

RESTORING THE ALTAR

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Restoring the Altar Part 1 – A Return unto the Lord

There is a cry from the Lord. It is a cry to restore the “spiritual” altar.

The Lord is intending to restore all things and the restoration begins with the sons and daughters unto His glory. The restoration is not for when we die or when the new heaven or earth arrives. It is for now – we are called to be the sons and daughters who have been bought by the Blood and renewed by the Spirit. We are called to walk the Way of the Kingdom in His power and authority to be good stewards of this earth, bringing light where there is darkness and establishing His Kingdom in the heart of man.

We need to return to the heart of worship – which is more than just singing songs. It is about fellowship, communion, intimacy and abiding in the Lord.

To comprehend what it means to restore the altar, we need to understand the altar in the Old Testament was seen as a place of consecration and a place of sacrifice. Before God gave His Law to Moses, men made altars wherever they were out of whatever material was available. An altar was often built to commemorate an encounter with God that had a profound impact upon someone. Abram (Genesis 12:7), Isaac (Genesis 26:24–25), Jacob (Genesis 35:3), David (1 Chronicles 21:26), and Gideon (Judges 6:24) all built altars and worshiped after having a unique encounter with God. An altar usually represented a person’s desire to consecrate himself fully to the Lord.

In the broadest sense, an altar is merely a designated place where a person consecrates himself to someone or something. There are over four hundred references to altars in the Bible. The word altar is first used in Genesis 8:20 when Noah built an altar to the Lord after leaving the ark.

During times of Israel’s rebellion and idolatry, the Lord’s altars fell into disrepair. The prophet Elijah, confronting the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, “repaired the altar of the Lord, which had been torn down” (1 Kings 18:30). Elijah’s restoration of the altar was significant, given the rampant paganism of his day. Also, in spite of the fact that he was living in a divided kingdom, the prophet symbolized the unity of God’s people in his construction: “Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, ‘Your name shall be Israel.’ With the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord” (1 Kings 18:31–32). It was on this rebuilt altar that God rained down fire and put the Baal-worshipers to shame (verses 38–39).

We need to therefore understand a broken altar in the days of the Old Testament spoke of a broken relationship with the Lord, caused by idolatry,

of backsliding and of neglecting fellowship with the Lord. For this reason Israel endured judgement at the hand of the Lord. They had forsaken the ways of the Lord. They had forsaken His Truth and His Law.

When the Lord speaks of restoring the “spiritual” altar, it means a number of things. Considering the altar is a place of sacrifice and of consecration, it means we need to get back to a point in our relationship with the Lord of submission, where we yield, where we surrender and we die to the self. It is about consecration by the Blood. After all, Jesus said: 24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”

An altar means that we do not keep anything for ourselves. An altar means that we realize that we are here on earth for God. An altar means that our life is for God, that God is our life, and that the meaning of our life is God. So we put everything on the altar. We are not here making a name for ourselves; we are putting everything on the altar for the sake of His name.

What then is the modern day version of the altar? It is the cross. Upon the cross hangs the Messiah by whose Blood there was a remittance of sin (repentance), yet His sacrifice also served as a voluntary act of worship and dedication. He is also the Anointed One and the Eternal Flame. By His sprinkled blood we are free and by His Blood there is the sacrifice made one and for all. The entire altar of burned offering as seen in the Old Testament is thus a spiritual type of Jesus on the cross.

We are therefore called to carry the cross and deny ourselves. To carry the cross therefore means to be that willing offering - a sacrifice as Jesus was a sacrifice - so that His fires may burn and we walk in reconciliation with the Lord. As we offer up ourselves on the altar of the cross, we show our dedication, loyalty, devotion and faithfulness unto the Lord Almighty. We then become a pleasing offering unto Him, and we become a sweet aroma.

To restore the altar, speaks of restoring worship, and the heart of worship is relationship. God has not called us to follow a religion, or a man-made system or rules and regulations and traditions. He calls us to follow Him, and to be **WORSHIPPERS OF SPIRIT AND TRUTH**. Worship is far more than raising your hands and lifting your voice to the Lord, it is about a heart seeking the Lord, a heart loving the Lord, and a heart yearning for the Lord. King David had such a heart for the Lord.

The Hebrew word for worship is Shachah - "to depress, meaning prostrate (in homage to royalty or God): bow (self) down, crouch, fall down (flat), humbly beseech, do (make) obeisance, do reverence, make to stoop, worship."

There are three Greek words for worship. They are a) Proskuneo (to fawn or crouch, pay homage, it originally carried with it the idea of subjects falling down to kiss the ground before a king or kiss their feet) b) Sebomai (to reverence, hold in awe), c) Latreuo (to render service of homage).

True worship therefore begins with a deep respect or reverence for God, a frame of heart and an attitude. It speaks of reverent submission, and bowing before the true King of kings. Worship is about a lifestyle. It is about intimate relationship. It is about consecration and being set apart for His Glory and to His Glory.

We can only walk in such reverence, in such a manner and in such a relationship once we die to the Self, once we lay down our crowns and in love and Spirit to seek Him and follow Him above all else.

To restore the altar means to return to the value, importance and power of the Covenant. At times, we forget we have a covenant with the Lord, and we may forget what this means. To restore this altar is about honouring that Covenant and being zealous, committed and true to that Covenant. Covenant speaks about revering the Lord, revering the Blood and being true to the Blood of the Lamb.

Remember, an altar was often built to commemorate an encounter with God. An altar is ultimately where we meet and encounter God. There at that point where we lay down the Self, where we sacrifice our old life and we seek His Way above our way, there, at that moment, we meet God. For at the point of submission, of yielding, and submitting, we draw close to God and He draws closer to us.

To restore the altar speaks therefore speaks of walking again in the true path of the Lord, of the Kingdom and in Truth. It speaks of abiding in the Lord, led by the Spirit, and seeking no other god. It speaks thus of intimacy, of taking the hand of the Lord, of forsaking the unclean, uncommon, immoral, unholy and counterfeit ways of the world.

Yes, as Elijah restored the altar, so we need to restore the altar in our lives. We need to come back to the Lord and we need to return to His heart. We need to come out of our worldly and religious ways and to bow before Him. It is about crowning Him again Lord of lords of our lives, of seeking His Kingdom and righteousness above all.

This is the restoring of the altar – a restoration of relationship, of Kingdom, of His Way, of His Truth and of His Glory in our lives. It is about true worship, and beholding Him as the eternal King. Truly, there at the altar of our sacrifice we must cry out to God “we will have no other Lord and you shall be our first love!” At the altar, we encounter Him, we revere Him, we bow, and we follow by His Spirit. For in our modern age, true relationship with the Lord, true worship, true intimacy, and the value of the Covenant of Blood has become lost and blurred in the midst of all the noise, smoke and mirrors of religion and traditions and worldly attractions. It is time to restore the altar. It is time to restore God on the throne of our hearts, for then as a worthy sacrifice unto the Lord the fire shall fall and cleanse, purify and refine us. For then, as we become a “pleasing offering” by the fire of heaven and the cleaning of the Blood, we worship Him in Spirit and Truth.

Restoring the Altar Part 2 – The Foundation

Restoring the altar speaks about restoring our relationship with the Lord. This means we must be rooted, grounded and settled in the Lord. Restoring the altar means restoring our foundation. And the foundation of our very existence, faith, action and thought must be Jesus and no else.

It says in Psalm 11: If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do? Indeed, if our lives are built upon any foundation except Jesus, then surely we shall struggle to overcome the ways of the world and we shall surely be swept away by the tides and the storms of our uncertain times. Indeed, what can the righteous do if the foundations are destroyed?

For this reason the devil and this world seeks to destroy the foundation of marriages, of our faith, of families and societies. And that foundation is Jesus. The devil can only do so by causing us to build not on the true foundation, but rather seek our own kingdom, to follow our own paths and our ways. Every house has a firm foundation. Without it, the house would quickly fall down. Similarly, our faith has a firm foundation-Jesus Christ. That foundation can and must never be shaken.

Matthew 7 speaks about being built upon the Rock of Jesus: 24 “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. 26 “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

Indeed, it is foolish not to build upon the rock of Jesus. It is foolishness if the Lord is not your foundation. For indeed, if He is not your foundation, then Psalm 11 rings true, what then can be done once the storms come and the wind blows and beats against you. This reminds of 1 Corinthians 1: 20 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 22 For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Indeed, restoring the altar is about restoring the foundation of our Covenant, which is Jesus. We must abide in Him so that He abides in us (John 15). How is your foundation? Is your faith build upon religion and tradition? Is your life build upon your own needs and wants? What is the

foundation of your relationships, your life as a whole and your spiritual walk? If it is not Jesus, then the foundation, therefore the altar, needs to be restored.

It says in Job 4: 'Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker? 18 If He puts no trust in His servants, If He charges His angels with error, 19 How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, Whose foundation is in the dust, Who are crushed before a moth? 20 They are broken in pieces from morning till evening; They perish forever, with no one regarding. 21 Does not their own excellence go away? They die, even without wisdom.'

Indeed, according to Job 4, it is a frightening thing if we fashion foundations after our own desires, wants, needs and selfish ways. It is indeed frightening if this world is our foundation, or if wealth grounds us, or if we place our hope in man or even the devil. They shall not overcome. Only those who follow and trust in the Lord will overcome. And this is also the crux of the message as to be found in the seven letters to the churches in Revelations.

It says in 1 Corinthians 3: For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Let us also take heed of 2 Timothy 2 (NKJV): 19 Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." 20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. 21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

Yes, the foundation of Jesus will always stand, and we are called to be vessels used to His Glory by building upon the eternal foundation. And we can only build and remain on the foundation when we depart from all iniquity.

We also need to be reminded of Hebrews 6: 19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

Those who follow the Lord can be assured and be at peace for the Living Lord, by His Word, will forever be our life anchor – immovable, infallible, incorruptible and always faithful! What a hope and what a blessing to know that God, the defender of Israel and the defender of His children, is indeed with us and not against us (Romans 8:31), and that in the storms and in the still waters, He remains our anchor that grounds us and that keeps us steady and who will keep us on course.

Jesus died and rose from the grave, tearing the veil before the Holy of Holies so that we the redeemed by His blood are saved, and that we have access to the throne room of God and that this Mighty God truly and undoubtedly anchors us. No matter the storms, no matter the winds of life, no matter the lashing rains of trouble and strife, no matter the heat of the sun, God anchors us, God keeps us from sinking and God keeps us from being shattered against the rocks of our hardships.

When we arise and when we sleep, we may know and we may take hope that indeed, we can be still for He is God and God is divine and moves in His holy ways for the good of His children. For we need not worry about the anchor, just as a captain of a ship needs not worry if the anchor will fulfil its purpose. A captain will lower the anchor and completely trust that the anchor will ground the ship and keep the ship steady. Just so we need not doubt in the Lord or question Him or ponder if He knows what He is doing, no, we must only be still, be full of hope, faith and love for God remains true to His children.

And indeed, when it comes to God, we, who are being anchored, are but small on the oceans of life while God is great, good and gracious. We do not have to fear – as Jesus calmed the storms (Matthew 8:23-27), just so we can remain at rest, anchored and secured in the Lord who is our loving God and our fortress, our stronghold and our deliverer, our shield, in whom we take refuge, who subdues peoples under us (Psalm 144).

Glory to God! When God is our rock and our fortress, when He is our anchor and when He is our hope, then the challenges, the obstacles, the fears and the worry of this life pales. In the days of rain and in the days of sunshine, when we are faced with famine or feasting, God is our refuge, and under His wing we take shelter (Psalm 91) and we can know, yes we can know, that nothing will separate us from His love (Romans 8:37-39).

With God as our rock and our anchor, we can rejoice with David when he said in Psalm 23: 6 Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Of the Lord it is written: Psalm 102:25 Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands.

And also ... Deuteronomy 32:3-5: 3 I will proclaim the name of the Lord. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! 4 He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.

Yes, we need to hold onto Jesus. Believers of this modern age are confronted with vast cultural shifts, while many of us are also struggling with conflicted morals, ideas, and desires. This is after all the story of the world – always trying to adapt and to conform to the changes in society. But despite all the

upheavals in the world, we can and are called to maintain our footing and direction by standing upon the foundation of Jesus – He who is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

If we hold onto the Lord as our Foundation, then we hold onto the promise of Matthew 25 (NKJV): 31 “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. 33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world ...

Jesus is the Truth and He must remain our foundation. He alone we must follow. Not dogma or doctrine. Hold onto God – The way, truth and life. What are we fighting for? JESUS! He is the Truth. He is and has always been and will always be the Son of the Father who has redeemed all mankind to heaven. As long as God remains the centre of our focus, He the one around which all flows, then we cannot lose our way. Is there any other way but God and is there any other truth? God is absolute in who He is – therefore His truth is absolute and doesn’t change as man changes or as society’s changes.

To restore the altar is a cry from heaven for us to return to the Father. It is time that we behold Him again, love Him, worship Him and make Him our highest priority. It is a cry for the restoration of the foundation.

We run around day after day, sweating and labouring to build careers, to become happy and to even do good religious works – yet we are so busy that we have neglected our First Love. We have betrayed Him by not seeking Him but seeking so many other things that distracts us. What is our greatest treasure? What is our greatest of delights? What shall we die for? Whose kingdom are we building? Are we simply running after wind and idols to fulfil our lives or are we willing to pursue the Lord above anything else? It is time to get back to Him, worship Him alone and love Him as our greatest love.

The Lord is putting a New Song in the hearts of His Bride. It is that song sung in Revelations 5. It is the song sung to Jesus, He who is the Truth. He is calling the Bride back from our state of being neither hot nor cold. The Bride is rising from her slumber, tired of complacency and familiarity. It is time for those who hunger for God and not man’s ways to stand up for truth.

To restore the altar calls for a people worshipping, abiding and beholding the Lord as the sure foundation. The last 2000 years the Holy Spirit has come powerfully to guide us in our walk with the Lord, empowering and

equipping. If we seek Him, the Great I Am, we shall again walk in restorative power to drive back darkness and bring light.

The Lord is so willing and ready to meet one's need. Where one's need meets God's power, then spiritual mountains are moved. Where need and faith collide, where need and hunger meet, where desire and thirst mingle, then God's hand moves and His glory is revealed. When this need of the people is brought before God (people willing to go up the mountain) then He moves in such manner as the day that Moses went up the mountain. Wherever I go and speak to the saints, this unquenchable and continuous hunger is evident for a real and intimate meeting with God.

It is time again for the Bride to be led to the feet of God and away from our own man-made visions, programmes, teachings and way of doings this. Jesus is all and in all. He is the only answer. The words of Jesus rings so true today that the harvest is ripe yet the workers are few. We need to pray that God will raise up His army because the need and work is too great, it is really as if this desire for God has become out of control - this is because as evil rises, so the world will fail more to satisfy man's spirit.

We must just be those vessels through whom God can work, making ourselves available, never being the answer but being the marker that points to the truth. God is pouring Himself out, greater and greater as prophesied by Joel. This I know: God is so ready and so willing to meet His people - really to meet them face to face. The Lord is coming down to touch His children, to meet with them and for them to have a real encounter so that they can know who He is.

Those who are walking in the Spirit, who restores the altar and we abides in Him, are those who shake the very foundations of Satan's kingdom by simply living, breathing and fighting for the truth - it is they who dare to abide in the Holy of Holies; it is they who dare to challenge for their claim to the land; it is they who fear only the Lord; it is they who stand with the high praises in their mouth and the double edged sword in their hand; it is they who live in the dangerous, seeking to set those free in darkness; it is they who seek to destroy Babylon, Egypt and Rome; it is they who will not rest until the Lord's banner is raised high.

This is the Bride, the true Crusaders, the David warriors, the Samuel priests and the Joshua conquerors. These are the freedom fighters. They shall be attacked, but the victory is already won. Victory was claimed 2000 years ago. We just take back what is ours. If the devil doesn't like it, just too bad - we shall resist, wrestle and challenge for we serve the Almighty King. Who can be against us? The Lord is seeking His true army to make a stand. Be strong, be true and hold onto the Lord who is our Defender and Strong Tower.

God is now calling His Bride to choose His way or the way of man. He is now calling us to step out of the walls of Babylon and into the light of truth. We love to talk about the unity of the Bride yet that unity is not the unity of denominations, but the unity of those serving Him in Spirit and Truth.

To restore the altar implies sacrifice and it will take courage and boldness. This world is not easy. In the workplace, in the cities, generally everywhere, there is a great rise of things that stand against Him. Yet we must choose to live for Him and not for the world. The greater the darkness, the greater the light!

It is no longer about us, for man has had His time in the sun. It is about Him, His Kingdom and His glory. To restore the altar means restoring Him on the throne of our heart.

There is no more time to be indecisive or to be lukewarm. There is no more time to want to do our will and still serve Him. Now is the time to restore the altar, restore the foundation and to walk in intimacy with the Lord.

Restoring the Altar Part 3 - Jesus the Foundation of Righteousness and Justice

Matthew 6: 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

When the Lord speaks about restoring the altar, it is about restoring justice and righteousness. We are built upon Jesus and Jesus is the foundation of righteousness and justice. And justice implies honouring God's Truth, God's Way and God's morals, values and standards.

Psalm 9: 7 But the Lord shall remain and continue forever; He has prepared and established His throne for judgment. 8 And He will judge the world in righteousness (rightness and equity); He will minister justice to the peoples in uprightness. 9 The Lord also will be a refuge and a high tower for the oppressed, a refuge and a stronghold in times of trouble (high cost, destitution, and desperation).

In Psalm 97 it says the following: 2 Clouds and darkness are round about Him [as at Sinai]; righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.

Since Jesus is our foundation and our Rock that we build our lives on, then according to Psalm 97 He is thus the epitome of righteousness and justice. If we then build our lives not on Him, then we walk not in His righteousness and justice. Justice speaks of God's order, laws, commandments, and truth. Righteousness speaks of God's redemption and salvation through the Blood of Jesus. There is only one way to walk in righteousness and justice and that is by following the way of Jesus.

If we seek justice and righteousness in any other way, then we are not built upon the foundation of God, and thus our entire lives are built on quick sand. We are at great peril if we ignore the truth that God is a God of Law and Order.

For a long time the church insists there is no more law to follow when it comes to serving God. Yes, we follow not the physical 613 Laws of Moses, but Jesus is the fulfilment of the Higher Law. Our God is not a God of lawlessness and disorder. He is the Judge. He is a Lord of Truth, and the constitution of His Kingdom is not determined by cultural shifts and humanism. To restore the altar is to return to God as the Lord of Law and Order, for this is the way of the Kingdom. If this is not so, we do as we see fit, and this is dangerous and this exalts man above God.

In Isaiah 11 it speaks of Jesus that will be the branch that shoots forth out of Jesse. And it says of Jesus in the following verses: 4 But with righteousness and justice shall He judge the poor and decide with fairness for the meek, the poor, and the downtrodden of the earth; and He shall smite the earth and the oppressor with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.

Jesus is the Lord of righteousness and justice. He is the capstone and the One who defines, upholds and establishes all righteousness and justice. If we walk therefore walk not in His glorious ways, then we shall be shattered for we walk not in accordance to His righteousness and justice. We thus stand in direct opposition to the throne room of God. To restore the altar is to return to the Lord's justice, to His righteousness, His Truth and His Way.

Listen to what Jesus says about the Holy Spirit in John 16: And when He comes, He will convict and convince the world and bring demonstration to it about sin and about righteousness (uprightness of heart and right standing with God) and about judgment: 9 About sin, because they do not believe in Me [trust in, rely on, and adhere to Me]; 10 About righteousness (uprightness of heart and right standing with God), because I go to My Father, and you will see Me no longer; 11 About judgment, because the ruler (evil genius, prince) of this world [Satan] is judged and condemned and sentence already is passed upon him.

The Spirit will come to convince the world of judgment [justice] and righteousness. The Spirit after all was sent to show us the way to Jesus who is justice and righteousness. We find therefore our righteousness in Jesus, and we discover justice in Jesus who has defeated Satan on the cross. But we if we walk not with God, then we come under the sway of Satan, and thus judgement. This is then part of the Holy Spirit's work on earth – to bring us into the maturity of understanding and walking in God's righteousness and justice.

Regarding the ministry of righteousness and justice, encapsulated by Jesus who is the foundation of all things and thus the capstone of our faith, the Son of the Living God taught on His ministry as spoken about in Isaiah 11, and that was upheld by the Holy Spirit, in the Beatitudes of Matthew 5.

Isaiah 11 the following: But with righteousness and justice shall He judge the poor and decide with fairness for the meek, the poor, and the downtrodden of the earth; and He shall smite the earth and the oppressor with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.

The righteousness and justice of Jesus speaks about fairness, about brotherly love, about liberty from oppression, about holiness and it stands directly against wickedness that destroys and kills and steals [the work of the enemy]. To walk in the righteousness and justice of Jesus is all about walking in God's Truth, in His love, in His kindness, faith, and hope. To therefore stand upon the foundation of Jesus, is to uphold righteousness and justice, which is to uphold all that Jesus stands for!

To restore the altar therefore speaks about walking in righteousness (right standing with God's Truth and Ways), holiness, purity and truth. After all, our God is a holy God and we are called to be holy!

And what Jesus stands for is what the Holy Spirit confirms and convicts us of because the Spirit was sent to lead us to Jesus so that we can build our lives on the true foundation of righteousness and justice. After all, the gifts of the Spirit of Galatians 5 is the manifested fruits of those who walk in the ways of Jesus, and whose lives are thus build upon the true foundation of righteousness and justice. Those who walk in righteousness and justice are those who manifest the fruits of the Spirit.

Thus, Matthew 5 also makes it clear therefore that those who walk in righteousness and justice, and therefore manifest the fruits of the Spirit, are those who seek the ways of the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes is all about the manifested inner working by the Spirit within a believer, who walks in accordance to righteousness and justice, and thus abide in Jesus the Capstone. For those who walk in such a manner, will be poor in spirit, will be meek, will be a peacemaker, will be pure of heart, and will stand strong when wickedness and evil assail them.

Those who thus walk in God's righteousness and justice, who therefore stands upon the foundation of Jesus, they will then begin to manifest the fruits of the Spirit, and they will begin to walk in the ways of the Beatitudes, and they will exercise by the inner working of the Spirit to walk in greater divine knowledge, virtue, godliness, brotherly affection, steadfastness, self-control and faith and love.

2 Peter 1 begins to become a reality for those whose life is built upon Jesus, therefore those restoring the altar. 5 For this very reason, adding your diligence [to the divine promises], employ every effort in exercising your faith to develop virtue (excellence, resolution, Christian energy), and in [exercising] virtue [develop] knowledge (intelligence), 6 And in [exercising] knowledge [develop] self-control, and in [exercising] self-control [develop] steadfastness (patience, endurance), and in [exercising] steadfastness [develop] godliness (piety), 7 And in [exercising] godliness [develop] brotherly affection, and in [exercising] brotherly affection [develop] Christian love. 8 For as these qualities are yours and increasingly abound in you, they will keep [you] from being idle or unfruitful unto the [full personal] knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).

These qualities are after all what the Lion of Judah stands for, upholds and teaches – He who is the capstone and who is RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTICE. However, none of this can be done without walking in the Holy Spirit. In Isaiah 11, it speaks of the Holy Spirit of wisdom, knowledge, counsel and might who will come upon Jesus. This was of course fulfilled when the Holy Spirit did come upon Jesus to empower the Son of God to walk in the righteousness and justice that flows from the throne room.

We also need to be reborn in the Spirit (John 3), in order for us to walk in the ways of Jesus, and thus in the ways of righteousness and justice. To restore the altar is all about restoring our relationship with the Lord, returning to His Ways and His Way is one of righteousness and justice.

God wants us to walk in righteousness and justice. It says in a rather famous passage in Hosea 2 about a future covenant [which is now the Covenant of Grace]: 19 And I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. 20 I will even betroth you to Me in stability and in faithfulness, and you shall know (recognize, be acquainted with, appreciate, give heed to, and cherish) the Lord. The foundation of God's Covenant is thus righteousness and justice! Righteousness for we have been made right by the Blood of Jesus, and justice for Satan has been defeated so that man can walk in the liberty of God.

Throughout the Old Testament, justice was a very important theme. The Law of Moses taught the nation of Israel about justice. And so we find severe punishment meted out when God's laws were broken. Israel had to understand that with God holiness is important, and that being fair, honest, truthful and upright in one's behaviour is of a key concern. Therefore, there were consequences when breaking the laws of Moses, for God is a God of justice and He will uphold His laws and truths.

God acted strictly according to the Laws of Moses when justice did not prevail in taking care of the poor, the widows or the elderly. He was strict about idolatry, immoral practices and false worship. Do we think God has changed? Of course not! He feels the same today for He never changes. We just don't have to slaughter animals as a sin offering to be forgiven, for Jesus is the High Priest who died for our sins so that God's wrath - meant for us as sinners - was poured out on the cross. Yet we must still uphold justice and walk in righteousness.

Satan is the one who first rebelled against God's laws, and he wants man to walk in rebellion, idolatry and spiritual apostasy. Judgement has already been spoken out against Satan, for God's laws are holy and must be upheld. The instigator of the rebellion - Satan - has already been judged, and this revelation is what the Spirit imparts to us. We must know that there are consequences if we follow in the footsteps of the judged, and that since justice will prevail against the law breaker, so justice will prevail against those who follow not in God's ways.

A country has many laws, upheld by the Constitution, and there is judgment when we fail to uphold these laws and break them. Ultimately, we have to remember that the Laws of God is Supreme to all laws, and if we break these laws and walk not in God's ways, justice will and needs to prevail. God cannot go against His own Supreme Laws, for then He Himself is a deceiver and a liar.

Sadly, since many unbelievers willingly deny the Lord and His Ways, they find themselves under judgement from the Divine Judge. And to put it simply, such justice is when we fall into the hands of the schemes and plans of the enemy and to the destruction of our own ways (Romans 1).

This is why it speaks of the foundation of the throne room being righteousness and justice. God is a Holy Lord, and He must and will uphold His Name and His Heavenly Constitution. We can only truly abide in His will and His constitution when under the Blood of Jesus, but then we are called to walk in His Ways and in His Truth.

For the unbeliever, rebellion and idolatry only leads to turmoil and spiritual decay. How important for man to come to the Lord, for there is judgement at the end of all things by which all will be judged. After all, the foundation of His throne room is righteousness and justice.

We cannot deny it. God is a God of grace and mercy, but His Will and Truth will be upheld, and only in the Blood of Jesus can we find our true righteousness and walk in justice. How the Lord is calling for a people who walk according to His righteousness and justice by their action, speech, conduct and faith.

We are called to be His ambassadors, upholding His Truth and Justice for all, which means we must know the heart of God. If we truly follow God, we will be concerned about abortions (which is an injustice to the baby), same sex marriages (an injustice to God's Laws), abuse of women and children, abuse of animals, divorces, unfair business deals, the poor, the homeless, the destitute, widows, orphans and the sick.

God cares about such matters, and He wants justice to reign supreme. Oppression is an injustice, exploitation is an injustice, breaking God's laws is an injustice, and walking in the ways of the devil is an abomination.

It is time that we as believers – those who walk by the Spirit and Truth – to stand up for justice, to walk in righteousness and to seek the liberty for an enslaved world. This is after all the foundation of the Throne Room and the heart of the Father and why Jesus shed His Blood. For then we restore the altar.

After all, the Scriptures testify this is the heart of the Father. Leviticus 19: 15 'You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor. And also ... John 7: 24: 24 Be honest in your judgment and do not decide at a glance (superficially and by appearances); but judge fairly and righteously.

Let us then build our foundation upon the true Rock of Jesus, and by doing so, walk in God's just and right ways to His Glory and for His Glory so that the oppressed, downtrodden, abused, enslaved and mistreated may be set free by His love.

And then we shall begin to restore the altar.

Restoring the Altar Part 4 – Keeping the Fires Burning

To truly understand the significance of restoring the altar, we visit *Leviticus 6: The Law of the Burnt Offering*: 8 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 9 “Command Aaron and his sons, saying, ‘This is the law of the burnt offering: The burnt offering shall be on the hearth upon the altar all night until morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it. 10 And the priest shall put on his linen garment, and his linen trousers he shall put on his body, and take up the ashes of the burnt offering which the fire has consumed on the altar, and he shall put them beside the altar. 11 Then he shall take off his garments, put on other garments, and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place. 12 And the fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not be put out. And the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order on it; and he shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings. 13 A fire shall always be burning on the altar; it shall never go out.

In Leviticus 6, the Lord commanded the priests to keep the fires on the altar burning – this was a sign of the continuous presence of the Lord (Number 15). The burnt offering is one of the oldest and most common offerings in history. It’s entirely possible that Abel’s offering in Genesis 4:4 was a burnt offering, although the first recorded instance is in Genesis 8:20 when Noah offers burnt offerings after the flood. God ordered Abraham to offer his son, Isaac, in a burnt offering in Genesis 22, and then provided a ram as a replacement. After suffering through nine of the ten plagues, Pharaoh decided to let the people go from bondage in Egypt, but his refusal to allow the Israelites to take their livestock with them in order to offer burnt offerings brought about the final plague that led to the Israelites’ delivery (Exodus 10:24-29).

The Hebrew word for “burnt offering” actually means to ascend, literally to “go up in smoke.” The smoke from the sacrifice ascended to God, “a soothing aroma to the LORD” (Leviticus 1:9). Technically, any offering burned over an altar was a burnt offering, but in more specific terms, a burnt offering was the complete destruction of the animal (except for the hide) in an effort to renew the relationship between the Holy God and sinful man. With the development of the law, God gave the Israelites specific instructions as to the types of burnt offerings and what they symbolised.

According to Law, the priest had to make sure that there was a continuous burnt offering unto the Lord. The burning fires also served as a day and night sweet aroma to the Lord and served as an indication of the people’s commitment to serving and worshipping the Great I AM.

Just as the burnt offering was a sign of general atonement - a request for renewed relationship with God – just so we must also be a living burnt offering unto the Lord. It says in Romans 12: 12 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of

your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Just as that offering was on the altar, and just as that offering was consumed by fire, so we need to offer ourselves up the Lord and we need to be consumed by His fire [Holy Spirit/His Glory/His Presence]. But this should be a continuous process where just as the fire on the altar never had to go out [so there always needed to be an offering], just so we need to remain as a constant offering unto God so that His fire may continue to burn and dwell in us. This calls for constant submission, yielding, and abiding in the Lord. To restore to the altar calls for us to constantly behold the Lord and abide in His presence where He becomes all in our lives, all the time.

To RESTORE THE ALTAR MEANS to be a continuous living sacrifice unto the Lord, so that we may continually be a sweet fragrance unto the Lord. We must continually lift up our lives to the Lord to His Glory and for His Glory.

It says in the New Testament that we must not to quench fire of the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Now, taking into consideration that according to Romans 12 we must be like a living offering unto the Lord, and if the fire that burns within us is the fire of Holy Spirit, therefore we must be like that offering as in Leviticus 6 where the fire never burns out. Therefore the Lord says we must be on a fire for Him as a burnt offering [living sacrifice], 24 hours a day, and seven days a week!

This is what it means to restore the altar. It means to restore our commitment to God, to rediscover our passion, our zeal and loyalty unto Him. And we can only be on a fire for God like the burnt offering in the days of old by allowing the fire of the Holy Spirit to burn and consume us 24 hours a day, seven days a week! We need to constantly be in submission to the Lord and allow Him to consume us so that He may increase and we decrease.

If the altar is thus not restored, it means we are no longer continuously being a living sacrifice for the Lord. Anybody who has ever stoked a fire will know it is hard work. You need to constantly be aware of the fire, and what the fire is doing. Indeed, to feed the fire you need fuel it so that it can continue to burn. We are as the living sacrifices are the fuel for the Holy Spirit's fire so that the Shekinah flames of God can burn within us, all the time. A fire can only burn when there is fuel, so the Holy Spirit can only burn in us when we are the fuel unto the Lord as the living sacrifice.

We read in 1 Kings 18 how the Prophet Elijah went up the mountain Carmel to challenge the prophets of Baal. Elijah set up an altar to make an offering unto the Lord. And when he prayed, fire fell from heaven and consumed the offering. There can be no fire unless there is an offering! The Holy Spirit cannot burn or consume us unless we are first willing to be a living sacrifice unto the Lord. Our Lord is an all-consuming fire – He needs to consume us all the time.

Unless we are willing to first sacrifice ourselves and unless we are willing to first give ourselves unto the Holy Spirit, and unless we are prepared to be a living offering unto God, then the fire from heaven can't fall and the fire of God cannot burn with us. When the Lord therefore says that the fire of the burnt offering must keep burning 24 hours a day, it means that WE must therefore be an offering 24 hours a day so that the Lord can continuously burn within us. THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS THEREFORE TO RESTORE THE ALTAR.

But once the fire begins to burn within us, the Lord says then we must continue to be a living offering unto Him so that the fire can continue to burn in our lives. So often we offer ourselves unto God, allowing for the Holy Spirit to burn within us, but then we will become consumed by the world or by the self or even the ways of the devil, until the fire within dies.

You see, we cannot be consumed by both the Lord and by the world. One is holy fire, the other is profane. One is light, and the other darkness. It says in 1 John 1: 5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. And also ... 1 John 2: 15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

We cannot be a burnt offering only for a day or a couple of hours! We can only be a true living burnt offering unto God when we allow His fire to continuously burn within us. But the fire will only continuously burn the more we feed the fire, which means the more we sacrifice ourselves the greater the Presence of God and the greater the sweet aroma! A true disciple after all denies himself and carries his cross. As we thus deny ourselves and live only for God, how that flame will burn and burn!

We need to constantly work at becoming more like the Lord so that the fire can rage deeper and higher within us. *2 Peter 1: By means of these He has bestowed on us His precious and exceedingly great promises, so that through them you may escape [by flight] from the moral decay (rottenness and corruption) that is in the world because of covetousness (lust and greed), and become sharers (partakers) of the divine nature. 5 For this very reason, adding your diligence [to the divine promises], employ every effort in exercising your faith to develop virtue (excellence, resolution, Christian energy), and in [exercising] virtue [develop] knowledge (intelligence), 6 And in [exercising] knowledge [develop] self-control, and in [exercising] self-control [develop] steadfastness (patience, endurance), and in [exercising] steadfastness [develop] godliness (piety), 7 And in [exercising] godliness [develop] brotherly affection, and in [exercising] brotherly affection [develop] Christian love. 8 For as these qualities are yours and increasingly abound in*

you, they will keep [you] from being idle or unfruitful unto the [full personal] knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One). 9 For whoever lacks these qualities is blind, [spiritually] shortsighted, seeing only what is near to him, and has become oblivious [to the fact] that he was cleansed from his old sins. 10 Because of this, brethren, be all the more solicitous and eager to make sure (to ratify, to strengthen, to make steadfast) your calling and election; for if you do this, you will never stumble or fall. 11 Thus there will be richly and abundantly provided for you entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

God is an all-consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29). This means that God wants to burnt and consume us completely and utterly just as the fire consumed the burnt offering of Leviticus 6. Remember, a burnt offering was the complete destruction of the animal (except for the hide).

God wants to consume us completely but we need to be a living sacrifice who will allow God to consume us completely all day. We need to be completely and utterly submitted to the Lord so that His fire by the Spirit may rage within and so burn away the dross of our sins. Only then will the gold of godliness manifest!

The problem is that we want to live for Him one day and the next day we don't want to live for Him. One day we walk in the light and the next day we are in the darkness. One day we are doing what He tells us to do and the next day we are not doing what He tells us to do. God has called us to be a living offering where the fire of the Holy Spirit burns indeed 24 hours a day, seven days a week! This means that for 24 hours a day you are under the submission of the Holy Spirit, and you are submitted to the Lord's will and you are allowing for the Holy Spirit to consume you 24 hours a day.

To be a true living offering means living for God 24 hours a day and you are not allowing God's Presence to be tainted. To allow the fires to keep burning, you need to allow yourself to be completely changed in the image of God every day in every way because then we are an offering on fire for the Messiah!

We are called to preach the Good News, in accordance to the Great Commission, and to let our light shine (Matthew 5). We are called to walk in God's authority so that we can establish God's Kingdom in the midst of darkness in the hearts of those we are walking in darkness. We therefore cannot walk in darkness and in the next day try to walk in the light. We cannot wander in love and the next moment hate. We cannot wander in the Spirit while living for the flesh. We cannot compromise by serving the world and by serving God. We cannot live for the self and also live for God. We have to be conformed into the image of Jesus. We need to become formed and we need to become more like God every day.

So to keep the fires burning 24 hours a day speaks of the constant work of the Holy Spirit in our lives so that we can become constantly more like God. But what is happening is that we live for God and then we also try to serve

the world. This is idolatry. One day the fire on the altar burns bright, and the next minute the fire is dying. We as the living offering must always be on fire for God, and not allow idolatry and the world or the flesh to quench the fire of the Spirit! We cannot be one minute a sweet aroma and the next minute smell like a pile of ashes!

We need to decide what we want to do. We are either going to walk in the manifestation of His holiness and righteousness because we have already been made holy by the Blood of Jesus or we must walk in the flesh. Manifest holiness and righteousness means keeping the fire burning, which means keeping the Holy Spirit operating and functioning in us 24 hours a day!

This is the great work of the Holy Spirit – burning in us all the time so that we can change in His Presence and become more like Christ. By the inner working of the Spirit we can always walk in the truth, never compromise, never deceived and victorious! It says in 2 Timothy 1: 6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

We have indeed been given the task to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, meaning we have an obligation and a duty by choice and by decision to keep fighting the good fight of faith and to keep on walking the narrow road of truth and life. The Holy Spirit has been poured out to aid us, but we need to allow the Spirit to work by giving the Spirit room to operate in our lives. Then the flame within us will be fanned and we can start walking in our spiritual gifts and callings.

We as God's priests have an obligation and a duty to keep His flame within us burning through obedience, faithfulness, loyalty and dedication unto God. We must never therefore quench the fire of the Holy Spirit, for then we quench the operation and function of the Spirit in our lives.

Indeed, these days we are making too many excuses - we are trying to justify everything in terms of why we are not walking in God's glory. We are trying to find a purpose and a reason for why we cannot do things in God's will.

God says He is looking at the church and He is looking at His children and He is seeing so many 'offerings' where the fire burns one day and then for a while it is dead – sometimes for months or even years! This cannot be for we must either allow the Holy Spirit to consume us or we are going to allow the devil to consume us. We need to decide, otherwise we are going to be a burnt offering one day and the next day we are going to be like a pile of ashes. We need to decide what we are going to do, because if we decide to live for God then we need to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

Matthew 3: 11 "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in

his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

We can only walk in the fire of God [baptism] if we are a true and willing sacrifice. And by that fire of God, the Spirit will cause the old man to die and the new man to be reborn.

Now, consider the following. The coals that were taken from the Altar of Burned Offering served as the coals to be placed on the Altar of Incense. The Altar of Incense served as a symbolic lifting of prayers to the heavens, becoming like a sweet aroma to the Lord. If we want to keep the fires burning, then this means constant prayer (Ephesians 6), constant dedication, constant worship and constantly walking in His ways. Revelation 8:4: And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

Coals in the Bible spoke of about purification (repentance) but also judgment. In Isaiah 6, the angel of the Lord touched the lips of the prophet to bring forth purification and remittance of sin. Now Isaiah can pray and speak prophetically day and night just as if he had become the Altar of Incense. Isaiah 6: And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. 5And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" 6Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."

Saints, we must not grow tired of carrying the cross and we must not grow tired of prayer, worship, dedication, keeping our hearts open to repentance and walking in His Spirit. Now, here is the wonderful thing – when we carry the cross, we are covered by the shadow of Jesus who shadowed Simon – we are covered by the oil and blood stained beams of the cross – we are therefore under His covering. As we carry the cross, our backs bend in voluntary submission and worship, we stand UNDER the Covenant of the Blood, as shed on the cross.

In Jeremiah 33 the Lord says He has a covenant with us day and night. By keeping the fires burning and carrying the cross night and day, from early to late, we are honouring the Covenant and come under God's order. Yet, as we carry the cross, we also sacrifice our times, our agendas, our way and ourselves. We come UNDER His will and way and glory.

When we therefore keep the fires burning on the altar, meaning we walk day and night under and in His Covenant as living sacrifices, we will therefore also generate coals of fires spiritually to serve as a sweet aroma unto the Lord. By keeping the fires burning, we become a sweet aroma unto the Lord.

Still today, the Lord points out how many times do we not grow tired of carrying the cross and how many times do we not let the fires grow cold and how many times do we not shun the light of the Holy Spirit? We need to fan the flame by continually praying. Prayer is our communication with the Father and his communication with us. In order to maintain an active and growing relationship with someone, you must communicate with them. It says in I Thessalonians 5:17(KJV) to pray without ceasing. We need to be in constant fellowship with Him, praying, seeking Him, denying ourselves and walking in His presence.

As we remain a bruning sacrifice for the Lord, not allowing the flame of His Glory within us to die, then we shall restore at altar.

Let us be alive unto the Lord – a worthy vessel of sacrifice – to His honour and honour. For then the fire within will be a pure fire, not one which is profane by our immorality and idolatry.

Restoring the Altar Part 5 - A Covenant Reflecting God's Heart

The Church (the believers who worship in Spirit and Truth) has been called to bring the lost under the Covenant of the Lamb, while the devil is 'working' just as hard to destroy, deceive and devour the innocent. The devil wants the world to burn to the ground, but the Holy Spirit was sent so that we can walk in victory and lead others to be victorious.

We have been empowered, equipped and anointed not for self-gain, self-glorification, self-exaltation or even to achieve success, but to lead a broken world back to the Lord, thus to the Covenant and therefore to rebuild and restore the altar. To restore the altar calls for us as believers to firstly commit again to the Covenant of the Lord, to honour it, to stay true to the Covenant and to walk in the reality of the Covenant. And secondly, to honour the Covenant by fulfilling the Great Commission, which calls for evangelising and making disciples of all nations.

We as Gentiles by the sacrifice and ascension of Jesus stand under the New Covenant also referred to the Covenant of Grace for it is by grace that we have been saved by our faith in the Son of God. We have to remember a Covenant is an agreement. This agreement is taken very seriously by the Lord, for His Son had to die a brutal death in order for the Covenant to be sealed and to be brought into effect. By this Covenant the Lord is our Saviour, Redeemer and Deliverer and Lord, and by this covenant we are His sons and daughters who should faithfully love and follow and serve Him with all our hearts and minds.

Covenant comes from Latin origin (con venire), meaning a coming together. It presupposes two or more parties who come together to make a contract, agreeing on promises, stipulations, privileges, and responsibilities. The biblical words most often translated "covenant" are berit in the Old Testament and diatheke in the New Testament. The preferred meaning of this Old Testament word is bond; a covenant refers to two or more parties bound together. The New Testament word for covenant has usually been translated as covenant, but testimony and testament have also been used.

This spiritual struggle – if we can call it that since God is Sovereign above all – is over man's redemption or damnation. And such salvation or damnation is interlocked when a Covenant is made. We can either willingly submit to God or allow Him to make a covenant with us or we can give the devil a foothold and thus legal ground to operate in us. When we give him legal ground, we have a pact or agreement by which the devil can walk through our lives to devour and kill.

James 4 sums up our walk of victory or walk of shame - 7 So be subject to God. Resist the devil [stand firm against him], and he will flee from you. 8 Come close to God and He will come close to you. [Recognize that you are] sinners, get your soiled hands clean; [realize that you have been disloyal] wavering individuals with divided interests, and purify your hearts [of your spiritual adultery].

We are either going to draw closer to God, or we are going to allow the devil to draw closer to us. It is that simple. There is no rocket science involved. Either we make a covenant with God, or we dance with the devil. We cannot serve two masters.

To uphold the Covenant, therefore to restore the altar, calls for us to serve only one true Master, and none other. We cannot walk in light and darkness. We cannot serve God and Baal. We cannot serve God and this world. And yet this is what is happening in churches – we are violating the Covenant by serving two masters, and thus the altar is being broken down. We need to restore the altar by ridding our lives of all idolatry and apostasy, and seek God as our First Love above all.

At times we do not understand the importance and the power in the Covenant. We have a Covenant with the Lord, sealed by the Blood of Jesus. In that Covenant is our deliverance, healing and citizenship in heaven. By the Blood we are free from the bondages of sin, from the strongholds of the mind and of hell, and we are liberated in the Spirit to abide in a true and real relationship with God.

But just as important as to know what this covenant entails, is also to realise that we should only have one true covenant to a master, and no other covenant. We after all cannot serve two masters, for then we have two covenants. We cannot serve two masters, for this is idolatry. Matthew 6: 24: No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will stand by and be devoted to the one and despise and be against the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (deceitful riches, money, possessions, or whatever is trusted in).

Satan has been at 'work' to get mankind to a point of serving more than one master, therefore 'signing' various covenants. If we have a number of covenants then we walk in idolatry, therefore rebellion, therefore we stand a good chance of undergoing a state of spiritual apostasy. Rebellion after all is like the sin of witchcraft [sorcery]. How can we expect the Lord and the devil to have a share of one person? Again, light and dark cannot co-exist.

We cannot serve man and God. We cannot serve the kingdoms of the world and the Kingdom of Heaven. If we do, we bow before two altars. If we do so, we burn with God's fire and profane fire. This cannot be. It is time again that we return to the Covenant by committing our very lives again to the Lord, so that there is a cry in our hearts we will serve no other God and that He is our First Love and He is our Master and Lord!

There is only the Covenant with one spiritual master that should be in place – and that is with God. The other existing and abiding covenant on earth that has deep spiritual significance is that of the marriage, but marriage deals not with master and servant but it is an agreement of two becoming one.

We at times do not realise the power of the Covenant. By that agreement, we walk in victory and we are more than conquerors. Under the Blood of the Lamb, Satan's power has been disarmed and we walk in the grace not to sin.

The Lord reminds us that indeed life lies in the Blood. Leviticus 17:14: As for the life of all flesh, the blood of it represents the life of it; therefore I said to the Israelites, You shall partake of the blood of no kind of flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood. Whoever eats of it shall be cut off. A Covenant sealed by blood has been made since the ancient of days, with Jesus being the last great High Priest who shed His Blood so that we can be free from the yoke of slavery and darkness.

If the power of the covenant lies in the blood, then surely the devil will also try to attack the very blood [our life source] so that we are bound and yoked to unholy and deceptive covenants. And so the world has fallen into all kinds of occult rituals, making a covenant with the devil. People are these days literally "selling their souls" to be rich or famous.

How we need to pray for the Lord to show us if we have any unholy covenants in place! Yes, we can even have unholy covenants with man. God has called us to make a true and everlasting Covenant only with Him. The only other true covenant in the eyes of God is within marriage. Yet we remain yoked to this world because of unholy covenants, and so we open doors through which we can be influenced, and thus we are no longer under the sole influence of God.

It should be noted that in political circles treaties and alliances are often seen as a form of a covenant. This will certainly apply to nations or tribes. Israel was often in the Old Testament in trouble for making a treaty or alliance with another country, as they often sought help from Egypt. After all, their true and only Covenant was with God, who was and still is their only true helper, strength, and redeemer. Still today we as believers must always consider that within a personal capacity we can have no other pact or agreement or alliance with anyone except with God. Yes, we as believers are one because of the Blood of the Lamb and we are united because of our common alliance to God, but our Covenant remains with God. We are not called to make any other covenant or alliance with man. Yet this happens daily as we for example sign church memberships, and so we come into covenant with the presiding pastor who is head of the congregation, and so we bind ourselves to the regulations, traditions, laws and rules and doctrine of that denomination, except of staying true to the eternal Kingdom of Heaven.

To understand what is also means to restore the altar by honouring the Covenant, let us read Jeremiah 31: 31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah - 32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to

them, says the LORD. 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

In 1 Kings 19, the prophet Elijah stood on a mountain after wanting to hide in a cave. He had just confronted the false prophets of Baal upon Mount Carmel, but he was weighed down in his soul by those who wanted to take his life. We read from verse 13: 13 So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 14 And he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life."

Let us understand Elijah was both in distress because his own life was in danger but also because his people had no longer stayed true to the covenant of the Lord as forged on the mountain when God gave Moses the Law. As a prophet, this spiritual condition bothered Elijah deeply, for he was seeing how his people had turned away from the Lord and His commandments. Translations use the word "forsaken" or "violated" to describe Israel's backslidden ways.

In Jeremiah 31 we read of a prophecy regarding a future dispensation, and this prophecy was the fulfilment of the New Covenant. When one however looks at the purpose of the New Covenant, then sadly one also comes to that realisation, as it dawned upon Elijah, that we as God's people also continually violate and forsake the covenant of the Lord. After all, how faithfully and with what great fervour in love and compassion do we serve the Lord, and how faithful are we staying to the two greatest commandments?

To understand the full impact of how we so often forsake the Covenant, we take heed of the following in the prophecy by Jeremiah: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

If we thus read Jeremiah 31, we comprehend the purpose of the New Covenant was for God's very nature and character and thoughts and attitudes and motives to rule our hearts and mind. This was the true intent of the sacrifice of Jesus, so that we may be adopted into the Kingdom as sons and daughters and so be granted access into God's presence. And by

that access and by the Holy Spirit, the intent is for God's presence to increase in our lives so that we may become more like Him and know Him in a true and real relationship.

The New Covenant comes down to God wanting to put His "heart" so to speak in ours, so that our very lives may function and operate in His love and according to His complete and perfect will.

It says in Colossians 2:8-12 (New King James Version): 8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. 11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Under the Laws of Moses, the covenant between the people and the Lord required males to be physically circumcised. Under the New Covenant, the physical circumcision becomes one of a spiritual nature, where our old ways should be circumcised [cut away] so all that we do and think and feel speaks of love and glory for our Lord. This inner circumcision is what Jeremiah 31 alluded to, for it is a circumcision whereby the Lord says "I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts."

How the Lord longs for a people who will push aside their own self-centered ways and the darken nature of the world by moving in His love and light and life, for then truly He is our God and we are His people. When we stay true to the Covenant, then we stay true to His heart of love and we stay true to His truth and ways of holiness.

How the Lord longs for a people who will know Him and love Him deeply, so that we may love each other deeply in Spirit. How the Lord longs for a people who will see beyond their own needs to focus on the needs of a broken world, be it spiritual or physical. For has Jesus not Himself said for us to seek first the Kingdom of God?

By the covenant of grace we should be renewed in mind and have our hearts that were once alienated from Him to become circumcised, which means consecrated in love unto Him. The Lord has called us to walk in His love, life, truth and light. We can only do so when we seek Him above all.

So then, how do we violate the covenant? By not allowing God's will to be done in our lives, and not allowing for our hearts to be conformed to His beauty and love. Indeed, we betray the covenant when we persist in our old ways and live according to the selfish desire and intentions of our hearts. God's love speaks of a love for all, and it speaks of His Kingdom and of the lost and the physical and spiritual needy. The world is spiritually broken

and the fires of discontent, hatred and bitterness are consuming the nations. Where then are the sons and daughters of the Lord to sow love in times of chaos and hope in times of distress? We betray the covenant through our state of idolatry and have covenants with others.

How can we truly know the need of the world when we hold onto our ways of pride and selfishness, instead of allowing God's love to permeate our souls? We can only move in the Spirit and in love when we have come to that point where our stubborn hearts have been broken and circumcised so that we serve God with all that we have.

Ezekiel 11: 17 Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel."' 18 And they will go there, and they will take away all its detestable things and all its abominations from there. 19 Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, 20 that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God. 21 But as for those whose hearts follow the desire for their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their deeds on their own heads," says the Lord GOD.

Ezekiel was also speaking about a future time of a people being reconciled with God, and the prophet speaks of a time where the people will have one heart – a heart of flesh and not of stone - and the Spirit will be in them so that they may follow the Lord's truths and commandments.

Under the New Covenant, this prophecy has also come into fulfilment. By the outpouring of the Spirit, we are filled by the Spirit, and by the sacrifice of Jesus, we can be reconciled unto God. But how the Lord calls for us to put away the detestable things and all its abominations and how the Lord calls for us to walk according to a heart of flesh and not stone. The Lord desires a people who will follow and serve faithfully in love and truth. He wants a people who will serve each other and be like that the Good Samaritan who reached out to the helpless.

Indeed, we should take note that the Lord says He will give them one heart. God wants to give His people one heart, meaning that we allow God's heart of love and of grace and mercy and beauty and life to guide and determine our path and ways. For indeed, when we as His sons and daughters allow our stony hearts to be circumcised, then we allow God's heart to change our old ways. If we do so, then we stay true to the Covenant and we become one as a people under the New Covenant.

In order to undergo such a circumcision, it requires a state of brokenness in His people, where our hearts need to break for Him and His Kingdom and for the needy and the lost and the dying. It is a brokenness of love for we have to be humble and come to the end of our old and selfish ways. In this brokenness will be found humility and in submission we will come to the

feet of the Lord. There at the fountain of life we may drink and be healed. How we need to be healed from our own selfishness, lawlessness, rebellion, idolatry and wickedness. How we need to be healed from our spiritual apathy, from being idle, from being passive in our zealous love for God's truth and being hard of heart while the world is dying physically and spiritually.

Only out of such brokenness do we come to the end of ourselves and deny ourselves, and then repentance and a state of turning away from the bareness of this world. God wants to increase in us so that His healing will take hold of us.

And then we begin to restore the altar. And we restore when we return to God alone, and when we honour the Covenant of Grace.

Ah, praise the Lord! A time has come for the Potter's touch, and in that touch of brokenness where we abandon ourselves to Him we shall experience judgement grace – judgement in our sin, yet the grace to come to Him, to seek Him, to know Him and love Him deeply.

Out of that state of brokenness where we die unto ourselves we shall live for God. In that circumcision we shall come to an end in ourselves – being the greatest of idols – for we shall truly see and know the heart of God and there we shall find our way. And as we lay down our lives in brokenness, and as we lay down our ways in submission unto His authority, then His life will truly take hold of us. It is time for us to decrease and for Him to increase so that His will and not ours is done.

Truly, those who come to brokenness allow themselves to be broken, allowing the Spirit of Truth to lead and the Spirit of Truth to mend and the Spirit of Truth to guide. How we need the Spirit of burning and how we need to have a broken longing for a broken world. Let us submit, let us be obedient, let us follow Him, and let us cast away our idols and our earthly treasures – for there at the foot of the cross God takes His rightful place in our hearts.

May we stay true to the Covenant by the Blood of the Lamb, for then we shall restore the altar and be true worshippers in Spirit and Truth.

Restoring the Altar Part 6 – Beware the counterfeit and ‘familiar’ altars

God is calling for a people who more than ever walk in His Truth, in the way of His Kingdom and who truly follow Him. For we live a world of many pseudo religions, counterfeit movements and deceptive philosophies that lead people away from the absolute divine truth of God. We live in a world of counterfeit power, counterfeit altars and counterfeit worship, where the lines between right and wrong are blurred and where man seeks to become a demi-god. And so much of this is even happening in churches.

Are we truly following Jesus, or are we following man? Are we following His Way, or the way of man, or maybe even a demonic entity? Are we following His Truth, or have we opted for our own brand of truth which is false and deceptive? Have we exchanged the true altar for a counterfeit altar? Shall we ignore the warning of 2 Timothy 4? It says: *For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine and accurate instruction [that challenges them with God’s truth]; but wanting to have their ears tickled [with something pleasing], they will accumulate for themselves [many] teachers [one after another, chosen] to satisfy their own desires and to support the errors they hold, 4 and will turn their ears away from the truth and will wander off into myths and man-made fictions [and will accept the unacceptable].*

If we abide in the Lord as worthy vessels of honour, we shall walk in the life and glory of the Lord. Yet we bow at the counterfeit and unholy altars to “unknown gods” then we shall walk in the path of death and destruction. Life is found in the Lord, and beyond Him lies the ways of the enemy and such ways are destruction and death (John 10:10).

In Acts 17:22-24 (NKJV) we read: Addressing the Areopagus: 22 Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 23 for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: 24 “God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.

How sad indeed when we continue to bow to counterfeit altars and worship man and unknown gods! Church buildings have become places of false altars, inciting worship when it is clear God does not dwell in temples made with hands. Hollywood is a counterfeit altar of worship and so the list continues. God calls us all to be a priesthood unto Him, seeking to serve Him above all else as living sacrifices serving a God whom we know by Name!

Satan has always tried to counterfeit the works of the Lord and for him it was very important to counterfeit the power of the altar, as set up for example by Noah, Abraham and Moses. So we see right throughout Scriptures in the Old Testament numerous altars erected to false gods, such

as Baal. Satan has always tried to lure man away from God to bow before 'other gods', even if that god is man himself.

To restore the altar is a call therefore to make sure that we are following the one true God, His way, His Kingdom and His Truth. For in this world there are so many pseudo religions and counterfeit movements, many times even within the church that looks, appears and feels like the Kingdom, but they are destructive and even at times demonic in nature. It says in *1 Timothy 4: But the [Holy] Spirit explicitly and unmistakably declares that in later times some will turn away from the faith, paying attention instead to deceitful and seductive spirits and doctrines of demons ...* If we embrace, advocate and support such false movements, doctrines, practices and teachings then we bow at a demonic altar. God calls us to restore the altar, meaning we bow only before Him, His Way, His Truth and His Glory.

Let us read from *1 Kings 12: 25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and dwelt there. Also he went out from there and built Penuel. 26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom may return to the house of David: 27 If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah." 28 Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" 29 And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. 30 Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan. 31 He made shrines on the high places, and made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi. 32 Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the feast that was in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And at Bethel he installed the priests of the high places which he had made. 33 So he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month which he had devised in his own heart. And he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and offered sacrifices on the altar and burned incense.*

In 1 Kings 12, we find Jeroboam ruling as the king of the north. Keep in mind that upon the death of Solomon in 931 BC the united kingdom of Israel was split with ten northern tribes pulling away and forming their own nation using the name Israel. The two remaining tribes in the south continued under the name of Judah.

Sadly, during the next 209 years the northern kingdom of Israel continued its worship of idolatry until in 722 BC God used the Assyrians as His hammer of judgment. The southern kingdom of Judah continued on for another 134 years after Israel's fall only to be judged for its spiritual adultery by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar (2 Chronicles 36:17-20).

Jeroboam at the time was afraid that the people of the north would show their support for the king of the south. The people at the time were still obligated to go up to Jerusalem to worship the Lord. *Deuteronomy 16: 16* “Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. 17 Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you.

Jeroboam feared that if the people went up to Jerusalem, they would favour once again the northern kingdom instead of staying loyal to the southern kingdom. Jeroboam devised a plan to set up places of worship to the north, so that the people don't have to travel to Jerusalem. His motivation was therefore one of maintaining his authority, rule and power over the people. He thus used manipulation and control to keep the people bound to the north.

In his treachery he set up a place of worship in two cities – Bethel and Dan. Yet, Jeroboam did not set up a true altar to God; instead he set up two golden calves. He used golden calves for it resembled the same god that supposedly would have led the Israelites out of the wilderness. The people were familiar with the golden calf – it was the one they worshipped in the wilderness when Moses went up the mountain. They were therefore familiar with the concept of golden calves and therefore did not rebel against such a concept.

A key part of the king's strategy was thus familiarity. It felt familiar. It appeared familiar, and if familiar, how could it then be so bad or wrong?

Jeroboam used a devious scheme to lure the people to the north, but instead of serving God, they would be serving the golden calves. Thus, they were being lured into idolatry. The calf (called Apis by the Egyptians and was tied with their pagan sun worship) after all is a recurrent theme in the history of Israel. Unfortunately it is mostly a theme of idolatry and evil. The people of the ancient world had a habit of worshipping calves. In fact, Israel developed her own system of calf worship that had actually developed within the Israelite religion. Read Exodus 32; 1 Kings 12:28 and 2 Kings 10:29.

The people at the time of Jeroboam were duped into bowing the knee before a counterfeit altar. After all, it felt familiar. It felt good. Yet they bowed not before the true King.

Remember what happened in the days of Moses when he went up the mountain, leaving the people along with Aaron behind in the valley? Aaron was left as a watchman to look after the people and make sure they walked in God's commandments. When Moses returned with the two clay tablets, Aaron had instructed for the golden calf to be built! Ah, indeed rebellion and idolatry had polluted the camp. The people were therefore also duped into bowing the knee before a counterfeit altar. After all, it felt familiar. It felt good. Yet the true King was meeting with Moses on the mountain!

We find the Old Testament is full of accounts of Baal worship. Israel was constantly coming in contact with sun worship. They were constantly being tempted to follow the religion of the pagans instead of the Bible, therefore pulled away from worshipping the one true God. Satan succeeded many times in leading God's people into sin and pagan sun worship. The prophet Ezekiel was shown the people turning their backs on the temple of God and worshipping the sun toward the east (Ezekiel 8). And so sadly, the Israelites often chose to place their faith and trust in fertility gods such as Dagon and Baal for their provision, yet as Joel reminded them, it is the Lord God who will always provide the former and latter rains at the right time to provide for the greatest of harvests.

The terminology used by those in the wilderness who followed the golden calf was that 'these gods shall go before us'. This concept was as a visible symbol of the divine presence, as in all pagan idolatry. Thus we see the difference between the worship of the One True God who is invisible and whom no man has ever seen or ever can see (John 1:18; 1Timothy 6:16) and no man has heard His voice either (John 5:37), compared to the worship of false gods.

Indeed, more than ever, people are led astray by the visible, by the tangible, by the temporary, by the natural, by the counterfeit and by the uncommon and unholy. This is world of moral relativism, where everybody decides their own truth, designs their own "gods" and even become "gods".

On Mount Carmel it was the prophet Elijah who discredited King Ahab's belief in the power of Baal, when at his request "the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice," and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. Daniel in his visions saw the golden statue, with Babylon as the head. After all, the Babylon's kings tried to exalt themselves against God's reign. The golden head of the statue reminds one of other idolatrous images of the Bible such as Aaron's golden calf. Here we therefore find the image of Babylon seeking to assert its rule, defying God, just as Satan defied the Lord. Still today, we find mankind being pulled away by false "gods", false ideas of divinity and false ideas of truth that seeks to defy the Lord.

Therefore, more than ever we need to be so aware of not being led away by what is false, the counterfeit, and what is deceitful. For remember, the devil and this world will always present something which appears "right" and that feels "familiar" but still it is not the Kingdom of God.

These days, we hardly know the difference between the Holy Spirit and emotionalism, between the real power of God and the metaphysical, between His hand moving and the movement of the demonic. We hardly know how to discern between His Truth compared to secular humanism intertwined with New Age paganism and occult. If we do not know what is real and what is false, then we are in danger of bowing and worshipping before the wrong altar.

These days more and more believers have been led astray from building God's temple – His true Church – by exchanging His true and everlasting riches and treasures of glory and divinity for the treasures that pass away and bring no fulfilment. We have become blinded by the physical, by the tangible and by the temporary, and so we have become more concerned with the Church building and its contents and our programmes than the spiritual value of being the church and operating as the church on a supernatural and eternal level.

How this world and the church has fallen into that trap of “make us gods” as we seek to set up a pseudo religion, a false truth and a false wisdom hoping that it will provide meaning and substance. And we should take note that when the Israelites agreed to the golden calf in Exodus 22, they were not technically replacing Yahweh, but they were creating their own style of religion for they were still seeking to make offerings unto Yahweh, despite having created a golden calf. For it says: *5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD [Yahweh]" The Israelites had therefore not fallen into technical paganism, but even worse, had created a religion that has the appearance of godliness but which was false. How easily could the people not have fallen into greater depravity and carnality if Moses had not arrived!*

But alas, let us behold what happened to those who had fallen into the trap of seeking “other gods”. By the time Moses came down from the mountain, he found the existence of a state of rebellion even though they were still willing to hold a festival unto Yahweh. Yet their rebellion had turned into idolatry, and so they sought to resist the authority of Moses. In the end, the idolaters were killed for God shall not be mocked. Iniquity, rebellion and lawlessness works towards the same goal – a resistance to the true authority. We cannot submit to God as the true authority if we press forward in self-intent and glorification in our iniquity and rebellion. This is worshipping at a false and counterfeit altar.

It has actually become easy through rebellion to set up a pseudo religion characterised by man-made ideas and programmes. Churches are run like religious institutions, driven by tradition and legalisms, all the while the way of the true Kingdom is not followed. *Mark 7: 'They worship Me in vain [their worship is meaningless and worthless, a pretense], Teaching the precepts of men as doctrines [giving their traditions equal weight with the Scriptures].' 8 You disregard and neglect the commandment of God, and cling [faithfully] to the tradition of men."*

Remember, worship speaks of submission, a state of yielding and a state of sacrifice unto the true Master and King. Here the Lord said in Mark 7 that those who hold onto man-made traditions, therefore religion worship Him in vain. In other words, they were worshipping at the wrong altar. We are called after all not to follow a religion, or a man-made system of religious ideas, services and structures to be found in churches these days, but to follow the one true God and the everlasting way of the Kingdom. If we truly

follow God as worshippers in Spirit and Truth, then we shall be restoring the true altar.

Sadly, the Israelites thought nothing of introducing a golden calf into the mix – just so today how often do we not find that man has added their own extra ingredients and ways and methods and “truths” to the “faith” of following God. There is only God’s way and God’s truth, and there is no room for our own interpretations, methodology and our “truths” and programmes – if we do, we create a pseudo religion and we live under a state of disillusionment and deception. Once we add our thoughts and ways to the divine and established truth of God, then we seek, inevitably will seek “other gods” to lead us home.

Throughout the life of Jesus, He only preached Kingdom. Nothing else. In the Lord’s Prayer, He urges believers to pray for Lord’s Kingdom to come. He only preached Kingdom because He never preached religion. Religion is man-made traditions, rules and regulations that define churches these days. There are all kinds of rules and customs that have got nothing to do with the Kingdom. We have rules and customs regarding dress code, worship methods, preaching methods, service modules and gender inequality which have absolutely nothing to do with Kingdom.

Just so, in Matthew 6, as Jesus taught about praying for the Kingdom to come, He also included in His teaching (verse 33) about seeking the Kingdom and His righteousness (implying walking in His Ways) then the rest will be added (life, hope, joy, and strength and spiritual prosperity). Take also into consideration John 3 where the Lord taught about the importance of being reborn again in Spirit, and unless you are reborn (new creation) you cannot see the Kingdom of God.

Therefore, it is clear: We need to seek the Kingdom above all else, but we can only walk in the manifested reality and glory of the Kingdom once we walk by Spirit, implying surrendering first our kingdom, laying down our crown and denying the Self. If we seek His Kingdom, then our kingdom (our ways, agendas, ideas) need to die as well. What we believe to be truth, or the right way, or the correct path, needs to be surrendered as we seek the true way of the Lord, which is the Way of the Kingdom. Jesus said He is the Way, Truth and Life, meaning He is the WAY of the Kingdom, and if we seek the Kingdom then we need to follow the Lord Jesus in Spirit and Truth. Then we shall restore the altar.

There is no other way except the way of the Kingdom. Our problem is that we fail to always surrender to the Kingdom of God, therefore submitting above all to the Spirit of the Lord. It says in John 3:30 that we must decrease so that the Lord may increase. It is that simple. We need to die unto the Self and take up the cross if we seek to follow the Kingdom. We can only be a new creation once we have died unto the Self and have allowed God’s Kingdom to completely and utterly take hold of us.

Kingdom is not religion. We need to understand religion is a foolish set of beliefs born out of the imagination of man. It is carnal in nature, for it is devoid of the Spirit of Truth. It is born out of the fleshly perception, out of tradition, past experiences, cultural brain washing and incorrect indoctrination. It says in *2 Timothy 2:23: But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.*

There is great division among “churches”, but not the Kingdom, because churches are run as religious institutions and by those with a religious mind-set. Because of religion, churches are divided because foolish and ignorant disputes. Religion and carnality produces strife and division.

It says in *1 Corinthians 3:3: For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?* Churches are marked by strife and divisions, for we seek the carnality of religion and thus behave indeed like men instead of sons and daughters of the Kingdom. For this reason we sit with thousands of Protestant denominations, all vying to hold onto their “own” truth and “traditions” and customs. What separates us is religion, and it will continue to produce strife unless we address it by returning to Kingdom values, customs and truths.

We are called to walk properly, which means walking in the ways of the Kingdom, and not in religion which breeds the works of flesh and thus fulfils the lusts of the flesh.

We need to restore the altar by seeking the true value and way of the Kingdom, instead of being like Aaron and setting up a pseudo religion. Religion breeds tradition and legalism, which in the end leads people further away from the divine truth of the Kingdom. After all, the Pharisees and Sadducees could not even see the truth, even when the Truth Himself stood before them! And just so the churches of today have become spiritually blind because of religion and traditions.

Are we teaching church or are we preaching Kingdom, meaning the doctrines and traditions and ways of a denomination, instead of the singular truth and way of the eternal Kingdom of God? The Kingdom is only built upon the truth of One – Jesus. In the Kingdom there is one vision, one truth, one Spirit and one mission. Jesus remains the Lord and King, and never man. It says in *1 Corinthians 14:20* that the “kingdom of God is not in word, but in power”. It also says in *Romans 14:17: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

The Kingdom of God is one of Power. It is not religion, because religion deals with the will of man which digresses to trivialities such as meat, drink, dress code, the ambience, style of music and so on.

The Kingdom of God is about holiness, purity, and in the power of the Holy Spirit one finds life, hope, light and love. The first disciples walked in power as recorded in the Book of Acts.

They walked in the might of the Lord for they preached the Kingdom (there was no formal church as what we know it today). The first disciples were told to wait in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit would enable them to receive power from on high.

The disciples were empowered to walk in the power of the Kingdom because they moved in the power of the Holy Spirit who led and guided them in all Kingdom Truth! We cannot walk in the power of the Kingdom if we fail to submit and move completely in the power of the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit is the one that grants us the wisdom, might, power, knowledge and counsel to preach Kingdom and not fall in the pitfalls of religion!

The Lord wants us to walk in the authority, knowledge, wisdom and counsel of the Kingdom, not institutionalised religion! Let us remember *Colossians 1:13: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son. Yes, we have been delivered from our sins by the Blood of Jesus which have made us sons and daughters of the Kingdom. It is again to rediscover our place in His Kingdom.*

We must remain standing on the Rock of Jesus for He is the King of the unshakable Kingdom that will never be destroyed, shaken or defeated! If we remain standing on such a Rock, abiding in Him, and we continue to follow His Truth, Way and walk in His wisdom, love and life then we shall restore the altar as worshippers in Spirit and Truth.

Restoring the Altar Part 7 – A time to repent and to uproot

Just as the Lord is calling for us to restore the altar, just so we must uproot all and everything that stands against God's Kingdom and God's Truth and Ways.

To Jeremiah it was said in chapter 1: "See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, To uproot and break down, To destroy and to overthrow, To build and to plant."

This reminds of 2 Corinthians 10: 4 The weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood]. Our weapons are divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5 We are destroying sophisticated arguments and every exalted and proud thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought and purpose captive to the obedience of Christ, 6 being ready to punish every act of disobedience, when your own obedience [as a church] is complete.

To restore the altar is a call to action. It is call to uproot. It is a call to cast down those things and words and ideas and doctrines that have set itself up against the Kingdom of God. It is call to identify all that is false, treacherous, divisive and idolatrous in nature by breaking down such altars of worship.

Let us be reminded we are dealing with warfare between the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness. Warfare implies strategy and it implies a certain plan of action in order to defeat the enemy. Our strategy as the children of God is to lead people to the Lord, to the cross and to the Covenant. The devil wants this world to bow before all kinds of false altars, idols, gods, lies and wickedness.

Throughout the Old Testament we see this constant struggle between the Kingdom of Light and the kingdom of darkness playing out, as God's servants erected altars in honour of the true King while the worshippers of the 'false gods' also erected their altars and idols. There are also at times instances when altars are broken down as a declaration of war.

One example is to be found with Ahab and Jezebel, which is a name synonymous with evil. She is the epitome of the wicked woman. Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal, a priest of the cruel, sensuous, false god Baal. Jezebel followed in her father's footsteps and was herself a power-hungry murderess who stopped at nothing to get what she wanted.

The king of Israel at the time was Ahab, a weak, self-pitying man who abdicated his authority to his bride, the princess Jezebel. In spite of God's laws forbidding idolatry and the worship of any god but the Lord, Ahab married this princess who brought to Israel with her hundreds of priests of Baal worship. One of her first acts was to order the extermination of the prophets of the Lord (1 Kings 18:4,13) and set up altars to Baal. So pervasive was her idolatrous influence in Israel that Jesus later used her

name to refer to a woman who led the church at Thyatira into immorality and the worship of false gods (Revelation 2:20). Jezebel's strongest enemy was the great prophet Elijah, who defied her and opposed her evil rule. First, he pronounced the punishment of God upon Israel in the form of a drought which lasted three years (James 5:17). This culminated in a contest on Mount Carmel between the powers of Israel's true God and the Baals.

In the end, Jezebel shouted her defiance to Jehu, the next king of Israel who came to take his throne (2 Kings 9:30-37). Jehu commanded her to be thrown out the window to her death, where she was trampled by the horses' hooves and almost entirely consumed by dogs. Her thirty years of tyranny over Israel had ended. The terror visited upon Jezebel was a testimony to the Israelites, and to us, that God shall not be mocked.

The confrontation on Mount Carmel as to be found in 1 Kings 18 will serve as a reminder of the struggle between light and dark in this world. Yet God is with those who serve Him, and who had laid themselves on the 'altar' as living sacrifices unto the Lord. In the confrontation Elijah challenged 850 false prophets. These prophets build a false altar, even bled and danced and chanted, but God did not honour their offering. Only when Elijah erected a true altar to the Lord, even one soaked in water, did God answer by fire. Truly, God's holy fire burns in the believers who seek to follow Him alone as the Kings of kings, yet for those who defy the Lord they burn with the profane fire of this world and of the devil.

It says in 1 Corinthians 3: 12 But if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will be clearly shown [for what it is]; for the day [of judgment] will disclose it, because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality and character and worth of each person's work. 14 If any person's work which he has built [on this foundation, that is, any outcome of his effort] remains [and survives this test], he will receive a reward. 15 But if any person's work is burned up [by the test], he will suffer the loss [of his reward]; yet he himself will be saved, but only as [one who has barely escaped] through fire.

We see even such idolatry and the setting up of false altars within the sanctuary of the Temple as found in Ezekiel 8: 5 Then He said to me, "Son of man, lift your eyes now toward the north." So I lifted my eyes toward the north, and there, north of the altar gate, was this image of jealousy in the entrance. 6 Furthermore He said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel commits here, to make Me go far away from My sanctuary? Now turn again, you will see greater abominations." 7 So He brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, there was a hole in the wall. 8 Then He said to me, "Son of man, dig into the wall"; and when I dug into the wall, there was a door. 9 And He said to me, "Go in, and see the wicked abominations which they are doing there." 10 So I went in and saw, and there—every sort of creeping thing, abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed all around on the walls. 11 And there stood before them seventy men of the

elders of the house of Israel, and in their midst stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan. Each man had a censer in his hand, and a thick cloud of incense went up. 12 Then He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the room of his idols?"

It is rather shocking that in the days of Ezekiel, idolatry was openly being practiced in the Temple of the Lord. These men were clearly practicing idolatry as forbidden by the Ten Commandments, and they were most likely engaged in forbidden practices of Deuteronomy 18. And what is the result of this rebellion and idolatry as shown to Ezekiel? "Therefore I will deal with them in anger; I will not look on them with pity or spare them. Although they shout in my ears, I will not listen to them." The Lord said that He will not listen to His priests for they have rebelled against Him. We see the consequences of their rebellion in Ezekiel 9 when the idolatrous people were killed, while in Ezekiel 10 we read of God's glory departing followed by further judgment on the leaders.

Throughout the ages, there has always been open rebellion against God, just as the devil rebelled openly against God. And we see such rebellion manifest in many different ways, through setting up of pseudo religions and false centres of worship and altars. Today, false altars of knowledge and wisdom are also erected. This world is being led further away from the Lord and His Truth, down a path of open idolatry, heresy, apostasy, lawlessness, depravity and rebellion. God's laws and truths are being openly defied, denied and opposed. There is no more shame, just wickedness and evil abound.

And yes, even in churches God is mocked as altars of silver and gold to Mammon are erected. Money is indeed the god of so many, and Mammon is openly worshipped and adored in churches, just as openly as the elders defied God in Ezekiel 8. So many who are called to lead the flock are wrapped up in greed and lust for power, and so they lead so many others astray and down a hellish path of spiritual impoverishment. Yes, money per se may not be evil, but indeed the love of money is the root of all evil. And sadly, so often you see in churches the First Love for God being forsaken for the love of Mammon. Yet we cannot serve two masters for this is idolatry.

Pulpits have become 'altars' where man is worshipped, praised, adorned and followed. Yes, even the pulpits have become the altars where the pursuit after money, fame and power is grabbed with a worldly thirst. All of this is open defiance to God, just as Jezebel openly defied God and the new king Jehu.

Across the world 'altars' to the devil is being erected, if it be on the music stage, if it be on the big screen of Hollywood, if it be on the religious platforms or if be the academics, the scientists, the philosophers, the humanists or the liberals holding onto a decadent secularism. The youth is

being devoured, families are falling apart, and more than ever so many by the hordes are being dragged to hell.

Remember Galatians 6:7 (Amplified Bible): 7Do not be deceived and deluded and misled; God will not allow Himself to be sneered at (scorned, disdained, or mocked by mere pretensions or professions, or by His precepts being set aside.) [He inevitably deludes himself who attempts to delude God.] For whatever a man sows that and that only is what he will reap.

We may wonder how we can possibly, as His priesthood, stoop so low as to bear witness to His Glory departing. After all, where is the Holy Spirit anymore? Where is God really in our midst? Is it not because we have erected altars of profane fire and sacrifices where the true altar of God's Presence should be erected? Idolatry and rebellion come in many forms, and whenever we seek to exalt anything above God, even ourselves, we allow idolatry into our lives. When we are not 100 per cent in God's will and our heart is not in alignment with His purpose, intent and vision and truth, then we are rebellious. To walk in idolatry and rebellion is a slippery slope, for rebellion is like the sin of witchcraft. Is it any wonder why the world is so overwhelmed by the spiritual darkness? The world has openly defied God, and in so many churches, the rebellion continues just as both houses of Israel once defied God.

Let us read out of 2 Chronicles 33: 10 The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention. 11 So the LORD brought against them the army commanders of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon. 12 In his distress he sought the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. 13 And when he prayed to him, the LORD was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God.

We read in the chronicles that Manasseh was a man who "did evil in the eyes of the Lord, following the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites." We therefore find a king who was following in the ways of darkness and corruption. He was thus spiritually alienated from God, paying no attention to the Lord.

Manasseh's rebellion against the Lord came to a grinding halt when the Lord brought Assyria to his doorstep. And in that moment of distress, Manasseh cried out to God, and his pride was brought low and the Lord showed him favour. We find here a fulfilment of the Scriptures of Matthew 23:12 which says For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. Indeed, Manasseh humbled himself and so the Lord exalted him by bringing him back to Jerusalem.

We read an astonishingly beautiful yet powerful word of testimony – "Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God." Manasseh who had defied God, who had resisted His reign, who had provoked God, and who was saturated with

spiritual darkness, came to a point in his life where he could testify and declare who God is – thus who the Great I AM is. What a turnaround! What a spiritual rebirth!

And why did this happen? From his days of terror and anxiety, until the days of his spiritual awakening, Manasseh endured a spiritual realization. His prayers were answered for he humbled himself – thus, Manasseh had a true and real meeting with God. And in that encounter between God and man, Manasseh realised without doubt who God is and who he is. Manasseh may have been king, but God is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. And how else for Manasseh not to bow down before God after receiving such a revelation – how else for Manasseh to forego his wayward ways and seek and pursue the Lord for he had a deep and profound understanding of who God is!

And what is the outcome of this realisation? 14 Afterward he rebuilt the outer wall of the City of David, west of the Gihon spring in the valley, as far as the entrance of the Fish Gate and encircling the hill of Ophel; he also made it much higher. He stationed military commanders in all the fortified cities in Judah. 15 He got rid of the foreign gods and removed the image from the temple of the LORD, as well as all the altars he had built on the temple hill and in Jerusalem; and he threw them out of the city. 16 Then he restored the altar of the LORD and sacrificed fellowship offerings and thank offerings on it, and told Judah to serve the LORD, the God of Israel. Manasseh now sought to serve the Lord; all because he came at a point in his life that he knew who the Great I AM is!

We can only restore the altar when we come to a point of deep repentance, of seeking the Lord, of seeking His Truth, His Kingdom and Way. It is time again for the Church to know God and to restore the altar so that the pure fire of heaven may fall to spark a great revival or refinement!

One of the greatest reformations is found in 2 Kings 22 and 23 in the time of Josiah's reign. Revival and restoration was sparked because the Lord's house was rebuilt, the law discovered, judges were called to confirm the truth and the law, there was then repentance among the entire nation, then the covenant renewed, then the idols and false altars were destroyed and then God returned in His glory.

THIS IS THE MESSAGE AND THE TRUTH OF JOSIAH'S REVIVAL: WE NEED TO BUILD HIS HOUSE, REDISCOVER THE LAW (AS FOUND IN JESUS), REAFFIRM THE COVENANT, REPENT, CLEANSE OUR TEMPLES, DESTROY THE FALSE ALTARS, RESTORE WHAT IS TRUE AND STAY HOLY.

This is what it means to restore the altar. It is about the Covenant with God, Walking again in His Truth, His Way and Spirit. But it is also about destroying everything firstly in our own lives which are not from God (uprooting and breaking the false altars) and then being true watchmen to cry out against the false altars in the midst of the Church.

In 2 Kings 11 we read of how a young Joash came to sit on the throne and the fall of the wicked Athaliah queen of Judah. Before Joash took the throne, the priest Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord, the king, and the people, that they would be the Lord's people (verse 17). We also read: 18 Then all the people of the land went to the house of Baal and tore it down. They utterly smashed his altar and his images to pieces, and they put Mattan the priest of Baal to death in front of the altars.

As with Josiah, we find Jehoiada taking the same course of action – utter destruction of the false altars and the destruction of all things that stood against God. Therefore, action was taken against the open rebellion, against apostasy and against the schemes of the devil. Yes, in the days of Josiah and Jehoiada all things unholy were smashed and destroyed.

Just so, the church (the corporate priesthood of the Lord) needs to again destroy every unholy stronghold and every idol and every false altar if we wish to truly see God's face. We need to take a stand against all things – word or deed or action or structure – firstly in our own lives and corporally in our midst if we wish to truly walk in God's glory again. Such action follows restoring the altar, which means recommitting to the Lord, to His Covenant and His Truth.

We also read of such direct action in 2 Chronicles 29 when Hezekiah succeeded Ahaz in Judah. He also reconfirmed the Covenant with the Lord and calls for the consecrating of the priests and the house of the Lord. We then read from verse 15: They gathered their brothers (fellow Levites) together, consecrated themselves, and went in to cleanse the house of the Lord, as the king had commanded by the words of the Lord. 16 The priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord to cleanse it, and every unclean thing they found in the temple of the Lord they brought out to the courtyard of the Lord's house. Then the Levites received it to take out to the Kidron Valley [for disposal]. 17 Now they began the consecration on the first [day] of the first month, and on the eighth day of the month they came to the porch of the Lord. Then for eight days they consecrated the house of the Lord, and on the sixteenth day of the first month they finished. 18 Then they went inside to King Hezekiah and said, "We have cleansed the entire house (temple) of the Lord, the altar of burnt offering with all of its utensils, and the table of showbread with all its utensils.

Hezekiah restored Temple worship and then we read in verse 27 that he gave the order to offer the burnt offering on the altar (therefore the restoration of the altar). And when the burnt offering began, the song to the Lord also began with the trumpets accompanied by the instruments of David, king of Israel. 28 The entire congregation worshiped, the singers also sang, and the trumpets sounded; all this continued until the burnt offering was finished. 29 When the burnt offerings were completed, the king and all who were present with him bowed down and worshiped [God]. 30 Also King Hezekiah and the officials ordered the Levites to exclaim praises to the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. And they exclaimed praises

with joy, and bowed down and worshiped. When the altar is truly restored, then true worship is restored! Note how the people BOWED DOWN and worshipped. True worship is one of love and devotion, but also of submission and sacrifice to the true King.

As with Josiah and Jehoiada, Hezekiah focused on cleansing and consecrating God's Temple, on Covenant, on worship, and uprooting everything evil and unholy. Just so, we need to first restore the altar within ourselves, for we are the temple of the Lord. We need to first make sure we are consecrated and cleansed. Secondly, we need to corporately make sure the Church of the Lord (His Bride) is consecrated and cleansed once again from all defilement, impurities, idolatry and uncleanness. Ephesians 5: 26 so that He might sanctify the church, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word [of God], 27 so that [in turn] He might present the church to Himself in glorious splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy [set apart for God] and blameless.

It is time again for the false altars to be uprooted. For let us arise as watchmen and let it be again as in the days of Ezekiel 6:2-4: 2 "Son of man, set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, 3 and say, 'O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD! Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains, to the hills, to the ravines, and to the valleys: "Indeed I, even I, will bring a sword against you, and I will destroy your high places. 4 Then your altars shall be desolate, your incense altars shall be broken, and I will cast down your slain men before your idols.

Indeed, it is time for the every 'high place' and every false altar to be broken in the midst of the people of God (the Church) so that true worship may return! May we be Bride dedicated unto the Lord, worshippers in Spirit and Truth, who remain true to the Covenant and who will have no other master except our Lord Jesus. It is time again for true and real repentance in our hearts and in gatherings where the believers meet. Let our repentance be a fulfilment of Joel 2: Let the priests, those who serve the LORD, weep from the vestibule all the way back to the altar. Let them say, "Have pity, O LORD, on your people; please do not turn over your inheritance to be mocked, to become a proverb among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, "Where is their God?"

In Joel 2 we find the priests weeping from one end of the temple to the other, pleading with the LORD to spare the people of Judah during a time of distress. This is just a way of emphasizing the strong weeping in the temple. May there be such a corporate weeping and repentance once again! It is time for us to repent and be converted into a praying priesthood that will destroy and uproot the false idols and altars. It is time to travail for the lost who are on the highway to hell! It is time for us to weep between the porch and the altar! More than ever we need a revival of holiness, a revival of character, a revival of people who are utterly selfless and prepared to lay their lives on the altar for God. Lord, sent the fire because we need another Pentecost!

Restoring the Altar Part 8 – Loving and Fearing the God

To restore the altar means restring our relationship with God, therefore restoring our commitment to the Covenant. This therefore means we need to once again walk in the love and the fear of the Lord.

A dilemma for Christians today is to reconcile themselves to either fearing or loving God. It seems to be a paradox – how can we fear Him and love Him at the same time? The truth is that the journey towards loving and understanding God’s love begins by fearing Him in a loving and a respectful way. It says in Revelations 1: 8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

Let us then examine this phenomenon – the alpha of our spiritual journey is to fear Him – therefore to respect and to be conscious of His holiness and purity – and the omega is to love Him unquestioningly. And just as God is the alpha and omega – therefore He exists as the beginning and the end continuously – just so is our journey towards spiritual maturity which leads to a point where we both fear and love God continuously, with both interwoven and without a discernible beginning or end. To fear and to love Him becomes to us a natural state of our spiritual condition, for this becomes intertwined and interwoven.

You see, we cannot love others truly the way we should unless we love God first above all. And we cannot lead a holy and pure life unless we fear (respect) Him as a holy and righteous God. To restore the altar calls for the believer to again restore that balance between loving and fearing the Lord.

Think of a circle – there is no beginning and no end. Just so our spiritual state of being should be like a circle with God as the Alpha and the Omega – with the fear being the beginning and the love being the end- always flowing, always moving, never starting and never stopping.

And the circle speaks of a ring and a ring speaks of a wedding – just so under the New Covenant we are wedded to the Lord, and so His desire is for us to grow so close to Him so that our spiritual being is one of constantly flowing with Him. We need to reach that point where we love Him and fear Him at the same time, all the time – so then, it is required of us to lovingly fear Him and fearfully love Him!

It says in Job 28: And he said to the human race, “The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.”

Based on this Scripture, to fear the Lord and to love Him shouldn’t be a dilemma, once we comprehend that even though the fear of the Lord may be the beginning of wisdom, the end journey of wisdom is the understanding and application of love.

So we learn to love through the cultivation of the fear of God ... we may struggle to comprehend this, but the reason is that through a healthy fear we learn to cultivate a God consciousness, and by such an effort we draw

closer to God, and so we learn more of Him, more of His heart and ultimately more of His love. And as we fear the Lord, we walk in holiness and purity, we walk in His Spirit and so we gradually learn what delights Him, what love is, how to walk in love and at last to how to administer the walk of love to others.

Jesus should be our foundation and the capstone of our spiritual walk. This is our first and greatest priority and challenge - to get this foundation right. Secondly, we need to BUILT upon this foundation, meaning we need to spiritually mature and grow as disciples of God. This all speaks of restoring the altar.

And through maturity comes loving and fearing the Lord at the same time, for indeed, if we fear Him, we shall obey Him, yet we obey also because of love. It is also true that many just serve God for what they can get out of it, or in the hope of not going to hell, but we should serve and follow God because we love Him, respect Him, adore Him and want to abide in Him.

And so, once we have our foundation secure, the Lord says then we need to address our next biggest challenge - learning to grow through submission and obedience unto the Lord in order to walk in faith, to walk in the fear of the Lord and to walk in the love of the Lord. For this is vital to understand - we need to love the Lord, we need to fear Him and we need to have faith in Him. But this doesn't happen overnight - this is a process of drawing closer to Him, denying the self, laying down our crowns and following Him.

We need to love Him above all else and then love this broken world. How we need to fear and respect the Lord and His Truth and His Commandments (something which is hardly being preached about anymore). This will then spark life. For to obey the Lord is about walking in His will, and there is life in His will. And obedience come through fearing Him, for if we fear Him not we walk in rebellion and apostasy, which sparks death.

The Lord said in John 14:23 that those who love Him will obey Him. Obedience comes through honour and respect, therefore if we love Him we shall also honour Him, which is to reverentially fear Him.

How we need to have faith in His provision, in His Presence and in His Word. We must trust and have faith in the supernatural, in the impossible and the wondrous. Indeed, to FEAR THE LORD MAY BE THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM, BUT THE LOVE THE LORD IS THE END OF WISDOM.

And so, to fear and love the Lord is intertwined and inseparable. Once we fear and love the Lord, we will know the Lord, know our place in the Lord, and so walk in faith and hope. Thus, let us then begin to seek the Lord so that we may walk in love, fear and faith. Amen

The 10 Commandments are all about love. The first four commandments deal with our relationship with God, but the other six deal with our relationship with our fellow man. All of these six commandments speak

about how we ought to love one another instead of hurting each other. They deal with respect and compassion. They speak of how to live in peace and with love with our fellow man by not stealing, by not murdering, by not coveting, by not slandering and bringing someone's name into disrepute. In the eyes of God that means walking in love.

Yet, for thousands of years the love which should exist among mankind has been shattered, resulting in war, conflict, violence, bloodshed, murder, hate and abuse, in essence, rebelling against the 10 Commandments. Why? Because we have not followed the fundamentals of the Holy commandments! We have therefore not feared the Lord!

We have not learned to respect the importance of God's laws, His holiness and purity, and we have failed to live for one another in Spirit and Truth, rather choosing to live for the Self. No wonder there is so much death in the world in the form of anarchy, violence, pestilence and lawlessness. We have failed to look after each other, to respect each other and to respect life because we no longer fear God!

If we do not respect and fear God's laws and commandments, then we are not going to follow them and so it is not surprising that mankind has not adhered to the basic principles of taking care of the poor, the needy, the widows and the orphans. Without the fear of God which teaches us about His pure laws and commandments, how then are we going to love Him and others?

God is the alpha and the omega – He is the beginning and the end. The beginning is to fear Him, and then the end of the journey is to know Love and to walk in Love. We cannot love without learning to respect and fear the Lord Almighty.

And so, placed between the Alpha and the Omega, we begin our journey towards cultivating a God consciousness. We have to learn, as we travel this path what it means to guard against the folly of spiritual deception, of the ways of the world, or the reality and truth of His presence and of the value of the Gospel in order for us to become mature Christians walking in the Omega of our faith which is love.

The two greatest commandments after all are to love the Lord and secondly to love our fellow man. We cannot learn to love and to understand the importance of love until we cultivate a healthy understanding and appreciation of divine holiness and purity which comes from walking in reverential fear of the Lord.

Indeed, love is our hope, our goal and our sure destiny as believers. If we are obedient, we will learn to love and walk in love. In the meantime, we fear now, because none of us is yet without sin or perfect in love.

For it says in 1 John 4:17-18 Love will come to its perfection in us when we can face the Day of Judgment without fear; because even in this world

we become as he is. In love there can be no fear, but fear is driven out by perfect love: because to fear is to expect punishment, and anyone who is afraid is still imperfect in love.

Yet, in these days we have failed to cultivate a God consciousness through a reverential and holy fear of the Lord.

There is, however, no greater argument for the fear of the Lord than as found in Isaiah 11 (Amplified Bible): 1 And there shall come forth a Shoot out of the stock of Jesse [David's father], and a Branch out of his roots shall grow and bear fruit. 2 And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him--the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the reverential and obedient fear of the Lord-- 3 And shall make Him of quick understanding, and His delight shall be in the reverential and obedient fear of the Lord.

Isaiah 11 speaks of the coming of Jesus who will be empowered by the Spirit of the Lord. But it was prophesied that Jesus, with the indwelling of the Spirit, will delight in the fear of the Lord. How incredibly! If the Son of God and the Holy Spirit delights in the purity and holiness of God the Father then why shouldn't we then fear God too? Why shouldn't we also, like Jesus, delight in the fear of God?

We read in Psalm 111:10 (NEB) The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and they who live by it grow in understanding... and also in Proverb 9:10: The first step to wisdom is the fear of the Lord, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Question remains, why is it that we will not accept the fear of God? Why do we try to "explain away" the fear of God in Scripture? What is it in our unconscious minds that creep up when the Spirit leads us into the revelation of the fear of God? Is it our pride, our arrogance, our stubbornness or simply our willingness to live for the Self and not for God?

It says in Deuteronomy 10 verse 12: And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

2 Chronicles 19:7: Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.

Psalm 19:9: The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

Indeed, it is the beginning of wisdom to fear the Lord. Wisdom after all guides us on our path. Wisdom leads us in God's will and wisdom leads us to follow His Word and Truth. How can we know how to live, act, behave and speak without wisdom? Without wisdom how can we possibly live a life in

the image of God? Solomon after all asked for wisdom from God and then the rest was added!

We need wisdom to deal with our finances, with our work, with our personal lives and with our ministry. We need wisdom from God in all that we do. But how can we walk in the wisdom of God if we are not prepared to take the first step of fearing the Lord? To be wise is to fear the Lord, and to be wise is to love the Lord and to obey His great commandments. To be wise means following in His footsteps and to speak His truth. True wisdom is the cultivation of the alpha and omega and the journey in between – to be wise indeed is to fear and to love the Lord.

In fact, the great news is that the love of God reflected through Jesus Christ in the New Testament Scriptures has the power to cast out unholy and impure fear and set us free! Such an unholy fear is settled in the Self, and the Self breaks down God consciousness and a deep desire to see God's Kingdom manifested in every weary heart and soul. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love (1 John 4:18).

It says in 1 John 4:7-12: Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

We need to remain in Christ who is perfect love so that by that love we may know true wisdom and true reverence for His holiness. Colossians 3:1-3 (NIV): 1Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Once we understand and accept that fear is the beginning and love the end of wisdom, then we can abide in the special appreciation of co-existing truths -- the "Fear of God" and the "Love of God." It says in Psalm 118:4 Let those who fear the Lord say: "His love endures forever".

Read Revelation 14:7: He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water" You see, we can only appreciate the depth of God's love, spelled out 1 Corinthians 13 when we know the depth and the beauty and the majesty of God, and such a journey begins with the fear of God.

And indeed, to live in the fear of the Lord is truly a blessing. He desires and causes our good, for He is the source of all good. Unlike the world, He is without partiality and pure in His love and righteousness toward us. As Christians we follow God's Word and are sensitive to the leadings of God's Holy Spirit. In this, we remain in the fear of the Lord.

For it says in Psalm 25:12-14 Who, then, are those who fear the Lord? He will instruct them in the ways they should choose. 13 They will spend their days in prosperity, their descendants will inherit the land. 14 The Lord confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them.

In other words, those who fear the Lord shall be shown the path that he should choose, and he shall enjoy lasting prosperity, and his children after him shall inherit the land. This is life!

Proverbs 14:26-27 (NIV): He who fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death.

If we, however, fear anything other than God, we are deceived. God is the only one in the universe worthy of fear. Satan, of course, would disagree and has made an industry out of generating pseudo fear. To be sure, Satan is truly a terrifying master to those under his care, but those "in Christ" have been purchased from his mastery and need not fear him any longer.

In Scripture and experience, the fear of God is also closely linked to the revelation of His sovereignty. Job 23:13-16 (NIV) "But he stands alone, and who can oppose him? He does whatever he pleases. He carries out his decree against me, and many such plans he still has in store. That is why I am terrified before him; when I think of all this, I fear him. God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me."

To fear God is pure and holy, for through that process we learn love. And how else could we but not fear a God of love, whose love will never fail us, who is faithful, just and forgiving? It is time that the Church becomes a place again where our relationship with God is not based upon a simple belief or a doctrine or on theology; it is God's burning presence in our lives. It is time for us to return to God who is mighty, holy and pure. Then we shall be restoring the altar!

It is time that we act upon Colossians 3: 12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

In our own capacity, we do not have the means to love as God desires, yet we can only do so when we abide in His love, which is one of the fruits of the Spirit (note, not our spirit). We need to truly cloth ourselves with love by

clothing ourselves in His Presence, and we draw closer to His Glory by fearing and revering our Lord.

The necessity to restore the altar by restoring the love of the Lord in our heart's is reflected in the following Scripture: 23 Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5: 25 Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. 26 Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.

As we restore the altar, we become true sacrifices unto the Lord, and then we shall seek the path of peace, reconciliation and forgiveness.

Also take note, we are called to love God first and above all, and not man above God. We can easily fall in the trap of humanism, which is a rationalist outlook or system of thought attaching prime importance to human rather than divine or supernatural matters. In other words, humanism places the needs, desires, wants and agendas of man above the will and the way of God. Humanism calls for us to forsake the truth of God for the love of man. If we walk the path of humanism, we therefore walk not in the fear of God, but primarily in the love of man. We can never place the needs and wants of man above the truth and way of the Lord, for this is idolatry. God's Truth is absolute, and in His Truth we must love, but then at the same not compromise with the world.

The church has steadily over time forsaken the Truth and Holiness of God to please man by promoting the needs of man in the name of love. And so homosexuality, same sex marriages, and the blurring of the gender lines have been promoted, all in the name of love. But this is not done in the Name of Jesus. Yes, He is love, but He is also a holy God and we must love others by first loving and fearing Him.

We are therefore called to walk in the love and the fear of the Lord, therefore restoring the altar. As we fear the Lord, we shall love His Truth and Ways, and we shall love others as commanded. As we love the Lord, we shall fear and respect His Truth and Ways, and we shall uphold the sanctity of life, and we shall respect others and seek to bring them without condemnation to the Throne of Grace.

More than ever, this balance needs to be restored for the balance is broken. More than ever, we need to restore the altar where we commit to loving as He has commanded, but we do by first loving Him. And then secondly live a holy and pure life, for our God is holy (1 Peter 1:16). As we then restore the balance – restoring the altar – we shall indeed walk in the will of the Lord, therefore walk in life and to the Glory of God.