

The ark and the altar (1 Chr. 13)

Part 1

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[00:00:00] I wonder if you'd turn please, first of all, to the, again to the Old Testament, in 1 Chronicles, chapter 13. These are well-known portions of the Word of God and are, no doubt, have been spoken on many times from this platform, but I trust the Lord will bless us tonight, even in the reading of His precious Word. 1 Chronicles 13, and verse 1, And David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader. And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, If it seem good unto you, and that it be of the Lord our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren everywhere, that they are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and the Levites, which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us. And let us bring again the ark of our God to us, [00:01:02] for we inquire not at it in the days of Saul. Verse 6, And David went up, and all Israel, and to Bealah, that is to Kirjah-Jerum, which belonged to Judah, to bring up thence the ark of our God, the Lord, that dwelleth between the cherubims, whose name is called on it. And they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab. And Uzzah and Ahio drove the cart. And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and cymbals, and with trumpets. And when they came unto the threshing-floor of Chidon, Uzzah put forth his hand to hold the ark, for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and he smote him, [00:02:01] because he put his hand to the ark, and there he died before God. And David was displeased, because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah, wherefore the place is called Perez-Uzzah to this day. And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the ark of God home to me? So David brought not the ark home to himself, to the city of David, but carried it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. And the ark of God remained with the family of Obed-Edom in his house three months. And the Lord blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that he had. Now in chapter 15, verse 1, And David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent. Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of [00:03:06] God, but the Levites. For them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him forever. And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the Lord unto his place, which he had prepared for it. Verse 11, And David called for Zarek, and Abiathar the priests, and the Levites, and Uriel, and Esaias, and Joel, and Shemaiah, and Elial, and Aminadar, and said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites. Sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it. For because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God [00:04:02] made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order. So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel. And the children of the Levites bear the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves

thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the Lord. And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be singers, with instruments of music, psalteries, and harps, and cymbals, sounding by lifting up the voice with joy. Now a verse or two in Genesis 13, verse 1. Genesis 13, verse 1. And Abram went up out of Egypt, he and his wife, and all that he had, and what with him, into the south. And Abram was very rich in cattle, [00:05:01] and in gold. And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, and to the place where his strength had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai. And to the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first. And there Abram called on the name of the Lord. And what also which went with Abram had flocks, and herbs, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together, for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there was a strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle, and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle. And the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the land. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen, for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me.

If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right. Or if thou depart to the right hand, [00:06:03] then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld the plain of Jordan. And it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, has thou comest unto Zohar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east, and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the flame, and pitched his tent towards Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly. 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. [00:07:09] And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem. Then stood up Jeshua the son of Josedach, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God. And they set the altar upon his bases, for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries. And they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord, even burnt offerings morning and evening. Verse 11 And they sang together by course, in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord, [00:08:03] because he is good, for his mercy endureth forever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the priests and Levites, and the chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, but had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice, and many shouted aloud for joy. So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy, from the noise of the weeping of the people. For the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off. One verse in the Psalms, Psalm 84, well-known verse, and verse 4.

Psalm 84, and verse 4. Blessed are they that dwell in my house, [00:09:04] they will be still praising thee, Selah. And last of all, a new testament in Ephesians chapter 3.

Ephesians 3, and verse 14. For this cause I bow my knee unto the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled [00:10:01] with all the fullness of God. That should be

enough.

Well, we've read many scriptures tonight, and I can assure you we're not going to go into the detail of all these scriptures, time do not permit, apart from the fact that I feel very inadequate when we read such verses to be able to expound them to the full, but I've really been enjoying some thoughts in relation to these verses. Two things I would like to bring to your attention, and I find that they're very necessary for the believers today, as they have been, I'm sure, in the teachings that we've come under for so many years, and even before my time, before your time, from the last century, the teaching that has come out as a result of going into these scriptures. Now, taken again from the Old Testament, we obviously look at them in their typical sense, [00:11:03] and the two things I'd like to draw your attention to tonight, and say a little on if the Lord helped me, is, and often think about it, the A.E. for the believer, the Ark and the Altar. The Ark and the Altar.

The Ark, we have been often taught, and I believe rightly so, speaks to us of Christ. And God, when he gave the instructions for the construction of the Ark, he said to them, there I will meet with thee, and there I will commune with thee.

That was God was going to come out to his people, because we know on top of the Ark was the mercy seat, and above that mercy seat, God said he would take his position, [00:12:01] he would be amongst his people, and there he would talk with his people, and you know, what a thought for our soul to think that God is amongst his people, and he has ever opened ear to the cries of his people. But again we say that the Ark, and I'm often very weary in saying definite statements like, a certain thing speaks of a certain thing, because sometimes you're asked to explain it, and sometimes you might feel it in your own heart and enjoy it in your own heart, but trying to explain it is a different thing. I remember years ago as a young brother, we used to sit under the sound of the Old Brethren and the Bible readings, and at a particular time we were speaking about the offerings, and my brother kept saying, oh of course this speaks of this, and that speaks of that. And later on I was speaking to another young brother, I wish they would tell us how they came to that conclusion. Not thinking any more about it, next Bible reading came up, same kind of statements, of course this speaks of this, [00:13:03] and this young brother who I was speaking to, he says, all of a sudden he says, excuse me brother, could you just explain how you came to this? And you know it was like hitting him with a 14 pound hammer, it just stopped. And he tried to explain it, and so I'm very weary about saying this speaks about this, and that speaks about that. But when it comes to the ark, and this is my own thoughts on it, wherever you read about the ark and its history, and we've read part of its history tonight, always seem to denote the condition that Israel was in. We might go on to this, the Lord help us. But also the altar, if the ark speaks to us of God coming out to us, the altar speaks about us going to God. Whether it's the altar of prayer, the prayer of need, being in this wilderness that we've been singing about, and the needs of the people of God. [00:14:07] We have this altar where we can approach God with all the sense of our need, and ever realize that God's ear is ever open to us.

And of course God knows all about the need, but being a dependent people I trust, he would like us to approach him and regard that need. But whether in like approaching God in another aspect, in the aspect of worship, we can thank God for the altar, we can, where we can give God his place, and give something to God. Often we think about our own needs, and what we need for the journey. What does God require? And maybe not come to us, but God requires something as well. The Lord Jesus requires something. It requires the response of his people, and we trust that we'll see this as we go into the, into the thoughts of the altar. But we read Psalm 84, well-known verse, [00:15:09] I'm sure it's been a verse of encouragement to us as we've contemplated these things. And in a sense it's

someone going into the presence of God, and listen to what it says, Now we know that this Psalm has overtures of the coming millennial kingdom, so I'm no doubt that the house referred to is what would be tangible as an actual construction.

The house of God in that day, so we're really spiritualizing this verse to our present circumstances. And I'm sure it's a challenge, it's certainly a challenge to me. Just where am I living? [00:16:01] We have this thought of dwelling, we have it also in Ephesians. We'll go on to this, we trust. We trust. Blessed are they that dwell. Now we know when we dwell we're settled in a position. Are we settled in such a position in our own lives, in the company of God, that we're found praising. God requires those who will praise, those who will worship. And you know, we won't find the ability to praise or worship if we're taken up with the things of this world. We're in a distinct atmosphere here, the house of God. We're in the company of God, and when we're in God's company and being influenced by what comes from God, then the result is praise. They that are in God's company dwell in my house, shall be still praising thee. So it's to be in that settled position, [00:17:08] to enjoy the things of God, to enjoy all about God and his great love to us, the way he has wrought through our Lord Jesus Christ, to bring him to himself, bring us to himself, bring this wondrous salvation to us. And you know it's a striking thing that is one of the Psalms for the sons of Korah. Now if you remember in the history of the events of Korah, number 16 I think it is, that the earth opened up and Korah and all that pertained to Korah was swallowed up. The judgment of God came upon them. If we go to chapter 26 of Numbers, Moses is repeating what happened. He's going over what happened. It tells us there actually that Korah perished. Chapter 16 doesn't mention it, I don't think Korah, [00:18:04] but however Korah perished. But it says a thing there, and I've often been struck about it, it says, notwithstanding the children of Korah died not. And you know I've often likened it to me.

Standing there probably worthy of the judgment of God, and yet God in his love and in his mercy, he's wrought through our Lord Jesus Christ to bring such a wonderful salvation that I've partaken of, and I'm sure I'm speaking for everyone here tonight, partaking of this wondrous salvation. So if we've been blessed in such a wonderful way by God, is there no response in our hearts to this God, this same God? Well if we dwell within that atmosphere where God is known, where we enjoy the thoughts of God's mercy and love, and I'm sure these sons of Korah would enjoy this. [00:19:08] Then if we're in that atmosphere, we'll be found praising God. And you know if God doesn't receive praise from the saints, he'll receive it from nowhere else. Nowhere else. Remember when the Lord was here, the disciples were crying out such wonderful things about the Lord. The Pharisees said, Master, rebuke thy disciples. Listen to what they're saying. He says, well if these should hold their peace, the very stones would cry out. You know sometimes I feel like a stone. Absolutely dead. But you know when I reflect upon what God has done through Christ, I can thank God for the measure in which I can praise him. We don't want the stones to cry out. God's looking for praise from his people. And it'll only come if we're dwelling here, [00:20:07] dwelling. An old brother in Fort Seton, old brother Peter Harkis, I don't know if anyone knew him, anyone knew him, died when he was 98 years of age. He used to sit back there in the Bible reading. He was a retired at that time, a particular time, a retired butcher. And you could see he was a butcher. He had rosy cheeks and he really enjoyed his meat, he used to tell us. But he would sit there in the Bible reading. If it ever came up the question, well why is it some believers seem to be on the top of the mountain all the time? Why is it some believers are always praising, always worshiping? You hear, get the brothers on their feet. They always seem to be in the spirit of praise and worship. Some believers seem to have a great appetite for the word of God. They have a great desire to be amongst the people of God. Why is it some have this? And he used to answer it by one little phrase. It depends on where you're living. [00:21:04] If you're living in the atmosphere where God is known, you'll be the very same as them. You'll be still praising God. Well,

God's looking for those who praise him. That's where we're dwelling. Are we flitting about? Are we established? Where we read in Ephesians, I must say one of my favorite portions, especially the little statement in verse 17.

Well, we'll read verse 16 for correction. That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man. This is a little portion.

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye be enrooted and grounded in love. And it goes on in these wonderful verses, verses 18, 19 and right down there. And it's that little, [00:22:03] that phrase that Christ may dwell in your hearts. Now I'm not a Greek expert. Someone said that's got some difficulty with English language. Nevermind the Greek language, but I believe that this expression dwell here is to make a home.

You know, Christ wants to make a home in our hearts. He doesn't want to make a hotel or a boarding house by their very nature of just temporary dwellings. He wants to make a home there. He wants to be there. He wants to enjoy your company. He wants us to enjoy his company. But again, the thought of dwelling, just what are we occupied with? Or we could only give Christ a permanent home in our hearts. Maybe sometimes we feel, well, just limited, a limited experience in our hearts. Other times we're taken up with things around us [00:23:03] and Christ is crowded out. Oh, well, we don't want that kind of atmosphere, but that the Lord might have that freedom to feel at home in our hearts. That's what the expression means. Does the Lord feel at home in our hearts? I trust he does. I trust he has that special place in the day in which we live. His name is so blasphemed in this world. It's so set aside even in Christendom, but oh, just to be in this place of favour and just to open the heart and maybe just like the hymn that we sing sometimes in the gospel, there is room in my heart for thee, oh for Christ, just to have this special place of favour and blessing in our heart. And of course, this being so, then we'll be certainly rooted and grounded in love, in love.

[00:24:04] So we go now into the verses we read in the Old Testament, First Chronicles.

I'm sure this portion, these portions again, have been a source of encouragement, source of challenge, that's no doubt, but a source of encouragement to us. There may be that feeling on one hand, and yet there was the blessing that the Lord gave to this man, Obed-Edom. When the ark was taken into the house of Obed-Edom, it says that the Lord blessed the house. The Lord blessed the house. There was a sad time in our history, I suppose. The ark, if we read in 1 Samuel, I suppose the [00:25:02] period and the time when Eli was the high priest and his sons were evil men.

Thinking about it, I think it followed one of the lowest times in their history. Evil men in the priesthood. I'm not saying that Eli was an evil man, he was a weak priest, but his sons were evil and he had no power over them. They just used the ark to suit themselves. Of course, God didn't bless them. We know the history, the Philistines took the ark. One thing I will say in relation to Eli, probably in his favour, it wasn't when he heard that his sons had been killed that he fell backward and died. It was when he heard that the ark was taken that Eli fell back and died. I suppose in that way, he had more concern for the testimony of God [00:26:09] than he did for his own family. Evil people, as they were. So the ark was in the hands of the Philistines and it eventually went to this place, Kiriath Jirim. It was not sought after in the days of Saul. It's amazing that this picture of Christendom, the years of barrenness, where we just take the name of Christ, but without Christ.

I'm sure in the days of Saul, they would speak about the ark, but had no desire to bring it back to its

rightful place. But here David had. Now we've often been told, and again I'm referring to what had been told by older brethren and so on, that the Philistine is a picture of man after the flesh. And so the ark, at the time of Eli, landed with the Philistine, [00:27:06] with the man after the flesh. No response Godward, obviously. He had absolutely no life Godward. Eventually it was sent back on a new cart. And here's David comes along, and I think the first mistake was that he copied the Philistine. He put it on a new cart. Now I don't want to go into all the details of this. We have limited ourselves tonight in relation to the ark. We haven't spoken about its construction, the material, and so on. I'm sure these things are probably better handled than someone more capable. So we've really concentrated on this part of its history. David copied the flesh.

And I say this tonight guardedly, but I believe we're living in the days of new cart Christianity.

[00:28:06] Christ should be presented in a special way, not in any concoction that I could think of, or you could think of. There is a scriptural way to present Christ. Now we said that the ark we feel is a type of Christ. Now David, he copied the flesh.

Well, they did it. We'll do it. We know the language of today. Let's copy the world and what they do. But God didn't bless it. In fact, when one put his hand out to steady it, God spoke to him. We know that what we read about. And then the ark was taken to the house of Obed-Edom. It wasn't blessed in the hands of David or in this man Uzzah or any of the others, but God blessed Obed-Edom, the Gittite.

[00:29:02] And this should have been a warning to them, a lesson to them, that here was a nation that in the past had been so favored and the ark was used properly by them and God blessed them. But now in their condition that they were in, God didn't look down in favor because they copied the flesh. And really speaking today, it's so very easy to copy the flesh. It's so very easy to copy what the world does. But you and I as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and being privileged to look into this precious book, we have such a wealth of teaching, the way that God wants things done, not the flesh. The way of the flesh, it may bring temporary pleasure.

[00:30:03] It may bring temporary results that we say, well, that's working. But if we present Christ in any other way than what is presented in the scriptures, then we're destined for God to show his displeasure. And so David displeased with God, what had happened, full of good intention, but doing it the wrong way. The ark went to the house of Obed-Edom and it should have been unlistened to them. And I take it, and I'm referring to Morris's dictionary here, I take it this Obed-Edom was a Gentile. He was a Gittite. There may be a bit of variance in this, but it may be just because he was a Jew in a Gentile place. But anyway, he was one [00:31:04] that on whom absolutely there was no thought of blessing to be there. It was a city that produced Goliath. And yet here was a man that David put the ark, as if David said, well, don't want any more to do it at the moment, put it in his house. And God blessed the house of Obed-Edom. You know, dear friends, it's a wonderful thing when we allow the ark into our house. When Christ has the first place, Christ has a prominent place. And you know, when David thought about it and some came to him and said, well, I don't know what happened to us, but God's blessed this man's house. So David took courage, but a different David. In between 13 and 15, and it's obviously 14, David did battle with the Philistine. He put [00:32:03] the flesh down. And you know, sometimes the battle with the flesh is a real battle.

It opposes everything that the spirit of God will occupy us with. The spirit of God leads us into all truth. The spirit of God brings Christ to us.

And if we set aside the spirit of God, all we're left is with the flesh. Might seem all right. It might look all right, but Christ, other than the way that the spirit of God presents him, it's Christianity on a new cart, on a new cart. And so David comes in this other way.

If I find the place again.

[00:33:03] He makes a place for the altar, for the ark. He's learned his lesson. Don't copy the flesh.

Let's present him the way that, bring the ark the way God says. That's a different thing. We said that we didn't want to go into the construction of the thing, save this. But on the ark itself were four rings.

And through these rings went two staves. And we're told by, in the construction of the ark, that these staves were never to be removed. And so the rings and the staves were there. Now again, this is my own personal feeling, this is my own personal thoughts on the matter. Maybe the thoughts of others, I don't know. I've tried not to in taking this up to look at others in case I'm influenced and some might say, well, [00:34:03] he's just quoting so-and-so. But the four rings, to me, present the four gospels. And we have adequate presentation of Christ in the gospels to do. Now I'm not saying that what we have in the epistles we should set aside. No way. Because Paul and Peter, they spoke and others spoke very encouragingly and wrote very encouragingly about the Lord Jesus Christ. But these four rings were to be used. And with the rings, the staves, and to my mind, it's just a little picture of what came through our Lord Jesus Christ. Grace and truth came by our Lord Jesus Christ. And so when we think about Christ, as seen in the typical way in the ark, we see the four gospels and all the way that he's presented there in these gospels. [00:35:01] Then we see the two staves, never to be removed. We know Christendom today has Christ, as we've said, in name only, but in no other way. They want the name, but they don't want the person, and so they take the name. You and I, of course, rejoice at the name.

The very name of Jesus, well, comes to us such wonderful blessing, doesn't it?

When we hear men say and blaspheme the name of Christ, then we can turn it to a scripture. They'll often speak about Jesus Christ in such a blasphemous way. But whenever I hear the name Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. The one who is the same, the one who's died to save me, this is the way I want to present him, as he's presented in the four gospels. [00:36:03] This is the way I want to think about him, the one who has brought grace and truth to bear, to light. And you know there were those when the Lord said to them, he says, I'm a man that has told you the truth, but they didn't want the truth. But I, for one, rejoice the moment I heard the truth. It showed me my lost condition. It showed me the cross, that Christ has taken account of that lost condition and has given himself for my salvation. What a price, he's paid the full price for salvation, nothing else to be done. It's all in the gospels. That's how we present the ark. That's how we present Christ. And so David says, well, this is the way we should do it. And so he says, sanctify yourselves. Of course, being sanctified is really preparing ourselves for service. Any that's wrong in our lives, we heard probably a little bit about it this afternoon. [00:37:05] Anything that's wrong in our lives has to be set right. Because God would have us, not as new Christians, but to those who really feel and love our Lord, feel for the person of our Lord Jesus Christ and really love him and enjoy all that he has done.

And of course, the grace, grace and truth, the land of the truth, the grace, the unmerited favor of God. We stand here tonight. You sit there tonight. Are you there because something you've done or I've done? Of course not. We testify of the mercy of God and the grace of God. His unmerited favor. And

that's why we're here tonight. Is it our own desires that have brought us here tonight? Of course not. If it was our own desires, we'd be away with the world. [00:38:05] Of thine own have we given thee, David says. Of thine own have we given thee. Really, we're being responsive to God and having the desire to be here tonight. So they took up the ark in the proper way, by the rings and the stairs. And lastly, David said, well, I want this to be the same. Well, I'm no singer, but I can thank God that the songs I sing are the songs that bring glory to Christ. I may be a pro in regards to my ability to sing, but I can thank God that the subject of the singing is the Lord Jesus Christ and the object is to praise him. And so they lifted up the voice with joy. Wonderful thing in the day in which we live, to be able to lift up the voice [00:39:04] with joy. And so here we have in the ark, a little picture of our Lord Jesus Christ, a little picture of what he is to us and the way he should be carried, the way we should present him. And we can thank God that we have the opportunity and ability by the spirit of God to present Christ the proper way, in due order. It speaks there of the due order, the right order that God would have us to present Christ the way the scripture teaches us. Wonderful, wonderful privilege to speak to others about the Lord Jesus Christ. We don't make up any stories, do we? We don't concoct things in our minds and say, well, this is, this is what it's all about. Of course not. What we present to others is what we learn in the [00:40:01] scriptures and that's how God would have it. So in the ark, we have Christ presented to us and God coming out through Christ to us. There I will meet with thee, there I will commune with thee. And we've often been told all that we'll ever know or understand about God or the Father is what's being revealed to us through our Lord Jesus Christ. He has shown us the Father. Time is fleeting on, so we just really want to go on these, in relation to the altar, some simple thoughts. But if you read through Genesis, you know, I've often thought you have to be a real construction worker if you were to work for God, if you lived in the time of the book of Genesis. Abraham, he built four altars. Isaac, he dug four wells, or maybe better to say [00:41:09] re-dug four wells. And Jacob, he built four pillars. David built a tent. It was a tent structure for the ark. So, but here we have Abram, this man Abram. Where we read in chapter 13, he had been in a condition, if the Philistine speaks of the flesh, Egypt speaks of the world. Again, we've been taught this. No reason to doubt it. So Abraham, he had his dealings with God. He constructed an altar, and then he went down to Egypt.

Now, if you read Mr. Darby's introduction to the Bible, he'll tell you there that from the moment [00:42:01] he went down to Egypt, to the moment that he came back, there's no mention of the altar. And you know, if we get mixed up with the world, the first thing that suffers is our dealings with God, and God's dealings with us. But where we started to read tonight was when Abram came back, and listen to what it says.

Apart from the tent, where his tent had been at the beginning, and to the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first, and there Abram called on the name of the Lord, the altar which he had made at the first.

You know, I feel sorry for any Christian who doesn't have his altar. Now, I don't know if [00:43:01] you knew Peter Harkis, but certainly one brother who came here, I believe quite often, you would know, and that was King Thompson. Now, King, when he got on the platform, local minister, wherever he was, King always encouraged in this kind of ministry. And he would often say, every believer should have their altar.

If you don't have an altar, it means that your communion with God is broken.

Now, here's a man, Abram, he made there an altar, on the way back, and he came back to the place

of the altar. Now, dear brother and sister, in your mind or in your heart, maybe unknown to others, you've maybe gone back a little, and I would say with all encouragement, get back to the altar, [00:44:03] because there you'll meet with God. There God knows all about your problems. He knows about the things that maybe attract you in this world, like Abraham, or Abraham, Egypt. He knows all about these things. But being in God's company again, being in that atmosphere, and again, in this time of need for Abraham, God led him back to the place of the altar. And I'm sure, and I speak, I'm speaking, I'm sure speaking for many in this room tonight, if not all, the times of blessing that we've received, when we realized that this was the place where we should be, on our knees, at the place of the altar. And, you know, once you get to the altar, you see things in a different light. Lot, he looked out to the plain city of the plains, planted there, and there he went. And it says, he picked his tent towards sun, [00:45:06] but you never read off an altar. Abraham, he removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron. And he built an altar there. Wherever he moved, he built an altar. And wherever we move through this world, dear brother and sister, always make sure you have your altar. Because there's a place of strength. There's a place of encouragement. There's a place where God knows all about us. And he would encourage us to take an altar. If we forget the altar, then you'll be overwhelmed by this world. But God doesn't want us to be overwhelmed by the world. He wants us to be overwhelmed by his love, and his care, and his concern for us. And that's why, Abraham, I believe in his mercy, God's mercy, he took him back to the place of the altar. He didn't take him to [00:46:03] another country. He took him to the place of the altar, which are made there at first. And sometimes we often speak about first love. We want to dwell in our first love, our first expressions of love to Christ. And that's where we ought to be. That's where the place of blessing is. So that would be the experience of Abraham. If you read through, you'll find other altars. And of course, the most famous one was chapter 22, the place where he was going to offer up Isaac. So these were little instructions in the life of Abraham. Last of all, this period our brother was speaking about, before they were taken into captivity in Babylon, the experience of Habakkuk, and what was going to overwhelm them, and so on. And the man of prayer, we've mentioned, the brother mentioned this afternoon. Where we read in Ezra chapter 3, [00:47:02] God was giving them an opportunity to go back. The fulfillment of the prophecy, that 70 years would be fulfilled before they were allowed back. And this is what happened. They came back, and they were allowed by Cyrus to construct again the temple. We know the Nehemiah in view of the wall being put up. But before the foundations were laid of the temple, they built an altar.

The temple would be an outward show of what God was to them. But first of all, they were going to give God his place. And so they built an altar. They built the altar of the God of Israel.

I know, dear brothers, we've spoken about Abraham's altar, and that might be in relation to our need. [00:48:01] But you know, God wants us to make an altar, so it will be used for his praise.

And this is what it was here. Give God his portion. We might feel a need, and we do feel a need.

And if I can speak reverently, God has a need. He has a need for his saints to praise him. As we said before, if he doesn't receive praise from us, where is he going to receive it? Where is he going to receive it? If he doesn't receive it from those who have accepted Christ, he'll certainly never receive it in the world, or even in Christendom today. Maybe in words only. But there they built an altar. And it says, they set the altar upon his basis, for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries. I've thought about this. I must admit, I looked up, and I tried to look up some of the other commentators on these things, nobody ever mentioned it. But I thought about it. When you put on his basis, you're making it prominent. [00:49:08] And I'm sure it was because that, and this is my own mind

again, I'm sure it's because they were wanting to show to the world around them that they were dealing again with the God of Israel. And if when others saw what was happening, then they would resist. They would say, well this is the God that brought them out through great deliverance in Egypt, and so on, led them through the wilderness, and so on. They're now dealing again with God. They better be very aware of what we're saying, or doing, to have a natural answer. And so they built this altar, and they were found praising, singing together, giving thanks unto the Lord, because he is good, for his mercy endures forever. By the God that we know deserves our praise. The God that we know, revealed in [00:50:02] Christ, deserves every vestige of praise we can muster. You might feel that we're praises so very weak. It says here that they offered the burnt offerings. Now if you're reading the burnt offerings, there was the offering of the cattle, and of the fox, and even of the pigeons. Now I'm not too sure if it speaks about various aspects, or various sorts of people's ability to praise. Some might praise, and you might say, well he's offering a goat that day. Or some might praise, and you say, well it's like a sheep or a goat. Some others might praise myself, and might say, well it's all my pigeon are saying, I've given. But you know it says a wonderful thing, on the three types of offerings, that the whole three are saying that there's a sweet flavour to God. So if you feel that all that you have to offer is only a pigeon, God appreciates it.

[00:51:08] God appreciates it. You might feel that we're, well we're really on the mountain top now, and we're really offering the best. It might be in the view of God to sip a drink. God understands. And here in the burnt offerings, the fact that we're offering to God, which was due to his name, we give God the first place. And all other work in relation to God will take its rightful course, and God will bless it. But God requires the first place.

And the first place here was in the altar. An altar to praise. An altar to worship.

And God had shown such great wonders and mercy to them, because he's good. For his mercy endures forever. And so the altar was built, worship was given, [00:52:05] the foundation of the house was laid, and the people sang for joy. God's rightful place brings joy to the heart of God, I'm sure of this. And I'm sure dear brother and sister, it will bring joy to your heart and mine, when you feel that God has given that rightful place. And so in this time of Ezra, in this time of revival, God got the first place. Sometimes I'm sure you might think, well, this is what I need, this is what I desire, this is what I, it's all I, I, I.

But God has a need to you. He has a need for praise, for to hear the praises of his people. Christ desires the praise of his people. And you know, if we were to begin tonight and praise every [00:53:04] moment of our lives, till we were taken to the glory, it still wouldn't be enough to praise the one who's done such wonderful things for us. And so dear brother and sister, simple thoughts I had before me tonight, to speak in this way, of dwelling, being in God's company, being in God's company, of giving Christ his rightful place. And in relation to the altar, to be ever before God, whether in need or in worship or praise. You have these blessed thoughts revealed in the Old Testament in time. But you know, as you go into the New Testament, you see the, the anti-type, you see these things coming out. And again, there's so much to praise Christ for, for all that he'd loved for us. But let us present Christ the way that the scripture presents him. Let us get into the gospel and read the life of the perfect man. You might think about your own feelings. [00:54:05] When you think about Christ, he's the one that never failed. And surely, he would draw from our hearts praise and worship. May it be so for his name's sake.