

Worship of the One True God – ALTARS

Altar – a place, especially a raised platform, where sacrifices are made to a god, an ancestor, etc., (From Latin, altare – a high place; from alt, high) (Hebrew – mizbe(a)h – place of slaughter or sacrifice) (Greek, bomos, from a root meaning to approach; thysiaterion, from thyo- to sacrifice)

The very first altars were made of things like earth, stone, rock, sometimes used in combination.

The first recorded altars would be lay altars, meaning that they were not built by nor worshiped at by a special priest, but just individual people who wanted to honor God, thank him, show their confidence in him, remember him and what he promised for themselves and subsequent generations. Later God would establish a priesthood. These altars were not elaborate, but very simple, using whatever materials were readily available.

The very first reference to an altar is in Gen. 8:20 – And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. (21) And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not curse the ground any more for man's sake;

God preserved Noah and his family and made a new covenant with mankind.

The next four altars recorded were built by Abraham; Gen. 12:7 (Shechem), 12:8 (Bethel), 13:18, 22:9. The first was to say amen to the promise of God, marking the land as his (like planting a flag). The next two were thanksgiving and memorial to God's restated promise, the third being after Abraham in trust gave choice of the land to his nephew Lot. God showed Abraham that he had something even greater reserved for him. The final altar was built to sacrifice the hope of the promise God had fulfilled through Abraham's son, Isaac. This took great faith and trust in God. God was discovered to be Jehovah-Jireh.

Isaac now builds the next altar recorded; Gen.26:25 (well at Beer-Sheba); Jacob erected altars at Shechem and Bethel, but these were probably not new altars but repairs of the altars built by Abraham, Gen. 33:20, 35:1-7, but Jacob named them, respectively, El-elohe-Israel and El-Bethel.

Moses builds the next recorded altar after the battle with Amalek, and Moses names the altar Jehovah Nissi, because the Lord would fight for them, especially against Amalek