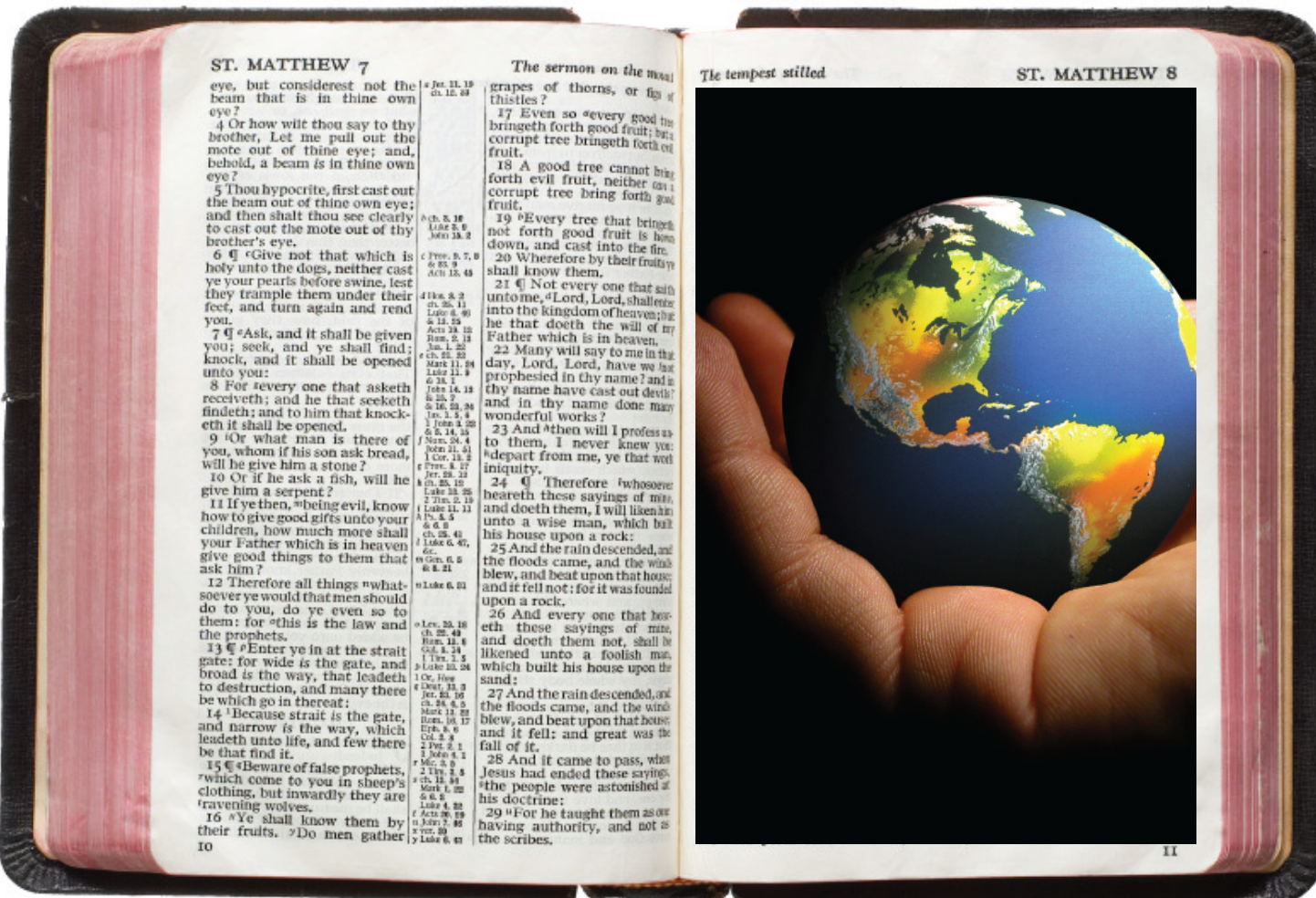
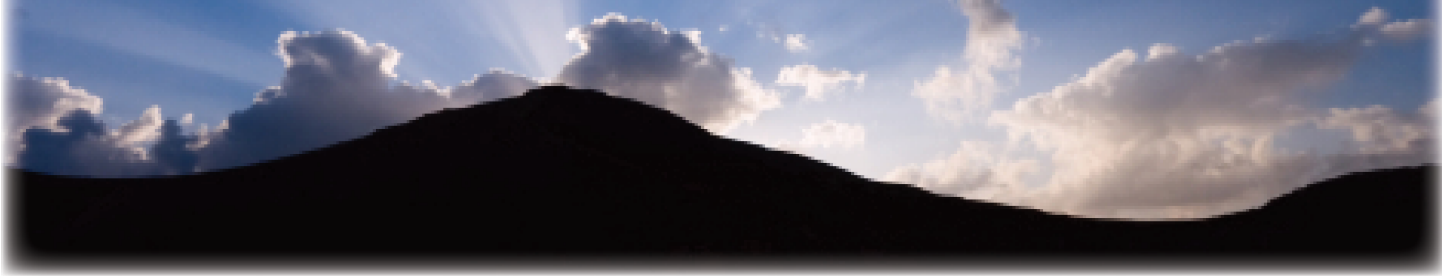


# Creations Gospel



**ST. MATTHEW 7**

eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?  
 4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?  
 5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.  
 6 ¶ Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.  
 7 ¶ Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:  
 8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.  
 9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?  
 10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?  
 11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?  
 12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.  
 13 ¶ Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:  
 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.  
 15 ¶ Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.  
 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather

grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?  
 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.  
 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.  
 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.  
 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.  
 21 ¶ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.  
 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?  
 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.  
 24 ¶ Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:  
 25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the wind blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.  
 26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:  
 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the wind blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.  
 28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:  
 29 For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

**The sermon on the mount**

**The tempest stilled**

**ST. MATTHEW 8**

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**This is a reprint from the original publishing in 2003. Due to having to upgrade the computer software publishing program, a new cover and artwork had to be used. Reprinted June 2010**

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## Introduction

Heading down the laneway on my Grandfather's farm we pass the hayfields, walking between the two broken-down stone walls. We pass the second hay barn. We amble by the untended apple orchard and the underground fruit cellar. Just as we approach the electric

fence surrounding the pig field we arrive at a ground-fed spring that surfaces into a shallow pool about a yard square. This small spring offered cold refreshment right through the hottest, stickiest summers. As a young boy, it was my favorite place on the farm. My brothers and I would catch frogs by hand in and beside the shallow waters, only to release them for another day's contest of stealth & speed. I remember the difficulty of trying to spot the frogs that had escaped into the water. Peering into the still waters on a sunny day, it was my reflection that stared back up at me. It was difficult to see beyond my face as I searched for my involuntary playmates below the surface. There is a parallel in this simple memory to how we look at scripture.

Our heavenly Father designed his word to appear differently on the surface than it appears beneath the surface. A casual perusal of scripture will only confirm whatever concept we were looking for in the first place. My high school librarian was a Rumanian gypsy who believed in reincarnation. She once told me that even Jesus Christ taught the principle of reincarnation. I imagine my gaping mouth incited the incredulous tone of her follow-up response. "After all, didn't he tell Nicodemus *You must be born again*". Regretfully, I could not restrain my disdainful shock at such a violent wrenching of God's word.

We can confirm any conclusion we start with if we simply glean from the 'surface' of scripture. As the reflective surface of the farm's ground-fed spring, if we venture no further than the surface of scripture all we will find is ourselves, whose origin & destination is the dust of the ground. We will only see exactly what we want to see on the surface of scripture. Vanity will blind us to the beauty

and glory the Father has hidden for those who reject the wisdom of the flesh and develop eyes that see and ears that hear.

## How Does God Teach

Yahweh rebuked Aaron & Miriam for their complaints about Moses, expressing his special relationship with Moses in the terms of how uniquely God communicated with Moses. God spoke to Moses openly and clearly, without dark sayings and symbolic visions.

*Numbers 12:6-8 And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream, My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all my house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches, and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?*

Why would God speak to Moses "apparently" & without the dark sayings? Earlier in the same chapter we read that Moses was the meekest man on the face of the earth (verse 3... *Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth*). Moses was not arrogant or pompous and required very little humbling, since he was the meekest of all men. This observation, in the context of God's explanation of his clear communication to Moses, suggests that God speaks in his dark sayings and visions and symbols with the express purpose of inducing meekness, of stripping away the flesh's arrogance and pompous self-confidence.

God teaches in a purposefully confusing manner. He will not be approached casually. He demands respect. He will not suffer the flesh to glory before him. Therefore his teaching methods require an intense concentration and effort, if we are ever going to understand what he is trying to tell us.

It is interesting to note that one of the promises God offers for constant attendance to reading his word is a growing humility. God's word has a humbling effect on those who will immerse themselves in it. When God presents the laws concerning the kings that Israel would eventually ask for He demands that they do their daily readings. The second of the four blessings for doing the daily readings was that the king would learn humility.

*Deut. 17:18-20 And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and **he shall read therein all the days of his life:***

*1.) **that** he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them:*

- 2.) ***that** his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and*
- 3.) ***that** he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end*
- 4.) ***that** he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel.*

The natural result of regularly considering the dark sayings and visions and intentionally hidden teaching of the Creator is the slow stripping away of our natural human arrogance and pompousness.... the development of a growing humility allows room for Yahweh in our hearts and minds. When we are full of ourselves (our natural state) we have no room for our Heavenly Father. God's chosen teaching pattern empties the arrogance, if truth is pursued.

### **How Did Jesus Teach**

This veiled teaching method is exactly how the man who was the reflection of the Creator taught. One of the titles of Jesus Christ is Immanuel, meaning *God with us*. Jesus was the perfect manifestation of his Father. One of the ways to learn more about God is to examine Jesus. We can take a lesson for how God teaches by examining Christ's teaching method. Jesus taught in parables and only explained them to his disciples:

*And with many such parables spake he unto them: as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples [Mark 4:33-34].*

Inexperienced Bible students often make the mistake of thinking Jesus used parables to make things clearer to those who listened to him. The truth of the matter is exactly the opposite. This teaching method confused his disciples. Not only did they constantly ask him what his parables meant, they also asked him why he even taught in parables.

*And his disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given, For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath, Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which saith, By hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears and should understand with their heart and should be converted and I should heal them. [Matthew 13:10-15]*

Jesus used parables as a mental obstacle course. The celebrity leeches, the different-simply-for-the-sake-of-being-different advocates, the mildly curious, the casual gawkers and the condescending religious hierarchy would gladly be rebuffed by the confusing lessons. However, the few who responded to the evidence of the miracles and sought the reflection of God as opposed to the reflection of themselves pursued by the majority, would become his disciples. These would follow him until he told them the meaning of these stories. They were willing to listen intently to the still small voice, straining their ears beyond the wind, earthquake and fire. Jesus taught in parables to separate those who were looking for an excuse not to believe his claims from those who were prepared to deny themselves in order to find truth.

This is the way God teaches. Our heavenly Father does not grab us by the lapels and shake us, demanding we understand what he has clearly stated so that there can be no confusion. He hides Himself. There is a path to find him, but that path requires the denying of ourselves. It requires building our life around a different focus than our own deceitful hearts. Very few are prepared to do this. The parables of Jesus and the parable saturated nature of God's word separate the casual student from the determined one, the mirror-worshippers from those who pursue the selfless path of truth.

Hidden truths abound in scripture. We have all seen the 'types' of Christ such as Moses, David, Joseph, Daniel and so many others. Principles, truths and exhortations are silhouetted in the many laws and rituals of the Mosaic covenant. There are parables of creation, historical parables, lineage parables and even geographical parables. An example of one of these geographical parables is where Paul expounds on the spiritual relationship between Sarah and Mount Zion along with the parallel between Hagar and Mount Sinai in Galatians chapter four.

### **Creation .... Not Nature**

Our foundation premise in this study is that we must venture beyond the veil to find God. We will submerge beneath scripture's surface to examine the spiritual significance of "*the things that have been made.*" We search for reflections and shadows of God's truths, His principles, His promises and His nature as they are displayed in the laws, features and components of creation. We will use the word 'creation' since I am uncomfortable with the word 'nature.' Creation is a term that presumes Yahweh's design, manufacture and control. Nature is a term allowing mankind to eliminate God and even insulting and denying the Creator by referring to a "Mother Nature" who controls the supposedly irrefutable laws of the universe. 'Nature' is a term spoken loudly by man's deceitful heart, elevating man to the highest evolved godlike status of the universe. 'Creation' is God's whispered term that diminishes man's significance and burdens him with moral responsibility. We will use the term 'creation.'

Creation currently revolves around a theme of finiteness. Everything has a beginning and an ending. Every building block of existence is currently bound by the cornerstone of finiteness. Our personal limitations under the curse are punctuated by this central theme of finiteness... death & life, pain & comfort, failure & success, sorrow & joy, tears & laughter. The darkness of the wisdom of the flesh concludes that therefore it is death that gives meaning to life. It is sorrow that propels the ecstasy of joy. It is failure that elevates success. The heart is so deceitful, suggesting that God's curse is actually a benefit.

The divine purpose is that we eventually enjoy the positives without enduring the negatives by being incorporated into an infinite based creation, a spirit based creation. The negatives, the pain emanating from a finite based creation, was intended by God to induce remorse, reflective self-examination and repentance. However, society has chosen instead to glorify the effects of the curse. Mankind is flooded with the flesh propaganda that life without death would be valueless, joy would cease to exist without sorrow and success would be unfulfilling without failure and there would be no laughter if there were no tears. Scripture warns us of these people: "*Woe to them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!*" [Is. 5:20-21].

We are not currently capable of even comprehending the infinite. However, the promise we have found, that we believe in and hope to participate in, is a new creation to be built upon the cornerstone of infinity. We await a heavenly kingdom on earth. The curse of the dust will be a memory. Death, as a reality, will perish. The earth and all creation will be blessed and spirit centered.... infinite as opposed to finite. It is not possible for our limited, finite minds to imagine all the changes required for creation to shift from a finite focus to an infinite focus. Scripture confirms this limitation in an expression presented in both Old and New Testaments: "*Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him*" [1 Cor. 2:9; Is. 64:4]. The millennial kingdom offers a transition period from the heavy burden of the curse ... to a rest of 1,000 years ... to be followed by a creation entirely spirit-centered as described in Revelation chapters 21 and 22.

## **The Creation Parable**

The apostle Paul writes to the Roman ecclesia that all have heard the preaching of Christ's gospel. [RSV]

*"So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ. But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have; for their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.."* [Romans 10:17-18]

We can legitimately ask Paul: How is it that you claim all the world has had the preaching of Christ offered to them? Whose voice is this that had gone out to all the earth and the ends of the world?

Actually Paul is quoting from Psalm 19. The first four verses of Psalm 19 read: [RSV]

*"The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."*

The psalmist David states that we can listen to creation as it tells us of God. David recognizes there are no audible tones from creation (expressed as the heavens and the firmament). Yet he states (and Paul concurs) that *"their voice goes out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world."*

Paul further emphasizes the clear message of creation's gospel in the first chapter in his letter to the ecclesia at Rome. Paul states that mankind cannot use ignorance as an excuse before God since the things that God has made clearly tell the good news of God's power and deity.

[Romans 1:18-20 RSV]

*"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth, For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."*

Our theme cannot be stated in clearer terms. The things that God has made tell His story. This is our subject: Creation's Gospel.





This simple phrase, heaven and earth, embodies all of God's creative work. It envelops the blessing and the curse, the hope and the dread, the promises to Abraham, the covenant people and the divine progression referred to in scripture as "the way."


The term "heaven" embraces positive images. When something is "of heaven" or "heavenly" it is related to the spirit. Matthew repeatedly defines the kingdom as being "of heaven." It should be noted, at the expense of the doctors of theology, that Matthew never speaks of the kingdom in heaven. He only refers to the kingdom as being "of" heaven... or **from** heaven... or a heavenlyly kingdom. Matthew does not use the term heaven to describe the physical location of the kingdom, but the nature and source of the kingdom about which Jesus preached.

That which is of the earth associates itself with negative images. Dust is the central defining term of the curse of sin and death under which creation currently groans in anticipation, awaiting a heavenly emancipation.

### **Earth & Earthy**

Gravity binds us to the earth. All that is related to the curses of Eden are bound by gravity to the earth. Angels, possessing a spirit nature, are not restricted by the laws of gravity. David sees an angel between heaven and earth with a drawn sword (1 Chron. 21:16) and the apostle John saw an angel fly in the midst of heaven (Rev. 14:6). The curses center around an earth theme.

*Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life...  
thorns & thistles shall it bring forth to thee... Thou shalt return to the ground for  
out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art & unto dust thou shalt return [Gen 3:17-19]*



Dust thou art and  
unto dust thou shalt return

*All are of the dust, and all turn to dust again*  
[Eccl. 3:20]

*Dust shall be the serpent's meat*  
[Gen. 3:14; Isaiah 65:25]

According to Jesus, Man's rejection of God is to be associated with this same cursed earthly dust: *And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that city, shake off the dust of your feet* [Matt. 10:14].

Jesus addresses the twelve as he sends them out to preach, associating a city's rejection of the gospel of the kingdom with its dust underfoot.

*Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you* [Luke 10:11].

Jesus instructs the 70 how to speak as he sends them out to preach. *But they shook off the dust of their feet against them and came unto Iconium* [Acts 13:51]. Paul & Barnabas are driven from Lystra, confirming the same parallel.

In fact, the very fate of the ultimately rejected is bound to the dust. Those who forsake . Yahweh will be written in the earth: *O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.* [Jer. 17:13]

This is as opposed to those who faithfully serve, whose names are written in heaven. *Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.* [ Luke 10:20]

The slaying of the wicked by the lion of the tribe of Judah who will come to claim his throne is equated with the smiting of the earth with the rod of his mouth: *But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked* [Isaiah 11:4].

## Heaven & Heavenly

That which is of heaven or heavenly is consistently positive and related to that which is eternal and of the spirit. Matthew repeatedly tells us of the kingdom **of** heaven. Our reward is reserved in heaven and will be brought to us from heaven. This reward is the redemption of our bodies from the curse of sin and death.

*For our conversation (better translated as citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body... [Phil. 3:20-21]*

The Lord Jesus also defines the reward as being reserved in heaven for the faithful. In Christ's often wrested promise in John 14:2-3 we read: *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also.* The Greek word translated "mansions" here is mone and is used in verse 23 of the same chapter in a verse with exactly the same promise, but translated *abode*.

Christ's promise is that he goes to his Father's house (heaven) to prepare these abiding places for his faithful followers. He promises to come again and take these followers to himself that they may be where he is. This is the same promise that Paul expresses in Philippians where he says that we look for Jesus to come from heaven to change our vile bodies that these bodies might be like Christ's. Jesus isn't identifying physical coordinates when he says he will take them to himself that they may be where he is, but rather a state of being.

Paul uses this same theme of our reward being an abiding place reserved in heaven in 2 Cor. 5:1-4:

*For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved (in other words - if our body dies) we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (This is our "mansion" or abiding place from John 14 and our "citizenship" from Philippians 3). For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house (mansion/citizenship) which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked (This is as opposed to Adam & Eve's first awakening of guilt manifesting itself in the shame of nakedness). For we that are in this tabernacle (our current sin-cursed bodies) do groan, being burdened: not that we would be unclothed (we don't look forward to death), but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.*

## Inherit or Be Inherited

Our reward is an eternal abiding place being prepared and reserved for us in heaven. At the expense of the doctors of divinity spewing from countless centers of 'higher' learning, it is clear that scripture never suggests that we will travel to that heavenly reward in order to receive it but just the opposite, that Christ will bring that reward to us. *And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be [Rev. 22:12].* Jesus will bring the reward with him for every man when he comes from heaven.

Absolutely no one goes to him to receive the reward.

It is also interesting to note that scripture speaks of our heavenly reward as being added.... *clothed upon*. Popular religion claims that when we lose our earthly body we are then free to claim our immortal reward. The apostle Paul stated that we have no desire to be unclothed (to die... to lose our fleshly frame). Paul's hope for a heavenly reward is expressed in exactly the opposite terms of popular religion. It is an adding, a being clothed upon with immortality - not a subtraction or removal of a fleshly covering to reveal the immortal beneath.

The phrase "heaven and earth" embraces the reward and the curse. The faithful will inherit the earth and the wicked will be inherited by the earth.

## **The Witnesses of God**

God called upon heaven and earth to be his witnesses to the covenant of life and death that he had offered Israel. *I call heaven & earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live* [Deut. 30:19]. These witnesses would also act as the proof that God's covenant would continue:

*Moreover the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah saying, Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the LORD hath chosen, he hath even cast them off? thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them. Thus saith the LORD; if my covenant be not with day and night and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them. [Jer. 33:23-26]*

As long as the witnesses of God (heaven & earth) are operating as they have for almost 6,000 years, we can be assured His covenant is intact. As long as the atmosphere exists and the laws of gravity are in force, as long as the witnesses exist... the covenant is active, the promise is assured.

## **At the Mouth of Two Witnesses**

God stated in the Deuteronomy 30 reference just offered that this is a covenant of life and death. Under the terms of the Mosaic law, in any trial where the accused could suffer execution, a minimum of two witnesses were necessary before the accused could be convicted. It was required that the hands of the witnesses would be the first against the accused. We find an application of this law with the "heaven and earth" witnesses.

*"At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. The*

*hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put away the evil from among you."*

[Deuteronomy 17:6-7]

One divine application of this law is seen in Deuteronomy 11 where God's judgements are spelled out against a prospectively apostate Israel. *Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods and worship them; And then the LORD's wrath be kindled against you, and **he shut up the heaven** that there be no rain and that **the land yield not her fruit**; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you* [Deut. 11:16-17]. Heaven and earth, as God's appointed witnesses, would be the first to put their hands against the guilty. The heavens would withhold the rain and the ground would not yield its full increase.

This is exactly what happened in the flood. Heaven and earth, as God's witnesses, put their "hands against the guilty." We read that the windows of heaven were opened, indicating that the vapor canopy (the mist that had watered the earth) was released. We read that the fountains of the great deep were broken up. The RSV translation presents the thought that after the flood was over the mountains rose and the oceans sank [Ps. 104:6-9 RSV], suggesting that at the beginning of the flood the ocean floors rose and the mountains sank. This would certainly answer the question as to how the whole earth could be covered in water in just 40 days. The hands of the two witnesses, heaven and earth, were the first against the guilty.

*Thou didst cover it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At thy rebuke they fled; at the sound of thy thunder they took to flight. The mountains rose, the valleys sank down to the place which thou didst appoint for them. Thou didst set a bound which they should not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth. [Psalm 104:6-9 RSV]*

Jesus Christ instructed rejected preachers to shake the dust from their feet as a witness against the towns refusing to hear the gospel message. These towns had chosen to bind their future to the dust of the earth. The dust of the earth would be their witness and when the hand of this witness would beckon for them they would become one with their witness... *dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return.*

## **The Heaven & Earth Seed**

The creation of Adam is expressed in terms of earth and heaven. We read from Gen.2:7 *And the LORD God formed man of the **dust of the ground**, and breathed into his nostrils the **breath of life**; and man became a living soul.* The dust of the ground was **of the earth**. The breath of life was **of heaven**. A human being is an incredibly complex structure, with intricately interdependent features. Describing our design as simply dirt and breath is an astounding understatement. Of all the ways the Father could express the creation of man, he chose to present man as a combination of earth and heaven... dust and then breath... earth and then heaven. Please note the progression. We will soon consider the terms in which God expresses the resurrection of the nation of Israel in Ezekiel 37. Ezekiel is told to prophesy twice. The body is formed first and then the breath

fills what was previously a valley of dry bones. Body and then breath... dust of the ground and then breath of life.... earth and then heaven. This is a consistent and significant progression.

Jesus Christ is the epitome of the earth and heaven union. He was the son of woman and the son of God. He was the son of the cursed earth and the son of the blessed heaven. He is the binding agent that brings earth and heaven together.

In addition, the nation of Israel is addressed on several occasions as "heaven & earth." Moses and Isaiah each address the nation of Israel as "heaven & earth."

*And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel the words of this song, until they were ended. Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass [Deut. 31:30 through 32:1]*

*The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. [Isaiah 1:1-2]*

This is most appropriate, not simply because Israel was appointed as God's witnesses to the Gentiles (just as heaven and earth were God's appointed witnesses to Israel) but because of the promises made to Abraham. In Genesis 13 God promises Abram: *I will make **thy seed as the dust of the earth**: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.* In Genesis 15 God expresses the same promise in these terms: *Look now toward **heaven**, and tell **the stars**, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, **So shall thy seed be.***

God established the continuing parallel that the descendants of Abraham would be identified with heaven and earth. It shouldn't be much of a surprise then when we consider the terms of Joseph's dreams. He first sees himself and his brothers as sheaves, as products of the earth... just as God first associated the seed of Abraham with the earth and then with the heavens. Appropriately, Joseph's second dream identifies the sons of Israel as the stars of heaven... just as God did to Abraham. This "earth and then heaven direction" is a significant and often repeated progression reflecting a divine pattern. This pattern expresses both doctrinal and exhortational truths to be presented later in this chapter. Interestingly, immediately following Abraham's attempt to sacrifice Isaac, we see the angel repeating the terms of the promise but in the reverse order: *I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore.* [Gen 22:17]

## **Israel Sustained By Heaven & Earth**

God fed Israel in the wilderness with two products that are associated with heaven and earth: the manna and the quail. The initial thought may be to associate the manna with the earth upon which it was found and the quail with the heavens from which they dropped. Scripture reverses this impression. Jesus identifies the

manna as the bread from heaven (John 6:31-33). Psalm 78:23-27 associates the quail with the earth and the manna with heaven:

*Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and **opened the doors of heaven**,  
And had **rained down manna** upon them to eat and had given them of the  
**corn of heaven**, Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full. He caused  
an east wind to blow in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south wind.  
He rained flesh upon them **as dust**, and feathered fowls **like as the sand** of the sea.*

The manna was 'of heaven' while the quail was 'of the earth.' A curse accompanied the eating of the quail (Num. 11:33), just as a curse is associated with the earth. There was no curse associated with the manna, just as there is only blessing associated with that which is 'of heaven.' In fact, the manna was identified with immortality, since an omer of it was placed in the ark of the covenant and never corrupted.

Repeatedly throughout both the Old and New Testaments, Israel is paralleled to earth and heaven. Examples of Israel likened to the earth and dust:

- Yahweh confirms the promises to Jacob at Bethel in the same terms he originally promised Jacob's grandfather: *"And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth."* Genesis 28:14
  - Balam asks *"Who can count the dust of Jacob?"* [Numbers 23:10]
  - God addresses Baasha (King of Israel) through the prophet Jehu explaining Baasha's elevation to authority in these terms: *"Forasmuch as I exalted thee out of the dust, and made thee prince over my people Israel."* [1 Kings 16:2]
  - Solomon offers appreciation to God for making him king over *"over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude."* [2 Chron. 1:9]
  - Isaiah writes of the surviving remnant of Israel in these terms: *"For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return..."* [Is. 10:23]
- Paul quotes these words in Romans 9:27.
- Hosea speaks of the future state of Israel as being redeemed from their shame in these terms: *"Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered or measured..."* [Hosea 1:10]
  - Hebrews 11:12 reads: *"Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable."*

Examples of Israel likened to the heavens and the stars:

- Moses addresses Israel on the last day of his life and tells them *"The LORD your God hath multiplied you, and behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude."* [Deut. 1:10]

● Moses addresses Israel: *"Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now the LORD thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude."* [Deut. 10:22]

● Moses, as he pleads with God to spare the destruction of the nation of Israel for their rebellion in the matter of the golden calf, speaks of the promise God made to the patriarchs to multiply their descendants *"as the stars of heaven."* [Ex. 32:13]

● Deborah and Barak, in their song of deliverance, referred to the battle against Sisera's horde as being fought by the stars from heaven. [Judges 5:20] *"They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera."*

● The King of Babylon is told he will be cut down to the ground because he had the audacity to presume to set his throne above the stars of God and ascend to heaven. [Isaiah 14:12-13] This refers to Nebuchadnezzar's militarily provoked rise in authority over the nation of Israel. *"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:"*

● Jesus Christ is defined as the bright and morning star. [Rev. 22:16] *"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."*



This principle of Abraham's descendants being paralleled to the stars of heaven can be extended to all the descendants of Abraham, including the Gentiles who claim him as their father by faith (*they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham...Gal. 3:7*).

● The seven stars of Revelation 1, referred to as the seven angels, represent the elder or elders of the seven ecclesias addressed in the next two chapters.

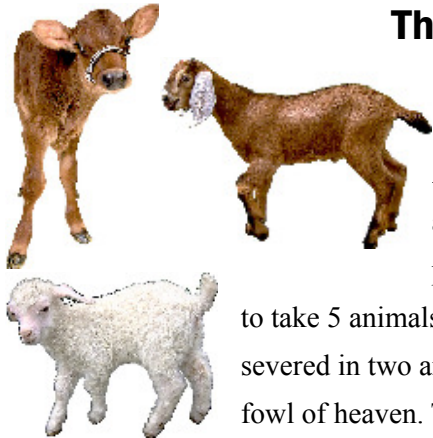
● The immortalized righteous are defined as stars and they shine with the brightness of the firmament forever and ever. [Daniel 12:2-3] *"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."*

*And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."*

Jude employs this consistent parallel between the enlightened and stars when he warns the brotherhood of the great danger of false teachers within the ecclesial community. He defines these men who "crept in un-



awares"... these Baalamites, Sodomites and Gomorhites.... these "brute beasts" .... as *wandering stars*, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever [verse 13]. Jude identifies these false teaching brethren as stars. They qualify as enlightened, as "stars". However, they refuse to deny the wicked emanations of their own hearts. Their ego or greed draws them off the "narrow way" and into the "broad way." They are therefore "wandering" stars.



## The Heaven & Earth Covenant



Abram, the eventual father of the "heaven and earth" seed, was invited to confirm God's promises with a covenant. The record in Genesis 15 instructs Abram to take 5 animals. Three of the animals are 4 legged beasts of the earth. They are to be severed in two and placed opposite each other. The remaining two animals are birds... the fowl of heaven. These birds are to remain whole & unsevered.

The heifer, she-goat and ram represent the earthly party of this covenant. The twelve legs of these three animals reflect the 12 great-grandsons of Abraham who would comprise the 12 tribe structure upon which the organization of the children of Abraham would stand. These gravity restricted animals are bound to the earth and therefore related to the curse of the earth. The severing of the bodies represents the eventual breaking of the power of the sin-curse in the body of the man who represents both parties of this covenant. Just as we break the bread to remember the breaking of the power of sin in the body of Jesus.... just as the temple veil (representing the flesh of Christ-Hebrews 10:20) was ripped in two from top to bottom at the Messiah's death... just as the rock at Rephidim, from which Israel drank, clave at the stroke of Aaron's rod as wielded by Moses (this rock was Christ - 1 Cor. 10:4)... so these 6 body halves represent sin-cursed flesh whose power would be broken in the body of the Son of God.

The turtledove and pigeon are not so restricted to the earth. With wings pumping they mount above the dust, climbing above the curse and soaring through the heavens. These two birds were not to be cut. The power of heaven will never be broken. Just as the six halves of the earth-bound animals represent the earthly contingent of this covenant (Christ and the enlightened) so the two birds represent the two who make up the heavenly contingent: Yahweh and Jesus Christ. Christ is seen in both parties of this covenant between heaven and earth. Jesus is the sum of all eight animal pieces. Eight is a number that is repeatedly wedded to both covenant and Jesus throughout scripture.

The association between Jesus, covenant and the number eight will be detailed in the chapter on "Rocks." The evidence presented there will offer a strong foundation for concluding that the sum of the "eight" sacrificial items (six halves representing those of the 'cursed earth' and two whole birds representing those 'of

heaven') in Abram's covenant offering reflect the Messiah mediator through whom heaven and earth would be reconciled and brought into a relationship of peace (harmony). He was the Son of God and he was the son of woman. He was both the product of heaven and the product of earth. Although these words in Eph. 2:14-15 apply to the union between Jew & Gentile achieved through Jesus Christ they beautifully encapsulate the union of heaven and earth:

*For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace.*

## **- The Progression - First Earth and then Heaven**

The divine progression is reflected throughout the parable of creation repeatedly. This progression offers both doctrinal and exhortational value. Our understanding of the atonement is validated by this progression. The moral lessons expressed in this progression define the borders of the narrow path of salvation. The progression that is repeatedly offered in scripture is that earth precedes heaven. This divine progression opposes popular Christianity's misconceptions concerning the nature of man, the nature of Jesus and the process of salvation.

Apostate Christianity claims that the essence of man is an immortal consciousness (heaven) that is bound in a mortal body (earth) and released upon the dissolution of that body. It is titled the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. That progression begins with a spirit based nature (immortal soul) and progresses to an earth-based nature (mortal body). That progression is heaven to earth.... spiritual to natural. Christians are also asked by their clergy to believe that Jesus was an heavenly, immortal, spirit being (God Himself or an angel) who hid within an earthly mortal disguise, telling everyone he really was a human being. This doctrine of the trinity as well as the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ require the opposite progression: a heaven to earth progression. In fact, this denial of the flesh of Christ (his humanity & human nature) was prophesied as being the defining doctrine of the anti-Christ system....

*For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. [2 John 1:7]*

The significance of the earth-heaven progression is stated by Paul within his discourse on the resurrection found in 1 Cor. 15:46: *Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.* This is an over-riding principle that is applied throughout scripture.

God and Christ repeatedly represent the enlightened as some form of fruit bearing plant life. They are identified with the vine, the fig tree and grain. For plantlife to live and bear fruit, it first has to die. The seeds are first buried in the earth. They germinate and grow, eventually breaking through the surface of the earth and

straining for the heavens. Paul, rather indignantly, states the simplicity of this lesson in relation to the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:36....

*Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened (meaning brought to life) except it die.*

The apostle Paul rebukes the critics of the doctrine of the resurrection firmly, explaining that death must precede life. He continues his reasoning to the point where he states the law of the divine progression in verse 46, that the natural always precedes the spiritual. That which is natural is of the earth. That which is spiritual is of heaven. Therefore, that which is of the earth must precede that which is of heaven in the plan of God. Let's examine some applications of this principle... that which is associated with the earth precedes that which is associated with heaven.

## **DARKNESS** Before **L I G H T**



This progression is repeated throughout scripture. In the creation process we see that darkness precedes light. Darkness offers an obvious association to that which is of the earth, while light is easily identified with that which is of heaven. We are told that God took light out of darkness. Darkness before light is a confirmation of the divine progression of earth (and that which is of the earth) preceding heaven (and that which is of heaven) in the divine plan. When we see the description of the individual days of creation they are always expressed in exactly the same fashion: *the evening and the morning were the first day... the evening and the morning were the second day...* etc. Light always

followed darkness. This is why the Jewish day has always begun at sunset, at the beginning of darkness. Their day begins in darkness and ends in light, as the divine pattern was instituted. It is interesting to note that this apostate world we live in begins and ends its day in utter darkness. That fact perfectly parallels the estranged state of creation today. It certainly is sadly appropriate.

### **The Creation of Adam**

The creation of man is expressed in similar terms. Genesis 2:7 presents the creation of man as a two stage process. First God employs the dust of the ground to create the form of man and then he adds the breath of life. That which is of the earth (dust of the ground) precedes that which is of heaven (the breath of life). Earth precedes heaven, just as darkness precedes light, just as death precedes life. Man is a product of both earth and heaven.

### **The Resurrection of Israel**

The terms of the prophetic progression of the resurrection from the dead of the nation of Israel, as presented by Ezekiel in chapter 37, present a similar two stage process. Ezekiel is instructed to prophesy twice. In the first stage the dry bones littering the valley floor dramatically draw together. Organs and flesh cover the

skeletons. The first stage is over. Lifeless bodies carpet the valley floor. Ezekiel is told to prophesy again. He calls for the four winds to breathe upon the slain so that they may live again. An army of living breathing people now stand where human bones had previously been scattered. God tells Ezekiel that this prophesy applies to the time when God will bring the nation of Israel out of their graves and back into the promised land.

This two stage prophesy presents the political and spiritual resurrection of the covenant people. The progression is first body and then breath.... just like the creation of Adam. Again we see the same progression: body (formed from the dust) precedes breath (from God in heaven) reflecting the divine progression of earth preceding heaven, darkness preceding light and death preceding life.

## **Baptism**

There has been a tremendous reduction in required ritual observance under the new covenant. The Mosaic covenant presented many detailed instructions concerning altar offerings, tabernacle attendance, circumcision, ritual cleanliness, priestly order, acceptable and unacceptable foods, etc. Under the Abrahamic covenant of faith confirmed in Christ's sacrifice we are only required to practice four divinely instituted rituals: baptism, memorial service, sisters' headcoverings and sisters' silence. God employs ritual as a teaching tool. Baptism offers this same consistent earth to heaven progression.

Baptism is a two stage ritual. At first glance it may appear as a single act. We are completely lowered beneath the water. We may assume that we are drawn back out of the water simply because our symbolic death would become literal if we stayed beneath the water. However, the fact that we are brought back up out of the water is equally as significant spiritually as the water burial. Baptism does not simply represent our joining Christ in his death. It also represents our joining him in his resurrection. Consider Paul's comments within just the first few verses of Romans chapter six where he offers insight into the significance of baptism:

*For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection....now if we be dead with Christ, we believe we shall also live with him... likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ...*

Baptism also reflects this same lesson of the progression from death to life. This progression of death to life that is presented throughout scripture is a doctrinal statement and the most powerful of exhortations. This progression speaks of the nature of the Messiah progressing from mortal to immortal, it denies the delusion of an immortal consciousness called the soul, and it shows us the path to life is by forfeiting a life of indulgence. Jesus tells us that we have to give up our life if we ever want to have life. *He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.* [Matt, 10:39]

## **Dual Messiah Memorials**

There are several two stage reflections of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This subject will be

pursued more vigorously within the "Rocks" chapter. However, the two stage progression in these memorials reflects the same earth to heaven progression we are currently examining. Here are some examples that will be explained in greater detail later in this book:

**Memorial Bread and Wine:** The bread represents the death of Christ and the wine represents his resurrection. Jesus established the progression of these memorials at the last supper: the bread and then the wine... death before life - *that which is of the earth precedes that which is of heaven.*

**The Fountain Stones:** There were two stones from which Israel drank from in the wilderness. Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 10: 4 that the rock Israel drank from in the wilderness was Christ. The first incident, at Rephidim (Ex. 17), represents the crucifixion and the second account, at Kadesh (Num. 20), represents the resurrection. The same progression is evident: death before life... *that which is of the earth precedes that which is of heaven.* These incidents will be examined extensively in the chapter on Rocks.

**The Covenant Stones:** There were two sets of two stones upon which the finger of God wrote the words of the covenant: the ten commandments. These stones present an unquestionable parallel to the Messiah (the evidence is presented in the chapter on Rocks). Once again, the first set of this dual Messiah memorial is broken. The second set is preserved in the golden ark within the most holy section of the tabernacle. The first of the two memorials is broken, representing the death of the Messiah. The second set is preserved in the place of greatest honor.... earth before heaven. This again displays the same progression of death before life, darkness before light, and suffering before blessing.

**Earth/Heaven Covenant:** The covenant God made with Abram we recently considered required two categories of animals. There were the three, severed, earth-restricted, four-legged animals. There were also the two fowl of heaven that had to be left whole. The six animal halves representing the earthly covenant party were prepared first. The progression of this dual Messiah memorial is the same: from earth to heaven and the item representing that which is of the earth is severed... just as the crucifixion rock at Rephidim clave after being struck... and just as the first set of Mosaic covenant stones were smashed at the foot of Sinai... and just as the memorial bread is broken.

**Baptism:** We have already determined that baptism is a two stage ritual. This subject is repeated again because it fits within the framework of the two-stage Messiah memorials.

## **The Last Shall Be first**

In accordance with the divine principle of "the last shall be first and the first shall be last" [Matt. 20:16; 19:30; Lk 13:30], it is the last stage of this earth to heaven progression that enjoys the glory & authority. This principle of the chronologically last becoming the first in authority and honor is reflected in the many sibling examples throughout scripture. Although Esau was born first, it was prophesied that the elder would serve the younger. We're told in Hebrews that Jacob's deathbed blessing of Joseph's sons was an act of faith. To the

dismay of Joseph, Jacob crossed his hands and put his right hand on the younger son, Ephraim, identifying the second son as the one who would inherit the blessing of the firstborn. On many occasions the son born first was not given the firstborn status of double inheritance and family leadership. Even though Zerah was technically the son born first to Judah, it was Pharez through whom the lineage of the Messiah was called. Aaron was the older son, but Moses was given the greater authority and honor by Yahweh. David was the last son of Jesse who became king of the nation. Adam and Christ are described by the apostle Paul as two men, the first being of the earth and the second being of heaven: *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive... The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.* [1 Cor. 15:22,47]

## **Exhortation Follows Principle**

In each of the dual Messiah memorials and also the first/last principle we see a progression that is also reflected in the earth to heaven progression exhibited in scripture. This progression expresses the exhortation that accompanies the doctrine of the atonement. That exhortation is that a life of self-sacrifice and self-denial must precede an immortal life of blessings and true happiness with contentment. The progression of earth before heaven and darkness before light and death before life each underline the significance of the exhortation that we should not join the world in its stampede of self-indulgence. Jesus had to suffer and die before he could rise to power, authority and everlasting life. David had to be a hunted political target before he could be king. Joseph had to be a slave and a prisoner before he could be the world's saviour with the political authority of a Pharaoh. The examples abound confirming the words of Jesus Christ in Matthew 10:39..."He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." We have to die before we can ever truly live. We must pour ourselves out, not fill ourselves up. We must empty ourselves daily. We must live lives of self-sacrifice and not self-indulgence before we can partake of the divine nature. So declares the two divinely appointed witnesses.... earth and heaven.

Creation's parables extend outward from heaven and earth in a logical, consistent pattern. We will continue our examination of this subject from the vantage point of the creator and look at the parable of the clouds of the heavens.



The previous chapter examined the relationship between the physical & the spiritual heavens. Within the framework of these observations we find we can probe deeper into creation, finding an abundance of spiritual parallels carefully hidden from the academic elite and reserved for those who have eyes to see & ears to hear.

The clouds ride the physical heavens, silently gliding above us. Often they pour down the life preserving water. Sometimes they deluge us, hammering our homes with fierce winds & violent floods. In scripture clouds present a consistent relationship with the presence, power & glory of God. Once this fact is established, the principle of God manifestation will be evident in the clouds along with strong exhortations.

Here are references where God repeatedly associates his presence with a cloud:

*And Moses went up into the mount, and a **cloud** covered the mount. And the **glory of Yahweh abode upon Mt Sinai and the cloud covered it six days: and the 7th day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud.**" [Ex. 24:15-16]  
"And Yahweh said unto Moses, speak unto Aaron they brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for **I will appear in the cloud** upon the mercy seat." [Lev. 6:2]*

*"And Yahweh said unto Moses, Lo **I come unto thee in a thick cloud**..." [Ex. 19:9]*

It was the cloud that represented the presence of God with Israel in the wilderness... to both Israel and to the hostile nations surrounding them. In Numbers 14:14 we hear Moses pleading with God to spare the nation on the basis of the anticipated blasphemy of the Gentile nations...

*"And they will tell it to the inhabitants of the land: for they have heard that thou Yahweh art among this people, that thou Yahweh art seen face to face, and that **thy cloud standeth over them**, and that **thou goest before them, by day in a pillar of cloud** ..."*

*"And **the angel of God**, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and **went behind them**, and the pillar of **the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them**. And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. And it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that no one came near the other all night." [Ex. 14:19-20] It was the cloud that went where the angel went. It was the cloud that protected Israel, illuminating their camp at night while darkening the camp of their enemies.*



*"I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that **the bow shall be seen in the cloud.**" [Gen. 9:13-14] This was the covenant God made with Noah & every living creature. Therefore, appropriately, the symbol of the covenant was to be framed by the symbol of God's presence...the cloud.*

*The burden of Egypt. Behold **Yahweh rideth upon a swift cloud**, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it." [Is. 19:1] The presence and power of God is seen in the clouds.*

The **glory** of God (as well as his presence & power) is associated with the clouds. Consider the following references:

*". . . and they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the **glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.**" [Ex. 16:10]*



In 1 Kings 8 Solomon's temple is dedicated. Verses 10-11 tell us: "*When the priests were come out of the holy place, that **the cloud filled the house of the LORD**. So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for **the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD**.*"

A similar occurrence took place at the dedication of the tabernacle during the wilderness wanderings. "*Then the cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and **the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle**. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation because the cloud abode thereon, and **the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle**... the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.*" [Ex. 40:34-38]

At the transfiguration of Jesus we read: "*While he yet spake, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.*" [Matt. 17:5] The three disciples should not have missed the significance of the voice out of the cloud, especially with Moses standing there with Jesus & Elijah in this vision.

God presents a strong, consistent case for associating his presence, power & glory with clouds. Having established this foundation, we can pursue this shadow lesson through scripture, uncovering fascinating spiritual lessons.

## **Dark Clouds**

Dark clouds, when associated with the presence of God, deliver a warning of harsh judgement. Dark clouds are accompanied by crashing lightning, driving rains, unrelenting winds and darkness.

In reference to the judgements upon Egypt God says: "*And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the LORD God.*" [Ezek. 32:7-8]

In Ezekiel 38 the Gogian host comes like a storm cloud into the land of Israel: "*Thou shalt ascend and come **like a storm**, thou shalt be **like a storm** to cover the land.*"(verse 9).

It is God that brings them like a cloud into the land. Verse 16 tells us

*"And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a **cloud** to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days.*



*And I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O God, before their eyes." The host of Gog is a dark cloud because they are God directed. The creator dispatches them into his land for the purpose of manifesting his power and his glory to the unenlightened Gentiles. God's judgement upon these invaders is expressed in similar terms. Verse 22 reads... "I will **rain** upon him & his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an **overflowing rain** and great hailstones, fire and brimstone." Rain comes from the clouds. This is not*

the gentle spring rain that coaxes the seeds within the earth's womb to strive upward searching for the light. This is the driving, pounding rain that overflows, crushing barriers... an unrestrained rain that floods, destroys & kills. These are the clouds that will teach man the fear of God.

Joel warns us of the day of God's judgements being a day of dark clouds.

*Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of **the LORD cometh**, for it is nigh at hand: A day of darkness and of gloominess, **a day of clouds and of thick darkness**, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations." [Joel 2:1-2]*

The harsh judgements of God are born on dark clouds.

## **Clouds & Jesus & The Saints**

Maintaining a consistency with the principle of God manifestation, we should see parallels between clouds and Jesus Christ as well as the saints. This is exactly the case.

When Jesus is taken up into heaven to sit at the right hand of God, he ascends into the heavens (so appropriately) in a cloud. The repetitive message of the clouds underlines the fact that Jesus was going to the Heavenly Father.

*"...while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." [Acts 1:8]*

The angels make it clear that he will return as he left. The inference is that he will come with the clouds. This is consistent with what Jesus taught the disciples and warned the Sanhedrin. Again & again we are told that when Jesus comes again... when he comes for judgement, with power & glory... he comes with the clouds!

Peter, Andrew, James & John sat on the Mount of Olives, overlooking Jerusalem from the east, listening intently as Jesus prophesied... of the destruction of the temple, the coming judgements upon Jerusalem & the signs of his coming. Jesus tells them: *'and then shall they see the son of man*



*coming in a cloud with power and great glory."* [Lk 21:27] These words of the Messiah are also recorded in the Matthew 24 and the Mark 13 accounts of the Olivet Prophecy. In Luke, Jesus goes on to say *"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and*

*they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power & great glory"*. Perhaps these disciples thought back to when Yahweh came to the freed slaves of Israel in a cloud with power & great glory. It seems very fitting that God's son be described as coming with the clouds... riding the very badge of authority God established from the time of Noah.

The impact of Jesus' claim did not escape the attention of Caiaphas. Jesus had been silent before his accusers until the High Priest adjured him by the Living God to answer their charge. Jesus replied: *"Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."* [Matt. 25:64] The High Priest rips his clothes (an illegal act for him - Lev. 21:10) and claims what Jesus said constituted blasphemy. Where did Caiaphas read 'blasphemy' into the words of Jesus? No doubt all the Sanhedrin would immediately recognize the grand claim of Jesus of Nazareth. These devoted disciples of Moses knew that it was Yahweh that had come to Israel in the cloud with power and great glory when he made a covenant with the nation at Sinai. . . . . blasphemy, declared Caiaphas on the basis of Jesus' claim of coming in the clouds of heaven. The spitting, ridicule and blows quickly followed.

Jesus Christ repeatedly taught that he will come in the clouds, cementing his claim that he comes with God's authority... that he is Immanuel (God with us). In Revelation 1:7 we read: *"Behold, he comes with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him."*

## **The Faithful & The Clouds**

God consistently parallels his presence, power & glory with the clouds. His son will come again "in the clouds," with all the attending authority, power & glory of his Heavenly Father. In order to maintain the principle of God manifestation, we should find parallels between the saints and the clouds. This is exactly the case!

Referring to the many faithful men & women honored in Hebrews chapter eleven we read this in the first verse of chapter 12:

*"Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a **cloud of witnesses**, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."*

Jude warns the faithful about false teachers within the ecclesia. In verse 12 he parallels them in several interesting ways... *"These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: **clouds they are without water**, carried about by winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots..."* Those who are enlightened but turn from the truth are still identified as clouds... but clouds without water. These people have the exterior appearance of godliness, but without substance. At first glance they seem to offer the water of the word, but they are clouds without water.

In Revelation chapter 10 we see the immortalized saints depicted as the rainbowed angel... **clothed with a cloud**. *"And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head..."* [verse 1]

The cloud at the mount of transfiguration holds a promise and offers a hope. Matthew, Mark & Luke each offer a record of this account. Each gospel account also offers this quote from Jesus immediately before their record of the transfiguration:

*"Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."* [Matt. 16:28; see also Mark 9:1 and Luke 9:27].

It is easy to see that Jesus is referring to the vision of the kingdom that Peter, James & John would share with him within a few days at his transfiguration on the mount. Matthew and Mark each note that it was **after** six days that Jesus took the three disciples with him up into the mount. Yet Luke says *"it came to pass about eight days after these sayings."* Not one of the three accounts offer an exact timing. Matthew and Mark identify the vision of the kingdom as simply being beyond a six day period following Jesus' promise of the vision of the kingdom. This aligns beautifully with the 7,000 year plan. The promise of redemption and a rest is offered to Adam & Eve in the garden. After 6,000 years the hope is realized. There were seven of them on that mount... Jesus, Peter, James, John, Moses, Elijah and Yahweh. Moses & Elijah represent those who had been dead, yet resurrected. The five of them witness the glorification of the son of God. It is a wonderful vision of the kingdom. We know that it was a vision because that is the way Jesus identifies the account to Peter, James & John. *"And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them saying, Tell **the vision** to no man, until the son of man be risen again from the dead."* [Matt. 17:9 ]

Luke presents the time frame between Christ's promise of the vision of the kingdom and the actual vision as being **about** eight days. The purpose of the difference is to present another emphasis. Luke's particular presentation of the vision of the kingdom is to be understood as being associated with the eighth millennium... when God will *be all and in all*. In this account we are given greater detail concerning the cloud. In Matthew's and Mark's accounts we are told that the bright cloud from which God spoke "*overshadowed*" them. In Luke we read "*...there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as **they entered into the cloud.***" In Luke's account, where the time frame is offered as *about eight days*, the distinction is made that all seven of them were together in the cloud. It has been demonstrated that we should understand the cloud as a parable representing the presence, power & glory of God. Therefore, as we see God and Christ and five of the faithful joined together in the one cloud, we see the promise and the hope presented in the cloud for the faithful. We are offered the divine nature (1 Pet. 1:4)... we will be like God... one with him... if we will be faithful. The eight day timeframe in Luke signifies the eighth millennium, when there will be no curse... everyone and everything will be in the cloud. This is as opposed to Matthew's and Mark's accounts where *after six days* the cloud simply *overshadowed* them, signifying the millennial kingdom. Each account is accurate in detail. There are no contradictions. God simply emphasizes certain features of the account and uses generality to stress specific aspects of this historical parable for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. The Matthew and Mark accounts that present the event as coming "after six days" signify the 1,000 year reign in the 7th millennium (after six). The Luke account presents the same event as taking place "about" eight days after the promise.... identifying the post-millennial kingdom, or eighth millennium. The underlying message of the cloud is consistent throughout scripture.

## **Caught Up In The Clouds**

Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 are often misunderstood, especially by apostate Christianity.

*"For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be **caught up together** with them **in the clouds**, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."*

Paul is not comforting those who have lost loved ones in the ecclesia with the physical coordinates of where the redeemed will join up with Christ. Paul is comforting them with instruction concerning their change in nature. Being caught up together in the clouds with Christ refers to the change in nature that will take place... from flesh-based life to spirit-based life. We must be born of the spirit to inherit the kingdom of God. This is what Jesus speaks of when he addresses Nicodemus in the night, stating that we must be born again of water

and of spirit. Being reborn "of the spirit" is the same as being caught up together with Christ in the clouds where we are included in the presence, glory and power of divinity. Flesh & blood will surrender to the spirit nature of deity... we will be caught up together with him in the clouds.



It should be noted that we have an exact application of these statements as presented in the vision of the kingdom during the transfiguration on the mount (just considered). The immortalization & glorification that was depicted took place in the air and in the clouds. Air and clouds are items we always find within earth's atmosphere. Paul doesn't write to the Thessalonians about a 'rapture' where the living faithful defy gravity rising up into the sky to meet Jesus in heaven. He is comforting those who have lost loved ones with the hope of inheriting the divine nature at the resurrection

### **In My Father's House are Many Mansions**

Jesus offers the same promise in somewhat different terms in John 14:2-3:

*"In my Father's house are many mansions: If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and **receive you unto myself**: that **where I am, there ye may be also.**"*

Jesus tells his disciples that he must leave them and go to his Father's house in order to prepare these *mansions* for them. The Greek word 'mone' is translated mansions. It is translated differently but offering exactly the same promise in verse 23 of the same chapter. Jesus says: *"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our **abode** ('mone') with him."* Jesus promises that he and his Father will come and abide within the faithful... that he will come to them and take them unto himself that where he is, they may be also. Jesus is not referring to a change in physical location but a change in nature. Jesus went to heaven to prepare these heavenly abiding places. He brings them with him when he comes again. He takes the faithful to himself so that they may be where he is. We join him in the cloud of God's presence, power & glory. We join him in the nature of deity. Peter expresses it this way:

*"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." [2 Peter 1:4]*

There is certainly no doubt that the reward must be brought to us. We **do not** go to receive the reward as the blind leaders of Christianity ask us to believe. Jesus emphatically states in Rev. 22:12

*"And behold, I come quickly: **and my reward is with me**, to give every man according as his work shall be." We do not go to receive the reward...Jesus brings these abiding places, prepared in heaven, with him when he comes... so that he can take us unto himself and we can be where he is (in nature), forever.*

Paul expresses the same promise of the cloud nature in Phil. 3:20-21: *"For our conversation (should be understood as 'citizenship') is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."* Our citizenship is in heaven. These are the mansions or abiding places promised in John 14. We look to heaven for Jesus to come to us with this citizenship...with these abiding places, so that he will change these vile, corruptible bodies to be like his body... so that he may take us unto himself that we might be where he is... so that we might be caught up into the clouds with him and be with him there forever.

The apostle Paul expresses this same promise in greater detail in 2 Corinthians 5:1-4:

*For we know that if this earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved (in other words - if the body we live in actually died) we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (the abiding places that Jesus promised he would prepare for the faithful when he went to his Father's house). For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked (Adam & Eve first experienced the shame of their nakedness immediately following their sin. The righteous have sought the acceptable covering for their sins ever since, so that we may not be found naked). For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed (we don't wish to die... to put off our temporary abiding place) but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."*

The apostle Paul exhorts us to believe in the unseen things which are eternal. We wait for the abiding places Jesus has prepared for us in heaven, made without hands & eternal...he will bring the reward - these eternal abiding places, with him when he comes. He will take us unto himself so that where he is, we may be. We will be caught up together in the clouds of God's presence, power & glory with the Son of God... where we will be with him forever.

The clouds of 1 Thess. 4:17 offer the comforting promise of eternal redemption from the cursed nature of sin and death we now endure. When we join Christ in the symbolic clouds of heaven, we shall not be found naked. We shall endure shame no more. We will join Christ and Yahweh "in the cloud" just as Peter, James, John, Moses and Elijah did in the vision of the kingdom on the mount of transfiguration.

## **The Cloud on the Day of Atonement**

The fascinating lesson of the cloud on the Day of Atonement solidifies the immense value of a clear understanding of the principle of God manifestation. God does not reveal himself openly... he manifests himself, he reveals himself through his creation. It is a legitimate question to ask why Yahweh veils himself in this way. Why doesn't God clearly reveal himself? Why does he veil himself, shielding his strength & glory in the weaknesses of man & creation?

## **The Veiling of God Is An Act of Mercy**

One of the first things that should be understood about the principle of God manifestation ( The veiling of God's strength & power behind the weaknesses of the flesh... prophets & kings & the faithful)... is that it is an act of love & grace. Man cannot stand before the unveiled presence of God. We would die instantly. The angel that showed his glory to Moses said this to him: *"Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me and live."* [Ex. 33:20] There is even an angel that if man saw his face, he would die. We cannot stand before the unveiled presence of God. It is an act of mercy that God veils himself before us....not revealing himself clearly, but through a glass, darkly.

## **God Manifestation as A Behaviour Modification Tool**

The principle of God manifestation serves as a tool for God to develop the spirit character within mankind. We remember the one man whom God declares that he did not have to speak with in a veiled manner. When Aaron & Miriam spoke against Moses we remember how God rebuked them:

*"Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I Yahweh will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all my house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of Yahweh shall he behold..."* [Num. 12:6-8]

You may recall that just a few sentences earlier we learned this about Moses: *"Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth."* [verse 3] God spoke to Moses without the shadowy visions & parables that God used with all other men... because Moses was already the meekest of all men. The veiling of God has a humbling effect on the men & women who will venture beyond the veil in search of the Creator. Those in whom the pride of the flesh is king will not respond to the still, small voice of the spirit which is veiled behind dark sayings & parables. These have eyes but do not see & ears but do not hear. These are they who have not... from whom what they have will be taken from them. Only those who have been humbled, whose fleshly pride has been beaten down, will enter the cloud and eventually stand in the unveiled presence of Deity.

Surely, the principle of God manifestation presents a difficulty to the understanding of the truth. It requires an abandoning of the mind of the flesh. The doctrine of the trinity, the humanizing of God,



is much more pleasant & acceptable to the proud mind of flesh that wants a God made in its own image. Therefore, we should understand these two features of this foundation principle of God manifestation: 1] That God veils himself as an act of love and mercy. 2] That God focuses his strength through the weakness of man, he reflects his glory through creation, he reveals his light through the shadows of the law.... in order to humble the faithful, preparing us as a proper abiding place for himself & his son.

## The Atonement Day Cloud

On the tenth day of the seventh month of each year the High Priest was to enter the inner room of God's sanctuary: the Most Holy. This is where the ark of the covenant rested with the uncorrupted manna, Aaron's rod of resurrection, and the two stone tablets of the covenant preserved underneath the mercy seat. This is the only day of the year the High Priest would be allowed to enter the Most Holy. He had to follow God's directions explicitly. His life depended upon it.

We read this warning from Lev. 16:2:

*"And Yahweh said unto Moses. Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; **that he die not:** for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat."*

This warning is further emphasized & expanded upon in verses 12-13...

*"And he shall take a censer full of burning coals from off the altar before Yahweh, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail: And he shall put the incense upon the fire before Yahweh, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, **that he die not.**"*

Within all the detailed directions for Aaron on the Day of Atonement, there is only one issue that God makes life threatening ... the creation of the cloud to cover the mercy seat where God will appear. The creation of the incense cloud was a life preserving act. Therefore, we can easily see that the principle reflected in this process must be related to the preserving of life. The wisdom hidden within the lesson of the cloud is the difference between life and death.

There are several lessons in the cloud on the Day of Atonement. One evident lesson is that man cannot stand in the unveiled presence of God and live... since Aaron is warned to shield God's glory with the incense cloud or die. The cloud was created to fog the room, centering on the mercy seat where Yahweh repeatedly tells us he would appear... where he would speak from. God does not openly reveal himself. He veils himself. He manifests himself through people and laws and creation. This



feature of the truth (God manifestation) highlights the vast gulf between the limits of man's power and the extent of God's power. God shines his light through the darkness of man and the shadows of the law... he creates light out of darkness... yet man's definition of darkness is the very absence of light. God brings life out of death... yet man's definition of death is the absence of life. God makes things out of nothing. Man cannot. We can change energy to matter and matter to energy. We can change a solid into a liquid into a gas and back again. Man cannot make something from nothing. God can. God chooses to reveal his light through the darkness of men's hearts... he manifests his strength through the weaknesses of his servants. He veils his strength in weakness and his light in shadows. The veiling of God's presence is an act of mercy. It is a declaration of his immense power. It provides an insight into the mind of God. It humbles the faithful.

Consider these words of the apostle Paul:

*"But if our gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them ....For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, **that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.**"*

[ 2 Cor. 4:3-7]

The God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, chooses to shine the glorious light & strength of the truth through the darkness & weakness of the flesh.

This particular application of the cloud lesson on the Day of Atonement offers both exhortation and promise. Aaron had to:

*"take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail: And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not." [Lev. 16:12-13]*

We observe that Aaron had to create the cloud **before** he could sprinkle the blood about the mercy seat. The creation of the cloud to shield God's presence at the mercy seat represents the principle of God manifestation. The sprinkling of the blood of the bullock before the mercy seat represents atonement. Therefore an exhortation is made clear to us. The practicing of God manifestation must precede atonement. Jesus had to be Immanuel (God With Us) before he could be the lamb slain for the sins of the world. Jesus had to display his Father to the world before he could save mankind from the curse of death by being the acceptable atoning sacrifice. He most certainly fulfilled that responsibility. Consider our Lord's answer to Philip when this disciple asked Jesus to show them the Father:

*"Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me?" [John 14:9-10]*

The exhortation to us is to follow Jesus Christ. Before we can expect to be covered by the white robe, washed in the blood of Christ, we must manifest God. We must display to the world the mind and character of the Father. We do this by returning good for evil, doing good to those who hate us, etc: *"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."* [Matt 5:44-45]

The fact that the cloud of incense had to precede the blood sprinkling is an exhortation to the fact that if we wish to be atoned for, literally (following Christ's judgement), we must first have manifested God in our words and deeds. Quite often in God's word, promise is often discovered in the folds of exhortation. This is just the case in the lesson of the cloud on the Day of Atonement.

### **The Curse - The Blessing - And The Cloud**

Looking beyond the exhortation within the chronological order of the day, we can also see the promise of a change in nature for those who manifest the Father through all the fiery trials they endure.

The Atonement Day cloud was created by the High Priest tossing the incense into the burning coals taken from the altar of burnt offering. The incense is prepared by taking four specific ingredients and grinding them into a fine dust, to which salt is added. This aromatic dust is thrown onto the burning coals, within God's sanctuary, creating a cloud that surrounds the mercy seat. This ritual displays the saints' change in nature from dust to vapor... from the curse of *dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return* to being *caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord... and so shall we ever be with the Lord*. The conversion of the incense from dust to vapor represents the change from flesh to spirit... the mortal putting on immortality and corruptible putting on incorruptibility. The process unfolds beautifully.

The preparation of the incense is described in these terms:

*"And the LORD said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices with pure frankincense; of each shall there be a like weight... thou shalt beat some of it very small ."* [Ex. 30:34,36]

The incense was composed of four equal parts. The spice chunks were combined and finely ground into an aromatic powder. The incense should be associated with the ecclesia. The four equal parts align with the four square encampment... the four lead tribes... the four faces of the cherubim rep-

representing God revealed in the faithful... the four categories of earth ( representing those to whom the gospel is introduced) upon which the seed of the word of God is sown in Christ's parable of the sower ... the four living creatures of Revelation chapter four representing the political aspect of the immortalized saints... the four corners of their cloaks that had to have the blue fringe representing the commandments of God (cp. Num 15:37-40 and Deut. 22:12)... the four cornered sheet descending out of heaven with the unclean animals in Peter's vision that represented the Gentiles that would now be welcomed into the ecclesia... etc. The four equal ingredients, like the four square encampment, reflects the ecclesia... those 'called out.' Four is a number that is consistently related to God manifest in the flesh throughout scripture. Therefore we can see that the four equal spice ingredients represent the ecclesia, the ones that are called out.

The four ingredients are combined into one mixture and ground together with salt. Salt is a preservative and should be associated with the extension of life... which is exactly the lesson involved in the creation of the incense cloud that prevents the premature death of the High Priest. They are no longer four spices, but one... one aromatic powder. This fact reflects the plan of God... many becoming one in him. Consider these parts of the beautiful prayer of Jesus Christ in John 17, where he stops on his way to Gethsemane to pray for the faithful:

*"And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee, Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.... Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us..." [John 17:11, 20-21]*

Just as the Father wants all the faithful, now suffering under the terms of the Edenic curse, to become one in him through his son, the four spices were ground into the single incense powder. The grinding of the incense is a necessary step in the process before the incense was ready to be transformed into the cloud. The crushing of the spirit of flesh in the faithful is a necessary step before we can be ready to join our Lord Jesus in the cloud of God's nature. Jesus offers this blessing as he taught the people on the mount:

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." [Matt. 5:3]*

This blessing is surely very confusing to those whose thinking aligns securely with the standards of the flesh. Being rich in spirit is considered something wonderful in the world. To be rich in spirit is considered to be full of zest, enthusiasm, and life. Unfortunately, if we are full of life... there is no room for God's spirit in us, only our own. The lesson we repeatedly learn in scripture is that we must pour ourselves out, empty ourselves, if we wish to be filled with God. Consider our Lord's words in Matthew 10:39... *"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."* Only by emptying ourselves will there be room for God.

The hidden exhortation of the grinding of the spices into the incense is expressed so beautifully in Isaiah 66:1-2...

*Thus saith the LORD, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool:  
where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For  
all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the  
LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit,  
and trembleth at my word."*

It is quite interesting to note the Hebrew word that is translated *contrite*. It is 'daka.' It means bruised or crushed or broken in pieces. This same word is translated bruised twice in Isaiah 53, referring to the promised Messiah: *He was **bruised** for our iniquities* and *Yet it pleased the LORD to **bruise** him*. God seeks the crushed spirit, the poor in spirit, those who have had the fulness of the flesh ground out of them. The Father does not seek ornate temples or gold drenched artifacts in which to reside. He seeks the crushed in spirit, those who have had their lives poured out... like the pouring out of the blood of the sacrificial animal at the base of the altar. When we have been emptied of ourselves, when our fleshly spirit is crushed... there is room for God in us. He can be our strength, he will be the crutch of our bruised spirit, the wheelchair of our crippled heart. The agonies and sorrows of life have great value in the refining and shaping of the future vessels of God's Holy Spirit. This is inspiringly expressed in Is. 57:15...

*"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 and humble spirit,  
to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."*

Jesus speaks of himself and God coming and making *their abode* in those who love him and keep his words (John 14:23). The crushing of the four spices into one aromatic powder exhorts us of the necessity for the enlightened to be tested and refined before we can be accepted up into the cloud of God's presence & power & glory.

The incense is ground into a fine, dust-like powder. We can see a strong association with the curse of our fleshly nature... *Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return*. Before the incense, now an aromatic dust, can be transformed into the cloud that would envelop the mercy seat... it had to be burned. Before the faithful can be changed from our cursed nature into the divine nature... we must be tested & purified in the refining fires of God.

## **Trial and Transition By Fire**

Fire has both positive and negative features. **Harnessed fire** warms, cooks, disinfects, tempers, lights & purifies. **Uncontrolled fire** consumes, destroys & kills. Fire is a symbol often used in scripture to represent the difficulties that the faithful will endure while being prepared for assuming the blessed nature of God.

*Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is, If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. [1 Cor. 3:13-15]*

*"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ " [1 Peter 1:7]*

It is the action of the fire upon the incense that changes the form of the incense from powder to vapor, from dust to cloud... thus symbolically from flesh to spirit & from curse to blessing... from the curse of *dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return* to the blessing of being *caught up together in the clouds and so shall we ever be with the Lord*. This is accomplished on the Day of Atonement. What a beautiful ritual, bursting with promise and exhortation.

The cloud, as created by God, presents a scriptural symbol for his presence, his power & his glory. The use of the cloud in scripture is consistent, spanning books penned by a diversity of men writing in varying centuries. This consistency of subtle symbols is a seed of inspiration for those who love God's truth. The understanding of the symbolic representation of the cloud explains challenging verses and provides the foundation for our next consideration.... that which issues from the clouds.



Since the clouds represent the presence, power & glory of God, then logically we should find in scripture that the rain which issues from these clouds is a reflection of something positive that issues from God. This is exactly the case. We find repeatedly in the Bible that the rain is paralleled to God's word.

"Give ear O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass."  
[Deut. 32:2]

"For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." [Isaiah 55:10-11]

As is always the case, exhortation weaves through creation's spiritual parallels. We find an interesting law that God establishes. Yahweh demands obedience from those to whom his word has come. In Deuteronomy 11 God warns Israel that if they do not receive his commandments then they will not receive creation's reflection of that word, which is the rain they need to survive. God points out that he is bringing them into a land very different from Egypt. In Egypt they watered their crops with irrigation ditches. Water flowed into their fields from the Nile. They could even form these channels with their feet. The promised land was very different. It was a land of hills and valleys, utterly dependent upon the rain from heaven. If there was no rain...the crops would fail & famine would follow. God presents a parallel between Israel's receiving and acting upon his words (the

spiritual rain from the spiritual clouds of his presence) and their receiving the literal rain from the literal clouds of the heavens.

"For the land whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs: But the land whither ye go in to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: a land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year. And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine and thine oil. And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full. Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them, and then the LORD's wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you. Therefore lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul..." [Deut. 11:10-18]

If Israel refused to receive God's word - God refused to send them the rain. This further cements the relationship between the rain and the word of God. This relationship is stressed throughout God's word.

"If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit." [Lev. 26:3-4]

A similar law will apply in the millennial kingdom:

"And it shall come to pass, that everyone that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain." [Zech. 14:16-17 ]

The effect of the rejection of God's word is severe drought. Rich earth turns to a sandy dust which yields no fruit. We can see this in the story of Ruth. Naomi and Elimelech take their two sons and leave the drought in Bethlehem, heading for Moab. This was the time of the Judges when every man did what was right in his own eyes... indicating the need for a spiritually instructive drought. If Israel will not receive God's word and bear fruit, then they will not receive God's rain and their land will not bear fruit. Perhaps in their hunger for the natural, they would learn to hunger for the spiritual.



Consider what Solomon prays for at the dedication of the temple. He asks that when the heavens are shut up and there is no rain due to sin that God may hear their prayer of repentance when they beseech him, praying toward the temple (1 Kings 8:35-36). Solomon understood the parallel between receiving rain and the obedient receiving of the word.

The rains were withheld for 3 1/2 years during Ahab's reign over Israel. Interestingly, Elijah is commanded to go and hide himself. The rains of heaven were restrained... and the word from heaven was restrained. God reinforces this association between the rain and the word during Elijah's tenure.

Yahweh presents the parable of the vineyard in Isaiah five. He defines the vineyard as the house of Israel. The vineyard yielded only worthless wild grapes. Part of the judgement upon the treacherous vineyard is that God would command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it [Is. 5:1-6]. The judgement for not hearkening to the word is to suffer the lack of rain.

Consider the conditions in Jeremiah's time, when Judah practiced wickedness but thought themselves righteous, when they hypocritically refused to face their immorality. They refused to receive correction and made their faces harder than rock... they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush. [Jeremiah 5:31; 6:15; 8:12]

Consider this testimony that associates Judah's refusal to obediently receive God's word and God's refusal to send rain.

"..and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness. Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed. [Jer. 3:2-3]

"Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up. And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded and covered their heads. Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads. Yea the hind also calved in the field and forsook it, because there was no grass.... O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee." [Jer. 14:2-5,7]

God withheld the rain on certain towns, but not on others... apparently as a teaching tool. It would drive those who rebelled against God's word to the towns where the word was received humbly.

"And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon

another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. So two or three cities wandered unto one city to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD." [Amos 4:7-8]

When the Messiah comes, the hearts of the Jews will be circumcised. Repeatedly we read of the humbling of Abraham's descendants when the kingdom comes. Isaiah tells us some of the blessings they will enjoy because of their renewed attitude... "Then shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous" (Is. 30:23). The association between the rain and the word of God is only the beginning of the lesson of the rain.

### **The Word Expressed Threefold**

There are three principle applications of the association between the rain and the word. These are [1] God's spoken Word; [2] the Word made flesh and [3] the Word in power. We have already established the strong relationship between the rain and the word of God. This parallel will be strengthened more when we examine the early and the latter rains. Application number two is the scriptural parallel between the rain and the word made flesh... the son of God. Jesus is introduced as the word made flesh... the living logos... in John 1:14:

" And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

Since Jesus Christ is expressed in terms of " the Word" we should see him also associated with the rain... if this parable of scripture is to be consistent and accurate. We certainly find this to be the case.

"Give the king thy judgements, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge the people with righteousness and thy poor with judgement. The mountains shall bring peace to the people... shall break in pieces the oppressor... They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. He shall come down like the rain upon the mown grass: as the showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." [Psalm 72:1-6]

There is no question as to who the son of the king will be that will bring peace and break in pieces the oppressor and have dominion to the ends of the earth. He is the word made flesh who comes down as the rain upon the mown grass. The mown (or cut down) grass is a symbol of the circumcision of the hearts of the children of Israel. John the Baptist was to be a voice crying in the wilderness, saying: "all flesh is grass... surely the people is grass" [Is. 40:6-7]. It is the mown grass that the son of the king showers down upon with peace, abundance and dominion.

James offers this parallel between the rain and the word made flesh:

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain." [James 5:7]

James exhorts the faithful to patiently wait for the coming of the Lord as the farmer patiently waits for the early and the latter rains... the planting rain and the harvest rain. This describes perfectly the coming of the word made flesh. He came the first time as the early rain, the spring rain, the planting rain. He comes again as the latter rain... as the harvest rain.

Jesus was and is the manifestation of Yahweh... the revealing, the reflection of God. This should be understood when we read Hosea 6:1-3:

"Come, and let us return unto Yahweh: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know Yahweh: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

Yahweh (actually his manifestation who is called Immanuel or God with us) will come to us after two days. This refers to the two millenniums separating Christ's first coming from his second coming... between the early rain and the latter rain presented in the following verse. It is after two days that he revives us, but the third day is when he raises us up. Now the third day is beyond the second day, yet the spirit chose to separate in our minds the two thoughts of 'reviving' and 'raising up'. They are separate acts. The reviving after two days may refer to being raised for judgement and the being raised up on the third day to the act of immortalization ... being raised in nature (no longer bound to the earth but emancipated by heaven). Nonetheless, we again see the word made flesh likened to the rain... and in fact, the early and the latter rain.

Job is a type of Christ. He is a righteous man who suffered for the good of others that were unworthy of him. Job, as a reflection of the Messiah, presents this parable of himself to his friends.... "Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silent at my counsel. After my words they spake not again; and my speech dropped upon them. And they waited for me as for the rain; and they opened their mouth wide as for the latter rain." [Job 29:21-23]

Jesus is identified as the bread from heaven [John 6:32-35], and therefore as the manna that God rained down upon Israel. "And had rained down manna upon them to eat" [Ps. 78:24] ... The LORD said unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you" (Ex. 16:4).

## Early & Latter Rains

In Deuteronomy 11 we read God's law concerning the rains. If Israel would hearken to his word, Yahweh would send the rains... the first rain and the latter rains. In fact there is an early and latter rain parallel with each of the three principal applications of the rain.

- The rain reflects the Spoken Word: We may automatically assume that the early and latter rains refer to the Old Testament and the New Testament as well as the old covenant and the new covenant. That was my first impression, until I saw the application of the latter rain for the next two categories being fulfilled at the second coming of Jesus Christ. The early rain is actually the entire Bible. The latter rain will be the spoken word of God presented following the initiation of the millennial kingdom. This will be confirmed when we consider the drought between the early and latter rains.

- The rain reflects the Word Made Flesh: The coming of the Messiah is compared to the arrival of the early and latter rains in both the Old and New Testaments. We recently examined Hosea 6:1-3 and James 5:7. Each reference parallels the Messiah's coming to the early and latter rains. Christ came the first time to sow the seed and nurture its growth... as the early rain. He comes again as the latter rain for the purpose of harvesting. The wheat will be gathered into the barn and the chaff will be burned.

- The rain reflects the Word Expressed In Power: God's Holy Spirit was poured out when Christ was sowing the ecclesia. We will see how this initial "pouring out" of the Holy Spirit is likened to the early rain. God's Holy Spirit will again be poured out at the time of the latter rain when the Messiah returns as the latter rain at the time of harvest at the end of the age.

The two stage progression of earth first and then heaven last is also reflected in the lesson of the early and latter rains. First we must bear the image of the earth... the dust. Secondly we hope to bear the image of the heavens... the spiritual. Paul highlights this order in 1 Cor. 15:46:

"Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual."

Our course is clearly laid out for us. The progression is a divine principle. The natural precedes the spiritual. The earthly precedes the heavenly. The early rain precedes the latter rain. Christ had to come as the lamb of sacrifice before he can come as the lion of judgement. The planting, the burial of the seed, has to precede the harvest of the mature fruit. We have to give up our lives if we ever hope to have life. We have to live sacrificial lives, dying daily, if we ever hope to live forever.

## **Elijah's Early & Latter Rains**

1 Kings 17 and 18 present a historical parable/prophecy employing the lesson of the early and the latter rains. Elijah enters the royal court of Ahab and declares that there will be no rain. James tells us the rain was withheld for 3 1/2 years (42 months... 1260 days). It rained before this period of drought. It rained after this period of drought. The prior rains can be understood as the early rain. The post-drought deluge are the latter rains. At the end of the drought, while Elijah prays for the rain, his servant goes seven times looking to the sea for signs of rain. The seventh time, denoting the 7th millennium, a cloud is seen. Almost immediately, the sky is full of dark clouds and wind. This denotes the power and glory that will accompany Christ and the saints when he comes as the latter rain to save Israel. He will come in the clouds of heaven with great power and glory and judgement.

It should be noted that Elijah prayed for that latter rain. God had instructed Elijah what to do. It was a foregone conclusion that the rain would come. Yet we find Elijah's prayer is the example offered to prove the statement that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

"Confess your faults to one another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months; And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." [James 5:16-17]

The lesson declares that we should be praying for God's will to be done. It was God's will that when Israel rejected God's word, there would be drought. Elijah prayed for a drought, hoping that Israel would repent. It was God's will that Israel receive rain after 3 1/2 years of drought. Elijah prayed for that. Are we praying for the return of Christ?... for the latter rain? Surely, God's will shall be accomplished whether we pray for Christ's return or not. Yet, are we aching for those spiritual blessings as a farmer anxiously yearns for rain? Do we groan for God's name to be glorified throughout all the earth and for His righteous judgements to come upon the teachers of lies who make merchandise of men and women. Do we weep with anticipation of singing Christ's praises with the resurrected saints of old? God's will shall be done! Christ will return! The latter rains shall come. The kingdom will be established. Our prayers will not change these facts, but our prayers do declare that our will is God's will... that we want what God wants. Let us pray with Elijah for those latter rains.

## **The Word Demonstrated With Power**

The third application of the word as rain is the word expressed in power... the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, demonstrating the visible power of God's word. When Jesus went up to sit at the right hand of God, the power of the word was poured out on the believers. The apostle Peter quotes from Joel as he explains the miracle of tongues that the Jews were witnessing in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. Joel puts it in these terms:

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit." [Joel 2:28-29]

This is in the context of the prophecy of the restoration of Israel, when Yahweh would restore them. In verse 23 Joel prophecies in these terms:

"Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month."

In the context of the promise of the pouring out of the spirit gifts upon the faithful we have the promise of the provision of the early and the latter rains. This suggests two outpourings of the Holy Spirit upon the faithful... with a drought between. The power of the word would be poured out in accord with the revealing of the word made flesh. When Jesus comes again the power of the word will again be unquestionably evident.

Hebrews carries this parallel between the spirit gifts of power and the rain into a warning for the first century believers. First, we read that it is impossible to renew to repentance those who were once enlightened and had tasted of the powers of the age to come (something that is not available to us in this age), once they had fallen away. Then the author makes the parallel between those who tasted the heavenly gift and used it self-indulgently with the ground that drinks in the rain yet bears thorns.

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world (age) to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." [Hebrews 6:4-8]

The earth is what we are made of. We are dust. The earth receiving the rain is the first century enlightened believers receiving the powers of the age to come. These powers were not ecstatic... being forced out of the brother or sister against their will. These powers were always under the control of the recipient of the heavenly gift (the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets 1 Cor. 14:32). Therefore, if an enlightened, empowered believer abused their power for self-glorification, teaching lies (as they certainly had the capability to do)... they could not be brought back to repentance. They had blasphemed the Holy Spirit, misusing it for wicked purposes. The thought being stressed here is the relationship between the pouring out of the power of the spirit to the rain.

Earth that drinks the rain	=	The enlightened who are the dust of the earth in whom the word has been sown
The rain that falls from the clouds	=	The Holy Spirit gifts that were poured out as the early rain
Herbs meet for those who attend it	=	The honorable execution of the Spirit gifts to glorify God, to serve the brotherhood and to spread the gospel
Thorns and briers	=	The misuse of the Spirit gifts... presumably for self-glorification
Whose end is to be burned	=	The impossibility to forgive blasphemers of the Holy Spirit, the rejection at the judgement for those who selfishly benefited from exercising the unveiled power of God

The lesson is that the first century enlightened (the ground into which the Holy Spirit was poured) should use those heavenly gifts to the glory of the Father and the furtherance of the gospel. However, our primary consideration is the writer's parallel between the pouring out of the Holy Spirit from heaven and the pouring out of the rain from the clouds of heaven.

It should be noted that some teachers have attempted to suggest that there can be some application of the warning in these words from Hebrews 6 for the present day believers. This is not possible. While we certainly qualify as:

- (1) those who have been enlightened
- (2) tasted the good word of God.

We do not qualify as those who have:

- (1) tasted of the heavenly gift (This should not be considered to be simply the word of God as this is already expressed as "tasted of the good word of God").
- (2) tasted the powers of the world to come.

While some may try to stretch the applications of these phrases attempting to squeeze ourselves into the picture being presented there is no possible way to explain how we taste of the powers of the age to come while still denying the doctrine of the present possession of the gifts of the spirit. This warn-

ing of the impossibility to forgive is limited to those who possessed the ability to use God's unmistakable power for self-glorification.

The relationship between the pouring out of the Holy Spirit in power is paralleled in both the Old and New Testaments to rain and specifically the early and the latter rains. This indicates the promise that the Holy Spirit will be poured out on the believers again, at the time of the latter rains.

### **The Absence of Rain Between the Early and Latter Rains**

Amos prophesies of the period between the two outpourings when there will be no open vision from God and places it in terms of suffering the effects of the absence of rain.

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst." [Amos 8:11-13]

The time period when there would be no answer from God is likened to a period of famine (drought)... no rain. Yet we have read of two great outpourings. The first was when the Messiah rose to heaven, and gave gifts to men. The second will be when he comes again. Between the early and latter rains of Christ and the early and latter outpourings of the spirit gifts, there would be a period of drought... not of physical rain but of the word of God and also of the poured out Spirit gifts.

When Christ comes again the drought of God's word will end. The word made flesh will come as the latter rain, the harvest rain. The power of the word will be poured out as the latter rain and great miracles will be witnessed. This same period of the drought of the word of God is prophesied in Micah 3:6-7:

Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them. Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God.

A period of Godly silence is prophesied. However, at the time of the latter rains, when the son of the King shall come down upon the mown grass and as showers that water the earth then the period of the famine of God's word will be over. God will no longer be silent. Isaiah tells us of the ending of this period of silence when God will roar like a charging soldier and cry out like a woman giving birth.

"The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. I have long time holden

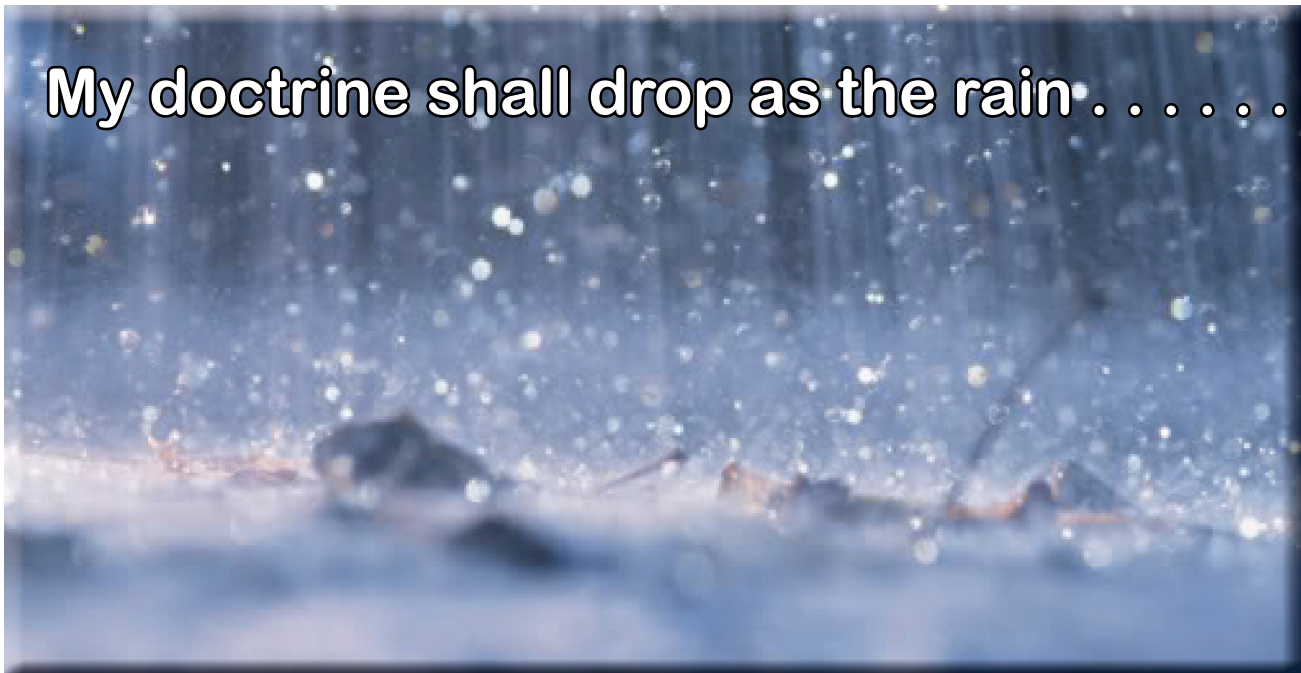


my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once." [Isaiah 42:13-14]

Between the early and latter rains there is a drought of the word of God. The early rain of the Spirit gifts ended with the second generation following the resurrection of Christ. These gifts were only offered to two generations. We are in that period between the early and latter rains of the Spirit gifts. There is no open vision and the Spirit gifts of prophecy, languages, healing and knowledge are not available. We eagerly await the coming of the word made flesh in the clouds of heaven who will pour out God's power and word on creation at the time of the latter rains.

### **Just the Beginning**

The Word... the word made Flesh... and the Word in Power... are all divinely reflected in the rain. The 'scientific' properties of rain also demonstrate spiritual lessons. The examinations within this book do not pretend to be exhaustive. The analogies can be followed deep within molecular properties and how each item interacts with other facts of creation.... how rain (the word) dramatically decreases the danger of fire (harsh judgements of God)... how the rain and sun and earth provide the food for fruit bearing plantlife (the enlightened faithful)... etc. This book is intended to simply provide a vehicle for the spiritual meditations of those who love Yahweh, his truth and his appearing. Follow the principles beyond these foundations. View creation with the seeing eyes of the spirit and the hearing ears of the spirit. The beauty and glory of the synergy between the physical laws of creation and how the principles of the spirit are reflected there are overwhelming, flooding the spiritual mind with appreciation for seeing things as God sees them.





The subject of water is not easily encapsulated. We cannot simply wrap up water into a tight little, spiritually defined package. Water offers a strong association with the word of God. Water is related to life, yet also to death. There is 'still' water, such as the sea of Galilee and 'running' water like the Jordan River. There is fresh water and salt water. The spiritual lesson of water should align with the spiritual lesson of the rain in a logical progression of thought as well as reflect the way each facet of creation interacts perfectly with each other factor to create a beautiful balance and order. Mankind has discovered the havoc that is created when one element of a region's balance of nature is altered significantly. The term 'nature' is used reluctantly... & only in the context of unenlightened mankind's frame of reference. We should still see a relation between water and the word of God that was established in the subject of rain. However, moving beyond rain to simply 'water' we should see the many applications of God's word reflected in the many features and purposes of water.

### **Life And Death**

Repeatedly we see bodies of water associated with life and death. Water is certainly a symbol of life. Except for oxygen we need water most of all. We can see spiritual lessons in how God has established our dependency on various elements of creation. First: we need oxygen. We are the product of heaven and earth. God made us of the dust of the earth and the breath of God. We cannot sustain our lives more than a few minutes without oxygen. This fact reflects our spirit based existence. Even though we suffer under a finite creation, we are created and are sustained by God's spirit. The Hebrew and Greek words that are translated spirit each also refer to air. Ruach is the Hebrew word for spirit and is also translated air, breath, tempest, wind and windy. The Greek word for spirit is pneuma. Perhaps we recognize the English derivatives: pneumatic (pertaining to air or gas) and pneumonia (respiratory disease). The word spirit should be associated to air. Consider Elihu's words concerning God in Job 34:14:

"If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit (*ruach*) and his breath (*neshamah*); all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust."

Firstly, Yahweh wants us to understand that we continue to exist by his spirit. By his spirit all things are sustained and continue under the laws and properties of creation that he has established.

However, this principle is not something we have any control over. God does not sustain creation because of anything we do or do not do. He has a timetable that we cannot change. The ultimate result will be that the earth will be full of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea. The fact that we do not actively participate in God's sustaining of the universe by his spirit is reflected in the fact that our intake of the necessary oxygen is accomplished without thought. Respiration continues whether we think about it or not... whether we are awake or asleep. Breathing is performed by involuntary muscles. Just as we don't have to make plans and set aside time to breathe each day... we cannot change or affect God sustaining creation by his spirit. Yet without his spirit we would instantly cease to exist.

Secondly, we need water to sustain our lives. While it has been proven possible to live for as long as two months with water but no food, we cannot survive even two weeks without water. As opposed to breathing, drinking is most certainly accomplished by a voluntary action. We have to choose to partake of liquid nourishment. It isn't a difficult choice. We need it to extend life. This helps define the spiritual lesson. We need water to survive. We can choose to receive it or choose to refuse it. If we refuse it, we die. If we receive healthy, clean water... we live. Water is life sustaining. Therefore, in order to maintain the reflection of spiritual principles from creation's order, water's spiritual lesson must present an offer of sustaining life. We need the word of God to continue surviving. We can choose to receive it or refuse it. If we refuse it, we die. If we receive pure, clean truth... we live. The word of God is life sustaining.

## **Water of the Word**

In Eph. 5:25-26 Paul writes:

"Christ also loved the ecclesia, and gave himself for it that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."

Paul relates the cleansing properties of water to the cleansing properties of the word of God through Christ who was the word made flesh. Since the rain presents the spiritual lesson of the word of God poured out from heaven to earth, it is consistent to see an extension of this 'word lesson' in bodies of water. These bodies of water are the source for the rain. The rain and snow sustain the bodies of water and rivers. The rain and the oceans, seas, lakes and rivers are interdependent. Therefore, the reflected spiritual lessons must be interdependent as well.

## Water As Judge

Jesus makes it clear that it is the word of God he taught that will judge us in the last day, " He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." [John 14:28] Since it is the word that we have received that will judge then it is only proper that creation's reflection of the word (water) also be presented in scripture as a judge.

The message of water is consistently presented in the context of the word in judgement: life and death. The geography of Israel presents this spiritual message of the water. There are two seas in Israel. The fresh-water Sea of Galilee bursts with life. Fruit yielding trees and vineyards run along the shores. Men draw sustenance from beneath the waters. Children play in the waters. Animals come for drink. Birds fly overhead.

The Dead Sea is lined with cold, grey rocks. No animals or crops are fed by these waters. It is the lowest point on the surface of the earth. No birds fly overhead. Only tourists venture into the waters, due to the crusty salt coating remnant you frustratingly keep trying to remove. God made a sea for life and a sea for death in the land of promise.

**SEA OF DEATH**



**SEA OF LIFE**

There is a strong exhortation within this geographical parable. This sea of life is fed from tributaries but also feeds the Jordan River, sending its precious gift of life-sustaining water down the Jordan Valley. The sea of death receives the waters of the Jordan but sends them nowhere. The exhortation is to share the blessings we receive. If we self-indulgently consume them upon our lusts... we have bound ourselves to the sea of death. If we share what little or what abundance we have... we have grasped for the sea of life. The Sea of Galilee receives and gives away, pouring itself out into the Jordan River ... but never lacks. Exhortations abound in scripture concerning pouring ourselves out, faithfully emptying ourselves, while believing that God will provide.

Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes 11:1 "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days." Give, and it will be returned to us. Just as the clouds empty themselves to feed the crops and animals, replenish the lakes and rivers and reservoirs, only to be replenished... so we who

wish to meet the Lord in the clouds and ever be with him there must empty ourselves, pouring ourselves out so that God may replenish us. It is written of our Lord:

"Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death." [Isaiah 53:12]

This is not exclusively a commentary of the sacrifice on the cross. Jesus poured out his life day after day after day... unto his death. This is the lesson of the pouring out of the blood at the altar. The Bible repeatedly tells us that the blood is life, just as the soul is the life. We must pour out our lives at the base of the altar (Christ is our altar Heb. 13:10) in order to be replenished with life. We must give in order to receive.

"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."  
[Matthew 10:39]

The waters of the Galilee are replenished because it shares the life preserving waters it receives. The Salt Sea is a place of death because it gives up nothing. Self-indulgence is suicide. The widow of one of the sons of the prophet was instructed by Elisha to gather as many vessels as possible after she explained that all she possessed was some oil. As long as she continued to pour out the oil she had, God continued to provide more... until there were no more vessels. The miraculous provision halted when she ceased to pour out her oil. The exhortational principle displayed in the miracle is the same as the geographical parable of the seas of life and death... if we will faithfully pour ourselves out then God will faithfully continue to fill us up.

In the millennial kingdom the Dead Sea will be changed to a sea of life, completing the parable. The river of the water of life will flow from the throne of the Lamb, eastward toward the salt sea. Ezekiel 47 and Revelation 22 describe the River of the Water of Life.

"These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh" [Ezek. 47:8-9].

Waters of death will become waters of life. Death before life is one of the major exhortational themes of scripture, based on an understanding of the atonement. The process will be complete after the dead come back to life and the dying are covered with immortality. The Dead Sea will maintain the proper spiritual reflection of creation by becoming a living sea.

## **Life to the Spirit - Death To the Flesh**

There are a number of historical parables that speak of the spiritual lesson of water being the word applied in judgement. God judged the world through the waters of the flood. The water was both the vehicle of destruction and the vehicle of salvation. The water destroyed and the water saved. The apostle Peter clearly states the saving feature of the flood's waters.

".. when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water." [1 Peter 3:20]

The very properties of the water that cut off the oxygen from the lungs of the living also buoyed up the sealed ark, lifting it above the destruction below. The water separated the spiritual to life and the fleshly to death... the sons of God were saved by the water and the sons of men were destroyed by the water. The box-like ark was sealed with pitch. The Hebrew word for pitch denotes camphire, a sticky red substance derived from the crushed leaves of the Henna plant. This red sealant covered the ark on the outside and the inside. The dimensions of the ark suggest it would have appeared like a massive coffin covered in blood. The waters that destroyed would also lift that blood red coffin above the destruction and death below. This is why Peter describes the water as a necessary part of the salvation process for those eight people.

## **Moses & the Nile**

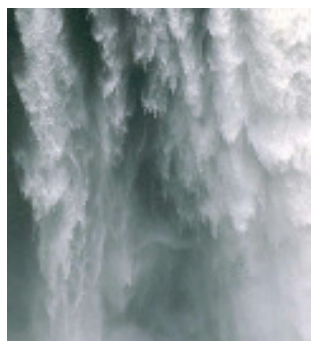
Pharaoh commanded that every Hebrew son be cast into the river. The river became a symbol of death to the Hebrews. From this picture of death, Moses was drawn out. The baby Moses was pulled from this river of death and given privilege and wealth as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. Life was drawn out of death. Both symbols are present in the parable of the waters of the Nile.

The Nile River sustained and enriched the Egyptians. The first of the ten plagues in Egypt was when the Nile River was turned from water to blood. Poured out blood is a symbol of life poured out... or simply - death. Therefore the first sign for the fleshly nation of Egypt (as opposed to simply the court of Pharaoh) is a sign of life to death. Yet three days after the Israelites are truly free from the bondage of Egypt (after Pharaoh's army is destroyed by the Red Sea) we witness an account that reflects the opposite message. The ecclesia in the wilderness travels for three days without water and comes to Marah where the water of death is found. [Ex. 15:22-25] A tree that is provided by Yahweh is cast into the water and the water of death becomes water of life. In the environment of the Egyptian bondage the first national sign was that the waters of life were changed to waters of death. In the environment of the wilderness freedom the first national sign was that the waters of death were changed to waters of life (after 3 days without the waters of life). The message of the water was death to the flesh but life to those called out by the spirit.

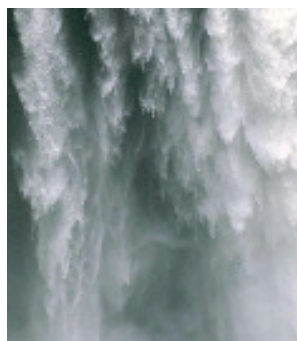
God directed Israel to encamp on a peninsula, hard against the Red Sea, after the Egyptians begged

them to leave. The temptation was too great for Pharaoh to ignore. He assumed that their military ignorance had exposed them to his vengeance. Pharaoh's proud strength led him to presume he would crush the weakness of these rebelling slaves that had humbled him. Many of the Israelites panicked when the dust-cloud of Pharaoh's chariots mushroomed against the horizon. Their oft-repeated response was... you've brought us out to kill us, Moses. This is a major lesson in the difference between the philosophy of the flesh and the philosophy of the spirit. The flesh trusts only in strength. The spirit only works through our weaknesses... that God may receive the glory and not ourselves. When speaking of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, Paul says this:

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." [2 Corinthians 4:7]



**The waters were  
a wall unto them  
on their right  
hand, and on  
their left.**



God's cloud separated Egypt from Israel, giving light to Israel through the night yet darkness for the Egyptian army. A strong east wind (the Hebrew for wind is 'ruach'... same word used for the 'spirit' of God) blew across the water that night and the water separated, creating two walls of water for Israel to walk between and escape the Egyptians. The Egyptians pursued Israel between the water's walls and across the dry sea-bed. The walls of water were released, crashing down over the armor laden soldiers, drowning them. The waters of the Red Sea were life to those called out by the spirit and death to the flesh... reflecting the word of God applied in judgement.

## **Baptism**

Belief in the truth is necessary for baptism. Jesus commands the disciples to preach and tells them:

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." [Mark 16:16]

Belief is necessary for baptism. We are then immersed into the waters. The waters of baptism are death to the flesh which we have rejected and life to the spirit which we have chosen. The waters of baptism are both a burial and a birth. We are born of water and born of the spirit in order to enter the kingdom of God. We are 'born again' in the waters of baptism. We will be born of the spirit if we are accepted by Jesus Christ and then clothed with the spirit nature of deity. The waters of baptism are

both death and life... death to the flesh and life to the spirit. It is very fitting that we are baptized in the very symbol of the word of God in judgement: water.

## **Water & Blood by the Spear**

Bodies of water have been demonstrated to represent a message of the word applied in judgement. The water that falls down from the clouds of heaven is the Word of God, the Word made flesh and the Word in Power. The overall theme of the word is present in all forms of water. Let us pursue the parable of water in a general sense.

After Jesus died a soldier pierced his side to ensure that he was dead. If he wasn't dead, the Nazarene's legs would be broken. It is noted that blood and water came from this wound. These constitute two of the three that bear witness in the earth.

"For there are three that bear witness in the earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." [ 1 John 5:8]

These three earth witnesses correspond to the life, the truth and the way. Although each of the three symbols are related in scripture to life (in this they agree in one), the spirit has the strongest relation to life. The water has its strongest relation to the truth and the blood is a symbol of the way. The message of blood in scripture is not simply 'life' but of 'life poured out' ... the way of sacrifice... or simply 'the way.' When Jesus was dead and the spear pierced his side it was witnessed that blood and water came from his opened side. In his death state the truth (water) and the way (blood) came out. The life (spirit) had departed.

John tells us that Jesus came by water and by blood, not by water only [1 John 5:6]. This is an exhortation. He did not simply come with God's truth (the water), he came to establish the way (the blood). We cannot be satisfied with simply knowing the truth... it isn't enough! James warns us:

"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils (indicating the insane) also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"  
[James 2:19-20]

James makes it clear that simply the knowledge of the truth is insufficient. We must have the truth but we must also exhibit the way. It is the way of sacrifice, the way of selflessness. We must pour out the blood of our lives at the base of our altar Jesus Christ... ("We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." Heb. 13:10). If we wish to enjoy the blessings of the 'life' then we must know the 'truth' and follow the 'way.' The three witnesses in the earth are there for those who choose to have eyes that see and ears that hear... the spirit, the water and the blood. Like Jesus, we cannot expect to come by water only. We cannot hope to enter the kingdom offering only a recognition of the truth. Like Jesus, we must come also by blood, indicating a sacrificial lifestyle.



## **The Water Against the House on the Sand**

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock. and the rains descended and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house: and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it. [Matthew 7:24-27]

It is interesting to see that when one has built their house upon the rock of Jesus Christ that the permanency of that house will certainly be tested by powerful waters. When the rains descended and the winds blew and the floods came and beat upon the house... the house did not fall. Those who build their habitation on the cursed and slippery sand (dust shall be the serpent's meat ... dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return) shall also have their dwelling tested by the waters. These are the waters that represent the word in judgement. Those who have built their habitations upon the firm rock of Christ will stand against the waters of judgement. Those who prefer the quickly and conveniently erected habitations upon the sand (the pleasures of this world) will see the facade of their protective home broken apart by the waters of judgement. The security and comfort that this world offers is like a Hollywood movie set. It is all on the surface, without substance... and very deceptive. Giving the appearance of being three dimensional... it is only two. Depth is the missing dimension.

## **Waterless Wells**

Peter & Jude each employ several creation comparisons in describing false brethren. Their warnings are not directed to teachers outside the ecclesia, but to brethren leading other brethren and sisters astray. Peter describes these false teachers within the brotherhood as making merchandise out of brothers and sisters by covetousness, being presumptuous and self-willed, having eyes full of adultery and cannot cease from sin and practiced at covetousness. Peter and Jude each describe them as waterless clouds. Peter says these members of the ecclesia are "wells without water." These people qualify to be identified as a well... as a presumed source of life preserving water. Yet they are waterless. The impression of life is there, but there is no substance. They are waterless clouds... offering the appearance of being a source of life preserving rain (the true word of God), yet they merely drift about the heavens deceiving themselves and others into thinking they are part of the Lord's 'clouds of heaven.' These people have always been part of the ecclesia. Peter and Jude each warn the ecclesia of those among us. Their exhortation here is not to beware of the world, but the ecclesia. They offer examples of Noah and the false believers of his day. There is no record of doctrinal apostacy before the flood. It is conceivable that everyone knew the truth. Considering how long people lived before the moisture canopy surrounding the earth was released in the flood, there may have been two billion

people on the earth at the time of the flood. The words "many are called but few chosen" certainly come bursting upon the surface of the mind in this context. Lot's experience is offered as well. Remember how Lot's and Abraham's companies were so large that the land could not sustain both together. Yet, how many were saved from Lot's company when destruction came to Sodom? Abraham may have been thinking of Lot's company and his own relatives when he asked God to spare the city for the sake of ten righteous. Out of that great company, only three are saved.

The rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram is also mentioned. This is when these three and 250 leaders in Israel (princes, men of renown... Num. 16:2) opposed Moses and Aaron and claimed the priesthood for themselves also. God opened up the earth and swallowed them. The rebels objected to the severely limited qualifications for priests, perhaps remembering God's promise of making them a nation of priests [Exodus 19:6]. They were waterless clouds, offering the appearance of godliness but without substance.

Balaam, a prophet of God, is offered as an example. Baalam was greedy. He wanted the riches of this world. He taught the kings of Midian to preach harmony and peace with Israel... defeating them by sharing their gods, their food and their sons & daughters through intermarriage (the account is in Numbers 25), thus defiling them. Pergamos had their Balaams.

Rev. 2:14 reads: "...thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication."

We are no different from the time of Noah and Lot and Moses and the first century ecclesia of Pergamos. We have 'Balaams' in our ecclesias today. Warnings abound throughout the New Testament about the false brethren within the ecclesia, these waterless clouds, wells without water and trees with withered fruit. Paul tells the elders of Ephesus that some of them would speak perverse things just to draw a following and that he tearfully warned them day and night for three years. We should pay heed to the divine warnings of the waterless wells among us.

There is a sea of life and a sea of death for Israel to contemplate. Scripture also presents the river of the water of life and the lake of fire which is the second death. Rev. 22, Psalm 1 and Ezekiel 47 each describe the River of the Water of Life. "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life..." (Rev. 22:1-2) In Rev. 20:14-15 we read of the lake of death... "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." It is interesting to note that life is associated with running water and death is associated with a lake... still water. Running water, even if fouled will always cleanse itself eventually. Running water is safe to drink, (as long as man doesn't unceasingly pour waste into it). Yet

still water can be fouled and will stay so. Here we have running water associated with life and a still lake associated with death. God designed creation to reflect spiritual truths. We also see the consistent message of bodies of water being related to the word in judgement... life and death.

## Running Water

Running water was a necessary ingredient in ancient Israel to cleanse from the defilement of death. In Numbers 19 we see the fascinating law/parable of atonement. When someone came in contact with a dead person they were 'unclean' and had to go outside the camp. On the third and seventh days that unclean person had to be sprinkled with the ashes of the red heifer (representing the death of the Messiah) along with running water. "And for the unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel: and a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water and sprinkle it ..." [Num. 19:17-18] This law described the process by which an Israelite might be cleansed from the physical defilement of death. Mankind received a physical condemnation in Eden. This law of the red heifer symbolically describes the



process by which we may be cleansed from that physical defilement of death that was pronounced upon our ancestors in Eden almost 6,000 years ago. Running water is part of the process. Running water and the ashes had to be sprinkled on the unclean on the third day and the seventh day. If they were not sprinkled on the third then they could not be sprinkled on the seventh and the death-defiled were never allowed back into the congregation again. If we refuse the waters of baptism, representing the death & resurrection on the third day of the antitypical red heifer (Jesus Christ), then we will not be cleansed of the physical defilement of death in the seventh millennium by drinking deeply of the running water of the river of the water of life. This fact of creation, that running waters (untampered by man's pollutants) are always clean, reflects strong spiritual truths.

Water is more often associated with life than death, since that is what we are called to. Jesus makes this parallel to the Samaritan woman at the well [John 4:13-14]: "Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The representation is made in the Mosaic law in the laver. The laver was made from the brass mirrors of the women [Ex. 38:8]. It was set at the entrance of God's sanc-

tuary in the wilderness. Moses, Aaron and the priests had to wash their hands and feet in the laver before they entered God's sanctuary... or they would die [Exodus 30:20-21]. Therefore, the water of the laver was a life preserving symbol as well as a cleansing symbol.

## **Blood & Water**

This association between water and life spills over into a connection between blood and water. Blood in scripture has a clear and distinct relation to life, but definitely not eternal life. There were two great laws concerning blood. The first was that one was not to eat blood. This is presented to Noah when God first gives man the right to eat meat [Gen. 9:3-4]: "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat." This law is confirmed in the Mosaic code with the same lesson repeated... the life is in the blood. This law required what we could not do with the blood. The other great law concerning blood required us to do something with the blood. Faithful people were to pour out the blood. The blood of the sacrificial animals came to the altar. On some occasions the blood went into the sanctuary to be sprinkled on the veil or behind and before the mercy seat or smeared on the horns of the incense altar. One last element must be added. The blood does not represent life eternal. This is made very clear when Paul declares in his discourse on the resurrection: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." [I Cor. 15:50] Blood will not be part of the spirit nature. Jesus refers to himself as a being of 'flesh and bones' when he is convincing his disciples that his resurrected form is not a ghost. He does not say that he is flesh and blood.

Since blood represents life, then the lesson is clear. We are not to eat blood... we are not to indulge in life, consuming life with all its lusts and pleasures. We are to pour out the blood at the altar... we are to pour out our lives in sacrifice at the feet of Jesus Christ. If we pour out our blood all our lives then we will be symbolically bloodless at the judgement seat and fit for the spirit nature. If we live for ourselves, self-indulgently, then we have our reward. This is the lesson seen in Jesus' words in Matt. 10:39... "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

So what does all that have to do with water? First we need to make the parallel between blood and water. Both blood and water are strongly associated with life in scripture. Turning the Nile River water into blood, when poured on the ground, was the fourth sign Moses was to demonstrate to the children of Israel in order to prove he was sent by Yahweh [Exodus 4]. Turning the Nile water to blood was the first of the ten plagues. Blood and water are used in each of the ceremonies by which one may be cleansed from one of the three conditions that constituted ceremonial uncleanness (leprosy, a bodily issue and contact with the dead). Jesus is identified as coming by water and by blood [1 John 5:6]. Blood and water issued from the spear-pierced side of Jesus. Blood and water were sprinkled on the book and all the people, confirming the Mosaic covenant [Heb. 9:18-19]. Blood and

water are each presented in scripture as cleansing agents. Water is an obvious example of this. The physical properties of blood do not offer cleaning services. The spiritual properties do! The saints have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of Christ.

## **Blood and Water Poured on the Ground**

David poured out the water onto the ground that his three mighty men had drawn from Bethlehem's well at risk of their lives. David says: "Is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore he would not drink it." [2 Sam. 23:17] David likens that cup of Bethlehem water to the blood of those men and then pours it out 'to the LORD' onto the earth. There is a precedent for this in the law, further solidifying the relationship between water and blood.

The Israelites could hunt and kill wild game for food... as long as they qualified as 'clean' animals. However, the blood had to be drained and poured onto the ground and covered with dust. "And whatsoever man there be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust. [Lev. 17:13]

The blood (the lives) of non-sacrificial animals are bound to the curse of the dust...dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return... & dust shall be the serpent's meat. The domesticated sacrificial animals, whose blood is taken to the altar, represent those in covenant relationship with God. The 'clean' non-sacrificial animals (those who are not in a covenant relationship with God) always must have their blood poured out on the earth and covered in dust.

## **Sacrificial Animals**

When the Israelites inherited the promised land, God allowed them to eat the flesh of sacrificial animals that had not been brought to the altar. He made the stipulation that the blood of these animals had to be poured out onto the ground like water and covered with dust.

"If the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to put his name there be too far from thee, then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, which the LORD hath given thee, as I have commanded thee, and thou shalt eat in thy gates whatsoever thy soul lusteth after. Even as the roebuck and the hart is eaten, so thou shalt eat them: the unclean and the clean shall eat of them alike. 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."

[Deut. 12:21-24]

"And if there be any blemish therein, as if it be lame, or blind, or have any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice unto the LORD thy God. Thou shalt eat it within thy gates:

the unclean and the clean person shall eat it alike, as the roebuck, and as the hart,  
Only thou shalt not eat the blood thereof; thou shalt pour it upon the ground  
as water." [Deut. 15:21-23]

Any animal, sacrificial or not, that was not offered on the altar was to have its blood (the life) poured out on the earth and covered with dust. There is a powerful exhortation here. Even if we are in covenant relationship with God, if we do not continually pour out our lives in sacrifice to God through Christ, then our fate is bound to the curse of the dust and we shall be the serpent's meat.

David poured out the drink of water onto the ground because he saw in that water the blood of the men who fetched it at the risk of their lives. The water in this account does not present a picture of the word of God but the lives of those to whom the word has come. The context, David's statement and the scriptural parallels firmly direct our conclusions.

Understanding water to represent the word of God in judgement offers a logical extension from the rain representing the word of God which offers a logical extension from the clouds of heaven representing the presence, power and glory of the Creator. Just as creation operates in a logical and self-sustaining way, the spiritual representations of the various features of creation maintain the same logical progression and interdependence.

# PLANTLIFE



Plant life derives its sustenance from both heaven and earth. Light, water and earth are necessary to promote and sustain plant life. Plant life sustained man in the garden, and right up until the eight people emerged from the ark after the flood. Man was not given permission to eat meat until after the flood.

"And God said, Behold I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." [Gen. 1:29]

After the flood: "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat." [Gen. 9:3-4]

Man was given the plants and their fruit to eat. When eaten and digested this food would become the man. Therefore an obvious suggestion is that plant life represents mankind in the parable of creation. This conclusion is supported throughout scripture. We will separate plant life into two categories: fruit

bearing and non-fruit bearing plant life. Scripturally, we will see these two categories represent the enlightened (fruit bearing plant life) and the unenlightened (non-fruit bearing plant life).

### **Fruit Bearing Plants**

Those to whom the word of God has come are repeatedly likened to plants from which fruits are expected... such as the grapevine, the fig tree, the olive tree, and grain. Those to whom the word of God comes, yet fall away are likened to fruit bearing plant life from which fruit is expected but not received. Those of the apostasy, without understanding, who teach lies and oppose the truth are likened to briars and thorns. These are presented as plant life that bears no fruit.

### **Israel As the Vineyard**

Across the generations spanning scriptural times, those to whom the word of God has come (to whom the rains have descended from the clouds of heaven) are repeatedly compared to the vineyard. In Isaiah five, God presents the parable of the vineyard that he carefully planted and cultivated. Yet it bore only wild grapes, unfit for the purpose for which the vineyard had been prepared. When God looked for acceptable fruit, there was none.



"For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgement, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry." [Isaiah 5:7]

The fruit of God's vineyard had been consumed by its very protectors. In Isaiah 3:14-15 we read:

"The LORD will enter into judgement with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces,

and grind the faces of the poor: saith the Lord God of hosts."

This analogy is a warning against the leaders of the ecclesia to care for God's flock and not exploit it. The ecclesial elders' lives must be filled with self-sacrifice, not self-indulgence. The leaders must show the way by exhibiting the truth and the life. God's judgement upon Israel was to have the hedge taken away, the wall broken down, the vineyard trodden down and laid waste without rain. In literal fact, they would be sent into captivity. In verse 13 God makes it abundantly clear what their literal fate would be and the literal reason for that fate. Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude dried



up with thirst." Their exile from the vineyard of the promised land would be because they lacked knowledge. The husbandmen had not fed the vineyard with knowledge. There was no sustenance. What were the elders, the arranging brethren & lecturing brethren and Bible class teachers doing ... instead of caring for the vineyard? Were they consumed with their occupations, their families, their friends and all the recreation they could squeeze into their weeks? Were they grabbing all the gusto they could? Were they taking instead of giving? They apparently were not afraid of the judgements of God. Exactly what did they think the 'fear of God' was... simply awe & reverence? Such a pity! They learned about the fear of God when his judgements came upon the wild grape bearing vineyard through the Babylonian army.

Jesus expands upon God's parable of the vineyard in Luke 20:9-16. He relates this parable after he was asked by the Jewish leaders by what authority he acted. This question was probably prompted by the fact that Jesus had recently cast out of the temple those that bought and sold, overthrew the moneychanger's tables and the seats of those that sold doves. Jesus speaks of certain husbandmen being set over the vineyard to care for it. When the vineyard's owner sends for his fruits the husbandmen kill his servants and eventually even his son. The conclusion is that the vineyard owner would come and destroy those husbandmen and give the vineyard to others. This was accomplished about 40 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus when the Romans destroyed the husbandmen and ravaged the vineyard in AD70. Eventually, the Jews were completely dispossessed from the land. This prophetic parable was a warning to the leaders of God's community when Christ first came. Perhaps the leaders of God's community today should also beware, since Christ soon comes again. The vineyard must be watered, fertilized, weeded, and cared for. If our ecclesial leaders are reaping instead of sowing in the ecclesia, then we too shall learn that the true significance of the fear of God is not simply awe and reverence.

This is God's sad commentary of Israel in Hosea 10:1-2:

"Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images. Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images."

Israel labored for themselves. Instead of a life of self-sacrifice in order to reap life everlasting, they chose their 'here & now' to indulge in the pleasures of this life. They had their reward! People are no different from age to age. We suffer the same problems in the ecclesias today. Christadelphians are consumed with the challenges and indulgences of this present life. The ecclesia often becomes more of a social group than the children of God. The ecclesial hall becomes a place for Christmas parties and even Halloween parties, yet rarely study days. Sunday School is suspended for the summer on the basis of silly, shallow excuses. Our hearts are divided, just like the Israelites.

## **The Fate of the Unfruitful Vine**

What value does a non-bearing vine offer? Will we maintain a non-yielding vine for its beauty? Of course not. Can woodworkers make furniture or carve works of art from it? ....No! The vine that no longer yields fruit has but one value. God asks and answers this same question in Ezekiel 15.

"What is the vine tree more than any other tree... Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? Or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devours both ends of it, and the midst of it is burned, Is it meet for any work? Behold, when it was whole, it was meet for no work, how much less shall it be meet yet for any work, when the fire hath devoured it and it is burned. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; As the vine tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

God created the vine to be a symbol of the enlightened. It was to bear fruit and have only one other purpose... fuel for the fire. This particular creation parable is fairly sobering. It is often repeated in scripture for emphasis. Consider John the Baptist's warning when the Pharisees and Saducees came to him.

"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." [Matt. 3:10]

Jesus presents the parable of the unfruitful fig tree in Luke 13. The owner tells the vineyard manager to cut down the unfruitful tree. The manager asks for the opportunity to try one more year, working the ground and fertilizing it. The agreement is made that if the tree does not yield the next year it is to be cut down.

## **Grace and Works**

### **Instant Guaranteed Salvation Vs. Proven Faith**

God created the earth and everything in it to reflect the gospel. A spiritual principle is reflected in this feature of fruit bearing plant life. If it does not bear fruit it is to be destroyed. This lesson directly opposes the immensely popular 'Christian' doctrine of being saved. There is a common definition of this 'saved' condition as it is expressed by 'Christians'. They believe that when one is 'saved' they are instantly guaranteed a place in God's kingdom. They believe that this salvation is irrevocably possessed... even God cannot take it away from them. They explain that they are saved by grace, not works. They cannot earn salvation. It is given as a gift and once given, cannot be taken back. Romans 10:9-10 is often quoted to support this doctrine: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

## Oversimplification Dangers

Unfortunately, people are always trying to oversimplify. Therefore many assume that if they only believe with their heart and confess with their lips, they will be saved. The word "only" never occurs in these verses in Romans. There is absolutely nothing to suggest that these two verses constitute all we need for salvation. Certainly we need to believe with our heart and confess with our lips. Yet nowhere does it say that this is all that we have to do. This doctrine is a delusion of the flesh that loves laziness. This doctrine of instant, guaranteed salvation is a product of the flesh that loves to hear, "buy now and pay later" ... indulge now and put off any necessary sacrifices until tomorrow. We can enjoy our instant salvation along with our instant orange juice, our instant potatoes, our instant entertainment and instant communication. Fast and effortless is the battle cry of the flesh.

A shred of truth can be a dangerous thing when it is isolated. Part of the truth of a matter can be very deceiving when the rest of the evidence is ignored. One crucial piece of evidence can be all the difference between guilty and innocent in a trial. It is certainly true that we cannot earn salvation. It is true that we are saved by grace. The conclusion that therefore we don't have to do anything is totally false. We are saved by grace, but if we do not prove our faith by the things that we do... we do not have a living faith. We are only deceiving ourselves. God is not fooled. Consider the reasoning that James offers:

"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?... even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone... Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only... For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."  
[James 2:14, 17, 24, 26]

There are many issues necessary for salvation... truth, baptism, hope, fear & trembling, sustaining to the end, enduring trials patiently, etc. These experiences are reflected in the creation parable of fruit-bearing plant life. The plant from which fruit is expected must bear fruit or be destroyed. The enlightened believer must prove his/her faith or the end is destruction. In Jude 12 the author describes the false believers within the brotherhood as clouds without water, trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. Jude describes their end as the blackness of darkness forever. It is true that we cannot save ourselves. Yet it is also true that if we do not participate in the process, we cannot be saved. Paul exhorted the Philippians to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." [Phil 2:12] Salvation is therefore related to work and fear. This concept of instant guaranteed salvation eliminates work and fear. Jesus tells us in Revelation 22:12: "And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." If we do not prove our faith in word and deed continuously... if we do not bear fruit... salvation will not be ours... our end is to be burned.

This issue of being burned offers strong lessons within the framework of creation's gospel. All the

spiritual reflections within creation's gospel interweave and are inseparable. Therefore, we need to examine the warning related to the fruit bearing plant life from which fruit is expected yet none is received.

## **Green Plants Do Not Burn**

One of the facts of creation is that dried up plants are far more susceptible to flames than healthy, green plants. The primary difference is the degree of water content. When an area has suffered without rain for an extended period of time the danger of forest fires increases greatly. The newscasters will often speak of a 'fire index' during the summer months, indicating the degree of danger from a forest fire. We are cautioned to be far more careful with open fires when the climate has been very dry and rain is scarce. There is a strong exhortation in this fact of creation.

The plant life that grows up out of the dust, stretching for the heavens, represents mankind. The rain that pours out from the clouds of God's presence represents the word of God. If the plants are dried up from lack of rain, they are very susceptible to destruction by fire. If we are not regularly replenished by the refreshing water of the word we become spiritually dried up and susceptible to the fires of God's judgements. Plants need water on a regular basis. We cannot simply dump a couple barrels of water on a tomato seed and expect that will be sufficient for the seed to grow to maturity and produce delicious, beautiful tomatoes. God did not create them that way. He created the natural order to reflect divine principles. We cannot simply absorb barrels of God's word at a Bible School once a year and expect that will be sufficient for bearing much fruit throughout the following year. Once a week at memorial service is insufficient. The repeated examples in scripture are for us to read and consider God's word, not simply daily, but evening and morning.



Without the daily watering of the water of the word, we will dry out... becoming very susceptible to the judgement fires. Our own personal 'fire index' will be at a dangerous level. The pattern for God manifestation for the children of God was Yahweh's sanctuary in the wilderness. The patterns of offering instruction for regular attendance to the word of God and prayer were the golden lampstand and the golden altar of incense. The priests had to replenish the oil in the seven lamps morning and evening, so that the lamps would continue to burn brightly. These lamps were never supposed to extinguish. This reflects the need of the priesthood of the Abrahamic covenant (ourselves) to replenish our oil on a morning and evening basis, so that God's word may burn brightly through our words and actions. Consider the parable of the kingdom in Matthew 25 where there are five wise virgins who have sufficient oil to wait for the bridegroom, but five foolish virgins have insufficient oil. The principle is the same whether God reveals the lesson through the oil-less lamps or the dried-out plant

life. If we allow our lives to be consumed with the pressing daily concerns, ignoring the word... our 'fire index' rises to dangerous levels... our instincts begin to favor our deceitful hearts... and the wisdom of the flesh begins to seem more logical to us.

We've noted the requirement for the Mosaic covenant priests to burn incense morning and evening at the same time they replenished the oil in the seven lamps... indicating that the priests of the Abrahamic Covenant (ourselves) should pray morning and evening when we refill ourselves with the oil of the word. The relationship between listening to God and speaking to God is significant. We have no right to pray to God without listening to him. Our prayers become abomination to him.

"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." [Prov. 28:9]

Just as the fruit bearing plant must have regular waterings in order to strain for the heavens, so we must regularly listen to God by reading his word if we want him to hear us when we pray for our loved ones and ourselves as we strain for the heavenly kingdom. If we receive the nutrients God provides we will bear fruit and the condemning fires of judgement will not consume us... just as fire is resisted by healthy green plants full of moisture.

### **Non-Fruit Bearing Plant Life**

The ground was cursed for Adam's failure. It would bring forth thorns and thistles. The ground would no longer yield its bounty without great effort and care. From this point forward, thorns are presented as symbols of the apostasy.

[Gen. 3:17-18] "...cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee."

This curse establishes a principle that weaves through all of scripture. Hosea prophesies to disobedient Israel that nettles will possess them and thorns will be in their dwellings.



Thorns, briars, nettles & thistles are consistently associated with immorality and apostasy and anything that opposes God. The inhabitants of Canaan that would not be driven out by the invading Israelites under Joshua would be thorns in their sides. [Num 33:55] Solomon likens the symbolic ecclesial bride of the Messiah among the nations to a lily among the thorns. [Song of Solomon 2:2]. The nations that oppose Israel will be destroyed like a thorn fire. [Ps. 118:10-12] Isaiah tells us that wickedness burns and devours briars and thorns... the disobedient people are fuel for that fire of

wickedness. Nahum warns that those who foolishly resist God are as thorns and will be devoured as dry stubble. [Nahum 1:10] David says the sons of Belial are as thorns that cannot be taken with the hand. [2 Sam. 23:6] In predicting the expulsion of God's children from the promised land, Isaiah presents the parable of God's vineyard. The vineyard represents Israel and is given over to briars and thorns... establishing a parallel between thorns and the pagan nations of Babylon & Assyria. God likens the rebellious house of Israel to briars and thorns to Ezekiel. [Ez. 2:6] Yahweh tells Ezekiel that when he is glorified in Zidon there will no longer be a pricking brier or a grieving thorn of all those that surrounded Israel. [Ez. 28:22-24] This shows the relationship in God's mind between thorns and the bordering enemies of Israel. Because Israel played the harlot before God he would hedge their progress with thorns... the reward for immorality and apostasy. [Hosea 2:5-6] Lamenting the absence of any good men, Micah declares that the best of these worthless people are briars and thorns. [Micah 7:4]

Jesus uses this symbolic meaning of thorns when he provides the key to identifying the false prophets. The Lord says that we will know people by their fruits and that grapes are not gathered from thorns nor figs from thistles. Good works will not come from liars and self-absorbed deceivers. Jesus equates the false teachers with the thorns and briars. He expands on this parallel in Luke 6:43-45...

"For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh."

The thorns and bramble are associated with the works & words of false believers. The apostle Paul defines his thorn in the flesh as a messenger of Satan. [2 Cor. 12:7] Some physical malady prevented Paul from preaching at full capacity. Paul represents this barrier to effective preaching as a thorn. Paul uses thorns in the same spiritually reflective sense as all the other scripture writers.

Armed with the understanding of the shadow lesson of thorns, briars, brambles, thistles, etc., we are free to pursue the application of this understanding where it is embedded in larger lessons. The warning for the first century believers found in Hebrews 6:4-8 was examined in the chapter on rain. Those who had tasted of the powers of the age to come were warned of the judgements accompanying falling away... in these terms:

"For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." [Hebrews 6:7-8]

If a brother or sister exploited the power of God they were given the freedom to direct, they are likened to the earth that drank in the rain (the word and the word in power) that did not bear fruit but thorns and briers. His/her end was to be burned. The shadow message of the thorns weaves throughout scripture through many writers and across centuries reinforcing our confidence that there is only one true author of the Bible.

## The Death of The Seed

Paul's powerful defense and proclamation of the resurrection to the Corinthian Ecclesia capitalizes on the lessons of creation to confirm divine principles and plans.



"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, 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: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body."  
[1 Corinthians 15:35-38]

What an incredible statement! Creation declares features of the doctrine of the resurrection. The seed is buried in the earth and then dies to be reborn as the plant, straining up above the dust to reach for the heavens and hopefully to bear much fruit. Paul parallels ourselves to the seed as we faithfully labor to rise above the curse of the dust and strain for that which is of heaven, to the glory of the Creator. This lesson of death before life is both a principle and an exhortation. It is the principle of atonement. We must die before we can live. We must put the instinctive urges and self-centered philosophy of the flesh to death before we can enjoy the blessings of the spirit. We must suffer the shame before we can enjoy the glory. This principle of death preceding life is confirmed throughout scripture.

- On the Day of Atonement there were two goats chosen for the atonement of the nation. The first goat died and the second goat was set free into the wilderness.... death before life.
- Leprosy is not simply a horrible disease. It is a scriptural symbol for sin in the flesh. A leper's body corrupted away as if it were a corpse in the grave, despite the fact that the leper was still alive. Therefore the cleansing ritual for a healed leper is representative of the elimination of the curse of sin and its effects from the bodies of the faithful. When a healed leper came to the priest for the cleansing ritual two birds were taken. The first bird was killed in an earthen vessel over running water. The second bird was dipped into the blood of the dead bird, along with cedar, hyssop and scarlet. The priest then shook the blood drenched living bird at the healed leper seven times. Then the living bird was set free. The first bird died and the second bird lived... death before life.

- The memorial bread and wine present the same progression. The pattern established by Christ was for the bread to be broken and consumed first and then the wine to be taken. The breaking of the bread represents the breaking of the power of sin in the Messiah's body through his death. The wine represents his resurrection. This is displayed in the dreams that Joseph interprets for Pharaoh's chief baker of breads and his chief presenter of wine. The bread baker died in three days. The wine server was raised to the right hand of power in three days. The bread was associated with death and the wine was associated with life regained. Jesus requires that the memorial bread be taken before the wine.... death before life. This principle and application will be examined within the Rocks chapter also.

The seed had to die before it could be reborn as a plant. We have to die to the flesh before we can live by the spirit.

### **The Ram in the Thicket**

Abram was ready to sacrifice Isaac to God, believing that Yahweh would bring him back to life.... since he knew that God had promised his seed would come through Isaac. We also know this because Abram, in faith, said to the young men accompanying him & Isaac "Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." Abraham fully intended to return to the servants with a restored Isaac. Isaac was then spared at the last instant. Abraham's faith was proven! Abraham saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. There can be no doubt that this ram represents Jesus Christ... as all the altar offerings point to the Messiah. It is interesting that the Jesus/ram is caught by its horns in a thicket when it is taken for the sacrifice. A horn is a consistent reflection of power throughout scripture. That is why the angels explain that the horns of the beasts in Daniel and Revelation represent kings. The horn, or the power, of this Jesus-ram is restrained by the thicket. There are several words for thicket in Hebrew. Basically this word refers to a dense, interweaving of non-fruit bearing plant life... often related to thorns and briars. The exact same Hebrew word, translated thicket, is used in Isaiah 9:18:

"For wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briars and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke."

Notice how the thicket is associated with the thorns and briars... drawing the thicket into the same judgement fire. The ram was caught by the horns in the thicket before being taken for sacrifice. The Messiah's power would be restrained by the godless. Even though Jesus was given the spirit power without measure... even though he could call legions of angels to his defence... he allowed himself to be subject to the power of the wicked Jews and the pagan Romans, to the very point of his sacrifice. He gave himself completely into their power just before his sacrifice. He was silent before their accusations. This must have unnerved the Jewish leaders. So many times in the past, and repeatedly in



the previous several days, he had embarrassed them with their silly trick questions. He embarrassed them to the degree that they were afraid to ask any more questions. He always revealed their lack of spiritual understanding. Yet now the Jesus/ram was silent. He veiled his power. He was the ram caught in the thicket.

## The Parable of the Sower

Jesus offered the now familiar parable of the sower. The seed/word is received by the ground. Some of that seed fell among thorns. The thorns choked the plants, rendering them fruitless. Jesus explains that the thorn-choked plants are the enlightened whose focus centers on the things of the world and are deceived by money. These fruit bearing plants grew up out of the dust straining for the heavens. Their thorny environment rendered them fruitless.

And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some



fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. [Matt 13:3-9]

The exhortations abound. The environment we place ourselves in can destroy us.... marrying out of the truth, living in isolation, vacationing somewhere other than Bible School, maintaining our closest friendships with those of the world, attending a university away from any ecclesia

simply for what the foolish refer to as a 'better education,' etc... etc... etc. Which quality of ground do we choose to grow up out of?

There are four categories of earth to which the seed of the sower (the gospel of the kingdom) is spread.... reflecting four categories of people with whom the true gospel is shared. The pathway represents those who hear the word, but simply do not understand it or see its value. These are people who stay on the common path. These are the politically correct and the trendy society groups. Birds are often associated with positive spiritual images, yet here they are enemies of the sower, stealing his seed for themselves. These birds are the theology doctors and 'Christian' teachers who appear on the exterior to be 'of heaven.' They take the seed of the word of God along the well-trod-

den pathway and exploit it for themselves and after it is digested they turn it into something vile and unclean, expelling it from themselves as an unclean thing.

The stony ground represents emotionally charged individuals that have no depth of character or understanding. They exhibit considerable but shortlived enthusiasm. They seek emotional stimulation and have no patience for the slow process of nurturing a seed from burial to harvest.

The thorny environment are those consumed by the 'supposed' demands of this life... often claiming that they 'have' to do this or that. They claim to have so little time for the truth with one petty excuse after another, choosing to chase the sparkling fools gold while ignoring the hidden pearl of great price.

The good ground are those who hear, understand and respond faithfully... making God their first priority in life. They bear much fruit, patiently and faithfully enduring and nurturing.

## **The Desert Tree and the Ark of God**

Yahweh presented Moses with exact details concerning the construction of the tabernacle, the ark of the covenant, the golden altar of incense, the table of shewbread and the bronze altar of burnt offering. God required the frame foundation for each of these items to be made of shittim wood from the acacia tree of the Sinai desert. These items are simply furniture to the wise in their own eyes doctors of divinity of this world. To those who have eyes to see they are shadowed messages from the Creator. They are a path and a goal... an exhortation and a promise... keys to understanding God's plan for the faithful.

## **Shittim Wood . . . Acacia Tree**

It is the tree of the wilderness, rising up out of the dusty wastes and straining for the heavens. The Acacia tree (from which the shittim wood for the articles of the tabernacle was derived) lives and grows with minimum moisture. It is not a tree in the category of the proud, tall cedars of Lebanon. It is a humble tree. Most probably the 10 cubit boards used in the construction of the tabernacle were not one piece. It would be difficult to obtain even one board of that length from an Acacia. It is a hardwood, very resistant to insects and disease. Another significant fact is that the tree had to die before it could be used for the tabernacle where God's presence would reside. Since the faithful are the ultimately intended dwelling place of the Creator then we should see ourselves (as well as Christ) in the acacia wood. We must die first, as the seed that is buried in the ground. Then we must reach up above the dust for the heavens, converting every drop of the word of God into faith that will make us strong and resistant to the diseases and insects of apostasy.

## **Jesus in the Acacia Tree**

"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." [Isaiah 53:2]

This chapter in Isaiah prophecies of the development, behaviour, purpose and ultimate sacrifice of the Messiah. Christ is described in much the same terms as the Acacia. The terms of the development of an acacia tree to the time of its death so that it could be formed into the sanctuary of God beautifully spell out the story of our Messiah.

Jesus is the tree (or branch or simply wood as the Hebrew word can be understood) that God directed Moses to throw into the poisonous waters of Marah to change them from waters of death to waters of life (Exodus 15:23-26). Jesus is the branch that grows out of Jesse.

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. [Isaiah 11:1-2]

The divinely planned features of plant life declare the glory and power and plan of the Creator, defining principles, prophesying and exhorting those who love God's word.



God created stones to reflect spiritual truths... as he apparently did with all that he created. Stones offer an image of permanency, steadfastness & refuge. Stones are not subject to disease. They do not corrupt like wood. Flames cannot destroy or change the solid state of stones, as opposed to metal. Stones do not bend. These features of stones & rocks offer a clear parallel when they are used to describe our Creator:

"Yahweh is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence." [2 Sam. 22:2-3]

Notice the words used with rock... fortress, shield, tower, refuge, savest me from violence (as the stone walls of defence that surrounded the cities of David's time). There is a message of permanence and protection.

"He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God." [Psalm 62:6-7]

The words salvation, defense, strength & refuge reflect the rocklike aspects of God.

"To shew that Yahweh is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him." [Ps. 92:15]

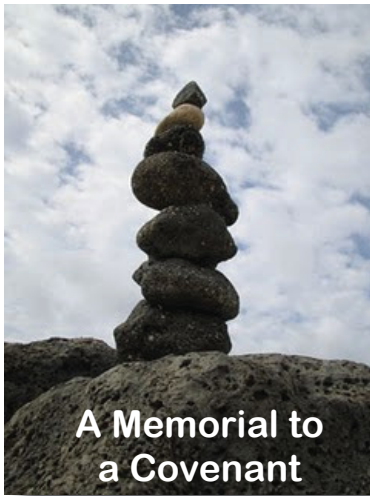
This verse parallels the uncorruptibility of rocks with the fact that there is no unrighteousness in Yahweh. God chooses to define himself consistently as the permanent, strong, uncorruptible, unchanging, unbendable rock. The principle of God manifestation demands that this parallel must extend to those who manifest the creator as well. It is interesting to see in what direction the lesson of the rock leads us.

## A Memorial To A Covenant

It is probably due to the permanency of stones that they are repeatedly used as a memorial to a covenant. The evidence for this parallel is consistent and abundant. This parallel will confirm prophecies and yield interesting lessons and exhortations.

Yahweh confirms the Abrahamic covenant to Jacob. Jacob vows obedience and memorializes this covenant with a stone that he anoints [Gen. 28:12-22]. When Jacob comes again to this place, God again confirms the covenant and changes Jacob's name to Israel. Jacob memorializes this by setting up a stone pillar [Gen. 35:9-15].

Jacob and Laban memorialized their covenant with a heap of stones. Those stones became the physical representation of the covenant between them.



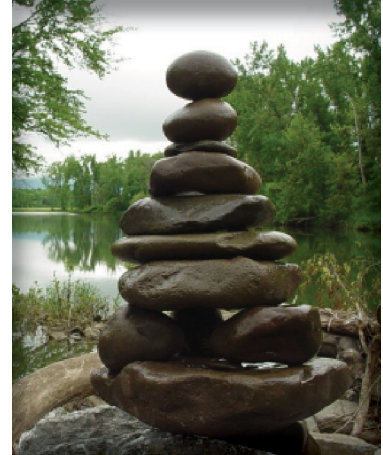
"Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee, and Jacob took a stone and set it up for a pillar. And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made an heap: and they did eat there upon the heap... and Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee; This heap be a witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm." [Gen. 35:44-46, 51-52]

When the children of Israel crossed the dry riverbed of the Jordan into the promised land, 12 stones were taken from the exact place at the edge of the riverbed where the feet of the priests carrying the ark of the covenant first stepped into the water. These 12 stones (a stone for each tribe) were to be left where Israel would first camp in the land of promise. These stones were to be a witness and a memorial, so that the story would be told to each generation about how the waters of the Jordan were cut off at the ark of the covenant.

"Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man, and command ye them saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night... and this shall be a sign to you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come saying, What mean ye by these stones? Then shall ye answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of Yahweh; when it passed over Jordan,

the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever." [Josh. 4:2-3, 6-7]

These stones were to memorialize the victory of the ark of the covenant. This is a fascinating account. There are other details of this event that piece together to form a magnificent spiritual prophecy and lesson. The record of this affair is identified as beginning "after three days." [Josh. 3:2] When the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the covenant (the symbol of God manifest in the flesh) stepped into the Jordan, the waters were cut off and receded a significant distance to the city of Adam. The children of Israel were instructed to wait behind the ark of the covenant a distance of about 2,000 cubits [Josh. 3:4] so that they might see what way they must go in order to enter the promised land because they have never been that way before. The crossing took place just above the mouth of the Dead Sea, where the living waters of the Jordan empty into this sea of death.



Jesus (God manifest in the flesh) is represented by the ark of the covenant. When the ark (borne by the priests) enters the water, the Jordan is cut off. This is the flow of life. The Jordan carries the waters of life from the Sea of Galilee down through the Jordan Valley... offering the life sustaining waters... down to the Dead Sea. No life is sustained by the Dead Sea. Life is cut off at the Dead Sea. Yet when the ark of the covenant (Jesus) enters these waters the flow of life to death ceases and backs up all the way to the city of Adam. This reflects the fact that the victory of Christ over death is offered to everyone, all the way back to Adam. It takes place after 3 days... indicating the time frame that death had dominion over Christ, yet its power was cut off after three days... just as after the third millennium following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the power of death will be completely eliminated. The children of Israel had to wait behind the ark by about 2,000 cubits. They had never been that way before and had to watch 2,000 cubits away so that they might see the way that they must follow. The children of Israel represent the faithful down through the ages who would look to Jesus Christ and his sacrifice as the way that they must follow in order to follow him... beyond the flow of life-to- death... into the promised land. They had to wait at about the 2,000 mark. We now approach the time when it will be 2,000 years from the birth of Jesus Christ. Do not think of the ark of the covenant only representing the death & resurrection of Jesus Christ. His entire life (from his birth) constituted a manifestation of the spirit. The children of Israel followed the ark by about 2,000 cubits. We will follow behind Jesus, through the cut off waters of life-to-death, by about 2,000 years. The prophecy is sure. The lesson is inspiring.

This analogy hints at the depth of the stone symbol in scripture. Yet we will always see the thread of

the foundation meaning of the stones & rocks as a memorial to a covenant. Consider this account at the end of the book of Joshua:

"So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance at Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in a book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of Yahweh. And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of Yahweh which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest you deny your God." [Joshua 24:25-27]

The clearest evidence for stones representing a memorial to a covenant are the four stones upon which the covenant with the children of Israel was written. The angel's voice thundered the words of the covenant out across the desert encampment for all the congregation to hear. Following this, Moses ascends Mount Sinai into the cloud to receive the covenant engraven on two stones by the finger of God. These two stones are destroyed by Moses when he descends the mount 40 days later, finding that Israel has already broken the covenant. The two stone tablets are replaced by God and eventually deposited, by his command, in the ark that came to be known as the ark of the covenant. Consider this progression of evidence:

"When I was gone up into the mount to receive the tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant which Yahweh made with you...And it came to pass at the end of forty days and forty nights, that Yahweh gave me the two tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant." [Deut. 9: 9, 11]

The two stones are defined as the tables of the covenant. In fact this is why the gold covered ark became known as the ark of the covenant... because the covenant (the two stones) was inside it. When Solomon's temple was completed the ark was placed inside the most holy.

vs.9 "There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, when Yahweh made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt."

vs. 21 "And I have set there a place for the ark, wherein is the covenant of Yahweh, which he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt." [1 Kings 8: 9, 21]

Verse 9 tells us there was nothing in the ark but the two stone tablets that Moses had placed there... and verse 21 states that the covenant was in the ark. God chose two stones to represent his covenant... to represent the permanency, the unbendable, the fireproof and corruption-proof nature of his agreement.

These two stones became the point of reference, not just for the ark, but for the tabernacle of God and all of its contents. In order to demonstrate this we need to understand that these two stones are

often referred to as the testimony.

"And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God." [Ex. 31:18]

"And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides: on the one side and on the other were they written." [Ex. 32:15]

We read of the ark of the testimony... the tabernacle of the testimony... the mercy seat which is above the testimony... the veil of the testimony. The omer of manna that was preserved was laid before the testimony. [Ex. 16:34] Aaron's dead rod, that had turned into a serpent before Pharaoh, identified him as God's High Priest when it came to life as it lay all night before the testimony along with the other rods. [Num. 17:4,10] Every item related to the most holy section of God's sanctuary was referenced to the two stone tablets of the testimony. Since it was noted that Aaron's rod was to be laid before the testimony, we can relate the power of resurrection to the power of the testimony... the two stone tablets. Actually this was the second set of two tablets... and this is very significant, as shall be demonstrated. Initially, we need to understand that the stone tablets were written on both sides by God. [Ex. 32:15; Deut. 10:1-2] Since there were two sets of double stones written on both sides... God wrote the words of the covenant on eight surfaces. Eight is a number strongly identified with Jesus and with covenant. Jesus was given as a covenant to the people (this subject will be examined more extensively later in this chapter).

The reason we know that the number eight represents Jesus is that the Greek letters that form his name, each representing a numerical value (since the Greeks' alphabet was also their numerical system), add up to 888. The principle of a triple digit number representing a man is confirmed in Rev. 13: 18 where the man of sin (Papal office) is identified by the number 666. The man of righteousness (Jesus) is represented by 888.

In Greek the name Jesus uses 6 letters: (1) Iota had a numerical value of 10; (2) Eta had a value of 8; (3) Sigma had a value of 200; (4) Omicron had a value of 70; (5) Upsilon had a value of 400 and lastly (6) Sigma had the value of 200....  $10+8+200+70+400+200 = 888$ .

The number eight is strongly associated with the Messiah, the covenant, and the promise of the covenant to be fulfilled in the eighth thousandth year when all flesh will be cut off and God will be all and in all. This is reflected in the sign of the covenant given to Abraham. That sign was circumcision, where the flesh was cut off on the eighth day. The principle can be seen in the covenant ceremony in Genesis 15 where God confirms his covenant with Abram. Three four-legged animals (heifer, she-



goat & ram), bound to the earth, are each cut in half... producing six halves. The two fowl of heaven (as birds are sometimes described in scripture) are left whole. There are eight pieces in all. It is a covenant between heaven and earth... represented by animals associated with the earth and with the heavens. The earth bound animals are cut in two, while the heavenly are left whole. The point of reference for all eight pieces is Jesus Christ. He was the Son of Man and seen in the six halves. He is the Son of God and represented with God as one of the uncut fowl of heaven. Representing both parties in the covenant, Jesus acts as the binding agent that makes peace... two becoming one. Features of the nature and mission of Jesus Christ are visible in the two birds as well as the six severed animal parts and also in the total of eight sacrificial items that confirm the covenant.

Consider also that Noah presents a shadow, a type, of Christ. He was the eighth person according to Peter (2 Peter 2:5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly). David, another type of Christ, was the eighth son of Jesse. [1 Sam 16:10-13] Another example is the fact that a sacrificial animal was acceptable as an altar offering from its eighth day of life, symbolizing the ultimate sacrifice of the Messiah (Lev. 22:27 When a bullock, or a sheep, or a goat, is brought forth, then it shall be seven days under the dam; and from the eighth day and thenceforth it shall be accepted for an offering made by fire unto the LORD.) The evidence for the association between Christ & the number eight certainly has not been exhausted; but, this is not our primary subject and we should press forward.

We return to the fact that the stones of the testimony became the point of reference for God's sanctuary and everything within the most holy place. There is an interesting prophetic parable enacted around these two sets of stones upon which the covenant was written by the finger of God. The progression of events are recorded in this fashion:

- God descended upon Mt. Sinai. [Ex. 19:20]
- God made a covenant with Israel... manifesting himself through the angel & speaking the words of the covenant. [Deut. 20:1-18]
- Following this, Moses ascends Mt. Sinai to God... drawing near into the thick darkness where God was. [vs. 21]
- Moses returns 40 days later with the two stones on which the covenant was written... the stones that Israel had already rejected by worshipping the golden calf. When Moses returns he destroys the two stones [Ex. 32:19] and judges Israel. He judges them as a woman that breaks wedlock. He grinds the golden idol to dust and casts it upon the brook that descends out of the mountain (most probably their drinking water). This parallels the test of the wife suspected of adultery in Num. 5:11-31.
- Moses returns to God in the mount.
- He comes back to Israel with the new covenant stones. There is no treachery this time and the stones are preserved, being placed in the golden ark of God. [Deut. 10:5]

Moses is a shadow of Christ who is a manifestation of God. Consider the parallels between the events surrounding Moses and the covenant stones and Jesus, who is the antitypical covenant stone.

- God came to men through Jesus Christ.
- God spoke the words of the covenant through Jesus. Jesus is given as a covenant to the people.
- Israel rejects Christ... breaking the covenant... breaking wedlock (since the children of Abraham are the bride of Christ).
- Christ ascends to God (as Moses ascended into the mount to God). Forty years later Christ 'comes' to judge Israel (through the armies of Rome - Matt. 22:7) just as Moses returned 40 days later & judged Israel. Moses threw down the two covenant stones, and then judged Israel for their faithlessness. The destruction of the temple is described in these terms by Jesus... "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." [Matt. 24:2]
- When Jesus comes back again there will be no treachery from Israel. They will accept him [Zech. 12:10]. They will honor the covenant, preserving it in their circumcised hearts. [Deut. 30:1-8] Many features of the Mosaic covenant will be renewed in the millennial kingdom. This reflects the fact that the second set of covenant stones was preserved... being placed in the Most Holy.

There is a further lesson in this historical parable. There were two sets of stones upon which the finger of God wrote the words of the covenant on both sides. This means there were 2 sets of four surfaces. Four is a number that reflects God manifest through the ecclesia. This principle was covered in the chapter concerning clouds. There are two sets of stones. The first is thrown down and broken before the second is prepared. This speaks to us of the breaking of the Jewish nation and the acceptance of the Gentiles (through their fall, salvation has come to the Gentiles Rom. 11:11). Both sets make eight surfaces representing Jesus Christ. Both Jew & Gentile are one in Christ. The broken branches will again be grafted in (For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree. Rom. 11:24). Consider also how Paul expresses how Christ has made Jew & Gentile one in him to the Ephesians... "For he is our peace, who has made us both (Jew & Gentile) one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility... that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body..." [Eph. 2:14-16]

The first set of four surfaces where the covenant was written by the finger of God reflects the ecclesia of the Jews... eventually broken apart by Christ for breaking the covenant. The second set of four stone surfaces constitute the Gentile ecclesia upon whom the finger of God has written the words of

the covenant on their hearts. It is interesting to note that Moses was required to hew two stones like the first upon which God would write the words of the covenant. [Deut. 10:1-5; Ex. 34:1] No such distinction was made concerning the first set of stones. In fact, God simply calls Moses up into the mount to receive the tables of stone. [Ex. 24:12] Just as Moses was required to prepare the stones for the word of God, Jesus was required to prepare the first century ecclesia for the covenant based on faith to be written on their hearts. He worked with the apostles for over three years, preparing them as anchors for the young and vulnerable ecclesia. God wrote on them with his finger when the Holy Spirit fell on them. This principle of the ecclesia being seen in the stones will be amply demonstrated later in this chapter.

Another interesting feature concerning the stones of the covenant is that those who broke this covenant were executed by stoning. God had many choices as to method of execution... sword, arrow, axe, drowning, suffocation, beheading, etc. The warning seems to be: Break the covenant of stones and the stones will break you. Consider this testimony:

- If anyone taught the people to go after other gods, breaking the first commandment of the covenant, they were to be stoned with stones, that they die. [Deut. 13:6-10]
- Those who offered their children to the idol of Molech, breaking the 2nd commandment, were to be stoned. [Lev. 20:1-5]
- When the son of an Israelite woman & Egyptian man broke the 3rd commandment, blaspheming Yahweh, God commanded that he be stoned to death by the congregation. [Lev. 24:10-16]
- A man was stoned to death for picking up sticks on Saturday, breaking the 4th commandment of the covenant. [Num. 15:32-36]
- Achan broke the 8th commandment when he stole from God at Jericho. The congregation not only stoned him to death, they raised a heap of stones as a memorial for what happens to those who break the stone covenant. [Joshua 7]

Consider also how stones are the avenue of destruction for the enemies of the covenant people:

- It is a stone that grinds Nebuchadnezzar's image to dust (dust is a symbol of the curse) in Daniel chapter two.
- It is a stone (the 1st stone... powered by the sling & directed by God) that struck Goliath in the head... a parallel to how the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent. The other four stones in David's bag represent the ecclesia. The first stone was Christ, prepared, powered & directed by God.
- In Ex. 15:5 and Neh. 9:11 it is recorded that the Egyptians (enemies of the covenant) sank as stones in the Red Sea.
- It was also prophesied of the Babylonians (enemies of the covenant) that they would sink

like a stone in the Euphrates. [Jer. 51:60-64] All of the enemies of the covenant are in danger of the covenant stone of judgement.

## **God / Christ/ Faithful & Stones**

Time after time after time, we read in scripture that our God is a rock. The features of a rock are paralleled to our heavenly father. Consistent with the principle of God manifestation, we will see this parallel flow through Jesus Christ and the faithful as well... each bound together by the covenant, represented in the stones.

"Yahweh is my rock & my fortress & my deliverer; the God of my rock, in him will I trust: he is my shield & the horn of my salvation, my high tower, & my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence... Yahweh liveth; & blessed by my rock; & exalted by the God of the rock of my salvation." [2 Sam. 22:2-3,47]

Please take note that Yahweh is both David's rock and the God of his rock. This reference identifies both Yahweh and the Messiah as a rock. Remember how David also says

"The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." [Ps. 110:1]

"...who is a rock save our God? for it is God that girdeth me with strength & maketh my way perfect." [Ps. 18:31-32]

"I will say unto God my rock..." [Ps. 42:9]

"Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress." [Ps. 71:3]

## **Christ Is a Stone**

The Messiah is represented as a rock & stone repeatedly in scripture, directly and indirectly through historic parables.

"If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious... Wherefore also it is contained in scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, select, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but onto them which be disobedient. the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence..." [1 Peter 2:4-5,7-8]

"And all did drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them: and that rock was Christ." [1 Cor. 10:4]

"As it is written, Behold I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." [Rom. 9:33]

The 'him' is the stumblingstone & rock of offence, referring to the Messiah.

Compare the terminology of these three references ...

"Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation, " [Is. 28:16]

"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon, But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." [1 Cor. 3:10-11]

"Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole, This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner." [Acts 4:10-11]

Jesus Christ is the foundation stone, the rock of offence, the stumbling stone.

After Jesus tells the parable of the wicked husbandmen he warns his listeners... "Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner... and whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. [Matt. 21:42,44] There are differing fates for those who come into contact with this Christ-stone. Remember the punishment of those who broke the stone covenant was execution by stones. There is a continuation of this application of judgement by stone in the parallel between stones and the Messiah. Those who fall on the Messiah stone... as if tripping over it, are broken. Those upon whom this stone falls are rendered into dust. Remember the curse: dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return... and dust shall be the serpent's meat. This is the fate of the nations represented in Nebuchadnezzar's dream image. [Daniel 2] The stone that is cut out of the mountain without hands (human hands) and first strikes the image at its feet, grinds the image to a dust-like chaff and then grows to fill the earth. Christ will come again and fall upon the enemies of Israel, grinding them to a wind-driven powder. He will then work toward the end of filling the earth with the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh's name. The fact that Christ is described as a rock & a stone repeatedly fits within the framework of the overall theme of the stones... they are a memorial to a covenant. Jesus is also a symbol of a covenant. Consider these references:

"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; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." [Isaiah 42:6-7]

"Thus saith Yahweh, 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." [Isaiah 49:8]

Stones and rocks are memorials to a covenant. Jesus Christ was the focus of that covenant given by God to the people. When Peter makes his famous confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" it is interesting to note that Jesus identifies this confession as the rock upon which he would build his ecclesia against which the gates of the grave would not prevail. The confession 'that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah' is the rock upon which the called out ones (ecclesia) would be built into a habitation for God to eventually dwell.

Jesus' parable of the house on the rock tells of the wise man that built his house upon a rock. When the winds and rain and floods beat against that house, it would not fall. But if we build our house upon the sand... the dust of the earth, then our house will fall and great will be the fall of it. The rock symbolizes: (1) the covenant (2) the person who is the focus of that covenant and (3) the confession that he is the son of God. As stated earlier the sand represents the curse of the dust... dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return; and dust shall be the serpent's meat. If we base the life we build upon Jesus Christ, we will be established. If we live for the moment in constant self-indulgence, savoring all that this brief life has to offer, our house will collapse with weeping and gnashing of teeth.

## **The Crucifixion Stone**

Just as the covenant itself is memorialized by stones & rocks, so are all the parties of the covenant. God is a rock. Jesus Christ is a rock and also those who have entered into this covenant relationship are repeatedly represented as stones. Before we pursue the covenant people, let's look deeper into the Christ-stone. Paul comments on the wilderness wanderings in 1 Cor. 10...

"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." [1 Cor. 10:1-4]

There were two rocks that Israel drank from after they were baptized by cloud and sea.

The first account is recorded in Exodus 17 when we hear Moses tell God that the people are ready to stone him because they have no water. This is how God responds:



"And Yahweh said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod wherewith thou smotest the river, take it in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel." [Ex. 17:5-6]

We have already been told by the apostle Paul that the struck rock from which the water came was representative of Christ. This event was to take place before the people, not accomplished privately. Moses was to take "of the elders"... not all of the elders, just some of them. Moses was to strike the rock with the rod that had struck the Nile River turning the water into blood. This was the same rod that had become a serpent. [Ex. 7:15] Moses was to strike the rock at Rephidim with that rod and then water would come out of the rock for the people. The people would be saved in this manner. We can actually learn more about the implications of this prophecy veiled as a historical parable if we read about this event in Deuteronomy, Psalms and Isaiah. First, let's establish the parallel to the manner in which Christ saved the people.

Just as Moses took some of the elders of Israel with him when he struck the rock with the serpent rod that had turned water to blood ... it was some of the elders of Israel that crucified Christ by the power of the serpent... who was their father (they were the seed of the serpent that bruised the heel of the seed of the woman). This event was part of the process by which the people may drink of the water of the river of life and live forever. A deeper probe will yield further beauty as we compare this event to the second time water was brought out of a rock.

## **The Resurrection Stone**

In Numbers 20 we read of the other account where the people are saved by water out of a rock.

"And the LORD spake unto Moses saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before



their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink; And Moses took the rod from before Yahweh, as he commanded him." [Numbers 20:7-9]

We have some striking differences between these two accounts. As opposed to taking some of the elders, Moses is required to bring the entire congregation with him to the rock. The rod that Moses brings is the one that is "before Yahweh." This refers to the same rod that had become a serpent, struck the Nile, and struck the rock at Rephidim. Yet now it was different. It was the rod of resurrection. This was Aaron's rod. Numbers 17 recounts the details of how Aaron's rod came to life bearing almond buds, blossoms and the ripe almonds. Moses was told to bring the rod before the testimony to be a token against the rebels. Therefore, the rod that was taken "from before the LORD" was the rod of resurrection... the same rod that had been used to strike the rock at Rephidim. Yet this rod was not to be used. It was simply to be present when Moses spoke to the rock here at Kadesh. When Moses spoke to the rock, God would cause the rock to yield its water for the congregation and their beasts to drink.

This account is prophetic of the resurrected state of the Messiah. All the congregation (not just some of the elders) come to Christ, in the heavens, through prayer. Upon request, in faith, Christ sustains us. It is interesting to note that each account presents a different type of rock. In Exodus 17 the Hebrew word that is used for the rock at Rephidim is tsur. This is a rock or boulder that is embedded in the ground. In Numbers 20 the Hebrew word for the rock at Kadesh is sela. This refers to an elevated rock, a craggy rock, an overhanging rock. At Rephidim we witness the historical parable of the crucifixion of the Christ. The rock is bound to the earth, firmly embedded in the curse of the dust (dust thou art & unto dust thou shalt return... dust shall be the serpent's meat). It was the serpent rod that struck the rock that was bound to the dust. At Kadesh, the rock that was to be asked for its water in the presence of the resurrection rod was elevated... indicating the risen state of the Christ (in nature and also at the right hand of his Heavenly Father).

### **Rephidim**

- Moses takes some of the elders
- Moses takes the rod that had turned into a serpent and changed the waters of the Nile to blood
- Moses strikes the rock

### **The Crucifixion Rock**

- Some of the leaders take Jesus
- These same leaders employ the serpent power of temptation sin, greed and fear to manipulate the Sanhedrin & Pilate to effect the death of Jesus
- Christ is crucified



■ The rock of flint cleaves in two

■ The power of sin is broken in the transgressionless body of Christ. We break the bread of his body in remembrance of this victory.

■ The water pours out of the rock and sustains the lives of the children of God

■ Through Christ's victory the children of God will be given life everlasting.

## **Kadesh . . . . The Resurrection Rock**

■ Moses takes the entire congregation to the rock.

■ In his resurrected state everyone approaches Christ through prayer, in the heavens

■ A different word for rock is used (sela) indicating a craggy overhanging rock one looks up to.

■ We must raise our attention to the heavens if we wish to come to Christ.

■ Although it is the same rod employed with the previous rock, the rod is not the serpent rod any longer. It is now the resurrection rod that identified the High Priest by sprouting 4 levels of almond fruit maturity from the dead rod.

■ Jesus should never be 'struck' (crucified) again. He no longer suffers the curse of mortality, but enjoys the immortal nature of God following his resurrection

■ Moses is instructed to ask the rock for its water.

■ If we want life we must ask for it through Jesus.

## **The Failure of Moses & Aaron**

We often hear that Moses' failure, for which he was barred from the promised land, was his failure to give God the credit for this miracle... saying "must we fetch you water out of this rock." It is assumed that Moses is referring to himself and Aaron as the we who fetch the water. This may or may not be the case, as Moses may have been referring to himself and Aaron and the LORD. However, this is not the reason given by God for preventing Moses' and Aaron's entry into the promised land. Yahweh's exact words to Moses and Aaron (who never spoke those words, yet was barred along with Moses) are "Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. These are the waters of Meribah." In verse 24 we read that Aaron would be gathered to his people and not enter the land because "you rebelled against my word at the waters of Meribah." God does not speak of Moses or Aaron taking credit for his providence. He speaks of their lack of belief and refusal to follow his specific directions (refer also to Num. 27:13-14 and Deut. 32:50-52). God was not sanctified before Israel because of the fact that Moses did not exhibit the faith necessary to simply call forth the water from the rock. Moses was an amazing man of faith, an inspiring symbol of faith & meekness... but not without flaw. In a sense Moses crucified our Lord afresh when he struck the stone at Kadesh. If we indulgently sin, without regret, simply trusting in the semi-automatic forgiveness of our Lord... we are renailing the spikes into Christ and raising the cross alongside the Roman soldiers, exploiting

the sacrifice of Christ. The book of Hebrews expresses it in these terms:

“For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation... of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing...” [Heb. 10:26-27,29]

## **The Flint Stone**

Deuteronomy, the Psalms and Isaiah add depth and breadth to this historical parable. We find that the rock of crucifixion at Rephidim was a rock of flint.

"Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint" [Deut. 8:15]

"When Israel went out of Egypt... Which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters." [Ps. 114:1,8]

In each of these references the Hebrew word translated "rock" is tsur. This identifies the rock embedded in the earth. It is the word used in Exodus 17 for the Rephidim account but not the word used in Numbers 20 for the resurrection rock. This word tsur is used to identify the crucifixion stone. It was a rock of flint. Flint was also used to make knives. Flint is common in that desert area, along with chalkstone & limestone. The word that is used by God when he commands Joshua to make knives of stone for circumcision is the same word used for the crucifixion rock... tsur.

"at that time the LORD said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time. And Joshua made him sharp knives, and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the foreskins." [Josh. 5:2-3]

The word that is translated 'sharp' is actually tsur... the word that identified the crucifixion rock. God commanded Joshua to make the knives from rocks. The center margin of the King James translation will identify these rocks as flint. Other translations simply say "flint knives" rather than sharp knives. It is fascinating to see the spiritual theme of the rocks spin so consistently through various authors and ages in the word of God. The flint was the stone that was struck by the serpent rod forecasting the crucifixion of the Messiah. It was the stone God required to be used to cut off the flesh when Israel entered the promised land. Circumcision is also the token of the covenant of faith established through Abraham. [Gen. 17:11]

## **Circumcision of Faith at Gilgal**

This token of the covenant of faith was the first act of Israel after they entered the promised land.

This, in itself, was an act of faith. Israel had just crossed the Jordan into enemy territory. The cities of the land knew what Israel was coming for (as evidenced by Rahab's words). Israel could expect to be attacked at any time. Yet the first thing they do is to totally incapacitate themselves. Circumcision is not an act that can be done without pain. It is an incapacitating pain. This is seen by the record of how Simeon and Levi were able to slay with the sword all the males in the city of the Shechemites three days after they had been circumcised. [Gen. 34:25] Israel had to trust completely in Yahweh's providential care. This is a powerful exhortation to us, if we wish to inherit the promised land. Another strong exhortation is that circumcision cannot be done without pain. Circumcision of the heart cannot be accomplished without pain. That is why Paul tells us that "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." This is equivalent to circumcising the flesh. Crucifixion also cannot be accomplished without pain. We cannot enter the kingdom without cutting off the crown of the flesh. It is the token of our covenant.

The flint rock of crucifixion that saved the people at Rephidim is also the circumcision rock of flint that cut off the flesh as a token of their faith at Gilgal. Those rocks were Christ who was given as a covenant by our heavenly Father.

One more point must be stressed. The water came from the rock. It did not come from behind the rock or under the rock. The rod did not simply knock the stone aside and water came bubbling up out of the earth. The rock actually broke in two and water came out of the rock... enough water for over two million people and their animals. This is a very significant fact. Consider the evidence:

"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." [Isaiah 48:21]

"He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers." [Psalm 78:15-16]

In each of these references the Hebrew word for rock is tsur... the crucifixion rock. It is not sela...the rock of resurrection. The rock 'clave'... it broke in two. The waters rushed like a river from the rock broken in two. The fact that the waters that saved the children of Israel came out of the rock indicates that there is no other name under heaven whereby we might be saved... other than the rock of our salvation: Jesus Christ. The 'claving' or breaking in two of the rock is a very interesting matter. This crucifixion rock at Rephidim that was broken in two represents the breaking of the power of sin through the death of Jesus. There are a number of symbols of the flesh of Christ that are broken in two... representing his death.

## **The Torn Veil**

The veil that separates the most holy place from the holy place in the temple at Jerusalem was ripped in two from top to bottom (from heaven to earth) when Jesus died (Matt. 27:51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent). We are told in Hebrews 10:20 that this veil was the flesh of Christ (By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh). That which represents the death of the Messiah is torn or broken or severed in two.

## **The Three Severed Animals**

You may remember our consideration of Abram's covenant from the chapter on Heaven & Earth and earlier in this chapter. The three 4-legged, earth bound animals that were required for the covenant are cut in two, making six halves. Six is the number of the curse of sin & death. The two remaining birds (the fowl of heaven... not bound to the earth) are left whole. This was a covenant of life and death... between heaven and earth. The binding agent between both parties is the one represented with both the halved animals and the whole birds... Jesus Christ. Just as there was a stone of crucifixion that was embedded in the earth and there was rock of resurrection that was elevated... so there are two categories of animals. One set was cut in two representing the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

## **The Broken Memorial Bread**

At the last supper we read that Jesus blessed the bread and brake it and gave it to his disciples, telling them to eat it. He told them the broken bread was his body. The bread was broken, just as the other symbols of the crucifixion of the Messiah were broken or severed or torn.

The memorial bread represents the death of Jesus while the memorial wine represents his resurrection. This is evident from the dreams of the baker and the butler that Joseph interpreted. The interpretation for the baker of Pharaoh's bread indicated that after three days he would die. The interpretation for the butler, the presenter of pharaoh's cup of wine (his wine taster) was that after three days he would be raised to a position of great prominence and sit at the right hand of power. The baker of bread dies. The presenter of wine lives. The broken bread represents the death of Jesus Christ and the breaking of the power of sin. The wine represents the resurrection to a new nature. The apostle Paul explains the significance and progression of the two stage process reflected in the bread and wine. In Romans 5:10 Paul writes:

"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 Breaking of the Covenant Stones**

The relationship between Christ and the two sets of stones upon which God wrote the words of the covenant was established earlier in this chapter. We see this same lesson portrayed in these stones.

In these continuing examples of dual Messiah memorials the first is consistently broken... the bread, the four legged animals and the Rehidim rock from which the water poured. There were two sets of covenant stones. The first set was broken at the base of the mountain when Moses confronted an apostate Israel. The second set was preserved in the golden ark of the covenant within the Most Holy section of God's Sanctuary. Once again, the first part of another dual Messiah memorial is broken.

There were two rocks from which Israel drank in the wilderness... one of crucifixion and one of resurrection. The crucifixion stone was broken in two, just like the bread of crucifixion and the veil and Abram's land-bound animals and the first set of covenant stones. The memorial bread is the first stone, the stone of reconciliation. The memorial wine is the second stone, the stone of resurrection and life.

### **The Faithful as Stones**

In order to be consistent with the principles of God manifestation we should find the faithful likened to stones & rocks. Those who manifest or reveal the Heavenly Father should be described in similar terms (although it should always be understood that there will be terms that describe Yahweh that do not apply to any others, including Christ, angels and the ecclesia). Shouldn't each party of the covenant be represented as the stones of the covenant?! We have seen God and Christ each called a rock and a stone. This is also the case for those who enter into a covenant relationship with God.

### **Israel**

The High Priest's garments had stones that represented the children of Israel. On his shoulders he wore two onyx stones that had the names of the twelve tribes of Israel engraved [Deut. 28:9-12]. On the breastplate were twelve stones set in gold... probably mirroring the encampment of the tribes, in their four-square rows. We are told that each stone represented a tribe [Ex. 28:21].

Joshua commands 12 men, one from each tribe, to bear upon his shoulder a stone from the Jordan River for his tribe... one stone for each tribe [Josh. 4:2-7].

Elijah took 12 stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, and built an altar in the name of Yahweh. Should it be any surprise then, when John the Baptist says to the Pharisees and Saducees "Think not within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." The stone represents not only the covenant but the parties of the covenant.

### **The Fate of the Stones and the Fate of the Parties of the Stone Covenant**

We witnessed strong similarities between the events surrounding the 10 commandment stones and the major events in Christ's life. We can see interesting parallels between the events surrounding the

covenant stones and the nation of Israel who agreed to the terms of the stone covenant. Their commitment was very clear. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do [Exodus 19:8]. In response to their commitment God wrote the terms of the covenant in stone. The stones then represented the parties of the covenant... (1) Yahweh, (2) the Seed of Promise and (3) the seed of Israel. We have already reviewed how God is a stone and the relationship of the Christ - Seed to the stones. Let's look at Israel.

There were two sets of stones with four surfaces to each set upon which the finger of God had written his commandments. Just as Israel encamped in the God-designed four square encampment and the 12 tribes were represented by the four rows of gems in the High Priests breastplate they were intended to see themselves in the four stone surfaces of each set of covenant stones. God intended to write upon their hearts his word. Unfortunately their hearts truly were hearts of stone. Therefore, just as the first set of covenant stones were thrust down at the base of the mount, breaking into many pieces scattered across the base of the mountain (not ground to dust as the golden calf was) and left there as a witness for all to see ... so the nation of Israel would be smashed and broken and scattered among the nations but preserved as a broken witness to their failure to perform the terms of the covenant.

Zech 7: 11-14 "But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts. Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts: But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate."



Jer 5:2 "O LORD, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return."

As already noted, Christ's prophecy stated that "not one stone would be left upon another."

And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these

things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. [Matthew 24:1-2]

Just as the stones were thrown down and shattered at the base of the mountain for their rejection of the covenant less than six weeks after committing themselves, their nation would be shattered in AD70 by the Romans for their rejection of the stone which the builders rejected.

The second set of stones Moses delivered were received without incident. They were reserved in a place of honor, the golden ark which would then become known as the ark of the covenant. Israel will also eventually be preserved in a position of honor, just like the second set of covenant stones. They will be regathered from the nations, placed in the promised land and revered throughout the world.

Zech. 8:23 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.

The first set of covenant stones was broken into many pieces for Israel's failing the covenant. Israel was broken into many pieces for failing the covenant. The second set of stones were accepted with humility and honor. Israel will be circumcised in heart and turn to Yahweh and love Him with all their heart and soul.

Deut. 30:6 And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

## **The Ecclesia Stone**

The nation of Israel stumbled over the rock of the Mosaic covenant, supposing that the law was an end in itself ... that justification came by works. They didn't realize that the law was only a school-master to bring us to Christ. Paul writes to the Romans saying:

"That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained unto righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith, but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith but as it were by the works of the law, for they stumbled at that stumblingstone. As it is written, Behold I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." [Rom. 9:30-33]

Just as John the Baptist said that God could raise up children of Israel from stones ... and the confession of Jesus Christ being the son of the living God was the rock upon which the ecclesia would be built...

so the ecclesia is also likened to stones.

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious. Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient; the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner."  
[1 Peter 2:2-7]

We are lively stones, built upon the foundation stone of Jesus Christ, into a dwelling for God. We will be the abiding places of the Father and his Son.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." [John 14:23]

Just as the children of Israel were supposed to live their lives in accordance with the terms of the stone covenant the ecclesia has the responsibility of reflecting the teaching of Jesus Christ... the true covenant stone.

2 Cor. 3:1 Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

Rocks consistently are used throughout the Old and New Testament to memorialize a covenant and represent not just the covenant but the parties of the covenant.

## **Conclusion**

It is inspiring to see how Yahweh has employed creation to reflect the truth of the gospel. It is inspiring to see how writers across varying centuries, societies, places and social status all use the creation symbols consistently to the subtlest degree. What an incredible book God gave to us!