

An Attempt To Listen To God

The Placement Of The

Brazen Altar

By

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God is sovereign and being such He determined where the furnishings of the Tabernacle were to be placed. Moses had no part in the decision making, nor could he after a time decide to change them around. God set the sun, moon, and stars in their place (Gen. 1:17) and told Moses where the altar was to be placed. I say it was irrelevant what Moses or all the congregation thought, it had to be placed according to the divine will. It must be observed that the altar was not outside the court but inside it. Due to it not being outside the court, the interpretation is not presenting Christ as the way of salvation, but the cleansing of the believer, although as will be seen it can be applied in an evangelistic manner. It was placed where the priests served, and the people who had been redeemed worshipped. One lesson is that those who are redeemed must appreciate that the only way of approach to God is by the altar. It can become so "ordinary" to come to God "in the Name of Jesus" and not really think about the wonder of the Person and work of Christ. God placed the altar so that when an Israelite entered the gate of the court they saw the altar. In its largeness it stood, a thunderous yet silent message bearer, "The sacrifice is the only way to approach God".

How I ought to approach God is clearly illustrated in the scriptures as when Moses approached the burning bush. In turning aside to see this great sight the Angel of the Lord spoke saying: "Moses, Moses . . . put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Ex. 3:4-5). We never read of Moses taking another step until God calls him. Having had this experience, how then would he have approached God? God gives us many examples of people who have been given an unveiling of the glory of God and their reactions.

- a) The children of Israel at Sinai. "And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die" (Ex. 20:19). How would they approach God after a manifestation like that?
- b) Belshazzar was a man who had no interest in God and showed utter contempt for Him. Having a drunken orgy it is recorded: "They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone" (Dan. 5:4). But God in a moment of time changed the scene: "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." (Dan. 5:5-6). At that moment he was brought face to face with God.
- c) Adam: "And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden" (Gen. 3:8). They made clothing of fig leaves, then as if that was not sufficient they tried camouflage by hiding in the trees! What was the problem? They were going to have to face God.

I am aware that some say: "But we are His children or His Bride" therefore we can have freedom to approach God without formality, after all, God is Daddy! Let it be clear, God is not "Daddy", the word "Abba" does not permit undue familiarity, it means to have child like trust and simplicity. The scriptures sound clearly: "Holy and reverend is His Name" (Psa. 111:9).

I repeat, it is not dealing with sins before salvation, but dealing with sins after salvation. This teaches a very clear lesson. Saints sin, they cannot live a life of sinless perfection as every New Testament epistle makes that evident. For instance:

- a) Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10)
- b) To the Corinthians:
 - i) There was abuse at the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:27)
 - ii) "Be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20)
- c) To the Philippians, he wrote to "Euodias and Syntyche" and to "be of the same mind" (Phil. 4:2)
- d) To the Ephesians, they had "left their first love" (Rev. 2:1-7)
- e) To those to whom James wrote, there was discrimination (Jam. 2:1)

Since I am no different from those ancient believers and will sin to my dying day, the question comes: "What about the sins I will commit tomorrow, in the future, next week, next year?" The answer is twofold. When I accepted Christ all my sins, past, present, and future, were all dealt with. We are told to confess our sins, never to ask for forgiveness. Forgiveness is in the heart of God, and by our confession the fulness of that forgiveness is restored to us. Concerning those committed before the Lord died, the sins of Moses, Solomon, David, etc.; Paul

informs us that they also were judged for by the sacrifice of the Lord (Rom. 3:25). The writer of the Hebrews affirms the same truth (Heb. 9:15).

God knew all my sins long before they were ever committed and the punishment for them all was put on Christ. Thank God that no matter what sin I could ever commit, even that which I cannot forgive myself for, there shall never be found a sin that the sacrifice of Christ has not the power to cleanse.

I submit one of the sins committed is that of presumptuous casualness when approaching the Living God. The disciples were no different from us for in sincerity they asked the Lord: "Teach us to pray", to which the Lord answered: "Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name" (Matt. 6:9). No wonder the ancient writer wrote: "God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few" (Ecc. 5:2). When one approaches God in such an attitude there will be a readiness to listen to God and the attitude of responding immediately. Foolish would the children of Israel had been, if after the enemies of the Lord had a letter from the king to force by governmental decrees, them to stop the building and they kept building in defiance (Ezra 4:23). When man heard the words of the Lord it had an effect:

- a) "And it came to pass, when the king (Josiah) had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes . . . Go ye, enquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great *is* the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us (2 Kgs. 22:11-13). He recognized that the promises of God were no empty threats so he began the work that had to be done. "And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchers that *were* there in the mount, and sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchers, and burned *them* upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words . . . And all the houses also of the high places that *were* in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke *the LORD* to anger, Josiah took away, and did to them according to all the acts that he had done in Bethel . . . Moreover the *workers with* familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD (2 Kgs. 23:16-24).

If we are going to offer to God the "sacrifice of praise" (Heb. 13:15); to "serve Him with all your heart" (Deut. 10:10); "acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12:28); then we must learn the truths of the placement of the altar.

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

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