

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

THE MONUMENT

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand. I Corinthians 15:1

Throughout the Old Testament, we see the practice of building altars. The primary use of these altars was to offer sacrifices to the LORD upon them. Yet that was not the sole purpose of erecting them. They were also raised as a testimony, memorial, or a commemorative monument marking some event which the builders thereof, wanted an indelible reminder of.

Noah built an altar when he emerged safely from the Ark. This Ark was primarily designed to save, Noah and his family, (who found grace in the eyes of the LORD), and to manifest the judgment of GOD upon this wicked world. While the world and its inhabitants were destroyed in the flood, yet it was this same Ark that HE used to "save the world", as HE preserved the humans in it which were needful for the repopulating the world, and the animals which would provide sustenance for Noah and his family.

Thus we see Noah's construction of that altar to give thanks as he offered blood sacrifices. Yet this altar was also built to commemorate the great display of the mercy of GOD, towards an unworthy creation. It would stand as a testimony to Noah's heritage, of the glorious deliverance which they had received, totally without merit.

We see Abram build an altar, to mark the fact that the LORD had appeared to him and announced HIS gift of the land of Canaan to Abram's seed, even though, many of its inhabitants still lived there. (see Gen 12:7) Then he built another one after he came to the east side of Bethel, where he spread his tent, to serve as a reminder that the LORD was pleased to dwell with him wherever he was. (see Gen. 12:8; 13:1) The LORD seems to have appeared to Abram (Abraham) a total of nine times and at least five times, it is recorded that he built an altar to mark the occasion.

The most famous altar that he constructed however was that one which he build on Mount Moriah, where he would have offered his only son, Isaac, had not the LORD "*provided HIMSELF a LAMB*" for the burnt offering. Surely the LORD met with HIM there and HE called the name of that place, "*JEHOVAHJIREH*", which testified to the fact that the LORD would provide.

Years later, the LORD appeared to Isaac in Beersheba and he too raised up an altar to commemorate the event and the fact that the LORD's mercies were ever present upon him. It is interesting that his servants also dug a well there, from whence they received life giving water to sustain them all. (see Gen. 26:23-25.)

Then Jacob, (Isaac's son whom the LORD loved) came to Succoth, "*And he erected there an altar, and called it Elelohe-Israel.*" (Gen 33:20) This literally stands as monument of testimony to the Faithfulness of GOD to the house of Israel, for Jacob "the supplanter" was now called "Israel" (i.e.; a prince who prevails with GOD) by the LORD HIMSELF. (see Gen. 32:28) We have no record that he built here an altar, but he did indeed memorialize the place itself, calling it "Peniel", which literally means "the face of GOD", for the LORD did meet him there face to face.

Moses was the last of the Patriarchs to build an altar before the LORD gave instructions as to how the one altar of the tabernacle was to be constructed. He raised up this altar, after Joshua

led the children of Israel in a victorious battle over Amalek. He would make a memorial to the faithfulness of GOD, calling it JEHOVAHNISSI, which means “the LORD is my BANNER”, or the LORD is my VICTORY.

Joshua built an altar in Mount Ebal according to the commandment which the LORD had given them. *“Therefore it shall be when ye be gone over Jordan, that ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in mount Ebal, and thou shalt plaister them with plaister. 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.”* (Deu 27:4-5) Thus he fulfilled this command as he commemorated the great victory which the LORD had given them when they destroyed Ai and its king upon the very place which the LORD had determined beforehand.

The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh (a half tribe of Joseph), who had determined to dwell on the west side of Jordan (after helping the other tribes defeat their enemies) built an altar by the River Jordan. The other tribes misunderstood their intentions and were ready to go to war with them, until they explained their purpose in building it. *“Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice: But that it may be a witness between us, and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the service of the LORD before him with our burnt offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your children may not say to our children in time to come, Ye have no part in the LORD. Therefore said we, that it shall be, when they should so say to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say again, Behold the pattern of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made, not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifices; but it is a witness between us and you.”* (Jos 22:26-28)

Thus Paul sets forth, this final “monument”, to the Corinthians as he declares unto them, that which would stand forever as a “witness” to them and to all who might observe them from afar.

He “declared” the gospel unto them. Paul only preached this one gospel. *“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”* (1Cor 2:2) The preaching of the gospel is meant as a testimony or witness (i.e.; a monument) to the glory of the Blessed GOD who ordained it and supplied it. The preaching of the gospel declares the immortality of the man, CHRIST JESUS and manifests the completed work which HE has performed in the behalf of that people which HE has loved from the beginning.

This is a living monument because this same gospel shall be preached as long as the world stands and can never be overturned, but shall manifest the triumphs of CHRIST even in the ages to come, world without end. As Paul here states that he continues to declare that which he had already declared when he first came to Corinth.

Those who have received this declaration, embracing its truth and falling down in worship of the LIVING CHRIST, have themselves become a “monument” to the grace of GOD. For how could they believe in HIM of whom they had not heard, and how could they have heard except that HE should have both sent the message and given them ears to hear it. “Which ye also received”.

Thus Paul says of them, *“Ye are our epistle (i.e.; word of testimony, a monument) written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.”* (2Cor 3:2-3)

Not only did they receive it but he says, “wherein ye stand”. A monument must have an enduring quality about it or it cannot be a true witness. Those in whom the LORD is pleased to perform HIS perfect work shall indeed stand in that TRUTH which they have initially embraced. To believe the gospel is more than simply the reception of a few facts, it is to embrace that TRUTH and cling to it as a matter of LIFE and death. The true followers of CHRIST have an enduring quality which serves as a witness to HIS faithfulness and lasting work. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”* (2 Cor 5:17) *“That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”* (Eph 2:7) mam