

Behavioral Responsibilities

Ecclesial Rituals

Under the laws of the Kingdom of God established at Mt Sinai there were an abundance of required rituals... circumcision, sabbath observance, feast weeks, new moon sacrifices, the Day of Atonement, the altar offerings, the Nazarite law of separation, sacrifices for giving birth, uncleanness rituals, etc. However, the law changed. The priesthood changed ... when the Ecclesial Age began, initiated at Jerusalem. There was a tremendous reduction in divinely required rituals. There are now four: baptism; memorial service, sister's headcoverings and sister's silence. There are only four divinely appointed rituals that are required to be faithfully observed during the Ecclesial Age... until the law changes again, along with another priesthood order.. when the Kingdom of God is restored on the earth, beginning at Jerusalem.

Why Does God Require Rituals

Rituals are one of the teaching tools employed by our Heavenly Father in the maturing of the intended bride of His son. We teach our children to walk by holding their hands, twisting their bodies and resting controlled weight on their legs, simulating the walking experience. We show them how to move their lips and their tongue to form words. We encourage and practice with them. In a similar teaching pattern God does much the same with us in the case of rituals. We are his children and these transitions in divine law and rituals are stages in mankind's development so that we might grow to spiritual maturity as a ready bride for his son. The rituals were intended to teach principles and reflect truths about the Creator, his son, God's purpose in the earth and the path of redemption. Divinely appointed rituals are physical projections of spiritual principles. Each ritual is a demonstration that our Creator is right about an issue. Therefore underestimating or disrespecting these Creator appointed rituals can be very insulting to our Heavenly Father and His son, a denial of His rightness... His righteousness. An exclamation point for this conclusion is the divine incineration of Nadab and Abihu, two of the first priests under Kingdom law, who disrespectfully modified the dedication ritual for the Kingdom Priesthood.

Lev. 10:1-2 *And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. 2 And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.*

The divine plan is eventually for all that is physical and natural to be in complete harmony with all spiritual truths. Rituals are physical projections of divine principles, so that the enlightened faithful might demonstrate the ultimate divine plan in our lives.

This maturity progression is expressed by the Apostle Paul when he explains that the Holy Spirit Gifts would only be available for a limited time. These gifts were to serve as a teaching tool, bringing the body of believers to a greater state of maturity until that which was 'perfect' (fully matured) should come (explained in the section concerning the spirit gifts).

1 Corinthians 13:10-11 *But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

The expressed purpose of those gifts was explained by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 4:8,11-15. *Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men... And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; **For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for***

the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.

The intention for providing these miraculous powers to the first two generations of Ecclesial Age believers was to carry the ecclesia (the body of believers) from its infancy to a level of self-sustaining maturity. The word "perfect" in verse 13 is the Greek *telios* indicating mature or of full age. It does not mean flawless, as the word suggests in our current society. In fact *telios* is translated as "men" in 1 Cor. 14:20 *Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men [telios].* The spirit gifts were offered by God to mature the newborn ecclesia, sustaining them until the next phase of his plan when *that which is perfect* would replace the spirit gifts. This is explained fully in the address concerning the Holy Spirit gifts. Rituals are used in the same context as they are another of God's teaching tools, like parables and visions and prophecies, the written word and the spoken word (creation/nature). Paul also explains that the law of Moses (with the abundance of rituals) was a God appointed teaching tool. (Galatians 3:24 *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.* The law was our "schoolmaster" to bring us to Christ. It was designed to mature the body of believers to a higher level of spiritual maturity, as long as we are observant and attentive students.

Paul explains the primary purpose of the law of Moses (Kingdom law) being the identification of sin (Romans 3:20; and 5:20). However, the Ecclesial Age rituals do not **primarily** display lessons defining sin but in define righteousness since the educational focus of this age is based on faith and not on works (as Kingdom Laws emphasized). Therefore we have seen a great reduction in divinely required ritual during the Ecclesial Age. Our Heavenly Fathers expects us to have matured to a greater spiritual level due to His progressive lessons.

The ecclesial age specifically has four rituals that must be practiced. There are significant principles and exhortations displayed in each ritual that should be understood and respected. Rituals constituted a major stumbling block for the Jewish people. They presumed the simple performance of rituals to be an end in itself paying little or not attention to their spiritual significance or how these lessons reflected on their God. This is why Jesus was condemned for healing on the sabbath. Principles are greater than commandments. The four divinely appointed rituals of the Ecclesial Age can also be a stumblingblocks for the brotherhood today, if we don't understand and respect the spiritual principles being projected by these physical activities.

Rituals Are Not An End in Themselves

Some people have thought that the mere performance of a ritual is a key to the value linked to the ritual, as if it was some magical key to power. This was the thinking of the pagans. The Jews also made this mistake as well, thinking that righteousness came from the works of the law. Jesus often spoke against the Jewish leaders preoccupation with the mere performance of the rituals while ignoring the lessons involved.

Consider **Matthew 15:1-11**: *Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father*

or his mother; It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother; he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: ¹¹Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

It should be understood these Pharisees were part of the body of believers. They were enlightened, responsible to God and were in covenant relationship with him... to the same technical degree as any member of the true community of God today.

Divinely Intended Ritual Contradictions

The Pharisees were blinded by their excessive reliance on rituals, ignoring the principles within. It is the principles that are truly significant. However an improperly executed ritual will not project eternal principles. This issue of the significance of the principals powering the rituals is why God designed contradicting rituals. If a boy had to be circumcised on the sabbath a decision would have to be made. Should the law of the sabbath be broken or the law of circumcision be broken? God made no allowance for when a boy had to be circumcised on the sabbath, when work was forbidden. It is the understanding of the principles reflected in both rituals that show that circumcision had to be practiced on the eighth day, even if it broke Sabbath law. The circumcision ritual was greater than the Sabbath ritual because of the principles reflected in each. The Jewish people were expected to understand this. Jesus highlights this understanding when he defends his policy of healing on the sabbath, which also was consistent with the principles of the sabbath but not the letter of that law (John 7:22-23). Circumcision projects the complete cutting off of the flesh in the eighth millennium, as opposed to the lesser rest from sin during the seventh millennium during the Restored Kingdom Age. Jesus defended his disciples harvesting handfuls of grain on the sabbath by noting that the priests profaned the sabbath, but were blameless (Matt. 12:5). God designed a series of rituals that (on the surface) contradicted each other, resulting in the profaning of the sabbath by the Aaronic priesthood, yet they were blameless. This was because the principles were greater than the commandments. Divine rituals are a very significant teaching pattern for the maturing of the enlightened faithful.

Baptism

(Ritual Number 1)

Baptism is required for salvation (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:20-21). This fact was established in the address concerning the Terms of Salvation. As noted in the Mark 16 reference, baptism must accompany belief, which presumes understanding. It is knowledge that makes one accountable to God's judgments, on the basis of the divine right of vindication.

John 9:39-41 *And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.*

John 6:44-45 *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.*

The resurrection Jesus references is based on hearing the word of God. Those who have heard and learned of the Father will be demanded to come before Jesus. They will be raised up at the last day.

Matt 12:41-42 *The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.*

The men of Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba were neither baptized nor circumcized. However they were enlightened. Their presence will be required at the resurrection. It is enlightenment that is the basis for resurrectional accountability. This is because of our Creator's right of vindication. If anyone suggests that enlightened rejectors have the power over our Creator to deny their own attendance at Christ's judgment simply because they have not technically entered into a covenant relationship then they are declaring Yahweh to be wrong in the matter of divine vindication as well as declaring enlightened rejectors to be more powerful than the Creator. Declaring our Creator to be wrong in a matter is not an inconsequential offense. This was exactly the offense of Adam and Eve. Their response to the two opposing testimonies declared the Creator to be wrong and the serpent to be right. Our Creator will exercise His right of vindication against those who knew Him but arrogantly refused any level of humble service. The enlightened rejector will certainly be raised for judgment on the basis of the righteous principle of the vindication of their Creator. No one can escape that vindication on the basis of any ritual.

Baptism separates the enlightened rejector from the enlightened acceptor. Baptism is the positive response to enlightenment. It is representative of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Baptism is a ritual testimony of our understanding and agreement that our Creator is right in demanding death for sin, but also testifies of His wonderful grace in offering us an unending life despite his righteousness in requiring our death for sin. By positively responding to enlightenment one comes into covenant relationship with God through baptism, binding the believer to the death and resurrection of the Son of God .

Baptism is a Declaration of the full Righteousness of God

The demonstration of this understanding of how the ritual of baptism declares the right-ness of our Creator is presented in the baptism of Jesus. Christ's cousin, John the Baptist, objected to baptizing Jesus on the grounds of his unworthiness: *I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me* (Matt. 3:14)? Jesus responds: *Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness*. How did the baptism of Jesus project the fulfilment of all righteousness? Whose righteousness is being projected? Why did Jesus have to be baptized? Jesus certainly did not have to be baptized on the basis of any personal transgressions. He had no sins for which to be forgiven. **There is much more to baptism than simply the forgiveness of sins**, which is a natural benefit from the understanding of the divine righteousness being projected. The life of Jesus was never about his own righteousness. It was always about his Father's righteousness. He spoke what his Father told him to speak. He did what his Father told him to do. The righteousness being projected in the baptism of Jesus had to be the righteousness of his Father. How does the simulated water burial and resurrection from that water grave declare the right-ness of the Creator?

Christ's whole life was about defeating sin and declaring the right-ness of his Father. In the death simulation of Baptism in the Jordan River Jesus projected the understanding that Yahweh was right and is right in requiring death for sin. The only sin Jesus had was guiltless sin nature, the dying nature that was righteously inflicted upon Adam and Eve for their sin. In voluntarily descending into that water grave

Jesus was demonstrating that his Father was morally right to demand death for sin. In rising again from that water grave Jesus declared the rest of the righteousness of Yahweh... "all" the righteousness. Despite the fact that our Creator is absolutely right to require death for sin, He is also right in gracefully offering renewed life after our required death... on the basis of the fact that we respect the rightness of His judgment that sin must die (unlike Adam and Eve). We deserve death. God was not wrong in requiring death for sin. He is not wrong in offering us renewed life despite the fact that our death for sin was absolutely right in the first place. Baptism is a validation of the righteousness of our Heavenly Father. The forgiveness of our sins is simply a logical extension of the primary lesson.

If for any reason this observation seems elemental, then we only have to recognize the universal rejection of this lesson throughout mankind. Every religion and humanist philosophy rejects the legitimacy of death for sin. The serpent lie reigns supreme in the current and historical religions spawned by the hearts of men. Immortal souls have been the common delusion of every form of apostate religion. Even humanist philosophies reject the legitimacy of death for sin in demanding an elimination of capital punishment. The universal rejection of the Creator's righteousness in requiring death for sin is an instinctive presumption of the naturally self-worshipping human heart. When we begin to think that baptism is all about the forgiveness of sins then we are responding to the seductive thought process of the self-worshipping human heart that constantly tries to move the focus away from our Creator and toward ourselves. The first positive response to enlightenment and faith is to demonstrate the full righteousness of the Creator in the ritual of baptism. The side-benefit is that the personal sins we have generated, for which we bore guilt, are forgiven... because death is the divine answer for sin.

Water Baptism

Baptism requires a total immersion in water. There are references to baptism of the Holy Spirit for believers immediately after Christ's ascension to heaven, but on the three occasions that could qualify as a baptism of the Holy Spirit there is no indication of Holy Spirit baptism invalidating water baptism. In fact, the opposite is true. The three incidents that would fall under the 'Holy Spirit baptism' application would be:

- 1) The baptism of Jesus by John the baptist when the Holy Spirit descended onto Jesus and filled him with power (Matt. 3:16) immediately following the water baptism of Christ.
- 2) The Holy Spirit filling the 120 disciples on the day of Pentecost, several days after Christ rose to his Heavenly Father in heaven (Acts 2:2-4).
- 3) When the Gentiles were divinely invited to join the body of believers for the first time (Acts 10). Immediately after this event the apostle Peter commands these believers to be water baptized.
Acts 10:45-48 *And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man **forbid water**, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And **he commanded them to be baptized** in the name of the Lord.*

Avoiding water baptism was not an option to the Apostle Peter, or anyone else in the New Testament. It was commanded by Peter to baptize those Gentile believers at the home of Cornelius after they experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Just as a demonstration of the perfect blending of all divine expressions (as well as a confirmation of the legitimacy of water being the required medium for baptism) the Creator's intelligent design of the water molecule is a parable of the divine plan for the three immortalization stages (Christ, the saints at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom and the rest of the world who are chosen at the end of

the Millennial Kingdom. Any fifth grader knows the molecular identification of water is H₂O, indicating two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom, constituting the Creator's creational formula for water. Oxygen is scientifically identified by the eight protons in its nucleus, being found on the Chart of the Elements at number 8. Eight is the scriptural number of our Messiah, as his name (Jesus) is spelled with six Greek letters that numerically add up to 888 (Jesus/Iesous: iota=10, eta=8, sigma=200, omicron=70, upsilon=400 and sigma=200 all add up to 888). The number 8 is constantly identified with the various roles of our Messiah throughout the Bible (savior, king, sacrifice, circumcising the flesh, etc). Therefore the oxygen atom in the water formula represents the promise of our Messiah's immortalization while the other two atoms are different and separate, just as the terms of the two immortalizations of the saints are different from their Savior's. We need forgiveness from guilty sin, but he only needed to be cleansed from the sin cursed nature he inherited from his mother. Hydrogen is number 1 on the Chart of the Elements and the most dominant element in our universe. Therefore hydrogen represents our Creator, from which all things have come. He embraces the faithful that He chooses at two points in His plan, corresponding to the two immortalization events in His plan that follow the immortalization of His son. This complete three stage plan for establishing perfect moral and physical harmony between the Creator and His creation is projected endlessly through scripture and the terms of creation to any of the believers with eyes to see and ears to hear. This is why the water molecule has 3 atoms with 1 component being oxygen and 2 components being hydrogen. This understanding blends perfectly with all the water rituals, parables and miracles presented throughout

The Ethiopian Eunuch's Baptism

When Phillip preached to the Ethiopian eunuch this education culminated in a baptism in an available body of water. They both went down into this water to satisfy the requirement for baptism.

Acts 8:36-39 *And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, **here is water**; what doth hinder me **to be baptized**? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and **they went down both into the water**, both Philip and the eunuch; and **he baptized him**. ³⁹And when they were **come up out of the water**, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.*

The very word baptism in the original Greek of the New Testament refers to a total immersion. The Greek word 'bapto' means to cover in water, to dip or submerge. This verb was used to describe how cloth would be dyed a different color, dipping it into the liquid dye. This is very appropriate since any other application would violate the spiritual principles and lessons presented in the baptism ritual. The divine principles offer the over-riding value, which is why strict attention to required ritual details is so incredibly important. We wouldn't want to be responsible for projecting lies about our Heavenly Father, like Nadab and Abihu.

The Death Before Life Baptism Progression

Our baptism is a two stage ritual representing the Messiah's death and resurrection, testifying to the righteousness of the Creator. We are buried in the water by a total immersion and we rise from the waters reflecting Christ's rising from the grave. We do not simply exit the water to avoid drowning. Just as we symbolically join Jesus in his death by burying ourselves in the waters of baptism, we symbolically join him in his resurrection as we come up out of the waters of baptism. Without a burial in the water (ie. sprinkling, or claims of spirit baptism) there is nothing that binds us to the death and resurrection of Jesus. We are born again through belief and baptism. We have executed the 'old man,' as the apostle Paul says... the old man whose god was the mirror and whose heart was his master. We buried our old man in the grave of baptism, just as Jesus executed his transgressionless sinful human nature on the cross. Just

as Jesus ascended from death to life after three days, we rise out of the watery grave of baptism with a determined new focus to live sacrificially and not indulgently, to serve the Creator and not our heart (our 'old' man). This two-stage progression in the ritual of baptism, from death to life, enjoys many precedents in divine law. There were rituals under the Mosaic covenant that reflected the same death-before-life progression that is evident in baptism...

● Under the laws of the Kingdom of God, established at Mt Sinai through Moses, the cleansing of a healed leper required two birds. The first was killed and the second was set free after being dipped into the blood of the dead bird... death before life (Lev. 14:1-7). Leprosy was a physical representation of the principal of the effects of sin in the flesh (defined in the section concerning the Nature of Evil. Leprosy is a disease where the body corrupts slowly as if it were a corpse in the grave, despite that fact that the leper is still living. It is a living decomposition demonstrating the effect of sin. This ritual of cleansing a leper that had stopped being leprous reflects the eventual cleansing of mankind from the physical effects and defilements of sin. Appropriately, the ritual involves this progression of death before life. Two birds are taken. The first is killed. The second is dipped in the blood of the first, sprinkled on the healed leper and then set free.

● Two goats were used on the Day of Atonement. The first was killed and the second was set free later... death before life on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:15-22). These two goats were chosen to represent the entire body of believers on the Day of Atonement.

Baptism's Sin Elimination by A Watery Death

As expressed in Romans chapter six, baptism eliminates all previous sins (Rom 6:7,11). This feature of baptism is confirmed in Colossians 2:11-13

*In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being **dead in your sins** and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened (made alive) together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.*

Death is the ultimate answer for sin and a full immersion in water is a spiritual death. Baptism "washes away" our sins (Acts 22:16) as we are buried in a watery grave. Water is presented in scripture as a symbol of God's word, which is also a cleansing agent

*Eph 5:25-26 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the **washing of water by the word**).*

Water, Death & Life

It is interesting to note there are several scriptural 'water' incidents that present a clear, consistent message of death to the flesh and life to the spirit. These serve to confirm the principles displayed in the Ecclesial Age ritual of baptism.

The flood is an example of this theme. Just as the water destroyed those who had rejected God's message, it was the vehicle of salvation for the eight people in the ark. The features of the flood are defined as a type of baptism because they project the same principles

1 Peter 3:20-21 *Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

The water is expressed as serving as the vehicle of salvation to the eight faithful in the ark, lifting them

above the destruction below. The water was also the vehicle of destruction to the faithless outside that gopher wood ark. The water destroyed but also saved.

The Red Sea parted for the Hebrews and provided a path to life for the children of God. Yet that same Sea brought death to the Egyptians who rejected God. This incident is also paralleled to baptism by the Apostle Paul.

1 Cor 10:1-2 *Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; ²And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.*

The relation between bodies of water with life and death is also displayed geographically in the land of promise. There are two seas in Israel. The Sea of Galilee supports the life that surrounds it. Birds fly overhead, fisherman feed their families from the water's harvest, crops line the shore, animals drink its water and children play in and by the water. Yet the Dead Sea is lined by cold, grey rocks. No birds are seen. Vegetation is extremely scarce. No one drinks the salt and mineral rich waters. It is the lowest point on the face of the earth. The promised land, the geography God chose for His Kingdom has only two seas. There is a sea of life and a sea of death. The ritual of baptism reflects the same theme with a body of water that offers both death and life: death to the flesh and life to the spirit.

This observation also declares the righteousness of the Creator. We have to recognize the necessity to destroy sin first so that righteousness might be established. The faithful have two primary behavioral avenues to pursue. We must run from sin and we must pursue righteousness. If we think that as long as we don't do bad things that we will be just fine with our judge then we don't understand baptism. If we think we can indulge in sin as long as we somehow make up for it with righteous deeds, then we don't understand baptism. We will be judged on both issues. Have we despised sin (like our Heavenly Father)? Have we loved righteousness (like our Heavenly Father)?

The two stage baptismal ritual of death and then life declares the salvation path. First we have to be reconciled and then we can be saved. The death of our Messiah was the path of reconciliation. The resurrection of our Messiah is the second stage in the path of salvation.

Rom 5:10 *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

Circumcision and Baptism

Extending our previous thought, the Apostle Paul expresses baptism as an extension of the principles involved in circumcision. Baptism goes beyond simply cutting off the flesh (reconciliation) by demonstrating salvation (rising out of the watery grave).

Colossians 2:11-13 *In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.*

Just as God commanded circumcision as a token of the covenant he made with Abraham (Genesis 17:13-14) so we enter into covenant relationship with Yahweh through the ritual of baptism. We accept the responsibilities of the covenant along with the blessings and advantages.

Enlightenment and Baptism

There are a number of different 'Christian' views on baptism. Some Christian organizations consider that sprinkling a baby satisfies the command to be baptized, despite the fact that this practice ignores Christ's

requirement that one must **believe** and be baptized. Babies have no capacity to believe prior to enlightenment.

Mark 16:15-16 *And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that **believeth and is baptized** shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned).*

In fact that there is no child baptism precedent anywhere in scripture. However, sprinkling babies was a pagan Roman religious ritual, the persecutors of early Christianity (before the prophesied corruption of Christianity into a pagan clone).

Baptism, a brief burial in water after a confession of faith, is a divinely ordained behavioural response to believing in the true gospel. It is the initial response to believing the truth of God's word, validating our Creator's righteousness. It is the choice to join Christ in his death and resurrection, to publicly abandon mankind's natural self worship and self indulgent lifestyle and adopt a sacrificially loving and exterior focused lifestyle. At baptism a faithful believer enters into a covenant relationship with Yahweh and Jesus Christ with all their past sins washed away.

We should not presume too much about the ritual of baptism. Baptism is not the point at which one becomes responsible to Christ's judgment. One does not have to be in covenant relationship with the Creator in order to be called for judgment. Postponing baptism as some kind of cautionary procedure displays a complete misunderstanding of this ritual. If a covenant relationship was the defining factor in a required presence at Christ's judgment then there would be no nation of Israel for the Gogian host to invade just before the glorious appearance of Christ to the world. The prophecy explains that Christ and the (already judged) immortalized saints will save the Jews in Israel before extinction. These genealogical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob still practice the covenant ritual of circumcision. Circumcision was a flesh based avenue to divine covenant status, having no basis in understanding or belief. After all it was an eight day old boy that was circumcised, void of all understanding or belief. The unbelieving Jews today are as much in covenant relationship with the Creator as any baptized believer. Yet their covenant status does not demand their presence at Christ's judgment... since they will be invaded by the Gogian host after that judgment has already passed. This is one of several avenues of consideration eliminating this misconception that it is a covenant relationship that somehow serves as the standard for a required presence at Christ's judgment. Baptism should not be understood as some kind of technical portal, but simply a set of declarations and a commitment.

Memorial Service

(Ritual Number 2)

Jesus commanded that believers remember his death and resurrection by partaking of broken bread and wine together as a memorial service.

Matthew 26:26-28 *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*

Mark 14:22-24 *And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.*

Luke 22:15-20 *And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:*

For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

The apostle Paul also comments on this required ritual:

1 Corinthians 11:23-29 *For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*

The First Day of the Week

Initially, let's consider the day of the week this is practiced. The first memorial service, instituted by Jesus Christ on the night of his arrest in Gethsemane was in the middle of the week. However, the practice of the early body of believers was to gather on the first day of the week to partake of the memorial service, encourage each other, collect donations, etc. This is mentioned more than once.

Acts 20:7 *And upon the **first day of the week**, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.*

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 *Now concerning **the collection for the saints**, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. **Upon the first day of the week** let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.*

It was the practice of the Apostles and first century believers to preach in the synagogue on Saturday and gather to remember the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ with the bread and wine on Sunday (Acts 13:14-16, 42-44; Acts 16:13-15; Acts 17:2; Acts 18:4).

There are 'Christians' today who oppose that first century practice and maintain that focused religious worship should be centered on the last day of the week, the sabbath or Saturday. These people suggest that the law of sabbath observance was from creation and will continue forever. While the principles projected from the ritual of sabbath observance are eternal, the performance of the ritual would not be, as very clearly presented in scripture. Principles are forever but laws and rituals are not necessarily forever. The law of Sabbath observance was formally initiated when God formed the nation of Israel under Moses at Mount Sinai. God made it very clear why the Israelites would be required to abstain from work on Saturday, freeing their minds to concentrate on divine principles and thoughts.

The Law of the Sabbath Exclusively Directed to the Jewish People under the Law of Moses

Exodus 31:12 *Speak thou also **unto the children of Israel**, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is **a sign between me and you** throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.*

*Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. **It is a sign between me and the children of Israel** for ever.*

Ezekiel 20:12,20 *Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, **to be a sign between me and them**, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them. ¹³But the **house of Israel** rebelled against me in the wilderness... **And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you**, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God. Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me.*

This law of the Sabbath specifically targetted the children of Israel, and not until after they came to Mt Sinai. In fact, the Law of the Sabbath Instituted to Reflect Being freed From Egyptian Slavery

Deut. 5:12-15 *Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee. Six days thou shalt labour; and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: **therefore** the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.*

God presents the reason He required the limitations of the Sabbath to be exclusively applied to the Jewish people... because they were liberated and given rest (sabbath means rest) from their brutal enslavement in Egypt. This statement underlines the **exclusive** application of the law of the sabbath to the Jewish believers.

Additionally the New Testament writers declare that Sabbath Observance, along with new moon observations and eating and drinking limitations were not to be extended into the Christian age.

Colossians 2:16-17 *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy-day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: ¹⁷Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.*

Sabbath observance shadowed a greater principle. The law of the sabbath was temporary. The principles shadowed by this law are eternal.

It is also interesting that under the Mosaic covenant, religious worship was focused on the **last** day of the week. However when the Mosaic covenant was fading away in the beginning of the ecclesiastical age, religious worship became focused on the **first** day of the week. This is a progression from last to first reflecting a divine lesson stated by Jesus in **Mark 7:35**

And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.

We have to be last before we can be first. We have to follow before we can lead. We have to die before we can live. The progression from last to first from the Mosaic Age to the Christian Age is in perfect accord with the principles of scripture. This understanding aligns perfectly with the death to life progression already witnessed in the baptism ritual.

It is quite clear in the New Testament that the early church assembled for religious services on the first day of the week and did not continue the Mosaic ritual of Sabbath observance.

Acts 20:7 *And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them...*

Community collections would be taken when they came together on the first day of the week.

1 Cor. 16:1-2 *Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. ² Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.*

It was the practice of the first century church to preach (work) on the Sabbath and assemble for worship on the first day of the week. This was the opposite practice during the Mosaic Age, where they held their religious services on the Sabbath and worked on the first day of the week. At the beginning of the Ecclesiastical Age the last became first and the first became last... quite appropriately.

The Bread and Wine

The memorials of bread and wine, the progression from bread to wine and the fact that the bread must be broken reflect significant, valuable principles and exhortations. The bread represents the mortal flesh of the Messiah where the power of sin was broken by the death of a transgressionless man. The wine represents his blood and his resurrection. The bread must be taken before the wine, as Christ's pattern demands, because of the standard divine progression of death before life reflected in that order of bread before wine.

The Dreams of Pharaoh's Bread Baker and Wine Steward

Joseph interpreted the dreams of the baker of breads (who would die in three days) and the butler or presenter of wine (who would be raised to the right hand of power in three days). Since Jesus was in the grave for three days and that death is remembered with bread and wine it isn't difficult to make the connection with this incident. The baker of breads died. The broken bread represents the death of the body of Jesus.

Lk 22:19 *And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.*

The presenter of wine was taken out of prison & raised to power, standing by the most powerful ruler on the earth at that time presenting the wine. The wine points to the resurrection of Jesus in this context. He was raised from the dead after three days to the right hand of the most powerful being in the universe where he presented his life (reflected in the wine). We were reconciled to God by the death of Jesus and we are saved by his resurrection (Romans 5:10 *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life*). The bread primarily (not exclusively) represents the death of the Messiah, which reconciles us to God. The wine does point to the resurrection of the Messiah, which will save us. The progression of the bread before the wine represents the same progression as the ritual of baptism: death before life. This is exactly the lesson the Apostle Paul produces in explaining the resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15: 35-37 *But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened (brought to life), except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain.*

Paul shows how the rules of creation project divine principles. A seed has to die before it can ever become a fruitful plant. It has to die before it can live as something better. The faithful have to learn this lesson over and over again. We have to die before we can live. We have to sacrifice what little we have before we can inherit the earth. We have to pour out our mortal, cursed lives as a demonstration of sacrificial love before we can enjoy being invested with eternal life. The progression of partaking of the broken memorial bread before the memorial wine validates this very consistent lesson. This is the path of redemption.

The Bread & Wine In the Altar Offerings

Another bread and wine example is seen in the six basic altar offerings of the Mosaic law. The bread (meal offering, sometimes referred to as "meat offering" but always grain or bread) and the wine were to accompany the positive burnt and peace offerings but never the negative sin or trespass offerings. The core lessons of the burnt and peace offerings are clearly spelled out by God in Hosea 6:6. This is a verse Jesus quotes more than once.

Hosea 6:6 *For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.*

God tells us through Hosea that he wants mercy (Hebrew=*chesed*, indicating a merciful love... as opposed to a love springing from sympathy) and not sacrifice (Hebrew = *zebach*, exclusively representing the peace offering). This tells us unchallengably that the practice of merciful love was the principle behind the lessons of the peace offering. God also tells us in this verse that he wants the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. Therefore the foundation exhortation manifested in the daily burnt offering was not simply dedication, but a targetting the broad principle of dedication to specifically the knowledge of God. This is the knowledge that the Creator tells us will eventually saturate creation as completely as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9; Hab. 2:14).

We must maintain the consistency of the lessons of the bread and wine as these emblems move from the First Kingdom age to the Ecclesiastical age. Therefore as we partake of the broken bread and then the wine we demonstrate our responsibility to saturate ourselves with the knowledge of God so that we might practice merciful love. Thinking like God enables acting like God. Our natural, instinctive thought pattern is not Godlike, but serpentlike.

The Breaking of the Bread

The bread is broken. Initially this may be considered a difficult shadow lesson as the bread represents the body of Jesus and his body was not allowed to be broken. However, this seeming inconsistency should serve as a glaring invitation to understand a significant spiritual lesson. Scripture emphasizes that not one bone of the Messiah's body would be broken, not only prophesying this in the Old Testament, but highlighting this in the New Testament so that we should not be able to miss this distinction.

Ps 22:16-17 *For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.*

John 19:36 *For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.*

Therefore, despite the fact that Christ's body was not broken, the bread representing his body must be broken. If this were a significant lesson it would be shadowed in other parts of scripture, as this is the consistent divine communication pattern. This is definitely the case. One obvious example is the veil separating the Holy section of the temple (with the golden lampstand, golden table of shewbread and golden altar of incense) from the Most Holy (with the ark of the covenant). Just like the memorial bread, we are specifically told this veil represents the flesh of Christ in Hebrews.

Hebrews 10:19-20 *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through **the veil, that is to say, his flesh.***

This interpretation of the veil as the flesh of Christ is the key to understanding its placement and application in the rituals of the tabernacle detailed in the Mosaic law. At the death of Jesus, remembered by the memorial bread, that (flesh of Christ) veil was ripped in two from top to bottom, from heaven to earth

Matt. 27:50-51 *Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, be-*

hold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent

This divine symbol of the flesh of Christ was ripped in two at the time of Christ's death, just as the bread that is symbolic of the flesh of Christ is ripped in two to remember his death. This incident and relationship further cements the significance of the divine lesson that must be understood in the breaking of the memorial bread.

The Breaking of the First of the Dual Messiah Memorials

There are also a series of dual Messiah symbols in scripture where the first of the two Christ shadows is broken. There were two stones in the wilderness from which Israel drank water. Paul relates this to Christ and the memorial service.

1 Cor. 10:1-4 *Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.*

Paul parallels the children of God in the wilderness and these particular experiences with the ecclesia and its rituals. The ecclesial ritual of baptism is displayed in the overshadowing cloud and the miraculous parting of the Red Sea. The bread and wine memorials of the ecclesial age are paralleled to the manna and the water from the rock in the wilderness. Paul says the rock that followed them was Christ. Israel drank from two rocks. The first was at the beginning of their wilderness journey at Rephidim. The second was at the end of their journey at Kadesh. God commanded the first rock to be struck with the rod of Aaron that had turned into a serpent and the Nile into blood. That rock clave in two and life saving water gushed out like a river. The second rock was not to be struck. This rock was to be asked for its life saving water. Just like the memorial bread, the first of these two Messiah memorials was broken in two.

Isaiah 48:21 *And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he **clave the rock** also, and the waters gushed out.*

Just as the bread and wine is a dual Messiah memorial where the first memorial is broken, the lesson is perfectly maintained in the two rocks in the wilderness, representing Christ, offering the water of life to the children of God.

Another dual Messiah memorial with the same pattern is the two sets of covenant stones God gave to Israel at Mt Sinai. Although there were two sets of stones, there were eight stone surfaces upon which the finger of God wrote the words of the covenant, the ten commandments. The fact that these stones were the embodiment of the covenant is made clear in a number of places. One such place is at the dedication of Solomon's temple.

1 Kings 8:9 *There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.*

Verse 21: *And I have set there a place for the ark, wherein is the covenant of the LORD, which he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt.*

There was nothing in the ark but the two tables of stone (verse 9). The covenant was in the ark (verse 22). Therefore the two stone tablets with the 10 commandments that Moses had set in the ark hundreds of years ago constituted the covenant. Jesus is the physical living embodiment of that covenant.

Isaiah 42:6 *I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles*

Isaiah 49:8-9 *Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of*

salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness

The fact that these covenant stones are bound to the living embodiment of the covenant is further cemented by the fact that there were eight surfaces upon which the finger of God wrote the words of the covenant. Eight is the number of the Messiah. In the original Greek language of the New Testament the name Jesus can be broken down into the six letters that form his name (I O E S U S). There is a numerical value to each of these letters as the Greeks' alphabet also served as their numerical system. The name Jesus adds up to 888. Just as the man of sin is numerically represented as 666 (Rev. 13:18) the man of righteousness is identified by 888. There is a consistent relationship between the number eight and the Messiah throughout scripture.

Just as there were two sets of four stone surfaces upon which the finger of God wrote the words of the covenant there were two sets of four in the divinely designed square encampment of God's children in the wilderness. There were three tribes on each of the four sides of the encampment. Inside this there was another set of four with the three divisions of the Levites (Gershonites, Mararites and Kohathites) and on the east there was the encampment of Moses and Aaron's families. There was an exterior set of four and an interior set of four surrounding the tabernacle with a total of eight separate, identifiable divisions encompassing the sanctuary of God.

Having established the two sets of covenant stones as representing the Messiah, the next step is to note that the first set was broken and the second set was preserved in the ark of the covenant (along with the rod of resurrection and the omer of incorruptible manna). Once again, the first another set of dual Messiah memorials is broken. We have the same progression as the two Messiah memorials of the Ecclesial age. We brake and eat the bread before we take the wine. The bread represents the transgressionless fleshly body of the Messiah where the power of sin was broken. The wine represents the life of Christ that was poured out and then returned to him in his resurrection.

The heaven and earth covenant made between Yahweh and Abram illustrates the exact same progression and principles. In Genesis chapter 15 Abram is instructed to take five animals. Three of the animals are to be severed in two (the heifer, she-goat and a ram). These four-legged animals are gravity bound to the dust of the earth. The twelve legs represent the 12 leg foundation of the organization of the children of God. The two birds, which rise above the dust climbing and soaring into the heavens, had to be left whole. There were eight pieces in all, once again representing the man of eights, Jesus Christ. He represented both parties. He represented the six severed halves, bound to the curse of the dust. Jesus was born under the curse of sin and death, inherited through his mother. Jesus also represented the heavenly party of two as he was the Son of God and genealogically descended from heaven. He is the mediator that brings heaven and earth together, making two into one and so making peace. He is there in all eight parts. There were two sacrificial animal categories to this covenant sacrifice. The first category was severed in two, just like the bread that we take first. The second category was to be left whole, underlining the significance of the severing of the first category.

Why did the first Christ/rock have to be 'cleaved' to harvest its water? Why were the first set of covenant stones smashed at the base of Sinai? Why did the first set of covenant sacrifice animals have to be cut in two? Why does the memorial bread have to be broken before partaking of it and then followed by the wine? The memorial bread represents the flesh of the Messiah. This was the platform for breaking the

power of sin. Jesus was born with the same cursed, unclean, sin-prone nature as we are. Yet he lived without any transgressions. He possessed the manufacturing plant for sin, but he didn't produce any sin. Therefore, at his crucifixion it was the cause of death that was being executed. He had no personal sins, just the unclean nature that created them. Sin in the flesh was executed in the body of Jesus Christ. The power of sin was broken. The Heavenly Father brought Jesus back to life, as death could not hold him. Since the power of sin was broken, its partner (death) could not maintain authority over the corpse of Jesus. After three days the the Messiah rose to life. It is an interesting parallel that all of creation will follow him after three divine days of 1,000 years each (Ps. 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8). That will mark the end of the millennial kingdom when sin and death are eliminated.

The memorial service primarily highlights the death of Jesus. Paul emphasizes this observation quite clearly.

1 Cor 15:26 *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

We primarily demonstrate the Lord's **death** in the memorial service. One of the early features of leavening apostasy is to concentrate exclusively on the resurrection of the Messiah and to diminish or ignore the significance of his death as nothing more than a mere technicality. This grows from a refusal to recognize the lesson of what was accomplished in his death, the path by which sin was defeated in Jesus.. so that he could extend the benefit to others who loved him and his Father above themselves and everything else. The lesson of the memorial service is designed to discourage this presumptuous mistake of underestimating sin, of diminishing its existence to a mere behavioral status. The death of Jesus is when the power of sin was broken. It was because the power of sin was broken that death could not hold him. The significance of the three nights and three days in the grave is another theme that projects principles and prophecies that are repeatedly mirrored throughout scripture and creation. But that is another issue for another time.

Unleavened Bread

There should be absolutely no doubt that that the first memorial service, initiated by Jesus Christ at what is called the last supper, was initiated with unleavened bread. By divine command no leaven could be consumed during a Passover meal or be present in anyone's home for the next seven days (Exodus 12). The Passover lamb had to be eaten with unleavened bread. Jesus is the antitypical Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). Additionally leaven was never, ever allowed on the sacrificial altar with the blood sacrifices (Ex. 23:18; 34:25; Lev. 2:11). That bronze altar for the blood sacrifices also clearly represented Jesus, the platform for all life sacrifices.

Heb13:10 *We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.*

This refers to the fact that the priests of the First Kingdom Age (from Sinai) were not allowed to eat the sin offering from the bronze altar when the blood of the sin offerer went into the divine sanctuary.

vs. 11-12 *For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.*

Another defining feature between the bronze altar and Jesus Christ is that they shared one very unique capacity. Anything that touched the bronze altar became automatically holy.

Ex 29:37 *Seven days thou shalt make an atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and it shall be an altar most holy: whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy.*

A similar pattern is presented by Jesus. When he touched the leper, he did not become unclean like any other Israelite. The unclean leper became clean upon the touch of Jesus. The woman with the bodily issue was automatically cleansed of her condition upon touching the blue hem of the Messiah's garment. Jesus was not defiled when he touched the dead pre-teen daughter of Jairus. The little girl was cleansed

from the defilement of death by the touch of Jesus. Jesus Christ is the living altar, the only acceptable platform for all life sacrifices dedicated to the Creator. No leaven was ever allowed on the altar.

Just as the Pasover lamb had to be accompanied by unleavened bread, so only unleavened bread was ever allowed to be offered with the blood offerings on the altar of burnt offering. In the same standard pattern it was unleavened bread with which the pattern for the memorial service was first initiated in that upper room at Jerusalem.

Extending this parallel between Christ and unleavened bread would be the identification of Jesus with the wilderness provision of the manna (John 6:48-58). As previously noted, the Apostle Paul identifies the Israelite diet of the manna and the water from the rock (that spiritual food and that spiritual drink) with the bread and the wine of the Ecclesial Age. It should be recognized that the manna, representing the bread component of the memorial ritual, was unleavened... just like all the other Christ shadows in this series.

The Unleavened Ecclesia

Just as Christ is constantly projected through unleavened shadows, the Ecclesia is supposed to maintain an unleavened status. When the Corinthian Ecclesia was not alarmed by the unGodly behavior of a young brother (living with his father's wife) this introduced a disrespectful, polluting influence into the ecclesial environment. Leaven is a polluting influence and the Corinthians were instructed to remove this leavening influence from among them so that they might be unleavened, as Christ their Passover lamb.

1 Cor 5:6-8 *Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificedb for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

This feast that Paul commanded the Corinthians to keep was clearly the memorial feast, an extension of Passover. They were no longer required to observe Passover or the feast of firstfruits or the feast of tabernacles. The only 'feast' they were keeping was the memorial 'feast' of the Ecclesial Age. The lesson was that they were supposed to be unleavened, just like Jesus and just like the unleavened bread they were using to remember the death of their Passover lamb, Jesus Christ.

Even the disciples did not understand the significance of the leaven symbol in the beginning. Jesus warned them to beware of the 'leaven' of the Pharisees. They presumed he meant any bread bought from a Pharisee might be intentionally unhealthy or damaging to ones health. Jesus meant the polluting influence of the thought patterns and inappropriate spiritual conclusions of the Pharisees (Matt. 16:6,11-12).

The polluting factor in leaven represents the bulging, ego inflating failure in all flesh-based philosophy. The common factor in literally every version of false doctrine is that it is always both God degrading and flesh exalting. There is absolutely no exception. An unGodly thought process is always a form of self-worship. It is this puffing up physical feature in leaven that reflects the spiritual lesson of the contagious ego inflation of whatever is politically correct among those on the highly populated road to destruction.

Just as leaven is negatively associated we see that the absence of leaven being identified with positive issues. It was the unleavened bread of righteous affliction for freedom from oppression, along with sincerity and truth.

Deut 16:3... *seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction; for*

thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life.

1 Cor 5:8 ... *the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*

It is sometimes rather oddly reasoned that if we were expected to remember the death of a transgressionless Jesus with unleavened bread that scripture would make this clearer than it already does. The excuse is that since a generic word for bread is used, without specifying whether the bread should be unleavened or leavened, that this somehow accommodates the far more convenient use of leavened bread in the memorial service. Sadly, this excuse is based on the presumption that God would never veil truth, that He would always offer the simplest and most unmistakable communications. That presumption is a negation of the foundational doctrine of God manifestation. Our Creator always veils Himself and His principles. He **never** makes it easy and effortless to think like Him. This is why He uses parables and visions and dark sayings and endless metaphors and shadows. This desperate and defensive line of reasoning presumes the exact opposite of the standard pattern of divine communication. Of course we can always prove the point of a matter, but it is never easy or effortless or void of any avenue for misunderstanding.

There are endless avenues for validating any divine truth. A demonstration of the significance of associating unleavened bread with the ritual projecting death and resurrection of our Messiah would be the first of the three divine harvest celebrations. Passover immediately preceded the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This first feast week recognized the barley harvest, demanding the barley first fruits be waved before Yahweh in an unleavened state. This first harvest celebration projects the first divine harvest from creation by the ultimate Husbandman... our Creator. The second feast week is the Feast of Firstfruits (also called the Feast of Weeks and Pentacost). This feast week celebrated the wheat harvest with the wheat harvest firstfruits being waved before Yahweh in the form of two **leavened** loaves. This harvest celebration projects the second creation harvest by the Creator at the beginning of the Millennium Kingdom when believers (suffering with a 'leavened' state, as opposed to Jesus) are immortalized. In perfect compliance we see Jesus defining this immortalization event as the harvesting of wheat in the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24-30; 37-43). The third harvest celebration (Feast of Tabernacles) projects the third and final divine harvesting of creation at the end of the Millennial Kingdom. This third divinely mandated feast corresponds to the vineyard and sometimes the olive harvest. The primary point in this parallel is that the feast week projection of our Messiah was identified exclusively with unleavened bread... as opposed to the immortalization/harvest of those who are saved on the basis of our Messiah. Breaking and eating unleavened bread to remember the death of our Messiah can be confirmed in quite a number of ways throughout scripture and the terms of creation... to those who have seeing eyes and hearing ears.

The Cup

We presume, fairly safely, that the drinking cup that Jesus defined as the new testament in his blood was filled with wine. The content of the cup is described as the "blood" of the Messiah. However, it does not appear to be identified specifically as wine in the New Testament. However, wine would serve as the appropriate representation for that metaphorical image. A confirmation of wine as the appropriate but not technically defined content of Christ's memorial cup would be the prescribed altar offerings of the previous age. During the First Kingdom Age there were six divinely appointed altar offerings. Four were animal offerings requiring blood (burnt, peace, sin and trespass). The two bloodless altar offerings were the grain offering (unleavened bread, flour and grain) and the drink offering, which was wine. The wine was the only offering that could not be offered independently. The wine offering always accompanied the burnt and peace offerings (along with the unleavened bread offering) but was not required for the sin

or trespass offerings. It must be remembered that the bronze altar represented our Messiah (Heb. 13:10). That altar and our Messiah also shared a very unique capacity, which was that their physical touch awarded a condition of holiness (Ex. 29:37). When Jesus touched the leper, the woman with an issue and the dead daughter of Jairus he should have contracted their ritually unclean condition, by divine law. Instead, they each became clean, instantly healed of their defiling conditions. That bronze altar is a clear parable representation of our Messiah, confirmed in several ways.

That bronze altar was the platform for four blood/life offering categories. Two of these offering categories were positive (burnt and peace). Two of these offering categories were negative (sin and trespass). The peace offering was bound to the burnt offering in that the fat of the peace offering was required to be offered on top of the burnt offering (Lev. 6:12). Only the two positive offerings had to be accompanied by the bread and the wine offerings (Num. 28:1-8). There were no instructions for bread and wine offerings to accompany the sin and trespass offerings. Each of these features being identified directs us to the comprehensive sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He is the ultimate burnt and peace and sin and trespass offering. We remember those four categories of life offerings with the same bread and wine that went on the bronze altar. Therefore it is perfectly appropriate to understand that wine is the correct symbol for Christ's blood, representing his life being poured out on our behalf.

We are instructed to think of the cup by which we remember the sacrifice of Christ as his blood. Our Creator makes it very clear that blood represents life (particularly **mortal** life).

Genesis 9:3-4 *But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.*

Leviticus 17:11,14 *For the life of the flesh is in the blood... For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off.*

There were two great divine laws concerning blood. God told his servants what to do with blood and what not to do with blood. By extension, they were being instructed what to do with their life and what not to do with their life. Noah and Israel were told never to eat blood (references noted above). What they had to do was pour it out into the dust or at the altar.

Deut. 12:23-27 *Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh. Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water. Thou shalt not eat it; that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD. Only thy holy things which thou hast, and thy vows, thou shalt take, and go unto the place which the LORD shall choose: And thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, upon the altar of the LORD thy God: and the blood of thy sacrifices shall be poured out upon the altar of the LORD thy God, and thou shalt eat the flesh.*

As we have already noted, that altar represents Jesus Christ, our Messiah. The earth (dust) is indicative of the curse of the dust (*Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return... dust shall be the serpent's meat*). God required the blood of a "clean" animal to be either poured out into the dust or onto the altar. That is our choice. We can pour our lives into the dust, choosing a life of indulgence ending in death, where dust punctuates the curse of death. We can also pour our lives out sacrificially at the altar of Jesus Christ. What we must not do is eat life (blood). We must not indulge in life, grabbing all the gusto and living every minute for ourselves. That is the serpent philosophy underpinning all false doctrine.

There were two great laws concerning blood. Don't eat blood. Pour out that blood at the altar. The projected exhortations are (1) not to eat or indulge in life and (2) we are to sacrificially pour out our lives at the feet of Jesus Christ. Since the memorial wine is identified as the blood of the Messiah these lessons are paramount in our considerations as we partake of the wine every first day of the week.

Unlike bread, wine can be preserved and actually improves its palatability with age. Just as Christ's initiation of the memorial ritual required unleavened bread the second item was not simply grape juice, but wine. Certainly it would be nearly impossible to use unspoiled grapejuice five months after the grape harvest ended.

We have noted the primary dual lessons of both baptism and memorial service. We see both the death and the resurrection issues displayed in both rituals. We see the validation of divine righteousness in both rituals. We see the dual exhortation of both putting the flesh to death and promoting the power of the Spirit in our lives. The bread and wine ritual declares we are not free to simply avoid doing bad things and think our salvation is assured. We are also not free to think that if we do many good things that somehow this affords the accommodation of personal evil behavior. We must have a dual focus of both denying the natural but ungodly urges of the flesh as well as practicing the righteous deeds of the Spirit. This dual exhortation is promoted by the dual benefit seen in the two stages of baptism (burial and rising) and the two memorial stages of the broken bread and then the wine: *when we were enemies, we were [1] reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be [2] saved by his life* (Romans 5:10).

Sister's Headcoverings

(Ritual Number 3)

This ritual is often misunderstood and minimalized, as it challenges the instinctive preferences of the natural mind. The natural mind prefers such ungodly principles as equality and complete freedom. The headcovering pattern is established in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16. Several observations should be made.

1 Corinthians 11:1-16 *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. ²Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. ³But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. ⁴Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head (Christ). ⁵But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head (man): for that is even all one as if she were shaven. ⁶For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. ⁷For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. ⁸For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. ⁹Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. ¹⁰For this cause ought the woman to have power (authority) on her head because of the angels. ¹¹Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. ¹²For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. ¹³Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? ¹⁴Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? ¹⁵But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. ¹⁶But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.*

Highlights of the Text

- The divine hierarchy is stated as God being the head of Christ who is the head of man who is the head of woman. This has to somehow be demonstrated in the headcovering commandment that immediately follows.
- The headcovering is required during prayer or prophecy. Even though a sister no longer has the capability of prophesying in this latter part of the Ecclesial Age, she can certainly pray.
- The reasoning is that if a woman approaches God to either speak directly to him (prayer) or directly for him (prophecy) then she must cover her head so that she will not dishonor her divinely appointed head (man, who is the reflection of God, while woman is the reflection of man). A sister praying to God with head uncovered reflects the glory of the flesh (man is her 'head') directly into the face of God. This is extremely disrespectful, declaring the divine hierarchy to be wrong.
- A woman's hair is given for a covering, but it is not the covering required for prayer, or it would not be demanded that she shave her head if she will not cover her head in prayer.
- A man must never cover his head in prayer, since his 'head' is Christ. It would not be shameful to reflect Christ to God through the uncovered head of a brother. Yet it would be shameful to reflect the head of man in the face of God through the prayer of a sister without her head covered, recognizing her divinely appointed 'head' as man.
- The last verse is translated in a misleading way in the King James Version. In the RSV it states: *If anyone is disposed to be contentious, we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God.* The original Greek words make it clear that Paul will allow **no variation** from the requirement of sisters covering their heads in prayer and prophesying. The headcoverings of sisters in prayer was of sufficient significance that no variations would be tolerated. Consider these translations:
 - Revised Standard Version:** *If any one is disposed to be contentious, we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God.*
 - New American Standard:** *But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.*
 - New Century Version:** *Some people may still want to argue about this, but I would add that neither we nor the churches of God have any other practice.*
 - New International Version:** *If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice nor do the churches of God.*

Even within the global Christadelphian community many oddly try to limit this ritual to Ecclesial gatherings and primarily memorial service. However, this conclusion is effortlessly dismissed ... conclusively and emphatically. The headcovering ritual was required when sisters prayed or prophesied, which are not activities a sister was ever allowed to do during memorial service. Therefore we certainly can't limit its ritual application exclusively to a time when the activities of prophesying and verbally expressed prayer were expressly forbidden. Sisters were not allowed to prophesy in the ecclesial environment. This is made clear when Paul establishes the rules for exhibiting the spirit gifts in the ecclesial gatherings in 1 Corinthians 14:27-40. Since sisters were not ever free to prophesy in the Ecclesial environment then it is abundantly obvious it is completely impossible to limit the headcovering application to memorial service or simply Ecclesial gatherings.

Paul states in 1 Corinthians 14 that the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. The gifts were not 'ecstatic.' The Holy Spirit did not force itself through a believer against their will. A believer could exercise the gift at will or keep silent at will. However, in all cases a sister had to keep silence in the ecclesia. *As in all churches of the saints, let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if*

they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church (1 Cor. 14:33-35).

Therefore the ritual of sisters headcoverings cannot be limited to strictly memorial service, where they were never allowed to pray or prophesy in the first place. Therefore, limiting the ritual of sister headcoverings during ecclesial gatherings would not be a fulfillment of the original scriptural instructions. The word that expresses the application is "whenever." ***Whenever*** a sister prays or prophesies she is to cover her head (which reflects the glory of man). The Sister does this to validate the righteousness of God in his divine hierarchy and the creational order (vs. 8-10). Contradicting our Creator's righteousness is what scripture's author defines as sin (1 John 5:17)

Veiled Submission

The head is the seat of authority and responsibility in the context of how God created us. For example: under the law of Moses an offerer would bring an animal to the door of the tabernacle and place their hands on the head of the animal and then kill the animal. Then the priest would take over (Leviticus 1:4-5; 3:2; 8:14,18,22; Lev. 16:21 ...Day of Atonement; Lev. 24:10-15; 2 Samuel 1:16; Joshua 2:19; Ezekiel 33:4). By placing his hands on the head of the animal before killing it, the offerer identifies himself and his responsibility through the head of the sacrificial animal. The head is the seat of authority and responsibility in the divine construction.

The phrase "*his blood be upon his head*" validates this understanding that the head is the seat of authority and responsibility.

In accordance with this relationship between authority and the head we see the highest political and ecclesiastical offices were confirmed by anointing the head of the newly appointed King or High Priest ... associating the head with this new level of authority and responsibility:

Leviticus 8:12 *And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him.*

Exodus 29:6-7 *And thou shalt put the mitre upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the mitre. Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him.*

1 Samuel 10:1 *Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?*

2 Kings 9:3 *Then take the box of oil, and pour it on his head, and say, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel.*

These consistent scriptural applications confirm the understanding that the head should be understood as the seat of authority and responsibility. **Covering or veiling that head indicates a veiling of the authority & responsibility of that head.**

The headcovering requirement is clearly an act of humility, recognizing that our Creator is always right. The absence of a headcovering when a sister prays will therefore be an act of arrogance and rebellion against divine principles. The absence of a headcovering during prayer is a rejection of the divine order of God being the head of Christ being the head of man being the head of woman. Every divinely imposed ritual is always a validation of the righteousness of the Creator, without exception. Our Creator was **right** in making man before woman and not at the same time. Our Creator was **right** in subjugating woman to man following the failure in Eden. A sister refusing to cover her head when she bypasses her divinely appointed headship (of man) is challenging the righteousness of God, promoting the rebellion that He was wrong in these decisions. Paul explains that if a woman refuses to cover her head whenever she prays or prophesies that she should have her head shaved. But if that is too humiliating... then let

her head be covered. The act of shaving a head was an act of humility and mourning, just like the act of covering one's head in ashes. It is interesting to note that when Israel rejected the right-ness of Yahweh that He directed them to shave their heads, to cut off their hair. ***Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath*** (Jer. 7:29).

High Priest Headcovering

Another ritual consistent with this lesson is the headcovering of the High Priest. Aaron was required to wear a turban on his head and then the golden crown would be placed over the turban. The crown, inscribed with **Holiness to Yahweh**, was not to be placed directly on his head. Just as the woman reflects the glory of her head (man) so the Mosaic High Priest reflected the glory of the greater High Priest (Jesus Christ). Therefore; his head should be covered, declaring that he is under the authority of another without displaying his own personal glory through an uncovered head when he approached God.

Exodus 29:3 *And thou shalt put the mitre upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the mitre.*

Exodus 39:30-31 *And they made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote upon it a writing, like to the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And they tied unto it a lace of blue, to fasten it on high upon the mitre; as the LORD commanded Moses.*

Lev. 8:9 *And he put the mitre upon his head; also upon the mitre, even upon his forefront, did he put the golden plate, the holy crown; as the LORD commanded Moses.*

It was a command of God that the golden crown had to be placed on the headcovering (the mitre or turban) of the High Priest. This distinction is repeated **three** times. The Aaronic High Priest was under the authority of the High Priest of the order of Melchizadek that would not inherit his position by lineage and would never relinquish his office to another due to sickness or death. The principle of the head covering is consistent throughout divine laws and rituals spanning different ages.

Therefore, it is very reasonable that God would require a sister to approach him with her head covered at all times...

1. To recognize the righteousness of the Divine order and God's creative order. By covering her head in prayer a sister recognizes and accepts God's wisdom in this divine order. By daring to approach the Heavenly Father without veiling her head she declares her objection to the divine order. She also reflects the glory of her head (man) in the face of God. Since brethren reflect the glory of their head (Christ) they are required to always pray with uncovered heads
2. To recognize and accept the righteousness of God's curse from Eden of being subject to the man. Genesis 3:16 ... *thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.*

Sisters are instructed to cover their heads when praying to recognize that Yahweh was right in declaring man to be their head and that it would be equivalent to the shame of shaving one's head if they will not veil their head in prayer. This is because it is a rejection of the divine order and a reflecting of the glory of man (the woman's head) in the face of God. The unveiled head would be a declaration of the woman's independence from man (her divinely appointed head) as well as opposing the subjection imposed in Eden for the woman's part in the failure.

Therefore, the sisters in the Ecclesial Age are required to cover their heads **whenever** they pray, just like the command reads.

Sister's Silence

Ritual Number 4

This is the fourth ritual that believers in the Ecclesial Age are commanded to practice.

1 Timothy 2:11-15 *Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.*

A sister must not teach in a way that will usurp authority over a brother. Two reasons are given.

1. Just as the headcovering in prayer, this confirms the righteousness of the Divine creative order... *For Adam was first formed, then Eve.*

2. This ritual also declares the sister's agreement with the righteousness of God's Edenic curse of subjection and womankind's responsibility for Eve's part in the failure in the Garden... *And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.*

This is strongly confirmed in 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 *As in all the churches of the saints, let your women keep silence in the churches.* It is interesting to note that this reminder is sandwiched within Paul's comments on the proper application of the Holy Spirit gifts as demonstrated within the ecclesia. Therefore, even when a sister had the God-given miraculous ability to prophesy or could instantly speak in languages for which she had never received training, she was absolutely forbidden to speak during ecclesial services.

Respectful Silence

Silence is a form of respect. Even the Godless societies of mankind understand this relationship. We have all seen when a moment of silence is requested to honor those suffering from a tragic event or for the death of a beloved or respected leader. A period of silence is a form of showing respect. This is not a man-made ritual. It was implemented by our Creator. Mankind has simply forgotten the origin, but everyone recognizes the meaning (Job 29:21; Job 32:4-7; Habakkuk 2:20; Lamentations 2:10).

Therefore although sisters are exhorted in scripture to teach the young women they must not teach or promote themselves above their brothers, or they deny God's wisdom in the creative order and deny the righteousness of God's curse of subjection for Eve's part in the failure in Eden. It is unwise to disagree with our Heavenly Father's wisdom or contradict His righteousness.

The responsibility on the brethren in relation to this sisters silence ritual is to rise to our responsibilities, exercising the necessary leadership, researching and teaching willingly and reflecting the role of our head in Jesus Christ.

Saved in Childbearing

Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety (1 Tim. 2:15). Paul's final comments following the declaration of the silence ritual affords a blessing related to the projected principle. One might ask, how is a sister 'saved' in childbearing... in relation to her humble recognition of being created after man and her gender's participation in the Edenic failure. There are at least three primary 'saving' issues to be seen in the childbearing application.

1. A woman has the incredible distinction of being the exclusive source for generating something clean from a human body. There is nothing clean that issues from a man. Man breathes in good oxygen and expels poison, eats nutritious food and expels unclean waste that has to be hidden underground from God's sight if we want Him to walk among us (Deut. 23:13). Men and women drink

fresh water but drain unclean poison from their bodies. Bodily issues automatically indicated a divinely unclean status under the divine laws of the Kingdom of God. Literally everything that issues from the body of a man is unclean, with no exceptions. There is one single exception with the body of a woman, and it is exclusively due to childbearing. It isn't the child. A newborn child is not considered 'clean' by divine terms. A new mother actually had to offer a sin offering for her own atonement just for righteously giving birth (Lev. 12). The clean item issuing from the body of a childbearing woman is **mother's milk**. It offers life and sustenance and health to a newborn child. Mother's milk is the only item that issues from any human being that can be considered divinely 'clean.' A childbearing woman has this distinction over all men, despite the fact that she must recognize man as her head and be silent.

2. This unique feature of childbearing is a great honor, and is a shadow of the promise of the seed of the woman that would issue from the woman but not the man. The childbearing capacity of the woman would be the avenue for generating the savior for all mankind.

3. The third issue is that childbearing women certainly have authority over their children. While a woman is certainly under the headship of man, who is under the headship of Christ who is under the headship of God... the childbearing woman has authority over her children. There is a unique 'glory' that accompanies childbearing that is forbidden to men. While children respect and frequently love their fathers there is an undeniable bond with a mother that all mankind respects... enlightened or unenlightened. It is undeniable.

Clearly, a woman would be 'saved' by childbearing.

Despite the fact that these four Ecclesial Age rituals are clearly stated in scripture; despite the fact that reasoning is offered by the divinely inspired writers for the validity, the foundations and the principles and exhortations packaged in these rituals, there will always be detractors within the brotherhood of the enlightened. This has always been the case and will not change in this age. The flesh craves self promotion, while bristling at inconvenience and limitations. The heart labors fervently to manufacture exceptions to divine rules while still promoting personal self-righteousness. If we are sincere and love Yahweh our Elohim with all our heart and mind and energy we will willingly and humbly submit to the divine instructions and internalize the behaviour modifying lessons designed to reshape us into the image and the likeness of our Heavenly Father, recognizing that **He is always right**.

The Principle of Separation

This is one of the more difficult disciplines a devoted student of God's truth must observe. This principle has a very subjective application but certain ground rules apply.

The principle of holiness is demanded of believers in all divinely mandated ages, despite whatever current divine laws or priesthood may apply. The principle of holiness is bordered by the principle of separation. Holiness does not exist without separation.

The principle of separation during the Ecclesial Age is stated in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 quite clearly and powerfully.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, ¹⁸

And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

This "yoking" has an application in marriage and business. We should not seek to join ourselves to those who are not joined to our Heavenly Father. However, understand that if a believer is married to a non-believer before enlightenment they should not seek to be parted (1 Corinthians 7:12-16).

The lesson stated in 2 Corinthians 6 is one of separation; however, the exhortation is not to become hermits. Jesus was not a recluse, nor were the apostles or prophets. We must be 'in' society but not 'of' society. We are not allowed to follow society in its moral standards freefall... or for that matter - endlessly descending Ecclesial standards. We are separated **to** Yahweh when we choose the gospel of life and commit our lives to him. We are told to separate ourselves **from** our godless society. That separation is two-fold. It is a separation 'to' as well as a separation 'from'.

There are many examples of the principle of separation in God's record, confirming the power of the lesson. God made a distinction between "clean" and "unclean" under the law in the pursuit of holiness. There were three conditions of ritual uncleanness... leprosy, bodily issues and physical contact with the dead. Each unclean condition separated these people out from the congregation. Following the end of the period of their physical defilement they were required to perform certain rituals before they could be welcomed back into the community. These rituals each shadow the principles of reconciliation and atonement, as they are pursued to achieve atonement.

God always made distinction between holy and unholy. The word holy simply means "set apart." God has separated out something as special and that distinction is what makes something "holy." We are required to be holy and not to let society conform us to its standards... which will often disenfranchise us from opportunity and possibly endanger us to harm.

Romans 12:1-2 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. ² And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

1 Peter 1:15-16 *But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.*

Yahweh has called us to become 'one' with Him. In order to become one with Him we cannot be 'one' with society. We cannot be members of fraternal organizations or political parties... Boy or Girl Scouts, Daughters of the Revolution, Democrats, Republicans, Masons, avoiding Employment Unions, etc. Our kingdom is not of this world. We are citizens of God's Kingdom, with our citizenship being reserved in heaven until our King returns and brings that citizenship with him (Phil 3:20-21).

One of the difficult issues of separation is that we become targets. Our refusal to join society in its godless activities ignites their defensive consciences and unleashes self-righteous indignation upon us. Jesus understands this....

Luke 6:22 *Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.*

The Vow of Separation

The most obvious ritual of separation commanded by God was the law of the Nazarite. This is found in Numbers 6. A man or a woman could make a Nazarite vow for a specific period of time. It was strictly

voluntary. It was called a vow of separation. They separated themselves **to** Yahweh (Num. 6:2 *When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the LORD*). They also separated themselves from four categories:

1. Strong drink (no alcohol of any type) ... no alcohol could be consumed during the vow period
2. Any grape related product... no grape products could be consumed
3. Any physical contact with a dead body... no exceptions
4. Any cutting of hair on the head... no razor was to come to the head during the vow period

This ritual of the Nazarite vow of separation was an exercise in High Priest emulation.

1. The High Priest was forbidden to consume any alcohol when performing his duties

Leviticus 10:8-11 *And the LORD spake unto Aaron, saying, Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.*

2. The vineyard was a symbol of the nation of Israel (Isaiah 5:7; Jeremiah 12:10; Mark 12:1-12; etc.). The High Priest was the servant of the nation and not an exploiter. He was to minister to their needs, not suck them dry. He was to be a planter and cultivator not a harvester or feaster.

3. The High Priest was the only other person in the whole nation of Israel that was forbidden to even touch his dead father, mother, brother or unmarried sister...

Leviticus 21:10-11 *And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes; Neither shall he go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his father, or for his mother.*

An ordinary priest was allowed to defile himself by physical contact with his dead father, mother, brother or unmarried sister (Leviticus 21:1-3). Only the High Priest and Nazarites endured this restriction.

4. Although the High Priest was allowed to cut his hair there is still a direct parallel. The unshaven Nazarite head was called the "head of his consecration." The Hebrew word translated "consecration" is **nezer**. Nezer is predominantly translated "crown" throughout the Old Testament. It is not the only Hebrew word translated as "crown" but in fact it is the specific word used to describe the crown of the High Priest (Exodus 29:6; Leviticus 8:9). The "head of consecration" of the Nazarite is a direct parallel to the crown on the head of the High Priest.

We (the true believers of the Ecclesial Age) are the "nazarites" of the covenant of faith (Abraham's) as opposed to the nazarites of the covenant of works (Mosaic covenant). Just as the Israelite men & women volunteered to perform the vow of separation to their God and imitate their High Priest... we volunteer to separate ourselves to that same God and imitate our High Priest - Jesus Christ. The principle is the same although the rituals are technically different. In fact the Nazarites of the Ecclesial Age must do exactly the opposite of the Nazarites of the Mosaic Age. We absolutely must drink strong drink and partake of wine (grape product) in our pursuit to identify ourselves with our High Priest, Jesus Christ, through the memorial wine. We are buried with the body of Christ in baptism, in essence 'touching' his dead body (also seen in eating his flesh in the broken bread of memorial service). Our Sisters cover their heads when praying through our High Priest to escape the need to shave their heads (1 Cor. 11:6),

as opposed to the shaving of the head at the conclusion of the Nazarite vow (Num. 6:18). The Israelites during the Kingdom Age had to separate themselves from the same things the brothers and sisters of the Ecclesial Age must separate ourselves 'to'. Both are pursuing the image of the High Priest. The details of the rituals are different, but the principles are the same. Believers must separate ourselves **to** as well as **from** in our necessary pursuit of holiness. The real difference was the educational focus for the laws and rituals of the 1st Kingdom Age (begun at Sinai) and the educational focus of the laws and rituals of the Ecclesial Age (begun at Jerusalem). The educational focus shifted from a condemnation of sin to the exaltation of grace when the new divinely appointed Age began at Jerusalem.

Therefore we understand we must be within society but not bound up in it. It must be a very subjective application of the principle, but this is how we manifest Yahweh and prove our love.... by being "holy, because he is holy."

Marriage

God's original intention was for one man to be married to one woman... for life. God created Eve for Adam... one woman for one man. These two were to become one, a unity in multiplicity. This was the command for the elders of the first century ecclesia (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6). This union represents the relationship between Christ and the saints (Ephesians 5:22-31; Revelation 19:7-8)...as well as God and those in covenant relationship with him (Jeremiah 3:20; Ezekiel 16:32).

Jesus removes the accommodations of the Mosaic law concerning marriage.... Matthew 19:3-12. God hates divorce (Malachi 2:14-16). Jesus, as was his pattern, intensifies the responsibility that the Jews had relaxed from their heart generated manipulations of divine laws and rituals.

When one comes into a covenant relationship with Yahweh, we are commnded to seek a spouse from within the brotherhood of believers (1 Corinthians 7:39, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Joshua 23:11-13). Those who married foreign wives suffered disaster; i.e. Samson the judge (Judges 14:1); Solomon the king of Israel (1 Kings 11:1-11). An excellent example of how God sees marrying out of the truth is presented in Numbers 25 in the incident at Baal Peor.

Israel was "yoking" themselves to Baal.... indicating they were making unifying personal relationships with Baal worshippers. This was provoked by the prophet Balaam who taught the enemies of Israel to defeat them through 'peace' (Revelation 2:14). Instead of military action, which was ineffective against Israel, Balaam had proposed integrating them into the society of the Midianites and Moabites. This subtle dissolving of the principle of separation on the basis of a false and God-despising definition of peace (toleration of diversity and absence of aggression) was the basis of the Israelites no longer being separated 'to' God.

The high point of the story is where Phinehas, grandson of Aaron the High Priest, follows an Israelite/Midianite couple into the Israelite's tent and with one thrust of a javelin kills them both. This double execution by a single thrust indicates the interruption of the physical consumation of their union. No community judgment was sought. Instead of Phinehas being executed for murder according to divine law, Yahweh exalts him and awards him an everlasting covenant of peace for all his descendants. This was because Phinehas was jealous for God. There was absolutely no lawful justification for what Phinehas did. By divine law, he was required to serve as a witness before the community and then would have served as one the initial executors by stoning if they were found guilty. This approval by God for an act of murder is strong proof of God's distaste for marriage outside the community of believers.

We can also confirm the same lesson conclusion by examining the names of those involved. Zimri (the groom) was the son of Salu, a prince of the tribe of Simeon. Cozbi (the bride) was the daughter of Zur, a prince in Midian. The son of a prince of Israel yokes himself to a daughter of a prince of Midian. Here are the meanings of the names, from the concordance:

Zimri = celebrate **Salu** = miserable **Cozbi** = deceit **Zur** = rock

It is easy to put the names God has recorded for our information into a powerful lesson.... in God's opinion this union was a **miserable celebration with the rock of deceit**. God wants us to marry **in** the faith. There can be no holiness without a separation 'to' as well as a separation 'from'. There can be no divine approval without holiness.

The heart's highly inappropriate defensive posture against the principle of separation will suggest that 'loving our neighbor' eliminates the necessity of separation. It is suggested that separation is an unloving act which falsely and pridefully elevates ourselves above those from whom we separate. This is simply another example of the the self-worshipping heart's relentless instinctive corrupting of divine principles. Every divine principle has significance but there are varying levels of significance. The divine law of circumcision was greater than the divine law of the Sabbath (John 7:23). Priests profaned the Sabbath through their temple labors but were blameless (Matt. 12:5). The command to love Yahweh our Elohim demanded everything (Deut. 6:4-5) while the command to love our neighbor only asked for a love equivalent to the love of self (Lev. 19:18) which is **dramatically less** than the degree of love demanded for our Heavenly Father. There are degrees of significance in divine principles that must be understood and balanced. The requirement to love our neighbor certainly does not negate the command for holiness through separation.

Prayer

There are basic rules for successful prayer. We are approaching the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Any old well intentioned approach will not necessarily be acceptable and good intentions are not good enough, as we have learned all through our studies of God's word. We must approach Him on His terms or we are going to be offensive to Him. It is very dangerous to offend our heavenly Father.

The logical place to start is where Jesus teaches his disciples to pray (Matthew 6:5-15). Here are things we learn from this text:

- Prayer should be a private affair between you and God.
- Mere repetition of phrases is useless and meaningless and disrespects God, such as repeating the Lord's prayer as a group or individually.
- God can and should be addressed as "Father," indicating we should think of ourselves as His children.
- We first express our understanding of his elevated position and honor. Then we express our will to be aligned with His... **God's will be done, God's kingdom to come.**
- We should ask forgiveness for our failing to live in accordance with God's standards, but understand that there are barriers to forgiveness, with on such barrier being our unwillingness to forgive (Matthew 18:21-35)
- It is perfectly acceptable to ask for physical sustenance (*daily food*). However, there is no indication of asking for great comforts... bigger houses, cars, better job, wealth, etc. This is also an exhortation for **daily** prayer, since the 'daily' bread request is only made for a single day.
- Just as the prayer pattern began with praising God, it ends the same way... praising our Creator.

Praying Through Jesus But Never to Jesus

Jesus instructs us to ask of God "through his name."

John 14:13-14; John 16:23-24;

Paul thanked God through Jesus: Romans 7:25

Paul praised God through Jesus: Romans 16:27

If we avoid Jesus, we have no access to Yahweh (John 5:23). Jesus is the appointed mediator between God and mankind (1 Timothy 2:5). To attempt to approach God bypassing his son is disrespectful to Christ and therefore to God. It also suggests we think we are good enough to approach God directly, as if we are not dependent on Jesus as our mediator. It is an arrogant and therefore self-defeating path.

We also should not avoid our Heavenly Father and think that there is some value to gain in directly addressing Jesus apart from his Father. Jesus lived his entire life without one single transgression, suffering humiliation after humiliation from the enlightened community in covenant relationship with his Father and horrible physical and emotional pain at the end of his mortal life in order to achieve a reconciliation for mankind with the Creator. If we disrespect that tremendous access opportunity afforded to us by Jesus thinking that somehow our exclusive approach to him will be met positively then we are truly being fools. We should never disrespect the very purpose of Christ's life and death by spurning his greatest gift to us, access to his Father. Praying directly to Jesus Christ and not through Jesus Christ disrespects his life, his purpose and his sacrifice.... which would be very foolish.

The Divine Pattern For Successful Prayer

The Golden Incense Altar

Exodus 30:1-9 *And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: of shittim wood shalt thou make it. 2 A cubit shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; foursquare shall it be: and two cubits shall be the height thereof: the horns thereof shall be of the same. 3And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, the top thereof, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns thereof; and thou shalt make unto it a crown of gold round about. 4And two golden rings shalt thou make to it under the crown of it, by the two corners thereof, upon the two sides of it shalt thou make it; and they shall be for places for the staves to bear it withal. 5And thou shalt make the staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. 6And thou shalt put it before the vail that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee. 7And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. 8And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations. 9Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon.*

Scripture confirms the practice of offering incense should be related to the offering of prayer.

Psalms 141:1-2; Revelation 5:8; Revelation 8:3-4

Also it should be noted that in the time just before Christ's birth it was understood that the appropriate time for burning incense should identify the time for daily prayer (Luke 1:10). The Jewish people understood this divinely mandated relationship between prayer and offering incense.

Therefore God's pattern of the incense altar and the ritual of burning incense should offer instruction in how to practice effective, successful prayer. These associations make it abundantly clear that the incense offering is a ritual parable concerning successful prayer. Through His usual intentionally complex educational pattern, God offers greater insight to those with seeing eyes and hearing ears yet at the same time

blocks the understanding of the far more populated group of the self-absorbed, 'pretend' Bible students.

The Incense Altar - Prayer's Platform

The frame of the altar was made, at God's instruction, of "shittim" wood, also known as Acacia (as it is translated in the RSV). The acacia tree grows in the Sinai wilderness. It is a tree of the desert. It only grows up to about 20 feet tall. It is not one of the proud and glorious cedars of Lebanon. It is a humble tree, but highly resistant to insect damage and disease. It is a hardwood tree and converts the meager level of moisture it receives into sustenance, straining for the heavens as it breaks out of the dust of the earth and heads upward above the desert floor. This information can easily be learned from a Bible Dictionary or book dealing with the plantlife of the middle east. The description reminds me of a specific prophecy of the Messiah in Isaiah 53:1-3...

*Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a **tender plant**, and as a **root out of a dry ground**: he hath **no form nor comeliness**; and when we shall see him, there is **no beauty that we should desire him**. He is despised and rejected of men; **a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief**: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

Just as we can see Jesus in the wood we should see ourselves in the wood. This is the framework of the altar of incense, therefore it presents the framework/attitude with which we approach prayer: humility, the absence of arrogance, straining for the heavens from out of the cursed dust of the earth. Another understanding is that the acacia tree had to die before the boards could be made from it and fashioned into an altar. This is the understanding we must have. We must die to sin and live to righteousness. We must join Christ in his death so that we might join him in his resurrection. Trees are often used as symbols of people in scripture (Judges 9:7-16; Isaiah 55:12; Isaiah 61:1-3).

Listen to God if You Want Him to Listen to Us

The timing of the incense offering is highly significant. Initially we see that the incense had to be burned in the morning and the evening. This exhorts us to prayer regularly, at the beginning and end of the day, similar to the offering of the daily burnt offering of the lamb. However the other distinction in the timing association is in relation to the replenishing of the lampstand. *And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: **when he dresseth the lamps**, he shall burn incense upon it. And **when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even**, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations* (Ex 30:7-8). Yahweh emphasizes twice that the incense should be burned at the same time the lamps are replenished with the olive oil fuel. Our enlightenment fuel comes from reading Yahweh's word, the Bible. We should read when we pray. We should listen to God if we want to have any confident expectation that He will listen to us.

The acacia tree converted every drop of rain and moisture into sustenance. Rain and water in scripture are symbols of the word of God (Deuteronomy 32:1-2; Isaiah 55:10-11; Ephesians 5:26). Successful prayer requires our ingestion of God's word on a regular basis. We cannot ask God to listen to us but refuse to listen to him. This is spelled out clearly in a warning from Solomon.

Proverbs 28:9 *He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.* If we think that God will listen to us without our listening to Him then our prayers are not simply ignored, they become an absolute abomination, highly offensive, to the Creator of heaven and earth.

Covered in Gold - Proven Faith

The altar is covered with gold. Gold is used repeatedly in scripture as a symbol for tried or tested faith... 1 Peter 1:7; Job 23:10; Zechariah 13:9; Revelation 3:18. We must pray with faith... James 1:5-7;

Hebrews 11:3; Matthew 7:7-12.

Golden Prayers ... Not Prayers for Gold: However, there are limitations of what we should ask for in prayer (James 4:3). The key is to ask for what God wants us to have.

1 John 5:14 *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.*

Personal Behaviour & Prayer: Our actions cannot contradict our prayers or they will automatically nullify our prayers. Godlike behaviour increases the power of our prayers.... James 5:16 (a **righteous** man) ... Proverbs 15:29; Isaiah 59:2; 1 Peter 3:7,12.

The Incense

These issues all fit within the context of the gold - tried faith. Let's move on to the incense itself that was burned upon the golden altar. The incense was made of four equal amounts of spices and beaten into a fine powder (Exodus 30:34-35). The four ingredients offer a consistent spiritual relationship with the theme of "God manifest in the flesh." We can see this shadowed in the foursquare encampment of the children of God; the four faces of the cherubim which is the symbol of God revealed through Christ and the immortalized saints; the four creatures of Revelation 4+5 that represent the political & military application of the immortalized saints; the four categories of earth in Christ's parable of the sower representing the four categories of people to whom the word of God comes; The four cornered sheet with the unclean animals in Peter's vision that represent the unclean Gentiles that will now be welcomed into the ecclesia; the four gospel records of the man who perfectly manifested God in the flesh; the four stones upon which God wrote the 10 commandments representing the perfect God manifesting man who would be the stone which the builders rejected and became the cornerstone; etc. The four equal ingredients of the incense are associated with the enlightened who are called to reshape themselves into the image and likeness of the Creator. When the incense is burned it becomes the prayers of the saints.

The Crushing of the Incense

This crushing stage represents the attitude with which we must come to God in prayer: utter humility without a trace of arrogance.

Is 57:15 uses the word "contrite." This is the Hebrew word *daka*, indicating crushed or bruised.

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite (dakka) and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite (daka) ones.

This Hebrew word rendered "contrite" (*daka*) is also translated crushed, broken, destroyed, smitten, humbled and bruised. It is translated 'bruised' twice in the Messiah prophecy in **Isaiah 53:**

vs 7... *But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was **bruised** for our iniquities:*

vs 10 ... *Yet it pleased the LORD to **bruise** him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.*

We must approach God with a contrite (crushed, broken, bruised) spirit. The incense is crushed from chunks into a fine dust. We are dust.... *dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return*. However, in our enlightened faithful state we are not simply dust, but aromatic dust... sweet smelling dust. Jesus said "*Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*" (Matthew 5:3). The crushing into a fine powder of the incense before it is burned speaks of the way we must prepare ourselves to speak to

God in prayer. We must think of God as our crutch and our wheelchair. Casual prayer is unacceptable. God must have 100% of our attention. We should not be driving, vacuuming, cleaning dishes, or performing any other duty that requires any part of our attention (with the exception of 'emergency' prayers of assistance or saving). God must have 100% of our attention and there must not be any interruptions. Jesus advised his disciples to go into a closet. **Matthew 6:6** ... *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.* This should not be taken literally so that we only pray in closets. Christ's point was not to pray for self glory.

We cannot display a broken spirit in a casual semi-alert prayer. All prayers must be formal and respectful. When faithful men wanted to pray powerfully here is what they did:

- Moses laid on his face and refused to eat or drink as he prayed for God to spare the lives of the those in the wilderness who cowardly refused to enter the promised land.
- David fasted, dressed in rags and covered himself with ashes to ask for the life of his son
- Daniel fasted & dressed in rags for three weeks in prayer seeking answers
- Jesus went apart from his disciples and prayed with intensity in Gethsemane

Intense concentration requires preparation and the right attitude. A casual prayer is not contrite.

The Incense Was Burned

It should be understood that prayer is a sacrifice (Hebrews 5:7; Acts 10:4). Therefore there should be a striving in prayer, a burning and an intensity. A lackluster, sing-songy cadence to an easily forgotten prayer is disrespectful to our Heavenly Father.

James 5:16 *The effectual **fervent** prayer of a righteous man availeth much*

Romans 15:30 *Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye **strive together with me in your prayers** to God for me*

Colossians 4:12 *Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always **labouring fervently** for you in prayers.* The Greek word translated "labouring fervently" is 'agonizomai.' This is where we get our English verb - to agonize.

We have a number of examples of men and women respected by our Creator who understood the value of a burning intensity in their prayers.

- Hannah prayed fervently for a son, prompting Eli to think she was drunk (1 Samuel 1:9-18).
- Ezra tore his clothes, falling on his knees, fasting... ashamed because the people had married out of the brotherhood (Ezra 9:2-14)

Jesus continued all night in prayer and he prayed with such intensity that it is said blood like drops of sweat fell from him (Luke 22:44-45).

Prayer Frequency

As we have already noted the incense had to be burned when the lamps were replenished. This took place every morning and every evening. The pattern therefore suggests that we pray regularly every morning and every evening. Here are a couple of examples:

- David Psalm 86:3 ... daily; Psalm 55:17 evening and morning
- Sons of Korah Psalm 88:1 ... night and day

Prayer Review:

- Pray daily: morning & evening is best. Address Yahweh but always pray through Jesus Christ.
- Prayer is a formal affair and should never be attempted without full concentration.

- If we will not listen to God (read scripture) regularly, we should not expect any success with prayer.
- Prayers should be brief, sincere and passionate. Believe in what you pray. Faith is necessary.
- Our behaviour has a great deal to do with successful prayer.
- Pray for things God wants us to have, not for things we can "consume on our lusts."
- Ask for forgiveness, understanding there is a direct relationship with how we personally forgive.
- Show great respect to Yahweh and display humility or don't bother praying.
- Pray for God 's will to be done, for daily necessities, for forgiveness, for understanding, for wisdom, for others and for Christ to come and the kingdom to be established
- Be thankful. Always thank God before asking for anything