

# Deuteronomy 27:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And there shalt thou build an altar unto the LORD thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up any iron tool upon them.

## Analysis

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**And there shalt thou build an altar unto the LORD thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up any iron tool upon them.** The altar of unhewn stones demonstrates that human craftsmanship must not alter what God uses for worship. Uncut stones represent unmodified divine creation, while iron tools represent human manipulation and improvement.

The prohibition against iron tools on altar stones teaches that worship approaches God on His terms, not through human achievement or artistic enhancement. We come not through our works or refinements but through simple faith in God's provision.

This principle anticipates the gospel - salvation comes not through human work or self-improvement but through God's provision alone. Christ is the living stone, rejected by men but chosen by God (1 Peter 2:4), and believers are living stones built into spiritual house.

The simplicity of unhewn stones contrasts with ornate pagan altars. True worship requires no impressive human contributions but humble acceptance of God's ordained means.

## Historical Context

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Exodus 20:25 similarly commands altars of unhewn stone. This contrasted with Canaanite altars often elaborately carved and decorated, reflecting pagan theology that deity could be manipulated through impressive offerings and artwork.

The prohibition prevented Israel from adopting pagan worship aesthetics that emphasized human contribution over divine initiative.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

## Study Questions

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1. What does the prohibition against hewn stones teach about approaching God on His terms?
2. How do unhewn stones symbolize coming to God without human achievement or works?
3. Why must worship avoid impressive human contributions that draw attention from God?
4. How does this principle anticipate the gospel of salvation by grace through faith alone?
5. What dangers exist when worship emphasizes human artistic achievement over simple obedience?

## Interlinear Text

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וְבָנָה יְתִּ And there shalt thou build	H1129	מִזְבֵּחַ שָׁם an altar	H8033	לִיהְיוֹן הַמִּזְבֵּחַ עַל־יְהוָה unto the LORD	H4196	מִזְבֵּחַ אֱלֹהִים thy God	H3068	מִזְבֵּחַ אֱלֹהִים an altar	H430		H4196
לֹא אֶבְנֶן יִמְשָׁלֶךְ of stones	H68	תַּנְשֵׁא יְמִלְחָמָה thou shalt not lift up	H3808	בְּרִזְלָה any iron	H5130		H5921			H1270	

## Additional Cross-References

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**Exodus 20:25** (Sacrifice): And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.

**Exodus 24:4** (Sacrifice): And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

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