

FIRE FALL

Day Seven: Repairing the Altar

And he (Elijah) repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down ... 1 Kings 18:30b

When you use the word altar in most churches, most people think of a kneeling bench where individuals bow their knees to pray, or of an area of the church devoted to praying. Nearly everyone responds with thoughts of prayer. While this is normative in modern Christianity, and is totally appropriate, this is not the Biblical concept.

To the Jew, and even to the early church, the altar was an image of sacrifice. Upon the altar, the sacrifices were roasted, and sometimes consumed. One type of altar was for food sacrifices, and a smaller altar was for incense. In both cases, there was some level of cost involved.

The disciples were the first to understand that Christ was our ultimate sacrifice. Instead of going to the Temple for sacrifice, they gathered there for prayer. Afterward, they went house to house breaking bread and studying the Word. The concept of the altar then became replaced with a lifestyle, in particular, the lifestyle of the cross.

Paul the Apostle emphasized the lifestyle concept of the altar in the life of the believer in his letter to the Romans. While Christ is our sacrifice, Paul said we are a “living, holy, acceptable sacrifice” and that presenting ourselves as such is our “reasonable priestly duty” (12:1). In many ways, Paul would later reiterate this point in his own testimony while teaching the Galatians, “I am crucified with Christ...it is no longer I that live, but Christ through me” (2:20).

In this light, rebuilding the altar is not an easy task. Rebuilding the altar means recognizing the sacrifice of those who have gone before while acknowledging that we now are called upon to lay down our lives in like manner. If revival fires of days gone by required yielded vessels of prayer, then it stands to reason that today’s rekindling will require no less. If the reformers paid a price for reformation, then we too must be prepared to pay. If the voices of the great awakenings had to live as sacrifices, then we must live such lives as well. A living sacrifice does not detract from the sacrifice of Christ on the cross...to the contrary it has always, and will always, illuminate His perfect work at Calvary.

And so, we pray:

Father, You gave us Your Son at the greatest of cost, so that we might receive freely that most expensive gift of Your grace. Teach us to live as sacrifices presented to You. Help us to live as sacrifices holy before You. Remind us through Your grace we are acceptable and cherished sacrifices unto You. Let us always serve You, no matter what the cost.

In the name of the Lamb slain and risen, our Lord Jesus Christ we pray. AMEN