

How to Have A Family Altar

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CHAPTER SEVEN

A Study of the Family Altar Through the Household Visits of JESUS (Concluded)

IN THIS CHAPTER we shall consider several interesting household visits of JESUS.

The first household visit is in many ways the most interesting of them all. "The first record," says R. A. Brehm, "that we have of anyone coming to JESUS specifically to worship Him took place in a home!"

Isn't that interesting and significant? Turn to the second chapter of Matthew and there read about the visit of the Wise Men to worship JESUS. These men made the long and wearisome journey from the East to Bethlehem where the young Child was lying in His crib.

We can rightfully imagine that it was a hard and perhaps dangerous journey. We read in Matthew 2:11: "**And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshiped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.**"

Verse 11 contains all the basic operations of the family altar. Notice: "**And when they were come into the house.**"

We come to JESUS in our family worship. Look at the distance they traveled and the effort and expectancy put forth to fill this home with the worship of the Saviour.

Faithful Simeon's heart was filled with joyous expectation from the HOLY GHOST on that revelation "**that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ**" (Luke 2:26). Simeon could think of no greater blessing than to see the Lord's CHRIST!

Why then do we count this privilege worth so little? Why are our hearts so cold and unresponsive at the opportunity of seeing the Lord's CHRIST in His Word every day through the family altar? After Simeon had seen JESUS, he blessed GOD and was ready to depart to fairer shores, saying, "**Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.**"

But Simeon testified that this privilege was not for him alone, saying, "**Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel**" (Luke 2:31, 32).

Those who have daily family worship can testify that seeing JESUS causes them to bless GOD and rejoice in His holy name!

As we worship Him, we know as a vibrant, living, experimental reality the truth of Paul's words: **"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord"** (II Corinthians 3:18).

And as we behold our Lord JESUS, life is transformed and take's on the perspective of eternity; our inward man is renewed ever according to the Word of GOD: **"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are no seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal"** (II Corinthians 4:16-18).

As we see these Wise Men worship our Lord, do we not feel condemned if in our homes we have shown Him no such worship and love? Ought not we who claim Him as our Saviour offer Him similar devotion in our homes!

Why then do so many fail to do it? It is because they do not love Him. Poor souls, they have lost that sense of wonder and reverence at the wonderful truth that GOD became flesh and gave Himself for us that we might be reconciled to Him.

R. A. Brehm rightly says: "Both the teaching and examples in Scripture warrant our saying that in this day He longs to reveal Himself to us right in our homes, the place where so much of our life is lived and where we need to experience the practical everyday reality of His peace, joy, strength, His wisdom, guidance, and help in any number of ways." Remember, as the disciples were speaking of JESUS together the Word of GOD says, **"And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you"** (Luke 24:36). Luke 24:36 is the illustration of which Matthew 18:20 is the promise and Luke 24:35 is the condition!

We notice last that worship unfolds into giving. They gave precious gifts to Him! As we worship, let us give Him our hearts, minds, and wills! These are gifts precious to His dear heart!

Mr. Brehm brings out that in the narrative telling of the visit of the Wise Men, there are four groups mentioned. Each group represents a different attitude toward the Saviour in that home.

(1) Mary and Joseph cherished Him with all their hearts and were eager to do anything they could for Him. The members of a family altar home should evidence this same eager desire to do anything possible to please Him and bring joy to His precious heart.

(2) Then there are the Wise Men who worshiped Him and gave Him costly gifts as an evidence of their adoration.

(3) Then there was Herod who hated CHRIST and wanted to be rid of Him. There are many in the world who will have nothing whatsoever of CHRIST in their homes. They want Him, but they want Him out of the way! The world is at enmity with Him and wants none of our family altar crusade to exalt and worship Him in the home! Wise men heed our message and have a

heart for it, but the Herods are full of hate. They will not fill their homes with the worship of CHRIST. "**Away with him,**" they cry.

(4) Then we have the chief priests and scribes, the religious leaders.

The greatest tragedy of all is that these theologians and religious leaders should be indifferent to His worship in the home.

The story is still the same today! Dr. Fred Garland, world-famed evangelist and editor of *The Soul-Winner* has said that in all his travels and visits in the homes of ministers he has been invited only once to family worship!

Probably the reason so few sermons are preached on the family altar is that ministers themselves aren't worshipping JESUS in the home!

One student of the Word has well said: "One would obviously expect to hear of them above all others rushing right off to Bethlehem to welcome the long-looked-for Messiah, but-well, their sin lay not in what they did but in their indifference to His presence in their midst. There He was in the home, ready to receive anyone who wished to welcome and worship Him; but these who made the high profession of being leaders of the chosen people of GOD were blind to their great privilege."

Can it be possible that He is today receiving the same treatment from Christian parents who ignore His right to a daily welcome at the family altar?

In Luke 8:51-56 we have recorded another very interesting visit to a home, the visit of JESUS to the home of the ruler of the synagogue. Verse 51, begins, "**And when he came into the house.**" Here is the beginning of a great blessing for this home. But JESUS found a home full of doubt, fear, and despair.

"**And all wept, and bewailed her.**" Immediately JESUS gave Heaven's interpretation of the girl's condition: "**Weep not; she is not dead; but sleepeth.**"

By this He meant that her body was resting for the time being and would be awakened on that great day of Resurrection. Dead bodies are forever out of the realm of life and they will never be awakened; but sleeping bodies will be awakened and raised up on GOD's day of resurrection. The early Christians shouted and rejoiced over the corpses of their loved ones for they knew their loved ones were not dead.

The body was sleeping, and the spirit of the body was still living and would one day be reunited to the body. In reality there are no dead bodies - only sleeping bodies. There are no dead people - only people who have removed from their bodies for a season to dwell in Heaven and glory, or Hades and its despair, awaiting the day of resurrection; and some will come to everlasting glory and some to everlasting damnation.

Every member of your household can be brought into the glorious truth of "body sleep" by faithful instruction around the family altar (I Corinthians 15:51-58). However, always make clear

that those who die outside of CHRIST will be resurrected unto "**damnation**" (John 5:28, 29). Luke 8:53, gives us the scorn of unbelief: "**and they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead.**" This is a picture of the creature in his dark ignorance daring to deny the Word of the Creator Himself.

This scene is being repeated today.

If you stand with Him, you sorrow not as the world sorrows when this glorious event comes to your saved loved ones. Let your family altar witness to the truth of verse 54 often! "**And he put them all out, and he took her by the hand and called, saying, Maid, arise.**"

Paul Rader used to say, "CHRIST wants nothing so much as to be believed!" He put out the scorners, doubters, and weepers. Unbelief is part of that enmity of our fallen nature to GOD! If CHRIST is exalted as Lord through the daily family worship and life, you will see Him put all this unbelief out! When these are out you and your family will experience unhindered enjoyment of the blessed HOLY SPIRIT in His fruits of "**love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance**" (Galatians 5:22, 23).

When CHRIST is exalted in a home, He puts off the works of the flesh and brings in the fruits of the Spirit! In verse 55 we have that significant verse the truth of which is behind JESUS' statement: "**She is not dead, but sleepeth.**" "**And her spirit came again.**" Her spirit had been in Abraham's bosom - that blessed paradise of GOD to which the saved went before CHRIST's death and resurrection. She did not care to come back here after being there!

And would our loved ones who are in that still more blessed abode of Heaven want to come back? They have no desire at all to come back until they come with Him on that glad morning of Rapture of all the Church for the marriage feast in the air! This girl's spirit came again to her body because He said: "**Maid, arise,**" and her parents were astonished.

But they would have been more astonished had they known what happened to her when He first called spirit from her body! They had no ears for that glad message. They wanted her back here again. And not for the girl's sake, but for the parents' sake, He promised, "**Fear not! believe only, and she shall be made whole.**" And for the parent's sake and for His own glory among men He said: "**Maid, arise.**"

The resurrection of the daughter's body was a great miracle, but the greatest miracle of all would be if this very day He would say, to your loved one who is dead in trespasses and sins, "**Arise.**" Anything wonderful, good and glorious can happen when CHRIST is in your home.

Parents are frequently astonished at what CHRIST does for them and their children when He is honored in the home through the family altar!

In Luke 7 we find another of JESUS' household visits, this time to Simon the Pharisee. Simon wanted JESUS to dine with him, but he had not worship for JESUS! He was like some modern Christians who want Him in their homes but give Him no worship.

Probably it makes them feel a little better if He is there, or it is considered the thing to do since

they call themselves Christians. But in Simon's house there was one present who felt that if He was in that house He should be worshiped. She was "**a woman in the city.**" And "**when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment**" (Luke 7:37, 38).

Do not be content to go through your family worship in a listless way! If your hearts don't have this burning love of CHRIST, you have not really experienced the spirit of family worship, no matter if you have gone through the motions! Simon the Pharisee objected to this woman and her worship of CHRIST.

JESUS' rebuke of Simon is scathing and to the point. His answer cuts through outward forms to the very spirit and heart of the matter: "**Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore, I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much**" (Luke 7:44-47).

The tears and worship of this woman mean more to Him than all the professions of courtesy and honor which Simon may make. Oh, Simon, you have multiplied yourself in Christendom down to this very hour! Where are the lovers of JESUS like this woman! When the love she knew returns to us modern believers, then the family altars will be returned to our homes in a hurry.

We may truly say that the sweetest hour of day to our Lord JESUS CHRIST is when we kneel to pray. We derive many benefits from the family altar. But the benefits I acquire are only secondary; they are the fruits. Can't we see that JESUS died on the Cross to make us worshipers?

CHRIST is love and wants to be loved. It is what He called the "**one thing needful,**" and that which shall not be taken away! When we love Him more - even as the woman from the city - then the very atmosphere of our homes will be sanctified. Then will the temper and spirit of our homes be holy and sweet.

When two people marry, they always intend to be kind to one another. However, after the glamour of the first few weeks has worn off, they begin to see each other as they really are with all their faults and frailties. And how vital to us is the holy hour of family worship together with each other and with CHRIST in the presence of His Word and His Spirit to the sustaining of that Christly compassion and consideration toward each other. The beautiful purity of sweetheart love can be preserved and cherished forever in the golden chalice of daily worship.

Yes, this woman's tears and worship and love perfumed the whole house with the sweet aroma of Heaven. And will it be with us as we lovingly and fervently worship Him at our family altars.

~ end of chapter 7 ~
