

# Guest Preacher - Mr. Joe Macphee (Elder Stornoway)

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Preacher: Mr. Joe Macphee

[0:00] Let's turn again to the first portion of Scripture that we read. Exodus chapter 20 and at verse 24.! Exodus 20 verse 24.

An altar of earth you shall make for me, and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen.

In every place where I cause my name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you. If you make me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stones, for if you wield your tool on it, you profane it.

And you shall not go up by steps to my altar, that your nakedness be not exposed on it. An altar of earth you shall make for me.

I want to look at this particular passage and look at it firstly in terms of the significance of the altar in the worship of God.

[1:18] And then we'll look at this particular narrative, the altar of earth. And then finally, we will look at that text in Hebrews 13.

We have an altar. First, by way of introduction then, the first mention we have in the Scripture of an altar is in Genesis chapter 8 at verse 20.

God's covenant with Noah. Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

The first thing that he did when they came out of the ark was to build an altar and to sacrifice to God, to worship God, to praise God, to give him thanks for his deliverance.

To give thanks to God for his deliverance. In verse 21 we read, Here God makes a covenant with Noah.

[3:10] And you can read that for yourselves as you go into chapter 9 of that magnificent book, the book of Genesis, the book of beginnings, that we ought to know intimately if we are to know the rest of Scripture.

God made a covenant with Noah, with Noah and his family and with all flesh. In other words, you and me too.

And in that covenant he calls and he commands all to believe. He calls us to faith. To faith. And it's remarkable how the Lord preserved the world.

Preserved him as a result of the promise of Genesis 3.15 that a Redeemer would come. A Redeemer would come to complete and to fulfill the work of redemption.

Until that Redeemer comes again in the final judgment. So we can see altar and sacrifices previously instituted by God according to his word.

[4:34] The patriarchs had used altars previously. And we read of that particularly from the beginning of the Bible. We read about Abel.

We read in Hebrews 11 and verse 4, By faith, Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. He offered a sacrifice.

Where did Abel find that pattern for worship? Surely he found it in God himself. The God who had provided a sacrifice and a covering for Adam and Eve.

For Adam and Eve. And the pleasing aroma to God. The Gaelic puts it in a very unique way.

Agus jadig tjr. Almost as if God felt. He felt it. And it was pleasing to him. And of course in the New Testament, it has its corresponding chapter.

[5:46] As we read of these things in Ephesians chapter 5. And the second verse. And we read these words. Which refer specifically to the spiritual

sacrifices that we are asked to give.

Ephesians 5 too. Therefore be imitators of God as beloved children. And walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.

A fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. There is the pattern. There is the pattern. Christ first. And based on Christ.

That most pleasing sacrifice and aroma to God. So from the beginning. We can see. That the altar and sacrifice was instituted by God.

And the altar stands. It stands for sacrifice or a death. It stands for judgment. It stands for blood being shed.

[6:56] Blood being shed. After the children of Israel cross over the Jordan. We see in Exodus 17. That Moses built an altar at Rephidim.

Where he called God Jehovah Nisi. And as we follow through that narrative from Exodus. From Genesis into Exodus.

And to this particular chapter. 430 years after the covenant with Abraham. God renews his covenant with Moses.

And with Israel at Mount Sinai. Confirming the promises that he made to Abraham.

That they would be a great nation. A people. And he gave them the Ten Commandments. He gave them the moral law. They were constituted as a nation.

[7:58] A nation before God. A nation that had the Ten Commandments at its very heart. At its very heart. And it's interesting.

If you read into Deuteronomy. About this particular narrative in chapter 20. You read this. And he declared to you his covenant. Which he commanded you to perform.

That is the Ten Commandments. And he wrote them on two tablets of stone. Which in Deuteronomy 9. 9 is called. Are called the tablets of the covenant.

God. The triune God. Re-establishing. Renewing. His covenant afresh. With Moses.

And with the people of Israel. And God comes to speak. He speaks in chapter 20.

[8:59] And God spoke all these words. He came to communicate his will. He came to provide a further revelation of his covenant of grace.

The covenant with Abraham was a covenant of grace. The covenant at Sinai is a renewal of the covenant of grace. And he came to communicate his will.

He's not leaving man. On their own. To use their own initiative. As regards working out what pleases him. He's already established for them.

Worship. He's already established. How they're to worship him. A sacrifice. Blood being shed. And here he establishes.

His covenant. In ten commandments. A summary of the moral law. And God comes down.

[10:02] God condescends to come down. And he comes down. And he comes to speak. To speak. And he speaks in the ten commandments. And we read at verse 18.

When all the people saw the thunder. And the flashes of lightning. And the sound of the trumpet.

And the mountain smoking. The people were afraid. And trembled. And they stood far off.

And said to Moses. You speak to us. And we will listen. But do not let God speak to us. Lest we die. What a sight it must have been.

What a sound. Because not only did they see. But they heard. And they heard. The voice of the triune God. Speaking.

Speaking. And he comes to speak. He comes to speak. And you see. The people's reaction.

[11:01] Don't let God speak to us. You speak to us. And Moses replies. Do not be afraid. Do not fear.

For God has come to test you. That the fear of him may be before you. That you may not sin. The law was given for transgression.

The law was given for transgression. The law was given that it would reveal sin. Sin. Sin. And Moses knew. That God had come down to test them.

That he was going to test them. As they made their way. Through the wilderness. To the promised land. To the promised land.

And then God speaks to Moses. He speaks to Moses. And he says to Moses.

[12:04] An altar of earth. You shall make. For me. God. Speaking. From heaven.

God. Revealing his covenant. To the people of Israel. And now God. Establishing covenant. Worship. Covenant.

Worship. And in that covenant. Worship. There are a number of elements. Firstly. This. Worship. Must be word based.

It must be based on the word. Of God. Tell the Israelites. Thus you shall say to the people of Israel. You have seen for yourselves.

That I have talked with you from heaven. Word based. The living God. Speaking. Face to face.

[13:02] As it were. With Moses. And it's remarkable. That he repeats to Moses. The first two commandments. He repeats them to him. You shall not make gods of silver.

To be with me. Nor shall you make for yourselves. Gods of gold. God. The seriousness. With which the worship of God. And in particular. Coming to God.

The seriousness of it. Can never be underestimated. God reminds them. Who he is. You shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make for yourself. A carved image. Or any likeness. Of anything. That is in the heaven above. Or that is in the earth beneath. Or that is in the water under the earth.

You shall not bow down. And serve them. And so. On. He is reminding. The people. And he's reminding us.

[14:00] That he alone is God. He alone is worthy to be praised. To be worshipped. And he knows our hearts. He was going to test the people.

Through the wilderness. He was going to test them. To see what was in their heart. Because he knew. Their propensity to sin. As he knows my propensity to sin.

And yours. And he is warning them. Of the dangers of idolatry. Idolatry. And he says to them.

This is what you must do. Moses. An altar. Of earth. You shall make. For me. Or an altar.

An altar. Of unhewn. Stone. In verse 26. At the end of the chapter. He calls it. My altar. What is unique about the altar.

[14:56] No man. Made. Hand. Or skill. Must. Go near it. It must be. His workmanship. It must be.

By the hand of God. And the hand of God alone. It must be simple. And unadorned. As one commentator put it.

Such as may convey. The impression. Of a direct contact. Between heaven. And the earth. Which he.

Himself. Had made. All of God. I'm speaking to you. From heaven. And there is contact. Between heaven.

And earth. And here it is. The very earth. That I made. And that I. That I. Uphold. By the word. Of my power. An altar.

[15:50] Of earth. Not a pagan altar. Not a Canaanite altar. And he knew. Of course. God. Knew. That they were going into a place.

Into a land. What people were worshipping. It was nothing new. For people to worship. But. Pagan worship. And pagan idolatry.

And the high places. Of which the scripture speaks. Time and time again. The high places. What is it about man. That we want.

The high places. That we want to know more than God. That we want to be God. That we want to build a tower. To heaven. It's in every heart.

In every heart. An altar of earth. You. Shall make. For me. And there must be no steps. It must be.

[16:45] On the earth. No steps. No ascending up. And he says something quite. Unique. In terms of the nakedness. Of mankind.

Which. Surely refers. To the nakedness. Of sin. The nakedness. Of sin. And it's remarkable.

When you look. At the. Details. That God gives. Following this. In the chapters. After this. 21. 22. 23. And so on. Down.

Through the rest. Of. Exodus. And the order. He gives to the priests. The priests. Legs. Had. To be bound. They had.

To have a special. Garment. That they wore. To cover the nakedness. Of their legs. Everything. Done.

[17:41] According. To the detail. That God. Gives. The worship. Of God. Was not. To be blemished. Or profaned.

By. Indecency. In any. Shape. Or form. And there is no place. For it. In the worship. Of God. Ever. Whatever worship.

That might be. An altar. Of earth. You shall make. For me. And then he says. Something about this altar.

You shall sacrifice. On it. Your burnt. Offerings. And your peace. Offering. This was to be. An altar. Of burnt. Offering.

First. And foremost. The whole. Animal. Burnt. To atone. For sin.

[18:36] And after it was slain. The blood. Collected. And sprinkled. On the altar. And on the people. In chapter 24. At verse 8. This blood.

Of the sacrifice. Is called. The blood. Of the covenant. Atonement. And it was. The death. Of the animal. In the place. Of the sinner. Who deserved. To die. It was atonement.

It was. Substitutionary. Atonement. And the smoke. Of the burnt. Offering. Rising up. As a pleasing. Aroma. To God. Godward. It was. Godward. And as one. Commentator. Let's put it. The atonement. Terminates. On the Godhead. The atonement. Terminates. On the Godhead. And not only. A burnt offering. But a peace offering. A peace offering.

[19:30] That there might be. Reconciliation. Between the holy God. And this. Guilty sinner. So that on the basis.

Of the burnt offering. There would be. Communion. There would be. Fellowship. Restored. There would no longer. Be separation. Because sin.

Separates. The altar. Of earth. The altar.

Of burnt offering. And peace. Offering. Or the significance. Of the altar. Sacrifice. Judgment. Death. And blood. Central. Central. To the covenant. Relationship. Between. A holy God. And sinners.

[20:26] But the altar. Has such significance. Because. It is where. That holy God. And that guilty person. Meet. They meet. At the altar. It's a meeting place.

There is a transaction. That the sinner. That the sinner. Might know. That he's a sinner. But that there is a sacrifice. For sin. There is a burnt offering.

And a peace offering. And the guilt. Can be removed. By penalty. Of death. And reconciliation. Made. And peace. Restored. Lord. And. Lord. Patrick. Fairbairn. Patrick. Fairbairn. Professor. Patrick. Fairbairn. Who wrote. A remarkable book. On the typology. Of scripture. Says this. Communion. With. God. And sinful.

[21:23] Men. Is through. The avenue. Of blood. And the sentence. Of death. Must ever be found.

Lying across. The threshold. Of life. The earth. Formed. Originally. For man's support. And nourishment. But now.

The witness. Of his sin. The drinker. Of the blood. Of his forfeited life. The theater. And home. Of death. Communion. With God. And sinful. Men. Is through.

The avenue. Of blood. Without. The shedding. Of blood. There is no. Remission. Of sins.

[22:19] And if you follow on. Through. Exodus. You will see. That that. Principle. Of the altar. Of earth. Or of.

Unhewn. Stone. Continues. Even though. In the tabernacle. The altar. Of earth.

Or of unhewn. Stone. Was covered. There was a covering. Of brass. The brazen altar. In other words. In other words. An altar. That had a covering. Of brass.

In order. That the sacrificial. System. Would start. Formally. For Israel. As a nation. The altar. Of burnt offering. And all. All the sacrifices. Centred. Around. The altar. This is where.

[23:14] The worship. Of God. Began. When you went in. To the tabernacle. What met you? The altar. The altar. Of burnt offering.

How can I get past it? You can't. How can I get access to God? You can't. There has to be an altar. You can't.

Go beyond it. You can't. Go beyond it. Into the holy place. Or the most holy place. Without stopping. At this altar. Of burnt offering.

At this altar. Of peace offering. No wonder. That every morning. And every evening. There were sacrifices made.

Every morning. Every evening. Sabbaths. The start of every month. The start of every year. All their feasts. The Jubilee. Started. And finished.

[24:09] With sacrifices. On the altar. And it. Represents. The whole. Spiritual life. Of God's.

People. Their acceptance. Was based. On sacrifice. Offered. At this altar. No blessing. Except through the altar.

An altar. An altar. An altar. Shaped. By him. From all. All. Eternity. An altar. Shaped by him. From all.

Eternity. And the sacrifices. That we read of. Here.

And in the rest. Of the Old Testament. Sacrifice. After sacrifice. Death. And judgment. And blood. And atonement.

[25:07] For sin. Sin. God. Accepted.

Them. Acceptance. In the Bible. And sacrifice. Are joined together. When you sing. In the Psalms. Just by. Slight digression. Although it's not a digression.

Really. When you. Sing. In the Psalms. Or read in the Bible. About acceptance. It is always.

Referring to sacrifice. Because there is.

Acceptance. Through no. Other way. Except. Through. Sacrifice. And the sacrifices. That you see. In the Old Testament. Were accepted.

By God. Only. As they looked. Forward. To a greater. Sacrifice. The once.

[26:02] For all. Sacrifice. For sin. As they looked. Forward. To Christ.

And the writer. To the Hebrews. Says. We. Have. An altar. We have.

The Lord. Jesus. Christ. He. Is. The. True. The true. The true. Altar. He.

Is. The true. Offering. And sacrifice. He. Is. The true. Burnt. Offering. The peace. Offering. He. Is. Our. Peace. There.

Could. Have. Been. No. Covenant. With. Noah. With. Abraham. With. Moses. And. No. New. Covenant. Without. The coming. Of. Jesus.

[26:59] Christ. What. Was. Freely. Given. To the people. Of Israel. And. To Moses. Was. Purchased. By Christ. Purchased. By Christ. We.

Have. An altar. The letter. To the Hebrews. Tells us. We. Have. An altar. And.

The New Testament. Tells us. That the blood. Of the animals. Could not. Take away sins. As they had to be. Offered. Continually. But. The blood. Of Jesus.

Can. He is. The true altar. He is. The true altar. He is. The altar. Of earth.

Shaped. In heaven. From all eternity. When he took. Our nature. To himself. He took. Our nature. To himself. He became.

[27:57] Like us. In every way. Except. Without. Sin. He took. Our. Nature. Our nature.

To himself. In order. That he might. Be the true altar. An altar. Of earth. Simple.

And. And. And. And. And. There he was. God. Himself. In our nature. Born. In Bethlehem.

Brought up. By his parents. In the temple. At twelve years of age. Telling them. I must be about. My father's business. And when he begins. His public ministry.

He goes around. There he is. In many senses. An ordinary man. There he is. A body. Like we have. A body. Of earth.

[28:56] An altar. Of earth. And he came. To die. And he came. To lay himself. On the altar.

Which is himself. He. Is the true altar. The true sacrifice. The true. Great. High priest. And his own. Precious blood. The Bible. Tells us. Which was shed. On Calvary's cross. He took it. Into.

Heaven. His own blood. The blood. Of the God. Man. He took it. And he took it. Into heaven. And was that.

Not a pleasing. Sacrifice. To God. If God. Felt. The sacrifice. Of Noah. And if God. Felt. And if God.

[29:54] Accepted. The other sacrifices. That were given. That were made. According to the pattern. That he gave. And if God. Felt it. And if God.

Was pleased.

How pleased. Was he. With the. Blood. Of his son. In our nature. What rejoicing. If we can use.  
Reverent. Language. What rejoicing. What rejoicing. We have an altar.  
We don't need. An altar. We don't need. An external altar. If you're a Christian. You have an altar.  
Not. Just. The Lord Jesus Christ. Wonderful. As that is. But you have an altar. Inside you. You have  
an altar.

[30:52] Inside you. Christ. Christ himself. Dwells. In your heart.  
Through the Holy Spirit. He dwells.

In you. Through the Holy Spirit. Christ in you. The hope. Of glory. Christ. Dwelling.  
In our hearts. By faith. And we come. To Jesus. Jesus. We come.  
To this altar. And we serve. At this altar. And we eat. At this altar. We come. To Jesus. The true.  
Altar. Do you. Have an altar. What is. Your status. Before God.

[31:51] Do you. Do you. Have an altar. Can you. Rejoice. With me. And  
say. Yes. I have an altar. Christ. Saved me.

He is. Everything. To me. All I need. Is him. And it's. All of grace. All of grace.  
The last time. I was here. I was just. When I was preparing. Just before I left. I was reminded of.  
What I had preached on. In Isaiah 6.

Where you have a throne. And an altar. And Revelation 20. The end of the chapter. Where you  
only. Have. A throne.

And a judge. Sitting. On that throne. No altar there. On the final day. Of judgment. No altar there.

[32:49] Just the judge. Of all the earth. Who is. This. Lord. Jesus.  
Christ. I think there was mention. Made in the intimations.

About. Your communions. Starting. Soon. Soon. The communion table. Is not an altar. It's not an  
altar.

It's a memorial. To him. To him. The broken body. And the shed blood. Of Christ. Word.  
And sacrament. Word. Word. And sacrifice. Covenant. Worship. Word. And sacrifice.  
Word. And altar. Worship. In spirit. And in truth. That's. What. The bible. Says to us.

[33:52] It says to us. Such. The father. Wants. People. Who now. Offer.  
Spiritual. Sacrifices. That's what you're called to do.

As a Christian. You offer. Spiritual. Sacrifices. That are pleasing to God. Because. Of Christ.  
Because of the.

Altar. That is in you. The true altar. The altar. Of earth. The altar. God. Gave. To man.  
Amen. May the Lord. Bless. These thoughts. On his word. On his word. We'll sing. In conclusion.  
Then. In the psalter.

And. Psalm. 118. Psalm. 118. And.

[34:52] We can sing. At verse. 24. Psalm. 118. Verse. 24. This is the  
day. God made. In it. We'll joy.

Triumphantly. Save. Now. I pray. Thee. Lord. I pray. Send. Now. Prosperity. Blessed. Is he.  
In God's. Great. Name. That. Cometh. Us. To save. We. From the house. Which. To the Lord.  
Pertains. You. Blessed. Have. God.

Is the Lord. Who unto us. Hath made light. To arise. Bind. Ye. Unto the altar's. Horns. With cords.  
The sacrifice. Thou art.

My God. I'll thee exalt. My God. I will thee praise. Give thanks. To God. For he is good. His mercy.  
Lasts.

[35:46] Always. These verses. To God's praise. This is the day God made  
in it.

With joy triumphantly. Same now I pray.

The Lord I pray. Send now prosperity.

Blessed is he in God's great name.

God. God cometh us to save We from the house Which to the Lord There tins you blessed time  
God is the Lord To and to us Hath made light to arise I need unto thee Altar shorts With courts that  
sacrifice

[37:43] Thou art my God I'll thee exalt My God I will thee praise Give  
thanks to God For he is good Is mercy Thus always A word of prayer in

conclusion Help us to look to Jesus The author And the perfecter Of faith  
That most remarkable gift You give to sinners like us That gift

Of faith by which we can see Jesus O Lord Help us To think On him Help us To see That it is all Of  
grace Not One Thing Of mankind In our salvation It cannot be It must never be Grant to us then On  
this Lord's day To Give you thanks For your day For the Worship of your house For the gospel Of  
the cross Of Jesus Christ And as we begin A new week We pray That we take Would take the  
Lord's day With us into every day To make every day A Lord's day  
In our dedication And commitment And service To him Who loved us And gave himself For us All  
we ask We ask In Christ's Precious name And for his sake Amen To ending