

BROKEN ALTARS

'Broken altars, scattered stones... symbols of a forgotten and hurting God. These crumbled fragments are the pathetic mementoes of a Forsaken love, of broken covenants, dead worship, polluted sacrifices, stifled visions and a longing and angry God. Are these the root of the present increase of earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes and typhoons? Are these the cause behind the menacing invasion of sicknesses, epidemics and pandemics that defy all treatment and cure'

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FOREWORD

The recent flood of natural catastrophe represents for the Church '*a crisis of interpretation*'. If, in cowardice, it turns from the Biblical and prophetic view of God's sovereignty in judgment, and defers to the world's preference for '*accident*', it effectually (i) voids God as God, (ii) becomes a false witness, and (iii) courts apostasy.

In Susan Tang's splendid **BROKEN ALTARS**, the true spirit of prophecy runs strong. How like God to employ so frail a vessel to shame the Church to wakefulness. **May His urgent cry be heard** through her in Malaysia, Asia and the world.

ART KATZ, prophet/apostle
BEN ISRAEL FELLOWSHIP, N. M. AMERICA

BROKEN ALTARS, FORGOTTEN GOD

Broken altars, scattered stones,
Crumbled fragments and a forgotten God
Indistinguishable heaps of rubbish
Desolate shrine
Pathetic mementoes of a Forsaken Love.
Of broken covenants and dead worship
Of polluted and missing sacrifices
Of faded loyalties and stifled visions,
Also, of a longing, hurting God.

O, to have known You and loved You
And then to fade away
Into disloyalty and spiritual decay;
Or worse, into deep darkness and degradation.
It's not only to lose life's highest incentives
Or heaven's holiest spell
But also to lose life altogether.

No wonder — *'There was no peace to
The one who went out, nor to the one who came in,
But great turmoil was on all the inhabitants of the lands,
So nation was destroyed by nation,
And city by city, for God troubled them
With every adversity' (2 Chro 15:5,6).*
So said the prophet Azariah.

Though spoken thousands of years ago
There is still relevance in the prophet's words
At this hour of great universal darkness.
Where earthquakes and tsunamis, hurricanes and typhoons
Sicknesses, diseases and terror acts
Deluge us almost daily, with meaningless deaths in every land,
There really is no true peace and rest, Lord
Within the heart of every human being.

So raise up, O God, Elijah-type of men.
The remnant is calling for their soon release.
Let the intensity of our prayers cause a Divine Stir
For their soon release, to stand strong in every land.

Come Elijahs, come! We have been waiting long.

Come, gather those scattered, broken, disorderly stones,
Come, rebuild God's altars; raise up the shrines
Establish God's honour once again, and lay the sacrifices on.
Then call for holy fire – the one that comes from above
The fire that consumes carnality and checks evil from within.
For we want no other, for others have left us, O, so dry
We seek the one from above, for only this one will satisfy.

INTRODUCTION

GOD IS ROARING and SHOUTING

The prophet Jeremiah prophesied that when Israel and the nations of the world repeatedly rejected God and turned a deaf ear to His pleas to forsake their wicked ways, **God pounced upon them like a lion!** What a terrible fate for Israel – her good and gentle Shepherd, the One who had protected and fed her had now become her ruthless destroyer. Like a lion, He would **tear and feed upon her!** Instead of speaking to her to comfort her, He is now shouting and directing battle-cries at her. Yes, Jehovah had decided to fight against her and the nations of the earth!

This is all too frightening and too hard to believe. The good shepherd had turned into a tearing lion? The protector and benefactor had now become the destroyer? The one who had spoken words of comfort to Israel is now shouting at her with battle-cries? The gentle Lamb who shed His blood for her has now become a merciless lion who wants to shed her blood? Woe to Israel and to the nations of the earth: *“For the **Lord has a controversy with the nations and He will plead His case with all flesh. He will (i) give those who are wicked to the sword (ii) cause disaster to go forth from nation to nation and (iii) raise up a great whirlwind (hurricane, tsunami) from the farthest part of the earth and (iv) on that day the slain of the Lord shall be from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth”*** (Jeremiah 25:30-33).

The prophet Amos prophesied, *“**The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord hath spoken, who can but prophesy**”* (Amos 3:8)? Three years after this prophecy, the lion sprang into action and devoured Jerusalem by an earthquake. *“The city that went out by a thousand shall leave an hundred, and that which went forth by an hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel”* (Amos 5:3).

Yes, tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes, typhoons and

terrorism are part of the lion's roar and they have become too 'frighteningly' common and un-nerving. So are epidemics and pandemics. From the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah we know the cause. It is because God is "*having a controversy with the nations and is pleading (judging) His case with all flesh.*" If God fights against us, what chance do we have of winning?

No wonder Jesus warned that in the end times, many people will die of heart attacks – "*Men's hearts failing them for fear and the expectation from those things which are coming on the earth*" (Luke 21:26). Tsunamis, hurricanes, terrorism and epidemics have not hit our nation yet. We Malaysians just watch these tragedies on TV, shake our heads, shrug our shoulders and sigh – we are thankful that these things are not happening HERE. What makes you so sure? Yes, what guarantee do we have that these calamities will not hit Malaysia?

I had a frightening and unique experience on 5 September 2005. As I was watching the news coverage of Hurricane Katrina on TV, the Lord asked me, "What if a tsunami were to come here?" Startled, I responded by rebuking this voice. I mistook it as coming from the enemy or my own inner self. I continued to indulge in the news. When it ended, I left the office to go into my bedroom. As I was going into my bedroom, I saw, in a vision, water seeping into my bedroom and toilet! I turned around and shouted, "No! No! Lord, do not let this happen!"

That night I could not sleep. I was deeply disturbed, so I stayed up to pray and to intercede in tongues. I finally dozed off at 3:30am. I woke up to the sharp beep of two SMSes and a phone call, all saying: "EARTHQUAKE AT CELEBES SEA, SPARKING OFF A POSSIBLE TSUNAMI HEADING EAST TO LAHAD DATU!" It was not an April Fool Day's joke. An earthquake did occur and the news was given by Smart Alert SMS. And if the tsunami had hit the east of Lahad Datu, it would have brought total devastation because the eastern part of Lahad Datu is an open sea with totally flat terrain – there is nothing to hold back an approaching tsunami.

I jumped out of bed to brush my teeth and realized my hand was

shaking slightly ... a harbinger of fear? The night before, the Lord was already trying to tell me something and thank God, my spirit caught it and I had prayed and prayed. No, in fact it was not just the night before. More than two weeks ago, the Lord had been trying to warn me but my hardened heart and undiscerning ears could not grasp anything.

Two weeks before September 6, (the day of the 'supposed' tsunami) I dreamt that a tsunami hit LAHAD DATU. I was in the sea but the waves could not sweep me off as I was holding on to a ledge that had suddenly juttred out of the sea! When I woke up, I thought to myself, "What a lousy and terrible dream, what a dark satanic attack...no lah, a tsunami will never come here. Lahad Datu and Malaysia are safe. It's a silly dream."

It was not so silly after all. I was genuinely alarmed by the news. I rounded up my intercessors (they pray daily in the church) and I asked the students of STESYEN KEHIDUPAN (BM SOL students) to stop their class and pray.

Thank God, the tsunami did not come and we are safe, but for how long? The Borneo Post's headlines on September 6 2005 read: '**POWERFUL EARTHQUAKE: 987 kilometers east of Lahad Datu in Celebes Sea, no tremor effect so far.**' Is not this amazing that such a powerful earthquake, measuring 6.6 on the Richter scale and striking at three degrees north and 124 degrees east of the Celebes Sea **did not cause a tsunami?**

The New Straits Times reported (NST 28/9/05) that **Sabah is susceptible to tsunamis as earthquakes are fairly active in this region** and the eastern part of Sabah is especially dangerous because it is flat terrain. The eastern part of Sabah comprises Lahad Datu, Sandakan and Semporna. On October 16 2005, the New Straits Times carried this headline: "QUAKE AND TSUNAMI PREDICTED." Part of the article carried the report by Dr. Smith who had predicted the coming of the killer tsunami that hit Thailand on December 26 2005: "*The epicenter of future quakes will shift northwards, north of the Andaman and Nicobar islands. A big earthquake with a more northerly epicenter than the Dec 26 quake will generate a tsunami which will have a more direct route down to the Straits of Malacca, swamping*

Singapore and Malaysia. As the sea passage narrows, more water will build up and the waves will become bigger. This is no joke. I would like you to put this message out to Singapore and Malaysia” (NST OCT 16/05).

The world is suffering not only from tsunamis, typhoons, hurricanes and terrorism, but also from the threat of incurable sicknesses and diseases. A top UN public health expert warned that a new influenza pandemic could kill from five to 150 million people. This is expected to happen ‘anytime.’ This sickness is incurable and no one knows when its virus will be activated – to kill.

Malaysia has her own problems. Besides the reports of the high number of suicides and drug addiction cases, we have also been told that the nation will be ‘savaged’ by cancer, AIDS and dengue fever. Today’s newspapers reported that five million young people in Malaysia are suffering from chronic illnesses and this will rise to 10 million by 2020 (NST Oct 11/05). Why are all these happening?

Besides the prophecies of Jeremiah, perhaps the words of Azariah, an obscure prophet who spoke into the life of King Asa, can help us. What was spoken thousands of years ago through these men has fearful relevance to our days.

“And in those times (times when altars were broken and God was forgotten) there was **no peace** to the one who went out, nor to the one who came in, but **great turmoil** was on all the inhabitants of the lands, **So nation was destroyed by nation, and city by city, for God troubled them with every adversity”** (2 Chronicles 15: 5-6).

“Because My people have **forgotten Me**, they have burned incense to worthless idols and they have caused themselves to **stumble in their ways. From the ancient paths, to walk in pathways and not on a highway to make their land a desolate and a perpetual hissing, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and shake his head. I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy, I will show them the back and not the face in the day of their calamity”** (Jeremiah 18:15-

17).

*“I will **make void the counsel** of Judah and Jerusalem in this place and I will cause them to **fall by the swords** before their enemies and by the*

*hands of those who seek their lives, their **corpses** I will give as meat to the birds of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth. I will make **the city***

***a desolate and a hissing**, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and hiss because of all its **plagues**” (Jeremiah 19:7-8).*

These were the reasons and the root behind the calamities and the tragedies of a nation. In these verses of scriptures, God’s prophets give us the root for the unrest and the universal darkness in their times (and ours). These words ring with deep relevance for our days. **A nation’s erring heart, wandering feet and spiritual disloyalty have brought about its own great misfortune and downfall.** It has given rise to the menacing peril of every form of adversity - from the sword to moral perversion, from incurable sicknesses and diseases to a convulsing nature which spews up tsunamis, hurricanes and typhoons at unexpected times, bringing with them horrifying deaths with corpses lying everywhere. Aceh, Sri Lanka, India, China, Russia, America, Mexico, Guatemala, Africa and ...? The list goes on and on. When will they come to Malaysia?

In His dealings with mankind, God can either make soft statements to us by *“putting his hand upon us”* (Isaiah 1:25) or by making loud statements by *“stretching out his hand against us”* (Isaiah 5:25). I am afraid the latter is happening right now. Human hearts have so hardened that God has to deal with us in fury by *“stretching out his hand against us.”* God is definitely not whispering into our ears any more. The honeymoon period is over and I can certainly hear Him roaring and shouting at the nations of the world and dealing with them in His fury right now. It will grow in intensity. If God had brought a ‘holocaust’ upon His own nation Israel because they did not listen to Him, how much more will He deal with other nations who insist on doing the same thing?

*“You have not listened to Me, says the Lord, that you might provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands **to your own hurt.**”*

Yes, God’s word is absolute. Because there is no shadow of turning in Him, therefore there is no way we can argue away His complaints, His verdict, judgment and, of course, His pain. We have indeed sinned to our own hurt and while we lick our wounds, God, too has been in pain. He watched us turn our backs on Him. We let His altars lie broken, scattered, overturned, neglected and dishonoured in every nation, every country and among different tribes and ethnic groups. How He hurts to see so many meaningless deaths.

Yes, the nation’s sorrows lie in its spiritual disloyalty to the God of heaven. History, especially the nation of Israel, has taught us that spiritual disloyalty brings physical pain and judgment, not only in human lives but also upon nature itself. When we attack God’s honour by allowing His altar to lie desolate, He will allow us no rest. As long as God is hurting and robbed of His glory, mankind will have no peace or goodwill.

Remember what the angels proclaimed at the birth of Jesus? They said, “Glory to God in the Highest, peace and goodwill to men on earth.” The implications are clear – when God in the highest gets His glory, then we men on earth will have peace and goodwill. But is God getting the glory? Not at all. Not when we leave His altars broken and scattered. Not when we allow His altars to lie desolate, and definitely not when we attack His honour by offering polluted and alien sacrifices.

May God, in His mercy, forgive us for allowing His altars to lie broken, scattered, desolate and unattended. The heaps of overturned stones look insignificant, but oh, its implications and consequences are horrifying and cannot be contained. These heaps of indistinct rubble expose the root of a nation’s sorrows and misfortune. **They also unveil the loss of our soul’s intimacy with God, our sad failure to hold court with Him within the inner recesses of our soul. We have, in spite of our grand outward facade, lost our highest incentive in life, forfeited heaven’s holiest spell and even life itself.**

Look at the unrest in the nations. Behold the perversion, the depravity, the meaningless genocides, the invasion of incurable sicknesses and diseases that defy medical treatment and a frothing and convulsing nature spewing out earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes and typhoons, resulting in millions of deaths. Yet, the worst is yet to come because Jesus said that all these are just the beginning of sorrows.

Oh God, let Your strategy of 'one covering or chasing a thousand' be activated at once for this is so needful in a time like this. So few want to pray, and fewer still, are those who pray in accuracy. We have failed to pray in accuracy because we have failed to hear from You. God, lead those who do hear, those who do pray, the ones or twos who come together, to heal and to uplift the broken heart of a hurting God.

Will You hear even as You heard Abraham, Samuel and David? In judgment, remember mercy. As You make Your wrathful statements especially in Asia through the earthquakes, the tsunamis, typhoons, the menacing invasion of incurable sicknesses, remember Calvary. Remember that these nations, however depraved, have been bathed by the blood of Jesus.

Oh God, surely Calvary pleased You. We know it did because it is so original, so selfless and oh, so very shocking – even to the devil. Calvary is something that the devil could never imitate. Yes, do not let Calvary go unheeded. For what You did on Calvary can cover many eternities. For Jesus' sake and for Your own, withhold merciless judgment and let "one cover a thousand, two cover ten thousand." Shorten the time of suffering, Lord, otherwise, who can be saved?"

1

THE MEANING OF BROKEN ALTARS

Broken altars, scattered stones, crumbled fragments ... and a forgotten God. Yes, what else can broken altars mean other than a God who has been forgotten, forsaken and dishonoured? When we allow His altars to lie desolate, we are announcing: *“We have moved on, God, and we do not want You because You are no longer relevant in this era of globalization and new world culture. Ours is a society of efficiency, control, opulence, great aspirations and ‘breaking the norm.’ Yours is just the opposite. How can You ask people to deny self and ‘wash one another’s feet’ in an age like this? In this high-powered age, this is totally irrelevant. You and Yours will not do in our era. We have actually outgrown You and need to move on.”*

‘Outgrowing’ God?

Yes, why need God and build altars to Him when we have actually outgrown Him? Outgrow a dress, you give it away, outgrow a pair of shoes, you throw the shoes away, outgrow some jewellery, you get new ones. Let’s do the same with God. Moreover, we have brilliant and competent ‘professionals’ today to handle our needs. We have excellent doctors to take care of our sicknesses, psychologists to take care of our minds, marriage counsellors to take care of our marriage problems, politicians to take care of our poverty. If we have wars, we can send our most powerful negotiators. There are also brilliant scientists who can put people in space and competent engineers to handle all our technical problems. Really? Then why is the world not a better place? Why is there such an alarming surge in mental illness, drug addiction, sexual perversion, criminal activities and incurable sicknesses and diseases all over the world? Why aren’t these professionals stopping the rampage of genocides, blighting famines, earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, terrorism and now, the pandemics of AIDS and bird-flu? The answer is not that they do not want to; the answer is that they are not able to – in spite of their brilliance and ‘relevance.’

CNN has just announced that the world's health experts and doctors have declared that they are woefully unprepared to handle this coming bird-flu pandemic. They do not have the answer or power to stop the deaths. At this time of writing, three countries have just been hit by the same earthquake. My Bible tells me that all these are just the "*beginning of sorrows.*"

Oh, the horrors of broken altars and a forgotten God! Oh, the consequences of desolate altars, of having known God, loved Him, embraced Him and then to allow this Light to fade into common day, into spiritual disloyalty, descent and decay. A dog going back to his own vomit! A pig returning to the dirt! I can almost hear the rebuke of the apostle Peter (2 Peter 2:22).

Desert God for More 'Legitimate and Urgent' Matters?

Broken altars must have first begun in the private lives of many before the effects are finally felt by a nation. All evil affecting a nation must have first begun in the lives of individuals. History has taught us that the evil often starts in the lives of the nation's spiritual leaders and then it spreads, like yeast, into the whole lump. An altar does not just fall apart suddenly. It breaks up through neglect, little by little and crack by crack. Are there cracks in your altar?

When was the

last time you spent unhurried time in the presence of God?

When was the last time you spent an hour in prayer?

As a pastor, I know that many ministers neglect the altar of God and they have had their personal altars 'broken down' because of 'busyness.' After so many years in forefront ministry, I know what busyness is. Even at this time of writing, the church and the school are undergoing some needed renovations. Besides the irritating noise of hammers, chain saws and a host of other tools and machinery, there are also the sounds of arguing, joking, shouting and swearing workmen. And the protesting screams of my dog (because she is locked up). Thunder (rightly named) has learnt to scream at different volumes – soft, medium, loud and extra loud!

We cannot allow our 'busyness' to be an excuse to leave God's altar desolate and in ruins. I remember I was so caught up with

work one day; I came out of my study, after hours of typing, to call my maid by the dog's name! While the maid walked away, the dog rushed forward! I sighed and complained, "*Dogs have better manners than maids!*" Of course - that's because I called, 'Rainbow!' (dog's name) instead of 'Hermin!' (maid's name!). Yesterday, when I took a friend and her son out to dinner, I called her son, 'Crypha' instead of Carpus! 'Crypha' was the name of another dog (the father of Rainbow and Thunder). I was not even immediately conscious of it till the mother and my two maids burst out laughing! I had given this young man the lovely name of Carpus (2 Timothy 4:13) and now I was calling him by a dog's name! Just too busy to remember!

Forgetting people's names and calling them by other names (especially dogs' names!) is bad but not tragic. Forgetting God is. To be so busy that we allow His altars to lie in ruins and abandoned will spell ill-will, not only for us, but also for the nation. God Himself had testified that judgments could not be averted because there were no altar builders and no offerings of incense to Him. Or He could not find intercessors in a nation to avert them.

In spite of how busy I am, I make sure I erect my personal altar. Amidst the knocks on the door and the interruptions by the contractor, the workmen, the electricians, the maids, the finance clerk and those in the administration section, I strive to build my altar. Yes, in the midst of the phone calls, the emails, the faxes, the SMSes and the 'uncalled for' visits, I am still obligated to build my altar, to offer my incense and my sacrifice. To deny God of this and to do other things, however legitimate or urgent these activities may be, is to get into 'frivolous activities with no eternal validity.'

The devil will always bring the 'legitimate' and 'urgent' matters along our way. Daily, the 'legitimate' activities cry for our attention. Do you have the strength to resist them and attend to the Lord's altar and burn incense to Him? Let us learn from the prophet Samuel. He was one of God's great altar builders and an outstanding intercessor in the Old Testament.

Samuel was attending to God's altar by drawing water and pouring it out before the Lord (a novel act which means 'the pouring out' of his life to Him), when all of a sudden, the fearsome news that the Philistines were invading the land, hit him. While others panicked, the old man remained calm and rejected all interruptions to his spiritual activities. Instead, he intensified his worship by offering a suckling lamb to the Lord.

At a time like this? Shouldn't he be attending to the 'legitimate' and 'urgent' matters like getting the troops organized, warning the people and discussing battle strategies with the soldiers, etc.? Was Samuel out of his mind? The Philistines, the nation's dreaded enemies were at the nation's doorstep, and what was he doing? Pouring water before God and offering a suckling lamb? How could anyone win a battle with water and a roasted lamb?

Samuel! Stop it! Has old age made you senile and 'irrelevant'? You should do the 'urgent'! Get the army, get the weapons, discuss battle strategies, warn and evacuate the people! Attend to the urgent and the legitimate. Pray later! This is not the time to pray, to offer sacrifices or to attend to God's sacred altar! Come out of it because there is no time to pray!

Well, Samuel prayed and prayed and prayed. He spent unhurried time in God's presence, even at the time of war. Cool old man. Strange and stubborn prophet. Peculiar and enigmatic leader. Can we truly trust him? He continued to 'pour water' before God and offered incense and the suckling lamb while others went into a frenzy attending to the 'urgent' and the 'legitimate.' Why? **Because he alone knew how to fight off Israel's enemies and how to keep the nation safe** – it was not by turning to physical arms and weapons but by turning to the Lord. It was not by frenziedly recruiting the soldiers but by building God His altar and offering Him the right sacrifices. What happened? Heaven thundered! There was a Divine Stir!

*“As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but **the Lord thundered with a great thunder** on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them and they were smitten before the Lord” (1 Samuel 7:10).*

Here was a man who refused to attend to the ‘legitimate’ and the ‘urgent’ matters at a time of war and what happened? He led Israel into winning the war! How? By attending to the ‘illegitimate’ and the seemingly ridiculous matters. Whoever would have thought of winning a war by ‘pouring water and offering a suckling lamb?’ This is all so outrageous and stupid. Well, this was how Samuel stopped the onslaught of the enemies! Do we want to hold back the earthquakes, the tsunamis, the perversions, the plagues, etc.? Then let us do what Samuel did – **rebuild the altars, bring back the sacrifices and pour ourselves out to God.**

King David also bypassed the ‘legitimate’ to do the ‘illegitimate’ at a time of ‘urgent’ need. When the Philistines invaded the land, instead of calling for battle strategies, relating with his fighting men or examining his weapons, David spent time in God’s presence to ‘inquire from the Lord.’ The enemies were at his doorstep, the army was waiting for his instructions and there was tension everywhere but what was the king doing? He was ‘inquiring from the Lord.’ Did he have time to pray? Yes, he had. Many kings would have abandoned God’s altar to attend to this very urgent matter of war management, but David spent time to build his personal altar and to seek the face of God. The true measure of a man is what he has become in his heart. No wonder God loved David but He rejected Saul.

The difference between these two men, Saul’s impatience and deep disregard for God, and David’s patience and regard for God was seen on the battle field. Consider what Saul did in 1 Samuel 14. He wanted to seek God but forsook that when the battle-cries of the enemies picked up. Instead, he went right into the battle without consulting God. It was because of God’s mercy that Israel won that day – God had heard Samuel’s continual prayers for the nation.

David was different. He had the patience to wait on God and it was clear that he carried God’s altar within him all the time. Waiting on God was worth it because as he waited, God gave him the right strategy against his mighty enemies. God told David to withhold his attack until he heard the sound of God’s

movement upon the mulberry trees. Whatever happened, David must wait for this sound because this was the sound of God's movement. If David had moved before or after that sound, it meant he had moved without God. What a tragedy this would have brought to him and to the nation. Instead of securing a victory, he would have been defeated.

What would have happened to David, and also to the nation of Israel if David had not built his personal altar and spent time to pray and listen to God? He would be leading his army and his nation into defeat. Too many of us are defeated in our well-intended exploits for God and have brought intense losses and pain to others because we do not build our personal altars to listen to the sound rustling among the mulberry trees.

“When thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the Lord go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines. And David did so, as the Lord had commanded him; and smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer” (2 Sam 5:24-25).

King Hezekiah had done the same thing. When news of the approaching Syrians reached him, he did not consult with his war lords or plan battle strategies. He set aside the ‘urgent’ matters to attend to God's altar and prostrated himself before God. All he did was pray vehemently and God moved on his behalf. Thousands upon thousands of his enemies were slaughtered, not by his army but by God's supernatural strength (2 Kings 19: 1, 14). Oh, if only we would learn to rebuild our altars. So much more would be done when we connect with God than when we trust in carnal strength and manipulative hands.

Is Burning for Ministry More Important than Burning for God?

Too many in the ministry today have forgotten that spiritual ministry is God's holy calling. They have turned God's work into a mere profession, a career, a ‘rice bowl’ and a hiding place for self. Like Ahimaaz, many were never genuinely commissioned, never had their hearts set on being the King's messengers but they are in it ‘for the glory and self’ (2 Samuel 18). **This is why many in the ministry today do**

not burn for God; they burn for ministry. They would rather get into so many ‘frivolous activities that have no eternal validity’ rather than spend time and wait in God’s presence for directions. When we genuinely burn for God, we will prevail in erecting altars and making sacrifices. If you are a minister of the gospel and you are reading this book, **you must ask yourself whether you burn for God or whether you burn for ministry.**

When we do not burn for God, we will not have the strength to resist the temptations that the ‘Balaks’ of this world bring to us. The ‘Balaks’ will appear in our lives sooner or later to woo us down the ‘Balaam’ road. It is so sad to see so many who do not have the strength to resist their ‘gainsaying’ ways (Numbers 22). Possessing Jesus does not mean possessing the inexhaustible. It only means we have **the access to the inexhaustible and daily, we must make the access into His presence to draw from Him.** Men and women of God do not ‘just fall.’ Their fall had always been brought about by the accumulative acts of undisciplined private misbehaviour, of ‘broken altars’ which finally led to the sad end.

How do we tell the ‘legitimate’ from the ‘illegitimate’ and the ‘urgent’ from the ‘non-urgent’ in the ministry? Whatever robs us of spending unhurried time in God’s presence and whatever causes us to abandon His altar is ‘illegitimate’ and ‘non-urgent.’ The phone calls, the deadlines for the books, appointments, the preaching itinerary, visits, etc. can wait. To me, they are the most ‘non-urgent’ matters. Anything that takes us away from time spent in the presence of God must be considered as ‘illegitimate.’

Our most urgent need is to pray, pray and pray. **The strategy in this dark hour of history is to repair God's broken altars.** We have no time to waste and no other effective strategies to secure the salvation of the nations. Men's salvation can only be found as we turn our faces, not our backs, to God. As God’s minister, we must know that when we fail to pray we will also fail to minister to the needs of people and the needs of our nation. When the axe head is not sharp, we have to exert more human strength. When we use too much strength on the ‘unsharpened’ axe head, it will fall off (2 Kings 6:5)! This is

why so many who are in ministry today are tired out, burnt out, opt out and are embittered out. To do spiritual work with physical strength is sheer folly.

2

CONSEQUENCES of BROKEN ALTARS

The prophet Amos prophesied that evil will not happen in a city without the Lord's permission, and that God, in His faithfulness, will reveal things to His prophets before they happen.

“Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?”

Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.” (Amos 3:6-7)

Consequences in a Nation

When Israel was going through a national tragedy, the prophet Elijah rose to arrest the problem. This man of God knew that the blighting famine was the consequence of the nation's spiritual descent and disloyalty – they had turned to Baal. They had forsaken Jehovah and attacked His honour by allowing His altar to lie in ruins and shambles and they had set up other alien altars. Those broken fragments and heaps of overturned and scattered stones might look insignificant to undiscerning eyes **but they were the root of the nation's sorrows and the spring of the nation's desolation.**

What did Elijah do to turn away the years of famine and the loss of innocent lives? He publicly rebuilt the altar of God. Remember, Elijah could do this in public because he had first done it in private. He was a man who ‘stood before God.’ Israel had, under the wicked influence of their leaders, publicly dishonoured Jehovah and thrown down His altars. Now Elijah had to challenge them by rebuilding God's altar in the open.

When the altar was rebuilt and the sacrifices were laid on it, God's response was awesome - He sent fire from heaven! What a fire it was! It consumed everything in sight and it resulted in the execution of the false prophets of Baal. This is the nature of true Divine Fire. Holy and pristine, it will always burn away rubbish and separate the false from the true. It will consume all that is flesh, sham and pretence.

We call for fire from above but God is calling for Elijahs from below. How can there be God's fire from heaven when there is no Elijah-type of men from the earth?

There is no way we can build or rebuild God's altars publicly when we do not first build them privately. What is so pathetic today is the lack or the loss of 'altar builders'- both in private and in public. No wonder the power of darkness has gone unchallenged and the light is going dimmer. O that God would raise up altar-builders once again!

What was the real cause of the pestilence that swept over Israel in the days of King David? Today, we will definitely call it an epidemic or pandemic of 'some sort.' What reason can we give when 70,000 men died in one day!? Or when 185,000 men died in one night (2 Kings 19:35)? This sounds so like what will happen when the 'bird-flu' virus is activated. Experts from the WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION have reported that eight to 150 million people will die!

When God opened the spiritual eyes of David, he saw, lo and behold, not viruses, but an angel of death killing his men! David acted quickly to stop the plague, not by the administration of medication or injection but by building an altar to the Lord! How strange this must be to the educated, the professionals and the brilliant leaders of the world today – to deal with an epidemic or pandemic by bending the knees towards heaven in earnest prayers, and not by the administration of the best antibiotics and medical cure.

When the incense of these sacrifices invaded heaven, God responded by sending His own fire to consume David's sacrifices just like He did to Elijah's sacrifices on mount Carmel! The plague was stopped! The death angel returned his sword into its sheath for there was to be no more killing in Israel – no more deaths. What a story! Through this incident, God is again reinforcing the reasons for the cause of evil in a nation.

In the days before King Hezekiah, the nation of Israel was given over to "trouble, desolation, jeering and captivity." What was

the reason for such misfortune and calamity? God was angry with them! Look at the deplorable spiritual condition that had brought on His hurt and anger.

*“They have also shut up the doors of the vestibule, put out the lamps, and **have not burned incense or offered burnt sacrifices in the holy place to the God of Israel.** Therefore the wrath of the Lord fell upon Judah and Jerusalem and He has given them up to trouble, to desolation, and to jeering, as you see with your eyes, For indeed, because of this, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and daughters, and our wives are in captivity, Now, it is in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel, that His fierce wrath may turn away from us, My sons, **do not be negligent now!**” (2 Chronicles 29: 7-11)*

In the days of Amos, what was the cause of the earthquake that rocked Jerusalem and made such a devastation that *“the city that goes out by a thousand, shall have a hundred left, and that which goes out by a hundred, shall have ten left to the house of Israel”* (Amos 5:3)? Read through the book of Amos and you will find that it was because they had stopped seeking the Lord. Even the priest in the city had been assimilated into dark wisdom and could not tell the difference. To him, the city church he pastored was a great church as it was flowing with wealth and an overwhelming presence of people. God had to commission a simple farmer from a little village to this high-powered and sophisticated city-church with only one simple message. It was: “SEEK Me” (Amos 5: 4, 6, 8). It means, *“Rebuild your altars, renew the covenants and start to sacrifice to Me again.”*

Consequences in an Individual's Life

When Manasseh, the ungodly son of King Hezekiah, forsook God and threw down His altars, he was bound with ‘hooks and fetters,’ and taken captive to Babylon (2 Chronicles 33:11). What pathetic relevance this has to 21st century Christianity. Today we have so many avenues of ministry, so many great Christian activities and preachers, yet we are still ‘hooked and fettered’ in one way or another. The reason why the devil can ‘hook and fetter’ us so easily is because we do not pray, we do not tend to our personal altars and we do not

know how to sacrifice to the Lord. This leaves us powerless to say, “No!” emphatically when sin knocks at our door.

Instead of acting like Joseph, who was emphatic in his refusal to sin and seduction, we behave like Balaam. We vacillate, we compromise, we entertain and we ‘spiritualize’ our wrongful moves by saying, “*Wait here, give me some time and I will pray about it.*” What need is there to pray over the revealed will of God? When God in His word has clearly told us not to commit fornication or adultery and not to marry a non-Christian, do we still ‘pray about it’? What happened to Balaam when he tried to be spiritual and prayed about whether he should or should not curse God’s people when God had already revealed to him that he should not? He gave himself over to the powers of deception. He ended up ‘hooked and fettered.’ When we go the Balaam way, we too will end up like Balaam, who ended up like Manasseh – ‘hooked and fettered!’

“Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the army of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze fetters, and carried him off to Babylon” (2 Chronicles 33:11).

The same thing happened to Ahaz, the wicked grandson of king Uzziah. When he neglected God’s altars and turned to other gods, he brought shame and desolation not only to himself but also to the nation.

“Therefore the Lord his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria. They defeated him, and carried away a great multitude of them as captives, and brought them to Damascus. Then he was delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who defeated him with a great slaughter” (2 Chronicles 28:5).

He was not only defeated by hostile Gentile enemies, he was also defeated and humiliated by Israel. Through Jeremiah, God warned Israel that she would lose the heritage that He had given her because of her spiritual disloyalty and decay.

“You, even yourself shall let go of your heritage which I gave you

*And I will cause you to serve your enemies
In the land which you do not know
For you have kindled a fire in My anger which shalt burn
forever” (Jeremiah 17: 4).*

It is no wonder that until the present day, Israel has not known true peace. How could she, when she continues to let God’s sacred altars go unattended? To have one’s heritage taken away (what a distinct heritage God had given her!), is synonymous with death itself. When God took away their heritage, all they had left was ashes – the holocaust (where 8 million Jews were gassed to death) was an example of this. Yes, what is there to live for when your heritage, which is God Himself, has been taken away? And what hope is there for any other nation when God’s wrath is kindled against her?

God’s word rings out loud and clear. How could we have missed it? From one prophet to another, from scripture to scripture and from one tragedy to another, God warned us of the tragic consequences of ‘broken altars.’ Why are we not hearing? Can’t you see that the ‘hooks and the fetters’ and ‘the captivity’ (drugs, compulsive behaviour, pornography, etc.) in your life, in your family and in the nation are there because we have neglected God? We have forsaken our personal and private times of intimacy with Him. We have ‘pulled our shoulders from Him’ and have shown Him our backs instead of our faces.

*“Our fathers have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord, and **turned their backs (on God)**. They have
not burned incense or offered burnt offerings unto the God of Israel” (2 Chronicles 29:6-7).*

*“They have **turned their backs unto me**, and not their face: but in the time of trouble they will say, Arise, and save us!” (Jeremiah 2:27).*

*“They **have turned unto me the back and not the face**”
(Jeremiah 32:33).*

What a price the nations of the world are paying for turning

their faces away from God. They have instead given Him their backs. We reap what we sow for this is what God declares in Jeremiah 18:17, “*I will show them **the back and not the face**, in the day of their calamity.*”

Consequences in the World

This is the terrible consequence when we show God our backs! In the day of hurricanes, tsunamis, earthquakes, sicknesses and diseases, we try to seek His face but alas, we find only His back! Now we know why in tragedies and calamities, God does not hear. He has His back turned on us just like we turned our backs on Him. But when millions perish, I know His heart is breaking and hurting because of their disloyalty that has brought on the tragedy.

“I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me” (Ezekiel 6:9).

Oh, the awful, awful consequences of ‘neglected altars.’ It has caused even the earth and sea to froth and convulse, causing sudden earthquakes, tsunamis, famines, genocides and incurable sicknesses and diseases. Is there really no Samuel (who will be hidden and obscure), no Moses (who will wait for 40 years), no David (who will suffer such humiliation), no Abraham (who will be greatly tested) and no Elijah-type of men (who will be confrontational and unpopular) to stand between them and God?

Through the Bible, through history and definitely through our personal experiences, we know the real reason behind these tragedies, these calamities and these prevailing misfortunes. We know the real reason why the ‘hooks and the fetters’ have come to nations, to individuals and to the world. Darkness seems to have won over in spite of God’s promise that “*the light shines in the darkness and the darkness can never over master the light*” (John 1:1). Why has darkness won over in so many nations? Because Christians allow it and because hardly anyone in these places wants to shine for God; they want to shine only for themselves. The lack of altars and the lack of intercessors have brought about the ruin in those villages, cities and nations.

In the days of Israel's sin and darkness, God said he was looking for only **one man – one champion to cover the nation and He could not find one** (Ezekiel 22:30). His complaint was not that He did not have enough workers, prophets, priests, etc. **He complained that there was no one who would pray and intercede for the land – in other words, there were many 'workers' but no altar builders.** Is it then a surprise that darkness has marched on unchallenged in the nations of the world?

Is it then a surprise that, finally the gentle and protective Shepherd has become a ruthless and destroying Lion – ready to pounce on all erring and defiant nations that celebrate abnormality and perversion? If we do not want this to happen to Malaysia (and to your own nation) then we must come back to God, as an individual, as a family and as a nation, to repair those broken altars.

I was watching a documentary on the tragedy in New Orleans and could not believe that there could be such suffering in America. The number of rape stories, rotting bodies, the violence, the hungry and angry people, traumatized children and missing families all seem unreal. Could all this be happening in the most civilized, the richest and the most powerful nation on earth? As I watched, I could not help but feel that God had given this place over to the power of darkness because there were no serious and self-denying altar builders or intercessors in New Orleans.

New Orleans is a modern day Sodom and Gomorrah. The French quarters of this city celebrates homosexuality and sexual perversion publicly with the police, mayors and city council officials giving their approval. The city was preparing for a mass gay festival called the 'Southern Decadence' with more than 125,000 revelers expected to fly in when Hurricane Katrina struck. They also hold the annual Mardi Gras parties where drunken men exchange plastic jewellery with naked women on the streets, sparking off another wild party known as 'Girls Gone Wild.' While many say the destruction of this city is an 'act of nature' we know this is an act of God and a very timely act too. He destroyed the city before they could launch another major party to celebrate decadence and perversion.

While we sympathize with those who are suffering, we dare not question the justice of God. God's mill grinds slowly, but it grinds exceedingly small. Rebellious and apostate nations will be taken into that mill. May the old New Orleans be grinded so small that it will never be rebuilt again – ever. Let it give way to a new city that knows the fear of God.

ALTARS BUILDERS and REPAIRERS

A careful study of the Old Testament will tell you that the patriarchs, starting with Abraham, built altars but not their own houses. They were contented to attend to God's altars and did not mind living only in tents. Abraham did not only build the most altars, but he also built the most powerful one when he offered his only son as the supreme sacrifice on Mount Moriah. No wonder he had such power with God. Let me borrow a paragraph from my book, 'ONE SHALL CHASE A THOUSAND'.

“Everywhere he pitched his tent, he always erected an altar. The altar is a symbol of self-sacrifice, self-denial and self-negation. His life spoke of the most intense devotion and deepest fellowship with Yahweh. His devotion to God was so intense that it usurped all his personal ambitions and desires, for every time God demanded something from him to the extent of killing his one and only son, he obeyed. He never withheld anything from God. He perpetually responded with, “Yes, Lord.”

That is the meaning and price for erecting altars to God. Altars always speak of death and sacrifice. Long after Abraham had vacated the place and shifted his tent, the altar he erected to God remained as a living testimony to the spirit of his life: Total abandonment to God. Abraham actually spent one hundred years moving from tent to tent at God's command. He laid claims to nothing, not even to Isaac, the son born to him when he was 100 years old. He just held on to God in faith and obedience” (From page 52, ONE SHALL CHASE A THOUSAND, by Susan Tang).

The Patriarchs

Now we know why God called Abraham His friend. Friends must have common virtues and Abraham and God certainly had the same virtues. Both were loyal altar-builders, both

loved their sons dearly and **both dared to usurp their own personal desires to release their best on the altar for slaughter** – Abraham, his Isaac, and God, His Jesus. Both knew the same horror and the pain of having to give up their one and only son. Did Abraham turn his face away from Isaac as he set to plunge in the knife? God did - this is why Jesus cried, "*Why have you forsaken Me?*"

Friends do not keep things from each other. They can be intimate and can share their hearts. This was what God did with Abraham. Can He do the same with you? Three angels went to visit Abraham but only two left to execute judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah while the third Angel, God Himself in disguise, stayed back to fellowship with the old altar-builder. God could talk with him because they both had much in common. He could unload His burdened heart to Abraham. Can He do the same with you? If you want that intimacy, then build altars and be willing to sacrifice.

When Noah came out of the ark, he erected an altar to God, and when the aroma and incense of that burnt offering reached the nose of God, He pronounced blessings and a promise that He would never again judge the world in the same manner - through a deluge of water. Isaac and Jacob, son and grandson of Abraham, erected altars wherever they went. Like Abraham, they knew in their hearts that they would only be safe when the altar was erected for their altars were always a testimony of their total dependence and surrendered will to God. It was the same with the kings of Israel and Judah. The good kings always erected and repaired altars while the bad and ungodly kings always tore them down.

The Kings

King David and King Hezekiah stood out as the best altar builders. Judgment over Israel was averted because David, the lesser Messiah, built God the supreme altar on which **he offered himself and his family as the sacrifices so that the plague in the nation could be arrested. Judgment was averted because God saw that selflessness** (2 Samuel 24:17). The greatest national revival took place in the days of King Hezekiah because he did not take the 'short-cut' way to revival. He undertook the arduous task of **cleansing God's temple first. As**

in all true revivals, personal caprice and selfish ambition must be dealt with before they can be arrested socially and publicly. When the sin of personal greed and self was dealt with, the people in Hezekiah's days were willing to 'shed blood' to bring an over-abundance of burnt-offerings and sacrifices to God out of their own free will.

A revival is not a revival until the 'burnt offerings' come back. **What are 'burnt offerings?'** **Burnt offerings are the supreme of all offerings.** God gets the whole animal (every part of the animal is burnt to cinders and ashes) while the worshipper gets nothing! Ponder what the pig says to the chicken: "*You are so lucky; the master can have his eggs for breakfast every morning and you are still around, but if he decides to have bacon tomorrow, then it will be goodbye for me forever.*" Both the chicken and the pig were willing to offer themselves to their master but not both were 'burnt offerings.' Only the pig was!

The Apostles and the Early Church

Jesus was a 'burnt offering.' The apostles and many in the early church were 'burnt offerings'. Jephthah's daughter was a 'burnt offering' (Judges 11). Mary, sister of Martha, in giving up her hopes of marriage and children, became a 'burnt offering.' The apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans (Romans 12:2) encouraged all of us to become 'burnt-offerings' to the Lord, offering to Him the entirety of our beings. Paul used the word, 'libation' (a drink offering to be poured out) twice as he referred to his own life and his near demise.

"Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all" (Philippians 2:7).

"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand" (2 Tim 4:6).

Poured out! Poured out! Burnt-out offerings are 'poured out' offerings. Remember how the prophet Samuel poured out water before God? Remember how King David poured out his precious life-saving drink before God? Remember

how the woman in Matthew 26 poured out her costly perfume on Jesus? Remember how the Lord Jesus Christ poured His life out for us? Now Paul recognized that it was his turn – and oh, he was just so willing. I believe that there will be many, many more in the days to come. God’s word has declared that the remnant, God’s hidden champions in the end times, will be characterized by the same lifestyle - they will ‘pour out.’

The Remnant

The prophet Micah prophesied that God will outwit and out-strategize the works of the enemy in the end times by raising up **seven shepherds and eight principal men** (Micah 5:5) to beat down and to check the onslaught of evil. God will have the perfect number of shepherds (seven means perfect) and an abundance (eight means abundance) of men to finish His work in the end times, no matter how mammoth the task may be. The word, ‘principal men’ means ‘poured-out’ men or men whose lives are poured out as a libation. Or a drink offering to God.

This word ‘*nesikkh*’ (‘principal’ in Hebrew) means ‘finished men,’ or men whose lives had been ‘poured out.’ This word was used of Oreb and Zeeb and also of Zebah and Zalmunna. While Oreb was ‘finished’ on a rock (Judges 7:25), Zeeb was ‘finished’ in a vinepress. Zebah and Zalmunna, the two defiant kings of Midian, gave Gideon quite a chase but Gideon caught up with them and finally ‘finished’ them. **Yes, unless we are ‘finished’ in ourselves, we can never pour ourselves out to God as a libation and a drink offering.** But oh, how wonderful it is to know that there will be many ‘poured out’ lives in the days to come, both within the clergy and among the laity. How wonderful it is to know that ‘burnt offerings’ will not be a thing of the past. God, in the day of His power, will raise up many in the nations of the earth who will willingly ‘*pour out their lives as a libation*’ or a drink offering to Him.

The Lord Jesus Christ

This remnant will be able to do mighty work for God because of their identification with the Lord Jesus Christ who had also ‘poured out’ Himself for the salvation of mankind. This was how He described Himself in Psalms and

Isaiah.

“I am poured out like water” (Psalm 22:14).

“He poured out his soul unto death” (Isaiah 53:12).

God’s way for securing salvation for the nations of the earth lies in Jesus being willing to ‘pour out’ His life for mankind. **There is no other way. There is no short-cut.** If God Himself took the way of ‘altars and sacrifices’ in order to bring redemption and salvation to the nations of the earth, who are we, then, to ‘climb up some other way’? Who are we to find other ways and methods to do it? If we do so, then the Lord’s indictment will be, “You are a thief!”

4

THE RESULTS of REPAIRED ALTARS

After Elijah had done his part on earth to repair the altar and to prepare the sacrifices, God did His part in heaven by sending His holy fire to consume the sacrifices. Imagine the awesomeness of that moment when, immediately after the prophet's prayer, wham! The fire descended and consumed almost everything in sight! All the people fell immediately on their faces and confessed, "The Lord, he is the God! The Lord, he is the God!" They probably also shouted, "*Fire! Fire! Fire from heaven!*" (1 Kings 18:38).

Descent of Holy Authentic Fire!

Elijah's fire reminds me of another fire that also came directly from heaven. This same fire came immediately after King David erected an altar on the threshing floor of Ornan and offered the needed sacrifices to God (1 Chronicles 21:26). Like Elijah's fire, this fire also descended only **after** the altar and the sacrifices were prepared, not before. In fact, in all the four Biblical accounts, supernatural fire only descended from heaven, **after the altars were erected and the sacrifices were offered – not before and definitely not without the altars and sacrifices. In other words, God's authentic, holy and pristine fire is always associated with altars and sacrifices.**

God's cardinal law is that if there are no altars, no sacrifices, no shedding of blood and no death, then there will be no descent of authentic and holy fire from above. Man's responsibility is to build or to repair broken altars and to present the needed sacrifices. God's responsibility is to light the fire and to set ablaze what we have painstakingly offered to Him, **This is the ancient, the authentic and the only way to get fire from above – there is no other way.**

There are four biblical accounts of fire descending from heaven, and in all the four incidents, God's fire came **only after** the altars were erected and the sacrifices of burnt offerings were offered (Leviticus 9:24, 1 Chronicles 21:26, 2

Chronicles 7:1, 1 Kings 18:38). God's fire first descended from heaven to fill the tabernacle with His glory in the days of Moses (Lev.9:24). This fire came **only after** Moses had gone through the painstaking intricacies of preparing the altar and the burnt offerings. When the two sons of Aaron tried to get God's fire to descend through some other means, they were killed instantly. Fire did descend, not to bless them but to kill them! This same fire descended again after **God's** temple with its altars and sacrifices were set in order during King Solomon's days (2 Chronicles.7:1).

Both David and Elijah experienced God's fire in the same way, **only after** they had erected altars and offered sacrifices. Who do we think we are that we can have God's authentic, pristine, ancient and holy fire to come to us without erecting altars and sacrifices or without our connecting with Him consistently through prayers, worship and a self-denying lifestyle? **God's fire had never operated independently of altars and sacrifices, and it will never come to us when we do not connect with Him through consistent prayers, intercession, worship and a self-denying lifestyle.**

Jesus said that if we bypass Him and use some other way to climb into the sheepfold, we are thieves and robbers. I am sure it can also mean that if we light our fire by and through some other means, without the presence of altars and sacrifices, then, we too are thieves and robbers. Yes, should fire come to us in any other way other than by the way of altars and sacrifices, we should look out. It may look real and burn for some time but it is a false and dangerous fire. It is an imitation and a pseudo-spiritual thing brought on by the flesh and by dark wisdom. This is God's indictment about false fire and fire of our own kindling:

*“The spark of his fire **shall not shine**, the light **shall be dark** in his tabernacle” (Job 18:5-6).*

*“Behold all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled, this shall ye have of mine hand; ye **shall lie down in sorrow**” (Isaiah 50:11).*

This is the fate when we try to set ourselves and the world ablaze by a fire that comes to us from ‘illegitimate’ ways and not **by the way of altars and sacrifices**. Darkness and sorrows will come when we try to kindle our own fire or catch it from some spiritual ‘fakes’ and then say, “*This is God.*” Today, so many churches and individuals are burning with strange and polluted fire – **polluted by their unconfessed sins of fornication, adultery, martial arts, homosexuality, lesbianism, pornography, clairvoyance and paedophilia**. **These people are actually permitted to operate in the church and to lead people.**

This is why there are so many disasters and collapses of so many men of God. Anxious for success and recognition, they have taken the short-cut to kindle a quick, sparkling and attention-grabbing fire. Their sparkling fire managed to draw thousands and after burning for some time, the fire did not only lose its sparkle, it also brought in darkness and sorrows.

Identification with Jesus Christ

God’s fire will burn away rubbish. This pristine fire from above will burn away self, little by little, sometimes gently but at times, ruthlessly, until Jesus is manifested in us. When God’s fire burns in us, **it will cause us to be identified with Jesus**. As it burns within you, you will hear yourself saying:

*“Since Jesus became poor to make me rich, surely I, too, should emulate His lifestyle. **I am His disciple and a disciple should be identified with the Master.** Therefore I should not use my riches to enrich myself. I should practise moderation and even self-denial to give away my resources to enrich others just like Jesus did. Jesus had no personal caprice and He had no cleaving relationship with earthly things. Neither should I.”*

But when ‘strange fire’ or the fire that comes from dark wisdom burns within you, you will rationalize your excesses and extravagances by saying,

*“Jesus became poor to make me rich. **I should be rich and have the best!** Why shouldn’t I spend all the wealth on*

myself? And if I do not have, then I should exercise my authority to ask from people even as Elijah asked from the poor widow. I am a child of the King and I should live like one. I have the right to have the biggest house, buy the best car, jewellery, furniture and clothes because I know God wants me to have them. My rich lifestyle will bring Him glory.”

Dark wisdom operates on deep deception, and defiled human hearts love deception and have a great capacity for it. It is so easy to get deceived today. So many pastors have become businessmen, peddling their goods behind the pulpits and at seminars etc. They are so daring as to mix their ‘God-given’ sermons with direct selling and sales talk to ‘fleece’ their congregations. The days of Jeremiah, and of ‘gainsaying’ prophets, priests and pastors are here once again. But where are the Jeremiahs, the Elijahs, and the prophets who will speak out, loud and strong?

When churches are filled with such leaders, will God’s people ever know how to erect altars and offer sacrifices? The devil will give us anything: wealth, success, popularity, etc. just to stop us from building or repairing God’s altars and sacrificing to Him. **The devil knows that altars and sacrifices will identify us with the Lord. A church that bears the resemblance of Jesus Christ is most hated by spiritual principalities and powers and they will do anything to stop this identification.** Let the church be identified with success, wealth, earthly glory, anything but please, please, do not ever let her be identified with her Lord! Keep the church away from Calvary. Let the church be built on anything, just anything but never, never let it be built upon Calvary. Why? Because Calvary was the Greatest Altar where God offered the Supreme Sacrifice. **When we build upon Calvary, it means we are identified with God, for God Himself was the greatest Altar-Builder.**

The devil also knows that true altars and sacrifices will cause the descent of God’s pristine and holy fire. He will do anything to prevent this fire from falling because when this holy fire falls and burns into human lives, it will spell the end of his devilish works and the collapse of his kingdom. What happened to the 450 false prophets of Baal when God’s fire fell? They were all axed to death! Spiritual blindness was

removed from God's people and they came back to Him.

These false prophets of Baal were certainly anointed - anointed with dark wisdom. Otherwise, they could not rise to such political power and be so wealthy and successful. They had the best for they ate at Jezebel's table. Jezebel consulted them and they influenced her. But when God's fire descended, they were all exposed and got the axe! This is what will happen when God raises up Elijah-type of men and women in the end times. The axe will fall on all 'darkly-anointed gainsaying' prophets who burn with sensuality, pseudo-spirituality, personal caprice, fleshly assertion and dark wisdom.

In every true reformation and Holy Ghost revival, **God's fire has always burned away personal caprice, selfish ambition and fleshly assertion and reinstated altars and 'burnt sacrifices.'** The revival in King Hezekiah's days caused such a spirit of selflessness in the people that they brought so many burnt offerings and sacrifices that there were not enough priests to flay them (2 Chronicles 29). A lot of revival 'fire' seems to be burning and sparkling today but where are the sacrifices and the burnt offerings? If revival does not connect us to consistent prayers, worship, intercession, holiness, the giving up of our rights and living self-denying lives, then what type of revival is it? Could it be that much of the revival fire kindled today does not have its source from above? Is its source somewhere else?

Modern day Christianity has not known the heights of spiritual power. It has not experienced the holy fire that can truly consume carnality because there has not been a sustained erection of altars and no true expression of the death of the self-life. Like the chicken, we do not mind giving eggs to our Master, but oh, don't ever let Him ask for bacon! Eggs from the chicken, Master? Anytime! But don't turn to the pig and ask for bacon! So God,

*"Let the intensity of our prayers cause a Divine Stir,
For the soon release of Elijahs
To stand strong in every land
Come Elijah, come! We have been waiting long*

*Call for holy fire – the one that comes from above
The fire that consumes carnality and checks evil from within*

*For we want no others, for others have left us, oh, so dry
We seek the one from above, for only this one will satisfy.”*

THE DIFFERENCE between ALTARS and MONUMENTS

Altars are powerful and although all of us are commanded to erect them, not all of us will do so or are able to do so **because erecting altars requires self-immolation. There can never be an altar without sacrifices, shedding of blood or death.** Altars require blood for it is the blood that sanctifies the altars (Exodus 24:6, 29:12, Leviticus 1:5). This is the reason why fleshly and carnal people shrink from erecting altars. For them, the cost is indeed too much. Only people who are willing to deal with self or to ‘shed their own blood’ can build altars. This is why Jesus said, “*Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny (die to self) himself and take up his cross and follow me*” (Mark 8:34).

There is no way we can erect altars if we do not do what Jesus said we have to do – **die to self, to a selfish lifestyle and to self-government.** The cost of building altars is too intense and costly for this present generation of materialistic and sensual Christians who only know self-gratification, self-glory and self-aggrandizement. It is indeed a pathetic generation – what else can we be when we do not know how to raise altars to God? Will God ever bless a man or woman whose ways are not marked by altars or whose ways are not marked by connection with Him through prayers, intercession, worship and sacrifice? Will He ever grant favour to anyone who does not know how to honour Him as Abraham did?

Today’s generation of Christians certainly knows how to erect monuments. Look at the million-dollar buildings with their outward architectural splendour and opulence. When the disciples of Jesus showed Him the posh and grand edifices of the temple, He said, “*Not one stone shall be left here upon another that shall not be thrown down*” (Matthew 24:1-2). So much for monuments and for things that God did not order! Sooner or later, they will come down. It is amazing how buildings of grandeur and edifices of opulence

can captivate us the way they captivated the disciples of Jesus.

How can monuments and great exteriors please God when it does not take much from a man to raise them up? Self-assertion, carnal push, lies, crafty stratagems (like Jacob's) and sub-standard behaviour can usually raise up monuments ... but not altars. While monuments abound, God is still longing and looking for altars, altars and altars! Where are they? No wonder He wept over Jerusalem for Jerusalem loved monuments or memorials but certainly not altars. Notice God's sharp rebuke to Israel in Isaiah 65:4, "*You remain among the graves and lodge in the monuments.*"

There are no two ways about this. If we are not erecting altars, then we will be building monuments which are actually an attestation to man's glory and a memorial of his own exploits and power. This 'monument-building' is so prevalent today. Unpleasant stories keep coming to my ears about pastors owing money to the contractors, to banks, to even loan sharks and getting themselves and the church into trouble because they could not pay off the huge debts for their church buildings and the monuments they ordered for themselves. This really has nothing to do with God's faithfulness. God will never pay for things He has not ordered! When we, in our carnal zeal, order them, then we have to do all the paying. When we, in our thoughtless passion, birth an 'Ishmael', then we will have to find our own sub-standard ways and means to either support him or get rid of him as Abraham did.

Why are men (and women) so consumed by monuments, by memorials of their own exploits, by buildings of physical grandeur and opulence and their costly accessories? Is it because they give them a false sense of power and security? Is it because these men have not been dealt with by God? Or is it because they have not been close to Him to see the real things of worth? **Or, could it be that they are actually unsure about their names being written in the Book of Life, therefore they strive to build monuments or memorials on earth so that they can be remembered forever?**

Jacob and Israel

After Jacob had his first powerful experience with God, he built God a monument. He piled up some stones and poured some oil over them and then he called it ‘the house of God.’ There it was - a cheap monument attesting to his great experience with God. It cost him nothing. His great experience may have released God’s presence into that place for he felt it (“*surely the Lord is in this place, how dreadful is this place!*”) but **it certainly did not change him**. After the great experience he was still as calculative, manipulative and ‘slimy’ as ever and he tried to use his crafty stratagems even on God. He tried to get God to do ‘business’ with him! Did he try to cheat God like he did his brother? In his transaction with God he told God to do five things for him and in exchange he would do only three (Genesis 28:13-19)!

However, after many years of God’s intense and painful dealings with him, Jacob ‘died’ to give rise to Israel. He finally erected an altar to God and called it ‘El-el-o-he Israel’ which means, ‘the God of Israel’ (Genesis 33:20). The difference of character between Jacob and Israel is immense and yet it is the same man! When God changed his name to ‘Israel’ meaning ‘Prince of God,’ it actually means that he is someone who could hold intimate fellowship with God, and he is open to His loftiest influence. No wonder he could build altars now.

Carnal, fleshly, calculative and self-controlled people can never erect altars. Jacob was once this type of person. This was why God took him through so much ... so that he would get out of that horrible self-life. It is not surprising that years later, God commanded Jacob to return to Bethel and there, **in the same spot where he had built a cheap monument, God told him to erect an altar! As Jacob, he could not deal with altars, sacrifices and the shedding of blood, but as Israel, he could.** Oh, God, may You change all Jacobs into Israels and turn all monument-builders into altar-erectors.

*“Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there; and **make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother**” (Gen.35:1).*

Yes, the ‘Jacobs,’ the carnal and fleshly Christians, who have not gone through the dealings of God and who do not

find God personal and real, can never erect altars. Only the 'Israelites,' those dealt with by God and those who have been exposed to His loftiest influence will be able to do it. Because altars, with their indispensable sacrifices can only be offered by those who are willing to offer themselves supremely to God.

Abraham and Cain

Abraham was an example of a supreme altar-builder, while Cain, the first-born son of Adam represented the supreme 'monument-builder.' The contrast between these two men is awesome. Both were wanderers but they did not have the same destiny and legacy. One reaped the favour of God, the other His wrath. While Abraham wandered **with God**, and built altars, Cain wandered **away from God**, and built cities! **One was a pilgrim with deep inner peace and rest, the other was a fugitive, devoid of all inner rest and security.** What is the use of building cities and indulging in great exteriors when we do not reap the favour of God and are devoid of His peace and rest? Abraham had truly chosen the best. He lived in tents, did not build anything (not even his own house) except altars but he ended up with an undying legacy. A legacy of having his descendants multiplied as 'the stars of heaven and as the sand upon the seashore.' A legacy of being a blessing to nations and families on the earth.

Abraham was not a 'spasmodic altar-builder.' He did not erect altars to God to seek Him only in times of emergency or when there were great needs in his life. **Erecting altars and sacrificing to God was Abraham's lifestyle – the result of a fixed purpose and mind.** As soon as he landed in the land of Canaan, the land of idolaters, he raised up an altar and sacrificed to Jehovah (Genesis 7). Abraham wanted to 'localize' God and to testify to the pagans around him, "*God, here I am! I want the Canaanites to know that I belong to You. You Canaanites! I want you to know I serve Jehovah, the one and only true God and here is His altar.*" No wonder God manifested Himself to him.

Knowing God generally, as a 'broad beam' was not enough for Abraham. He wanted God as His personal 'pointed and

focused ray.’ He wanted to ‘have’ God for himself and he wanted God to be real and personal to him. No wonder God came to Abraham in such personal ways. He will always, whether we are conscious of it or not, come to us too, when our daily lifestyle is marked by intercession, worship and sacrifice or by the erection of altars to Him.

On Mount Moriah, God came to this ‘altar-builder’ and tested him severely. God told him to erect the **supreme altar**, a symbol of the one on Mount Golgotha that would come long after Abraham’s death. Who could meet the intensity of such a severe and ‘ruthless’ requirement as to kill one’s only son and offer him as a sacrifice? Would Abraham do it? He was used to erecting altars but would he erect this one? Would he allow God to ‘finish off’ his desires, his dreams and his posterity? To kill Isaac would mean to kill all of these.

No one, except Jehovah, knew that on Mount Moriah, Abraham offered up **not one, but two sacrifices. The first one was Abraham himself, and the second one was Isaac.** There is no way he could have offered Isaac if he had **not first immolated himself and offered himself to God.** Before he was prepared to kill Isaac, **Abraham had to kill himself first.** He had to shed both his own blood and the blood of his son. Isaac was the outward and visible sacrifice but Abraham was the inward and the invisible sacrifice. **What a parallel this has to what was to come on Mount Golgotha, thousands of years later, when another Father had to sacrifice His one and only Son.** Abraham sacrificed his son to a loving and all deserving Creator but there, on Golgotha, a loving and a worthy Creator had to sacrifice His son to His undeserving, mean and corrupt creatures. No wonder God came to Abraham and told him that He wanted to ‘multiply him.’ **To multiply Abraham means to multiply the number of altar-builders. God’s desire is to multiply altar-builders, not monument-builders.**

Abraham released such a powerful spirit of self-abandonment, obedience, generosity and goodwill over Mount Moriah that thousands of years later it affected those who either lived or came into contact with that place. It affected Ornan, the farmer, who was willing to give up everything to King David without

charge. It affected David who was willing to sacrifice ‘costly things’ to God. David rejected Ornan’s free gifts and instead paid heavily for them. God chose this same location to sacrifice His own Son as a ‘burnt-offering’ for mankind. It was here that our Lord chose to die. This was the same place that thousands of years before Him, Isaac was prepared to die (2 Samuel 24, 1 Chronicles 21). **Human actions on earth, unknown to us, definitely have divine implications, spiritual value and eternal validity.**

What can I say about Cain, the man who refused to build an altar to God and killed his brother when his brother did? Cain’s story is a frightening story. This rebel, murderer, wanderer and fugitive was also the first great monument-builder. Cain did great exploits but unfortunately, his exploits were not for God. They were for himself. Cain was rejected by God because he refused to erect an altar and to be associated with death, the shedding of blood and sacrifices. He preferred to give God a bloodless, cheap and ‘less messy’ sacrifice – fruits from his own garden.

He was later forsaken by God and banished from His presence when he murdered his own brother who had pleased God by erecting an altar. **The one who built a monument killed the one who erected an altar** (1 John 3:12)! The scriptures are clear in saying that Cain killed his brother to cover up his own evil works. What was the evil work of Cain? He refused to erect an altar to God. He knew that altars and sacrifices were inseparable. He did not want to deal with blood and death, which all priests had to deal with. Priesthood was deeply rooted in sacrifices, shedding of blood and death.

Has the ‘killing’ of altar-builders by monument-builders ceased? Certainly not – the animosity is still very much alive today. Art Katz wrote: *“There is a tension, and even a hatred, between those who purport to serve God and who make a sacrifice for God which is not acceptable in His sight (however much it is heralded by men) and those who do bring the sacrifice that is honored by Him, who have to bear the brunt of the animosity and the hatred of those who are running on parallel tracks but are doing their own religious thing.”* (Quote taken from the article entitled: *THE ANATOMY OF DECEPTION* by Arthur Katz) Cain and Abel

are still very much alive in Christendom today.

It is frightening to know that although Cain was devoid of God's presence, he was still successful in his 'building programmes.' His success had nothing to do with the blessings of God – it was purely self and dark wisdom that set it together.

Cain manifested no remorse or repentance over what he did to his brother. He just left God's presence and concentrated on earthly employment and selfish labour. He diverted all his energies to building a city and naming it after his son. This is what the 'Cains' in the world do - they get involved in the exterior and the physical facades, indulge in endless rounds of activities and build plenty of impressive monuments so that the inward restlessness can be drowned out, so that the guilty past can be forgotten, so that the inward poverty will not appear.

It was this way for Cain – is there any difference today? Years later, the prophet Hosea prophesied that Israel's prosperous front, lively activities and building programmes were to mask a deep spiritual poverty, disloyalty and unreality that were eating away at the heart of the nation.

“For Israel has forgotten his Maker and build palaces; and Judah has multiplied fortified cities, but I will send a fire on its cities that it may consume its palatial dwellings” (Hosea 8:4).

David and Absalom

Absalom, the charismatic and rebellious son of David also built for himself a great monument in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 18:18). He thought he would be king and wanted his own name to be perpetuated. But when he died, only a great heap of stones was cast over his dishonoured body. Where was the splendid monument or the memorial he raised up for himself? Gone. Disintegrated, Finished. Absalom, who thought he would be buried as a great king and who wanted posthumous fame, received none of it. So it is with most men who, without the 'shedding of blood' build monuments for themselves.

The difference between the spirit of this father and son is

‘worlds apart’. Although he was the greatest king of Israel, the thought of building monuments or memorials for himself had never entered David’s heart. His driving ambition was to build a great temple for God to house His eternal presence. David spent his life planning for the Lord’s temple. He located a suitable location for God’s house, he waited on the Lord for the revelation of its intricate and detailed architectural designs, heavenly colours and unique decor and he collected the different materials for the temple. Well, in order to make sure David was sincere, God allowed him to do all these, **but he was not to build the temple himself. It must have been painful but David lay it down for this man knew how to build altars and how to sacrifice.**

David was also a man who knew sacrifices and the ‘shedding of blood.’ If he had not, he would never have been able to go through all the ‘ups and downs’ in his life and to continue as king of Israel. David was great because his paths were strewn with altars, altars and more altars. His entire life was a life of pursuing God, waiting on God and surrendering to Him. Whether he was indoors or outdoors, in the palace or the wilderness, among sheep or among his fighting men, in the ‘ups’ or in the ‘downs’, David’s ways were marked with prayers, intercession and worship to God.

An altar erector will not and does not act impetuously to shed the blood of others, unlike wicked Cain or Saul. Those who build altars will have a conscientious regard for the lives of others because they fear God and have a diligent regard for His will. They will not allow self-will to assert its evil influence over them to take the lives of others. **While monument-builders shed the blood of others, altar-builders shed only their own blood.** This is why David refused to ‘shed blood’ when he was pursued by Saul, when he was bullied by Joab, insulted by Shimei and attacked by Absalom. To fight them would mean to darken the nation with a civil war; there would be great loss of human lives and endless rounds of sorrows - orphaned children, widowed mothers, etc. David chose to walk the unfamiliar road of leaving everything in the hand of God and he allowed his own tormented soul to be sustained by Him. He allowed Saul to bully him but he would not do wrong by shedding Saul’s blood.

One of the greatest altars David built was when he was near the cave of Adullam in the stronghold. He was almost delirious with thirst but when his fighting men brought him water, he did the unbelievable! He poured his drink of hard-gotten water out to the Lord as a drink offering while exclaiming, *“Be it far from me, oh Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives” (1 Sam 23)?* He simply refused to drink the water and felt only God deserved such a sacrifice.

His warriors had risked their lives to bring him that water. They almost died in order to meet his need. This was why David proclaimed that he saw their blood in the water and instead of consuming it, he poured every bit of it to the Lord. What a sacrifice! What admirable control – to pour away every drop of precious water onto the dirt soil and say, *“Lord, You take it.”* It is painful – it is very painful especially when you are in dire, dire need of life-saving water. But then, who has ever said erecting altars is not painful?

David’s actions remind me of another person, in the days of Jesus, who also ‘poured out’ to the Lord. Remember how this uncommon woman broke her alabaster box of costly perfume, (meant only for her bridegroom) and poured it all out to Jesus? What did Jesus say? He told everyone that the memory of this woman would be perpetuated forever. **She will have a memorial and a monument raised up in her name because she ‘poured out’ to the Lord.**

“Wherever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her” (Matt 26:13).

This woman did not seek any memorial for herself. She was not out to build any monuments. **She merely ‘poured’ out everything she had to Jesus and she received a memorial! She got her monument!** While others criticized her, Jesus said, *“Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her” (Matt 26:13).* **Jesus Himself gave her a memorial and raised up a monument for her!** Because this uncommon woman, like David knew how to ‘pour out’ to God

and to turn **her greatest desire or need into her highest sacrifice**, God saw to it that the memory of her deed would be perpetuated forever.

While David spent his life building altars and sacrificing to God, Absalom, his son was obsessed with monuments. To ‘sacrifice’ one’s life-long spiritual and ‘illegitimate’ desire and dream is not easy. Yet God would require that of us. This is why God requires that David laid down the building of a temple for Him. Are you saying, “No” to me, Lord? But it was a spiritual desire, a godly dream for Your honour! “Well, the answer is, ‘No’, *David*.” Why not? “Because you are a man of war and there is blood on your hands, David. I cannot allow a man of war to build. You will not build but your son, Solomon will.”

I would like to borrow some lines I wrote in *THE DEMANDS OF LOVE*.

“Men and women who have become ‘two armies’ on the inside, always fighting, competing, comparing and killing in their hearts, full of strife and contention must not build for God. Whatever they set up will eventually come down. It was only after warfare in the kingdom had ended and peace and quietness prevailed that God allowed the process of building (of His great temple) to start in Jerusalem (1 Chro. 7-10). Yes, we must come free of the bloodshed, the striving, the conflicts, the fighting, the competing, the insecurities and the rage on the inside of us before we can build for God. Otherwise, we may tear down everything that we ourselves have set up for according to our inward state shall be our outward work, If there are conflicts and fighting on the inside, there will also be conflicts and fighting on the outside.” (Taken from page 180 from DEMAND OF LOVE BY SUSAN TANG)

To have God say “No” to this was definitely not easy to David but he yielded. Just why couldn’t he build that temple? After all, it was his vision. All the plans and the architectural designs were given to him by God through revelation. He had the resources, the silver, the gold, the people and the materials – everything. Yes, everything, **except the Divine approval**. So

David halted. David jammed on the brakes. David tightened the knob and David kept back the lid when God said, “No”. **David died to self, he forsook his dreams and laid his passionate and driving ambition on the altar and let it go up in smoke, as a sacrifice to God.**

Can we also do the same? Can we build an altar and allow our driving ambitions, careers, a boyfriend or a girlfriend, our much needed holiday, a dream house, anything, to go up in smoke to God as our sacrifice when He says “No”? The memory of David’s deeds are perpetuated because he was a man who knew how to build altars, how to sacrifice to God and how to accept God’s “No”. If we do not know how to jam on our brakes and obey God when He says “No” then we will never have any memorials to our name – on earth or in heaven.

May we know that monuments or memorials can never be raised up by bricks and mortar or with grand architectural edifices. **It has to be built by the way we live and by how much we have ‘poured out’ ourselves to the Lord.** King David knew this and this is why he declared, “*The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance*” (Psalm 112:6). Proverbs 10:7 gives us this promise: “*The memory of the just is blessed.*”

CONCLUSION

THE ONLY ANSWER TO THE PRESENT GLOBAL CALAMITIES

God wants us to know that **His ultimate purpose, (both for our individual lives and for the nations of the earth), can only be fulfilled through the ultimate lifestyle – the life of ‘altars and sacrifices.’** This is the type of life that Abraham lived. It is the type of life that Jesus our Lord told us to live (Mark 8:34). Today, the talk in Christendom is always about ‘monuments and self,’ instead of ‘altars and sacrifices.’ It is easy to tell the source of a person’s life or his or her ‘beginnings.’ If your life is a product of institutionalized Christianity, you will always be concerned about ‘monuments and self’ but **if your life has the right beginning and is an infusion of the life of Jesus, then you can live the ultimate lifestyle, the life of ‘altars and sacrifices,’ or the way of self-denial.** Self-denial, coming a little at a time will be worked into us by the life of Jesus, not by our own strength. If your life has its beginnings in Jesus, then the outworking of everything (in your life) will come through the power of the Holy Spirit. He will, as we surrender to Him, enable us to lay down our most earnest desires, driving ambitions and life-long dreams on the altar, just like Abraham laid down Isaac. The ‘pouring out’ of oneself and the offering up of burnt offerings will always cause a divine stir from heaven.

In days like these, when the gentle Lamb has become an angry Lion, roaring and shouting at the nations of the earth, who can find salvation except those who build altars and are willing to offer sacrifices? The curtain was lifted in Ezekiel 9 to show us **the fate of those who built altars and those who did not.** It was a horrible scene where **five ‘death’ angels** were sent out to kill everyone who did not ‘sigh and cry’ over the sins of the nation. There was **only one protecting angel who** was sent to put a mark of protection upon those who did (Ezekiel 9:4). God’s indictment to kill everyone and not spare (not even children) in Ezekiel 9 has always disturbed me.

The truth is the truth. Look at the millions; many are children, who have perished in the recent tragedies: hurricanes, tsunamis, mud-slides, earthquakes, gas leaks, wars, genocides, sicknesses and diseases. Many more millions will perish when the avian flu virus is activated. The World Health Organization experts have stated that eight to 150 million people will die in this incurable plague. Which nation on earth is secure and who will be saved? **According to God's word, only those who consistently live a lifestyle of prayers, intercession and self-denial.** The hidden Anna and Simeon, Samuel and Epaphras (Colossians 4:12). As it was in the days of Ezekiel, so it is today - there are so few of them.

This is why only one angel was needed to put the mark of protection upon the heads of the 'altar-builders' or the self-denying intercessors. Truly, there were not many heads to mark. Therefore his job was quick and easy. Look at his early return into the presence of God to report, "*I have done my job*" (Ezekiel 9:11) long before the other five destroying angels returned. The other five angels took a much longer time because there were many millions given over to death and destruction and they were kept busy.

It gives us pain to witness the onslaught of darkness consuming the nations of the earth ... now rapidly covering Asia. Why has darkness prevailed when God's promise is that darkness will never be able to prevail against the Light (John 1:5)? It has happened because Christians refuse to pray, to intercede and to live self-denying lives. It has happened because God's altars, like in the days of Elijah, have been thrown down and hardly anyone wants to see them repaired. Why not? Because repaired altars means the return of sacrifices, shedding of blood and death which will cause the descent of God's holy and pristine fire to check sin, apostasy and degradation. But oh, these three essentials – sacrifices, shedding of blood and death – are definitely too repugnant, too alien, too painful and too discomfoting for today's new-world generation of Christians who believe in 'another gospel and another Jesus.'

I have before me some newspaper clippings from the Borneo Post (Sept 6/05) with the headlines: **'TYPHOON MAY HIT**

MALAYSIA.' Here is a part of the report:

*'We had typhoons in Sabah in the past, that too only the tail end. Even then, many people died. Realizing the change in typhoon pattern, Malaysia had invited foreign experts to help it prepare for the new threat. Malaysia often experienced tropical storms but was **not prepared for other threats and Malaysians never thought that the country would be hit by a tsunami like the one on Dec 26 last year. Scientists were worried that typhoons which constantly hit Taiwan and Japan were now moving towards Southeast Asia.'***

Note what is being said by the newspapers:

- i) Malaysia faces **a new threat**
- ii) this is something Malaysians **never thought** could happen in our country
- iii) the country is not prepared to face such a calamity

Another headline says: '**ASIA VULNERABLE to NEW ORLEANS-STYLE TRAGEDY**' (Borneo Post Sept 8/05). The article went on to describe how the governments in Asia are trying to step up disaster prevention measures and to improve their infrastructure to prevent a disaster. Yet another headline was about the coming avian influenza pandemic. It read: '**AIRPORT SCREENING UNLIKELY TO STOP SPREAD**' (Borneo Post Sept 24/05). The article carried a grim report about the failure of airport measures in every country to stop the plague from spreading from country to country. It stated that *'global health officials believe a flu pandemic which could kill millions of people worldwide is overdue.'*

God is indeed shaking the foundations of the earth and *'everything that can be shaken will be shaken.'* The nations are indeed drinking from His *'wine cup of fury'* and are *'staggering and going mad'* (Jeremiah 25:15). It hurts to know that God, our Keeper and Protector, has turned against us to harm us. Why? **Because we have brought it upon ourselves.**

'Do not go after other gods to serve them and worship them, and do not provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands and I will not harm you. Yet you have not

listened to Me, says the Lord, that you might provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt' (Jeremiah 25:6-7).

No place on the surface of the earth is safe from God's anger, from the Lord's roar and from earthquakes and tsunamis for God has pronounced that '*disaster shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great WHIRLWIND (TSUNAMI) shall be raised up from the farthest parts of the earth'* (Jeremiah 25:32). For us to say that our country is safe from earthquakes and tsunamis is utter foolishness and deception because *when God does the shaking, every corner of the earth will feel it – there is nowhere to hide*. No wonder Dr Smith says, '*It is no joke. I would like you to put this message out to Singapore and Malaysia.*'

No invention, nothing that comes from the hand of man can ever hold back this devastation. No, nothing can ever prevent the Lion from roaring, pouncing, tearing and shedding blood except two things: **repaired altars and burnt offerings.**

Yes, the Lord has indeed '**ROARED FROM ZION** and uttered His voice from Jerusalem; and the inhabitants of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither' (Amos 1:2).

'THE LION HATH ROARED, WHO SHALL NOT BE AFRAID?' (Amos 3:8)

What is your response to the message of this book? Will you, in spite of your 'legitimate' and 'urgent' business, repair the broken altar in your own life, in your family, in the church and in the nation? **Repaired altars or a genuine lamentation after God (1 Samuel 7:2), characterized by deep repentance, intercession and a self-denying lifestyle (which will cause the descent of God's holy fire to check sin, degradation, dark wisdom and apostasy) are the only hope for our present problems.** No army, police force, scientist, doctor, clergyman, theologian or brilliant politician can help us. The Lion has roared, who will not be afraid? Who, and what, can appease Him? Only these: **repaired altars and returned sacrifices.**

PRAYER OF MINISTRY TO GOD

However thick the darkness, Your light can penetrate through because You said that *'the light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not'* (*The darkness can never master the light*) *John 1:5*.

O God, shine through the suffering, the pain, the deaths, the carnage and the curse to let us see You in this time of tragedy. We are here, Lord, standing in Your presence to minister to You because we know You are hurting too. This tragedy must have hurt You the most because You love and You care; yet You have to stand back to allow the unleashing of these killer waves, these merciless earthquakes and these damning viruses to kill with no warning. No father delights in whipping his children, yet it has to come because the pain from the whipping will drive perversion and foolishness far from the child.

We in Asia have felt this whipping – we are pained. Are You? While unregenerate men have angered You by their perversions and wickedness, we have angered You through our infidelity, prayerlessness and rebellion. We have deliberately pulled our shoulders from You and Your pleadings had very often fallen on deaf ears. But we can hear You now. Please lower Your voice a little, especially in Asia. Lord, Your shouting and roaring have gone over the waves and we are frightened. Remove the blows; no more, Lord.

Please stop the roaring. Please stop the shouting. Do not pounce on us to tear us anymore. Give us time to rise up and seek Your face. If the gentle Shepherd has turned into a ruthless Lion, what chances have we for survival? If You, Who shed Your blood for us no longer value our blood but instead want to shed it, then who can be saved?

No more, Lord. No more, because of Calvary. Look at what You did at Calvary. Look at what You went through at Calvary – Father and Son 'pouring out' to save defiant and sinful men and women. Nothing could ever match Calvary – the day when You, the mighty and loving God were killed

by puny and hateful men, the day when You, the holy Creator was judged guilty by His unholy and guilt-ridden creation. How can an incorruptible and holy Creator be judged guilty by His corrupted and unholy creation?

No demon, however great, can undo what was done at Calvary. Calvary has the power to cover many cycles of eternity and many more Achehs, New Orleans and Pakistans. God, remember Calvary, and the blood that flowed there, so that in judgment, You will remember mercy. Did You regret not stopping all those earthquakes and hurricanes? Did You take joy in seeing all the suffering, the tears, the carnage? Did You delight in hearing the screams? No, I know You did not for this is not Your nature. O God, it must have caused You a lot of pain to see all these. It must have hurt You not to stop them. It must have hurt You terribly to do something against Your own nature.

None of us like being violated. You must have felt the pain of being violated when You allowed these tragedies to happen because what You have allowed is contrary to Your nature. Forgive us for violating You and dishonouring You through our sins. Our sins and lack of prayers have brought on so much unnecessary judgment and suffering. O God, forgive our passiveness, our perversion and our hardened hearts. Puny man possesses great power for puny man can actually 'make' the mighty God act contrary to His own nature.

We have the power to turn the Lamb of God into a fierce, roaring and tearing Lion. We have brought great curses upon ourselves and if it were not for Jesus, we would indeed be lost forever. Father, thank you for the Cross.

The physical waves have receded; the spiritual ones will soon be unleashed. O God, insulate us against the coming spiritual tsunamis. Brave us against this satanic onslaught which will soon follow the physical one. We do not want to be caught unawares. Teach us to pray and give us a high level of spiritual clarity and accuracy as we shoot our arrows (prayers) into the spirit realm to come against the coming satanic invasion whose target is the minds and hearts of our young people in the nations

of the world.

Teach us to plead with You, to intercede and to watch effectively over our nation and the nations of the world. You Who spared Malaysia and our lives, must now work deeper into us to make champions out of each one of us so that we can cover the nation from being pillaged by the enemy.