by its leadership! (Vs 17-18)

King Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel saw Elijah the prophet as being the one who was troubling Israel. But as Elijah pointed out, they were the ones who had forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and had followed Baal.

We saw how the spiritual condition of the nation was shown by its people!

(vs 21) The problem was that the people of God did not want to wholly commit unto God—They wanted the LORD God Jehovah, but they wanted Baal too because the worship of Baal appealed to their flesh!

Read Verses 21-30

Tonight we continue to look at this passage and I want us to see a third point here. The spiritual condition of the nation was shown by the condition of the altar of the LORD! (vs 30)

Tonight and next Wednesday Night I want us to focus upon this broken down altar and its need of repair.

I. THE PURPOSE OF THE ALTAR!

The altar was a SACRED PLACE where a man got into contact with God!

A. The Altar Was To Be A Place Of Thanksgiving And Praise!
(e.g.— Noah in *Genesis 8:20*; Abraham)

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It was a place where man was to be humbled and the LORD was to be exalted! But we see here that the altar of the LORD had been broken down!

That means that there wasn't any humbling before the LORD!
That means that there wasn't any exaltation of the LORD!
That means that there wasn't any Thanksgiving and Praise!

The Psalmist David had penned years earlier:

Psalm 100:4-5—"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."

The altar of the LORD was broken down...

That was the condition of their altar, but what about the condition of our altar—in this age, our heart is the altar!

1. God is looking for our humility in our hearts and lives!

2. God is to be exalted in our hearts and lives!

The question that we need to ask ourselves is this:

Is the LORD being exalted in our heart and life like He should be—with Thanksgiving and Praise?

1 Thessalonians 5:18—"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

Hebrews 13:15—"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."

The Altar Was To Be A Place Of Thanksgiving And Praise!

B. The Altar Was To Be A Place Of Confession!
But, again, the altar of the LORD had been broken down!

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Solomon had penned these words of wisdom years earlier:
*Proverbs 28:13—“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper:
but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”*

The Psalmist David, who knew something personally about sin and grieving the heart of the LORD as well as getting back to the LORD, penned these words:

*Psalm 34:18—“The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a
broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.”
(contrite = collapsed or crushed; i.e. humbled)*

*Psalm 51:17—“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a
broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”*

Listen to the words delivered by the Prophet Isaiah:
*Isaiah 57:15—“For thus saith the high and lofty One that
inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high
and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble
spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the
heart of the contrite ones.”*

*Isaiah 66:2—“ . . .but to this man will I look, even to him that is
poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”*

**Today there aren't a whole lot of folks who are confessing
their sins, but rather many are covering them up!**
Sometimes they are covered up with **distractions!**
Sometimes they are covered up with **denial!**
Sometimes they are covered up with **defense! (excuses)**

Could I tell you that **one of the reasons why there is no
confession is because there is no brokenness over sin!**
There is no contriteness in the heart and spirit over sin!

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In our day, folks don't want to hear about their need to be **broken** over sin in their life—It goes to **PRIDE!**
But it is a truth taught in the Scriptures!

People don't want to hear of how they should be broken over sin because people don't like the hardness of it and what it requires!

1. SELF is the enemy of brokenness!
**Our will is often dominated by self, and so, it must
be broken! To be broken is the beginning of revival
in our hearts!**

We know that we **NEED** revival, but we don't want the pain and the humbling that accompanies the **brokenness** required for revival! We want an easy path and **brokenness is anything but easy!**

Galatians 2:20 summarizes what brokenness is all about. It is *"Not I, but Christ."*

We SAY we want to be like Christ, but we do not want to be rid of **PRIDE!** Yet, pride **MUST** be dealt with in our hearts if we are to show forth Christlikeness!
The proud self within us must be broken!

**We cannot want our own way and the LORD's way
at one and the same time! (Vs 21)**
We must surrender ourselves and bury any self-glory,
so that the LORD may be all in all to us!

We would be surprised at how much self dominates!
For example, we often attempt to let self live the Christian life! Look at how often we use the word *"try"* in relation to our living for the Lord. (The word *"try"* is a *"self"* word denoting the power of the flesh!)

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What about Christian work? Many times we just employ *self* to do the work instead of allowing Christ to fill our lives and to work in us and through us!

That's what the Christian life, the Christ life is all about! But it will not happen as long as we are satisfied with the "*self-life*"! **Self is the enemy of brokenness!**

2. Consider also the sins of the self-life!

What about sins of attitude?

Being *irritable, envious, resentful, jealous* and *critical* of others are sins of the flesh or self!

Ephesians 4:30-32 –30 "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

The sins of *worry* and *fear* also cripple us in our fellowship with the Lord! "*Faith*" and "*trust*" cannot dwell where there is worry and fear! They are polar opposites!

2 Timothy 1:7 "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

Often, when things are going well for us, "*self*" produces "*complacency*" and what I call "*drift*" away from the LORD in our lives!

Deuteronomy 8:10-11 –10 "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. 11 Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes..."

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When things don't go well for us, "*self*" is prone to produce *self-pity* when we face trials or afflictions!

"I don't deserve this!"

"Where is the LORD in all of this?" (e.g. Job)

Self further produces *sensitivity, touchiness, and self-defense* when we feel hurt or wronged by others! (Again...e.g. Job)

1 Peter 2:19-21– 19 "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. 21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:"

These sins of the self-life must be dealt with before Christ can fully live His life in us!

3. When we sin, the LORD uses His Word that He has given to us and His Holy Spirit that He has placed within us to convict us! Brokenness is that proper response in our lives of *humility to conviction* that comes from the LORD!

God deals with us in that way in order that we may be broken and walk more closely in fellowship with Him!

But what if we are not in the Word—reading, studying, and meditating on it like we should be?

Or, what if we are not in the house of God under the teaching and preaching of the Word like we should be?

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Or, what if our response to the Word of God is not what it should be?

4. **Sometimes the LORD allows trials to come into our lives in order that *self may be broken more and more, and that Christ may shine in our lives in ever increasing degree!***

We know that afflictions may take many forms:
It might be a devastating circumstance of some sort, or
It might be the vexing of our souls by someone irritating us!
It might be constant interruptions or multiplied sorrows in one form or another!

But whatever the affliction, we must yield those things (I'm talking about the whole matter) over to God and accept the affliction that has come our way as the Lord's will for us to mold us and make us into what He wants us to be!

Then we must bring the wrong reactions that we may have had toward our suffering to the Lord and ask His forgiveness (*1 John 1:9*), allowing His restoration to work in our lives!

5. **Brokenness is necessary if we are to ever learn to lean on Jesus!**

We are **prone** to lean upon ourselves, and to react to temptations and trials according to the *self-life!*

The path of least resistance is to yield to what the flesh desires and walk in the flesh! We know that to be the case, yet we find ourselves doing it! That is sometimes why God allows the afflictions to come!

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God loves to be trusted, and He wants us to trust Him fully and completely lean upon Him!
*Proverbs 3:5-6 –5 – “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”*

6. **Now we need to understand that resisting the self-life and living the Christ life is a lifelong process, and one that is not easy!**

But understand this to...God loves us too much to leave us to ourselves! He wants only that which is best for us!

And whatever God allows into our lives, we can trust the LORD to work ALL THINGS out for OUR good and for HIS glory! (*Romans 8:28*)

Conclusion

That's a good place for us to put up a peg right there.

There are some other things we'll see about the altar, but they'll have to wait until next time:

But let me ask this in closing:

What shape is your altar in right now? I'm talking about your heart! The place where you are to get in touch with God!

The Altar Was To Be A Place Of Thanksgiving And Praise!

The Altar Was To Be A Place Of Confession!

But the altar of the LORD was broken down and needed repair!

Before the people of God could ever see the power of God manifested on the altar, the altar had to be repaired!

Are you looking for God to do something God-like in your life but your heart is not where it needs to be with Him in order to see that? Maybe you need to repair the Altar of the LORD that is broken down!