

**Series: God & Abraham #1151**

**Title: Genesis 12.7-8**

***God Is Worshipped***

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. How are you, my friend? Did the weekend refresh and renew you? Were you able to join together with other believers in worship and praise for the One True and Everlasting God? I hope so. I pray for you; that you will be an active participant in a local church where God's Word is proclaimed with clarity and conviction. Churches like that can sometimes be hard to find, so let us pray that each one of us can find one and that we will join in with joy!

What I would like to do today is to read from a Psalm, to comment on it and open with prayer, then we will return to the life of Abraham. This Psalm relates to what we will discover in our Genesis 12 passage. And this Psalm is Psalm 43. This is a prayer for deliverance, and one that many of us can relate to, perhaps even at this very hour. I am reading from Psalm chapter 43 and verses 3-5. This is Psalm 43, verses 3-5. Give ear to God's Word.

**"<sup>3</sup> O send out Your light and Your truth, let them lead me; let them bring me to Your holy hill and to Your dwelling places. <sup>4</sup> Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; and upon the lyre I shall praise You, O God, my God. <sup>5</sup> Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God."**

The Psalmist is clearly in despair. He's not doing well. He talks to himself and asks, "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why are you disturbed within me?" If I were to ask this Psalmist, "How are you, my friend?" he might well answer, "Not too good." But notice what he does with his despairing soul, he takes it to God where? At the *altar* of God. The Psalmist had an altar of God and there he speaks to the Lord and notice what he calls God. He says, "my exceeding joy." That is another name for God. Our exceeding joy! Is God your exceeding joy?

At this altar to the God of exceeding joy the musical instrument, the lyre, is played to praise God. And the discouraged and troubled soul is lifted because there is hope in God. The Lord God is to be praised because he provides help. He lifts up the countenance of the Psalmist. Ah, for any one of us who are struggling, for those of us who are in despair, with our troubled souls let us go to the altar in our hearts built for God and let us ask Him to send out His light and His truth to us. Our hope is in Him and Him alone. And to Him we will go and ask that He take the despair away and lift up our countenance. God is our exceeding joy! Do you need the joy of the Lord on this Monday? Ask God for it.

Let's pray. Our Father we thank You that You are our exceeding joy. We praise You, O God, our God. If our souls are despairing, if they are disturbed – and there is much that can cause us to despair and there is much that is disturbing in this world and in our lives – in what causes us to despair and to be disturbed we ask You to give us hope and to give us help. Teach us to build an altar in our heart to You, and to come there regularly to worship You, to praise You, and to ask You for what we need. Teach us to pray, O God.

As we return, at the start of this new week, to your ancient Word meet with us. Teach us. Speak to us. Abram built an altar to you. And he called upon You. May we do the same. Thank You for hearing and answering all our prayers, in the Name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

I am aware that I speak to the discouraged, the dispirited and the despairing on this broadcast and podcast and I want to encourage you to cast your cares upon God, because He cares for *you*. I too sometimes have down days, even seasons where I get so discouraged and I find such solace, peace, and comfort from my Lord and my God. I hope that you will turn to Him along with me and find that He will *never* disappoint! He is faithful. He truly does lift up our countenance. Psalm 43.

When we left Abram on Friday he was in the land of Canaan and facing the fact that so was his enemy, the Canaanite people. And, being in the exact place God wanted him did not mean he didn't have danger. However, as we learned, God gives Abram His divine presence and His commanding and comforting voice.

*God appears to Abram!* That is what Genesis chapter 12 and verse 7 says. I quote, “The Lord appeared to Abram...”

This is the first time in the Bible we read of an appearance of God to a person. Genesis 12.7 is the first time in the Bible we read of an appearance of God to a person, and this is the man Abram. I believe we can rightfully assume God appeared to Adam and Eve many times, even daily in the Garden in Eden, prior to their sin, but the Bible does not specifically state, “The Lord appeared to Adam and Eve.” But here, the Lord does appear to Abram.

And we said on Friday this is the first of several theophanies. A theophany is the visible presence of God in the Hebrew Scriptures, and my view is that who Abram saw was a pre-incarnate Jesus Christ. This is the first time the Lord appears to Abram, but certainly not the last. And I gave you several other passages to consider. I hope that you carved out a little time yesterday or on Saturday to look at those. Genesis 12.7, 16.7, 17.1, and 18.1. These are all so *powerful!*

Amidst all the danger around Abram and his small family, his possessions and his people, in the land of Canaan, the Lord appeared to him! This should comfort and strengthen those of us who have faith in God but who find ourselves fending off some threats where we live. God does not physically appear to us, true. But His presence is in us through the Holy Spirit who is God. And His voice is heard through this, His holy Word. Dear Christian, take heart, great is He who is *in* you!

Today, I invite you to notice what Abram does in response to God’s presence: he builds an altar! Still in Genesis chapter 12, let me read verses 7 and 8. Genesis 12.7 and 8, **“So [Abram] built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him. <sup>8</sup> Then [Abram] proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord.”** This is crucial to catch: Abram responded to God by worshipping God! In more than one place Abram builds God an altar.

And there are a few things I want to say about altars. The first is this: Abram is *not*, he is not the first man to build God an altar. Noah is. Back to Adam and Eve for just a moment: yes, we can infer that they had a family altar to God at which, for example, Cain and Abel brought their offerings in Genesis chapter 4. But again, we are not specifically told there that they built an altar. Like we are told in Genesis chapter 8 that Noah erected the first altar to the Living God. He did so after the epic flood, which Noah – by faith – survives in the ark. I am reading Genesis 8, verses 20-21.

**“<sup>20</sup> Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. <sup>21</sup> The Lord smelled the soothing aroma; and the Lord said to Himself, ‘I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.’”**

And we know that God is referring to destroying every living thing *by flood water*. God will destroy again – in the future – *by fire*. (But not again by water.)

The second thing I want to add about altars – the altars built by God’s people - is that we find they are built in places where God encounters man. So, here at Genesis 12 the Lord appeared to Abram and Abram built an altar. And this happens twice in this passage. The first is at Shechem and the second is between Bethel and Ai. And then, since we do have some time remaining, turn over to the twenty-sixth chapter of Genesis and verse 24. I’ll read about an altar Abraham’s son Isaac made.

Genesis 26, verses 24-25, **“<sup>24</sup> The Lord appeared to [Isaac] the same night 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, for the sake of My servant Abraham.’ <sup>25</sup> So [Isaac] built an altar there and called upon the name of the Lord, and pitched his tent there; and there Isaac’s servants dug a well.”** I will have more on the altar built for God when you join us tomorrow. We are off to a good start, and we continue, the Lord willing, all this week on God Is.

---END---