

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.
Hebrews 12:12-13

BETWEEN BETHEL AND HAI

And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.
Genesis 12:8

Those who are the called according to GOD's purpose (i.e.; HIS sheep, HIS elect) are no different in and of themselves, (see Eph.2:3), than those who are left to wander in the darkness and ultimately reap the just reward of their disobedience. *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."* (Rom 3:23) The clear teaching of the scriptures is that the sons of GOD are saved totally by grace and not in any wise owing to anything they have done or said.

There were many sheep herders on the plains around Ur of the Chaldees, but it was to Abram (later called Abraham) that the LORD spoke this commandment, *"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:"* (Gen 12:1) This is a scenario which is repeated many times in the scriptures; such as with Noah who found grace in the eyes of the LORD (see Gen 6:8); the widow of Zarephath to whose house the prophet was sent; (see Luke 4:26), or Lydia, whose heart the LORD opened, (see Acts 16:14) to name a few.

There was no debate or decision that was made by Abraham since it was true then, even as it was when the LORD JESUS spoke these words, *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."* (John 10:27) The LORD had determined to bless Abraham and his call was but the evidence of HIS appointed purpose. There were no conditions involved but there was an action on the part of Abraham, which was a product of the same grace that called him, he *"obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."* (Heb 11:8) *"Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth."* (Psa 110:3) Where you find men who are not willing to follow the LORD JESUS, you will find those who are not called.

HIS promise to Abraham was without condition, HE simply declared that HE would bless Abraham and his posterity. It is here that many of the Jews have been caused to stumble by going about to establish their own righteousness. Most of those who are of the house of Israel after the flesh believe that these promises which were made to Abraham and his "seed", have their primary reference to the promise of a certain amount of soil in the earth which they might call their own. They believe that they partake of these "promises" by their natural birth and are those called by the LORD simply because of their nativity.

Paul was very clear to WHOM these promises were made. *"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."* (Gal 3:16) All of the promises of GOD are found in JESUS CHRIST. HE is the ONE to WHOM these promises were made and HE is the ONE who has taken possession of those promises in establishing HIS kingdom in the earth. (see Ps. 2:6-12)

The calling of Abraham is but an illustration of the extent of that Kingdom. *"And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."* (Gen 12:2-3) John saw the fulfillment of this promise, *"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."* (Rev 5:9-10)

As Abraham journeyed from Haran to Canaan, he pitched his tent and built an altar of worship unto the ONE who had called him. Those who are called by the grace of GOD will be found worshipping at the footstool of HIM who has purchased their eternal redemption. They will lift up the NAME of CHRIST as a NAME above all names.

The scriptures tell us that he pitched his tent between Bethel and Hai. The name "Bethel" literally means "the house of GOD". We find that this town (Bethel) was originally called Luz but the name was changed by Jacob after he had the dream of the LADDER which reached into heaven. He was completely awed by what he had seen (see Gen 28:17) and humbled in the dust. Even as Isaac Watts recounts in his hymn, "How sweet and awful is the place with CHRIST within the doors." (Gadsby's Hymnal #440)

It is interesting that we see this town, here, referred to as Bethel, before that name was bestowed on it by Jacob who came later. Is this not an illustration of HIM who *"quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were."* (Rom 4:17)? Abraham believed GOD and embraced the PROMISE of GOD, even before he saw it completely fulfilled. Even as GOD has determined to save HIS people before HE is pleased to call them. HIS call of them is evidence of this determination.

In point of fact Abraham never actually possessed any of the land which was promised to him. (see Acts 7:5). Even though he was called out of Haran as a man mightily blessed of GOD, he was never anything more than a sojourner in a strange land. Yet he confessed, that *"he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."* (Heb 11:10)

In like fashion those who are called by the LORD rejoice in the PROMISE of GOD and yearn for a complete manifestation of the redemption which is promised, (see Rom. 8:23) yet they find in themselves such a paucity and weakness in their flesh that they almost despair of not being consumed by it. This is illustrated in the other "city" which was to the east of the spot where Abraham built his altar and pitched HIS tent.

This was the town of Hai or as it also called Ai in the book of Joshua. (see Joshua chap 7) It was here that the Israelites suffered a stunning defeat and here that Achan took the accursed bar of gold. Ai was a city which was near to the town of Bethhaven which literally means "house of vanity" or as some would say a "house of witches."

Lest HIS children should be lifted up with pride, the LORD is pleased to give them a thorn in the flesh. Paul speaks of it in this fashion, *"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."* (Rom 7:18-19) Then he describes the nature of this conflict, *"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."* (Gal 5:17)

And so the children of GOD when called by the LORD, do indeed confess that they are strangers and sojourners in this world but they are also very much beset by the "sin that dwelleth in them". They desire to be found among those who worship HIM in SPIRIT and TRUTH, yet they are made to lament the fact that even their repentance needs to be repented of. Though they are not "of the world" they are yet "in the world". But they look for a CITY with FOUNDATIONS, confessing that JESUS CHRIST alone is their RIGHTEOUSNESS. They have pitched their "tent" between the House of GOD and the vanity of the flesh, with hope. mam