

DAY 2 – CONSECRATION AND COMMEMORATION

BACK TO THE ALTAR – A PLACE FOR REMEMBERING

“AND THERE HE BUILT AN ALTAR TO THE LORD, WHO HAD APPEARED TO HIM” (GENESIS 12:7).

CONSECRATION AND COMMEMORATION

In the Bible, altars always represent places of consecration and commemoration. They are an outward symbol of one's personal connection to God, of one's acknowledgment and worship of the true and living God. Altars were often built to commemorate encounters with God that had a profound impact on someone's life. When God did something “super-normal,” “supernatural,” or “super-special,” the recipients of God's mighty act often did not want to forget it, so they would build an altar—a place for remembering—on the spot where they had seen God move.

When God told Abram in Genesis 12:7 that He would give the land of Canaan to his descendants, Abram built an altar there because his encounter with God was “super-normal.” In that moment God promised to transcend everything normal in Abram's life and make from his seed a great and mighty people. When Isaac was wandering the desert of Gerar and fighting the locals over well water, God appeared to him and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants” (Genesis 26:24). Isaac commemorated this divine encounter by building an altar on that very spot because his encounter with God was “supernatural.”

God had broken through the natural order of Isaac's life to affirm that His promise to Isaac's father was now Isaac's promise also. Isaac's son Jacob travelled to a place called Bethel (Genesis 35:3) and built an altar in honour of God, who had appeared to him during his flight from Esau. Because that encounter with God was “superspecial,” Jacob built an altar there. A fearful Gideon was pleasantly surprised when God appeared to him in peace and called him to lead the nation to victory. Gideon was so moved that he built an altar on the spot and called it “Jehovah is Peace” (Judges 6:24) because his encounter with God was “super-peaceful”!

NEVER FORGET

While many see God's mighty acts in their lives as mere moments of coincidence or chance, others recognize the moving of God and do all within their power to never forget what He has done. And there is an added benefit to their efforts: future travellers along life's journey are blessed by the altars set up by believers. Ellen White notes, “Abraham set us a worthy example. His was a life of prayer. Wherever he pitched his tent, close beside was set up his altar, calling all within his encampment to the morning and evening sacrifice. When his tent was removed, the altar remained. Roving Canaanites received instruction from Abraham, and wherever one of these came to that altar, he there worshiped the living God” (From Eternity Past, p. 76). What heavenly blessings do you want to remember in the future? And what altar to God will you build today?

Let's talk to our God.