

# Listen To The Sparrows and The Swallows!

## A Quick History Lesson on the House of God

In the Old Testament, the temple was understood to be the house of God, the place God called “home” on planet earth (II Chron. 6:2). Before the temple was around there was a big tent that the children of Israel carried as they journeyed through the wilderness (Ex. 26:1). This big tent housed the Ark of the Covenant where God’s presence dwelt (Ex. 25:10). The children of Israel carried around this big tent in the wilderness until they could pass over into the Land of Promise and give God a permanent residence. Well, even before that mobile tabernacle was constructed there was Moses’ tent. It was here that God Himself felt comfortable enough to first leave lonely Mount Sinai to dwell in the tent of his friend, Moses (Ex. 33:7). This was the first place that the Presence of God made His home with a human. It was no coincidence that it was Moses’ tent. Moses made long hard journeys up to the top of Mount Sinai just to be close to God, even to immerse in His presence (Ex. 24:18). Moses would refuse to move unless the Presence of God moved with him, no matter how much pressure the people gave him (Num. 9:21-22). Moses loved the LIVING God. He only wanted to dwell where God Himself was. What a heart!

## Hunger for The Living God

We see this same heart in another man several hundred years after Moses. This man’s name was David. David was passionate for His God. Indeed, he was desperately in love. His yearnings for the God He loved continually resulted in him crying out to dwell with God in His house. This deep longing can be heard throughout David’s Psalms; *“Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where Thine honor dwelleth”* (Psalm 26:8). *“One thing have I desired on the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, to enquire in His temple”* (Psalm 27:4). *“My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is; To see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary”* (Psalm 63:1-2). To David, it was not a matter of correct doctrine or righteous Christian living. He was completely captivated with the God He loved. The Lord Himself was the object of his one supreme desire, and to find Him David had to go to where He lived, His house. It is interesting to notice that David did not want to make regular visits to the

house of God, rather he wanted to dwell there all the days of his life. This desire for constant union and communion with the living God gives us a picture of the incredible joy that we can experience now that Christ, the very Living God, has made His home in us! But the point of this article is to focus on the blessedness of hearts that will press in to dwell in union with the living God in the greatest intimacy possible.

### **“Even Thine Altars”**

*“How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.*

*10 For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness” (Psalm 84:1-4, 10).*

Psalm 84 starts out with David nearly fainting with desire to dwell in the courts of the Lord. Not only his heart, but his very flesh was crying out for the LIVING God. Let's face it, this guy was about to pass out or have heart failure over the desperation of his desire to be with the Lord in His house. He felt that just one day in this realm of nearness to God in the courts of His House would be better than a thousand days somewhere else (verse 10). Even to be the person opening the doors to the house would far excel anything that could be known dwelling in the tents of wickedness where God did not live. David was so overcome with this desire that he became jealous of the little birds that made their nests in the temple. It is here, with these little sparrows and swallows, that we find the very heart of our message. David pointed out that it was not just a loft in the roof of the temple that these birds made their nests, but it was the Lord's altars where these birds chose to lay their young. David qualifies these altars as particularly blessed by saying; *“**Even** Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God”*. It is at this point that the Psalmist begins to exalt with these words, *“Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will still be praising You!”* Obviously, there is something about living in the realm of the altars that causes one to rejoice continually!

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## **The Simple Sparrows and Swallows!**

Now, the sparrows and swallows are simple little creatures. They are just little birds. A little bird is not after great gain or glory, and in this psalm we find them simply finding a good place to make a home, build a nest and safely lay their young. It is rather interesting that these birds would choose a place like the altars to make their homes and even safely lay their fragile young ones. We have mentioned that usually birds chose a high place, like the lofts or rafters, to make their nests. These kinds of places are hard to reach, far above other creatures that would harm them, or hurt their babies. In so many ways the altars would seem a foolish choice for these birds. The altars in the temple were the places where the priests offered sacrifices (Lev. 1:5-9). This was a messy business, and unpleasant in many ways. These altars were places where death and sacrifice were always present. There was a continual shedding of blood and fiery consumption of the flesh of slain beasts. The essence of death was always present at the altars, but there was another element that was also present. Smoke would rise up from these altars of sacrifice, bringing atonement, forgiveness, and with certain offerings a sweet savor to ascend to God's nostrils (Gen. 8:20-21).

## **True Worship**

In those days what happened at the altars was called "WORSHIP". In the Old Testament, worship was not related to praise songs, but to offering up sacrifices (I Sam.1:3, 2 Kings 17:36). In fact, the first mention of worship in the bible related to an act of sacrifice, Abraham's offering of Isaac (Gen. 22:5). So, in Old Testament terms, a place of constant worship could be found at the altars where the priests were continually offering up sacrifices (Ex. 29:42). And with a continual offering will come a continual release of smoke or "fragrance" from the altar. Not only was death and sacrifice present at the altars, but the air was permeated with the smoke of fragrant "Lamb-life" ascending to God's throne! Every animal offered on those altars was a picture of God in His eternal Lamb nature manifesting the beauty of His outpoured life. Here, you find a picture of God in His most sacred and eternal nature. To live in such an environment would cause one to become saturated with God in the deepest and most intimate way, in His eternal sacrificial Lamb nature. Here, at the altars, we find the very spirit of God's enthroned King... a little lamb as though slain (Rev. 5:6). If life only comes of death (John 12:24), then the altars would be the engine, the power-supply of life for the whole temple. At the altars there was a constant demonstration and release of Christ and Him Crucified in type and shadow. The fire was to always be burning at the altar, therefore the altar was a place where the spark of Life never goes out

(Lev. 6:13). For a heart that hungers after the living God... the altar would be the height of finding Him in His true Person and eternal image / essence. Here, He is manifesting His glory as He continually pours out His Life for others. Here we find the Cross as the height of communion, where the release of His glory and the wonder of His Person are made manifest. Here, at the altars we find a beautiful picture of God in His eternal essence ever releasing the presence of His eternal nature, a Lamb as though slain.

## **The Blessedness of the Altars**

Yes, death is a constant factor at the altars, and so it is today with the preaching and embracing of the Cross. But death is not the end, glory and true worship is. Here at the altars the blood of the Lamb is not just talked about, but poured out, making it precious, living and effectual (I Pet. 1:19). Communion in the deepest measure is found where the living God is. That which David's heart longed for and panted after found its satisfaction at the altars. This is why David was so jealous of those sparrows and swallows, for they had found the true place of blessedness and had made their homes there, even raising their young there. They were simple little creatures, but they had enough sense to know that the place of the altar is safer and more blessed than all of our best schemes to save our own lives and protect ourselves and loved ones from the preaching of the Cross. We may build our home far away from any place that preaches the Cross or emphasizes laying down our lives through Christ as true worship. But when we begin to long for the living God, we must draw nigh to the place where He can be found. I am not now speaking of joining any particular church or group, but rather of developing a heart that will not avoid the work of the Spirit to apply the cross to our old life and bring forth the spirit of the Lamb in us as our new Life.

It is always safer to self protect, take the easy route, not get messy, and seek to save in this life. But when you hunger for more than just a comfortable earth life, and find yourself panting after the living God in His fullest measure, you will go where the action is. You will go where His Life is being manifested, even to the loss of our own. You will love His altars. The preaching of the Cross will be your only glory (Gal. 6:14). You will exult in the high praise of knowing Him, evening if it is found in the fellowship of His sufferings (Phil. 3:10).

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that causes one to rejoice continually!***

## Conclusion

These Old Testament pictures were meant to be fulfilled in us, the very Body and House of the Risen Son (I Cor. 3:16). We are the temple, we are the priests and the Lamb of God is our Life now (I Pet. 2:5)! We will never find true and deep satisfaction apart from the altars of the Lord. The blessedness that makes our hearts sing can only be experienced by embracing the wonder of Christ and Him crucified. Throughout the generations man has misunderstood, misinterpreted, and misrepresented the preaching of the Cross and the blessedness of the Cross. A false spirit of tormenting, empty death has overshadowed the wonder of knowing Christ in His eternal nature and partaking of His blessed Lamb life. Many reject the altars and in so doing miss out on the resurrection that follows after. The living God that they hunger for always seems to evade them, as they walk far away from the altar. Yet, the little sparrows are singing out their encouragement to us today. Why would those little birds and their babies sing all the time from their home at the altars if it were place of torment and depression? The Lord is calling out to us today. Yes, there is a cost in preaching and embracing the Cross, but there is an even greater loss in rejecting it. Would you spend a few moments before the Lord and ask Him His opinion on this? Search this out for yourself in the scriptures. Seek and you will find, God promised it (Heb. 11:6). This area is so important and will affect every aspect of our lives. May the Lord bless you as seek Him.



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**This is a Fire Ministries article by Kelly Koshatka  
meant to help draw your heart into a greater hunger  
to pursue Jesus Christ as the One Who truly lives in you.**

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