



CITY CHAPEL
SCHOOL OF MINISTRY

DISCIPLESHIP LEVEL – LESSON 3 THE ALTAR

Introduction

The Disciple is a follower of Christ in all seasons, situations, in private and public; in everything and everywhere. The underlying principle that made our Lord overcome all the way to the Cross is what we will dwell on in this chapter. There is an inherent driving energy that distinguishes the true believer from the religious Church attender. We will examine this key and aim to enable the reader to become an Overcomer and constantly victorious in all areas of life and faith.

THE TABERNACLE

We begin in the Old Testament where God instructed Moses to build a structure called the Tabernacle. The building was a collapsible tent which was erected as the Israelites travelled through the Wilderness on their way to the Promised Land of Canaan.

5 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²“Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an ^{1a}offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering. ³And this *is* the offering which you shall take from them: gold, silver, and bronze; ⁴blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, fine linen, and goats’ *hair*; ⁵ram skins dyed red, ^{1b}badger skins, and acacia wood; ⁶oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense; ⁷onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate. ⁸And let them make Me a sanctuary,^{1c} that I may dwell among them. ⁹According to all that I show you, *that is*, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make *it*. *Exodus 25:1-9*

God gave Moses very precise instructions about the construction of the Tabernacle with minute details concerning the dimensions, material and the contents of the structure. Everything from the Ark of the Covenant to the different compartments as well as the establishment of the Priesthood Exodus 25-30.



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In the midst of these instructions, God says something that gives us the clue to what the main purpose of the Tabernacle was amongst other things:

²¹ You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. ²² And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which *are* on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel. Exodus 25:22

The main reason or principle behind the Tabernacle was the communion between God and Man. The building was to 'house' God and His Presence amongst His people. The goal of God and Man dwelling together has been the underlying theme of the Bible from the beginning. From the Garden of Eden, where God would come down and walk with Adam to name the animals (Genesis 2:19), create Eve and bless Mankind.

It is also how the saga of God's love relationship with Man ends:

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. ² Then I, ^[a] John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.* ⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Revelation 21: 1-4

The Apostle Paul gives us the revelation of what the Temple or Tabernacle means in the New Testament context:

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷ If anyone ^[b] defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which *temple* you are. 1 Corinthians 3:16



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For you^{are} are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among *them*. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." 2 Corinthians 6:16

Jesus referred to His body also as the Temple (John 2:19-21) and from these scriptures we begin to understand what the Tabernacle in the Old Testament meant in principle.

The Tabernacle consisted of three key compartments or sections

- The Outer Court
- The Inner Court
- The Holy of Holies

Like the Tabernacle, we also have three compartments (Foundation Course)

- The Body
- The Soul
- The Spirit



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The Altar Principle

We will now delve into the subject matter of this study with the Tabernacle and this biblical principle as the context. Do remember that the key focus of this study is to identify and emulate what made our Lord Jesus Christ such an overcomer and successful in His Mission.

³⁵ Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a ¹⁹solitary place; and there He prayed .Mark 1:35

We will come back to this incredible scripture later. First let us delve into the meaning of what an altar is. One of the best ways to describe what an ALTAR means is the following statement:

An Altar is the place, platform or principle where Man connects to and communes with God tangibly so that communication flows both ways. This enables a living, viable and dynamic relationship between humanity and divinity. The altar becomes the place and experience of worship, sacrifice, connection and an effective embassy of the Kingdom or Presence of God.

This theme of the altar runs through scripture from the Old Testament through to the New Testament. So that even before the Tabernacle was made or presented to Moses by God, Man had encounters with God at the Altar.

Then Noah built an **altar** to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the **altar**. Genesis 8:20

Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” And there he built an **altar** to the LORD, who had appeared to him. [Genesis 12:7](#)

And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent *with* Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an **altar** to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. [Genesis 12:8](#)

to the place of the **altar** which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the LORD. [Genesis 13:4](#)

Then Abram moved *his* tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which *are* in Hebron, and built an **altar** there to the LORD. [Genesis 13:18](#)



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Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an **altar** there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the **altar**, upon the wood. [Genesis 22:9](#)

So he built an **altar** there and called on the name of the LORD, and he pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well. [Genesis 26:25](#)

Then he erected an **altar** there and called it El Elohe Israel. [Genesis 33:20](#)

Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an **altar** there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother." [Genesis 35:1](#)

Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an **altar** there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone." [Genesis 35:3](#)

And he built an **altar** there and called the place El Bethel, because there God appeared to him when he fled from the face of his brother. [Genesis 35:7](#)

And Moses built an **altar** and called its name, The-LORD-Is-My-Banner; [Exodus 17:15](#)

Why An Altar?

From these verses we can deduce the following:

- It was a place of worship and sacrifice to God
- God spoke as a result of sacrifice and worship at the altar
- It was not a one-off ritual
- For people like Abraham it was a regular ritual
- There were epiphanies (God appearing) at the altar
- There were prophecies that came at the altar
- There was 'calling on the Lord' at the altar
- There was naming of places as a result of altar encounters
- God showed different attributes of Himself at the altar



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Three things are constant with the altar, WORSHIP, SACRIFICE and COMMUNION. Noah sacrificed precious animals out of the very little number of animals left. Abraham placed his only son Isaac on the altar. They worshipped at the altar and God communed with them.

Even in the New Testament under the dispensation of Grace, this theme continues:

I beseech^[a] you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your* ^[b]reasonable service Romans 12:1

¹⁰ We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. ¹¹ For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. ¹² Therefore Jesus also, that He might ^[c]sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. ¹³ Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. ¹⁴ For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. ¹⁵ Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, ^[d]giving thanks to His name Hebrews 13:10-15

Even though we have crossed over into the New Covenant there is still the requirement of sacrifice and worship leading to communion. This is why so many Christians miss the depth, power and awesomeness of what Christ accomplished at the Cross.

We think that the principles of the Old Testament no longer apply to us. They still do! We must bring a sacrifice to God and worship Him so that we can have fellowship and deep communion together with Him.

- The altar keeps us humble and dependent on God
- The daily rhythm keeps us disciplined
- The secret place keeps us focused
- The altar is our refilling station
- Fresh encounters help our faith walk with God
- The altar keeps us grounded
- Your altar is your reference point
- A vibrant altar births a vibrant Christian life and ministry

The logo features a red line-art illustration of a church building with a steeple and a dome, positioned above the text.

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Jesus Our Example

Our primary focus as good disciples is to follow the Master's example. If you patterned your life after the Lord's you will be a faithful follower of Christ. So in this matter of the altar, let us look at how he operated in this principle.

He went a little farther and fell on His face, and **prayed**, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will*." [Matthew 26:39](#)

Again, a second time, He went away and **prayed**, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done." [Matthew 26:42](#)

So He left them, went away again, and **prayed** the third time, saying the same words. [Matthew 26:44](#)

Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He **prayed**. [Mark 1:35](#)

When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He **prayed**, the heaven was opened. [Luke 3:21](#)

So He Himself *often* withdrew into the wilderness and **prayed**. [Luke 5:16](#)

As He **prayed**, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe *became* white *and* glistening. [Luke 9:29](#)

But you, when you **pray**, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, **pray** to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. [Matthew 6:6](#)



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And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to **pray**. Now when evening came, He was alone there. [Matthew 14:23](#)

However, this kind does not go out except by **prayer** and fasting." [Matthew 17:21](#)

And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to **pray**. [Mark 6:46](#)

Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you **pray**, believe that you receive *them*, and you will have *them*. [Mark 11:24](#)

From these scriptures, we can deduce the following key points:

- Jesus and the Father were one at the Altar
- The place of prayer aligned Jesus with the Will of the Father
- Even in the most trying occasion the Altar was the place for Him
- Jesus drew strength from the place of prayer
- Our Lord's ministry and life show the altar principle at its best
- Early morning was a time of prayer for our Lord
- Getting up early and finding your secret place is sacrifice for the body
- Instructions are downloaded daily and overrides yesterday's instruction
- Jesus went to His altar alone
- Jesus' altar was anywhere and anyplace as required
- The altar is the place of faith and prayer coming together
- You have to have seen before you see, or you will never see
- Jesus altar was before after ministry
- The altar is synonymous with prayer in Jesus' life