

BUILDING AN ALTAR TO WORSHIP THE LORD

“Now Joshua built an altar to the LORD God of Israel in Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the children of Israel,...” Josh. 8:30-31

1. This was commanded by the Lord Deut. 27:1-26
 - a. Set up stones on Mount Ebal
 - i. They had to whitewash them
 - ii. These were stones which an iron tool had not been used upon
 - iii. They were to write plainly on the stones the words of the law
 - b. Set up an altar to the Lord
 - i. Building the altar with the same stones
 - ii. Offering of burnt and peace offerings
 - c. Eat and rejoice before the Lord
 - d. Half of the people would stand on Mount Gerizim to bless
 - e. The other half would stand on Mount Ebal to speak the curses
2. The key thing - To obey the voice of the Lord and keep His commandments as God’s people

THE REASON FOR BUILDING THIS ALTAR

1. Establishing the vital role of worshipping God

“... as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses: “an altar of whole stones over which no man has wielded an iron *tool*.” And they offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings.” And there, in the presence of the children of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written.” Josh. 8:31-32

- a. They had to establish the vital role of the worship of God
- b. God is a holy God and He wants us to worship Him in holiness
- c. Giving of sacred offerings to the Lord will be accepted
 - i. Burnt offerings - This is for the atonement of sins
Cf. Lev. 1:4
 - ii. Peace offerings - This is for thanksgivings
Cf. Lev. 7:12

2. Remembering the covenant of the Lord as a nation

“Then all Israel, with their elders and officers and judges, stood on either side of the ark before the priests, the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, the stranger as well as he who was born among them. Half of them *were* in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel.” Josh. 8:33

- a. The altar was meant for all to remember and to ratify the covenant
 - i. The leaders - Elders, officers and judges
 - ii. The religious leaders - The priests and the Levites
 - iii. All Israel
 - iv. The strangers born among them
- b. Half of the people would stand in front of Mount Gerizim - Speaking the rewards of keeping the covenant
- c. The other half would stand in front of Mount Ebal - Speaking the curses that will come when they do not keep the covenant
- d. The priests and the Levites will bless the nation
- e. They were to publicly do this as a nation

3. Making the reading of the Scriptures the focus in worship

“And there, in the presence of the children of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written.” Josh. 8:32

“And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and the curses, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel...” Josh. 8:34-35

- a. The vital place of the word of God in worship
 - i. Joshua wrote the word of God on the altar
 - ii. The people were meant to focus on the word of God as they worship
- b. Joshua read all the words of the law
 - i. The blessings
 - ii. The curses
 - iii. This was to help the people remember the Lord’s covenant
 - iv. This was to renew their faith in His covenant
- c. They were to know and to keep all the commandments of God
- d. The reading of the commandments was meant to be the main focus in worship

KNOWING AND KEEPING THE LORD'S WORD ARE MEANT FOR EVERYONE

“There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them.”
Josh. 8:35

1. This was not just meant for the men
2. This was meant for everyone
 - a. All the assembly of Israel
 - b. The women
 - c. The little ones
 - d. The strangers living among them
3. The little ones were also involved in worship
4. Worship of the Lord / keeping of His word was meant for the whole family
5. It was also meant for strangers...for everyone else

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Keeping the command to worship the Lord
2. Having reasons to worship the Lord as God's people
 - a. To establish the vital role of worship to God
 - b. To remember the Lord, His covenant and the need for the Lord's blessings
 - c. To know His word
3. Practising the word of God as a collective response to God