***The Bible Doctrine of Altars

RV121-02***

Please open your Bibles once more to Revelation 6:9-11. We are starting the fifth seal.

The groundwork for the antichrist's tribulation world is being led not only by the secular world with its leftward bias, but by naive evangelical Christians supporting the same objectives. It is amazing how more and more Christian leaders are sounding exactly the same way as the secular world with all of its leftist ideals. The current peace movement, for example; the disarmament movements; and, the nuclear freeze movements – all of these are clearly promoted by communist Russia. And gullible Western societies are responding to these approaches, and they are prepared for non-resistant conquest. We must say, "Where have people's brains gone?" i.e., when they are ready to accept these kinds of movements that are destined to bring about their own destruction.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who grew up under communism, and so knew it firsthand, and never knew anything else but, who, by the grace of God, came to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; was born again; and, then entered the realization that something was very, very wrong indeed. Solzhenitsyn is able, from the frame of reference of his own experience, to look at what is happening in Western societies today, and the kinds of self-destructive efforts we are on, which are going to make it very easy for the things that we are reading here in the book of the Revelation to come about in the antichrist's world. One of the things that Alexander Solzhenitsyn is reported to have said is in an article published by the Wall Street Journal of June 23rd, 1983, in an article by John Train, "The Lonely Voice of Alexander Solzhenitsyn." He quotes Solzhenitsyn as saying:

"What about our younger people and their concern for disarmament? It is normal to be afraid of nuclear weapons. I would condemn no one for that. But the generation now coming out of Western schools is unable to distinguish good from bad. Even those words are unacceptable. This results in impaired thinking ability. Isaac Newton, for example, would never have been taken in by communism. These young people will soon look back on photographs of their own demonstrations, and cry. But it will be too late. I say to them, 'You are protesting nuclear arms, but are you prepared to try to defend your homeland with non-nuclear arms?' No, these young people are unprepared for any kind of struggle. Do we have a single main underlying moral ill that one can identify, besides cowardice and selfishness? We hear a constant clamor for rights, rights, always rights, but so very little about responsibility. We have forgotten God. The need now is for selflessness; for a spirit of sacrifice; and, for our willingness to put aside personal gains for the salvation of the whole Western world."

That's precisely what is the problem. Solzhenitsyn has put his finger right on it. We have reared a generation of youth who do not know what freedom is. They do not know what it is to be free of looking in the mail for a little green check from the government as a subsidy and a benefit for one reason or another. They have grown up with that attitude. The welfare state is the state which has been dignified in their thinking. As the welfare state comes into being historically, it undermines the capacity of people to be willing to fight to maintain their freedoms.

Ten years ago, when Alexander Solzhenitsyn was exiled from Russia and came to the United States, President Ford refused to let him come to meet with him at the White House because he feared, as he was advised by Kissinger at the time, that it would upset Soviet Russia for us to be meeting with a man who was condemning the system that he knew so well, and calling it for what it really is. So, the White House turned its back upon him. The American press continues today to ignore this one voice – this clarion call to wisdom and to rationality that we have in our society today.

The peaceniks are obsessed with the notion that if the free Western nations do not resort to unilateral disarmament, the apocalypse will be upon us. Unilateral means that we get rid of our weapons; we disarm ourselves; and, we don't care what the communist world does – whether they keep building more or what. We just quit making weapons. We destroy what we have. That is unilateral. We do it on our part. If you haven't caught that that is the point of the demonstrations: the peace movement; and, the nuclear freeze, then you haven't been listening closely. The idea is that if we don't do that, we're going to have a nuclear holocaust. The truth of the matter is that that is exactly what will trigger it.

Well, it's bad enough that the secular world and the secular liberal press promotes those notions, but it is also within the Christian community. It is eating away at us like a cancer. It is hard to believe that with we are reading and what we are hearing, to realize that this is exactly what the antichrist needs to bring about the terrible things we're reading about here in the book of the Revelation.

**"Christian Socialism"**

There's a man whose name is Ronald Sider. He is a prominent Christian author and lecturer who is calling upon Christians with a powerful voice to turn to "Christian socialism." Sider was featured at a conference sponsored by Fuller Seminary; the National Association of Evangelicals; and, 39 other major evangelical organizations, which was held about a year ago in Pasadena, California. The theme of the conference was "The church and Peacemaking in the Nuclear Age." "Christianity Today" is the organ of expression for neo-evangelicalism in our country, such as is sponsored by prominent figures like Billy Graham. Neo-evangelicalism seeks a real re-approachment with the liberals and with liberal theologians, and seeks a re-emphasis upon social activism as over against the teaching of the gospel, and of teaching people the principles of doctrine for their living. "Christianity Today," in July the 15th, 1983 issue, reported on this conference. In it, it praised the ideas of Ronald Sider, extolling him as just a real nice guy. I want to read to a summary of what Sider said from a new book by Frankie Schaeffer: Bad News for Modern Man. This book was well-titled.

I caught an interview with Frankie Schaeffer on a radio program a couple of weeks ago, and they were reviewing the book. I hadn't had a chance to read it, but one lady got on, and she took him to task for the fact that, in the name of protecting the holiness of God, and the integrity of Scripture, he has forgotten about being loving. Well, the reason for it is that Frankie Schaeffer puts the bad news in terms of the names of the people who are the news carriers. And what she didn't like was that he is calling the names of people prominent in evangelical circles, like Ronald Sider, who are promoting the very things that the Word of God condemns, and that are going to bring us down to destruction as a nation. It's time somebody did it. This is an excellent book. This shortsighted woman may have second thoughts when the communist world is able to move in upon her society, and she experiences the devastation. Perhaps she'll have the honor of being one of the first to be raped, and to enjoy the fact that she wanted to promote love instead of what God has said in condemning the evil that is being promoted by unthinking Christians even today. In this book, Frankie Schaeffer has this to say concerning the article in "Christianity Today," and the conference in Pasadena:

"'Christianity Today' quotes, 'Sider opts for what he calls 'the way of the cross.' To Sider, according to 'Christianity Today,' and confirmed by Sider's own book, 'the way of the cross' is the following: He believes the U.S. should embark on a fundamentally different path. That new path is civilian-based defense. He proposes that the U.S. channel money now being spent on nuclear arms into a massive program to educate its citizens in the methods of nonviolent, non-cooperative self-defense, principles espoused by Gandhi. Sider, who identifies Soviet totalitarianism as a ghastly evil, believes that if the U.S. would disarm..." Now get this. This is a leading evangelical teacher to whom millions of Christians in this country are now listening and paying attention, and not throwing up at the same time. Sider, who identifies Soviet totalitarianism as a ghastly evil, believes that if the U.S. would disarm, "The Soviets would almost surely invade, and thousands would likely be tortured and killed. But he says, 'If hundreds of thousands of committed, praying Christians died in a nonviolent campaign, I predict we would see the most rapid expansion of the Christian faith the world has ever known.'"

So, instead of a possible nuclear holocaust, Sider is inviting you to sure torture; to sure destruction; and, to sure abuse of the women and children in our society. I want to remind you, that this was Fuller seminary. This was the National Association of Evangelicals. This was 39 prominent evangelical organizations. It was a big mob of the opinion-makers in the Christian community. Do you wonder now why we're such oddballs here on the corner of 6th and Nursery? This is the normative thinking out there, with all those Bible churches and all those churches of every kind. This is what they think. This is the love they're promoting. This is the madness. But it's just exactly what the New Age movement want Christians to do; give in; be silent; and, be removed from the scene.

One of our young men fell into conversation at work with someone, and the words New Age were mentioned, and he said, "Oh, do you know about the New Age movement?" And the man said, "Yes, I'm one of them." Well, that was shocking. We've already told you that they're out there, but when you find one, you say, "Doggone it, they are out there." Then somebody else joined this group discussion and said, "I just hope the rapture will come soon so we can get rid of all the Christians." He couldn't believe his ears, because we've already told you that the New Age looks upon the rapture, not as something to fear the recoil from, but as the basis for removing all these irritating Christians who are mouthing all their ideas from the Bible, and insisting on imposing them on society. The lady understood what she was talking about: "Let's have the rapture and wipe out all the Christians to some other dimension so that we will be free to proceed to create a new and golden age." Christians are helping to lay the groundwork for the horrible things that the antichrist is going to do to people. If you think communism is bad, just way till you sit it up in heaven and watch what goes on this earth under the antichrist. You will see that the communists were but a small group of people running a church picnic in comparison.

So, Ronald Sider espouses all the concepts of the welfare state which are being proposed by the political left, and which are going to be installed by the antichrist. Sider justifies his views by a call to Christian compassion – compassion for the needy, which he tries to defend by a series of biblical distortions.

Gary North recently promoted a book which had been written that took Ronald Sider's book; analyzed it; and, really tore to shreds this man's abuse of Scripture; misapplication; and, misinterpretation. It's an excellent book, and it shows how totally unchristian and unbiblical this concept of compassionate Christian socialism is.

What God calls us to do is to deal with the real world – a world which is motivated by Satan and his concepts. God does not call us to be motivated by some sincere, wishful thinking that pursues some irrational hope for a world which is not, and never will, be until Jesus Christ returns to this earth.

So, even Christians today are being deluded into helping the antichrist set up his socialist, atheistic society, asking us to voluntarily become the hostages of communism, and to suffer the consequences of this disarmament, and the consequences of personal torture and death. That happens to be, if you have not only already realized it, what this upcoming presidential election is all about. And unless Christians get this straight, they're going to be very confused. The upcoming presidential election is very clearly about the matter of the welfare state, with government as the final provider. And if you've been listening to the Democratic candidates (the Three Stooges) running for president, you will be well aware of the fact that this is where it's at. This is the question: Are we going to have a society where the welfare state is accepted?

I was opening the mail the other day, and listening to Donahue was up to on his program, and they were discussing what has happened to people who are not getting benefits as a result of the pulling in of the reigns of the present administration. One college student stood up and was complaining about how restricted the money was to her. Somebody else was complaining about how they couldn't get a job like they used to be able to get a job. It was just one constant complaint after another of how the government was pulling back what they once used to do for this individual and this individual.

Then he goes to the caller on the phone, and he says, "Is the caller there?" This caller was a lady, and she had it up to her craw. I stood there clapping and cheering. In effect, she said, "I, for one, am sick and tired of the government reaching into my pocket to give to favored groups of vested interests. That is the only way that the government can be a dispenser of benefits – if it takes it from me. And I am sick and tired of working the way I do, and giving as much as I do just because there is a power in government controlled by a philosophy of socialism that takes it away from me." I thought, "Now, finally, somebody has said it. I've been waiting for a long time for people to really put into perspective that what government gives, it takes away. For those of you who are promoting this kind of welfare, I want you to know that I resent you reaching into my pocket and robbing me so that you can dispense it. Where do you get off, thinking that you have the right to do that?" That's what this election is all about.

Now, for everybody else that calls, Donahue then goes to the panel, and they had a panel up there. He usually says, "What do you think about that?" But guess what he did. I was waiting for this panel who was going to take this, because these people up on the panel were saying the same things that this lady was saying. Instead, he said, "Just a minute," and he went to somebody else in the audience, who asked a question that had nothing to do with what the lady said. He just went on. I know from years of watching Donahue that that's how he cuts people off at the pass on the telephone. He goes to someone, then he says, "Wait a minute. I'll get back to." Then he goes to somebody else. They throw the switch, and they never get back to them. I was really shocked that he had the gall to just bypass that lady and not let the panel discuss that issue, and let people take it up. He was smart enough to know that she had put her finger on the issue.

It's not only the secular world out there, like the liberals that Donahue represents, that are doing that. It is people like Ronald Sider within the Christian community that are doing that, and Christians are cheering them, and saying, "Right on."

The four horsemen of the apocalypse have revealed to Jones the rapid degeneration and the rapid deterioration of the antichrist kingdom which is built upon these very principles that Christians and humanists alike are calling for today. They're going to get it. They're going to get the full implementation, and then it comes crashing down around their ears. John has shown that an era of false peace is followed by violent bloodshed; inflation; famine; epidemics of deadly diseases; and, attacks by hunger-maddened wild animals. The result is that one-fourth of the world's population, which is left after the rapture, dies. And, because they are all unsaved people, Hades gobbles them up into its suffering.

Now, with the fifth seal, the scene shifts to heaven. It shifts from the earth's situation to a scene of what is taking place in heaven as the result of what has happened on the earth to those who have become believers during the tribulation. The rapture has taken place, and all Christians all believers) have been removed. The whole world now is was flooded at the beginning of the tribulation period with unbelievers. In that period, immediately the gospel goes forth by those whom God raises up to proclaim it, and people begin to be saved. These people, as they are saved, apparently almost inevitably become martyrs. Not all of them, but most of them become martyrs. Most of them are killed. That is what has been taking place now as part of this earthly scene during the first three-and-a-half years. Now, the scene shifts to heaven with the fifth seal, so John sees something of the result of that martyrdom of believers.

**The Fifth Seal**

Revelation 6:9 says, "And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held." The word "open" looks like this in the Greek Bible: "anoigo." "Anoigo" here actually means "to break." Here, it's referring to the point when the Lord Jesus Christ breaks the next seal on the scroll. Jesus Christ again is the one who breaks the seal because He alone is the one who is qualified to do it. It identifies this now as the fifth in the series of these seals. The seal is again the same as we've had before: the "sphragis." This refers to something which restrained the scroll at a certain point so that it would not reveal what was in the next section. It kept it secret until someone who was authorized, like Jesus Christ, to break the seal, broke it to reveal the next section in this preview of the tribulation.

When it was broken, John sees something. Again, we have the word "horao" that we've had several times, which is the Greek word for "seeing in an overview panorama." John again is taking in the big picture. He personally observes this with his eyes.

**An Altar**

His eyes are drawn, first of all, to something that appears like an altar of some kind. He focuses to something that he sees underneath the altar. So, we have this Greek word "hupokato." "Hupokato" refers to this in terms of location. This was a significant place in the Old Testament order of worship relative to altars. In the Old Testament ritual, the blood of the sacrificial animal was poured out here at the bottom of the altar. And it is the blood of the animal that, we are told, represents the life of that animal. So, when you poured out the blood, you were thereby indicating that, at the bottom of the altar, you were literally pouring out the life of that creature.

Leviticus 4:7 indicates that: "And the priest shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar." The altar in the tabernacle had four high spots which were horns, and the blood was placed upon them: "The priest shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the Lord which is in the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offerings, which is at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation."

The picture that you had in the Old Testament was that you had the tabernacle when they were still in the wilderness. The back third was called the Holy of Holies. The high priest entered it once a year to make sacrifice for the people. It was the place where the Ark of the Covenant was located, and where the mercy seat was, which covered this box, which was sprinkled with blood, and which was overshadowed by the two cherubim angels, and where God Himself dwelt. The middle third was the holy place part where they ministered day-by-day before God. There was the altar of incense, which is referred to here. But in the front third, before you could ever come into the tabernacle to worship, was the altar upon which sacrifices of animals were made. So, this is the picture you have in Leviticus 4:7. There was an altar at which the blood is poured before the priest is qualified is permitted to go into the tabernacle to worship. You also have that in Leviticus 8:15.

Back to the book of Revelation, John sees the souls (that is, the life) of the believers, who were martyred in the tribulation, poured out at the bottom of a heavenly altar, as these who have been slain, and thus their lives being carried out in sacrifice. In Leviticus 17:11, we read, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood. And I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls. For it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul."

So, John, as he observes this altar, sees that here at the bottom are the souls of certain individuals. These souls represent the life of people who have been killed in the tribulation period, and poured out at the bottom of the altar. Just as in the Old Testament, the bottom of the altar became the place where the blood of animals was poured out in preparation to approach a holy God within the tabernacle itself. The word for "also" is the word "thusiasterion." "Thusiasterion" come from "thusiazo" which means "to sacrifice." So, an altar is a place primarily for offering animal sacrifices in approaching deity. It's very important that you remember that. Why do you have an altar? What is the purpose of an altar? Why does anybody ever put up an altar? It is so that you can sacrifice an animal. This word is used in the New Testament only for the altar of the true God, such as in 1 Corinthians 9:13. It is used only in reference to God's altar.

There is another word in the New Testament which is used for pagan altars. In Acts 17:23, when Paul is in the city of Athens, and he begins to speak to the philosophers on Mars Hill, he says, "I notice that you have an altar to the unknown God." He uses the other word for "altar" which is used in reference to false altars and to false gods. In the New Testament, "thusiasterion' is a sacred word. When you see it, it is only for an altar to the true God. The imagery here is taken from the altar of sacrifice in the Old Testament temples. That's why you have an altar. When the people came out of their slavery in Egypt, they were given instructions for the use of an altar for sacrifice if they were going to approach God. The sacrifice, of course, symbolized the fact that the blood of Christ was going to be shed in the future to make it possible for sinners to enter the presence of a holy God.

In Exodus 39:39, for example, we read of: "The bronze altar, and its grate of bronze, its staves, and its vessels, and the laver at its foot."

Exodus 29:40: "And he put the altar of burnt offering by the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation, and offered upon it the burnt offering of the meal offering as the Lord commanded Moses." This referred again to this particular offering.

An altar is seen in heaven by John which is in keeping with the view of heaven as God's temple. This is the view that you have in the Bible of heaven. It is viewed as the temple where God dwells. For example, Habakkuk 2:20 says, "But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him." Well, where is the Lord? The Lord is in heaven. So, heaven here is viewed as God's temple.

We have this also indicated in Psalm 18:6. Heaven is God's temple: "In my distress, I called upon the Lord and cried unto my God. He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry came before Him, even unto His ears." Where is God? He is in His temple. Where is God? He is in heaven. That's where His temple is. When we pray, He hears us in His temple. That's what the psalmist is saying: "When I was in distress, I prayed, and here I spoke on earth, and God was in His temple in heaven. This is way off there in the northern areas of outer space, which was the area that Satan attacked as an angel when he wanted to bring God down.

**The Bible Doctrine of Altars**

So, for a moment, we need to take a look at this concept of the Bible doctrine of altars. The Hebrew and the Greek words for "altar" refer to any raised structure with a flat top on which sacrifices are performed to a deity.

**Approaching and Worshiping God**

God directed the use of altars in the Old Testament era for the purpose of approaching Him and worshiping Him. In Exodus 20:24-25, He makes it very clear why you have an altar: "You shall make an altar of earth unto Me, and shall sacrifice thereon your burnt offerings." That's very clear why you have an altar: so you can make a sacrifice: And your peace offerings: your sheep; and, your oxen, and all places where I record My name, I'll come into you and I will bless you. If you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone. For if you lift up your tool upon it, you have polluted it." Just leave it as natural rock if you're going to make an altar out of rock instead of out of earth: "You shall neither go up by steps unto My altar, that your nakedness be not exposed thereon." God even said, "Don't make an altar with an elevated place the way the Pagans did, because as you go up, your nakedness might be viewed under your robes that you wear, and it would be disgraceful. So, keep the altar on the ground level.

So, there is very explicit directions to the Jews as to building the altars; how to do it; and, why to do it.

**The First Altars**

The first recorded suggestion of animal sacrifice is in Genesis 3:21, where we are told that God killed an animal to make some clothes for Adam and Eve. That very shedding of the blood of those animals symbolized God covering their nakedness, which now reflected their sin, with an innocent life and payment. The first record of sacrifice in the Bible is Genesis 4:4, where Abel was bringing his offering to God, and in Hebrews 11:4, that offering of Abel's is commended because it was done in the right way by: "By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous; God testifying of his gifts, and by it being dead, yet he speaks." His brother Cain, being a farmer, brought the produce of the field and said, "Why isn't that just as good for me to sacrifice?" And God said, "Because it doesn't have the shedding of blood, and it doesn't symbolize the giving of life in order to pay for sin." God says, "Why are you angry, Cain? The sacrifice is out there lying at your door – that little sheep there. Pick it up, and do this sacrifice the way I told you to do it. I've shown you how to build an altar. Now sacrifice according to the way it should be done."

**Mormon Altars**

If you ever go to Salt Lake City, you'll see one of their statues they have there of Adam and Eve at an altar. Take a look at what's on the altar. I'm surprised that the Mormons haven't caught on to the bad publicity this gives them. On that altar are the fruits of vegetables and of the produce of the field. Can you believe that? There's a little lamb struggling around the side, but on the altar, sacrificing to God, is exactly what Cain put on there. This is another clear stamp of the fact that Mormonism is tied back to the ancient pagan religious systems.

A few years ago, they used to have an angel that stood in that in main building where the visitors go through. You kids who were on the trip camp with me will remember that. The angel stood there in his robes. And on his robes, he had the markings of the Masonic lodge. One of the leaders of the Mormon Brigham Young University was one of their chief experts in the history of Mormonism. This historian gave a speech to a seminar in which he showed how Mormonism was connected to Masonry, because in the temple, they do all the same things that Masons do in their secret rituals, and he then showed how masonry was connected to the Babylonian occult system. I'm not going to go into the details of all the mark on the breast and the various parts of the body that are there, and what those symbols mean. But the same symbols were on this angel's robes, and he called attention to it.

Boy, there was a rustling in that audience. Everybody came away. Those who had been sleeping said, "What did you say?" That information went screaming up to the 28h floor of the headquarters building in downtown Salt Lake City, to the president; prophet; revelator; and, seer. The next day, that angel was jerked out of that display center, because they could not afford publicly to show that these very symbols are what Mormons wear on their underwear. If you are faithful Mormons, you wear the temple garments. If you've been through the temple, and if you've been through that secret ritual, which you must go through if you're going to be in the third heaven, then you are wearing that underwear today with those secret markings on them to protect you.

**Abel's Altar**

Abel said, "I'll believe God. He showed me how to make an altar, and I would sacrifice a blood sacrifice." Cain said, "I'm just as good as you are, and I'm going to do it my way." The Mormons, interestingly enough, show their satanic origins by that statue of Adam and Eve, and by the Masonic markings on their garments, and the rituals that they perform within their temple.

The Old Testament uses altars again and again. I won't go through to read all of this. I'll just give you the references. You can read this on your own. I want you to see something, and you'll see the moment why I'm coming down so hard upon this. An altar is to sacrifice something on. An altar in Scripture was to sacrifice a symbol for the covering of our sins, which had not been done until Jesus Christ came along.

**Noah Built an Altar**

So, Noah built an altar (Genesis 8:20-22). Abram built an altar (Genesis 12:8(. In Genesis 22:9, he was going to sacrifice his son Isaac as per God's direction. Again, blood was to be shed. I want you to notice as you read these that every one of these is an altar for the sacrifice of the spilling of blood. Isaac built an altar on which he shed blood (Genesis 26:23-25). Jacob built an altar (Genesis 35:7). Moses built an altar (Exodus 24:3-8). Joshua built an altar (Exodus 8:30-31).

Gideon built an altar (Judges 6:25-32). This passage tells us about how he built an altar. Gideon did a good job. He was little fearful, but the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him as the Angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Christ. He said, "Gideon, I want you to build an altar, but I'll tell you what we're going to do, Gideon. Let's really do this thing up good. I want you to go, and I want you to bust up Baal's altar there, and I want you to use the wood from his altar to burn for My sacrifice. The next morning, when the worshipers of Baal came, they were horrified to see Gideon's altar burning, offering up the sacrifice that God made out of the dead Baal's altar. They were indignant. It's an interesting passage. But what did Gideon put upon it? Blood sacrifice.

Incidentally, this was after the tabernacle, which was the central place for sacrificing. So, individuals could still build altars, but they only built them for what? To show that they were sinners, and that God had to cover them with some life in the future represented by the blood of that animal, wherein was the life. If the blood is gone, the life is gone.

David, in 1 Chronicles 21:26-30, built an altar. Solomon, of course, in 1 Kings 9:25, built an altar when they turned from the tabernacle to the more stable permanent structure of the temple, and the altar was placed there outside the temple. In the Old Testament, the altar was the place for animal sacrifices and the shedding of blood. That act symbolized the future sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the final Lamb of God.

Therefore, in Hebrews 9:19-22, we read, "For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of calves and of goats with water and scarlet and wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, 'This is the blood of the testament which God has enjoined upon you." He's talking about the Old Testament: "Moreover, he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry, and almost all things are purged with blood by the law; and without the shedding of blood is no remission" (there is no forgiveness for sins. Since the animal sacrifices did not satisfy the justice of God (they were only symbols), you couldn't do it just once. They had to keep doing it and doing it repeatedly.

So, in Hebrews 10:1-4, we read, "For the law, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make those who come to it perfect. The law was what? It was a shadow. It was a picture. Everything in the worship service and in the tabernacle was a picture of what was to come. The altar, with its blood sacrifice, was a picture of the coming Savior. And the writer to the Hebrew says, "None of that ever satisfied the demands of God's justice against sin – to punish sin with death: "For then would they not have ceased to be offered?" If the blood of animals would have done it, you wouldn't have to repeat it: "Because the worshipers once purged should have had no more consciousness of sin. But in those sacrifices there was a remembrance again made of sin every year, for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins."

So, they had to repeat it. It had to be blood. It was indispensable to worshiping God. The altar was indispensable for approaching God before the death of Christ. The brazen altar, as we have shown you, stood directly in front of the entrance to the Old Testament tabernacle, and later to the temple, signifying that the approach to God was by means of a blood sacrifice. And the fact that there was a need for this sacrifice indicated that Jesus Christ had not yet made it obsolete. That's what I'm getting to.

**Is an Altar Obsolete?**

Has an altar become an obsolete object? In Hebrews 9:23-28, we have recorded for us the fact that the high priest had to enter in with the blood every year. He had to sacrifice the animal on that altar. He had to walk into the holy of holies with that blood every year. Then Hebrews 9:28 says, "So, Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him, He shall appear the second time without (or apart from) sin unto salvation." When the Lord comes the second time, it's not going to be to deal with salvation (with sin). That He has already done the first time.

Then Hebrews 10:11 says, "And every priest stands daily ministering, and offering often the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. But this man, Jesus Christ, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies made His footstool." That's why Jesus is seated at the right hand of God the Father. The priest never sat down. There was never any provision in the temple for them to sit down, because they had to do it again and again and again, because it was all symbolic. But the altar was a crucial instrument for approaching God.

**No more Animal Sacrifices are Required Today**

However, after the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, no more symbolic animal sacrifices are required. If you don't have any need to make sacrifices of animals, you don't have any need for an altar. The church age has never been directed to have an altar. There's no need for an altar because an altar implies what? It implies the necessity of making a sacrifice for you to be able to face God. And Jesus Christ made altars and sacrifices obsolete and meaningless. So, no altar is ever prescribed for Christian churches or Christian worship. The continued use, therefore, of altars in Christian churches is an act of apostasy, and an insult to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another thing happens to be that we don't wear robes in out worship services. What are those robes for in the Old Testament? The robes signified something that the priest had to do at that altar. Lord Jesus Christ came along, the Lamb of God, and died for the sins of the world. He paid the final sacrifice. He made altars and robes obsolete.

I had a man one time ask me, "Why don't you have an altar in your church?" Well, I mean, I could have said to my husband also going to look in the gymnasium. So, I asked, "What do you have an altar for?" He said, "Well, to make a sacrifice." I said, "Exactly. Are you making a sacrifice? What sacrifice do we as Christians have to make?" I said to him, "At least the Roman Catholic Church is consistent. They have an altar, but the Roman Catholics say that they are sacrificing Christ again and again in the Mass. If they're going to do that, they have to have an altar."

But what about all these Protestant churches – all these churches of the Reformation era who understand justification by faith, and who understand what the death of Christ has done in removing the whole animal sacrifice system? Why do they still have an altar there? You see how totally disoriented they are from the reality. They have not made the connection that the altar itself now is simply an insult to the Lord Jesus Christ.

**The Christian's Altar**

We do have an altar as Christians? We do have an altar by which we approach God. Hebrews 13:10-13 tells us about that: "We have an altar (we Christians have an altar) of which they (of the Old Testament order) have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp." When you took the carcass of this animal that you had sacrificed, then you took it outside the camp, and that's where you burned it. That was the place of humiliation: "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify (separate) the people with his own blood, suffered outside the gate." They put him on a cross outside the city. They burned Him in the garbage dump, in the refuse pile where they burned the carcasses of the sacrifices. Therefore, he says, "Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him outside the camp bearing His reproach." So, we have an altar. We have an altar to approach God alright, but that altar is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, because we are not required to make material sacrifices, we do not need a material altar, but we do have spiritual sacrifice, as you know. For example, some of them are mentioned right here in Hebrews 13:15-16: "By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise (the sacrifice of our lips) to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks in His name." That's one of the spiritual sacrifices: "But to do good (divine good production is another sacrifice), and to not forget to share (to give financially), for with such sacrifices God is well-pleased."

Romans 12:1-2 call upon us to make the sacrifice of our bodies. We have spiritual sacrifices that we offer. And the altar we need for that is nothing more than the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**The Christian's Temple**

It's interesting to observe, in Revelation 21:22, which lets us peek into heaven, that there is no temple there. And if there is no temple in God's eternity, neither is there an altar: "And I saw no temple in it (the New Jerusalem) for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Jesus is not only our altar, but He is also our temple.

So what are you going to do about it? What about people who are associated, such as these tapes who listen to session later. They're in some church where they walk in, and there they've got an altar. There they have a minister who's going through a ritual in front of that altar. Every time he passes the altar, he bows before it. What is he bowing to?

I was in a place like that a few months ago, and it really makes the hair creep on the back of my neck when I see that. He is walking before the altar, and there he is lighting that candles, and the candles burning – all the ritual; all the formality; and, bowing before that altar. And what is there? Nothing. What should you do? Flee it. Get out of it. If you walk into a church, and there's an altar up front, and there's a minister who's going through rituals before that altar, you know that you're standing in the presence of an insult to the precious Son of God. You should turn your back upon that organization as they have turned their backs upon the Savior, and upon the great thing which He did for us in making a sacrifice once and for all – never to be repeated. Why would you dignify some human viewpoint evil at the expense of honoring the Savior who bore the humiliation necessary to take you into eternal life, and to make all eternity a ball for you? Flee it. Abandon it. Have nothing to do with it.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1984

[**Back to the Revelation index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/revelation.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)