

The Outpoured Gift

by G.W. North

The sermon explores the connection between the altars of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and how they foreshadow the outpoured gift of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

Scripture: Galatians 3:1

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit"

Description

G.W. North emphasizes the significance of altars in the lives of the patriarchs, particularly Isaac and Jacob, as they symbolize the connection between God's promises and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He highlights Jacob's transformation from uncertainty to a personal relationship with God, culminating in the establishment of altars that reflect his spiritual journey and the collective identity of Israel. North draws parallels between the altars of the patriarchs and Moses' national altars, illustrating how they represent God's dwelling among His people and the call for the Church to be a source of living water. The sermon underscores the necessity of prayer and intercession for the Church to fulfill its role as a house of God, from which the Spirit flows to quench the thirst of the world. Ultimately, the message calls believers to live sacrificially and actively engage in spiritual warfare, embodying the principles of the altar in their lives.

Transcript

Passing on to Beersheba, we find Isaac's altar built by 'THE WELL OF THE OATH'. This is a remarkable connection, laying emphasis upon the altar with the water of life. It is a most important link-up, bringing to our notice the truth which Paul states for us in Galatians 3 v.1 ,2. Presenting the crucifixion in verse 1, he puts the question about receiving the Spirit in closest juxtaposition to it in verse 2: 'received ye the Spirit?' he asks. The death and resurrection of Christ and the outpouring and gift of the Holy Spirit are found together in: (1) the Old Testament in type, (2) the New Testament in print, (3) in fact in history and (4) in experience in truth.

The unfolding plan is made yet plainer as we observe Jacob's emergence into spiritual clarity. Establishing the altar at Shechem, he gave testimony to his direct personal encounter with the Lord at Jabbok. He had emerged from the uncertainty of his former trust in One who was 'the fear of his father Isaac', into a new direct knowledge of God and himself. When he named his altar 'GOD THE GOD OF ISRAEL', he was drawing attention to this. God and he who had first met and wrestled and then clung together at the waters of Jabbok and Peniel, were declared by him to be permanently joined together at the altar of Shechem.

Upon the basis of Jacob's newly-discovered reality God commands him to go back to Bethel, the place where he had been granted his first revelation of God. Purging himself and his household from the last remnants of idolatry, he obediently went up to Bethel and there built another altar as commanded by the Lord. He had not built one upon the first occasion but had simply interpreted his dream to mean that Luz was the house of God and had therefore renamed the place Bethel. Raising his pillow into a standing memorial, he anointed it for prophetic significance and passed on into Syria.

This time, however, Jacob, in the light of the new day now dawning, with clearer understanding, built an altar there calling it 'GOD THE HOUSE OF GOD'. Once more he raised up a pillar of stone, but before anointing it he poured upon it the drink offering of wine. Usually the drink-offering was made to the Lord as part of a sacrifice embracing some more substantial offering, which constituted the major part of the whole. In a special sense it represented that degree and quality of the outpoured life which God deemed could not be properly typified by the flesh and blood of the body. It really showed what was in the blood, what it represented -- that is the soul-life, the spiritual and moral beauty and calibre, or character and disposition of the life. This is what God drank in.

Animals and birds had no virtues of spirit and soul to offer to God. They compulsorily lost their existence, they had no life to give. By command their meagre qualities had often to be augmented by the blood of grapes, the wine of life. But even then all was woefully short of that which their combined powers so poorly symbolised.

Jacob left the altar empty, but saturated and anointed the pillar with wine and oil. The altar was of many stones, the pillar was but one. Perhaps Jacob saw it all in a very personal way and meant it to represent himself, Israel and, hopefully, all who according to the promise should proceed from him through his twelve Sons. Prophetically, however, they were to be God's house of Israel; God had planned it so and later they did make Him a house to dwell in. How much of it all Jacob foresaw we do not know. To us he has left the message of his altars, 'God the God of Israel' and 'God of the house of God'.

Linked with the altars of Abraham and Isaac, Jacob's show the development of the line of spiritual truth which God first began with Abraham, Jacob's grandfather. Death and resurrection of the Seed, followed by the giving and receiving of the Spirit, accompanied by abundant fruitfulness, logically eventuates in the building of the house of God -- the Church -- 'the pillar and ground of truth'. If it were by the message of the altar alone, God is indeed seen to be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Much more than this lies to hand and will repay patient search, but let us proceed yet further to consider Moses' altars.

Before doing this we ought here to notice that, unlike his patriarchal forbears, MOSES never once built an altar for himself alone. In this matter he always acted in a national capacity; he built altars for Israel. When Abraham, Isaac and Jacob raised their altars they were acting as individuals. Although prophetically and typically their actions have wide and varying implications, they did not build for the nation. The nation did not exist in their day; they were the fathers of it, so they could not act mediatorially as did Moses in his day. But, even so, Moses could have built an altar for himself or just for his family but there is no record that he did so. He always acted for the family of God, the nation of Israel.

Moses was commanded by God to direct Israel to make an altar of brass. This was to stand within His courts to be the altar of the Lord and of the children of Israel from that time forward. The altar that Moses built at Horeb was Israel's also, but in another way. Having earlier noted the details leading up to and surrounding that episode, we will not again go into them, except to underline one or two points. At Horeb

Israel was presented with a vision of itself. Soon they were to be given instructions to provide living-accomodation for God. When they did so they became in a more visible way the house of God, for then God dwelt in the midst of them and walked among them; from then on they were God's Church in the wilderness.

So, beyond Horeb's mute testimony to the Christ, its voice speaks no less strongly to His people themselves. On the day the great miracle was wrought, Moses was acting for God. According to His word, there on the top of His own handiwork stood God. At His Command the rock was smitten; unto Him Moses had stretched forth his hands and built his altar; it was He who had allowed Amalek to attack Israel. His people had much to learn of their heredity and pre-destiny and He had brought them to Horeb to teach them many things. Not only must they learn the facts of Calvary and Pentecost and the relationship between them, but they must also be taught the difference between the flesh and the Spirit. They must also be shown the likeness between themselves and the thirst-quenching rock.

Jacob's pillar was a piece of rock; it was raised up to be the first intimation in scripture that the Church is God's house, the pillar and ground of truth. Without flesh and blood that pillar was offered to God as representing the solid, righteous, eternal character of God's people. Over this the drink-offering was poured and the anointing applied; it stood there as a permanent testimony to God for His purposes in the earth. Now the Lord is showing Israel that, beyond anointing, the rock must know a smiting that the river of living waters might gush forth from it.

Beyond indrinking the Spirit to become a well within for the quenching of its own thirst, the Church must also know a great outpouring from itself, that all may come to the waters and drink. It must wrestle in prayer continuously, going on far beyond its own strength, enduring and outlasting its weariness; mediational in intercession, with princely power and priestly devotion, it must hold up the sceptre of the cross, that Jesus (Joshua) may win the battle for victory in the lives of His people. The house of God is a house of prayer that it may be a house from which the living waters flow out from under the altar.

If we would desire to have Jehovah as our banner we must live a life upon the altar principle. Amalek can never be allowed to drink of the water supplied by God for His people or all will have been in vain. The Church may recline to drink the Spirit but they must stand up to wage war against the flesh. What a wonderful symbol of the cross is that rod of Moses; it fills so many roles. Here it appears in the unusual symbol of a flag staff from which streams the banner emblazoned with an altar bearing the words 'Jehovah my banner'.

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