

**Outline of
the Messages for the Full-time Training
in the Fall Term of 2004**

**GENERAL SUBJECT:
THE INTRINSIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LORD'S RECOVERY
FOR THE BUILDING OF THE CHURCH
AS THE HOUSE OF GOD AND THE CITY OF GOD**

Message Four

The Rebuilding of the Altar of God—the Altar of Burnt Offering

Scripture Reading: Ezra 1:2-3, 5; 3:1-6a; Psa. 43:4a; Eph. 5:2; Rom. 12:1

- I. “They built the altar of the God of Israel to offer burnt offerings upon it, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God”—Ezra 3:2b:**
- A. For the recovery of the house we need the recovery of the altar—1:2-3, 5; 3:2-3:
 - 1. We must put all that we have and are on the altar for God's satisfaction; otherwise, it is impossible to have the church life.
 - 2. The first thing to be recovered for the church life is the altar—Rom. 12:1:
 - a. Before we can have the church life, we must put everything on the altar—Psa. 43:4a.
 - b. We must put all that we have, all that we are, and all that we can do on the altar for God's satisfaction; this is the start of the church life.
 - 3. The problem is that we have come back from Babylon to Jerusalem, yet at Jerusalem we may still keep many things for our own interests; we may not offer everything on the altar for God's interests and for God's satisfaction—Rom. 12:1:
 - a. We should not come back to Jerusalem yet maintain our life as it was in Babylon.
 - b. The life in Jerusalem must be absolutely for the Lord's interests.
 - B. The altar of burnt offering typifies the cross of Christ—Exo. 27:1; 40:6; Heb. 13:10:
 - 1. In His economy God gives us one person—Christ—and one way—the cross—1 Cor. 2:2:
 - a. The cross is the center of God's operation in His economy—Gal. 1:4; 2:19-21; 3:1, 13; 5:24; 6:14.
 - b. God governs everything by the cross and deals with everything by the cross—Col. 1:20-22; 2:11-15.
 - 2. The cross is the base, the ground, of all spiritual experiences; all spiritual experience begins from the cross—Gal. 2:20; 6:14; 1 Cor. 2:2:
 - a. In order to progress spiritually, we need to pass through the cross daily—Matt. 10:38; 16:24; Luke 14:27.
 - b. In order to have the proper church life, we need to experience the cross—Eph. 2:14-16.

- c. Through the cross we need to become nothing, to have nothing, and to be able to do nothing; otherwise, what we are, what we have, and what we can do will become a substitute for Christ—1 Cor. 1:17-18, 23.

II. “They began to offer up burnt offerings to Jehovah”—Ezra 3:6b:

- A. The burnt offering signifies Christ’s being absolute for God’s satisfaction—Lev. 1:3-9:
 1. The burnt offering, which was wholly for God’s satisfaction, typifies Christ as God’s pleasure and satisfaction—Eph. 5:2.
 2. The burnt offering typifies Christ not only in His living a life that is perfect and absolute for God but also in His being the life that enables God’s people to have such a living—John 5:19, 30; 6:38; 7:18; 8:29; 14:24; 2 Cor. 5:15; Gal. 2:19-21.
 3. The burnt offering is Christ Himself, and we are one with Him; thus, the burnt offering is also our oneness with Christ—1 Cor. 6:17.
- B. The burnt offering is for God’s food that God may enjoy it and be satisfied—Num. 28:2:
 1. Although God is almighty, He cannot provide Himself something to eat; His food must come from His people—v. 2.
 2. Christ is God’s food, but He is not God’s food in a direct way; rather, Christ is God’s food served to God by us.
- C. The burnt offering is “a satisfying fragrance to Jehovah”—Lev. 1:9, 13, 11, 17:
 1. The Hebrew word for *burnt offering* literally means “that which goes up” and denotes something that ascends to God—v. 3.
 2. The satisfying fragrance is a savor that brings satisfaction, peace, and rest; such a satisfying fragrance is an enjoyment to God.
 3. Because Christ lived a life that was absolutely for God’s satisfaction, His living was a satisfying fragrance, a sweet savor ascending to God for His pleasure and satisfaction—Eph. 5:2.
 4. The burning of the burnt offering is as the burning of sweet incense—Exo. 30:7-8; Lev. 16:12-13.
- D. Ashes signify Christ reduced to nothing—6:10; Mark 9:12:
 1. Since we are one with the Christ who has been reduced to ashes, we also are reduced to ashes, that is, reduced to nothing, to zero—1 Cor. 1:28.
 2. Putting the ashes at the east side of the altar, the side of the sunrise, is an allusion to resurrection—Lev. 1:16; John 11:25; 2 Cor. 1:9.
 3. Christ’s death brings in resurrection, and in resurrection the ashes become precious materials for God’s building—1 Cor. 3:9b, 12a.
 4. The precious materials for the building of the New Jerusalem come from the transformation of the ashes; thus, eventually the ashes will become the New Jerusalem—Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rev. 21:18-21.
- E. The burnt offering indicates that we have a heart that is absolute for God in this age; we are not for anything else, and we have no other interest—Rom. 12:1.