

Visions Dreams & Parables of the Old Testament

This study was the basis for a continuing adult Sunday School class at the Granite State Ecclesia in New Hampshire, USA. These are presentation notes that were used for a verbal presentation. These were not developed or converted into a manuscript style of presentation. The King James translation version will be the primary but not exclusive scriptural reference source. We will not be examining every instance in the Old Testament where God speaks to someone in a dream or a vision. We will be somewhat selective as we concentrate on these dreams and visions and parables.

What Is the Difference?

What is the difference between a dream and a vision? A parable certainly stands apart, as a non-historical account whose significance is not on the surface but demonstrates an instructive lesson. However we should consider certain historical events that bear close resemblance to a parable, with moral lessons as well as doctrinal and prophetic significance.

- The apostle Paul uses this precedent several times. He draws upon the geographic parable of the two mounts of Sinai and Zion in Galatians 5, explaining what each one represents historically, doctrinally, and prophetically. He draws exhortational precedent from this examination.
- In 1 Corinthians 10 he tells us the nation of Israel was baptized to Moses in the cloud and the sea and they partook of spiritual food and spiritual drink in the wilderness, like our bread and wine. He defines the rock they drank from as Christ.

Selectively detailed historical events, creational features and geographic design can all qualify as parables. A dream requires the dreamer be asleep, unconscious. It should be understood and is sometimes significant that sleep is frequently associated with death throughout scripture. A 'vision' suggests the one who experiences the vision is awake but perhaps in a trance. Their sense of reality has shifted. Although they are awake their senses are limited to what their mind is being directed to comprehend. Their eyes see things that only exist in their minds, without substance. It is interesting that God uses both forms of communication... where those to whom his messages are being directed are both awake as well as asleep. Since we have not yet examined every dream and vision in scripture we certainly are not free to make unequivocal statements. However, instinct suggests that dreams are experienced by the enlightened and faithful as well as the unenlightened and unfaithful but visions are exclusively reserved for enlightened and faithful. People who experienced visions were men like Daniel, Peter, James, John and Paul. Dreamers were certainly Abraham and Jacob but also Abimelech, Pharaoh and Laban. If this proves to be true at the end of our consideration this would be very significant when compared to the divinely ordained relationship between death and sleep.

1. Jacob's Ladder

Genesis 28: 10-22 *And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. 11And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. 12And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. 13And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; 14And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 15And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. 17And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. 18And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. 19And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first. 20And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, 21So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: 22And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.*

Our dreamer is Jacob. Jacob was born second to Isaac but made firstborn by the undermining of his brother Esau's right according to his chronologically being born first. The name Jacob (properly pronounced Yacov) means heel holder or supplanter... an underminer. Jacob has been sent away by his mother for fear of his life from his brother Esau for taking away his birthright and the blessing of the firstborn. He is heading for his uncle Laban's home in Padanaram to take a wife. He makes it as far as Luz, which he renamed Bethel, which means the house of God... house of El ... house of the Mighty One. When Jacob returns from Padanaram his name will be changed from the underminer (Jacob) to Prince of El ... Prince of the Mighty One. He now goes to sleep in what he will identify in the morning as the house of El. Jacob takes a rock for his head. It is this rock that will be used to memorialize this place, this dream, its significance and Jacob's covenant with God the next morning. We will consider the significance of this stone after we examine the dream itself.

Jacob is asleep... in a symbolic death state. He witnesses a ladder stretching from earth to heaven. Angels are both ascending and descending on the ladder. A ladder is a conveyance, a bridge from one point to another. Do those points indicate geographical points in our three dimensional world or are these points in time? The promise God makes is certainly geographical... the inheritance of the land confirming the promise made to his father and grandfather. However, he will not inherit that land for a very long time. The seed promise is also far distant in the future. Jacob embraced this vision and the promise but saw them in the future... not in the short term. Jacob, like the faithful before him, believed in the far distant fulfillment of their hopes and dreams (Heb 11:13).

The Ladder Rungs

We have the ladder stretching from its base on earth and progressing up to heaven for Jacob to witness. The ladder is inviting. It is certainly our goal to achieve heaven, but not geographically. The kingdom of heaven that will be established and inherited on the earth. I think we are looking at a time ladder here, stretching from the present time which was that night at what Jacob renamed Bethel ... to a future we are still waiting for. Bro Thomas, in Elpis Israel, describes this as a ladder of ages and generations. He refers to the rungs of the ladder as indicating divinely appointed ages or epochs. This is an interesting analogy since God definitely appoints stages in his plan where the rules change. We have the Patriarchal age progressing from Adam to Moses. We have the Kingdom Age age progressing from Moses to Christ. Following the resurrection we have been living in the Ecclesial age and we await the Millennial Kingdom Age. The rules change at each of these four stages. Finally we have the post-millennial kingdom timeframe when time will "be no more," (when creation will be in perfect harmony with the Creator. God will be all and in all, which is how peace should be understood. I am certainly not suggesting there were only four ladder rungs... simply that there were incremental steps in the timing of God's plan for the journey from creation's cursed state to its blessed state. The ladder could also refer to Jacob's subsequent generations as they travel toward the promised seed through whom all families of the earth would be blessed.

The angels were ascending and descending on this ladder. Bro Thomas suggests this refers to their work of ministering to the affairs of the those who will inherit the promises (Heb 1:13-14; Matt 18:10). Jesus uses an interesting expression to Nathaniel when he exclaims his faith in Jesus as the Christ... , *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.* (John 1:49-51). Nathaniel will see the angels ascending and descending upon the son of man ... similar to what Jacob witnessed with Yahweh at the top of the ladder in heaven. This would suggest that the ladder can **also** represent our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the extension between earth and heaven. We can achieve the heavenly state via him, our mediator... the earth and heaven man... son of man and son of God. He is our bridge across the chasm of death. Just as the ladder stretches from the earth and to the heaven this is the progression Jesus followed. He began in the cursed mortal state and following resurrection achieved the blessed spiritual state. This is the progression we have seen so many times before in our considerations... flesh before spirit, death before life, light before darkness, sacrifice and suffering before peace and blessing. This is the divinely ordained progression (1 Cor 15:42-49). Just as the ladder began its ascent firmly positioned in the earth and extended upward into heaven, so our Lord Jesus Christ was begin as flesh and ascend to spirit... from cursed to blessed... from death to life. The vile and God despising teachings of the Christian apostasy reverses the divine plan and has Jesus going from blessed to cursed, from heaven to earth.... but the ladder did not stretch from heaven to earth but from the earth to heaven (Gen 28:12).

Jacob awoke from sleep and remembered his dream. When Jacob awakes from the sleep of death he will see the reality of his dream. He will see the gate of heaven opened and the angels visibly being sent back and forth by the manifestation of Yahweh Elohim... Jesus Christ. He will witness the reality of his glorious dream.

Awakening From the Dream

When Jacob awakens he is awed by his dream. He takes the stone used as a pillow for his head and sets it up as a pillar, anointing it and making a covenant with God (Gen 28:20-22). This action appears to be the closest approximation Jacob can make to his experience with his dream. No doubt he was inspired to do this, since this action is in perfect symbolic harmony with intricate, interdependent themes throughout scripture. Stones are used in scripture to represent a memorial to a covenant... by both men and God. Twenty years from this time Jacob will erect another stone memorial and make a covenant.... with Laban (Gen 31:45-52). The stones become the memorial, the witness to the covenant between these two men. Yahweh also uses stones as a witness to a covenant. The two stones upon which the finger of God wrote the words of the covenant and Mt Sinai.... the ten commandments (1 Kings 8:9,21... the 2 stones were known as the covenant). Joshua also uses the stone precedent for memorializing a covenant (Joshua 3:2-4,14-chap. 4:9, 18-24). These 12 stones were set as a memorial to the power of the covenant and what it accomplished at Jordan in reversing the river flow into the Dead Sea.

Let's review this use of the stones. There are distinct parallels to Jacob's use of the stone pillar in response to his dream.

Josh 3:3-4 *And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host; When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. 4Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore.*

After three days they witness the reversal of the flow of the Jordan from the living waters flowing from Galilee to the Dead Sea. They are camped at the mouth of the Dead Sea.... As the insatiable Dead Sea swallows all the flow of living waters, converting them from life sustaining water to useless and lifeless liquid, so also the insatiable grave swallows all that live. The promise is that this flow of life to death will reverse and the children of promise will cross over the dry riverbed. As the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the covenant touch the river the waters recede. The point of reference for this reversal is the city of Adam by Zarethan. The children of the promise must watch from a distance of 2000 cubits. The power of the covenant, represented in these two stones, reverses the flow from life to death as seen in the River Jordan.... all the way back to Adam by Zarethan (meaning distress)... to all those who reside in the city of Adam. The promise of the covenant is that the flow of life to death will be reversed in all the faithful who reside in Adam by the distress he initiated . The faithful had to watch this miracle from a distance of about 2,000 cubits before they could follow the covenant.... just as all those in Adam must wait about 2,000 years after the man who was given as a covenant to the people had the flow of life to death reversed in him. We are almost at the end of that 2,000 years now. We are approaching the edge of the dry riverbed now. The promise goes back all the way to Adam.

The 12 memorial stones were set up for people to remember what the power of the covenant, embodied in the two stones within in the ark, accomplished and how they entered the promised land. We can see an application in these stones applying to both Christ and the saints. Clearly the initial parallel to the 2 covenant stones in the ark reversing the flow of life to death pictures the resurrected Son of God. Just as clearly the 12 stones (chosen by one member of each of the 12 tribes of Israel and established as a single memorial) signify those who had to witness this miracle from about 2,000 cubits away before they could follow.

Stones are not only symbolic of a covenant in scripture but also represent the parties of the covenant as well. God, Christ and the saints are repeatedly presented as a rock or a stone in scripture {Psalm 16:2; Matt 21:42-44.... Jesus was the stone cut out without hands grinding the image to dust in Dan 2... he is the chief cornerstone of the temple of the Heavenly Father's habitation.... he was the 2 covenant stones in the ark (2 sets of 4 stones written on 8 surfaces).... the saints are also depicted as stones as they are parties of the stone covenant 1 Peter 2:4-5}. Just as the two covenant stones in the ark represent Jesus they also represent the faithful in that although there were 8 surfaces upon which the finger of God wrote his word ... making impressions in the stone.... so there were four stones. Four is a number representing God manifest in

the flesh. It is the number of the faithful, the ecclesia. Rocks are used throughout scripture as a memorial to a covenant, also embodying the parties of the covenant (note: the symbolic identification of the number 4 will be extensively covered in future classes).

It is also interesting that the breaking of the terms of the stone covenant brought judgement by stones... break the stone covenant and you will be broken by that stone.... in an execution by stoning.

Jacob not only set up the rock as a pillar and memorial to this covenant and dream, he anointed it with oil. This too is significant. Jacob is going to travel a long way. He has never been that way. He doesn't know how long his supplies are going to last and there are no grocery stores or convenience stores or highway rest areas along with way. He uses some of the precious oil he has with him to pour on top of a rock. Clearly Jacob considers this anointing as highly significant. I am aware of no Biblical precedent for this at this point in history. Yet Jacob repeats the procedure when he returns to this place with 2 wives and 12 children (11 sons and 1 daughter and a wife about to give birth).

Gen. 35: 6-15 *So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Bethel, he and all the people that were with him. 7And he built there an altar; and called the place Elbethel: because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother. 8But Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried beneath Bethel under an oak: and the name of it was called Allonbachuth. 9And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him. 10And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. 11And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; 12And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. 13And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him. 14And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. 15And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Bethel.*

God confirms the covenant with Jacob at the same place - Bethel (formerly Luz). Jacob repeats the response of establishing a stone pillar and anointing it with oil. Even though there is no precedent for this, the appropriateness of this response is confirmed by repetition. This second time the stone is anointed we see a drink offering being added: wine. As we know, wine is symbolic of blood. We established that a stone is a memorial to a covenant and that stones not only represent the covenant but the parties of the covenant. This principles bound up in the anointing of the stone can be seen extended through the guardians of the stone covenant.

God confirms the appropriateness of anointing with oil with the High Priest (Ex 29:5-7). He is also sprinkled with blood along with the oil.

Ex 29:22 *And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him*

Oil and blood ... similar to how Jacob pours oil and wine on this rock memorializing the covenant he made with God. Aaron and his sons (the priesthood of the Kingdom of God) are the guardians of the stone covenant. The kings of Israel were also anointed... 1 Sam 1:10; 1 Sam 16:13. The guardians of the stone covenant were anointed with oil, just as the stone was anointed with oil. The stone did not simply represent the covenant, but the parties of the covenant.

The sanctuary of God with all its components were anointed with oil at God's command (Ex 30:22-33). Interestingly there were four spices added to the oil to make the holy anointing oil. The number four reflects God manifest in the flesh. It is the number of the ecclesia. The very composition of the holy anointing oil embodies the principle of the parties of the stone covenant.

The foundational altar offering (the burnt offering... as opposed to the other 5 altar offering categories) was accompanied by bread and wine and oil (Ex 29:38-42). The burnt offering is fulfilled in dedication to the knowledge of God (Hos. 6:6).

I believe the oil represents the Holy Spirit... the power of God that has been poured out like oil on the parties of the divine covenant embodied in Jacob's stone and the stones of the covenant where the 10 commandments were carved by the

finger of God. Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:37-38). The ecclesia was anointed with the Holy Spirit also (Acts 2:1-4; 1 Cor 1:21-22).

Since my suggestion is that the Holy anointing oil represents the Holy Spirit (the power of God) then the application of the oil should be consistent with this understanding. God required this oil to be burned in the 7 lamps in the golden lampstand in the tabernacle, perpetually. There was never supposed to be darkness in God's sanctuary. The burning of the oil illuminated the Holy Place. This principle of oil powering enlightenment is extended through scripture. The five wise and five foolish virgins of Matt 25 were separated by their state of readiness with the oil for their lamps. The five foolish were unconcerned about their oil reserves and let them lapse while the wise maintained adequate reserves. Our access to the Holy Spirit in this generation is limited to the word of God. We do not enjoy access to the spirit gifts and therefore our fuel source is the word of God.... we replenish our oil reserves, powering the enlightenment we offer by living our lives in a Godly manner, manifesting our Heavenly Creator righteousness wherever we go. This relationship between the anointing with oil and the anointing with the Holy Spirit and the burning of the oil for light and the exercising of the Holy Spirit to enlighten is further confirmed by Eph 4:8-14. When the fully mature word of God was completed the holy Spirit - the anointing oil - was replaced by what was greater (1 Cor 13:8-10). Therefore the extension of the application of the anointing oil and the application of the Holy Spirit with which the ecclesia was anointed... parallels each other perfectly.

There is also the application of the anointing oil with healing and the power of the Holy Spirit that anointed Jesus and the ecclesia with healing (Mark 6:12-13; James 5:14-15). The anointing oil representing the Holy Spirit is consistent with other principles and parallels throughout scripture. The extensiveness and consistency of the pattern validates our understanding.

In addition to this we have the ultimate anointing of the Holy Spirit... when the mortality of the saints will be covered with immortality... when corruptibility will be swallowed up by incorruptibility 1 Cor 15:5-54; 2 Cor 5:1-4 when we put on our heavenly tabernacle we are no longer naked before God. Immortality is a covering (therefore an atonement).... just like the anointing oil was poured over the head of the one anointed. It was poured on the head due to the head being the seat of authority and responsibility.

Jacob anointed the rock he had rested his head upon, the rock he appointed to memorialize the covenant he made with God following the confirmation of the promises God extended to him that had originally been made to his Grandfather and his Father. This action perfectly and seamlessly reflects the lesson of the divine covenant with the faithful and the anointing of the faithful with the power of God.

2. Joseph's Dreams of Heaven & Earth

Genesis 37:5-11 *And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. 6And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: 7For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. 8And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. 9And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. 10And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? 11And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.*

Joseph is the 11th son of Jacob (known as Israel at this time) chronologically. But he is the firstborn son of Rachel... Jacob's true love and the woman he worked 14 years to marry. He thought he was going to get Rachel after working seven years, but was tricked by Laban and given Leah. He had to work another 7 years for Rachel. Leah bore Jacob six sons and a daughter before Rachel bore Joseph to Jacob. Joseph was Jacob's 11th son... but still considered his firstborn, due to the

elevated state of Rachel. Joseph was openly favored above his brethren (Gen 37:2-4). Joseph is given what is today the traditional linen tunic reaching to the feet and the hands that identifies him as the bedouin sheik's heir... the chosen successor as the head of the family who will also receive the lion share of the inheritance. Joseph's brothers despise him for the open and unrestrained favor displayed by their father and the fact that he is a teenage tattletale. Joseph's dreams enflame their distaste to a violent rage. Joseph is 17. His brothers, with the obvious exception of Benjamin, would range from their mid-twenties down to their older teens. This would be because Jacob took both Leah and Rachel for his wives after seven years with Laban. He then served Laban another seven years for Rachel, during which time his wives and their handmaidens bore his sons and daughter, with the exception of Benjamin. We know this because after Joseph is born (years after he took Rachel for his wife) Jacob asks Laban's permission to leave with his wives and children... before serving him yet another six years (Gen 30:25-28). There would only be a seven year difference between Joseph, the youngest at this time, and Reuben, the oldest. Therefore Reuben, the oldest son, would be 23-24 years old when Joseph was 17 and had these dreams. Benjamin would be 10 or 11 years old, as he was not born until after the six years of Jacob's further service to Laban were ended and the family had left Padanaram, entered the promised land and made it to Bethlehem.

Joseph has these two dreams. His brothers already despise him, jealous of their Father's unrestrained favoritism, Joseph's reporting of their misbehavior and mistakes... and now they hear these dreams depicting him as their lord and master.

The first dream has them harvesting a field of grain. Joseph's sheaf stands upright while the sheaves of the 11 other brethren bow down to his sheaf. The second dream presents Joseph as a star with his brothers as 11 other stars and his father and stepmother as the sun & moon. Even Israel immediately recognizes this demeaning understanding...

10 And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? 11 And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

Jacob observed the saying. Jacob too had experienced two divinely inspired dreams. He knew very well that God communicated through dreams. Additionally, there was more evidence that these dreams were legitimately inspired by God as prophetic. They reflected the promises made to Abraham and confirmed to Isaac and Jacob. They present the descendants of the patriarchs as earth and heaven. God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as the dust of the earth for multitude (Gen 13:16) and as the stars of the heavens for multitude (Gen 15:3-6). Joseph's dreams are consistent with the promise of God concerning the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are represented in the same earth and heaven framework. Jacob (wisely) pondered these dreams.

This parallel between the themes of Joseph's dreams and the promises to Abraham are extended all through scripture. God repeatedly parallels the children of Israel to the dust of the earth and the stars of heaven... to earth and heaven. We have examined the relationship between these two icons before in our Ecclesial SS classes... how the dust of the earth represents the curse of sin and death and heaven represents the blessing of immortality and righteousness. We have examined the divine progression before also... that first comes mortal and then immortality, first death and then life... first darkness and then light... first sacrifice and then unimaginable blessing. Consistent with this progression we have the future descendants of Abraham paralleled to the dust of the earth first and then to the stars of heaven in the progression of Joseph's dreams. Genesis 13 presents the dust parallel and Gen 15 presents the heaven parallel in exactly the same progression.

Israel, as a body or people, becomes known as heaven and earth... appropriately, since God established this relationship. God addresses the nation as "heaven and earth" (Deut 32:1-2; Isaiah 1:2). God also appoints heaven and earth as the two necessary witnesses against the heaven and earth people to witness and judge them in matters dealing with the covenant between heaven and earth

Deut 30:19 *I call heaven and 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 17:6-7 *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. 7 The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to*

death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you.). How was this accomplished?

Deut 11:13-17 *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, 14That 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. 15And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full. 16Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; 17And 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.*

Heaven and earth were the two witnesses God appointed to examine the heaven and earth people concerning the covenant between himself and the descendants of Abraham Isaac and Jacob... the covenant between heaven and earth.

We can extend this lesson of Joseph's dreams throughout the entire Bible as it weaves through prophecies and principles and exhortations.

Matt 24:35 *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*

Apostate Christianity is blinded to the carefully veiled implication of Christ's words. Right after prophesying of the resurrection of the nation of Israel in the parable of the re-blossoming of the formerly winter-dead fig tree during the spring-rebirth, Jesus confirms that the Roman dominated nation of Israel would have to die before it could possibly be resurrected... heaven and earth would have to pass away.

2 Peter 3:10-12 *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. ¹¹ Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, ¹² Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?*

Again, apostate Christianity is blinded to the intentional complexity the Creator uses to give to those who have and take away from those who have not (Matt. 13:12). This destruction of heaven and earth Peter references is the destruction of the Jewish nation by the Romans, just as Jesus prophesied when he said that heaven and earth would pass away.

We all know the fulfillment of Joseph's dreams, how his brethren and father and step-mother were politically beneath him in his position of prominence in Egypt. His sheaf of grain was higher. His star was greater.

3. The Bread & the Wine Dreams

The next dreams we will consider are experienced by non-believers... Pharaoh's chief baker and his chief butler (the wine steward and wine taster to prevent the poisoning of Pharaoh). Joseph is now in Pharaoh's dungeon, placed there by his former master Potiphar for being falsely accused of the attempted rape of Potiphar's wife.

Read Genesis 40 through 41:1

These two men experiencing these troublesome dreams had fallen from the pinnacle of their professions, serving the most politically powerful and financially secure man of that generation. These were Pharaoh's chief baker (a baker of breads) and the chief butler (or wine steward or wine taster). We have the basics of a recurring pattern in scripture.... the bread and the wine.

The environment is Pharaoh's dungeons. They share this prison with Joseph. The prison in this context represents our current cursed state where we suffer under the curse of sin and death, as we are all imprisoned by king sin. The butler's dream is interpreted first. He dreams of three vine branches that go from blossoms to ripe grapes. He takes these grapes and presses them into Pharaoh's cup and presents this as wine to Pharaoh. The text suggests there is no delay in Joseph's interpretation, as if the explanation of the dreams had already been revealed to him, but this is not explained in the text. Joseph tells the former chief butler that the three vine branches are three days. The butler will remain in the prison for three days and then he will be lifted up out of the prison and restored to the privileged right hand of Pharaoh where he will again present the wine as a highly trusted man of privilege and authority. Joseph asks for the butler to remember him in

his time of exaltation and to show him favor by ending his unjust imprisonment. Joseph will continue to be imprisoned for two more years, until he interprets the dreams of Pharaoh himself.

Encouraged by the pleasantness of that interpretation the baker recounts his dream. Joseph explains that the three baskets are the same three days, but the baker of breads will be hung on a tree and die. The birds will eat his corpse.

This is a reflection of the lessons bound up in the memorial bread and wine that we use to remember the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The three more days in prison seen in the three branches and the three baskets represent the three days Jesus was dead in the tomb, paralleling Pharaoh's dungeon where the last three days of the baker would be spent. Jesus was sent to this stone tomb by King Sin, not transgression but human nature - the manufacturing plant for sin. This guilt-free sin nature is referred to scripturally as "sin in the flesh" and sometimes just "sin" and sometimes as the devil and sometimes as Satan and also as the serpent was condemned on the cross. Jesus was hung on a tree, a cursed state under God's law. After three days he was elevated out of that stone dungeon of a tomb, out of the prison of death. He rose to life again, to present his renewed life at the right hand of the most powerful being in the universe... Yahweh. The dreams of both the baker and the butler are portrayed in the life and death and resurrection and elevation of the Son of God in perfect parallel detail.

The prison environment is representative of creation's current cursed state of sin and death, therefore symbolic of both the death state and the living cursed state. The baker and butler lived out those three days in prison before execution and exaltation paralleling the three days Jesus spent in the tomb. Joseph spent two more years in the prison before being raised up by the already risen butler, exactly reflecting the two millenniums the faithful would wait to be raised up out of the prison of sin & death by Jesus at his triumphant return in power and the clouds of heaven. The dungeon represents the entire cursed state, enveloping death along with its symbol.

Ps 142 ... whole psalm but the key is verse 7. The context of this Psalm is that David is being hunted. He is isolated and feels alone and trapped even though others are with him. They aren't supporting him though, they are frightened and burdening him. They look to him to be saved, which is why he feels like he is in prison.

Is 42:6-7; Isaiah 61:1; 1 Peter 3:19 The job description of the Messiah will be to preach to and finally free the prisoners

The baker of breads dies and the presenter of wine lives in this account. This reflects the lessons of the memorial bread and wine we use to remember the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Each memorial is absolutely essential. Jesus had to die to break the power of sin in his body that was free of any sin-guilt from transgression. He had to rise from the dead or the path of salvation would not be accessible. We are reconciled by the death of Jesus and we are saved by his life.

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

The broken bread represents the reconciliation through death. The wine represents the salvation stage. The bread represents his death and the wine represents his resurrection. This is why the pattern was established that the bread is consumed before the wine, as the wine represents his death and therefore our reconciliation and the wine represents his resurrection and therefore our salvation.

Just as Joseph waited two more years in prison before he was elevated to freedom and richness of life and political authority so the true believers, bound by the law of sin and death, will wait 2 millenniums from the time Jesus died for three days and rose to life and power when they will be freed from the shackles of sin and elevated to richness of life and political authority. The baker and butler project our Messiah and Joseph projects the faithful. This observation parallels the 2,000 cubit distance the children of Israel had to place between themselves and the ark of the covenant when it was carried into the Jordan River as they were about to inherit the promised land. From a distance of 2,000 cubits they watched the power of the stone covenant reverse the flow of the Jordan River from the sea of Life (Galilee) to the sea of death (Salt Sea) and return to Adam. This 2,000 year wait is also prophesied in Hosea

Hosea 6:1-3 *Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. 2After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.*

3Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: 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.

There is a twofold repetition here is Hosea's prophecy:

- 1) he has torn and will heal;
- 2) he has smitten and will bind us up.

There is another twofold repetition:

- 1) after two days he will revive us;
- 2) on the third day he will raise us up... with the conclusion we will live in his sight.

He has torn and smitten (indicating we suffer under the curse of sin and death, with disease and frustration and fear and fragility and sorrow and death). *He will heal us* (indicating we shall be freed from the curse and experience the richness of life eternal and the divine nature). This happens after two days. Two days will have passed completely. That means we are in the third day when this binding and reviving happens. It does not say ... during the second day. It specifically says **after** two days. A prophetic day can be interpreted as a thousand years (2 Peter 3:8 ... why does Peter make that statement in this context of how long faithful have to wait for the coming of the Lord?... because a day = a thousand years and God is not "slack" concerning his promise). So after two days... after two thousand years ... from a distance of 2,000 cubits after two years in prison we shall live in his sight.

The twofold repetition is a prophecy of the two resurrections during that divine day of 1,000 years. One resurrection is planned for the beginning of that day (like the evening) and one resurrection is planned for the end of that day (like the morning). The precedent for the evening (beginning) and morning (ending) of a day would be the description of each day of creation (Gen 1).

So after two days we will be released from this period of being torn and smitten and will live in the divine presence. The time is further identified by the expression: *Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: 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.* Again this is a **double** expression... the time frame of the third day (after two) is defined as:

- 1) darkness surrendering to the morning light of a new day and
- 2) one coming to us as the early and latter rain.

This is the third doubled expression in this text. Jesus is the light that will dawn on creation after two thousand years dispelling the darkness of ignorance and freeing the prisoners.

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

The Messiah will enlighten (come as the dawning of the day) and he will release the prisoners.

We have another prophecy in Isaiah of the millennial kingdom period when the faithful will be given light and released from prison, confirming the prison identification we make for the baker/butler dreams.

Isaiah 49:7-13 *Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee. 8Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; 9That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. 10They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them. 11And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. 12Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim. 13Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.*

Jesus will come to us as the dawning of light after two thousand years because light is the inheritance of the saints.

Col. 1:12-13 *Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: 13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son*

At the end of the two days, on the third day the Lord will come to us as the early and latter rains. This is also a consistent theme in scripture presenting the return of Christ in the context of the latter rains: James 5:7; Psalm 72:1-7.

Why did Jesus have to be in the grave for three days and nights? Because a day with the Lord is like a thousand years and a thousand years like a day. It is at the end of three millenniums that death will be eliminated completely from creation... as it was eliminated from Jesus after three days. The resurrection of the son of God after being dead for three days and nights is a historical prophecy and promise that after 3,000 years all of creation will be raised to eternal life. Death will cease to be a reality.

Therefore the fact that Joseph had to remain in prison for two additional years before the wine steward brought about his release from prison is highly significant. This reflects the 2,000 years that the faithful will wait until the wine steward of life (Jesus Christ)... will come again (as the dawn and as the latter rain) to release the faithful from the prison of sin and death after two days.

3. The Rise & Exaltation of Joseph by Dreams

In the very next chapter of Genesis we have the account of Pharaoh's dreams depicting the land's fruitfulness (or lack thereof) for the next 14 years.

Genesis 41:1-8;14-32 *And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river. 2And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow. 3And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. 4And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke. 5And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good. 6And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them. 7And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream. 8And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.*

14Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh. 15And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it. 16And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

17And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river: 18And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fatfleshed and well favoured; and they fed in a meadow: 19And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favoured and leanfleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness: 20And the lean and the ill favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine: 21And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they were still ill favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke. 22And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good: 23And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them: 24And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears: and I told this unto the magicians; but there was none that could declare it to me. 25And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do. 26The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one. 27And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine. 28This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh. 29Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt: 30And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land; 31And the plenty shall not be known in the land by

reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous. 32And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

First we notice that these are dreams and not visions. The unenlightened Pharaoh is in the death-like state of sleep when he experiences these dreams. The unenlightened are spoken of as being dead in scripture even through they are alive... Luke 9:59-60; 1 Pet 4:4-6. When we commit ourselves to Christ we are spoken of as escaping from a death state....Eph 2:1-2,5; Rom 6:13 (baptism is being alive from the dead).

God communicates to the unenlightened Pharaoh through dreams and not visions, apparently consistent with the death-like, unenlightened state of Pharaoh... as opposed to a vision, experienced while one is awake, and alert to the light.

One odd thing about this incident is that it is reported that none of Pharaoh's servants could explain these dreams. That seems odd since that certainly wouldn't happen in our society. If President Bush had disturbing dreams there would be an endless line of people with silly explanations. I suggest that may have been the case with Pharaoh as well, but Pharaoh was unsatisfied with this kind of 'mud-thrown-on-the-wall-to-see-what-will-stick' type of sloppy interpretation attempt. He was very unsettled by these dreams. He wanted concrete understanding and the self-satisfying, like-to-hear-myself-talk sputterings of the astrologers, the soothsayers, the palm readers and the crystal ball gazers did not satisfy Pharaoh's sense of dread for these dreams. Like all brown-nosers they would have interpreted these dreams in Pharaoh's favor and tried to spin them into something glorious for Pharaoh. I think this is why the record states that no one could explain these dreams. I don't think it is because they didn't try, completely inconsistent with capricious human nature. I think it is because Pharaoh could see through their shallow deceptions. This is also interesting as it appears Pharaoh may not have possessed the wisdom of age and experience. Joseph tells his brothers that God had made him a 'father' to Pharaoh (Gen 45:8). This suggests Joseph was older than Pharaoh since this would be an odd expression if that weren't the case. Joseph could have used many other parallels to explain his relationship to Pharaoh (mentor, friend, advisor, etc), but chose father (Hebrew is *ab*, the same word Joseph uses to refer to his own father, Jacob). Joseph was 30 years old when he was brought up out of prison (Gen 41:46). This would suggest that Pharaoh was noticeably younger than 30 years old. The father analogy would not fit if Pharaoh were even in his mid-twenties. Pharaoh is most probably a young man, but is not daunted by his older advisors with their silly dream interpretations.... as the record states - verse 8: *And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.* God not only gave this young Pharaoh clear, defined, memorable dreams... he weighed him down with a dread accompanying these dreams that would not be brushed aside by the shallow guesses of his ambitious yes-men advisors.

After it is determined none of Pharaoh's usual advisors are capable of explaining these dreams we see the butler (the chief presenter of wine, wine steward, wine-taster) all of a sudden remembering Joseph from prison, a man who could interpret clear but unsettling dreams. We might ask - how could he have forgotten? But in reality, that claim is very believable. There are a couple of different possibilities.

1) The butler had enjoyed a life of great privilege and influence as Pharaoh's chief wine steward. Then he was thrown into the dungeons without recourse, no appeals, and prospects of degradation and death.... and then poof - he was returned to pomp and privilege. It is not uncommon to mentally block out the unpleasant memories of catastrophic experiences... to refuse to allow these memories to surface into our consciousness. It is reasonable the butler would have 'forgotten' until the frustration of Pharaoh's situation triggered these memories into the consciousness of the butler. However, I think the prophetically perfect timing of 2 years would also suggest divine assistance to ensure the butler's memory reactivation.

2) Another possible explanation is that the butler is simply feigning his recollection but never pursued his now two year old debt to Joseph out of fear of exposure. After having been taken out of prison back to his old position he would have felt vulnerable and exposed and unwilling to make requests. As time went on, like most people, he would repress his sense of responsibility to Joseph and rationalize his reluctance to seek Joseph's benefit at a potential risk to

himself. This was the perfect time to act... benefiting both Pharaoh and Joseph.... satisfying his guilt and ensuring the appreciation of his employer.... classic self-serving human nature.

Either way, it is very reasonable that the butler has not sought the benefit of Joseph until this time and after no one could satisfy the Pharaoh's need for understanding his dreams, stepped forward with his suggestion concerning this imprisoned slave.

Joseph is taken from prison and enslavement. He is washed, shaved and clothed appropriately for an audience with the world's most powerful man. I wonder if it had been divinely revealed to him what was going to happen. It appears Joseph may have already known the interpretation of the dreams and had determined the wisest course of activity in response to these dreams and was prepared to be bold enough to offer advise to Pharaoh. If this divine kindness presumption is legitimate, the anticipation Joseph would experience at being freed from prison would parallel the anticipation we experience as we have been notified by God in advance that we are the final generation before Jesus, the antitypical chief wine steward, raises us up out of our prison of the curse of sin and death. Perhaps Joseph was given the interpretation of the dreams in advance.... but we are not given that information. It is only conjecture. This might be the case since Joseph appears totally confident God will answer Pharaoh's request for understanding (*15And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it. 16And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace*). Additionally there is no hint of hesitation in Joseph's response. After Pharaoh explains the dreams Joseph immediately launches into the divine explanation. There is no record of a pause to pray or a request to return in a day or more with the answer (as with Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar)... just the answer... as if it were ready on his lips waiting to be presented.

God's communication to Pharaoh is presented in dream format and doubled. Two sets of images confirm the same message. Pharaoh recounts the dreams to Joseph. Pharaoh is on the river bank (Nile, assuredly). There are seven steers that emerge from the river that are plump and healthy... good eating.... we're talking Prime Rib on the hoof... these aren't hamburger. They feed in the meadow. These seven are followed (presumably out of the river) by seven cattle that look bony and diseased. Pharaoh says he has never seen cattle as thin and diseased as these in his entire country. These steers also feed in the meadow.... but they feed on the 7 healthy, plump cattle. Then Pharaoh is surprised to see the physical impossibility of the seven gaunt, diseased steers showing no sign of that impossible consumption whatsoever. Pharaoh wakes up. Then he dreams again. Let's just pause here.

Pharaoh watches as these animals exit from the river. The Nile River is a symbol of the country of Egypt, just as the Euphrates is used as a symbol of Babylon and the Jordan of Israel. God's judgements against Babylon are expressed in terms of the Euphrates River that dominated the area (Jer 51:60-64). Christadelphians have used this relationship between great rivers and kingdoms to interpret prophecy.

i.e. Rev 16:12 *And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared....* indicating the drying up of the power and influence of the Turkish Ottoman Empire. This took place in the 19th century and culminated with the loss of Palestine in 1917 to Britain during WWI... therefore making the way clear for the kings of the east. This relationship can be extended to large bodies of water. In Daniel's dream in chapter seven he sees four mishapen beasts emerge from the Great Sea (Mediterranean)... indicating prophecies related to the region surrounding the Mediterranean... *Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. 3And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.* We know these nations to be the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman kingdoms. Interestingly even the Kingdom of God is identified with a great river... the river of life (Ezek 47 & Rev 22).

A great river defined a geographical territory because it was the foundation of life. The river provided water for man, their herds, game and agricultural crops; as well as fish for eating. It provided an avenue of transportation, a natural defense and a major recreation center. It is only logical a geographic region would be identified by a great river.... as is the case in Pharaoh's dream. Each of the two sets of cattle emerge from the river.... indicating the Egyptian framework to this dream. Joseph tells us the two sets of seven steers represent 2 sets of 7 years.... abundance and depravation. The second

dream involves grain.... seven good ears. Interestingly the Hebrew word for ears is shibboleth which can mean both a flowing stream (as in the word the Gibeonites requiring the Ephraimites to speak to identify them as they tried to cross the fords of the Jordan) or an ear or head of grain. In the same sense our English word “ear” can indicate a bodily part with the capacity to receive audible tones as well as a head of grain.

The dream is then repeated in somewhat different but parallel terms. There are 2 stalks with 7 grain clusters. In the same progression the 7 well favored grain clusters come first. The miserable ones come afterward, devouring the good ones. Joseph explains that the repetition of the dream confirms the absolute but unappealing certainty of the events reflected in these dreams. Gen 41:32 *And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.* In a similar vein we see Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the multi-metaled image being repeated in different terms in a dream experienced by Daniel with the four misshapen beasts that rise out of the great sea (Daniel 2 & 7).

Pharaoh was given the ability to remember these dreams in detail and burdened with a sense of dread concerning these dreams. He had to know what they meant. This is why he was willing to listen to a criminal slave after his advisors proved to be clueless. Joseph interprets the dreams for us so that there is no question as to what they represent. Seven years of incredible agricultural abundance will be followed by seven years of devastating drought and agricultural failure. Joseph then is bold enough to advise the king. This thirty year old former rich boy, who had been sold by his brothers into slavery, falsely accused of attempted rape and imprisoned by his owner and living in the dungeons for years, forgotten and abandoned for two years by the chief butler he had benefitted. We can safely assume Joseph would not be left alone with Pharaoh, especially if he were younger than Joseph. I imagine the advisors were a little startled when this criminal slave was bold enough to advise the king. However, they couldn’t fault his advise. They all agreed with Pharaoh that Joseph’s suggestions made sense. I imagine they were significantly more startled when Pharaoh elevated this criminal slave above all of them. What would we think if President Bush replaced Vice President Cheney with a foreigner who had spent years in Leavenworth? The political repercussions would have shot through the palace and the capital city like a lightning bolt.

Just as Joseph, the chosen heir, the son who wasn’t born chronologically first but elevated to the firstborn status.. was taken from prison falsely accused and elevated to the 2nd highest political position on the planet. . . . so Jesus, the chosen heir and the son of God who wasn’t born chronologically first but was the first born son of God... was taken from the prison of the tomb and raised up to the 2nd highest political position in the universe... above all angels and principalities and powers, with the exclusive exception of his Heavenly Father.

4. The Parables of Baalim

Numbers 22:1-6 Balak the Moabite King is afraid of Israel and seeks to hire Baalim to curse Israel. Moabites were relatives of Israel (Gen 19:36-38). God would judge Moab for their unsupportive attitude to Israel (Deut 23:3-6). So the princes of Moab come to Baalim at Pethor (in Mesopotamia Deut 23:4). Therefore the the river [Num 22:5] could have been the Euphrates?). He was certainly sent for from the east (Num 23:7). Balaam had to have some kind of reputation to be known so far and wide. The princes offer wealth for curses. Balaam is sought out as a hired gun.

Balaam wants to go. He covets the honor and the wealth being dangled in front of him. God forbids him. Balaam dutifully dispatches the princes of Moab. But more return with more tempting offers. Balaam harasses Yahweh to let him go to Moab. God gives permission but is very disappointed in Balaam.

read the remaining portion of Num 22, through vs 41.

Do we pray for things we shouldn’t have? (James 4:3)

Balaam’s first parable: Num 23:5-10.

The people shall dwell alone. They shall not be reckoned among the nations... separate, apart, different, isolated. This is what is indicated by the concept of holiness. This is part of the blessing of Israel Balaam reluctantly presented. Isolation

may not seem like much of a blessing but a choice has to be made, either joining ourselves to the serpent dominated world or to God. We separate ourselves from one as well as attach ourselves to the other. There is a disconnection from and an attachment to that is required. The exhortation is to be separate: 2 Cor 6:17-18; This was one of the qualifications of Jesus as our High Priest: Heb 7:26.

Next part of Balaam's parable: *Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? The dust of Jacob is a reference to the promises to Abraham (Gen 13:16)*

The fourth part of Jacob... the number four is constantly associated with God manifest in the flesh throughout scripture. This fourth part of Jacob the king and princes of Moab are invited to consider represents the children of Israel's position as the people through whom Yahweh will manifest himself. They have taken upon themselves His name.

The fourth part of Jacob: divine arrangement of the doubled 4 square encampment in wilderness

1. Outer 4 quadrants with 3 tribes each
2. Inner four quadrants of Gershonites, Merarites, Kohathites and priests.

At the time of Balaam's attempting cursing the Moabite vultures were on a high place looking down on Israel - seeing the four parts camped separately with the tabernacle in the center and the cloud above it. Two sets of four ... remember the lesson that eight is the number of the man who was and is and will be the perfect manifestation of Yahweh....888.

A few further applications of the pattern where 4 is identified with how Yahweh manifests Himself

- The foursquare dimensions of bride of Christ - new Jerusalem of Rev 21;
- 4 temples of God's presence
- 4 faces of the 4 cherubim
- 4 kingdoms depicting the armies God would use to judge Israel (Nebuchadnezzar's image and Daniel's misshapen beasts)
- 4 categories of earth in the parable of the sower depicting those into whom the word of God is sown
- Christ's inner circle of four (himself, Peter, James & John) for transfiguration, raising of Jairus daughter, garden of Gethsemane
- 4 symbolic articles in the holy place of the tabernacle (lampstand, table of shewbread, altar of incense and veil)
- 4 individual items in the Ark of the Covenant (2 covenant stones, manna, High Priest rod)
- 4 incense ingredients; the aromatic dust burned on the altar of incense to represent the prayers of the faithful and thrown on the fire on the day of atonement to make the cloud to veil the glory of the ark of the covenant
- 4 gospel accounts of the man who was the perfect manifestation of the Heavenly Father;

Balaam asked who could number the fourth part of Jacob. The world should consider the fourth part of Israel. That fourth 'part' of Israel is its responsibility to manifest the Creator whose name they have taken upon themselves by covenant.

Balaam continues: *Let me die the death of the righteous, let my last end be like his.* Of course Balaam is speaking as God has directed him, but Balaam's last end... in the sense of how he died ... was not pleasant. He died in war at the hands of the very children of Israel he was reluctantly blessing at this time. It is interesting that the latter end of the children of Israel is blessed. The beginning was very blessed. The end will be very blessed. They will be humbled when Christ returns and he will save them from the northern invader. Their latter end will be better than before... 10 men will take hold of the skirt of a Jew and ask to associate themselves with him because they perceive that God is aligned with them (Zech. 8:23).

Balak, the King of Moab, is understandably quite upset with Balaam's reversal of his intentions. But he's not ready to give up yet. He wants Balaam to try again from another location, from Pisgah where only a portion of Israel could be seen (Num 23:13-14). Pisgah is where Moses would see the promised land and then die (Deut. 34:1-4).

After building another 7 altars, making another 14 offerings... Balaam comes back with another message from Yahweh. **verses 18-24** *And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor: 19God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? 20Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. 21He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. 22God brought them out of Egypt; he*

hath as it were the strength of an unicorn. 23 Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought! 24 Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain.

This is the second time Balaam has addressed Balak and the Moabites concerning Israel. Through Balaam, God rebukes Balak for presuming God's policy toward Israel could be reversed by persistence or sacrifices... as if Yahweh can be bought off with shallow, meaningless expressions of devotion. God says, what do you think, I'm some kind of human being? ... some kind of liar or wishy washy man? Balaam explains he is powerless to change God's policy toward Israel. We might ask the question as to why God says through Balaam that he has not beheld iniquity or perverseness in Israel... as if this might be grounds to reverse the blessed status of this people. It also seems rather strange since God condemned the previous generation of the men of war to die in the wilderness due to their faithlessness, he sent poisonous serpents among them.. he rained fire down on them for complaining. Why does he tell Balak he hasn't seen iniquity in Israel? I have a couple thoughts on this. One suggestion is that God is qualifying his refusal to curse, that he hasn't seen the **level** or **degree** of iniquity in Israel that would reverse the blessed status into a curse. This may have been the opening Balak and Balaam perceived as the opportunity to destroy Israel... since this is the direction they took - promoting iniquity in Israel. The other (not necessarily alternative, but complimentary) possibility as to why God expresses he has not seen iniquity or perverseness in Israel is the reaction we all seem to have when an outsider to our family criticizes or seeks the misfortune of one of our family. My brothers and I fought constantly as children, but we took great offense when someone else threatened one of us... drawing us together defensively. An outsider (Balak) is seeking the damage of God's children, the people who have chosen to take his name upon them. God will discipline his children as he sees fit, but will not be provoked against his family by an idol worshipping outsider. Yahweh is not some capricious, flip-flopping human being.

This issue of the degree of qualifying iniquity to encourage divine cursing seems to be the course of action pursued, when that attempted cursing proved fruitless. Balaam was at the center of this promotion of iniquity that was described in Number 25

Rev 2:14 *But I have a few things against thee, because 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. Balaam taught Balak to put a stumblingblock in front of Israel.*

This understanding is confirmed further on in Numbers. 31:14-16 *And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle. 15 And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive? 16 Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.*

There was an absolute organized agenda against Israel, to encourage them to antagonize Yahweh enough to obliterate them. The Moabites and Midianites had a plan to promote iniquity in Israel. God reveals this at the end of the account of the incident at Shittim in chapter 25:16-18 *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ¹⁷ Vex the Midianites, and smite them: ¹⁸ For they vex you with their wiles, wherewith they have beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a prince of Midian, their sister, which was slain in the day of the plague for Peor's sake.*

This should be fairly scary to Christadelphians today. A legitimate prophet of Yahweh was so greedy for financial advantage and personal glory that he actually advised the enemies of the enlightened exactly how to antagonize God against the Israelites. What was this avenue... it was peaceful cohabitation.... loving your neighbor as yourself... sharing lifestyles and children, intermarrying and calmly respecting the diversity between them.

What exactly had they done? Num 25:1-9

Balaam starts it but Phinehas finishes it. Literally, Phinehas committed murder. He had no right under divine law to execute Zimri and Cozbi for their marriage (or sexual dalliance, if you prefer to believe that). By divine law Phinehas had to arrest them as a witness, bring them before the elders for accusation and perhaps qualify as one of the first to apply judgment, due to his witness status. Phinehas took matters into his own hands and murdered the two of them... with one

thrust of a javelin (suggesting the nature of their activity within that tent). For his act of impulsive murder to defend the righteousness of Yahweh, Phinehas is greatly honored by God (Num 25:10-13 and Ps 106:28-31).

The participants in this God despising behavior of marrying outside the body of the enlightened and their names and meanings (defined by the Young's concordance) are:

Israelite groom: Zimri (meaning **celebration**) ... son of a prince in Israel

Father of the groom: Salu (meaning **miserable**)... a prince in Israel

Midianite Bride: Cozbi (meaning **deceit** or lie) ... princess in Midian

Father of the Bride: Zur (meaning **rock**).... a Midianite King (Num 31:8)

Yahweh records these names that spell out to those with eyes that see and ears that hear the divine declaration of a marriage outside the community of the enlightened: **A miserable celebration with the rock of deceit.**

This issue of putting stumblingblocks in front of others is a serious issue with our Heavenly Father. He despises those who promote wickedness in others. Consider the seven things God hates:

Prov 6:16-19 *These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: 17A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, 19A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.*

God despises those who place Godliness impediments in front of others, making their lives more challenging than it already is. This principle is expressed in the law found in **Lev 19:14** *Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD* (verse 18 is the royal law of loving your neighbor as yourself).

Jesus warns against those who will promote offense (Matt 18:1-11)

Paul warns also Rom 14:13-14 *Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. 14 I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.*

The Pharisees were the masters of this, defining righteousness as every little ritual they chose... with the washing of hands and pots and blind observance of ritual performance, without understanding the principles involved. Christadelphians do the same things today. The Pharisaical spirit of the self-righteousness creates stumblingblock after stumblingblock for believers in age after age, with the ecclesial age being no different than any other age.

Motivations are important to God. **Why** a stumblingblock is placed in front of someone is very important. God Himself certainly places stumblingblocks, not with the intention to create failure but he certainly places stumblingblocks and challenges (Ezek 3:20). God doesn't tempt but he does test. Motivations are important to our divine judge. There is the one who provokes simply for entertainment.... just to watch the failure and experience feeling the control over another... as if they are a puppet master. There is the one who provokes out of self righteousness and confirmation of one's sense of goodness... if everyone doesn't perform this service or ritual the way I do then it can't be right. Balaam's motivation was greed (2 Peter 2:15; Jude 11). These references are both prophecies of false teachers within the brotherhood. This is the stumblingblock the Christadelphian body founders did not want in our path... the crippling effect a paid clergy could have on maintaining the integrity of the true gospel. The Balaam factor was eliminated through the construction of the ecclesia in its present form. A paid clergy is scripturally acceptable. It isn't more inherently righteous that we don't take advantage of a paid clergy. It is simply that we don't need any more stumblingblocks than we already have. Balaam was judged for his devious, greedy undermining Num 31:8.

Next in Balaam's parable we see the statement that there is a shout of a king among them. This would have been disconcerting to Balak... as that reference meant a kingdom. That meant borders and a standing army, presenting a threat to his ambitions. The references to king and destroying like a lion appears to be a reference to the lion of the tribe of Judah... the Messiah who would be their king and save them from their enemies (Gen 49:9-12)

Israel's repayment for the stumblingblock behaviour of Midian was lion-like (Num 31:7-12... vs 12-prey). A lion is one face of the four faced cherubim and the four living creatures of Rev 4-5 depicting the immortalized saints in the millennial kingdom. There are aspects of the lion that are therefore very spiritually positive while other features are decidedly the opposite. Just as the son of God is likened to a lion.... we also see the opposite: **1 peter 5:8** *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:* Solomon humorously defines the ridiculous excuses of the lazy worker by using a lion... **Prov 26:13** *The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets.* A positive lion-like feature is boldness **Prov 28:1** *The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.*

The strength of a unicorn... we don't really know what a unicorn was. This may have been a wild bull or even the horned horse of mystery that may have been hunted into extinction, or even a rhinoceros. The unicorn was massively strong & wild according to all the uses in scripture. The book of Job refers to the impossibility of domesticating the unicorn. God says there is no enchantment against Israel. There is no trick, no bad luck charm, no ritual, no 'dead cat swung five times over your head over a goat's grave at midnight during a new moon' that will have any power against God's chosen people.

It shall be said concerning Jacob and Israel.... what has God wrought?

Consider Israel today. The prophecies that have come true concerning this people and the nation of Israel... the curses of Deut 28 and Lev 26... the prophecies of the nations' destruction and the scattering but not the disappearance of the sons of Jacob. The resurrection of the nation on the same soil, by the exact descendants of the original residents, with the same language and the same capital. We have witnessed the first stage (political) of the resurrection of Israel (the national first born son of God). The body reassembled on the valley floor as the mountain nations look down on them (Ezek. 37). This corresponds to the process of resurrection depicted in scripture for the saints. Everyone immortalized that had been dead will experience two resurrections. First is the resurrection from the dead... both just and unjust will experience this (Acts 24:14-15)... paralleling the political resurrection of the nation of Israel and the first prophecy of Ezekiel to the dried out bones of Israel on the valley floor. After the judgement the faithful (only the truly faithful) will again experience another resurrection... a raising up... an elevation to the divine nature of immortality (1 Cor 15:51-54)... paralleling the second stage of the resurrection of the nation of Israel depicted in Ezekiel 37 when God commands Ezekiel to prophecy a second time but to the wind to fill the bodies with breath and the stand up and live. What has God wrought in Jacob and Israel... what incredible signs and lessons! Balak was clueless.

Totally ignoring the blessings God gave through Balaam, Balak insists on a third location, a 3rd viewpoint from which to possibly curse this huge family by dangling some trinket in front of a fickle god.... throwing a little beef or mutton on an open fire... these 14 offerings on 7 altars... as if this little ritual is going to negate all the divine proclamations that Yahweh has made. What a typical mindset for we human beings... so many of us refuse to stop & consider... or learn something. We are blind to any overwhelming evidence contradicting a preferred frame of reference. We have an agenda. Let's not let facts or evidence get in our way. Our mind is made up. Balak is very typical of a 21st century person.

Balaam makes the climb up to the high point at Peor. He requires Balak to have 7 altars constructed again. They haul up the cattle and the sheep, slaughter them and roast them. Balaam doesn't go hunting for divinations this time to try and influence God (Num 24:1). He looks out over the encampment, ordered by their tribes and surrounding and facing in toward the tabernacle of God.

Num 24: 3-9 *And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: 4He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: 5How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! 6 As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the LORD hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. 7He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. 8God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an*

unicorn: he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows. 9He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.

How goodly are your tents o Jacob - your tabernacles o Israel.... tents = ohel; tabernacles = mishkan
several parallels are made - all pleasant. He parallels the encampment to a garden of aloes and cedar trees that Yahweh has planted by the river. This same aloes is positively associated with the the Messiah and the ecclesial bride in several places in scripture...

Ps 45:6-9 A picture of Messiah the king and his queen bride ... aloes accompanies them
Song of Solomon 4:12-16 The bride of the Messiah is like a garden of sweet odors (incl. aloes).... just as Balaam sees Jacob as a garden
John 19:39-40 Jesus is buried in a hewn out rock in a garden and wrapped in linen with an abundance of aloes and myrrh.

Balaam witnesses to the garden like appearance of the encampment of Israel... ordered and pleasant. They are planted by the river. Here it would be the Jordan River, not far from their encampment. This is a picture of the millennial and post-millennial kingdom where we see a garden of trees planted by God by a river.
Ezek. 47:6-12; Rev. 22:1-3

Balaam's prophecy: the garden shall spread.... He shall pour out the water out of his buckets and his seed shall be in many waters, the king shall be higher than Agag.... God's garden shall expand.
God defines the use of waters in Rev 17:15 as being peoples and nations and tongues... not just peoples.
The seed of God that will plant his garden shall spread across many waters making his king greater than Agag.
God started with a garden... the Garden of Eden.
Isaiah presents a similar picture of the bridegroom and the bride and a garden that spreads across all nations ... as seed across many waters ... in Is 61:10-11.
Just as Balaam sees Israel as a watered garden, Jeremiah presents a similar picture after the regathering of the Jewish people into the promised land Jer 31:10-12; Isaiah 60:15-16,21

The place of Christ's arrest is a garden. The place of his burial is a garden. How appropriate. Adam & Eve succumbed to the temptations of the flesh in the garden. Jesus was taken by the sons of men and became under their power in the garden. Death was inflicted on Adam in the garden and then he was removed from the garden. A dead Jesus was placed in the garden as he was reconciling a cursed world to his Heavenly father through the execution of sin in his body.... bringing us back to the garden... that we might be called the planting of Yahweh (Isaiah 61:1-3).

The king shall be higher than Agag. This was a title of the ruler of the Amalekites... like Pharaoh to the Egyptians. The Amalekites hated the Jews. They were the first to attack Israel in the wilderness after escaping Egypt (Ex 17:8-16). Here the rod of God had to be extended above all, especially Amalek... for victory over the Agagites. Moses was on the top of a hill to watch the battle and when he rose his hands up (holding the rod of God) then Israel prevailed. Jesus is the rod of God.... the rod that became a serpent, the rod that struck the Nile and turned it to blood; the rod that struck the rock-split it in two and the water gushed out; the rod that lay before the testimony all night and the next morning budded and bore buds and blossoms and ripe almonds - becoming the rod of resurrection. This rod of God was the Messiah, the king of Jacob who would rise above Agag.... depicted here as rising above Amalek, the Agagites.

We recently read in the daily readings of how King Saul was commanded to annihilate the Amalekites, to reflect the king who would rise above Agag. Saul was weak and foolish. Samuel had to be the one to slaughter Agag. The next reference to Agag is the great enemy of the Jews... Haman the Agagite who plotted the annihilation of the Jews, as the Jews had attempted to annihilate his ancestors. Once again the Agagite is defeated. The time will come when the king will rise above Agag, when all his enemies will be brought low and this divinely appointed gardener (as Adam was) will spread

his garden across many waters... many peoples and nations and languages. This activity of rising above Agag is expressed in the remainder of Balaam's parable ... *God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn: he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows. 9He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.*

This is the king, the lion of the tribe of Judah. Christianity mistakenly expects a lamb just as Israel mistakenly expected a lion when he came as the early rain to water the garden of God, the enlightened who bore his name, the planting of God. We know he will come as the lion at his return. He is the lamb/lion. He is depicted this way in Rev 5:4-6. The Messiah's lamb application precedes the lion application... just as sacrifice and victimization and suffering precedes glory and honor and power. The lamb before the lion & the cross before the crown is the pattern that escapes the flesh centered mind.

Next Balaam offers to show the nations that intended to pay him to curse Israel what their opposition of Israel would warrant them in the end of the matter... the Moabites, the Edomites, the Amalekites and Kenites. They would all be defeated. None would prevail. Despite the fact that Balaam had enough credibility with these men that they were willing to invest their time and wealth in securing his curse, he lost all credibility with them when he didn't tell them what they wanted to hear. Instead of pursuing Israel as an ally, they maintain their enemy status. We human beings do this constantly, redefining everything so that it is palatable and completely ignoring what we don't like... subjective thinking as opposed to objective. It is truth that sets us free, not obstinate self-delusion like the Moabites and Amalekites.

5. God Comforts A Concerned Jacob

Gen 46:1-4 *And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. 2And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. 3And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: 4I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.*

Israel/Jacob is on his way into Egypt, leaving the promised land. Beersheba is at the southern end. He offered sacrifices to God... why? Did Israel see some special need to offer sacrifices or ask God's guidance at this particular time? Why did God consider it necessary to come to Jacob in a vision of the night to comfort fears about entering Egypt?

Jacob had been convinced that Joseph was alive again, having lived with his death for 22-23 years. We know this is the time frame since Joseph was 17 when he was sold into slavery. He was 30 when he rose to power and glory. The time of plenty was over in seven years. The food inventory would have lasted for some time into the first or second year of famine. His brothers had gone to Egypt twice to buy food and the second time would have been severely procrastinated to avoid exposing Benjamin to the dread Egyptian overlord they didn't know was their brother. Joseph would have to be 39 or 40 when he revealed himself to his brothers and sent for his father. Israel was convinced. Why else would his sons confess to the horrible sins of selling their brother and their father's favorite into slavery and deceiving him about Joseph's death. Then there were the wagons and the goods Joseph sent. Jacob was convinced Joseph was alive. Why would he be afraid to go down into Egypt? Why would he be offering sacrifices to God and God would be answering him about the journey into Egypt being the right move?

Israel remembered. He remembered the prophecy his father and grandfather had told him about. The prophecy God made to his grandfather when he offered the 5 animals and made a covenant with the God of heaven and earth. Abraham had fallen into a deep sleep and Yahweh spoke to the Father of the Faithful telling him... Gen 15:12-14 *And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. 13And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict*

them four hundred years; 14And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

What was Jacob doing? Was he bringing his family into the very country that would afflict his grandchildren and great grandchildren and great-great grandchildren? Jacob was afraid. He offered sacrifices to God in his anxiousness. God lovingly answered him... telling him it was all right. God would be with him. He would see Joseph. And God would bring them back to the promised land.

6. The Barley Bread that leveled the Midianites

Judges 7:9-15 And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand. 10But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host: 11And thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host. 12And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude. 13And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. 14And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host. 15And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

Gideon is the lowest of the low in Israel. He presents himself as the least in his family, who are the least in Manasseh, which is only a half tribe (since Manasseh split up when the promised land was inherited) and Manasseh was passed over as the eldest son of Joseph for the first born status and it was given to his younger brother Ephraim by their grandfather Israel. Gideon had assembled 32,000 warriors, who were actually farmers, shopkeepers, merchants pretending to be soldiers. God had whittled the group down to 300. Earlier that day Gideon had sent back 9,700 men, leaving only 300 to face the Midianite horde of 135,000 trained, armed mercenaries. God has increasingly made Gideon's job more and more difficult. He was not a proven leader or a general or even an experienced soldier. These men were on a suicide mission. It is one thing to sit back in our comfortable chairs in our air conditioned room and postulate on how they should have had the faith to simply trust in God that this pitiful handful of men could take out an army with every Israelite farmer having the responsibility of killing 450 soldiers each. It is quite another thing to sit there cold and alone (without campfires for warmth so as to keep hidden) on that hill overlooking the tents and campfires spread out across the valley as far as they could see... having watched their brethren leave them and go home to their families and the relative safety of their homes.... alone, exposed, uncomfortable and scared.

God understands. He has made Gideon's challenge greater and greater... vs 10 (*if you are afraid...* this is not patronizing... this is supportive and compassionate). Gideon and Phurah sneak down to the perimeter guards, close enough to hear their conversation. One of them tells the other about a dream he had (once again, the unenlightened have dreams and not visions). Long before Gideon had the need for faith reinforcement, God gave this doomed Midianite soldier a dream that would enrich the faith of his chosen servant Gideon. The soldier explains his dream to his fellow associate. A cake of barley bread (the Hebrew word for cake suggests a round or rolling piece) tumbles into the camp. The word tumble doesn't suggest a haphazard bumping and jumping. It is destructive. The Hebrew word is haphak... which is also translated overthrow (Hab 2:22 - twice). The round of barley bread comes barreling into the Midian camp and knocks over a tent... flattens it. The text reads that it smote the tent. The word translated smote is also translated slay, kill, beat, slaughter... you get the picture. This mercenary tent, depicting the entire encampment, has been laid out by a round of barley bread.... prostrate before it.

The other soldier interprets the dream as Gideon the son of Joash being represented as the barley cake and the toppling of the tent by the barley representing Gideon's military defeat of the Midianites. The soldier explains that the God of Israel has delivered the Midianite army into the hands of Gideon. I wonder how familiar the Midianite encampment was of this dream and its interpretation by the time Gideon and his men surrounded the camp, broke their pitchers revealing the torches, blasted the trumpets and yelled the sword of Yahweh and Gideon. It is a little odd that this panicked the seasoned soldiers so easily into hacking each other to death. Surely God augmented their panic but it may be they were mentally prepared and on edge. The attack, if you want to call it that, took place at the beginning of the second watch of the night. Since there is no fourth night watch mentioned in scripture until we come to the New Testament and historians tell us the Jews observed three night watches then this would have put the time of the attack about the middle of the night. Everyone was asleep except the perimeter guards. 120,000 soldiers died that night (Jud 8:10). We might wonder why 15,000 men who remained alive would continue to run from Gideon's little 300 man posse and not turn on them. It would seem the panic didn't really diminish. Perhaps they remembered the stories of what Yahweh had done to the Egyptians and Jericho. Midian was actually relatives of the Israelites. they shared a common ancestor... Abraham (Gen 25:2-6). They were sent eastward, where Midian had settled east of the Jordan. I imagine the Midianites always resented the descendants of Isaac who were preferred above all of Abraham's other children. The Midianites, along with the Ishmaelites, had purchased the chosen heir of Jacob from his brothers and then sold Joseph in Egypt. Even today the second class descendants of Abraham, the arabs, contend that it was Ishmael that was being offered on the rock at Moriah by Abraham and they go to worship at the dome of the rock... the third holiest site of the Moslem religion (but elevated in significance only since the Jews returned to the promised land).

Eventually Gideon hunts down the final 15,000 men and eliminates them as well, removing the Midianite threat to Israel as God commissioned him. The dream of this godless Midianite soldier was fulfilled.

7. The Bramble King

Judges 9:1-21 *And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem unto his mother's brethren, and communed with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying, 2Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether is better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, which are threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? remember also that I am your bone and your flesh. 3And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He is our brother. 4And they gave him threescore and ten pieces of silver out of the house of Baalberith, wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light persons, which followed him. 5And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself. 6And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went, and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that was in Shechem. 7And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you. 8The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. 9But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? 10And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us. 11But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? 12Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. 13And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? 14Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. 15And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon. 16Now therefore, if ye have done truly and sincerely, in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands; 17(For my father fought for you, and adventured his life far, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian: 18And ye are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maidservant, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your*

brother;) 19*If ye then have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you: 20But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech. 21And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to Beer, and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.*

Abimelech: The First ‘Human’ King of Israel

Abimelech was a son of Gideon’s concubine, not a son of one of his many wives. Abimelech plots against his half brothers, jealous of their influence and greater wealth. He connives with his Shechemite relatives, as his mother was a Shechemite. They finance his coup with 70 pieces of silver taken from their center of pagan worship... the house of Baalberith (the lord of the covenant) a god of the Philistines. Abimelech hires cheap thugs who will kill for money. He takes control of the family compound and one by one executes all of his brothers... no doubt assuming control of all the family assets. Unlike his father, Abimelech wants to be king. Gideon refused this honor (Judg 8:22-23).

The sole remaining son of Gideon (known as Jerubbaal, meaning ‘let Baal contend’, which was the name given by Gideon’s father to him when Gideon destroyed the altar and grove of Baal) is Jotham (Yah - tam)... meaning Yahweh is perfect. He is the 70th son of Gideon. For Gideon to have 70 sons they had to be popping out pretty frequently from a variety of wives. He judged Israel for 40 years and it isn’t any great secret that the older you get the fewer children you have. I wonder how many daughters he had? We are told he had many wives. I have never been able to understand the supposed benefits of polygamy.

The Patterns of Seven

70 rule for Moses Num 11:16,24

70,000 die in plague for numbering 2 Sam 24

70 years of captivity in Babylon Jer 25:12-12; 29:10

70 weeks prophecy for fulfillment Dan 9:24

Jesus appoints 70 to preach gospel of the kingdom Luke 10:1

Man lives 70 years Ps 90:10

70 days from annihilation edict to emancipation edict Esther 3:12 to Esther 8:9

7 millenniums until completeness of God’s plan... until curse is over

70 years until Babylonian captivity was over

70 days until death sentence was lifted and future reversed

70 years to live

70 weeks of years for fulfillment to when iniquity is finished

Jotham was 70th son descendants were finished.... last son...

70- totality, completeness, a finishing

Jotham calls out to the Shechemites from far enough away so that he can effect an escape before they reach him. He exposes himself to possible assassination in order to make his point, to highlight not only the wickedness of the Shechemites but to offer a curse.

Jotham stands on Mt Gerizim overlooking Shechem. There is much history in this area.

Shechem is where the prince of the area, named Shechem, defiled the daughter of Jacob. This is where Levi and Simeon assassinated the city on the third day after the men had been circumcised. Prompted by fear of a violent response from the people of the land Jacob calls for his community to abandon their idols. He calls for them to surrender their idols and he buries them by an oak tree in Shechem and journeys to Bethel where God had appeared to him in another time of trouble.

When the children of Israel inherited the promised land, Shechem became a city of the kohathites (Levites) and a city of refuge for the slayer (Josh 21:20-21). The law of the city of refuge was intended to be used for an accidental death (Joshua 20:2-7) not murder, like Abimelech did to the sons of Gideon. There should have been no refuge for Abimelech.

Shechem was also where the bones of Joseph were buried when they were carried out of Egypt (Joshua 24:32). This is the place where Joshua called the leaders of Israel, when he was about to die and made a covenant with them by the oak at Shechem (slimly possible it was the very oak where Jacob had put away the idols of his family). Joshua set up a stone pillar as a memorial of this national covenant to serve Yahweh.

Rhehoboam the son of Solomon went to Schechem for his coronation, as opposed to his father that had been crowned at the Gihon Spring at Jerusalem. Shechem was to become the first royal city of the northern country of Israel, having seceded from Rhehoboam's nation (1 Kings 12:25). Shechem is an area associated with political control, as we see in the incident with Abimelech... the second king of Israel ... as Yahweh being the first. At least Abimelech was the first human king of Israel.

Jotham stands upon Mt Gerizim as he addresses the men of Shechem, without whose support Abimelech would never have succeeded or been a threat to Jotham or his family. Mt Gerizim had been the Mt of blessing as opposed to the mount of cursing that Ebal was chosen for. The tribe of Levi had been chosen to be one of the six tribes represented on Mt Gerizim (Deut 27:12-13). Levi was also appointed to speak the curses for all the people. Now the Kohathite division of the Levites, if they settled the land as God appointed it... were performing the cursed behavior in the sight of the very mount their ancestors had shouted the curses (Deut 27:14,24-26).

The Plantlife Pattern

Jotham's parable presents four categories of plantlife that were solicited to rule over all the trees. This is different than the judges God had appointed. The trees in Jotham's parable were looking for someone to control them politically. The people didn't appoint the judges. Judgeship was not a democratic appointment. Democracy is an evil form of government designed by the sons of men (as opposed to the sons of God). Judges were divinely appointed. They were saviors in times of distress and persecution. Abimelech's rise to political authority was simply lusting after power and influence... taking instead of giving... what can I get out of it, not what can I give.

Of the four plant-life categories, olive tree, fig tree, grape vine and bramble... the first three are consistent symbols of the nation of Israel throughout scripture. We considered the olive tree when we examined Zechariah years ago. We considered the fig tree and grape vine when we studied the parables of Jesus. The bramble is an obvious exception. However, the non-fruit bearing bramble is a very negative symbol.

The Hebrew word translated bramble is also translated thorns, although it is not the exclusive word for thorns. We can see the symbolic precedent for thorns and brambles established right at the curse of Eden in Gen. 3:18. From this time forward the thorns, thistles and therefore bramble (loaded with thorns) is associated with ungodly behavior and apostasy.

- Song of Solomon 2:2 ... parallels the ecclesial bride of Christ among other women to a lily among thorns
- Isaiah 5:6-7 the judgement against the unfruitful Israelite vineyard is to be overgrown with thorns
- Isaiah 9:16-19 ... God gives the people to judgement like thorns to the flame
- Ezek 2:6 ... rebellious house of Israel like thorns Ezekiel dwells among
- Micah 7:2-4 ... bad people are like thorns
- Isaiah 55:8-13 ... when righteousness is dominant the curse of the thorns will be replaced by blessings
- Ezek 28:24-26 ... ending of the curse for godlessness on Jews is expressed as no more thorns

Jesus and Paul use the thorn symbol consistent with Old Testament precedent

- Matt 7:15-20 Jesus uses parallel and asks do men gather grapes of thorns - to identifying false teachers
- Luke 6:44-45 *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.*
- Mark 4:18 *And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, 19 And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.*
- Matt 27:29 crown of thorns used to mock Jesus... submitted himself and veiled his power before the thorny kingdom of men; symbol of their temporary victory - bruising of heel

- 2 Cor 12:7 Paul understood the parallel.... thorn in the flesh from Satan... physical impediment which was a feature of the curse, designed to show God's strength through Paul's weakness
- Heb 6:4-8 Those who abused the miraculous Holy Spirit gifts are like earth bringing forth briars and thorns

Jotham's fourth plant life category is the bramble, thorn laden bush. Four is number identifying 'God manifest in the flesh' ... doubled is Jesus Christ (8). Like the olive tree, fig tree and vine - Gideon had refused to rule over the men of Israel when invited. The bramble (Abimelech, lusting for power) agreed. Jotham expresses a conditional curse on Abimelech and the men of Shechem... conditional on whether they have acted righteously & fairly, which he knows they have not (19 *If ye then have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you*). Jotham complains of the unfairness of the men of Shechem... that they returned evil to the household of Gideon (Jerubbaal) for the righteousness he gave them (17*For my father fought for you, and adventured his life far, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian: 18And ye are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maidservant, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your brother;*). Jotham's curse within this parable is for fire to issue from both parties to consume the other party, which would confirm the evil nature of their deeds... 20 *But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech.* Shechem was destroyed by Abimelech (Judg 9:45,46,49. Abimelech met his end from a women who dropped a rock on his head (Judg 9:53-57).

8. Solomon's Dream

1 Kings 3:3-15 *And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places. 4And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar: 5In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. 6And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. 7And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. 8And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. 9Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? 10And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. 11And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; 12Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. 13And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. 14And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days. 15And Solomon awoke; and, behold, it was a dream. And he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and offered up burnt offerings, and offered peace offerings, and made a feast to all his servants.*

The first question to address is what was Solomon doing specifically at Gibeon and why was this considered a "high place" where sacrifices should be offered?

Josh 21:17-18 A city of the Levites (which is odd, since the Hivites of Gibeon had deceived Joshua & heads)

1 Chron 21:28-30 David moves sacrifices from Gibeon to Moriah

2 Chron 1:3-7 Solomon breaks from his father's pattern and goes to Gibeon to sacrifice, where tabernacle and bronze altar are kept

Solomon came to Gibeon because this seemed the most appropriate place to sacrifice, as opposed to the former threshing floor of Arunah the Jebusite, where God had appeared to his father David. It is interesting that offering sacrifices at high places is considered to be a failing (vs 3: And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places) but God communicates to Solomon in a dream here at the high place at Gibeon, which appears to accommodate a behavior that was not preferred.... like allowing men to take multiple wives, while that was not the divine intent (according to Jesus).

God appears to Solomon in a dream, during the night and offers Solomon... name your gift. I'll give you one wish... ask for whatever you want. Solomon had not yet been seduced by his ego or his incredible number of wives. His father's influence was still strong. This is clear from Solomon's answer to God.... *7 And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.* Solomon's request was sacrificial and humble the true benefit would be for God's people.... make me a better king, make me a better judge... I'm not the smartest or the wisest and I'm afraid of making mistakes - give me wisdom so that I can do a good job. This scene of granting a wish is a common scenario in the imaginations of men, but this is an uncommon request. We've all heard the fantasies of the genie in the bottle than can grant three wishes.... i.e.the jokes about the man with one wish supposedly smart enough (more appropriately greedy enough) to ask for more wishes. These fables and jokes all display the shallow, temporary, self-centered, naturally me-first focus of the human heart. A similar concept today would be how young children write to Santa Claus with lists of things that they want. I doubt we would find any single requests like Solomon's.... The lists go on and on. Even though Solomon is certainly not a little child the principle is the same with adults for long wish lists. Solomon is more concerned at this time with God's people than he is with himself, more concerned with their well being and his inadequacies than with his own personal benefit.

God is happy with the sacrificial request and grants him wishes Solomon did not request. There would be three unconditional blessings and one conditional blessing... wisdom, riches, honor and a longer life as long as Solomon would behave in a godly manner and serve Yahweh in the same pattern as his father David. These are all blessings for the saints as well. Inheriting the nature of God will translate us from a finite existence to an infinite. What we are incapable of understanding at this time... if we are accepted, we will be living. We will eventually witness a creation without death, without aging or decay, without limitations. Our wisdom will expand. The wealth of the world will be channeled to the king. The saints will be his vice-regents... the king-priests. Just as the Jewish people will be honored all over the world and ten men out of all languages will take hold of the skirt of a Jew and say they will go with him because they perceive that God is with them... the immortalized saints will be held in even greater esteem, just as political and religious leaders are respected in our society. Four blessings.... four is the number of God manifest in the flesh. Solomon is the divinely appointed king of God's children... reflecting the future reign of God's son.

Interestingly, when Solomon awakes and has full memory of his dream and his exchange with God and full confidence that God will bless him as promised... Solomon travels back to Jerusalem, stands before the ark, offers sacrifices there and throws a party for his staff.

And Solomon awoke; and, behold, it was a dream. And he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and offered up burnt offerings, and offered peace offerings, and made a feast to all his servants.

What is interesting is that, if Solomon feels it is appropriate to offer burnt and peace offerings at the ark in Jerusalem, why was he at the high place of Gibeon? If Gibeon was the right place to offer sacrifices than why did Solomon leave and return to Jerusalem after being offered these four blessings? I think he knew Jerusalem was the correct location. He had been instructed to build the temple and was provided with the construction material and gold and silver and gems for that purpose by his father.

Immediately following this account we have a demonstration of Solomon's enhanced wisdom. The two prostitutes come before him in the matter of whose is the correct mother of the remaining living child. I would imagine his court would have been aghast at his command to slice the little baby in half so that each mother could have half of a tiny corpse.

Solomon knew what he was doing all along. He was determining which woman possessed the motherly love that would be demonstrated sacrificially. Sacrifice defines love. Husbands and wives sacrifice for each other because of their love. Parents sacrifice for their children because of their love for them. Solomon determined which woman would display sacrificial love for this child, never (I believe) intending to kill a helpless baby. This took wisdom and courage, as this would certainly not have been a politically correct command. This story of exceptional wisdom would be recounted by the merchants that travelled afar and Solomon's honor would grow. Eventually great people would come from far to hear his thoughts, like the queen of Sheba with her gifts and entourage who was breathlessly overwhelmed after her audience with Solomon.

Have you ever thought of that possibility? What would you ask for if the Creator of Heaven and Earth came to you in a dream and said... What do you want me to do for you?

I know exactly what I would ask for, without a seconds hesitation.

9. Isaiah's visions

Isaiah chapter one:

Isaiah prophesied throughout the reign of four kings.. Uzziah (a basically good king but was inflicted with leprosy for burning incense in the temple - 52 years), Jotham (a good king - 16 years), Ahaz (a very bad king - 16 years) and Hezekiah(a good king - 29 years). Isaiah bridged these four kings which would mean a minimum of 47 years as a prophet of God (minimum of 1 year during Uzziah, but potentially many....16 for Jotham 16 for Ahaz ... and a minimum of 14 for Hezekiah (since Isaiah is present in the 14th year of Hezekiah when he prophesies what Babylon will do to Jerusalem after the Babylonian emmissaries who had supposedly come to inquire of Hezekiah's health have left. A minimum of 47 years as a prophet of God, and potentially longer would demand that Isaiah began prophesying at a very young age. If he began at just 20 then he would have had to have lived to at least 67 years old and active as a prophet. Quite probably he was a teenager or even possibly pre-teen when the visions of God first came to him. This would be like David anointed king of Israel as a teenager, Samuel to whom God spoke as a young boy, and Jeremiah who objects to his appointment as prophet by saying he is but a child. Hosea is another prophet whose tour of duty spanned these same four kings, indicating he too was quite young when called by God (Hosea 1:1). Amos was also contemporary with Isaiah along with Hosea (Amos 1:1).

I find it interesting that God does this so frequently... choose the very young as his spokesmen. By choosing the very young he exposes them to severe opposition. The more influential and honored would be offended that this child claims divine communication when they were passed over... that God would choose this inexperienced youth instead of themselves to speak on God's behalf. I think the abuse these young prophets and chosen of God would suffer would have the same effect as the training of David for kingship by refining him through the elevation of victorious soldier, to the degradation of hunted outlaw, an outcast reduced to hiding among the Philistines and eventually to the glorious and immensely wealthy and powerful king. The young prophets would not be given an opportunity to grow pompous from the honor of divine communication since they would be maligned by their jealous and more influential elders and those who didn't appreciate their uncomplimentary messages from God. Doesn't Jesus respond to his disciples when asked who would be the greatest in the kingdom by telling them that whoever would humble himself as a little child would be great in the kingdom. God set the precedent throughout the Old Testament by repeatedly speaking through children.

Due to the minimum of 47 years of service we are safe to conclude that Isaiah is called to prophesy at a very young age. His message is very unflattering. This boy must stand before his elders telling them they have behaved improperly and God is going to punish them. That must have been difficult. Consider verse 4 of chapter one: *Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.* There are self-righteous among the enlightened in every age... no matter the level of iniquity. We human beings have the ability to think we are wonderfully righteous no matter

how vile God finds us. I have no doubt Isaiah suffered abuse for his prophesying in the ecclesia of his day... just like Enoch & Elijah & Jeremiah, Peter, James, John, Paul and Jesus.

Isaiah's prophecy begins by addressing heaven and earth. This form of address serves more than one purpose. You may have heard others suggest Isaiah is addressing the Israel's political heavens as heaven and the general population as earth. This is certainly a legitimate conclusion as heaven is used in scripture to reflect an elevated political image ... but there is much more to this expression than just that minimal observation. Firstly it is a way of addressing the nation that finds its origin in the promises to Abraham and is not the first time the nation is divinely addressed as heaven and earth through a prophet of God.

1. God promised Abram that his children would number as the dust of the earth and secondly as the stars of heaven.
2. Joseph's two dreams align with the divine promises made to his grandfather, in the same order. The Abrahamic seed is depicted first as the sheaves growing from the dust of the earth and then as the stars of heaven. The progression of earth before heaven is a significant observation that should be cataloged for future applications.
3. God directly addresses Israel as heaven and earth, in the same way He does through Isaiah

Deut 31:30 - 32:1-2 And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel the words of this song, until they were ended. Chapter 32: Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. ² 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.

Referring to Israel as heaven and earth is a pattern also employed in the New Testament. In the Olivet Prophecy Jesus states that heaven & earth will pass away but his words would never pass away. This statement follows the parable of the fig tree, prophesying of the resurrection of the nation of Israel. Israel still existed as a nation when Jesus prophesied of its resurrection. It could not be resurrected (depicted as a fig tree emerging from a winter death into a spring rebirth) without first dying. When Jesus clearly states that heaven and earth would pass away... he was referring to the heaven and earth nation of Israel, which was a direct result of the heaven and earth promises to Abraham. Peter uses the same frame of reference as his Master in 2 Peter 3, when he describes the burning up and destruction of heaven and earth. He is merely prophesying, as Jesus did, of the destruction of the nation of Israel... heaven and earth.

There is even more to the message than this application of heaven and earth to the nation of Israel here in Isaiah 1. Notice the tone of the words ... as if God is asking heaven and earth as a third party to consider his case... as if they are the jury in the dispute between God and Israel (read verses 2-9 of Isaiah 1). Verse 10 now addresses Israel directly. **Why** would God address heaven and earth in this manner?

Because heaven and earth were divinely appointed as the two witnesses required by divine law in a trial that could end in execution.

Deut 17:2-7 *If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the LORD thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the LORD thy God, in transgressing his covenant, ³ And hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded; ⁴ And it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and enquired diligently, and, behold, it be true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel: ⁵ Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, even that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die. ⁶ 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. ⁷ The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you.*

Deut 30:19 *I call heaven and 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.*

The Two Witnesses Consider The Testimony of Rebellion & Stubbornness

An application of the divine appointment of heaven and earth to be the witnesses against Israel we read the warning of God in Deut 11:16-17 *Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods,*

and worship them; ¹⁷ 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. In accordance with the law of the two witnesses the hands of the witnesses will be the first to execute judgment (Deut 17:7) we see in Deut 11 that the heavens will not give rain and the earth will not yield its agricultural bounty, if Israel is witnessed worshipping other gods.

In Isaiah 1 God calls heaven and earth as His witnesses against Israel. He presents His case to the two witnesses of heaven and earth. He asks these two witnesses to consider how he has nurtured these people as his own children but they have rebelled against him. Now rebellion is a very serious charge... The prophet Samuel declares to the demoted King Saul after his failure to execute God's annihilation of the Amalekites commandment that rebellion is equivalent to witchcraft... *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry* (1 Sam 15:23). Rebellion and stubbornness are bound together here. Stubbornness is a refusal to obey, or progress, like when Israel rebelled when the 12 spies returned from the promised land. The cowardly men of war planned to murder Moses and Aaron, appoint a new leader and retreat to the supposedly safer slavery and degradation of Egypt. The only reason God didn't kill them at that time was because Moses asked that they might be spared. Instead God killed them in the wilderness over the next 38 years. Rebelliousness (stubbornness) is a very dangerous sin. Consider the laws concerning the rebellious son in both the Mosaic age and the Millennial kingdom age: Deut 21:18-21; Zech 13:2-3. In both cases it is death that is the judgment for stubborn behavior.

Our responsibility as parents to the children who carry our name reflects God's efforts to those who have taken his name upon themselves. Israel was warned in the third commandment not to take Yahweh's name in vain (falsely or casually). We are baptized into that family name... the name (singular) of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:20). We have the responsibility to teach our children to fear God and not act stubbornly or rebelliously (Ps 78:1-8). We do this to save their lives, as rebelliousness is a capital crime punishable by death.

God addresses heaven & earth saying consider how rebellious Israel has been. God says that even the ox knows his owner and the donkey knows his master's stall... but Israel isn't even as smart as an ox or a donkey. God parallels the enlightened community to animals many times in scripture. The altar offerings are a perfect example. Oxen qualified as an acceptable altar offering. King David used the oxen of Araunah the Jebusite as burnt and peace offerings. Fire came down from heaven and consumed the offering on Mt Moriah and the plague stopped. An ox is one of the four faces of the Cherubim and the living creatures of Revelation four representing God manifest in the flesh. The resistance of Nebuchadnezzar to humble himself before Yahweh resulted in his being mentally reduced to an animal and being condemned to eat grass like the oxen. You are supposed to be a man, Nebuchadnezzar but since you can't learn the lesson of the ox knowing his owner then you will become one and perhaps you will learn the lesson then. His father's lesson was repeated to his son Belshazzar on the night of his defeat before Persia. Dan 5:21 *And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will.*

When Paul presents his defense to the Corinthians for his behavior among them he employs one of the lessons of the oxen in the laws of God. 1 Cor 9:3-10 *Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, 4Have we not power to eat and to drink? 5Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? 6Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? 7Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? 8Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? 9For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? 10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.*

Therefore the parallel God makes between the ox and the donkey to Israel fits within a consistent pattern.

This thought process of Israel's unacceptable behavior is expanded upon by God in verses 10-15 of Isaiah 1: *Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. 11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. 12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? 13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. 14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. 15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.*

Judah had a good king. They were practicing the Mosaic law... offering sacrifices, worshipping at the temple, observing the new moons and feast weeks and praying with open arms. The problem was not their worship practices. The problem was their ungodlike behavior, which was negating any value to their worshipping practices. They were inconsistent. This is a very serious warning to the Christadelphian community, which may also observe the divine rituals but still act in divinely unacceptable ways, encouraging divine anger.

The Physical Effects of UnGodly Behavior

Isaiah 1: 5-7 *Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. 7 Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers.*

God asks them why they prefer disease... a symptom of their unGodlike behavior. However, we want to pay particular attention to how God addresses them as a single body. The hole head... the whole heart... from the sole of the foot to the head ... the wounds and bruises and putrefying sores that haven't been treated. This language presents the thought of the nation of Judah as a single body.... the body of believers. This is a theme throughout scripture. This is a very significant and far reaching scriptural theme. When we view the group of believers as a single cohesive, interdependent unit we are no longer free to disassociate ourselves from the parts of the body of believers that we find objectionable.

Paul employs this platform of reasoning when addressing the abuses of the Holy Spirit in the Corinthian ecclesia (1 Cor. 12:12-27... one body with many components). Paul uses the same reasoning with the Romans 12:3-4 *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

When one part of the body suffers, every part of the body suffers. We can't isolate the pain to one area and be unaffected. Oh, that's just the little finger that's broken.... meaningless, and hardly necessary. Our body parts are all interdependent. If we ignored an open wound on our body, as God says Israel was doing, then our whole body would suffer horribly. Israel was ignoring the condition of the body of believers as a whole.

This whole line of reasoning ... of the many believers being viewed as a single entity - a single body is an extension of the greatest principle in God's word... the principle of God manifestation (God manifests Himself through in the context of a multitudinous singularity). We refer to the multitudinous Christ... the immortalized saints pictured as the one son of God... many individuals being expressed as one body. We have the vision of the man of one spirit in Daniel 10 and John's vision of the multitudinous Christ in Rev 1, representing the many expressed as a single composite entity.

Dan 10:5-7 *Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: 6 His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and*

his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. 7And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves.

Rev 1:12-16 *And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; 13And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. 14His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; 15And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. 16And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

These are both images of the principle of God manifestation, a single entity comprised of many harmonious, interdependent components.... a multitudinous singularity.

Just as the tabernacle and the temple were each one building in which the glory of the Heavenly Father would reside, so the body of believers is repeatedly expressed as a single unit, a single body made up on many units... in which the Heavenly Father will deposit his glory. This is the theme of God manifestation... God being one.... becoming many... who will all be one in him This is the prayer of Jesus for all believers down through time John 17:10, 20-21.

Now in the beginning of the ministry of Isaiah Judah had a good king, Uzziah. Yet the nation was corrupt, the body of believers was sick because of sin. The good suffered along with the bad because of the behavior of the bad. When we recognize this divine principle of the unity of the body of believers, as it is presented here in Isaiah one, we can see a great responsibility placed on everyone for the health of the whole body. We are not free to be an island to ourselves and think we are just fine with God... that we can isolate ourselves from parts of the Christadelphian body we find objectionable and consider ourselves separate from the consequences of their behavior. If we hurt our foot, doesn't the whole body suffer?! God created us this way to reflect divine principles. I can tell you from extreme experience that when the digestion system has a problem the entire body suffers severely. Energy is drained from every part of the body to deal with the pain. What happens if we ignore open wounds and sores like God describes here in Isaiah: 5... *the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 6From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.* If we treated our body this way our health would deteriorate and within a period of time we would be dead. What happens if we ignore the problems within the brotherhood? Wouldn't the same principle hold true? Is it better that we ignore the problem, isolate ourselves from the problem or address the problem? If we break an arm is it our practice to ignore it or treat it?

Pain is Necessary for Life

There is a condition a child can be born with where they have no sense of feeling... congenital insensitivity to pain. Many years ago I read of a couple of children in England born to the same couple. Paul Waters was a young boy and his sister Victoria was 18 months old. Neither of them could feel pain... or warmth or cold or an embrace or a kiss. They were a severe danger to themselves and others because they had no respect for pain... their own or the pain of others. They were like those in Judah who saw no need to deal with the sick head and faint heart, wounds, bruises and putrefying sores of the body of believers. Paul, jealous of Victoria, would pull her from her bed and jump up and down on her while she looked up at him laughing. Paul didn't remove sand from his eye and went nearly blind in that eye. An untreated broken bone in his hand limited the use of that hand. Running on a broken bone in his foot left the damage only partially repairable. They weren't expected to live into their teens. I thank God that I can feel pain.... it extends our lives. Pain is a preserver of life. Just as the fiery trials of this life have the capacity to lead us to the gift of eternal life.

Pain is good. Elimination of pain is bad. Ignoring pain as if it didn't exist is dangerous. Ignoring and isolating oneself from diseased parts of the body of believers is therefore also dangerous and potentially deadly in a spiritual sense. The good suffered for the sin of the bad in the case of Achan. He stole from God when he took gold and silver and Babylonian clothing from Jericho. The precious metals were God's. Everything that could burn in Jericho was supposed to be destroyed by fire. Achan stole these goods from God and hid them below the earth in his tent. What is particularly interesting is that everyone suffers because of the individual sin of Achan... and everyone is blamed. Joshua 7:1 says that

Israel (the body of believers) was guilty of trespass.... because one man secretly took the accursed thing. God was angry and He was angry at everyone.

The spies returned from Ai, the next city chosen for elimination after Jericho, and recommended a small group of 3,000 be sent to dispatch this pitiful little group of Canaanites. 36 didn't return. They were killed at Ai. Israel was devastated (5 *And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water*). These 36 men died because of Achan's sin. How many parents and wives and children cried and had to suffer with just memories of their loved one for the rest of their lives because these 36 men died because of Achan's sin?

Achan is discovered. He and his whole family and all of his goods are destroyed. The family is stoned and burned with fire Josh 7:24-26 *And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. 25And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. 26And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.*

The whole body of believers suffered for the sin of one man. He caused the death of 36 men and destroyed his family, brining the death of all his children for his covetousness and greed and disrespect for Yahweh. Good men suffered for the sins of a bad man because there is a body of believers where every part is dependent on the other parts. No one is an island to themselves.

The National Famine for Saul's Guilt

Another example is when the nation of Israel suffered with famine for three years during David's reign because Saul had improperly attempted to annihilate the Gibeonites. God told David that if he wanted to make atonement the Gibeonites would have to identify the terms of atonement. They required that seven descendants of Saul be handed over to them for execution. The famine ended. The whole nation suffered for the sins of Saul... well after Saul was dead.

Probably the most powerful example of this principle is that we all suffer for the sin of Adam. However, we are not guilty for his sin, just as Israel was not guilty for Achan's sin. That would be false doctrine. We certainly do suffer for it though. Rom 5:12,19; 1 Cor 15:22. Good people suffer for the sins of bad people because there is a single body of believers and the principles of creation reflect spiritual principles. Just as the whole physical body suffers because of the pain or disease in a single part... so the the whole body of believers suffer together for the sickness of a part.... by divine principle. Therefore we are not free to ignore the problems of the brotherhood, the whole body. Judah would not treat their sick head and heart or bind up their wounds or treat the problems of their body. They felt no pain. God finds this objectionable behavior. This problem can be partially addressed by developing empathy. Accepting and drawing upon the pain of others as opposed to isolating oneself from it and self-righteously separating ourselves from the unacceptable behavior of others within the brotherhood... as if somehow we are totally separate and therefore untouched by their perceived uncleanness. Empathy is not an emotion that is dominant in our society. Jesus tells us that as iniquity increases, the love of many will decrease. Empathy is a result of the love of many... the love of mankind, the love for others. Society sets the tone. This is our environment... the presumption that we can disassociate ourselves from others and care about their difficulties and problems to a lesser and lesser degree (if at all). Developing a love for many, for our neighbor and the brotherhood and developing empathy frees us from this downward spiral of detachment.

However the other part of the equation is that we have to deal with the necessity for judgment, or the wound will fester.

Yahweh reprimands the heaven and earth community for their hypocritical inconsistency. They were participating in temple worship offering sacrifices and praying with raised open hands... but didn't understand that did not eliminate the inconsistency of their unGodly behavior outside the temple. God adjures them to wash themselves, recognize their filthy state and clean away the filth of ungodly behavior. He promises forgiveness. 1: 16 *Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; 17Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed,*

judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. 18Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Sin Red

God parallels sin to scarlet & crimson and forgiveness to snow and wool. I believe we have all reviewed before the consistent parallel in scripture between colors and divine principles... the relationship between sin and red, righteousness and white, Godliness and blue, green and resurrection and eternal life, and yellow as tried faith. We can see these relationships as we do our daily readings...

- Esau- an unGodlike man - was born red all over and sold his birthright for red pottage, thereby despising that birthright;
- The Red sea was the place of judgement on the enemies of God's people (Pharaoh's army);
- The red flesh of the blemishless heifer whose ashes cleansed from the defilement of physical contact with the dead was a symbol of the sinful human nature of the Messiah that would have to be transgressionless so that sin could be executed in him for mankind to have the door of salvation opened.... this also required three or possibly four red items of cedar, scarlet, blood and hyssop
- This was just like the cleansing from leprosy in the healed leper (same 3 or possibly red ingredients; as the hyssop is not particularly identified as red)
- The Roman soldiers clothed Jesus in a scarlet robe in preparation for his sacrifice on the cross.... the red covering on the man of white without personal sins whose righteousness would become a sin covering over the faithful so that their sins would be eclipsed in God's sight
- The red roman dragon of Rev 12 representing pagan political aggression and shifting to apostate Christian aggression and the Roman Catholic church pictured in Rev 17 as the red beast.
- Blood is red. Blood represents life but cursed life, not eternal life (Gen 9:4; Lev 17:11; 1 Cor 15:50).

Isaiah's divine vision said "*though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool*".... from red to white. How do we go from red to white in color? The funny thing is we don't take away the red. The red is not eliminated by replacing it in order to create white. Two colors are added to make white. Red is a primary color. It is not a color identified by the mixing of other colors... orange or brown or pink or purple. It is solitary. It is primary. There are two other primary colors. This is one of countless examples of how features of creation reflect divine principles. The three primary colors from light separation are red, green and blue. When white light is bent to reveal all the colors within... red is the primary color revealed first with green being the next primary color and blue the last primary color... with all the blends appearing between these three colors. The way we go from red to white is by adding color... not removing red. We have to add green and blue. Green is a color associated repeatedly in scripture with resurrection and life eternal. Blue is the color appointed by God to represent himself and his commandments (Numbers 15:37-41). This is quite appropriate as blue is the most dominant color in creation (sky and water). By adding green and blue to red we achieve white. By adding resurrection and Godliness to sin nature we achieve righteousness. The features of creation reflect divine principles and our understanding of the truth.

Christianity falsely presumes that salvation is achieved by elimination and not addition. Christians teach that when the physical body is eliminated at death, then the spirit nature is unshackled to inherit eternal bliss. They don't see salvation as an addition, but as a subtraction. Salvation throughout the New Testament is expressed as an addition and never a subtraction. The divine nature is added to and envelops the natural body. The bodies of the saints will be redeemed, not eliminated.

- **Rom 8:23** *And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. ²⁴ For we are saved by hope:*
- **1 Cor. 15:52-54** *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory*
- **2 Cor 5:1-4** *For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ² For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: ³ If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. ⁴ For we that are in*

this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

Salvation requires addition, not a subtraction... just as transforming red into white is not done by creational standards by removal and replacement, but by addition.

Therefore, in order for Judah to progress from their scarlet state to that of snow and white wool they would have to renew themselves (green) through practicing Godliness (blue), reflecting the moral nature of the Heavenly Father. They would have to add green and blue to go from red to white. Recognition of their sinful state was necessary first. This is the reflection in the progression of the 'red' blood in the sin offering for the High Priest and the nation. Blood had 12 applications in three locations (Lev 4:3-7). The three stages were the veil (flesh of Christ); the altar of incense (prayer - recognition of sin and verbal repentance); and the last and largest application was at the base of the burnt offering altar (Christ - Heb 13:10).

The path of forgiveness of sins

1. The red blood (cursed mortal life) applied 7 times to veil - flesh of Christ
2. The red blood applied 4 times to each horn of the altar of incense (power of prayer to the faithful community)
3. Remaining red blood (cursed mortal life) was poured out at base of altar - a life poured out at feet of Jesus.... repentance reflected in changed behavior - pouring out our lives in sacrifice

1. **Recognition** 2. **Repentance:** Sorrowful expression & resolve 3. **Resolve:** Faithful execution in deed (tried faith)

Reward & Discipline

In Isaiah 1, after offering to change their color status from red to white, God again states the divine principle of reward for good behavior and punishment for bad behavior... *19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: 20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.* We do this with our children. If the young children behave well through memorial service they get to enjoy a piece of candy as a reward. This is wonderful. It is a divine principle... favor & reward is given for good behavior. Some children are faster learners than others. One particular child I knew was punished frequently on Sunday afternoons for bad behavior at memorial service but I'm a lot better now. Some kids are just slow learners.

This is a divine principle: God rewards good behavior and punishes bad behavior. The problem with this understanding is when it is mixed with our natural fleshly, self-consumed thought process. We human beings reverse the thoughts and say to ourselves... therefore anyone who enjoys great value must be righteous and those who are poor and destitute must be wicked. This would be another one of those nasty oversimplifications. The divine mind is not that simple. We cannot say all bad things that happen to someone is a confirmation of bad behavior or all good things are a confirmation of good behavior. This was the evil reasoning of Bildad, Zophar and Eliphaz against their 'friend' Job ... reasoning for which God condemned them to death but would spare them if Job prayed for them. This is the false doctrine of exact retribution... promoted by the comfortably self-righteous at the expense of the guilt burdened less fortunate.

God does reward for righteousness and punish for unrighteousness... but this does not license us to presume that all benefit is proof of righteousness and all misfortune is proof of wickedness. Once again... we have to be careful not to let this balance of understanding eliminate the possibility that misfortune in our lives cannot be related to our relationship with our Heavenly Father. Reflection and self-examination is a good thing, as long as it leads to a legitimate recognition of ungodly behavior and the resolve to change.

However, equally important would be recognizing the extreme evil of the dominant societal presumption that discipline is destructive. It is presumed that positive reinforcement is the exclusively legitimate educational procedure, that discipline only teaches violence. That is a God-despising lie. It presumes human beings are basically good and that we have to be taught to do bad things. Just the opposite is true. Human beings are instinctively liars, selfish, self-consumed, violent, etc. We have to be taught to be honest, loyal, polite, non-violent, faithful, etc. Society's foundational impressions will always

be the exact opposite of the Creator's. This false presumption that physical discipline is evil is a blasphemous philosophy, declaring Yahweh to be evil.

Following God's willingness to change their red-sin status to white-righteous and restatement of his policy of rewarding good behavior and punishing bad behavior... He laments Judah's current wicked state:

21How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. 22Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: 23Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

God parallels Jerusalem to a harlot. This is a consistent parallel in scripture (Ezek 16:1-3, 15-16, 19-21, 28, 31-32; Ezek 23:1-4. The ecclesia is likened to a virgin engaged to the Christ bridegroom (2 Cor 11:2). We use this parallel to understand prophecy... like Rev 12 with the woman with child.

God describes Jerusalem's state as digressing from valuable to worthless... from silver to dross (the discarded refuse of refined silver)... from pleasant, enjoyable wine to watered down cheap wine. The proof of this is the rebelliousness of political authorities, using their influence to enrich themselves and promote their influence and personal agenda at the expense of righteousness and God's agenda. It is a shift from self sacrifice to self-indulgence from service to exploitation. What is incredible is the human capability to continue considering oneself righteous despite this complete paradigm shift. Mutual reinforcement encourages redefinition of right and wrong and crusts over the conscience, rendering it less sensitive. Self-sacrifice is proof of an outward love. Self-indulgence is proof of an inward love. Empathy, the sharing of emotion, is an expression of outward love. When political leaders are described as taking bribes and refusing to judge on behalf of the fatherless and the widows, those without protectors or champions, then empathy is crippled.

God's answer to Judah's rebellion and self-centered, self righteous behavior is expressed in the following verses...

24Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies: 25And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: 26And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city. 27Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. 28And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed. 29For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen. 30For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water. 31And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.

A time is identified when Yahweh would judge the nation, removing the dross and tin from the more valuable silver. God will avenge His name among His enemies. What a spine chilling thought... to be so self-deluded that one presumes themselves to be a righteous servant of God attending the temple and praying with open arms (like a Christadelphian attending memorial service and participating in ecclesial activities) while God simultaneously considers you his enemy.... not simply 'disappointed' in us, not just upset with us, not even just 'angry' with us... but his **enemy!**

There is a time when God will deal with his enemies. This is the transition period into the new heaven & earth of the millennial kingdom when Judah will become ashamed of their behavior, ashamed of their history, and the repentance will be great (as described in vs 28-31).

God deals with his enemies when he ends his silence:

Is 42:13 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. 14I 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. 15I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools. 16And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them,

and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them. 17They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye are our gods.

When Israel/Judah's enemies invade, then God will send the redeemer and the Jews will repent:

Isaiah 59:17-21 *For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke. 18According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompence. 19So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him. 20And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. 21As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.*

In Isaiah one God says they will be ashamed of their oaks and gardens. This refers to their idolatry. They would cut down a tree and with part of the stock they would form a god to worship. They would plant groves to these false gods (Is 44:10-20; Deut 16:21-22). In this time of repentance they will be ashamed of this previous behavior. They will be given a new heart and spirit to serve Yahweh properly (Deut 30:1-8; Ezek 11:17-21; Ezek 36:21-27)

Zechariah prophesies of this time of deep repentance in the day of God's vengeance:

Zech 12:9-14 *And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. 10And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. 11In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. 12And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; 13The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; 14All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.*

Political & religious are covered here. The individual identification suggests a complete, and not a mob motivated or politically correct, shallow repentance -like only being swept up in the moment. This repentance is deeply personal.

Enemies from within the ecclesial brotherhood:

Phil 3:17-21 *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. 18(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) 20For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21Who 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.*

Those who profess to be the servants of the Creator but do not behave in the way he requires **become the enemies of the cross of Christ**. God will come through Christ to deal with his enemies.

We Become What We Worship

God says that they will repent of their behavior with oaks and gardens because they will be like an oak whose leaf fades and like a garden without water. They will get exactly what they worked for. They worshipped oaken images - therefore they will suffer as an oak that is diseased or waterless or heading to winter. They planted their groves but they refused the water of the word of God and therefore they will become like what they worshipped... a waterless garden. If we worship the image in the mirror then that will be our future.... the curse of mortality. If we worship the Heavenly Father according to his terms then our future is to be like him, to inherit his nature. We get what we truly work for either way. We become what we worship.

Fiery Judgment Retardant

In this state of dried out tree or dried out garden they will burn (vs 31 *And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them*). This is another way that creation reflects

divine principles. We have determined many times before that water is symbolic of the word of God and can even be segmented into three applications of the word... 1) the spoken word, 2) the word made flesh and 3) the word expressed in power (i.e. the pouring out of the Holy Spirit gifts). Healthy green plants full of water do not burn easily at all. They repel the flame. How many forest fires start in a downpour? Water extinguishes flames. The fire indexes broadcasted by the fire departments are based on how dry the trees and plants are. The less water content, the more exposed they are to damage and destruction by fire. Another symbolic feature we have examined before is the divine use of fire as a symbol. Sin is an incendiary in scripture (Is 9:18-19). Fire is the future of the rejected of God (Lk 13:30). We use this understanding to draw greater depth out of the use of fire in rituals like the burning of incense and the burning of the offerings on the altar and God's command that no fire be kindled on the sabbath day. The strong exhortation to us is to fill ourselves with the water of the word, so that our resistance to fire is great. The word should be deep in our hearts and ready on our lips. If the water of the word saturates us the fire cannot harm us... like Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah who walked through the flames of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace with one like the son of man and emerged without even the smell of fire on their clothes.

Isaiah 2

The Word Which Isaiah Saw (not heard).

Our next consideration in Isaiah seamlessly progresses into chapter two from our examination of chapter one. Even though the wording suggests it is a separate revelation to Isaiah (as it introduces the "word which Isaiah saw" the message is a perfectly logical progression from the previous thoughts... read Isaiah 2:1-5... the establishment of the millennial kingdom...6-9: the contemporary lamentable state of Israel ... 10-21 how the day of God's exaltation means the day of apostate mankind's degradation and humiliation and abject fear.

Isaiah 2:1-5 *The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 2And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. 3And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 4And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. 5O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.*

This is the word that Isaiah **saw**. That is an odd expression unless we are considering a vision or Isaiah is reading text supplied by Yahweh. The vision application would be a more consistent conclusion. We'll proceed under that understanding, that this is a vision that Isaiah was privileged to witness and record concerning the millennial kingdom. This is clearly the millennial kingdom and not the post millennial kingdom as people still need to be taught the ways of Yahweh and there are still individual nations. In the post millennial kingdom there will be no nations (Rev 21:1)... where we read that in the 3rd heaven and earth there will be no more sea and the glory of the knowledge of God will saturate the earth as the waters cover the sea, meaning there will be no need for anyone to "learn" the ways of God anymore... as they did during the previous Millennial Kingdom.

Last Isn't Always Ultimately Last

Therefore it seems an interesting phrase that introduces this vision of God's word... "in the last days." These cannot be the ultimate last days because time will still be recorded during the millennial kingdom, night and day will still exist. It is the post-millennial kingdom where time will have no logical application and there will be no night. The answer to this expression is that there are more than one set of "last days." There are also several beginnings presented in scripture. There are several endings. There are several "last days". There are several "days of the LORD." This consideration fits into the understanding that one of the greatest dangers in reading scripture is oversimplification. We have to be very careful when we define issues and expressions in scripture. If we presume that the "last days" are always the very last

days ever, then we would have to eliminate this vision as having any application to the Millennial Kingdom... and we would be very wrong.

An example of this would be where Peter explains the miraculous communication from the believers on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-17). Peter says this prophecy of the Holy Spirit being exhibited was to happen in the last days, yet this was the beginning of the ecclesial age... but the last days of the Mosaic age. This also is not the ultimate last days nor the ultimate beginning... just one of many beginnings. There are four distinctive divinely appointed 'Ages' presented in scripture with a beginning and an ending for each... what I would refer to as the 1) Patriarchal Age from Adam to Moses... 2) the Mosaic Age from Moses to Christ ... 3) the Ecclesial age from Christ's ascension to his return and the fourth being the Millennial kingdom age. There are more than one beginnings and more than one "last days." Let's not presume, let's define... very carefully.

After all, we have many beginnings and endings in our own lives. As we see our children grow we define certain times in their lives as a beginning.... school age, puberty, baptism, marriage, etc. These all indicate beginnings and endings.

The "last days" mentioned in this vision are the last days of the third age, the last days of the ecclesial age and the introduction of the new heaven and new earth prophesied at the end of Isaiah's writings.

Isaiah's reference to God establishing His house in the top of the mountains and above every hill, is a reference to political elevation... above all nations. Nations are frequently veiled in divine expressions as hills and mountains.

Hab 3:6 *He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting.*

Is 55:12 *For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.*

God's kingdom, with Israel & Jerusalem as its center, will be exalted over all nations. Israel will rise from the lowest point to the highest point. This is the picture presented in Ezekiel's dry bones prophecy (Ezek. 37). Ezekiel sees the nation of Israel as dried out bones scattered across a valley floor. He is then commanded to prophesy twice. In the first prophesy four steps are recorded... the bones form into (1) skeletons, to which is added (2) muscle and (3) flesh and finally (4) skin. God requires Ezekiel to prophesy again and this time the four winds fill the bodies with breath and they stand up as an army. This depicts the two stage resurrection of the nation of Israel... political and spiritual - reflecting the two prophecies God required of Ezekiel. The significant part of this that has bearing on our current consideration is that in its death state, prior to political reorganization, Israel is not only presented as dried out bones but bones that are scattered across a "valley" floor. What is the defining feature of a valley? What is it that makes it a valley, as opposed to a plain?... that would be being surrounded by mountains or hills. It is a low point being towered over and surrounded by elevated earth. The prophecy presents the remnants of the nation of Israel still being visible before the mountain nations but in a state of death. The Jewish people were always distinct from the societies of the mountain nations, but they had no personal government and borders. At their lowest point, when they are dried out bones on a valley floor surrounded by towering mountain nations.... when the Nazi's were hunting them to extinction and Great Britain tried to prevent their migration to Palestine and even the United States refused to act on the documented atrocities of the extermination camps of Europe during WWII... God was forming the skeleton on the valley floor, in the direct line of sight for these mountain-nations... exactly according to the specific terms of the prophecy presented more than 2,000 years before.

Jerusalem's Geographic Elevation & Creation's Recovery

Not only will Jerusalem will be elevated politically above the mountain nations of the world, there will be a corresponding **physical** elevation accompanying the political application. There will be a great earthquake and the Judean hills will prostrate themselves before Mt Zion just as the mountain and hill nations of the world will bow before the political authority of Mt Zion (Zech 14:3-4, 9-11). It should be no surprise that the earth will mimic the political and spiritual environment. This is what happened in the beginning when Adam and Eve failed and death, decay and disease were introduced into creation. The terms of creation suffered right along with mankind. Animals and plants suffer along with mankind under the curse. Rivers and streams dry up under the blistering oppression of a drought. The terms of creation

reflect the spiritual state of man. When righteousness reigns on the earth and the knowledge of the glory of God spreads across the planet like the light of the rising sun then the environment, plant life and animal life will benefit along with mankind. This is why we are told that creation “groans” along with us waiting for redemption (Rom 8:21:21-23). This is why we read of the millennial kingdom in terms of a healing of creation as well as man. Not only do we read of the redemption of the bodies of the faithful we read of the healing of the earth where waters will break forth in the desert and the rose shall bloom in a desolate place (Is. 35). We read that the redeemed will run and not be tired and the heat of the sun have no effect on them but also that former vicious predators will become gentle and the lion will eat straw like the ox and poisonous serpents will lose their venom. Creation is bound to the state of man, its appointed caretaker. It should be very logical that just as Jerusalem will be elevated politically that there will be a physical demonstration in creation of this feature and just as the nations will bow before the political authority of Jerusalem the surrounding mountains will bow before Mt Zion, The Judean hills surrounding Jerusalem will become a huge plain where hills and valleys previously stood for millenniums.

Therefore we read in Isaiah 2 of the Kingdom being paralleled to a “mountain” of Yahweh’s house towering above the mountains and hills... vs 2: *it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.*

It is very consistent that we see the vision of the Millennial Kingdom presented by Christ in the transfiguration accounts as taking place in a high mountain (Matt 17:1-2 and also in Mark 9 and Luke 9). Jesus noted in each account that there were some disciples standing there who would not taste death before they saw the kingdom. Seven days later Peter, James and John witnessed a vision of the millennial kingdom on the high mountain. This mountain of the Yahweh’s house will become the focal point of the planet. It is already the focal point but the basis for that focus will shift. Today Israel and Jerusalem is the focus of the world out of concern for being the spark for world conflict (Zech 12:2-3). I doubt there could be a day when we could listen to a news radio station currently without hearing something about the Israeli/Palestinian conflict or the roadmap for peace or suicide bombings or Arafat’s underminings or Sharon’s defending his actions or something about the conflict in Israel. I believe we would probably hear it reported almost everywhere in the world. The world is focused on Israel. The mountains have witnessed the skeleton formation, the muscle and flesh and skin form. But we still wait for the 2nd prophecy when the four winds (representing Christ and the saints whose (by then) immortal nature is likened by Christ to the wind. John 3: 7 *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

I find interesting the specific terms in which the people of the world express their eagerness to submit to the authority of Jerusalem and learn of Yahweh...Isaiah 2: 3 *And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. They want to go to the mountain of Yahweh and to the house of the God of Jacob.* The world will recognize the Jewish identification of the Creator of heaven & earth. He is not a God of the dead. Jacob will be alive again. This is the proof Jesus offered for the disrespected doctrine the resurrection against the pitiful efforts of the Sadducees to discredit him (Luke 20:37-38). What an incredible honor. That the Creator of heaven and earth would identify himself with Jacob... that the world would seek out the ‘God of Jacob’. It will become politically correct to seek out the one true God.

The Wannabe Behavior Pattern

The popular opinion will be to want to be like the Jewish people, the children of Jacob. How completely opposite that is from our current society. Antisemitism and Jew-hating permeates society, even among those who pretend to be tolerant. I have been startled by how blatant anti-Jewish sentiments are in the media, especially NPR. The poor downtrodden suicide bombing Palestinians (a word mutated from Philistines) and the oppressive Jews and how unjustifiably they defend themselves. There will be a reversal of attitudes in the Restored Kingdom. The Jewish curses of Deut 28 & Lev 26 will be alleviated. Curses will be eclipsed by blessings. The miraculous victory of the Jewish people and their rise to political power and wealth and good fortune will naturally draw the rest of the world into adoration and emulation... the **wannabe** effect. The masses of this world do the same thing with celebrities. They put their posters on their bedroom walls and buy their CD’s, their McDonald’s themed happy meals, their sports jackets and their brand of tennis shoes. This same effect

will be applied to the Jewish people. Zechariah tells us that 10 men will take hold of the skirt of a Jew (Zech 8:22-23)... the wannabe pattern of human behavior. They will desire to go to the house of the God of Jacob.

The other issue expressed here is the motivation to 'know' Yahweh and to travel to His house. The world will actually **want** truth as opposed to our current society where truth is a personal preference and ultimate truth is undesirable and considered an evil thing, as absolute truth is divisive and intolerant by its very nature. Diversity and tolerance are currently but improperly respected as righteous behavior both in society and the current body of the enlightened. There will also be a universal recognition that popular opinion had been wrong (Jer 16:19-21). The house of the God of Jacob will be the 4th temple that will be constructed in Jerusalem. I realize many people oddly refer to this as the 'third' temple. I believe that would be a mistake. Just like the Bible, I count the tabernacle Moses built in the wilderness as the first temple, Solomon's the second, Joshua and Zerubbabel's the third and the temple of the millennium kingdom the 4th. The tabernacle is also referred to as the temple of God in the book of Samuel (1 Sam 1:9; 3:3). I believe it is significant to realize the millennial temple will be the fourth temple. Four is the number that is constantly associated with God manifest in the flesh, just as there are four Hebrew letters in the memorial name of God into which we come into covenant relationship through baptism (YHWH)... the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit we are baptized into. The temple is an expression of exactly that thought. It had been considered God's residence on earth. Yet the ultimate residence will be the saints. He will take residence in them as if they are His temple. This is the promise Jesus expressed to his closest disciples on the last night of his mortal life (John 14:23). This is the same type of expression used in connection with the first century believers who possessed the Holy Spirit. God's power dwelt within them and therefore they were a temple of God (1 Cor 3:16-17; 1 Cor 6:19; Eph 2:19-22; Rev 3:12). Since the temple is a symbol of how God will take residence in faithful mankind I think it is appropriate that the temple that will be constructed at the beginning of the millennial kingdom be the fourth temple, as four is the number consistently being associated with God being manifest in the flesh. This is the temple whose construction and dimensions are detailed in the last chapters of Ezekiel. The wealth of the nations will be directed to Jerusalem where the temple will be built and political and from where religious authority will be centered. When the world recognizes Yahweh they will direct their value to that place (Isaiah 60:1-17).

Is 2:3 *Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.* In fact the attendance of the gentiles in Jerusalem will be required! Their attendance will not be an invitation but a command with fearful implications if not respected

Zech 14:16-19 *And it shall come to pass, that every one 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. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; There shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen That come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, And the punishment of all nations That come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.*

Is 2:4 *for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 4And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people:* Global political & religious authority will issue from Jerusalem... from the throne of David that Jesus Christ will possess. The world will be ruled by a theocracy... a religious monarchy that will not be a dynasty... just a single immortal King/HighPriest. These verses clearly teach the exact opposite of popular Christian teaching today. This is not ambiguous language. This isn't prophecy couched in difficult symbolic language. This is a crystal clear, definitive prophecy about a time that has never ever existed on the earth. Popular Christianity teaches there will never be a divine kingdom on the earth (with the exception of the Jehovah's Witnesses who put the insignificant masses on the earth but the far more significant 144,000 saints enjoying heaven. Christian teachers tell the world that the throne of David is now in heaven, that the earth will be consumed in fire and utterly destroyed... that the man who will build the next temple in Jerusalem will be the anti-christ, following the rapture.... when this antichrist will take control of the whole earth and make peace and make a covenant with the Jews and build a temple at Jerusalem. It amazes me that people can read this Isaiah text and maintain those opinions. The capacity of the human brain to avoid a socially isolating understanding is incredible.

Is 2:4 *And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*

Military aggression will not be tolerated. Disputes will no longer be resolved by invasions and rebel forces armed with killing machines. Agriculture careers will replace military careers. Military schools (the learning of war) will be abandoned and closed... no more Annapolis or West Point. You are probably aware of the large statue in the front of the United Nations building in NY of the musclebound man beating a sword into a plow with this same Isaiah verse quoted below. You may not be aware that this statue was a gift from the Soviet Union, the godless, atheistic global superpower of its day. This is a reflection of the time when all the world, all the nations, will learn the ways and paths of the Creator. Can we imagine what life on earth would be like without a military focus? Ordinarily half of the entire US annual budget is spent on defense. Imagine if the billions of dollars focused on military superiority was spent on education, health and welfare? Negotiations between nations will not take forever because the immortal priest intermediaries will be able to read minds and know who is lying and who is telling the truth. The immortal intermediaries cannot be assassinated or kidnapped or held against their will. These immortal, divinely empowered intermediaries will have the capacity to inflict famine and disease on rebellious countries and regions (remember Zech 14:16-19 *And it shall come to pass, that every one 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. 17And 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. 18And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. 19This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.*)

Then there is the logical exhortational recommendation to this vision of the millennial kingdom

Is. 2:5 *O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.*

Following this vision and exhortation is an explanation of God's abandonment of the Jewish people...

Vs 6 *Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers. 7Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots: 8Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: 9And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not.*

The East-West Equation

They are replenished from the east... what does the 'east' represent? Why do we have the right to come to this conclusion? Adam & Eve were ejected from the garden to the **east** (3;24)... When Abraham left Ur and traveled to the promised land he turned his back to the east and traveled west.... when Judah was ejected from the promised land for their idolatry and abominably ungodly behavior they were sent directly eastward to Babylon... Cain, after murdering his righteous brother traveled to Nod - east of Eden.... The only direction one could ever travel toward the presence of God was westward, with their back to the east (i.e. tabernacle, temple, Eden)... Ezek 8:16 back to temple and face to east... the coming of Jesus will be like the lightning that comes out of the east and shines to the west (Matt 24:27 *For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*) This is when the son of God will be the light that will lead mankind back to God... from east to west, at his coming.

Being "replenished from the east" means they were accepting the wisdom of the flesh- associated with the east. When one is in the presence of God's tabernacle or temple... yet they are looking to the east (for replenishment) then their backs are to God (Ezek 8:16-18). Ignoring the spiritual lesson of the daily progression of the sun... from east to west and the subtle divine implications they focus their attentions to the east.... to where Adam & Eve were thrust out ... the direction Cain moved.... the city Abraham abandoned when God called him... the Babylonian captivity city to the east. They were replenished from the east. This is a negative thing.

6. *Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers. 7Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots: 8Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: 9And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not.*

Their own community is not good enough. They please themselves with the children of strangers. They listen to soothsayers, they want to get their 'horoscope' for the day. Their wealth has blinded them. The common man is degraded. There is no love of many, just a parasitic, greedy live for yourself, grab as much gusto as you can, live life to the fullest attitude.

The Isaiah/Micah Parallel

Interestingly Isaiah's vision/prophecy is repeated word for word in Micah 4 immediately following a similar condemnation of the Jews behaviour. Micah 4:1-3

The context is in the immediately preceding verses concerning the Roman destruction of the city of Jerusalem (Micah 3:9-12). Because of the wickedness of the Jews he will plow Jerusalem as a field (Emperor Hadrian ordered this done in 130AD). Notice the description of the unacceptable behavior in the enlightened community: *abhor judgment, and pervert all equity. 10They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. 11The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money:*

This is the behavior of a parasite... taking and not giving... no effort is made without reward and personal benefit is the motivation for any action. This is the opposite of a sacrificial lifestyle. It is in this context we see the prophecy of God's silence... same chapter

5Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him. 6Therefore 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. 7Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God.

This is oddly but frequently presented in our community as being fulfilled during the period between the testaments... from the time of Nehemiah to John the Baptist... as if there were no active prophets during that period. This Micah context suggests an application **following** the plowing of Jerusalem as a field. However, we also already know that the prophecy of the silence of God cannot possibly be applied to the period between the testaments for other reasons... as God defines the ending of his silence as the introduction of the millennial kingdom in Isaiah 42 and we also have the witness of the early and the latter rains of the word of God. There would be a drought of the word of God between the early and latter rains when the word of God would be poured out. The early and latter rains are paralleled throughout scripture to the spoken word of God, the word made flesh (Jesus) and the Holy Spirit gifts. The early rain application of each of these has already taken place... in that transitional generation between the end of the Kingdom Age and the beginning of the Ecclesial Age. These early rains (planting rains) are 1) The complete Bible - the early rains of the literal word of God, 2) the first coming of Jesus - the early rain of the word made flesh and 3) the pouring out of the Holy Spirit for two generations in the beginning of the ecclesial age. The 'latter' rain for each of these will take place when the millennial kingdom is established, the transitional generation for the next Age transition... between the ending of the Ecclesial AGE and the beginning of the Restored Kingdom Age. God's silence will end and the word of God will issue across the world again. The word made flesh- Jesus Christ will rain down upon the earth... he will come to us as the rain as the early and latter rain (James 5:7, Ps 72:6).... and the spirit gifts will again be evident in the earth as the blind will see and the deaf hear & the dead rise. The sun going down over the prophets and that prophesied silence of God would begin **after** the second generation of believers -the last generation the spirit gifts had been promised to - had died off about 130AD, when Jerusalem was plowed as a field.... less than 100 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the initiation of the Ecclesial Age.

10. The parable of God's Vineyard

Isaiah 5: 1 *Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: 2And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. 3And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. 4What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? 5And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: 6And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. 7For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.*

We have referred to this parable a number of times when we were studying the parables of Jesus in our last SS study series. This is the foundation for Christ's parable of the sower and the parable of the wheat and tares and the parables of the vineyard. Let's review some of the basic thoughts we drew from this parable and the consistent use of this theme in divine teaching.

Beloved and Wellbeloved

This is described as a song sung to the prophet's beloved about his beloved. At first I was confused on this word since my Christadelphian Works Strong's Concordance says this word is 'yadiyd' and my Libronix Strong's concordance says this word is 'dowd' which is the same word used frequently throughout Song of Solomon translated "beloved". I thought that would be very appropriate if it were the word exclusively used in Song of Solomon with the exception of this one place... initially I thought we wouldn't be free to make that conclusion due to conflicting documentation. However, it seems that the Hebrew words for wellbeloved and beloved are two different words. Wellbeloved is from yadiyd and beloved is from dowd. Two different words are used to express the loving relationship the prophet has with the owner of the vineyard. The second word, translated "beloved" in this first verse of Isaiah 5 is the same word that is used throughout Song of Solomon in its presentation of the love between the Messiah bridegroom and his ecclesial bride. The only other place the Strong's Concordance records the use of this word is here in Isaiah 5 for this parable.... interesting.

What is interesting is that all the uses of these two words relate to the relationship between the Creator and the faithful.. *dowd* is only used in Song of Solomon outside Isaiah 5. *Yadiyd* is used in several places but consistently in reference to the love for Yahweh or Yahweh's love for the faithful.

Deut 32:12; Ps 60:5; Ps 108:6; Ps 127:2; Jer 11:15 (beloved)

Ps 84:1 How amiable (yadiyd) are thy tabernacles

Ps 45: introduction

What Is the Only Thing We Can Give Our Creator That Isn't His and He Won't Take Without Our Permission?

This parable is a song presented to the prophet's beloved and concerns the prophet's own beloved. This is how we should feel. Like a husband feels about his wife... like a father feels about his children... our Creator should be our **beloved**. Love is what this is all about. All of creation was put under the control of the one who was made in the image and likeness of the Creator... initially... at least until we failed. What could we possibly give back to God that wasn't His already? What can we now give to God that isn't His? The collection bag and everything in our wallets is His already. The only real value of money is in the minds of men. What is money or gold or homes or cars to the Creator of heaven and earth? There is only one thing we can give to God that isn't his already.... our love. It isn't obedience. Obedience is merely an expression of that love and the validation of that love. Without obedience the verbal expression of love is proven to be a shallow lie. In this song-parable in Isaiah 5 we have the inequity of a one-way love being displayed. The vineyard was provided everything it needed, but refused to give anything back... like the Dead Sea that receives but won't pass along (unlike Galilee that receives water from tributaries and passes water along into the Jordan). The love was given to the vineyard but the vineyard would not respond lovingly. This absence of divinely inspired behavior reflected the useless nature of the

wild, yet agriculturally mature grapes. They are partying and boasting of alcohol consumption and drawing lies behind them wherever they go, conceited, self righteous, taking bribes and preventing justice... and this is the ecclesia, the enlightened community. There was no loving response to Yahweh who had provided for them so abundantly. Love always draws a response. Love is not passive. It is active. **True** love is always active, like burning fuel. This is a phrase we hear in movies and books... “true” love. The phrase begs the question... what is love when that love is **not** true? That would be untrue love... fake love! Love is not true when the response does not mirror the expression. Professing love but not living love means it is **not** ‘true’ love.

Jesus makes this very clear to his closest disciples on the last night of his mortal life.

John 14:22-24 *Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? ²³ 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. ²⁴ He that **loveth me not** keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.*

Love means obedience! Absence of obedience confirms the absence of love, despite a contradicting verbal insistence. Many today do not understand love. Look at this generation and its attitude to love. An incredible amount of marriages are abandoned. Children are not raised by their parents. How much face to face time do parents have with their children in our society? ... with daycare and television and DVD and computer babysitters... the family meal has been sacrificed to conflicting schedules. Convenience has overtaken love as our lives become more and more complex. True Love is never convenient. True Love means sacrifice... not convenience. Without sacrifice all we have is untrue love, fake love, convenient, shallow, instant on-&-off Hollywood love. Jesus warned us almost 2,000 years ago what would happen when iniquity would increase.

Matt 24:12-13 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. ¹³But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Iniquity is directly related to love. As iniquity increases... love decreases. Love is a positive motivator. As love fades, loving behavior fades.

Reversing Decay

We are here today to refresh our love, to consider what has been invested in us, how God sacrificed his son on our behalf... we too have had a good vine planted, our earth has been softened and oxygenated, stones have been carted away that would have prevented deep roots, fencing protects us from animals over-running us... the tower and winepress have been constructed, awaiting our fruit.... which is the outworking of our true love. God has established this ritual of memorial service for our benefit... to remember the foundation of our love. We are being saved from sin and death, from suffering and extinction... for joy and fulfillment.

We do the same thing with our other loves. We remember. We look back at old photographs, jumpstarting memories... of a marriage ceremony, of a honeymoon, of happy times with the ones we love. Cards & letters expressing love are kept for repetitive review. Can’t we re-experience the emotions of that time when we look at those photos and read those cards? I see pictures of my daughters when they were very little and I remember the joy in their faces when I would appear unexpectedly. I remember the hugs and kisses goodnight and the sitting outside their bedroom door at night because they were nervous about the dark. We remember ... and our love is reinforced and when our love is reinforced our loving resolve is strengthened.... we nurture, we protect, we provide, we teach. We keep photos of those we love on our desk or workstation for constant rejuvenation, for the sustaining energy love provides, to refuel lost resolve when frustration and misfortune and obstinance shred our mental strength. This is why we come together on the first day of the week... to remember our well-beloved ... to refuel our love so that true love will burn brightly and powerfully in the things we do, which is the fruit we bear... the good wine we give to our Heavenly Father for his loving provisions, his investment in us. Just like Israel, we are the vineyard of our wellbeloved.

Remember the parables of judgement we considered in Matt 25 following the Mt Olivet prophecies? The 5 rejected wedding attendants were not allowed admittance into the wedding for what reason? The Bridegroom did not “know” them... yet these 5 reflect those in covenant relationship with this Bridegroom. They are part of the ecclesia... yet he says he doesn’t even know them. What does it take for Christ to know us?

1 Cor 8:3 ... *But if any man love God, the same is known of him.*

It is **love** that affords the recognition. Love is validated by loving behavior... or it is only fake love.

The Peace offering, that displayed the principle of divine unity.. the presence of harmony (peace), the only offering where everyone fellowshiped together in the same sacrificial meal... God getting his portion on the altar, the officiating priest receiving his portion, the priesthood getting a share and the offerer also participating... this 'peace' exhorted the faithful about merciful love. The Peace Offering presented a destination and the path to that destination. The destination was oneness with the Creator... perfect harmony (peace) with God. The direction or path to that destination is merciful love. Hos 6:6 *For I desired mercy [chesed= merciful love], and not sacrifice [zebach = peace offering]; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.* This is the reference Jesus repeatedly quotes and says... if you only understood this you wouldn't have condemned the guiltless. This is the reference that is a key to understanding that divine principles are greater than divine commandments.

This parable song is very appropriately addressed to the prophet's wellbeloved. It depicts Israel and Judah as a vineyard planted on a very fruitful hill. The vine was a choice vine planted. Primarily we should consider the choice vine as the Messiah, as he is the true vine and we must remain in him in order to be part of the Heavenly Father's vineyard. However, besides presenting broad principles ... this is also a very **specific** parable. It prophesies of the rejection of the vineyard, the breaking down of the wall and trampling by animals, and being sent out of the fruitful hill into captivity. Therefore we can also look beyond the principal application of the vine to a specific application of the choice vine. This would be Abraham... and from Abraham - Isaac and then Jacob. This is a choice vine from which the vineyard was planted. Abraham was God's friend. Isaac and Jacob both acted faithfully, as Hebrews 11 tells us. This was a 'choice' vine. It was planted on a very fruitful hill... the land of promise. We are not examining the parable in principle for a general application at this time, but looking for a specific application. We might look at Palestine today and be tempted to dispute that claim. That fruitful hill seems more like a wasteland with a few isolated spots of fruitfulness... the Jordan valley, surrounding Galilee, the spring at Engedi by the Dead Sea. We would be wrong on two counts if we fell to the temptation to question the claim of a fruitful hill into which the choice vine was planted. First we need to understand that what Palestine looks like today in relation to fruitfulness has little to do with the agricultural potential when they first entered the land under Joshua. It was a land of milk and honey, indicating rich bounty. Over the subsequent centuries and millenniums this fruitful land with all its agricultural potential became a wasteland - mirroring the lack of behavioral fruitfulness Yahweh received from those to whom he had given this land of milk and honey. I'll explain how in just a moment, but first I want to comment on the 2nd reason why we would be wrong if we presumed that the agriculturally non-productive status of Palestine today somehow invalidates the parable's claim to planting the vine in a fruitful hill. This would be the fact that the true fruit God was looking for from his fruitful hill was righteousness. Therefore the fruitful hill (from an agricultural perspective) would have to somehow qualify as being particularly suited to the particular production of righteousness.

Both concerns are answered in Deut 11:8-17

Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day, that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land, whither ye go to possess it; ⁹ And that ye may prolong your days in the land, which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give unto them and to their seed, a land that floweth with milk and honey. ¹⁰ 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: ¹¹ But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: ¹² 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. ¹³ 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, ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full. ¹⁶ Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; ¹⁷ 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.

This is God's definition of the fruitful hill where he is going to plant them. This promised land was very different from Egypt where they started out as the privileged elite but ended up as abused slaves. This promised land was the perfect land

for developing righteousness. It was a rich agricultural land but wouldn't stay that way unless righteousness was harvested along with grain and grapes and olives and figs. This was a fruitful hill in that it was perfect for both applications. The rain from heaven represented the word of God. They had to prove their love through loving obedience. Then they would continue to enjoy the rain that would ensure the rich agricultural bounty of this fruitful hill. This is why Palestine today is definitely not a agricultural land of milk and honey. Love of 'self' long ago displaced the love of God. Self-worship while hypocritically maintaining self-righteousness led to the murder of God's son and the utter devastation of the land. The fruitful hill had its hedge taken away, its wall broken down, briars and thorns have overgrown a once bountiful vineyard, and the rain has been withheld since the book of Revelation was finished. The early rains fell in the first coming of the Messiah, the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the inspired writings of the New Testament. There has been no rain since. We wait for the latter rains, when the prince, the son of the king, will come to us as the rain upon the mown grass (Ps. 72), when God's word will be poured out again with Yahweh's long term of silence ended, he will cry out like a woman in childbirth and like a charging soldier (Is. 42), and the gifts of the Holy Spirit will pour out (Joel 2:23,28) upon the earth with human healing and resurrection and ecological reconstruction and geographical improvements and political upheavals. Right now, before our eyes, the fruitful hill is being prepared once again. The vine has been replanted. The abundance of stones are still there but will be removed. The walls are being built. The ground is being overturned, softened, aerated.... prepared for a rich harvest of righteousness.

Once again the physical is mirroring the spiritual as the land is also being reclaimed agriculturally. Trees are being planted across the land of Israel to enrich the earth and maintain moisture in the ground and reclaim its fruitfulness. The literal state of the land is reflecting the principles in God's word... just as it has since Abraham (the original choice vine) walked his fruitful hill.

The Bordering of the Vineyard

Therefore we can see the specific application of the choice vine (the stock of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) being planted in a fruitful hill.... in a land that is uniquely capable of producing righteousness. God fenced this land... he bordered it and enclosed it. He separated this fruitful hill. Separation is a divine principle. The land had been divided up, bordered by inheritance at Shiloh by Joshua... the divinely appointed political leader of the vineyard... and by Eleazar the divinely appointed spiritual leader... at the door of the tabernacle Josh 19:49-51. The principle of separation is an expression of the holiness.... making distinctive and separate that which is holy from that which is common. Eventually we hope to be separate from mortality, if we qualify to partake of the Creator's holiness (Hebrew 12:10). In order to qualify to be a partaker of divine holiness we must practice holiness now.... striving to reshape ourselves in the image and likeness of ultimate holiness (Heb 12:14). It is separateness that defines holiness (2 Cor 6:14-18). It is the recognition and respect of the borders of holiness that reinforces the principle of holiness. There are degrees of holiness. For example there was the holy place in the tabernacle and the most holy place. The most holy place could only be approached by the High Priest, and only once and year and not without generating the cloud of incense and then bringing blood. He would have to pass through the veil, the only entrance. It was bordered on four sides... like the foursquare encampment that was doubled... the 4 square political tribes and the inner 4 square Levites & priests.

The principle of separation is presented powerfully in the law of the Nazarite, where anyone of the community could imitate the High Priest by the rules of separation (Num 6:1-8).

*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall **separate** themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to **separate** themselves unto the LORD: 3He shall **separate** himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. 4All the days of his **separation** shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk. 5All the days of the vow of his **separation** there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he **separateth** himself unto the LORD, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. 6All the days that he **separateth** himself unto the LORD he shall come at no dead body. 7He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God is upon his head. 8All the days of his **separation** he is holy unto the LORD.*

Vs 2 either a man or woman... this is a genderless ritual and all inclusive similar to baptism & memorial service. Separation is the dominant word and concept presented here.. separate yourselves to vow and separate yourselves to yahweh and from alcohol, grape products, haircuts and dead bodies. This is what points of separation do... a fence separates.... fences are designed to separate **to** and to separate **from**. A fence separates pets and small children **from** the dangers of outside the boundary of the separation point- the fence... but also separates those pets and small children **to** the watchful environment of those responsible for them. Marriage separates a man and wife **to** each other while separating them **from** all other men and women.

We should understand the value of separation. We separate ourselves and our children to and from. We separate ourselves and our children to helpful and beneficial influences. We separate them from harmful and potentially dangerous influences. We want to know who their friends and teachers are. We want to know where they are and what they are doing. The world is not just a dangerous place physically. The greatest danger is philosophically. The wisdom of the flesh is very seductive. It seems very logical and morally right on an instinctive mental platform. This was the great danger God saw in the pagan residents of the promised land when he brought the offspring of the “choice vine” back into that fruitful hill. He wanted the rocks removed from that fruitful hill. He wanted a hedge built. The pagan residents were not to be allowed to co-habitate with the children of God. They were to be annihilated or driven out (Ex 23:20-33; Deut. 7:22-26 + vs 16; Deut. 12:29-31). Israel did not execute God’s commandments completely. They left pagans in their land. The leaven or cancer was not completely removed. They were not separated from the dangerous self-worshipping philosophies of the heart (Psalm 106:34-36).

We are under different divine laws now. There is no kingdom of God on earth currently. We live among the pagans with their self-worshipping, instinct based religions. It should be harder for us to be separate than it was for the descendants of the choice vine. Our government is not divinely organized. Our laws are not divine laws... obviously. The worshippers of Yahweh do not outnumber the mirror-worshippers. A king like Hezekiah cannot come along and change the standards of society by removing centers of false worship and commanding people to worship the one true God. The influence of society is going to be far greater in our environment. They have the high ground. The exercise of separation is going to be far more difficult for us. We have to live and work among the haters of true righteousness and despisers of that which is good. We are supervised by them, taught by them, and governed by them. At times our separation will be offensive to them. We will be presumed to be self-righteous, pompous, holier than thou, unloving and intolerant of alternate behavior patterns and resistant to descending moral standards. However, if we hide our separation so that it isn’t offensive... then we aren’t really separate. One of the features of the Nazarite vow was its visibility. The Nazarite was visually distinctive. He or she was forbidden from cutting their hair. Nazarite vows generally lasted more than the time from one haircut to another. Sometimes a person was a Nazarite for life - like Samson and perhaps even Samuel. The uncut hair would present a high visibility and instant recognition of a Nazarite. There must be a visibility to separation or there is no separation. People should see the boundaries we place. This uncut hair is one of the ways we define the Nazarite ritual as an imitation of the High Priest. In verse 7-9 of Num 6 we see the head of the Nazarite with its uncut hair identified as the head of “consecration” ... *He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God is upon his head. 8All the days of his separation he is holy unto the LORD. 9And if any man die very suddenly by him, and he hath defiled the head of his consecration; then he shall shave his head in the day of his cleansing, on the seventh day shall he shave it.* The Hebrew word translated both consecration and separation is *nezer*. This is the same word that is used exclusively to identify the crown of the High Priest. Now, when I say exclusively I mean no other Hebrew word is used to identify the crown of the High priest, however that doesn’t mean this word *nezer* does not identify the crown of anyone else. Although there are other words translated crown, this word is used to identify the crown placed on a seven year old Jehoash at his coronation at the expense of the evil queen Athaliah. But there is no other word used in reference to the High Priest’s crown than *nezer*. This word *nezer* is also translated separation 8 times... which are all found in this 6th chapter of Numbers in reference to the law of the Nazarite. The uncut hair of the Nazarite was the head of his consecration, the head of his separation... his crown like that of the High Priest (Ex 29:30... Holiness to Yahweh). To be separated is to be set apart - identified as special - holiness is a feature of separation. When something is holy it

is special to God... set apart, not common. We read of the “Holy” Spirit. Interestingly the same Greek word translated Holy in “Holy Spirit” is also translated saints in many places of the New Testament. The Greek word is *hagios* - #40 in the Strong’s Lexicon. Using the Englishman’s Concordance in Christadelphian Works we can find all the references the word *hagios* is used in the New Testament - no matter how it is translated (Romans 15:25; 1 Cor 6:1). The word saints means holy. This principle of separation and its relation to holiness as the difficulty is presented in our environment is expressed by Paul to the Romans in chapter 12:1-2

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

This is what is being presented in the parable we are considering with the building of the fence and the removal of the stones... creating an environment of separation which is necessary for the fruitfulness of the vineyard. Remember the true fruit that God (as the husbandman or farmer) wants is righteousness. Just as the fence protects the vineyard from outside influences that will discourage the fruitfulness of the vineyard ... separation encourages righteousness. Separation is not exclusive. We aren’t being exhorted to live as a hermit, avoiding all contact with society. Jesus didn’t do this. The apostles didn’t do this. Separation is one issue in the vineyard. It is the fence. However, it is helpful to understand the features of separation as they are presented in the ritual of separation known as the law of the Nazarite.... the template for separation... crowned by the head of separation. The head whose hair was shaved at the door of the Tabernacle as the last step in the Nazarite ritual and used as kindling for the flame that would consume the Peace Offering (Num 6:18-20). It is the hair that encapsulated the whole of the Nazarite ritual of separation... the fence of the vineyard.

Interestingly there is a parallel between fruitfulness and this word *nazir* that is translated nazarite and separate in relation to Joseph. Jacob blessed his sons before he died. This is recorded in Gen 49.

Let’s look at Gen 49:22- 26. *Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: 23The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: 24But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) 25Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: 26The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate (nazyir = nazarite) from his brethren.*

Joseph was separated from his brethren. He was isolated. This separation was on his head - like a crown (different word for crown than *nezer* ... simply the crown of the head). He was a fruitful bough. Like Joseph, God wanted Israel to be separate to encourage fruitfulness and so he set up a hedge for his vineyard and removed the stones. In fact there is another parallel between a vineyard and the words used to describe the uncut hair feature of the Nazarite law.

Lev 25:5 That which groweth of its own accord of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed [nezer- also translated consecration throughout nazarite law and crown of high priest]: for it is a year of rest unto the land.

11A jubile shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed (nezer - consecration and crown).

There would be no pruning of the vineyard in the sabbath year or the Jubilee year. The vine would be “undressed” or uncut. The vineyard was to be consecrated for that year... like the head of a nazarite.

This is the lesson of the hedge and the removal of the stones in the fruitful hill God prepared for his vineyard. It is the lesson of separation and environment preparation and control for the purpose of fruitfulness. The fruitfulness the Heavenly husbandman sought was righteousness. Although he did everything right ... the right land (a fruitful hill), the right laws, the removal of the stones (the pagan worshippers that would inhibit the fruit of righteousness),

protective borders, a choice vine planted and a tower and winepress in anticipation of the fruit. Yet instead of righteousness in the enlightened community, He saw oppression. Instead of acceptable divine worship He saw self worship. Instead of sacrifice He saw indulgence. Adding insult to injury the vineyard redefined the terms of acceptable behavior and considered themselves righteous despite the fact that God considered them despicable.

On what basis did God consider his vineyard (the Ecclesia) unacceptable? What qualified them as “wild” grapes? We can examine the woes, the judgements and the words that follow “because” in this 5th chapter of Isaiah for that answer.

8 Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay fi eld to fi eld, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!

11 Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine infl ame them!

13 Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge

18 Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope:

20 Woe unto 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!

21 Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

22 Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: 23 Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!

These woes are very much about shutting off the conscience... alcohol disengages the conscience, being prudent in ones own sight, wise in their own eyes ... redefining right and wrong to convenient personal standards, redefining right and wrong by simply redefining good as evil and evil as good and exchanging darkness for light... these are all practices dependent upon a defective conscience. A working, effective conscience is an essential commodity in our service to God (1 Tim 1:18-20; 1 Tim 4:1-4; Titus 1:14-16; 1 Peter 3:21 (baptism should be the answer of a good conscience, a compelling ... not a coming of age, not something performed because loved ones or family expect it, or some other people think you are ready....but the answer of a good conscience). Baptism is utterly useless without the conscience. If we are not mentally in the way of salvation, baptism doesn't change our direction. It's just a ritual.... just like memorial service. If the ritual is not a reflection of the mind then the ritual is totally without value and an utter waste. Defective consciences are found in the social outcasts as well as the outwardly righteous, or self-righteous. Sensitive, valuable consciences are also found in all levels of society. Judas was a thief and a traitor and an inner circle disciple of Jesus, one of the 12. Yet Peter, another one of the 12, when the cock crowed the third time, went out and wept bitterly... his conscience convicting him. Caiaphas, in his indignant self-righteousness, determined it was necessary to kill Jesus of Nazareth. While Nicodemus, another member of the Sanhedrin, came to Jesus by night and spoke out against those intending to arrest Jesus. We are told there will be many surprises at the judgement seat. There will be those who protest their rejection with claims of performing miracles and great signs, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Lying to oneself is incredibly easy.

The tower and the winepress were features of the vineyard God built. The winepress was for the purpose of converting the harvested grapes into a liquid for making wine, which is the yield the husbandmen was looking for from his fruitful hill. The crushing of the grapes by the husbandman to produce the final stage of the crop can be paralleled to the process by which righteousness is developed by God, remembering that righteousness was the true crop God expected from his vineyard. It is the crushing of the grape to produce the blood of the grape that can be paralleled to how God encourages the proper application of conscience by applying pressure in our lives (of which blood is the divine symbol). This crushing of the grapes is evident in many lessons in scripture. It represents the crushing of the ego, man's natural love of self and unrelenting self-promotion. The crushing of the ego is necessary for the development of righteousness... just as the crushing of the grape was necessary in its final processing. We can see this lesson in the pouring out of the blood in many of the altar sacrifices... a self-sacrificial lifestyle. We can see this in the burning of the incense... the consuming of the 4 equal parts of aromatic dust that is transformed into the cloud of God's presence on the day of Atonement by the consuming power of the fire. We can also see this lesson of how God teaches, that he teaches in such a way as to strip away the ego.

Moses was the one man God could talk to face to face as a man speaks with a friend without dark sayings and visions and dreams... because Moses was the meekest man of his generation (Num 12:3) . His ego was already crushed. Jesus taught through parables to reinforce a chosen perspective, to give to those who had and take away from those who had not... to give sight to the seeing and take away sight from those who had eyes but chose not to see. The principle has been divinely orchestrated through such men as Joseph and David... enduring a prolonged degradation, humiliation, despair and danger in preparation for exaltation and responsibility and glory. These are the parallel lessons that teach the same principle as the crushing of the grapes.

We can further cement this understanding by simply pursuing the analogy further. After the grapes are crushed the liquid harvest is converted to wine. Wine was divinely chosen for as a significant component of both Mosaic and Ecclesial Age rituals. During the Mosaic age wine was used as the drink offering on the bronze altar of burnt offering. Along with the meal offering it accompanied the positive burnt and peace offerings but never the negative sin or trespass offerings. Although the wine was not an independent offering, it was still defined by God as an "offering". In our Ecclesial age Jesus instituted his memorial of the bread and the wine to signify his death and resurrection, encompassing all of the hopes and responsibilities for those who would believe & follow him. Wine is associated with blood in both ages as well (Deut 32:13-14... blood of the grape + the blood of the new testament in Christ). We have learned repeatedly that blood represents life. Although the faithful were forbidden to consume blood they were allowed and even instructed to drink the divine symbol of blood - wine. That is consistent with our conclusions concerning the crushing of the grapes from the divine vineyard as representing the crippling of our egos. Our cursed life and our focus on the short term needs and desires of this cursed life must be diminished for the concentration of our attention to be directed to the next life. The grape juice crushed from the grapes has to undergo a change from the fragile, spoilable grape juice through the fermentation process to the state of wine where it can stay valuable and consumable indefinitely. Therefore the true harvest the farmer wanted from the vineyard was wine... not just grapes or grape juice. The true harvest the divine husbandman wanted from his vineyard of believers was righteousness, righteous lives. But when a farmer only has wild grapes to start with, no amount of crushing or fermentation will transform the product into the wine that scripture tells us makes glad the heart. By pursuing the analogies further we can see the consistency of the underlying message in this parable of the vineyard. The crushing of the grapes represents the crushing of our sinful tendencies and worldly focus and cursed life attentions... like the burning of the incense and the fiery consumption of the altar offerings and the pouring out of the blood at the base of the altar. Once the grapes have been crushed, the blood of the grape, representing our lives, can be changed into a form to cheer the heart of the husbandman. Therefore the winepress was a very significant part of this parable. Unfortunately those grapes were wild, indicating a people focused on the pleasures of sin... the liars and drunks and partiers and hypocrites and bribe taking perverters of justice within the community of the enlightened... the Ecclesia.

The last feature of God's preparation for his vineyard of believers was the tower. It appears the only benefit a tower served in the vineyard was observation & protection. It was a place for watching over and anticipating dangers to the vineyard. When danger came to a city's door people fled to the tower, the last place of refuge and protection. The city's watchmen were placed in the tower as the community's early warning system. The tower was built in the vineyard for the protection and preservation of the vineyard, much like the fence. The tower indicated the presence and benevolent care of the husbandman for the vineyard.

David recognized God as his high tower, trusting in divine protection (Ps 18:1-2; Ps 61:1-4; Ps 144:1-2). The tower was for observation and protection. In the parable it represents the presence and continuing care and protection of Yahweh to the body of believers. However, we are not told that the tower would be broken down. The hedge would certainly be removed. The fence would definitely be broken down... but there is no indication that the tower would not remain. This may suggest that although the vineyard would be judged for its lack of fruitfulness, it would not be abandoned. I think a parallel symbol is when the two stones of the covenant with its four surfaces representing the party of the covenant (the Jewish people at Sinai) were smashed at the base of Sinai for Israel's rebellion in the matter of the golden calf. These stones were smashed, but they were not

ground to dust like the golden calf was. The broken shards of the two stone tablets would be scattered at the mountains base, visible but broken.... in much the same way the mortal party of this covenant would be broken and scattered at the base of the nation mountains around the world for their rebellion of the stone covenant and their rejection of the Messiah cornerstone. They would be broken but still quite visible at the foot of the mountain. The vineyard would have its hedge and fence broken down. The rain would be with-held. It would be eaten up and trodden down (Is 5:5-6) but the tower would still stand... indicating God's continuing observation and preservation, despite the over-running and exploitation of the vineyard.

Yahweh has promised to restore the Jewish vineyard in the latter days. He must, as He cannot fail. The vineyard He planted with the choice vine on the fruitful hill will bear good fruit and forever more (Deut 30:1-10; Jer 30:16-22; Ezek 37:21-27). The tower would not be broken down. Although the vineyard would be over-run it would not be destroyed ... it would be given to others (Lk 20:9-19).

[Refer to Volume Two](#)