

THE ALTAR

ALTAR – A table, a platform or elevated place on which the Priest placed a sacrifice as an offering to the Lord.

The Hebrew word for altar (mizbeah) comes from a verbal root meaning “a place of slaughter or sacrifice.”

Altar is first mentioned in scripture in Genesis 8:20. Noah built the first altar unto the Lord after the flood.

The next few altars mentioned were in connection Abraham, who built his last altar on top of a mountain the land of Moriah. (Genesis 22:9).

Abraham’s son, Isaac built one altar (Genesis 26:25). Jacob, Isaac’s son did not build new altars but restored some that Abraham built.

Altars were also used by the Israelites to remind them of major events.

During the time of Moses there were two priestly altars that played very important roles in the Tabernacle in the wilderness. They were: (1) the altar of Burnt Offering and (2) The Altar of Incense.

The Altar of Burnt offering was placed in front of the entrance of the tabernacle (Exodus 40:6). The purpose was to declare that entrance into the presence of God must be preceded by sacrificial atonement for sin.

The Altar of Incense, Exodus 30: 1-10, stood just before the veil inside the tabernacle that separated the most holy place from the rest of the worship area. (Exodus 40:26-27). Priests burned incense on this altar everyday so its fragrance would fill the tabernacle when the blood from the sacrifice was being sprinkled on the altar of burnt offering.

Although altars were used in pagan worship as well, more often than not, they were used to worship God and to make sacrifices unto him. Also they were erected and used to “remember” great events and experiences with God so that those events could always be remembered and celebrated.

The altar should represent the same thing in the 21st century as it did in bible times. They should represent a place where decisions are made for our lives. It is a place where we have encounters with God that we will always remember and celebrate.

All over the world, thousands of people respond to the altars at churches to make life decisions. In fact, everything that is said and done throughout the worship service is leading up to that altar service where the word of God is responded to.

Most churches have a particular area in the church, usually in the front, which is used as an altar to help those that respond to the word of God to have various encounters with the Lord. Some come for prayer and some come to make eternal decisions as well as decisions for their lives.

The following are some basic principles that are important for those who desire to work at the altar to assist people and help them to have a positive experience and/or to help them to understand what is happening there and to assist them as they make lifetime decisions.

HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE ALTAR WORKER

First and foremost, it is important that those who assist at the altar be people that are concerned about souls. They should be people who love to see people get delivered and are willing to don't mind sacrifice their time to work with them throughout the process. Therefore, when working on the altar, one should be very serious about what they are doing and also very focused on what is taking place. The altar worker cannot be a person that is easily distracted.

The altar service is very sacred and very serious. It is not a place to hold conversations or to play. It is literally kingdom work and should be treated as such.

The altar worker must have good hygiene because unpleasant odors can be very distracting. (It is a good practice to keep a mint or breath spray available and to wear deodorant).

The altar worker preferably should be one that is filled with the Holy Spirit. There are many instances when one will have to discern what is going on with the individual. Sometimes they will reveal to you what they need and sometimes you will have to discern it. Also, the Spirit filled believer will have more authority and effectiveness.

Everything needs to flow at the altar and therefore it is important that the music match what is going on at the altar. (Blood songs for example are good for demonic activity).

The altar must pay close attention to the Pastor or speaker so that if called upon suddenly, you will be able to act quickly to pray or for whatever you are called upon to do.

When there are several people working with one individual, they all must be on one accord. Preferably one person will take the leading role so as not to confuse the seeker. If one goes over while people are already working with the individual, one should listen first to see what is being said/done.

It is very important that the altar worker listen to the calls that are made to be able to assist the person at the altar and to be effective. Is it a call for receiving Salvation? Is it a call to be filled with the Holy Spirit or for healing or even general prayer? It is important to pray specifically when possible.

Anyone who works at the altar should have the ability to lead a person to Christ.

There are times when a person should not work at the altar. Those times are:

- (1) If an individual does not feel led to work at the altar for any reason, they should not work on the altar.

- (2) If a person does not feel “up to par” spiritually, they should not work on the altar.

(3) When a person feels especially weak or sick, they should not work on the altar.

(4) It is not advisable for a woman to work on the altar when she is pregnant. Many times there are a lot of hormonal changes that take place when a woman is pregnant which may cause them to not feel the best physically and /or emotionally.

It is very important to be sure to touch people appropriately when laying hands on people. You don't want to send the wrong message.

If you are not "up to par" spiritually, it is not advisable to try to cast out demons. One should be spiritually and preferably experienced with dealing with strong demonic forces. Sometimes people that are possessed can be very strong and any number of situations may transpire while working them demonic activity.

It is important that all who desire to work on the altar live in a perpetual state of spirituality to the best of your ability. Be a person of prayer and a person that reads the word of God. Be a person that consecrates and dedicates their live to God as a lifestyle.

Last but not least, in addition to the above, one must be sensitive to the Holy Spirit to do and say whatever he may lead you to do.