

The Altar Sanctifies The Gift

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Why Matthew 23:19 Is So Important for the New Testament Christian

Matthew 23:19

“Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?”

This verse is far more than Jesus correcting the Pharisees as it is a prophetic revelation pointing directly to Christ and His Cross, and it is essential for every New Testament believer because:

1. It Reveals That Nothing Is Acceptable to God Outside of the Altar

In the Old Testament, the altar sanctified the gift.

The gift was not holy by itself.

It became holy only when it was placed upon the altar.

This shows us:

The object (the gift) had no power.

The altar was the place where God accepted and sanctified the gift.

Everything depended upon the altar.

2. It Reveals That Christ Is Our Altar

Hebrews makes this unmistakably clear:

Hebrews 13:10

We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.

Christ Himself, in His sacrificial death, is the altar for the New Testament Christian.

Not Christ the miracle worker

Not Christ the teacher

Not Christ the example

But Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23).

1 Corinthians 1:23

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

The altar is the Cross, where Christ offered Himself (Hebrews 9:14).

Hebrews 9:14

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

3. It Shows That Nothing We Offer to God Is Acceptable Unless It Is Laid Upon the Altar of Christ's Cross

Just as the altar sanctified the gift under the Old Covenant...

So, the Cross sanctifies everything under the New Covenant:

Our prayers

Our worship

Our obedience

Our gifts

Our service

Our sacrifices

Even our very lives (Romans 12:1)

Romans 12:1

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

None of these are acceptable to God unless they are placed upon the one altar He recognizes which is Christ crucified.

If the Pharisees missed this, Jesus said they were blind.

If the church misses this, it walks in the same blindness.

4. It Clarifies Romans 7 and the Christian's Struggle

Romans Chapter 7 shows us that:

The believer tries to offer service to God

But if it is not through the altar (faith in the Cross)

It becomes dead works

And the Sin Nature revives

And the believer becomes a slave to it again

Romans 7 is the picture of serving God with a sanctified gift,
but without the altar, and therefore God cannot accept it.

This is why Jesus' words are so vital for the New Testament Christian.

5. It Protects Us from Exalting Our Gifts Above the Sacrifice Most Christians today unknowingly exalt:

Their giving

Their worship

Their effort

Their obedience

Their spiritual disciplines

Their emotions

Their experiences

But Jesus says the altar is greater than all the gifts.

Meaning:

The Cross must hold the central and supreme place in the believer's life and walk.

Without it, all gifts, even "good" ones are rejected, because only the Cross sanctifies.

6. It Brings the Christian Back to the Only Place God Works

Romans 8:2

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

The Holy Spirit only works within the boundaries of the Cross

God only gives grace to the humble

And humility is found only at Calvary

This verse reinforces that truth with laser clarity.

The altar (the Cross) is the place:

Where grace flows

Where sanctification occurs

Where fruit is produced

Where the Spirit works

Where gifts are made holy

Where the believer remains alive unto God

Matthew 23:19 is central to New Testament Christianity because Jesus is declaring that nothing we offer to God is holy unless it is placed upon the altar of His sacrificial death.

If what we are reading in God's Word doesn't take us to the altar, then whatever we are attempting to offer to God from it cannot be Sanctified.

The Cross doesn't just save us once, but it sanctifies everything we offer to God every day.

This is why our faithful Lord ALWAYS delivers us to the place out of which alone He can accept anything we offer Him as if it is not out of the death of Christ it cannot come forth as the Life of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:11

For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

2 Corinthians 4:12

So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

Preach The Cross



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