**BUILDING ALTARS FOR MISSION**

Suggestive sermon for April 21st – Literature Evangelism Promotion Sabbath

By Dr. Super Moesi – SID Publishing Department Director

**Introduction**

The Seventh Day Adventist church theme for this quinquennium is Reach the World, in line with the world church theme, the publishing ministries adopted and adapted it to Reach Everyone, I Live for Mission.

This is in line with the words of Christ in response to the question of the disciples, And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”[[1]](#footnote-1) The actual sign in direct response to their question is “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

Christ’s response then calls for the involvement of each and every member of the church participate in the proclamation of the gospel. When everyone participates the coming of Christ will be hastened.

In this message we will study Abraham mission exploits as God’s missionary to heathen worlds in the Old Testament. One of Abraham’s outreach strategies was Building altars. Therefore, this discourse seeks to show 1. what Altars signified, 2. Who and where they can be built and 3. how every member can espouse this model for the advancement of the gospel.

The pen of inspiration states, “Ministers and people should engage in the circulation of books, pamphlets, and tracts, as never before. Sell where people are able and willing to purchase, and where they are not, give them the books.” *Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 690*

**I - What altars did Abraham erect?**

Abraham had a culture of of building altars wherever he travelled in Old Testament. He went from place to place for various reasons including, place of meeting God, looking for food and pastures for his animals. However, where ever he camped it was spontaneous that he left a mark of his faith in God, in form of an altar.

Lets consider the following texts;

1. Genesis 12:7 “Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” And there he built an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him”[[3]](#footnote-3)
2. Genesis 12:8 “And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent *with* Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.”[[4]](#footnote-4)
3. Genesis 13:18 “Then Abram moved *his* tent and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which *are* in Hebron, and built an altar there to the Lord.”[[5]](#footnote-5)
4. Genesis 22:9 “Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

**II - Why should we build altars?**

1. An altar is a *place of surrender*, where Abraham surrendered and gave into God’s guidance.
2. An altar is a *place of sacrifice*, where Abraham’s most beloved son was offered to God.
3. An altar is a place worship many of Abraham’s family members and servants worshiped God.
4. An altar is a *place of revelation*, God revealed himself to Abraham by consuming the sacrifice
5. An altar is a *place of connection*, where heathen people connected with God their creator.
6. An altar has a long lasting effect where people heard God’s voice even after Abraham departed.
7. **Why are altars so important?**

Commenting on the texts above on building altars, E.G. White stated the following,

“Many keep their faith secret, afraid to confess it, but not Abram. **Wherever he went he confessed the One whom he trusted and obeyed**. His altars dotting the Palestinian countryside became **memorials to the one true God.** The Canaanites, whose iniquity was not yet full (ch. 15:16), were thus made acquainted with the Creator of the universe, and by Abram’s precept and example were **called upon to discard their idols and worship Him**.” SDA BC V1 297

“In following years, there were those among the **roving Canaanites** who received instruction from Abraham; and whenever one of these came to that altar, **he knew who had been there before him**; and when he had pitched his tent, **he repaired the altar**, and there **worshiped the living God**.” Christian Service 210.4

There are at least three elements that stand out and are very important for our consideration:

1. **Wherever, Abraham went he confessed the God He believed.** This indicates that each and every member can confess their God like Abraham. Any member can build an altar wherever thy go to confess faith in God. Abraham’s foot steps were easily traceable because of these missionary monuments he built. How can members do the same today?
2. **Memorials to the one true God:** Abraham was not afraid of the fact that the heathen gods littered the place and people worshiped other gods. He knew their worship styles to other gods would be impacted by the power of his true God. This indicates that a missionary should not worry about the powers of other gods by trust God to change the lives of the target people despite their past. In other words, just erect the altar where you get an opportunity.
3. Heathens **were called upon to discard their idols and worship Him**. The altars stood as witnesses even after Abraham departed. The inanimate altar continued to proclaim the one and only true God to the heathen lands. The heathens came to the ruined altar of Abraham and God used it as a instrument of conversion for the heathen to the true one God. How can a member build altars today?

**III - How can I build Altars for mission as a member?**

To make this point clear, of how each member can build an altar, true stories of how some members did altars in their own little space that God gave them will be shared.

1. **Harvest mission Altar in a Muslim home**

In Madagascar, in the Southern Africa Indian Ocean Division, a married woman who was raised a Muslim and married to a Muslim received a missionary book of the year, “When God Said Remember” in Malagasy, the local language. When she got home from work she felt moved to read the book. It took her about three days to finish the book. The book opened a new world of Sabbath rest and spending time with the new-found creator. She went to her work place with a request to her employer to keep the Sabbath. The employer reminded her that Madagascar has one of the highest unemployment rate. She was informed that she could not have both, keeping the Sabbath and keeping her job. She had to choose, and she chose the Sabbath over her job. Her husband noticed his wife was not going to work anymore. Upon inquiry he discovered that she stopped because she read a book. He read the book with an intention to convince his wife to disregard the Sabbath and go back to work in view of the biting economic situation. However, the husband had exactly the same experience as his wife. He quit his job to keep the Sabbath too. Both of them are happy baptized members of Seventh-day Adventist church and full-time literature evangelists. The climax of the story is that; this one book was circulated among family members. By November 2017 nine people had joined the church because of the one book altar built in their homes. The book altar is still making its rounds among relatives, only heaven knows the ultimate impact of this book Altar.

1. **Harvest Altar in Pentecostal Home**

A literature evangelist in South Africa gave a book, “When God said Remember” to a Pentecostal and professional singer client. She had a few questions regarding the biblical Sabbath. She later discovered that she was twenty-four hours behind in her worship appointment with her creator. The lady worshiped for the first time on Sabbath the first weekend of August 2017. The gathering was at Akasia church, in the province of Gauteng in South Africa. The writer was in the same church on the day. When an appeal was made for members to buy missionary books to share, she ordered one hundred copies. Her strategy is to build altars in the offices and homes of church pastors and bishops, who pastored her before and still invite her to sing. Her confession was that music is a door opener, but a book altar is the ministry. She saw the power of book in her own life after being a Pentecostal for 20 years. The book convinced her to keep the Sabbath despite the fact that she is no easily influenced. The book altar has done it and she has started building many more altars. You (members) can do the same.

1. **Harvest Mission alter in Dumping place.**

One of the frequently asked question is “why share books when people throw them away.” A lady in East London, South Africa went to a dumping site to throw litter/rubbish from her yard. Upon arriving at the site, her attention was drawn to something that was sticking out in the rubble on the ground. She got close to inspect the sight and she discovered that it was a book. She picked it, dusted it and wiped it, the title was “When God Said Remember. She took the book home and upon reading it she started looking for the church. Upon finding the church she was warmly welcome and later baptized into the Seventh- day Adventist church. The book altar is still effective to turn people to God, regardless of the worthlessness of the things around where the altar erected. The lady has held various positions in the church including deaconry and woman ministries leadership.

**IV - How can you build an altar?**

Abraham built altars wherever he went, you can carry some light (not heavy), yet effective material to build altars by carrying missionary books and leaflets wherever you go. Your work place, petrol stations, school grounds, toll gates, weddings, funerals, etc are all potential construction sights for altars.

 Ellen white nailed it when she said,

“*Let the leaflets and tracts, the papers and books, go in every direction.* ***Carry with you, wherever you go****, a package of select tracts, which you can hand out as you have opportunity.* ***Sell*** *what you can, and* ***lend*** *or* ***give*** *them away as the case may seem to require. Important results will follow.” --Review and Herald, June 10, 1880. {ChS 151.1*

To Live for mission or live the mission, turn you home into center for evangelism.

Let every visitor to your home and office walk away with a book or leaflet to construct more mission altars.

Load your car with truth filed literature for every passenger to keep turning many to righteousness.

Carry the books and pamphlets with you wherever you go to build altars at petrol stations, hospitals and other unexpected places where hungry souls are languishing for knowledge. The Bible and Spirit of Prophecy are emphatic that there will be great harvest as indicated by the texts below.

The Bible says in Isaiah 55:11,

“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please And it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

E.G White categorically states: “God will soon do great things for us if we lie humble and believing at His feet, […] More than one thousand will soon be converted in one day, most of whom will trace their first convictions to the reading of our publications.” {CM 151.3}

**V - Appeal**

**Where have you been this week or this hear are your footprints traceable. For Abraham they could tell be the altar behind. What about you?**

Do you want to be part of the mission altars builders? Share a book!

Do you want to preach after you are gone and departed? Share a book!

If the answer to the above is yes, then stand up so I pray for you.

Preacher or Designee Dedicatory prayer

1. *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 24:3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 24:14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ge 12:7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ge 12:8). Nashville: Thomas Nelson. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ge 13:18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ge 22:9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Is 55:11). Na

shville: Thomas Nelson. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)