

The Divine Prayer Template 4

The greatest obstacle to reading the Bible effectively is exactly the same for every level of Bible student. It makes no difference if one has opened it for the first time or spent thousands of hours studying and meditating on this book. That obstacle is always the same. That greatest of all tripping points is underestimating the Bible, presuming that we can easily take the full measure of the words. The corresponding tripwire of overconfidence naturally generated from a far too powerful human heart serves to clear and pave that broad and popular path Christ cautioned the children of God to avoid. The first and last step in divine education is that there is always far more to be found in divine expressions than we will ever see in this life and we are not nearly as smart as we presume. This is why Peter commands us to be ready always to give an answer to anyone who asks a reason for the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear. This willingness to prove all things sanctifies our heavenly Father in our hearts (1 Pet 3:15, 1 Thess 5:21). Therefore, beware the conclusions of any professed Bible teacher in our community who pre-warns us that they are not willing to suffer any objections or corrections from their presentations or expositions... which appears to be a growing trend.

The Living Gospel

Divine communications (whether written or spoken) are like single cells within a complete living entity. Despite a single detail's independence there is also an interdependence and partnership that affords a comprehensive synergistic cooperation, achieving a perfect balance and greater combined purpose. There is no superfluous or unnecessary component within any form of divine communication. Every law, every ritual, every miracle and every creational feature offers a variety of inter-related applications. There is an individual as well as a shared and layered purpose to each detail. Each component of our living body has an individual purpose but that purpose is magnified on the basis of its cooperation with and dependence upon all the other parts of our body. The functioning of our lungs is incredible, yet meaningless without partnering with the heart and the digestive system, and the brain, etc. Paul notes this synergistic design when he parallels the human body with the intended operational structure of the ecclesia (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12). However this understanding framework also extends to the structure of the Bible (the written word of our Creator) and the features of creation (the spoken word of our Creator). On the basis of this understanding we should have the opportunity to witness the continuous flow of related divine thoughts throughout all divine communication, like blood feeding oxygen and nutrients to every cell of the body. The witnessing of the same divine perspective through many different written and spoken expressions being pumped through different priesthood ages with different laws and rituals as well as the confirming features of creation offers a measured vision of our Creator's incredible glory that will eventually cover the earth as the water covers the sea.

Extreme Warnings Invite Extreme Attention

Our consideration of the design and operation of the incense and the golden altar certainly offers this measured glory opportunity. The significance of these observations is underlined by the extreme warnings associated with the incense and golden altar rituals. The High Priest had to burn the incense within the Most Holy chamber on the Day of Atonement to prevent his own death (Lev 16:13). Anyone presuming to plagiarize the composition of

the incense formula for personal use was to be permanently ostracized from the community of God (Ex. 30:38). The incineration of Nadab and Abihu as well as King Uzziah's imposed leprosy for disrespecting the incense are also invitations to witness this significant hidden value. Let's continue to pursue this veiled beauty and hidden glory within the construction and operation details of the incense and the golden altar.

Our previous commentary examined the pattern of the three evening and morning rituals of the burnt offering, the lamp refueling and the incense burning. We noted that the daily doubling of these three stage alpha and omega rituals is a common scriptural and creational pattern. As we also noted, there are three successive divine ritual patterns, each requiring three stages in which one of those stages employs the subject of our consideration.

- A. The pattern of the three morning and evening rituals employs both the incense and the golden altar in the third stage of the progressive rituals.
- B. The incense alone constitutes the first of the three rituals within the Most Holy Chamber of the Tabernacle on the Day of Atonement (1. incense burning; 2. bullock blood spattered eastward and westward over the Mercy Seat; 3. goat blood spattered eastward and westward over the mercy seat Lev. 16).
- C. The third of these three stage ritual progressions was for the two categories of the sin offering when the sacrificial bullock blood was taken within the Tabernacle. The ritual instructions for the sin offering for both the High Priest as well as the nation required twelve blood deposits at three progressive stations (Lev. 4:1-21).

The golden altar alone (no incense) was employed as the second stage in this third three-fold progressive ritual (Lev. 4:1-26). Therefore in these three 3-stage ritual patterns we see the incense and altar serving first (Day of Atonement) in the progression, second (sin offering) and also third (evening and morning rituals). We also see the incense serving separately (Day of Atonement), the golden incense altar serving separately (High Priest sin offering) and both of them serving together (evening and morning rituals). This is not a haphazard pattern within a pattern within a pattern. It is perfectly ordered, just like the intelligent design of creation where the natural order is sustained by a perfect blending of very complex and layered interdependence of each individual feature of the whole, like the cumulative cells of a living body.

We originally considered this three stage sin offering ritual progression 45 months ago in our fourth commentary entitled Blood Times Three when our primary focus was the dual acceptance lesson of the blood (1. forgiveness and 2. cleansing/purging). Now that our focus is the incense and the incense altar, let's reconsider these two sin offering rituals within our current context.

The Fire of Rejection

The sin offering procedures for the High Priest and the nation were parallel yet expressed independently, unlike the other four of the six sin offerings for transgressional sin, for which guilt was assigned (Lev. 4-5). The fact that the blood of the bullock sin offering entered the divine sanctuary was the qualification for the elimination of the priests of the Kingdom of God from personal benefit (Lev. 4:10-12,21; Lev. 6:30; Heb. 13:11). Each of the six bullock waste components divinely identified had to be transported out of the camp and burned completely to ashes in the same exact location where the ashes from the altar of burnt offering were deposited

(Lev. 4:11). These appropriately six rejected bullock components are defined as the skin, all the flesh, the head, the legs, the inwards and the dung. The incineration from flesh to ashes/dust outside the camp for these six rejected components confirms the Edenic condemnation of the flesh returning to the dust from which it was generated on the basis of sin. Death was not part of the original creation order when everything was declared to be very good. The dying nature was introduced only after sin corrupted that formerly very good creational order. That observation defines a very significant feature of our Creator's righteousness. This fiery consumption of the six rejected sacrificial components also highlights the consuming fiery nature of our Creator (Heb. 12:29). It also fits perfectly within the creational features of fire that project divine principles. Sin, with its numeric identification with the number six, is frequently presented in scripture as an incendiary and fire as a demonstration of divine judgment (Matt 25:41; 2 Thess. 1:8-9). This is why igniting a fire on the Sabbath (the assigned rest from the effects of sin) was forbidden (Ex. 35:2-3). The fact that water is a flame retardant demonstrates how filling ourselves with the water of the word of God protects us from our Creator's justified fiery judgments, in the same sense that well watered plants and trees are more resistant to flames than dried out plant life.

The Fire of Acceptance

The second category of fire for this sin offering was within the camp, consuming the bullock's divinely acceptable components on the bronze altar. This fire of acceptance (as opposed to the fire of rejection outside the camp) highlights how fire is presented as both the avenue of rejection as well as the avenue of divine acceptance. Just as eternal death is presented in the context of never ending smoke as well as ashes, so the only path to eternal life is through death, through the painful flames of a complete self-sacrifice. It was the death and ashes of the red heifer that cleansed the children of God from the divine unacceptability of touching the dead. It was the death of our Messiah that was the required path for his resurrection to immortality. It is our associative death in the waters of baptism that precedes our rising again from those baptismal waters to project our hope of salvation from the condemnation of death originally imposed in Eden. The sin offering for the High Priest and also for the nation included two separate fire categories in two of the three geographic theatres for this ritual: the rejection fires outside the camp and the acceptance fires within the Tabernacle courtyard. The third ritual theatre was within the Tabernacle's Holy Chamber, but there was no fire applied.

The Golden Altar Participation

The employment of the golden incense altar in these two sin offering rituals (High Priest and nation) involves the very appropriate three stage progression of the sacrificial blood. The sin offering bullock blood had twelve applications at three progressive stations. Just as the fire was employed in two separate environments (Tabernacle courtyard for acceptance and outside the camp for rejection), so the blood is applied in two separate environments (the Holy Chamber and the Courtyard) projecting both a mental and behavioral partnership, therefore comprising three separate theatres for the complete execution of these two sin offering rituals. Now, let's follow the blood trail.

Scripture repeatedly identifies blood with mortal life (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11; 1 Cor. 15:50). Sacrificial blood has two applications, forgiveness and cleansing (Heb. 9:22). Both of these applications are components of atonement (salvation), for which the blood is an icon (Lev 17:11). Therefore as we follow the sin offering blood trail we need to place all of our understandings within the framework of blood representing sin cursed mortal life.

The first blood station was the veil upon which the blood was violently spattered exactly seven times. This veil projects the flesh of our Messiah (Heb. 10:19-20). The denial of our Messiah's flesh nature was prophesied to become the signature doctrine of the Christian apostasy (1 Jn 4:3; 2 Jn 7). The doctrine of an immortal god disguising himself in a cloak of flesh and lying about being mortal, lying about a capacity to sin, lying about dying and lying about returning from the dead is the ultimate blasphemy. The removal of the 'veil' over the face of all nations (Is 25:7) at Jerusalem upon the return of Christ prophesies of the global enlightening concerning this basic feature of apostate presumptions. Interestingly, the separate enlightenment of the Jewish people is expressed in very similar terms of that 'veil' being taken away from their heart (2 Cor 3:16). The absolute first step in an effective sin offering would be understanding the nature of our Messiah's life sacrifice, which was all about his Father's righteousness. That death was not primarily focused on the forgiveness of our sins, as is sometimes suggested. Enlightenment is always the first stage in any acceptable relationship with the Creator. This is the exact same beginning point of the doubled three stage evening and morning rituals that we considered in our last commentary, where the knowledge of God was the divinely mandated expectation of the daily burnt offering (Hos. 6:6).

Spattered Blood and Not Sprinkled Blood

It should be noted that there is a unique Hebrew verb for the handling of the blood of the sin offering, separate from the other blood offerings. The Hebrew verb '*nazah*' indicates a violent spattering and not a gentle sprinkling, as indicated by the verb (*zaraq*) used to define the blood handling for the other blood-based altar offerings. This unique verb application confirms the understanding that the defeat of sin (the extent and limit of exactly seven spatterings) could not be accomplished without violence. Sin never surrenders politely. Sin is a devouring lion, a poisonous serpent and a fearsome dragon.

This three stage blood trail projects the complete defeat of sin and sin's power that will be divinely processed at three stages over seven millenniums, projected through the six Greek letters of the name of our savior (Jesus/Iesous) that numerically add up to three eights (888 = three immortalizations). The six letters that produce the three eights depict this progression from mortal to immortal in three stages for the complete maturing of the divine plan. These three battles that sin loses are demonstrated in the immortalization of our savior, the immortalization of his family at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom and the third immortalization for the rest of the world at the end of the Millennial Kingdom, after a full seven 'times'. The sevenfold blood spattering of the sin offering on the veil prophesies the same final defeat of sin after seven millenniums that is also projected in the seven spatterings of the blood of the red heifer toward the Tabernacle from outside the camp (Num. 19:4). Just as the violent spattering of the blood of the sin offering prophesies of the complete and final elimination of the guilt of transgressional sin after seven 'times', so the violent spattering of the red heifer blood prophesies of the elimination of the guilt-free sin application of the cleansing from the physical effects of sin (the defiling touch of death) after seven 'times'. Both sin acceptations are eliminated in these three progressive victories of Spirit over flesh, projected through the two blood acceptations (forgiveness and cleansing). However, if we limit our understanding of sin to just a single acceptance, or inappropriately understand that

second sin acceptance to also assign guilt, then the consistency and bright, glorious beauty of these symmetrical patterns dissolve into the darkness of our oversimplification presumptions.

Smearing the Blood on the Golden Horns

The second blood application of this sin offering required smearing the sacrificial blood on the four horns of the golden altar. Once we have been exposed to the light of divine truths we need to make a choice for either acceptance or rejection of those truths, selflessness or selfishness. We have to choose our master: Yahweh or sin. The smearing application of the sacrificial blood on the four golden horns indicates that we have chosen to worship Yahweh instead of the mirror. We have previously noted the scriptural interpretation of the incense altar and incense burning to indicate the application of prayer, the intimate personal mental and heart circumcising submission to the ultimate authority. Once we recognize our sin (the blood spattering on the veil), we need to repent (the blood on the four incense altar horns). However this is not enough. The forgiveness of sins due to our prayerful repentance is not the only component of our salvation. Forgiveness alone is never enough. There is a third stage with the twelfth blood application.

The third and final blood application station involved the remainder of the blood. This remaining blood had to be poured out at the bottom of the altar of burnt offering in the Tabernacle Courtyard. That altar is scripturally interpreted as defining our Savior (Heb. 13:10; 1 Cor 10:15-18). After we have experienced enlightenment (our sacrificial life blood on the veil) and we have prayerfully repented (our sacrificial lifeblood on the golden altar horns) we still have to pour out our lives at the feet of Jesus Christ, demonstrating the proof of our repentance which was enabled by our enlightenment. This third application of the blood confirms the understanding that there is more to salvation (atonement) than simply forgiveness. This third blood stage also projects that second acceptance of 'personal' righteousness, as opposed to oversimplifying this righteousness principle exclusively to the universally accepted understanding of imputed righteousness. Personally demonstrating Yahweh's righteousness in our lives is absolutely necessary for salvation. This is why we are repeatedly warned we will be judged according to our deeds. As noted previously, the three judgment parables of Matthew 25 all highlight the impending rejection of our judge for the absence of personally projecting divine righteousness in our lives. The second and third blood application stations for the sin offering project the two categories of consideration for our final judgment: sin reconciliation on the basis of repentance (incense altar) and righteousness demonstration (burnt offering altar). The appropriately 12th application of the blood at the third station involves the huge majority of the blood, indicating the intensity of the required commitment to be visibly demonstrated in our lives. The first blood stage involved finger spattering. The second blood stage required smearing. The third blood stage required pouring out the rest of that blood at the base of the altar, just as we must pour out our whole life at the feet of Jesus Christ.

Our considerations concerning the incense and its altar and the glory of how their details and applications compliment all other divine communications will continue with our next commentary.

Brother Jim Dillingham

The Divine Prayer Template 5

Our foundational understanding concerning the incense ritual has been its intended projection of the privilege of prayer (Ps. 141:1-2; Rev. 8:3-4; Luke 1:10). Therefore we should be able to examine the required details concerning the incense components, their processing and the execution of the ritual in order to better understand divinely acceptable prayer patterns.

Four Incense Components

Four specific ingredients were required, in equal weights, to produce the Tabernacle incense. That composition was forbidden for any personal use, upon a threat of permanent expulsion (Ex. 30:38). We have noted on several occasions how the very common 'four' pattern highlights the theme of God manifestation. A pattern of four serves as a frame for some lesson concerning how our Father has, does or will manifest Himself. We have also noted the 'doubled' four pattern and how that consistently identifies our Messiah and his role in the ultimate plan of God manifestation. That ultimate state of perfection in the eighth millennium, when our Creator and His truths and principles are manifested through every single component of creation without a single contradiction will be a state of peace, which is a complete harmony between the Creator and everything that exists beyond the elimination of sin and death. The cursed flesh and everything associated with it will be cut away in circumcision-like fashion beyond the end of that seventh divine day, eliminating all physical and spiritual contradictions to our Creator's righteousness. The progressive plan resulting in this conclusion moves through four specific divinely appointed educational stages. The transition between one divinely appointed educational stage into the next is clearly identified by three markers: 1) a change in divine law, 2) a change in the priesthood and 3) an incredible outpouring of divine power that validates these changes. That validating and very public divine power escalates with each transition. This was the subject of our very first commentary beginning this series five years ago. Our generation will soon experience the divinely appointed third transition into the fourth assigned educational stage. These educational stages can be identified as the Patriarchal Priesthood Age, the First Kingdom Priesthood Age, the Ecclesial Priesthood Age and the Millennial Kingdom Priesthood Age. Each Age had its own laws and priesthoods. An interesting note is that each transition period from one Age to the next is associated with a two generation introductory period.

Each stage has its particular focus for educating the enlightened concerning the instinctively challenging eternal truths and principles of our Creator. It is the inappropriate presumption that each stage is completely comprehensive that serves as a common tripping point that the hearts of the enlightened sometimes exploit to convert humbling divine truths into self-glorifying understandings. The Jewish community incorrectly presumed that their mechanical ritual performance completely satisfied divine approval. The Christian community (and increasingly Christadelphians) incorrectly presume that faith alone completely satisfies divine approval. Both perspectives are incomplete.

Four Equal components

It should be understood that many of these four component allegorical frames for the principle of God manifestation present a distinct equality balance in their divine design. The configuration of the community of the enlightened had to be foursquare with three tribes at each quadrant. The inner spiritual foursquare encampment was for the Levites and Priests. The four horns on the four corners of the two foursquare altars of bronze and gold were separately stationed at the junction of each of the four altar quadrants but offered the same construction and appearance. The four Cherubim of Ezekiel's vision are each the same, with their four faces looking to those same four quadrants and connected in a foursquare fashion, never needing to turn in order to move in any direction. They were accompanied by four wheels within four wheels. Additionally the four incense components were required to be of equal weight. The equality of each of these groups of four (and

many, many others) exhort us in parable fashion to balance the educational focus of each divinely appointed Age. It is the deceitful heart within every one of us that relentlessly hisses its seduction for imbalancing divine principles into a self-centered focus. It is the circumcising and re-circumcising of that heart that empowers our divine vision to see the light veiled within the darkness of our Creator's intentionally complex communications.

Divine principles have to be balanced. Judgment and mercy are both divine principles. Neither is exclusive. Condemnation and forgiveness are both divine principles. Spiritual and physical... perishing forever and everlasting life... works and grace ... imputed righteousness and personal righteousness... transgressional sin and sin producing human nature ... light and darkness ... good and evil... love and hatred... and blessing and cursing have to all be balanced if we are going to manifest our heavenly Father in our thoughts, words and deeds. Therefore, the four incense ingredients had to be of equal weight.

The Blending of the Four Separate but Equal Incense Ingredients

Those four ingredients (stacte, galbanum, onycha and frankincense) were blended together by the apothecary before being employed in the ritual. The lessons of the four divinely appointed educational phases of the Creator's plan have to be blended together in our lives in order for our prayers (burning incense) to be effective. The primary, but certainly not exclusive, educational focus of those four progressive stages are: 1) The value and necessity for personal righteousness in the Patriarchal Priesthood Age; 2) The condemnation of sin in the First Kingdom Age; 3) the necessity and value of grace and imputed righteousness in the Ecclesial Priesthood Age; and 4) The necessity for a physical application extending from spiritual truths and principles in the Millennial Kingdom Priesthood Age. Just like the foursquare and four equal weight distinctions, each educational focus should not be elevated above another or in opposition to another. They have to be blended, just like the apothecary did with the four incense ingredients. Dangerously imbalancing divine principles results from a preferred singular focus generated from our hearts and accommodated by a divine communication pattern that gives to those who have and takes away from those who have not (Matt. 13:12).

Harvesting Tears to Burn on the Incense Altar

It is an interesting note to understand how these incense ingredients were harvested from creation for this divine purpose. Frankincense is drawn from particular trees by creating slits in the bark, bleeding the resin from within into tears that harden into the necessary incense component. Since the Tabernacle incense presents an image of prayerful repentance on the basis of a circumcised heart, this harvesting operation for its frankincense component serves to confirm a seamless theme in relation to repentance following enlightenment.

Beaten Into Dust

The apothecary's processing of the incense would involve crushing the incense chunks into a dust-like consistency (*thou shalt beat it very small* Ex. 30:36). This projects the processing of the saints into the appropriate vessels for the eternal Spirit to dwell (John 14:23). *For thus saith the high and lofty One That inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones* (Is. 57:15). The two related Hebrew words translated "contrite" here in Isaiah are also translated dust, broken, crushed and bruised. The crushing of the incense into a dust consistency is a confirmation of the righteousness of the divine judgment of death for sin in Eden when the declaration was made: *Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return*. This dust consistency is a necessary component for the incense application in the first of the three rituals performed in the Most Holy Chamber on the Day of Atonement. Two handfuls of that incense dust (creating yet another doubled four Christ pattern) was burned in the fire from the bronze altar to create a cloud to embrace the divine glory between the cherubim inside the Most Holy Chamber (Lev. 16:12-13). That dust to cloud transfiguration on the Day of Atonement that saved the life of the High Priest is a projection of the immortalization of our Messiah, being the first of the three immortalization events prophesied in the divine plan that were all so flawlessly portrayed on the annual Day of Atonement.

The Flames of Divine Acceptance

The burning of that incense is a demonstration of the necessity for a burning passion, an energy that needs to be heard in our prayers and witnessed in our lives. A casual shuffling through of enlightened service and particularly the appropriately four rituals of the Ecclesial Age (baptism, memorial service, the required presence or absence of a head covering during prayer on the basis of gender and Sisters silence) offers our deceitful hearts a distinct advantage in its relentless pursuit to subjugate our minds to its instinctive self-worshipping philosophy. The unacceptability of an unprepared prayer full of often repeated expressions that are spilled out with a hypnotic cadence is like unprocessed incense on the golden altar that just won't burn.

The Divine Spotlight of Broken Patterns

One particular inconsistency between the Ecclesial Age ritual of prayer and the Kingdom Age ritual of incense burning stands out like white on black. We have noted many times that these pattern departures and surface inconsistencies should serve as divine beacons to the seeing eyes of the heart circumcised who are eager to see a greater measure of our Creator's glory. The necessary choice of whether to break Sabbath Law or Circumcision Law when a boy turned eight days old on the Sabbath was one of these issues (John 7:22-23). Another was the unique bloodless 'flour' sin offering of the impoverished Israelite (Lev. 5:11). Another was the reversal of the Nazarite 'separating from' restrictions being reversed into the Ecclesial Age 'separating to' ritual requirements. These surface contradictions are keys to understanding how to assign the layers of significance to interdependent divine truths in the correct order. Our current question would be why the High Priest was required to wear his standard head covering (turban/mitre) when he performed the incense ritual, portraying the pattern of acceptable prayer? This required head covering is in direct contradiction to the Ecclesial Age instructions that a Brother must never cover his head during prayer, as opposed to a sister who is required to cover her head whenever she prays (1 Cor 11:4-5). This ritual explanation is concluded with Paul's gavel pounding statement that there are absolutely no exceptions to this ritual requirement for both men and women (vs. 16 in any translation except the KJV). What are we supposed to understand by the High Priest performing the prayer template ritual of incense burning with a 'covered' head? This answer will also address the reason why the golden crown of the High Priest could not be placed directly on his head but had to rest on that same turban head covering.

The Required and Forbidden Head Covering

In order to answer that question, we need to define the lesson of the head covering. Paul explains this for us when he defines and interprets one of the two gender specific Ecclesial Age rituals. Let's also remember that every single divinely imposed ritual in any age shares the foundational understanding that the correct application will always demonstrate some feature of our Creator's righteousness. This is true in all applications without exception. Sister's are commanded to cover their heads during any prayer in order to demonstrate the right-ness of the divine order: that God is the head of Christ who is the head of man who is the head of woman. A sister praying with an uncovered head is contradicting the divine righteousness of that assigned order. Just as a sister must always project the Creator's righteousness by covering her head during any prayer, so a brother must never cover his head in prayer... to demonstrate the exact same feature of our Creator's righteousness. When a sister prays to Yahweh through Jesus, she is bypassing her divinely appointed head (man). She covers her head, declaring she accepts her appointment under the power of man by divine command, so that she might directly access Yahweh through our appointed mediator. An uncovered sister's head in prayer rebelliously contradicts the Creator's rightness in His four-stage descending hierarchy. The Brother has no 'power' on his head between himself and our Mediator and therefore must never cover his head in prayer. To do so would be a rejection of Christ as the man's immediate authority. Also, since the woman is the glory of the man, an uncovered sister's head disrespectfully projects the unveiled glory of the man in the face of God when she seeks to approach Him directly in prayer. Therefore one aspect of the head covering is a recognition of being under the power of another. Another divine righteousness feature of this Ecclesial Age ritual was confirming that the

woman was made for the man and not that the man being made for the woman. Now, let's apply these observations to the head-covered High Priest burning the incense.

In exactly the same fashion, the Mosaic High Priest was under the authority of another. The Mosaic High Priest would surrender to the greater authority of the ultimate High Priest, our Messiah. Paul highlights this power level assignment when he observes how Levi (while still in the loins of Abraham) respectfully paid tithes to Melchizedek (Heb. 7:4-11). The Mosaic High Priest was under the authority of a greater High Priest, despite the fact that the Messiah was not yet born. This is true in the same sense that Jesus was the lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8) and that Yahweh had already made Abraham the father of many nations when he didn't even have a son at the time (Rom. 4:17). Our omnipotent Creator has the exclusive right to refer to future events in the past tense because if He says it will happen, it is as good as done. Therefore the Mosaic High Priest had to cover his head in the Tabernacle when he burned the incense, projecting the prayer pattern. He was under the power and authority of another. Similarly to sisters, Aaron and the continuing line of temporary High Priests were assigned as helpers that were fit (Gen. 2:18) for the bridegroom, the ultimate High Priest.

Repeated Ritual Reversals Are Christ Focused

We have seen a number of Kingdom laws and rituals reversed in the Ecclesial Age. The four restrictions of the Nazarite were converted into absolute requirements in the Ecclesial Age but focused on a singular association. We touch the dead body of Jesus in both baptism and eating the broken bread. We eat the grape and drink the alcohol in the wine of the memorial service. Sisters cover their heads in prayer as opposed to the Nazarites that uncovered their head at the conclusion of their vow by shaving their head and placing that previously unshorn hair into the fire of the peace offering. The two great blood laws of the Patriarchal and First Kingdom Ages were reversed in the Ecclesial Age. Instead of being forbidden from blood consumption we are commanded to consume the blood of Christ in the memorial wine, or die forever (John 6:53). The temple altar where the sacrificial blood was to be poured out was eliminated and replaced by the mental image of our Messiah before whom we pour out our lives at his feet. Now we also see the reversal of the head covering requirement. Since we are told definitively that our Creator never changes we need to ask why these dramatic reversals in laws and rituals were implemented.

The progressive nature of our Creator's education process is for our benefit, and not a result of His enlightenment or some degree of wrath satisfaction, as is often suggested from apostate Christianity. Just as a parent teaches their maturing child with different methods at different stages in their child's progression, so does our Creator. As we have noted before, there is not a single animal species in creation that remains under the care and direction of their parents for anywhere near as long as is necessary for creation's appointed caretaker (mankind). We are the only species invited to share the image and likeness of our Creator. There are divinely appointed educational themes for each new priesthood age with its new laws and rituals. In order to truly understand and properly balance the eternal divine truths we are invited to understand and appreciate then we have to consider these changing laws and rituals. We must do this first in the context of their immediate and constricted educational framework and secondly in the greater frame of spanning the full range of divine education available to us, including both the written word of God (Bible) and the spoken word of God (creation). Not only will everything fit together perfectly when examined in this manner, but that understanding structure will be incredibly beautiful. It will be like viewing the earth from space, seeing the entire interdependent structure of creation at once.

Don't Be Satisfied With 'Either-Or' Answers

The primary educational theme of the First Kingdom Age laws and rituals is the condemnation of sin, compared against the necessity for personally demonstrating divinely right behavior. This educational theme emphasizes

our inadequacy and the need for a savior. After the transition into the Ecclesial Age the new laws and rituals primarily highlight the availability of grace and imputed righteousness despite the Creator's being right for condemning sin and requiring an impossible level of personal righteousness. However, if we view this educational transition as a replacement instead of a progression, then a veil of darkness prevents further enlightenment and the resulting glory from that growing enlightenment. The key to understanding our heavenly Father is the blending of all the stages of His progressive education. Comprehensive answers that are eternally true are not supposed to be simple or easy.

We have it all before us, like no generation ever before us. We have the entire (perfect, mature) word of God. We have a familiarity with the features of creation like no generation ever before us. We have amazing research tools to examine both of these forms of divine expression and how they compliment each other flawlessly at every level. The exponential value that is intentionally veiled in divine expressions can be realized individually if we will deny the heart generated, oversimplified distortions that saturate apostate philosophy and are endlessly re-introduced into the community of the enlightened. Everything has to blend perfectly. If something looks like it doesn't fit, then that is exactly what we need to address because the problem is not with Yahweh. The problem is always with us in our endless battle against the natural serpent thought process emanating unbidden from within.

Brother Jim Dillingham

Vocational Training for an Immortal Priesthood No. 62

March 2013 **Sabbath Law**

It is late Friday afternoon in the divine week of the Creator's plan. We are preparing for the Sabbath Millennium, the seventh divine 'day' of 1,000 years (Ps. 90:4; 2 Pet. 3:8; Heb. 4). Hopefully we are all preparing for this Sabbath application. That is what these vocational training commentaries are all about. It may be difficult at times to maintain the excitement of anticipation following decade after decade of our community's concentration on "signs of the times" considerations highlighting our Messiah's extremely imminent return. While that may certainly be the case, it also may not happen for another twenty years. The only definitive border we have been given is that the generation that witnesses the blossoming of the national fig tree of Israel will not pass away before all things are fulfilled (Matt. 24:24). This same promise is made in Psalm 102 where we read: *When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in his glory.* We read that the heathen will fear the name of Yahweh and that the kings of the earth will see His glory. We are also told this prophecy was written for the "last" generation: *This shall be written for the generation to come* (vs 18). The Hebrew word translated "to come" is *acharon*, which is primarily translated as last, latter, utmost, uttermost, and hindmost throughout scripture. When Yahweh declares He is the first and the last, it is the word *acharon* that defines the "last" application. Jeremiah 30:24 similarly identifies the preceding prophecy of the restoration of the nation of Israel as being the last generation. *The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have done it, And until he have performed the intents of his heart: In the latter days ye shall consider it.* The original Hebrew word translated as "latter" is *achariyth* which is predominantly translated as last, end and hindermost. Our generation has witnessed the first (political) stage of the resurrection of the national firstborn son of God (Ezek. 37). We have witnessed the favoring of Zion and the blossoming of the fig tree in Christ's Olivet parable. We are that last and final generation identified in each of these prophecies. We are at the threshold of the millennial 'day of rest'.

The Stone Covenant

Sabbath Law was instituted at Sinai, being the fourth of the ten commandments, inscribed twice on the two sets of two covenant stones by the finger of God, just as there will be two Kingdoms of God on earth. These stones were repeatedly identified as not simply "the covenant" but also "the testimony". The second set of stones served as the identifying point of reference for the golden ark and the entire Tabernacle. The history of these two sets of covenant stones serves as a prophetic parable appropriately addressing two applications: the nation of Israel and Jesus Christ. We will leave the fascinating consideration of these stones to another commentary and focus on the fourth commandment about keeping the Sabbath holy.

Two Precedents

There are two primary precedents offered by Yahweh for mandating that fourth commandment. Each focus centers on the theme of resting, or ceasing from labors. The first precedent was the seven day pattern of creation, with no creative work being performed on the seventh day. It should be understood that our Creator certainly did not need six days to create everything. Our heavenly Father simply verbally commanded and massive stars appeared with immeasurable energy requirements, gravity relationships, appropriate positions in the night sky for early navigation and every other detail in perfect compliance with the rest of creation. Yahweh could have created everything in an instant. He chose to stretch this over six evenings and six mornings. We are specifically told that our Creator does not need to rest, as mortals do. Therefore the Sabbath precedent should be highly significant in our considerations. Yahweh explains why He initiated Sabbath law within the context of the ten commandments. *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:*

For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. When Moses restates these same commandments to Israel on the last day of his life he offers an additional and constricting motivation for introducing Sabbath observance. *And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day* (Deut. 5:15). The reason Yahweh offers for imposing the Sabbath law when His Kingdom was established at Sinai was that it should serve a reminding demonstration of the rest He had given Israel from their Egyptian bondage. This understanding easily fits within the original precedent of a divinely imposed ceasing from creational labors and simply reviewing and enjoying what has been created.

The Covenant Token

Yahweh makes it clear to Moses that Sabbath law was the “token” of that covenant He made with Israel, as circumcision was the token of the Abrahamic covenant. *Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed* (Ex. 31:13-17). The Hebrew word translated sign (*oth*) is the same word used to identify circumcision as the “token” of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 17:11) and the rainbow as the “token” of the Noahic covenant (Gen 9:11-12). The understanding that Yahweh appoints Sabbath law as the icon of the Mosaic covenant will be essential in explaining the truth about several Sabbath issues and how the Sabbath truths, principles, promises and prophecies balance with other issues.

Sabbath Questions

Ezekiel confirms this divine assignment for the Sabbath serving as the sign (token) of Yahweh’s relationship with the house of Israel. *Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them. But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness... And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God. Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me* (Ezekiel 20:12,20). As we have noted in the past, all divine laws and rituals declare features of our Creator’s righteousness, without exception. Additionally we can frequently apply these righteousness projecting rituals in prophetic applications. These foundational understandings offer the framework for definitively answering questions that can sometimes generate friction between Bible students. Here are some of the questions we will need to address concerning Sabbath Law:

- Why was the spiritual focus on the last day of the week during the First Kingdom Age changed to a first day of the week spiritual focus during the Ecclesial Age and then will be changed back to the last day of the week during the Millennial Kingdom Age?
- Why was Sabbath Law broken in order to maintain Circumcision Law? On what basis is circumcision greater than Sabbath observance?
- Why did Jesus perform so many healing miracles on the Sabbath, infuriating the leaders of the enlightened community to whom he was commissioned to preach?
- Why is it the leaders of the enlightened community did not understand the legitimacy of Christ’s Sabbath healings and how they perfectly projected his Father’s righteousness? What was missing from their thought process?

- On what basis did Jesus defend his disciples for harvesting grain on a Sabbath for personal consumption (Matt. 12)?
- On what basis were the Aaronic priests guiltless when they “profaned” the Sabbath by working on that day (Matt. 12)?
- Why was the daily burnt offering doubled (4) on the Sabbath during the First Kingdom Age and then will be doubled again in the Millennium Kingdom Age (8)?
- Why is there an evening and morning Sabbath burnt offering required for the First Kingdom Age but only a morning burnt offering required during the Millennium Kingdom Age for that seventh millennium since creation?
- Why, specifically, was the Sabbath law divinely chosen to be the particular token of the Mosaic Covenant?
- Why were the first and third days of the three days of Christ’s death Sabbath days? The first was the High Sabbath (John 19:31) and the second was the seventh day Sabbath, by the end of which Jesus had already risen from the dead (Matt:28:1-6).
- How do those two Sabbaths during Christ’s death relate to other divine patterns, like the two sets of covenant stones commanding the ‘sign’ of the Sabbath?
- How do all the other ‘seven’ highlights in divine law relate to the seventh day of the Sabbath (the seventh day procedures for resolving the touching of the dead; the seven sets of ‘clean’ animals for Noah’s ark; the seven blood splatterings on the Tabernacle veil for two separate sin offerings; the “seven times” punishment term for breaking the covenant (Lev. 26: 18, 24, 28); the seven day term for the three divinely appointed feast week celebrations and why the first day was always a High Sabbath without consideration for which day of the week the feast began; the first seven days of a newborn sacrificial animal that prevented its qualification as an altar offering; etc).

It is understood we will certainly have to prove the legitimacy of these questions before addressing each of them. Most of these questions are ‘why’ questions. These are the most significant type of questions, as they highlight motivation and not structure. Our primary goal should always be to understand the mind of our Creator and not be satisfied with the mere technicalities (the how, where, who, when and what questions). Additionally we have to be careful not to try to answer ‘why’ questions with ‘how’ answers. i.e. If we asked ‘why’ the sun came up every morning we would probably get an answer about the earth’s rotation of the sun with a lesson in gravitation law and the spinning earth. That would be an inappropriate ‘how’ answer to a ‘why’ question, betraying a foundational disrespect for creation’s divine design. Every feature, law and relationship in the terms of creation demonstrate divine truths and principles. This is true from the grandness of the universe to the design of the human body right down to the sub-atomic level, witnessed through all five senses and from our appropriately ‘eight’ sensory receptors (2 eyes for seeing, 2 ears for hearing, 2 nostrils for smelling, 1 tongue for tasting and skin for feeling). Our Creator’s righteousness is gloriously projected everywhere, but only visible to those with circumcised hearts, empowering our two ‘seeing’ eyes and our two ‘hearing’ ears (Matt. 13:16).

Since we are on the threshold of the Sabbath millennium, let’s consider the rotation question concerning Sabbath observance. As we have noted, Sabbath Law was the signature ritual of the Mosaic Covenant, just as circumcision was for the Abrahamic Covenant. Yet neither of these rituals are required during the Ecclesial Age and yet both of them will be required during the Millennial Kingdom Age (Ezek. 44:9, 24). Why do we see this ritual rotation?

Sabbath Law Rotation Between the Ages

Every answer to every Sabbath question must fit within the frame of the original divine definition for its application. The Sabbath signifies a rest and particularly a rest from labor. It should be remembered that hard

labor was a component of the curse inflicted on Adam due to the corruption of creation by the contradiction of the Creator's righteousness (sin): *cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground* (Gen. 3:17-19). The effects of sin are what we must labor through in life (hard work, disease, pain, frustration, violence and death). We certainly need a rest from the effects of sin.

The Sabbath Rest From the Effects of Sin

The requirement of Sabbath observance within the laws of the original Kingdom of God and the restored Kingdom must be considered within the educational frame of that Law. As we have noted on many occasions, the primary educational focus of Kingdom Law was the exposure, highlighting and magnification of sin (Rom. 3:20; 5:20; 7:7,13). This two stage application of Sabbath Law and its promised rest reflects the two stage salvation process and the two categories of sin from which we hope to enjoy a rest. The first Kingdom Age emphasizes the condemnation of sin (both the moral and the physical applications). This is demonstrated and emphasized repeatedly in the deaths of the sacrificial animals, the blood handling and the uncleanness laws. The Restored Kingdom Age adds depth to that image by applying the rest from both transgressional sin and its horrible effects during that Sabbath millennium. We read of the chaining of the four divinely appointed sin icons: devil, satan, serpent and dragon (Rev. 20:1-3). We also read the many prophecies of the rest from the effects of sin during that Restored Kingdom Age, including meaningless weapons being reforged into agricultural tools and military education ending (Is. 2:2-4), agricultural abundance (Ezek. 34:29), carnivorous predators becoming herbivorous and venomous reptiles and insects becoming harmless (Is. 11:6-8), the reduction of sorrow and tears (Is 65:19), the extension of mortal life (Is. 65:20) and some who inherit immortality (Rev. 20:4-6). The 'rest' promised through Sabbath observance within the original Kingdom laws is realized in the context of both sin applications in the Restored Kingdom of the Sabbath Millennium.

Why Jesus Healed on the Sabbath

This is why it was so appropriate that Jesus healed so frequently on the Sabbath. He was demonstrating the promise of the Sabbath rest from the effects of sin by restoring sight, hearing, mobility, bodily health, mental health and even life. The question as to why the authorities of the enlightened community inappropriately presumed this rest from the effects of sin (Christ's healing miracles) was somehow a violation of Sabbath Law should be a glaring warning signal to the current community of the enlightened. They concentrated their attention on the negative application of Kingdom Laws (*Thou shalt not*) without recognizing the incompleteness of that limited perspective. Jews focused on the performance of ritual technicalities, blinded to the parable-like education and prophetic applications of ritual laws. Apostate Christianity also concentrates on a partial focus, exclusively centering on the positive applications of grace and imputed righteousness with a presumption of automatic forgiveness, blinded to the foundational structure of sin condemnation that affords the extension of grace, righteousness and forgiveness.

The Incompleteness of Sin Condemnation to Achieve A Divine Rest

We have noted repeatedly the necessity for balancing our understandings with the divinely appointed dual acceptations of eternal principles. Sabbath Law will be required in two divinely mandated educational stages (the original and the restored Kingdom of God) of both promise and reality that are separated by the addition of the necessary second component to facilitate that 'promised' rest to become a reality. The identification and condemnation of sin (First Kingdom Age) still needs the resulting grace and imputed righteousness that have been the educational focus of the Ecclesial Age in order for the realization of the promised rest from sin in the Restored Kingdom Age of the Sabbath Millennium.

The lesson of requiring the condemnation of sin in order to extend the exaltation of grace and forgiveness is demonstrated in more than simply the two ages in which Sabbath Law is imposed. Baptism projects exactly the

same dual image of 1) the righteous condemnation of sin through joining our Messiah in death by burial in the baptismal waters as well as 2) awarding unearned righteousness on the basis of grace as demonstrated in our (resurrection-like) re-emergence from that baptismal burial. Similarly, memorial service presents the image of the condemnation of sin in the flesh of Christ by 1) consuming of the broken unleavened bread before 2) drinking the wine, demonstrating the life available by grace in consuming Christ's blood. Jesus directly associates this two stage procedure of eating his flesh and drinking his blood with inheriting eternal life (John 6:54), which is the ultimate rest from sin.

We will continue to address the itemized questions concerning how the Sabbath relates to other rituals, laws, miracles and prophecies throughout all divine communications.

Sabbath Law 2

Kindling a Sabbath Fire

Our society's commercial marketing masters constantly mine our debt limits. They design their aggressive campaigns according to the foundational principle that perception is reality. They bombard us with coveting incentives that are designed to convert our available debt into their assets. The successful operation of their mission is dependent on correctly harnessing the current, but highly fluid, societal understandings and thought processes. These understandings are often referred to as 'political correctness', which is an expression representing the majority understanding about an issue. Success is quantified in a framework of short term success, anticipating immediate results. As the few lights in a dark world, we academically understand the illegitimacy of this pattern. We are not free to permit our heart generated perceptions to govern the foundational 'realities' from which our activities extend. This is why our Ecclesial Age has been assigned four divinely designed rituals that are supposed to at least temporarily cut away that default perspective that is often shared by a surrounding community. Baptism, memorial service, the covered (Sisters) and uncovered (Brethren) heads of prayer participants and Sisters' silence are each designed to arrest the endless re-inflation of the heart dominated perspective. It is this 'perspective' recognition that is the master key to successfully pursuing the glory of our Creator in His veiled expressions, the light that can be drawn from darkness.

Light Drawn From Darkness

Light out of darkness was the first creative act recorded in scripture. Paul confirms the application of this initiating act to ourselves. *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ* (2 Cor. 4:6). That darkness perspective is demonstrated through the default thought patterns of the serpent mind (human nature). Paul confirms that the center of this darkness is the human heart, into which the divine light is introduced by gospel truths. Our task is to deny the automatic heart generated perspective that places ourselves at the center of every consideration. This perspective differential is why every single false doctrine is always divinely insulting. Imbalancing these perspectives is demonstrated when some in our community pursue fraternal unity with each other at the expense of doctrinal unity. It is presumed that the absence of fraternal friction must somehow be preferred above doctrinal harmony. That imbalanced goal demonstrates a preference for darkness rather than light (John 3:19).

Doctrinal distortions accelerate in our community wherever the default perspective of the heart is offered traction. Everything is not about us and every consideration does not qualify as a moral exhortation. As our beloved Dr Thomas has often been quoted: "Men were not ushered into being for the purpose of being saved or lost. God-manifestation, not human salvation, was the grand purpose of the Eternal Spirit."

Kindling A Sabbath Fire

With this preface let's examine a feature of Sabbath Law that certainly cannot offer any moral exhortation. There is no message that can be drawn from this law that can be refocused onto ourselves or be manipulated into some exhortation about 'just getting along with each other'. Immediately before inviting Israel to contribute materials for the construction of the divine sanctuary, Moses declares: *These are the words which the Lord hath commanded, that ye should do them. Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the Lord: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death. Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day* (Ex 35:1-3).

Why would God command Israel not to kindle a fire on a Sabbath day? That would certainly be an inconvenient requirement. A fire would be valuable for warmth on cold nights or light to prevent our stumbling in darkness as well as food preparation (including the wilderness manna and quail). The inconvenience factor isn't surprising as that is the basic nature of sacrifice. We forfeit an immediate short term advantage in order to pursue a potential and far greater long term advantage, confident in the reality of that potentially greater advantage. Yahweh's commandments were not intended to accommodate our convenience. That has been the goal of the endless manipulations of the enlightened teachers pursuing the itching ears of their communities to their own personal advantage. This is why Jesus condemned the respected teachers of the enlightened community to whom he was commissioned to preach for their endless reversals of the divine perspective. Their Corban law corrupted the fifth commandment about honoring our father and mother (Mark 7:9-13). They inappropriately valued their own altar gifts above Yahweh's altar and the gold in the temple above the temple itself (Matt 23:26-22). They inappropriately condemned Jesus for healing people on the Sabbath while still being willing to care for their own endangered animal on a Sabbath (Matt. 12:11-12). Their pursuit of divorce for any reason was countered by Christ's condemnation of adultery for any husband abandoning (divorcing) his wife, with the one exception allowed by Kingdom Law for the discovery that a new bride had not been a virgin (Matt. 5:31-32; Deut. 24:1) . A self-centered perspective is not exclusive to the unenlightened. Therefore we have to ask, what was the divine motivation for the very serious injunction against kindling a fire on a Sabbath day?

The Sabbath Rest From Sin and Its Effects

There are several understandings that have to be blended into a determination that will perfectly harmonize with all other divine expressions, laws, rituals and prophecies. We have determined Sabbath observance is founded upon the creational pattern of rest (Ex. 20:8-11). Sabbath law was initiated at Mt Sinai with other Kingdom laws but founded on the precedent of Israel's rest from Egyptian slavery (Deut. 5:15; Ex. 31:12-17; Ezek. 20:12,20). We have noted the elimination of Sabbath observance requirements during the Ecclesial Age (Col 2:16-17) yet the renewal of Sabbath law upon the renewal of the Kingdom of God (Ezek. 44:24). We have noted the prophetic application of the Sabbath as a rest from the effects of sin (Gen. 3:17-19). A very real rest from the effects of sin will be experienced during the Sabbath Millennium. These rest prophecies that accompany the chaining of the serpent, dragon, satan and devil describe how the earth will yield greater bounty, venomous reptiles and insects will become harmless, military education will end, mortal life will be extended so significantly that a 100 year old person will be considered only a child in the context of their life expectancy and frightening carnivorous beasts will become docile herbivores (Is. 2, 11, 65). The restraining of offenses against our Creator's righteousness (sin) absolutely must demonstrate a corresponding physical cooperation. A rest from behavioral sin must extend itself into a rest from the physical effects of sin.

In order to answer our query we will have to blend these understandings with our Creator's consistent application of fire and what it means to particularly "kindle" a fire. Fire is another of the endless features of creation whose properties were designed to project divine principles. Our Creator does not merely tweak or manipulate the supposedly inviolable 'natural' laws of our universe to achieve His purposes. In truth, He designed and operates them all as a projection of His eternal truths and principles. This is why so many of the faithful quote creation when validating divine truths (i.e. Matt. 5:44-45; 1 Cor. 15:35-38; Ezek. 15).

Consuming Fire and Non-Consuming Fire

A brief consideration of fire must begin with our Creator defining Himself as a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29). Appropriately, Yahweh's wilderness presence was demonstrated to Israel in the nightly fire that replaced the daily cloud and also through the burning mountain from which He declared the covenant to all of them. The altar offerings were divinely accepted through fire. The death of our Messiah was ritually demonstrated by the incineration of the red heifer (Num. 19). The six identified refuse components from the sin offering whose blood entered the Tabernacle were consumed by fire outside the camp. That consuming feature

of fire, by which Yahweh defines himself must also be balanced by the appearance of a fire that does not consume. The angel appeared to Moses in the burning but unconsumed bush. Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah emerged from Nebuchadnezzar's furnace without even the smell of fire on their clothes. The awarding of the power of the Holy Spirit to the 120 in Jerusalem at Pentecost was identified by 'cloven' tongues of fire above them. That 'cloven' feature of the fire parallels that dual nature of the fire. This dual application of being both a consuming fire as well as a fire that does not consume is also veiled in the features of creation. Fire is both a blessing and a curse. It saves as well as destroys. This dual application of fire (by which our Creator identifies Himself) corresponds directly to the only two possible outcomes of our judgment: eternal destruction back to the dust & ashes (forever consumed) or eternal salvation (forever unconsumable)

The Principle of Control

The difference between a fire that benefits life and a fire that destroys life is the principle of control, of harnessing the fire by limiting its accelerants (such as fuel and oxygen). Respecting and fearing the fire's danger empowers us to harness its benefits. If we do not fear the consuming capacity of the fire then our carelessness prompts an unnecessary danger. Controlled and harnessed fire will warm our homes, grow our crops (sun), light our way in the darkness, cook our food, temper our metals, sanitize, purify and cauterize. An unharnessed fire with unlimited access to fuel and oxygen will destroy and kill. A great deal more could be said about fire as it is a major scriptural and creational theme. However, these foundational observations should be sufficient to determine the divine motivation for that Kingdom Law injunction against kindling a Sabbath fire.

It wasn't the presence of a Sabbath fire that would be offensive to Yahweh. It would have been the kindling of a new fire that would offend the Creator. The bronze altar fire in the Tabernacle courtyard as well as the seven burning golden lamps in the Most Holy chamber were supposed to never be extinguished. It wasn't the presence of fire that was offensive, but the kindling itself and only on the Sabbath day.

The Eight 'Eternally' Burning Fires of God

Additionally it is significant to once again see the number eight (the number of immortality and the number of our Messiah) highlighted in the fact that there were eight fires Israel was commanded to continue burning endlessly. These were the seven burning lamps inside the Holy Chamber of the Tabernacle and the one fire on the altar of burnt offering in the courtyard (Lev. 6:13; Ex. 27:20). The single fire was for consuming the flesh of the offerings, the bread and wine offerings in the first of the three holiness stages, the Tabernacle Courtyard. The seven fires on the seven lamps were strictly for light generation inside the Holy Chamber. This 7+1 observation not only blends perfectly into our endless and seamless considerations of the number 8, it also fits perfectly into the 'plus 1' considerations addressed under the Jubilee observations in the 50th and 51st commentaries in this series. Just as another meditation incentive, isn't it interesting that there would never be darkness in any of the three holiness stages of the Tabernacle structure. The 'endless' fire of the bronze altar would enlighten the Courtyard. The seven burning lamps would enlighten the Holy Chamber in the second holiness stage. In the third holiness stage the glory of the Creator on the mercy seat between the cherubim brightened the Holy Chamber so significantly that the face of Moses would shine when he exited (Ex. 34:33-35). In the first two stages it is burning fuel (two different fuels) that generates the light but in the final stage it is the glory of the Creator, which shines without burning fuel and there is no consumption. These related observations in the context of fire are offered simply as mental cud to re-chew in our private meditations. There is great beauty remaining to be sweetly discovered.

Godly Fear in Addition to Godly Reverence

In reference to the recommended fear of fire, we actually have a somewhat similar warning about fearing the fiery nature of our Creator in our Ecclesial Age. In the context of the observations of the burning mountain and the shaking of the heavens as well as the earth we have this concluding statement: *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and*

godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:28-29). Within the framework of our goal of receiving an unshakable Kingdom we are encouraged to serve with two separate categories of fear... both reverence as well as “godly” fear. The added motivation for serving with that “godly” fear is the exclamation point that our God is a “consuming” fire. That is not a comforting statement about the blessings of a controlled fire but a definite warning about destruction from fire, a “consuming” fire. That is not a reference to the warming rays of the sun that gently coax the fruit bearing plants to rise above the earth as they stretch toward the heavens. This Hebrews 12 aspect of fire is all about consuming and eliminating that which can burn and be destroyed. This recommended fearful pursuit of an unshakable Kingdom is exactly what the law forbidding the kindling of a Sabbath fire was all about.

Kindling the Fires of Divine Indignation

Offenses to our heavenly Father (sin) are presented as incendiaries throughout scripture. This is why we repeatedly read of Yahweh’s anger being “kindled”. *And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp* (Num. 11:1). Notice the relationship between the kindling of God’s anger and the consuming of the offenders in flames. This is a common theme: *and the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly... the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague... the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and he departed... And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel... the Lord’s anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years* (Numbers 11, 12, 25, 32). The inappropriate behavior of the enlightened prompted a kindling or igniting of divine anger. There is a strong pattern of behavior demonstrating that it is unwise to be unafraid of offending our Creator, on the basis of His personal definition of being a consuming fire.

Therefore it is a demonstration of the flawless symmetry in all divine communications (scripture and the terms of creation) that Yahweh would command no fire be kindled on a Sabbath day. Observing the holy status of the Sabbath day demanded a rest from our burdens (1st Kingdom Age) and will result in a rest from the burdens of the curse of sin (2nd Kingdom Age). In the observance of the Sabbath rest and intended exercise of spiritual meditations it is required that we are careful not to fuel the anger of our Creator by offending His righteousness... indicating the “kindling” of His anger... especially when a special day is ordained for this very purpose, as in the Sabbath.

The fact that the laws of the Kingdom Age were primarily intended to teach us about sin (as has been repeatedly demonstrated in these commentaries) demonstrates the appropriate frame for this understanding about not kindling a fire during the Sabbath rest. As Paul repeatedly points out, the Law was all about identifying and magnifying sin so that every mouth would be stopped and every head hang in shame. The Law was intended to wipe away mankind’s default arrogant smirk, encouraging a desperate search for some avenue of hope, in search of a hero to save us from the assured condemnation of that Law. This was the schoolmastering technique of divine law, delivering us to Jesus Christ. Therefore it is highly legitimate that we understand the injunction against kindling a Sabbath fire as offering cautionary advice against igniting our heavenly Father’s indignation for our arrogance in provoking him on the very day He has assigned to be a rest from both sin and its effects.

Light Becomes Darkness

Truly understanding the divine motivation for commanding no Sabbath fire be kindled requires a perspective that is uncomfortable to the human heart. We should certainly be afraid of prompting our Creator’s indignation. Forgiveness is never presented as automatic or unconditional. The presumption that any fear of Yahweh our generation faces should be strictly limited to reverence and never actually being afraid of offending our Creator’s righteousness would automatically darken any possibility of understanding this law about kindling a

Sabbath fire. Those who accommodate the endless itching ears of our community constantly deny any reason for our specific community to ever be afraid of our Creator. This heart generated perspective presents the false understanding that our salvation is all but assured, that any and all of our possible divine offenses will certainly be forgiven and that our toleration of ungodly behavior and doctrinal variations actually qualifies as righteousness. Light becomes darkness and a consuming fire is perceived as a warming fire when a heart dominated perspective addresses eternal truths and principles. Paralleling our introductory comments, these Brethren make merchandise of us (2 Pet. 2:3).

The Spiritual and Physical Bond

A further complimentary issue in the Sabbath fire kindling injunction that offends a heart generated perspective would be the necessary relationship between spiritual and physical, between the physical properties of this law and the necessary spiritual implications springing from those physical properties. The illegitimate default presumption of a complete separation of the divine bond between physical and spiritual, where one has no effect on the other, authorizes such divinely offensive understandings as the progressive elimination of the principle of sin in the flesh (demanding an exclusive transgressional, guilt-assigning application to all sin), the dramatic reduction of the principle of atonement to nothing more than forgiveness (eliminating the physically cleansing component of atonement saturating scripture) and the accommodation of some form of respect for the delusion of evolution. A creational order that was defined as “very good” was corrupted by Adam’s offense against the Creator’s right-ness. There was a divinely necessary complimentary physical response to that moral corruption. Death, disease, hard labor, danger, reduced earthly fruitfulness and violence were the physical effects of the moral corruption. These physical contradictions offend the ‘right’ creational standards of Yahweh. These creational contradictions to divine standards (right-ness) will have to be eliminated along with the moral contradictions to our Creator’s right-ness in order for true peace to exist.

Understanding that there is a definite divine bond between spiritual and physical is what invites us to see the incredible glory in the features of creation and how they offer a perfect validating parallel to the written word of our creator. We have noted how the very basic three layered operating design of the universe was the foundational template for the three stage design of the wilderness encampment. We have seen how the atomic structure of carbon and oxygen declare divine truths that are demonstrated in scripture but opposed by the heart generated and mirror focused religions of the sons of men. The creational features of fire, weather patterns, water, gravity, mathematics, chemistry, physics and biology all declare the glory of our Creator to anyone who has ears to hear that still, small voice... to any of the enlightened willing to endlessly re-circumcise their hearts.

We will continue to pursue answers to our original Sabbath questions in our next commentary for your consideration.

Bro Jim Dillingham

Sabbath Law 3 The Two Sabbath Stages

The completely unique insight afforded our enlightened community is qualified on the basis of understanding the principle and application of God manifestation. Mankind is satisfied with defining their gods on the basis of the filters our Creator employs to veil Himself. However this intentional veiling effectively licenses mankind's twisted interpretations of their gods into really nothing more than slightly elevated reflections of themselves. Paul describes this understanding to the Roman Ecclesia as the foolish who think themselves to be wise worshipping the creature more than the Creator and changing the glory of the incorruptible God into corruptible man, birds, beasts and reptiles (Rom 1:22-25). We, the enlightened, understand that our Creator intentionally hides His glory, projecting Himself through layers of complexity such as creational features ('natural' laws), parables, rituals, miracles, changing laws, geography, people, animals, agriculture, prophets, kings, armies, kingdoms, mathematics, biology, physics, chemistry, selectively recorded historical events and more. The clearest, most perfect manifestation of our Creator was (and still is) through His son.

Image and Likeness

Since the original creative intention was for man to be in the image and likeness of God, then clearly this should be our primary focus, with Jesus serving as our template, our plumb line. We are supposed to accurately manifest, reveal, demonstrate and project our Creator. We cannot bear His 'image' while still suffering under the physical curse of mortality, but we can pursue His 'likeness'. What makes this goal difficult is not simply the intentional layers of complexity veiling our Creator from direct observation, but the instinctive and very counterproductive thought process of the human heart (the default serpent frame of reference) that will automatically convert every understanding into a self-affirmation unless consciously directed otherwise (scripturally expressed as *circumcision of the heart*). Powerfully highlighting the degree of this challenge is the recognition that the enlightened community to which Jesus preached did not recognize him as a manifestation of their Creator. He confused everyone, including his own disciples.

We personally have a direct connection to that specific enlightened community to whom Christ came for his ministry and his 33 year battle and defeat of sin. We are the particular generation to whom he will come again, not for preaching but for judging... not for defeating sin but for defeating the servants of sin who prefer sin above righteousness. We are the last chapter of our divinely appointed Ecclesial Age, just as that generation was for the Kingdom Age. Theirs was the last generation divinely required to submit to Sabbath law. Our Generation will be the first to see Sabbath law restored, in the Millennial Kingdom (Is 66:23; Ezek. 44:24; 46:1-4,12) . Jesus told us that the generation that witnesses the flourishing of the national fig tree of Israel would not pass away before all the things he had just prophesied would be fulfilled (Matt. 24:32-34). It is this two stage Sabbath law application that we should address, in order to penetrate more of the veiled layers in our determined pursuit of our heavenly Father's likeness.

The Honor In Seeking the Divinely Concealed

First let's establish a pattern in order to confirm the validity of our hopeful pursuit of these intentionally hidden understandings. After all: *It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: But the honour of kings is to search out a matter* (Prov. 25:2). Our goal is to be immortal king-priests serving the King of kings throughout the Sabbath Millennium Kingdom. Therefore let us be honorable and search out what our God has concealed. There is a repeated dual Sabbath application that should encourage our curious meditations. This two stage Sabbath progression is a single radiating beam of light extending from a greater two stage divine theme. Ultimately this understanding is expressed in the original design template of both image and likeness. Since Adam and Eve

rejected the divine ‘likeness’ in their contradiction of the Creator’s righteousness, they forfeited their ‘image’ benefits. The curse of mortality, degradation, danger, disease, hard labor/sweat and exaggerated childbirth pain was charged to them and therefore their descendants for their rejection of the divine ‘likeness. Salvation is an expression of being awarded the benefits of the divine image that were originally intended: the immortal spirit nature of Yahweh. Salvation, as so many other divine procedures and principles, is expressed in two stages. We are currently between those two stages. 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.* Paul expresses our reconciliation in the past tense, while being saved is expressed in the future tense. This same two stage progression is demonstrated in both baptism and memorial service. Baptism is not simply a water burial, but also a resurrection from that water grave. Memorial service requires partaking of the broken bread before the wine. The two stage foundation for everything that has been made is expressed within the frame of each creation progression being processed through both an evening and a morning (Gen. 1). The creation of man is also expressed in two stages: an earthen body to which is added breath from heaven to make a living person (Gen. 2:7). Paralleling Adam’s creation would be the resurrection of the national first born son of God, being expressed in two stages by Ezekiel: the reconstruction of the lifeless bodies from dried bones (political application) to which is added the breath from the four winds for the spiritual application (Ezek 37). The creational feature confirming this pattern is that it takes the dual combination of both a man and a woman to create a new life. The law of the early and latter rains (Deut. 11) is another light beam radiating extensively throughout scripture and creation from this foundational pattern. These two stage progressions have been considered several times in our commentaries. However, this is the specific platform from which we may ascend further in our pursuit of the divine mind in the particular context of the two ‘Sabbath’ stages.

Blessing or Burden?

Sabbath law was intended as both a blessing and a promise. However, the enlightened community often saw it as a burden in their pursuit of earthly, short-term, self-centered goals. *Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, Even to make the poor of the land to fail, Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? And the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, Making the ephah small, and the shekel great, And falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, And the needy for a pair of shoes; Yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat (Amos 8:4-6)?* Jesus defended his disciples for harvesting and eating grain on a Sabbath by correcting the Pharisaic misunderstanding about the Sabbath: *The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath (Mk. 2:27).* The enlightened community misunderstood Sabbath law as being a negative burden and completely missed the promise of a positive blessing within the framework of that law. This is the result of an immediate self-centered focus smothering a distant Yahweh-centered focus.

It was this distorted focus that generated such murderous animosity against Christ for his frequent Sabbath healings. The leaders of the enlightened community did not understand the promised blessings within Sabbath law. The complete blessings embodied in Sabbath law will not be fully realized until the end of the Sabbath millennium. During that seventh divine day (the Millennial Kingdom) Sabbath observance will be restored and demanded by Christ and the immortalized saints. During that Sabbath Millennium there will be two particular events when the promised blessings hidden in Sabbath Law are realized. These are the two immortalization events in the beginning and the end of the Sabbath millennium when the faithful will enjoy a complete and eternal rest from sin and the accompanying physical effects of sin. This observation corresponds perfectly with the observation that the first and last of the three days between Christ’s death and resurrection were Sabbaths.

The First and Last Sabbath during Christ’s Death

In order to maintain the integrity of Jesus’ prophecy that he would be in the grave for 3 days as well as 3 nights (Matt. 12:40), he had to have died late afternoon on Wednesday, being buried just as the Thursday High Sabbath was beginning (or “dawning” as the beginning of a new day is sometimes expressed) at sunset. That “High”

Sabbath would be the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (John 19:31; Lev. 23:6-7). The Friday between the two Sabbaths separating Christ's death from his resurrection is clearly highlighted by the timing of the women who wished to prepare spices for his burial. Mark 16:1 tells us that these women purchased their spices for Christ's burial **after** the Sabbath was over. However Luke 23:56 tells us they prepared those spices just **before** they rested on the Sabbath. If the only Sabbath during the week of Christ's death was the usual Saturday Sabbath then this timing would highlight a scriptural error that would invalidate the Bible's divine authorship. These women could never have prepared the spices before they had even purchased them. In fact, they had purchased the spices after a Sabbath but prepared them before another Sabbath. Therefore there had to be a Sabbath just before their spice purchase and another Sabbath just after their spice preparation. This understanding blends perfectly with the divine law that the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (the day immediately following Passover) was always a Sabbath, no matter which day of the week that 15th day of the first month arrived. Clearly, the first and last of the three evenings and mornings separating our Messiah's death from his resurrection were Sabbaths... paralleling the two great promised and permanent rests from sin and the effects of sin (immortalization/atonement) at the beginning and the end of the Sabbath millennium. Sabbath law should be understood as a blessing, not a burden. As our King has told us: *The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.*

Enlightenment Alone Is Never Enough

Our Creator is searching for those who not only know His eternal truths but appreciate His values and His perspective, often to their immediate and sometimes significant disadvantage. Simply knowing the true gospel is not enough. Enlightenment alone has never been enough for any generation of the enlightened community since Adam was formed. If we cannot appreciate the value of His assignments (rituals, laws, appointments) which shadow His eternal truths and principles, perhaps treating them as an inconvenient necessity (as was the case with the enlightened community's Sabbath observance), then why would He want our company for eternity? Why would our Creator want to share His nature with those who find the assignments of the shadows He has appointed to project His eternal truths and principles as a burden and not a blessing? Do Sisters find the prayer head-covering law inconvenient or degrading? Do they search for exceptions to this Ecclesial Age law, just as the Jews have done for what they considered to be a Sabbath burden? Is our community, to whom Christ will come again, all that different from the enlightened community to which he came the first time? Perhaps we should carefully consider the lesson from the previous commentary about not kindling a fire on a Sabbath day.

The First and Last of the First and Last

If we presume to discount as inconsequential the observation noting the first and last days of Christ's death being Sabbaths we should also note this was similarly the case with the first and last of the three divinely ordained harvest feasts each year. As we have previously noted, these three harvest feasts are shadow projections of the three creational harvests in the divine plan when Yahweh covers faithful mortals with immortality. Yahweh is the ultimate Husbandman, having sowed creation with the intent for a bountiful, fruitful harvest of His image and likeness. This is why the enlightened are so frequently presented as fruit bearing plant-life throughout scripture (vineyard, barley, wheat, fig trees, olive trees, etc) as opposed to the unenlightened and mankind in general who are represented as plant-life that does not bear fruit (briers, thorns, weeds, grass, etc). The Feast of Unleavened Bread projects the immortalization of Jesus Christ, symbolized in the barley harvest with its unleavened focus. The Feast of First Fruits projects the immortalization of the saints at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom, symbolized in the wheat harvest (i.e. Christ's Kingdom parable of the "wheat" and the tares; Matt. 13) with the leavened focus demonstrated in the two initial wave loaves (Lev. 23:17). The Feast of Tabernacles projects the third and last immortalization (third creation harvest) projected by the end of the annual harvest season (Lev. 23:39). Yahweh required that the first and last days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread would serve as Sabbaths (Num. 28:18,25). He also required this same first and last day Sabbath pattern for the Feast of Tabernacles (Num. 29:12,35; Lev. 23:39). The second feast week (Weeks, First Fruits,

Pentecost) only required the first day of the feast to serve as a Sabbath and not the last day. Just as the first and last of the three days Christ was dead qualified as Sabbaths, so did the first and last days of the first and last Feast Weeks. As we have already noted, the last two immortalization events in the divine plan are similarly at the beginning and end of the Sabbath Millennium, the restored Kingdom of God.

WHY?

We need to face the looming “why” question. There is obviously a dual Sabbath pattern being divinely veiled for our hopeful discovery. The two Sabbaths bookending Christ’s tomb experience is our exclamation spotlight prompting our “why”. Our Messiah’s title of alpha and omega (first and last; Rev. 1:8,11; 21:6; 22:13) embraces this first and last Sabbath pattern during the death of our Messiah and also the first and last feast weeks, etc. Jesus Christ is the exact image and likeness template that was intended on that very first Sabbath, the day when the Creator rested from His six days of creative works, when everything was cumulatively declared to be “very good”. He is also the template for the final millennial Sabbath, which is why he will be the King of the entire planet for that seventh 1,000 year term, the ruler of creation (with only his Father having greater authority). The two stage name and title of “Jesus Christ” projects this same beginning-ending, alpha-omega, and two-Sabbath pattern. Jesus was the appointed name of his first birth from the virgin Mary. Christ is an official title that was completely realized when he was immortalized upon his rebirth from the grave, when the flesh to spirit nature became a reality at his resurrection. That flesh and spirit progression that is summarized in the name/title “Jesus Christ” is also being subtly highlighted in the repetitive two Sabbaths pattern. This is exactly how the man described as both a stone and the one given by God as a covenant to the people is depicted in the two sets of covenant stones. The first set of stones upon which the finger of God wrote the covenant was smashed at the base of Sinai by Moses while the second set was preserved inside the Ark “of the Covenant” eventually coming to rest in Jerusalem, orchestrated by King David. Just like the two sets of stones shadowing our Messiah, he had to die before he could be resurrected. He had to demonstrate in his flesh the likeness of God (a conscious choice to prevent sin from ‘working’ in him... the Sabbath principle of not working) so that he could have that flesh covered by his Father’s nature... enjoying the blessings of the “image” of the Creator. This is why there are two aspects of Christ’s firstborn status, both authority and chronology. Jesus was ‘made’ Yahweh’s firstborn in the sense of his authority level (Ps. 89:27). However Christ was also the first to be forever reborn from death, indicating a chronological first born status (Col. 1:15-18). This is another dual application in a long list of dual ‘acceptations’ (as Dr. Thomas would say) that often trip up enlightened Bible commentators promoting oversimplified answers.

Demonstrated Understanding & Appreciation in Stage One

Application of Principle & Promise in Stage Two

There are the two stages of development being expressed in the repetitive dual Sabbath pattern. This progression embraces divine principle, promise and exhortation. It is demonstrated in the initial and restored Kingdoms of God where the Sabbath was appointed as the official “sign” (Heb: *oth*) of the covenant. The Sabbath lesson of the first Kingdom founded at Sinai was to consciously rest from our labors, remembering that ‘labor’ was part of sin’s curse. The Sabbath lesson in the restored Kingdom will add to that foundational responsibility and promise the actual realization of resting from the curse. There will be immortalized humans, significantly extended mortal life, a shift from a global military concentration to agriculture and reduced danger from both man and beast. The ‘promise’ of a rest from sin projected in the first Sabbath Kingdom is ‘realized’ in the second and restored Sabbath Kingdom during the Sabbath millennium.

A Progression and Not A Replacement

The issue we must stress at this point is that one is not a replacement for the other, just as grace is meaningless without works and we want both the likeness as well as the image of our Creator. We need both aspects indicated in the name and title of Jesus Christ. We need both reconciliation and salvation. This is why we must beware the incredible danger of oversimplifying divine principles. We invite significant error when we limit

divine principles and terms to an 'either-or' choice instead of the inclusive 'and' understanding. Our understanding of sin must embrace both categories of sin producing human nature (guilt free) as well as the resulting transgressions (guilt). Righteousness must be understood as both being gracefully imputed as well as personally and individually generated. Death has to be understood as both permanent (to perish) and temporary (prior to judgment). When we are considering the term 'resurrection' we have to determine whether we are addressing the resurrection to mortality for judgment or the resurrection to immortality following judgment, as each requires different terms of participation. If we presume there is only one resurrection category, that mistake will grow like leaven... as it has for over 120 years in our community. If we presume there is only one definition of sin in scripture, that minimalization will grow like leaven resulting in over-simplified misunderstandings that degrade our heavenly Father. If we think reverential fear is the only fear of God with which we should concern ourselves then we will not be afraid of offending the righteousness of our heavenly Father, potentially kindling the anger of the One who defines Himself as a *consuming fire*.

Only The Beginning

As always in these limited space commentaries, the validations and applications of this two Sabbath stage pattern have certainly not been exhausted. There is a far greater measure of the hidden glory of our Creator in this pattern to search out, honorably.

Our next Sabbath Law commentary will address the questions concerning the doubling of the burnt offering on the Sabbath and then the re-doubling of that Sabbath burnt offering during the Sabbath Millennium Kingdom, however limited to a morning offering exclusively. Hopefully we will also be able to address why Circumcision Law was elevated above Sabbath Law.

Bro Jim Dillingham

Sabbath Law 4

The Doubled Doubling of the Sabbath Burnt Offerings

The divinely appointed priests of the Kingdom of God profaned the Sabbath every week, yet without any guilt being assigned. Jesus confirms this understanding when he addresses the inappropriate judgments issuing from the foundational Jewish misunderstandings about Sabbath Law (Matt. 12:5). Those leaders of the enlightened community were blinded to the blessings within Sabbath Law, seeing only the judgments. They did not understand that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath (Mk. 2:27). That imbalancing oversimplification prompted progressive errors culminating in murderous collaborations due to Christ's frequent Sabbath healings. This is the disastrous effect when incomplete presumptions within the enlightened community provoke judgments against those who are actually promoting the complete and balanced but unpopular understanding. The spiritual leaders of the enlightened community didn't recognize the greatest example of Yahweh manifested in the flesh anyone had ever seen ... right in front of their faces, because of their partial and minimized understandings of divine laws and principles. That **should** be a powerful warning to all subsequent generations of the enlightened community, including ours.

Profaning the Sabbath Without Guilt

Despite that Kingdom Law injunction against doing any work on the Sabbath, the priests were instructed to double their daily burnt offering duties. As Jesus highlights, the priests were not **guilty** for performing these Sabbath labors. Oddly, but apparently, the educators and spiritual leaders of the enlightened community were oblivious to the implications of that observation by the time the Messiah began preaching the gospel of the Kingdom to the children of God. Yet, this glaring inequity between the 'no labor' Sabbath command and the priest's guiltless Sabbath labor should have prompted 'why' questions whose answers could have prevented the catastrophic mistakes of the children of God when the Messiah miraculously healed so frequently on the Sabbath.

Another glaring inequity in Sabbath Law would be the absence of divine direction when a child had to be circumcised on a Sabbath. No divine direction was offered concerning which of these covenant defining rituals had to be observed at the expense of the other. Jesus offers this dichotomy as a direct defense to the leaders of the enlightened community for his Sabbath healings that prompted their murderous indignation. *Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment* (John 7:22-24). Once again Jesus offers an insight into how to avoid inappropriate foundational understandings by highlighting balancing observations concerning divine rituals. The natural human tendency is to oversimplify divine issues, often initiating a domino effect of errors resulting in ultimately contradicting our Creator's righteousness. As our Messiah pointed out: *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*

Therefore let's not simply skim the surface of these issues, offering common enlightened community catch phrases in order to balance and understand what the enlightened generation from the last Divine Age transition should have seen.

Why Was the Burnt Offering Doubled and Redoubled on the Sabbath?

The ritual of the daily burnt offering was doubled every Sabbath. Those guilt-free priests had a lot of work to do on those otherwise labor-denied Saturdays. Therefore we should ask why it was the burnt offering that was

particularly highlighted in such a seemingly contradictory manner on this specific day. *And on the sabbath day two lambs of the first year without spot, and two tenth deals of flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, and the drink offering thereof: This is the burnt offering of every sabbath, beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering* (Num 28:9-10). Each of the other six days of the week there were two daily burnt offerings with one in the evening and the morning of every day, mirroring the description of the divine labor pattern over the six days of creation (further emphasized by the evening and morning incense lamp replenishment and incense burning inside the Tabernacle). Each separate stage of creation is defined in the terms of an evening and a morning. Despite the fact that there is no creative activity on that seventh day following all the creation activity, Yahweh requires the priests not only to continue the daily burnt offering but to double their efforts. Compounding the significance of this pattern is the fact that the double Sabbath burnt offerings during the First Kingdom Age is doubled again in the Millennium Kingdom Age. Four burnt offerings were required for each Sabbath under the original Kingdom laws. In the Sabbath Millennium Kingdom there will be eight Sabbath burnt offerings. There will be a single burnt offering presented each of the seven days of the week, exclusively in the morning (Ezek 46:13-15). Additionally the Prince will personally offer an additional 7 burnt offerings on the Sabbath (Ezek 46:4). Therefore there will be a total of 8 Sabbath burnt offerings in the Sabbath Millennium, doubling the 4 Sabbath burnt offerings for the previous Kingdom Age, which doubled the daily burnt offerings required for the evening and morning of the other 6 days of the week. Clearly, this is a significant pattern presented subtly through that thin, small voice of intentional complexity provided for those among the enlightened with ears that actually hear, despite the distracting winds, earthquakes and conflagrations of life.

Eternal Truths Are Three Dimensional

In order to blend and accurately balance all of these observations, exceptions and details we need to understand the divinely intended educational application of the burnt offering, a complete and balanced understanding of Sabbath Law, the significance of the number totals and the foundational educational themes of the two Kingdom of God Ages. The foundational premise for all true Bible conclusions is how the principle of God manifestation demands that divine principles, laws, rituals, miracles and all forms of divine expressions will blend together perfectly without any contradictions into a seamless woven fabric of three dimensional confirmation. Everything affects everything else. Nothing can be completely isolated. What a shallow scriptural examination presumes to be a 'contradiction', actually highlights a 'balancing' influence. Yahweh did not forever replace the judgmental, sin condemning laws and rituals of His Kingdom Age with the grace and imputed righteousness focus of the Ecclesial Age. Each Age offers a progressive educational portion of the whole. The principle of God manifestation should over-rule all of our Bible considerations as well as any complimentary scientific studies of the features of creation. Everything is interconnected, complimentary and balancing. Admittedly this makes definitive conclusions much more complex. However that intentional complexity is the sharp sword of the word of God that helps the circumcised hearts of the enlightened to understand (giving to those who have... Matt. 13:12) while simultaneously preventing the uncircumcised hearts of the enlightened as well as the unenlightened to understand (taking away from those who have not... Matt. 13:12).

As we noted in past commentaries, Yahweh defines the behavior pattern He expected us to learn from the burnt offering ritual as the pursuit of the knowledge of Himself. *For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings* (Hos. 6:6). Since the burnt offering was the alpha and omega offering of every day of every year, this clearly stated behavioral expectation is crucial for properly balancing any scriptural references including the burnt offering. Since our Creator intends to fill all the earth with the knowledge of His glory (Is. 11:9; Hab. 2:14) it should be no surprise that energetically pursuing the goal of filling the dust from which we were formed with a progressive knowledge of God should be our personal foundational goal throughout a life we have dedicated to our beloved heavenly Father. Let's recognize this is not

currently the dominant understanding within our enlightened community. It is oddly but commonly presumed that once one has been baptized that the primary focus in our lives should be developing greater love and that greater knowledge really isn't necessary. This imbalancing of priorities offers an inappropriate advantage to our naturally deceitful hearts (Jer. 17:9) from which our various loves are generated. The degree of accuracy in the Bible commentaries presented at our community's primarily social conferences has plummeted over the last forty years. The invested time and intensity of our Bible studies and meditations has steadily leached into a far greater social interaction due to the endless avenues of instant communication and social media that are so entertaining and personally validating. As a community, we have come to mistake the gleaming pyrite littering the surface of our lives that is so adored by the masses while overlooking the pure gold buried within scripture and the terms of creation.

Forfeiting Our 'Rights'

Our Creator not only wants us to truly understand Him, He wants to be appreciated. He is developing a people "for His name". However, since the value being offered is so incredibly beyond our imagination there is an extreme personal cost to even qualify for considering our participation. We not only have to forfeit our life, we also have to forfeit our heart. Unlike the societies we operate within, we have no 'rights'. In our pursuit of the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh Elohim we do not have the 'right' to life, liberty or the pursuit of happiness. We do not have the 'right' to remain silent. It is silence that condemns the Watcher (Ezek. 33), yet many in our community promote a silent toleration of ungodly behavior by suggesting that any degree of 'judging' would be inappropriate. We have forfeited our lives and all of our 'rights' for the opportunity to possibly participate in our Creator's vision of a creation environment that will be in perfect harmony with all His eternal truths and principles. We have to know it and we have to want it... more than anything else, all the time.

This is **why** the altar offering projecting this determined and unstoppable pursuit of the knowledge of our Creator was the first and last blood offering of every day. It was the Christ altar's foundational offering. The peace offering (projecting loving mercy and the three great love commandments through its three offering divisions) had to be offered **on top** of the burnt offering (Lev. 3:5). This distinction proves that knowledge has to come before love. Only a love (peace offering) that is channelled through the pursuit of the knowledge of God (burnt offering) will ever be acceptable to our Creator.

The Prophetic Nature of the Doubled Sabbath Burnt Offering

The Sabbath burnt offering was doubled in order to serve as both a prophecy as well as a streetlight for that narrow difficult path chosen by all those willing to sacrifice everything for the possibility to bear the Creator's name forever. The fact that there were four Sabbath burnt offerings during the first Kingdom and eight are planned for the Sabbath Millennium Kingdom is a golden vein intersecting with complimentary scriptural observations. A parallel pattern would be the four and eight surfaces of the two sets of covenant stones inscribed by the finger of God. There were four inscribed surfaces on each of the two sets of stones, adding up to eight total stone surfaces imprinted with the words of the covenant (10 commandments). We should remember how Jesus is the express image (Heb. 1:3) of his Father, which is an expression embracing this concept of impressing the word of God into stone. Just as there were eight stone surfaces, we know that the six Greek letters spelling the name of Jesus add up to 888. We can also see the parallel between the four initial covenant stone surfaces and the eventually eight total surfaces to the four Sabbath burnt offerings in the first Kingdom Age and the eventual eight Sabbath burnt offerings in the Sabbath Millennium Kingdom Age. Just as the first set of covenant stones were broken at Sinai, the first Kingdom founded at Sinai was broken by the Romans. Just as the second set of covenant stones were preserved in the golden Ark that came to rest in Jerusalem, so the covenant will be restored when the Kingdom is restored, at Jerusalem. The progressive four and eight pattern that is common to both the covenant stones and the Sabbath burnt offerings validates our understanding that everything is

interconnected and harmonious when we truly understand our Creator's truths and principles. That four/eight pattern offers a very extensive binding application throughout scripture.

The two structural stages of the wilderness encampment is another projection of this same prophecy of the two stages of the Kingdom of God. The exterior configuration is blocked out in four geographic components of east, south, west and north. These initial four blocks of the wilderness community project the first Kingdom of God and the first set of covenant stones, and the four Sabbath burnt offerings emphasizing the need to pursue a progressive divine enlightenment. The inner four encampment components were the three divisions of the Levites along with the priests and Moses encamped on the east. That inner foursquare encampment projects the second and restored Kingdom, identified by the preserved second stones. Just as there were four Sabbath burnt offerings in the first Kingdom and there will be eight Sabbath burnt offerings in the restored Kingdom during the Sabbath Millennium, so we see this four and eight progression being projected in other Kingdom shadows. The first Kingdom Age presented a partial education plan, focusing on the righteousness of Yahweh in the context of sin condemnation. The restored Kingdom, with its re-doubled eight Sabbath burnt offerings will complete the divine educational process by combining the three separate educational focuses of the previous three distinct educational stages in the divine maturing process of His son's bride, as well as adding a fourth educational focus.

Why Is there No Evening Burnt Offering During the Sabbath Millennium Kingdom?

The restored Kingdom of God will span the Sabbath Millennium. It will be the age of enlightenment, engaged by the most effective educational tool of them all... the fear of God. The degree of fear generated by the sword issuing from the mouth of the King of Kings will initiate a global paradigm shift with incredible results, such as converting the universal despising of the Jewish people into an adoration, a global economy based on agriculture instead of war, the elimination of all apostate religious organizations and the abandonment of democracy for a theocratic government. The doubling of the daily burnt offering (intended to prompt a dedicated pursuit of the knowledge of our Creator) every Sabbath initially served as a prophecy of how the knowledge of our Creator will dramatically increase on that seventh divine 'day' of 1,000 years in the 7,000 year plan of God. The redoubling of the Sabbath burnt offerings in the restored Kingdom, combined with the elimination of the evening burnt offering is a testament to both the exponential increase of that knowledge of divine truths and principles as well as the shift from the darkness associated with ignorance to the light of true understanding. There will certainly still be night and day, but there will be no burnt offerings during the darkness, representing the divine policy shift away from patiently accommodating ignorance. This pattern demonstrates why darkness is completely eliminated along with the elimination of sin and death in the 'eighth' day, following the conclusion of the 7,000 year plan. *And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever* (Rev. 22:5). Just as there will only be light with no darkness, so there will only be enlightenment with no foolish ignorance when sin and death are eliminated completely in that eighth 'day'. However, the Sabbath Millennium Kingdom only offers a rest and not an elimination. There will still be darkness, but there be no 'evening' burnt offering.

This issue of the elimination of darkness as well as the promotion of light highlights an issue that is often overlooked by the enlightened in current and past ages, to the disadvantage of our pursuit of the knowledge of our Creator (projected by the burnt offering). The elimination of darkness and the establishment of light are separately necessary features of divine policy. We have to understand and appreciate both the condemnation of sin as well as the glorification of righteousness. We have to practice both judgment and merciful grace and know when each is the appropriate course. Part of the wisdom of the BASF is that there are not only statements defining foundational truths but also doctrines to be rejected. Ignoring the justified condemnation of sin in order

to focus on the far more pleasant glorification of righteousness will eventually imbalance our understandings and thereby initiate an undermining influence in our relationship with our heavenly Father and His son.

Imbalanced Emphasis

Our community endlessly and loudly promotes the less significant feature of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as saving ourselves. However, our salvation was simply a consequence of the far greater purpose in the sacrificial death of Jesus. Primarily that death validated the righteousness of Yahweh, declaring that the original Edenic judgment of death due to sin is absolutely right. Similarly the baptism of Jesus had nothing to do with any forgiveness of sins but simply the fulfilling of 'all' righteousness (Matt. 3:15). Apostate mankind, every form of apostasy and increasingly members of our community contradict the divine righteousness in our Creator's judgment of death for sin. They presume either that we don't 'really' die (immortal souls) or that death has always been part of the terms of creation and has no direct association with the Creator's judgment for contradictions to His righteousness (sin). If we exclusively concentrate on grace, without recognizing the rightness of judgment then we will imbalance divine principles. We not only need to confirm and appreciate the light, we also need to identify and despise the darkness.

Only A Rest

While darkness and ignorance are not completely eliminated during the Sabbath Millennial Kingdom, the influence of darkness and ignorance will be suppressed. In perfect accord, the altar offering (burnt offering) highlighting our dedication to the knowledge of our Creator that will eventually saturate the planet will only be offered in the morning (Ezek 46:13-15). The limitation of the Sabbath Millennial Kingdom is that it will simply be a rest. Due to the forced enlightenment and direct divine management through Christ and the immortalized saints (thereby chaining sin in the bottomless pit) the planet will enjoy a wonderful extended benefit of that rest from sin, which will be a rest from the effects of sin (death, disease, suffering, sorrow, violence, danger, etc.). The Sabbath Kingdom does not offer an elimination of sin and its effect, but only a rest. Mortal life is dramatically extended during the Sabbath Kingdom Age (Is. 65:20) but people will still die. Sin will be restrained during the Sabbath Kingdom, but not eliminated. Rest is the Sabbath theme of the seventh day. However, the theme of the eighth day (circumcision) is a cutting away... an elimination. This observation will lead us into the answer presented in the next commentary concerning the basis upon which the enlightened community could determine whether Circumcision Law should have been observed at the expense of Sabbath Law or otherwise.

Bro Jim Dillingham

Sabbath Law 5

The Sabbath Vs. Circumcision Challenge

The default thought pattern for the human experience has been generated by the serpent enthroned human heart since it was voluntarily internalized in Eden. The sons of God are tasked with repeatedly circumcising away that thought pattern that is so eagerly embraced by the societies of the sons of men. We are warned constantly to listen to God and definitely not to listen to our hearts or trust our instincts or act impulsively on our first impressions, as the sons of men promote endlessly. Historically, whatever community heart circumcision has been achieved in the enlightened community through witnessing fearful miracles or experiencing crushing divine judgments has been slowly but steadily eroded by that endless brackish thought-flow issuing unbidden from the human heart. This is why, by the time of the judges, the enlightened community is defined as “every man did that which is right in his own eyes.” The heart circumcising fear of God had been worn away in favor of conscience deadening conveniences and self accommodations and self-exaltation... similar to the enlightened community today.

The Heart’s Arsenal

One of the common tools the uncircumcised heart employs to deny advantages to a divine perspective is promoting ‘either-or’ choices. This oversimplification thought process is instinctively appealing. This mental platform allows us to compartmentalize issues, use broad sweeping statements, and emotionally promote such potentially dangerous words as all, only and always. However, compartmentalizing scriptural issues and exhortations opposes the foundational principle of God manifestation where everything is interconnected into a single multitudinous unity and everything affects everything else. We do not have the freedom to choose an exclusive policy of **either** judgment **or** grace; a single understanding of sin being **either** guilty transgressional sin **or** guilt-free sin nature; either preferring some exclusive application of the reverential fear of God or being afraid of kindling our heavenly Father’s anger; presuming that the gift of imputed righteousness somehow eliminates the self denying responsibility to demonstrate personal righteousness (projecting God’s right-ness in personal words and deeds); as well as presuming that loving our neighbor as ourselves somehow fulfills the command to love our Creator with all our heart, mind, life and energy. Oversimplification is one of the great weapons in the heart’s arsenal in the jealous defense of its naturally ascendant authority.

The acceptance of the legitimacy for an either-or presumption platform in the understandings and applications of divine principles has a blinding effect on the seeing eyes and a deafening effect on the hearing ears that Jesus encouraged his disciples to develop. Jesus explained that most of the enlightened community to whom he preached could not truly see or hear and that is why he spoke in parables (Matt. 13:10-15). Jesus used the same intentionally complex teaching pattern that his Father used, which had the effect of giving more to those with seeing eyes and taking away what little the voluntarily blind had in the first place (Matt. 13:13). The potentially transforming power in this warning is recognizing that Jesus was referring to the enlightened community that was already in a covenant relationship with his Father. Therefore it was that age’s Christadelphian community where so many had eyes but could not see and ears but could not hear. The heart generated thought process of these Jewish Brethren and Sisters blocked the full understanding of Christ’s veiled educational pattern (thereby taking away what little they had in the first place; Matt. 13:12). Even the authority of Christ’s miracles was insufficient to overcome the combined societal power of the heart generated misinterpretation of divine expressions. Despite admitting Jesus could bring the dead back to life, the Sanhedrin confidently plotted what they presumed to be his necessary assassination (John 11:46-50). The natural enmity between the thought process of the heart and the thought process of the spirit circumcised heart is an endless battle within the

community of the enlightened. Outside the community of the enlightened there is no availability for that sharp two edged sword of spirit truth to repeatedly circumcise that naturally serpent dominated heart. The heart rules by default, as well as by mutual consent, among the unenlightened.

The Death Defying Choice

One of the endless thought re-training exercises within Kingdom Law was the balancing of Sabbath Law and Circumcision Law, which is this commentary's focus. This lesson demonstrates the illegitimacy of the oversimplification thought pattern that is progressively leavening the community of the enlightened in this last generation of the Ecclesial Age. When a newborn boy turned eight days old on the Sabbath, a choice would have to be made as to whether or not the Sabbath command forbidding any work (punishable by death) would force the timing of the child's circumcision to be changed to either the seventh or ninth day. The other possibility is that Circumcision Law could be understood to trump Sabbath Law, demanding that the circumcision work be performed on the eighth day, even if that violated Sabbath Law. The Lawgiver offered no insight into this dilemma, expressing no exceptions in Sabbath Law for Circumcision Law. Although this was a life and death decision, no simple answer was available.

Underlining the significance of this consideration is that these two rituals were divinely assigned as the very tokens of their respective covenants. Circumcision was the assigned token of the Abrahamic covenant of faith. *And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations* (Gen 17:11-12) Sabbath observance was the assigned token of the Mosaic covenant of works: *Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations... every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people... Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever* (Ex. 31:12-17).

The same Hebrew word (*oth*) is translated as both *token* and *sign* in these quotes. Joshua uses this same word to describe the twelve stone memorial identifying where the ark of the covenant cut off the Jordan flow (Josh. 4:6). This is the word used in relation to the red cord hung from Rahab's window as a marker to the covenant the Hebrew spies made to save her and her family upon Jericho's destruction (Josh. 2:12). This is the word that Hezekiah uses to inquire about what sign might validate the truth of Isaiah's promise that God would extend his life by fifteen years (2 Kings 20:8-9). This is the word used to define the sign of the virgin birth of Emmanuel, who would be the very flesh and spirit embodiment of the divine covenant (Is. 7:14). This is also the word used to describe the rainbow to be the sign of the covenant that Yahweh would not destroy the earth by water again (Gen. 9:12-16). Therefore we can understand the two rituals of circumcision and sabbath observance to represent each of their respective covenants, as they were appointed to do by the eternal Lawgiver.

Judge Not According to Appearance

Since the primary educational focus for Kingdom Law was the condemnation of sin, it is highly appropriate that a violation of its signature ritual (Sabbath observance) would demand a death sentence. This was certainly the case for the man simply gathering fire wood on a Sabbath day (Num. 15:32-26). It is also highly appropriate that a violation of the stone covenant's signature ritual would demand death by stoning. If one broke the stone covenant (as the covenant had been engraved in stone by the finger of God) they would in turn be broken with stones. We do find that circumcision was preferred by the Jewish law authorities above Sabbath observance, in death-defying fashion. We also see that this was the right decision. Jesus confirms this in his defense for performing healing miracles on the Sabbath. *Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every*

whit whole on the sabbath day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment (John 7:22-24).

But WHY Is It Right?

Jesus implored the enlightened community not to make judgments based on instinctive presumptions but to judge righteously. He pointed out they had correctly chosen to circumcise their boys on the Sabbath. However they didn't understand the implications of that pattern in relation to the Messiah's Sabbath health restoration miracles. Therefore we have to ask: On what basis does circumcision deflect the Sabbath death penalty for working on the Sabbath? This is the lesson of how faith has the capacity to overcome the very legitimate death of the enlightened.

The divine righteousness of the death sentence in Eden is an endless theme running through every stage in the maturing plan of our Creator. This was the theme of Kingdom Law, the right-ness of the divine condemnation of death for sin. The principle of grace was veiled and subtly shadowed within the Law but was not shouted or spotlighted in those laws and rituals that are about to be restored and expanded to cover the planet. The death sentence for violating that Sabbath signature ritual of Kingdom Law was set aside to accommodate the circumcision ritual.

Always the First Step In Pursuing Righteous Understandings

The first step in addressing any question involving divine truths and principles is to remember our foundational premise. Yahweh expresses Himself with intentional complexity, as a thought and behavior modification procedure for all those who truly love Him above everything else in our lives. Pursuing the divine mind through the obstacle course of that intentional complexity in all divine communications requires us to use that sharp two edged sword to circumcise our hearts. Only the meek will have eyes that actually see and ears that actually hear. Those have been rare qualities even in the community of the enlightened for 6,000 years. There is absolutely nothing but blindness and deafness to the Creator's communications outside the enlightened community. Therefore we need to search for the divine light that is hidden in the shadows of our heavenly Father's expressions in order to learn why circumcision was greater than Sabbath observance.

The Restoration of Both Circumcision And Sabbath Observance

The answer would not be as simple as considering which ritual will be reapplied in the restored Kingdom of God, as both rituals will again be required under restored divine law in the Millennial Kingdom. *Thus saith the Lord GOD; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel* (Ezek. 44:9); *and they shall hallow my sabbaths* (Ezek:44:24; 46:1-4). It is the end of the Sabbath Millennium Kingdom, marked by the unchaining of the devil, satan, dragon and serpent, when we see the conclusion of the divine rest (Sabbath) followed by a complete cutting away of all flesh (Circumcision, Rev. 20:7-15). The Sabbath rest from sin offers only a partial answer to the problem of sin. A comprehensive understanding of sin would include any contradiction to the Creator's righteousness (1 Jn. 5:17). The cutting away of all naturally sin generating flesh (mortal life) is the complete answer to the problem of sin that will have had corrupted a previously *very good* creation seven millenniums in the past.

The Numeric Markers of the Rituals

The prophetic nature of the identifying numbers of each ritual offers a key to understanding why circumcision had to be performed on that eighth day of life even if it violated the Sabbath Law of the seventh day. Just as the number eight is greater than seven so the cutting away of all sin producing flesh in the eighth millennium will be greater than the mere rest from sin and its effects during the seventh millennium in the divine plan. Seven is the very dominant number in the laws and rituals of the first Kingdom of God initiated at Sinai. Seven is the term limit for sin, demonstrated in the seven sin offering blood splatterings on the veil of Christ's flesh (Heb 10:19-20) separating the Holy from the Most Holy in the divine sanctuary (Lev. 4:6). That term limit of sin

being seven is demonstrated in the seven day reconciliation from the defilement of death through the ashes of the red heifer (Num. 19:12). The prophetic nature of the assignment of a divine rest to the seventh day is also demonstrated in how each of the three harvest feasts under Kingdom Law were primarily highlighted as seven days. This term prophesied the divine harvest planned for that seventh term when the divine image and likeness that had been sown into mankind at creation and developed in the community of the enlightened over six millenniums will finally be reaped (Matt 13:36-43). The harvest of a crop indicates the end of growth at the point of full maturity.

Just as the number seven was the numeric symbol of Kingdom Law with its primary educational focus being the divine righteousness in the condemnation of sin, so the number eight is also associated with the exaltation of our Creator's righteousness, but in the perfect harmony that will result from the complete cutting away of sin and death. This is why the number eight is the number of immortality... eternity... infinity. This is why the Greek name of Jesus adds up to 888. As reported many times previously in our commentaries, those three eights in the name of our savior prophesy of the three immortalization events in the divine plan, the three divine harvests of the Creator's image and likeness. These are 1) Jesus Christ, almost two millenniums ago, 2) the family of Christ at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom and 3) the rest of the world at the end of the Millennial Kingdom. Just as the number eight is greater than the number seven, the eighth millennium of perfect divine harmony when Yahweh will be all and in all (1 Cor. 15:28) will be greater than the seventh millennium when creation will enjoy a one 'divine day' rest from sin and its horrible effects.

The Ritual Tokens of the Faith and Works Covenants

In seamless fashion we can also see that the very covenants defined by these two signature rituals present the exact same progression of value. The 8th day token of the Abrahamic Covenant of faith was circumcision. The 7th day token of the Mosaic Covenant of works was Sabbath observance. The primary statement of the laws and rituals of the Mosaic Covenant was the Creator's righteousness in His condemnation of sin. The divine requirement of death because of sin is absolutely right. However, on the basis of a living vibrant faith, we can be imputed a degree of divine right-ness that can overpower the finality of death. This is the progressive structure of the baptism ritual, demonstrating a hopeful rising again after the justified death of the water burial. Just as faith has the capacity to overcome the finality of death, so the circumcision token of the Abrahamic Covenant of faith had to be preferred above the Sabbath token of the Mosaic Covenant of works.

Yet there was no simple answer from Yahweh as to which ritual had to be preferred above the other. That looming death sentence for disrespecting the Sabbath work prohibition may have been an incentive to shift a boy's circumcision to the seventh or ninth day to avoid a presumed execution for a Sabbath circumcision. That would have been wrong.

The uncircumcised human heart is the serpent's throne. Simple answers are one of his greatest weapons in defending his dominance in our natural thought process and communal paradigms. Mere enlightenment offers no automatic defense against the serpent seduction issuing instinctively and unsolicited from our hearts. If that were the case the wilderness ecclesia would never have rejected the promised land after the spies report; Israel would not have preferred pagan idols; the truth would not have been lost after those first 280 years following the conception of the Ecclesial Age; and the enlightened community would not have orchestrated the death of the son of God.

The Heart's Oversimplification Seduction of the Enlightened

The cancer of oversimplification is progressively leavening the community of the enlightened in this last generation. The balanced dual nature of divine principles are being illegitimately repackaged with identifications that inappropriately exalt ourselves... such as the elimination of the fear of God by defining it as

nothing more than reverence; the elimination of the flesh's sin identification through the dramatically minimized presumption that sin is nothing more than transgressions against divine laws; the elimination of our responsibility to personally project our Creator's righteousness in our words and deeds by minimizing righteousness into the incomplete simplicity of just imputed righteousness; the diminishing of the principle of atonement to nothing more than mere forgiveness; and the diminishing of the required exceptional love of Yahweh our Elohim into nothing more than the love of our neighbor (which is so conveniently measured as being equal to the love of self).

Our next commentary will not only be the sixth in the Sabbath sub-category but also the 66th in the full series. In respect to this obvious numerical emphasis and in the greater context of how our generation stands on our toes at the very end of the 6th divine day, we will center our next thoughts on the various ways in which Kingdom Law highlights how a term of seven (highlighted by the signature ritual for observing the seventh day) would mark the limit of divinely accommodated sin. Sin will be arrested and restrained at 'seven' and additionally will not be allowed to continue beyond seven.

Bro Jim Dillingham

Sabbath Law 6

The Reign of Sin Ends at the Sabbath Millennium

The sun is about to set on the sixth millennium since creation. The transition from the sixth into the seventh millennium will be cataclysmic. Our current transitional generation is paralleled, in very uncomplimentary fashion to the enlightened community, to other cataclysmic events in scripture such as the flood and the destruction of Sodom. There will be a two stage defeat of sin over that seventh divine day, the Sabbath Millennium, just as Jesus defeated sin in two stages. Initially Jesus defeated sin by refusing to ever submit to its authority over the 33-plus years of his life, demonstrating the righteousness of his Father flawlessly. Secondly he defeated sin completely in his death, breaking the power of sin in the voluntary, violent execution of his sin cursed body following a perfectly righteous life (which we remember by breaking and eating the memorial bread). Similarly we see a two stage defeat of sin in the Sabbath Millennium. Initially we see a violent battle establishing a global political authority that results in the four manifestations of sin being chained in the bottomless pit for that 1,000 year Sabbath Millennium (Rev 20:1-3). The power of sin to deceive will be dramatically reduced (Is.30:20-21). The final defeat of sin comes at the end of the Sabbath Kingdom. That restraining chain is removed, releasing the influence of the serpent, dragon, devil and satan back into the world (Rev. 20:7-9). Following a violent conclusion (paralleling Christ's final defeat of sin at his death), the grave and death are cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death. The second death is eternal, as opposed to the first death experienced prior to the judgment of the enlightened. All of creation will be in perfect harmony with the Creator following the end of the seventh 'time' (1 Cor. 15:28; Rev. 20:14-15).

Shadow Confirmations

This divinely mandated limitation of the power of sin to a 'six times' framework is projected frequently throughout scripture, very often in Kingdom laws and rituals. The initial application, as demonstrated in our continuing Sabbath theme, is quite obvious. That seventh day of rest projects a completely separate operational framework than the preceding six days. There is a holiness assignment to the seventh day that is absent from the previous six days. The fact that Sabbath observance was the assigned token of the first Kingdom Age and the divine covenant through Moses is a highly significant understanding (Ex. 31:12-17; Ezek. 20:12, 20; Deut. 5:12-15). Yahweh assigns tokens to identify His covenants, such as the rainbow against the cloud for the covenant with Noah (Gen 9:13) and circumcision for the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17:11). Each covenant is a partial component of the complete plan, offering a highly focused and therefore limited application. As we have noted repeatedly in the past, the educational focus of the Mosaic covenant was the identification and magnification of sin (Rom. 3:20; 5:20; 7:5,7-13). The appointment of Sabbath law as the token of the covenant spotlighting sin is a declaration of our theme, that the power of sin will be divinely limited to a framework of six 'times'.

The Consistent Application of the Theme

Before addressing the Kingdom Law shadows framing this theme of sin's power being limited to a reign of six times, let's consider how this lesson is not limited to the divine educational stage of sin identification (Kingdom Law). The three gospel records of the transfiguration on the mount are historical parables of the three immortalization events in the divine plan: 1) Christ's immortalization... about two divine days ago; 2) the immortalization of the family of the Messiah High Priest at the beginning of the Sabbath Millennium and 3) the immortalization of the rest of the world (at least those approved by Christ) at the end of the Sabbath Millennium. Each gospel record is preceded by the same promise from the Messiah: *There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.* The Matthew 17 and Mark 9 accounts of the transfiguration each

immediately follow that promise with the exact same timing reference point: *And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them.* Those six days following the promise of witnessing the future glory of our Messiah in his Kingdom perfectly parallel the creational pattern of the 7th day of rest following the six days of labor, as well as Sabbath Law with the necessary hard labor feature of the Edenic curse ending at the sixth day. Confirming the accuracy of this shadowed observation would be Luke's somewhat different timing reference as being "*about eight days*" (Lk. 9:28). Both timing definitions are general and not specific.... *after six* and *about eight*, therefore identifying late afternoon on the seventh day following Christ's promise. The six and eight timing references for these three salvation projections parallel perfectly with the shadow lesson of our Savior's divinely appointed name. As we have repeatedly noted, the six Greek letters spelling the name of Jesus add up to 888. Eight is the number of immortality and infinity (both scripturally and scientifically). The three eights shadowed in our Messiah's name, meaning savior, projects the promise of those same three promised immortalization events in the Creator's plan. This same theme is projected in the design of the golden ark of the covenant where six surfaces are joined together at eight points of convergence (corners) where three surfaces join (at each of the eight corners). When we correctly understand divine truths and principles they can be confirmed in endless ways throughout the two forms of divine expression: the Creator's written word (scripture) and the Creator's spoken word (the terms of creation which were a direct result of His verbal commands). This 6/8 salvation pattern is also demonstrated in the six cleaved animal carcasses combined with the two whole birds of heaven for a total of eight components constituting the heaven and earth covenant with Abram in Genesis 15.

Luke's approximate eighth day reference is a projection of the third immortalization event in the Creator's plan when death and the grave will be cast into the lake of fire (second death) at the conclusion of the Sabbath Millennium. This is why circumcision, the cutting away of the flesh of a man, had to be performed on the eighth day. This covenant token ritual projected the final cutting away of all flesh at the eighth 'time'.

Therefore we can see in Matthew and Mark's accounts of the transfiguration that six times projects that ending of the veiling of divine glory. That divine glory will spread over the entire earth throughout that Sabbath Millennium, no longer hidden from those with eyes that don't see. Enlightenment will no longer be voluntary after the sixth 'time' concludes (Ezek. 39:7, Jer. 16:21).

The Violent Submission of Sin After Six Times

An example of how six marks the end of the power of sin is also demonstrated in Noah's exact age of 600 (Gen. 7:6) when the global flood ended sin's dominance in the very corrupted community of the enlightened. Noah's name means rest, completing the image projecting the theme we address. It should be understood that the rest we seek is not achieved without the necessary violent subjection of the power of sin. The violent flood and the violent crucifixion both validate that observation. This process of the violent subjection of sin to introduce a divine rest from sin will be performed at Armageddon, then spreading globally during our transitional generation.

It should be recognized that violence, in and of itself, is not a contradiction of Yahweh's righteousness (as contradictions to our Creator's right-ness is what qualifies as "sin", in both of its acceptations). Our heavenly Father is always right, 100% of the time, without exception. Therefore when Yahweh initiates violence, it is always right. I have tried over the last five years to avoid personal experiences, but I will break my pattern and share one particularly troubling experience in the context of this consideration.

Over forty years ago, I was exiting the Ecclesial Hall after memorial service as I overheard a young brother who became a Christadelphian in order to marry a Sister. He was speaking with several Arranging Brethren in the small foyer. He declared that if Jesus put a machine gun in his hand at Armageddon to kill sinners that he would throw it back at Jesus' feet and indignantly refuse. It was not my place to speak, but the anger within me has never been extinguished. Unsurprisingly that man soon left the truth, sadly taking his Sister wife with him. He should never have been baptized in the first place, on the same basis John refused to baptize the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. 3:7-8). If we presume that God's will can be accomplished without violence against mankind, we are pitifully foolish and completely unfamiliar with both scripture and the lessons of creation. The reference to the absurd weapon of a machine gun also betrays the foolishness of a fleshly perspective, as the weapons of our Creator are not so childish or limited. Christ and the saints will control the features of creation, commanding earthquakes, storms, seas, winds and even diseases and not the cap pistols where mankind places its confidence. Is it any wonder that trained, hardened by experience, highly armed and technology equipped soldiers will panic and flee when Jesus Christ and the immortalized saints defend Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4)? Although we are currently commanded to be conscientious objectors, we are not pacifists. War and violence are not inherently unrighteous. Sin never surrenders without violence.

The Six Who Slaughter At Jerusalem

There is an interesting parallel between the six men who enter from the north to slaughter Jerusalem (Ezekiel 9) just before the Cherubim appear in Ezekiel 10. These six compare exactly to the six political military identifications in Ezekiel 38 of Rosh, Persia, Lybia, Ethiopia, Gomer and Togarmah. Those six will be defeated by the antitypical cherubim... Jesus Christ and the immortalized saints. Six is the limit of sin's unrestrained influence.

Jericho was silently circled for six days. Following that sixth day, the violent destruction of Jericho was accomplished initially by earthquake and then by the sons of God under Joshua. This parallels how the earthquake cleaving the Mount of Olives will initiate the defeat of the sons of men by the greater Joshua commanding the greater 'sons of God' (Zechariah chapters 12-14). The reign of sin and its worshippers (the sons of men) are limited to six 'times', as demonstrated by Sabbath Law and so many other divine shadow expressions.

Triple Sixes and Triple Eights

There cannot be any doubt that the number six is endlessly associated with the curse of sin and death. The antichrist numerical identification of triples sixes (Rev 13:18) is the antithesis of the Christ numerical identification of triple eights in the name of our savior. The fact that six marks the end of sin's unrestrained influence is repeatedly shadowed in the laws and rituals of the Kingdom of God. This is why the community of the enlightened that relocated to Egypt numbered 66 (Gen 46:26), although equaling 70 with the addition of Joseph, his two sons and his wife that were already in Egypt. This is why Pharaoh pursued the sons of God to the Red Sea with 600 chariots (Ex. 14:6). This is why Goliath was six cubits tall and had a spear head so large it equaled 600 iron shekels. This is why the number of the sons of God that were killed upon attacking Ai after Achan stole from Yahweh at Jericho was six times six (Josh. 7:5). This is why the weight of gold that came to Solomon annually is identified as 666 talents, as the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Kings 10:14; 1 Tim. 6:10). This is why Nebuchadnezzar's golden image measured 60x6 (Dan. 3:1).

The Bronze Man's Six Cubit Measuring Reed

This is also why one of the two tools for measuring the Sabbath Millennial Jerusalem Temple is a reed of six cubits. That brass man measuring the temple is a shadow projection of our Messiah Judge, who

will measure us following that first resurrection (from the grave) to determine if he wants us or not as components of the ultimate divine sanctuary of his Father (Ezek. 40:3-5). Just like the brass man measuring the temple, Jesus will measure us during our personal judgment on the basis of two separate considerations: sin and righteousness. We will be judged by how we have recognized, avoided and reconciled personal sin as well as how we have understood, pursued and personally demonstrated the righteousness of our Creator (projected by the unspecified length of flax line). Those of us who incorrectly presume that salvation (atonement) is all about just the forgiveness of sins will be in for a very disappointing experience. Remember, our judge has warned us... many are called to the judgement but only a few of the judged will be chosen (Matt. 20:16; 22:14).

Six is the limit for the unrestrained serpent influence that rules the kingdoms of men and defines what is “politically correct” in our current generation. There are obvious and less than obvious scriptural projections of this understanding. The prophesied ending of the the self-imposed divine silence after six times is projected in the recognition that despite calling Moses into the holy mount, God did not speak to him until after six days. *And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud* (Ex. 24:15-16). This perfectly parallels the Amos, Micah and Isaiah prophesies about the period of divine silence that will end upon the introduction of the Millennial Kingdom (Micah 3:6-7; Amos 8:11-12; Isaiah 42:13-14). Yahweh has patiently accommodated the dominant sin influence over creation and the enlightened community for six times, but it will soon end with the ending of His silence. Just as He spoke to Moses in the seventh day after being called into the mount, so He will speak to mankind through His son following the conclusion of the sixth millennium. Since Moses was on the mount for a total of 40 days, this would indicate God communicated with him for just over 33 days. This is an exact parallel to how many years Immanuel (the title of Messiah meaning ‘God with us’) was publicly demonstrating his Father’s righteousness before the sons of men and the sons of God.

The Year of Release From Bondage

Under the laws of the Kingdom of God, one of the sons of God who had sold himself into an indentured servant status would be set free after six years of service. The seventh year was the year of release (Ex. 21:1-6; Deut. 15:12-18). This law demonstrated how the feature of the Edenic curse concerning hard labor (Gen 3:17-19) would end after six times. The Sabbath Millennium will experience a rest from the agricultural nature of the Edenic curse (Ezek. 34:26-29; Isaiah 35). There will be no need to chemically fertilize. There will be no need to let the land rest the seventh year (Ex. 23:10-12) during the Sabbath Millennium. The rest from sin after six ‘times’ is not limited to the sons of God. All of creation benefits from that rest. This is why Sabbath observance demanded that the land, the animals and the servants of the enlightened community would rest and be refreshed in that seventh ‘time’.

Athaliah, the evil queen of the enlightened community of Judah, the daughter of a marriage outside the truth, was overthrown and executed after six years of her wicked influence in the Kingdom of God (2 Kings 11:1-3).

The Western Entrance Through the Eastern Gate After Six Days

The prince will enter the eastern gate of the temple on the seventh day, after having the doors closed for the previous six days (Ezek. 46:1-2). This is another projection of the same shadow-theme. The temple in the Sabbath Millennium will have four entrances, being the fourth divinely designed sanctuary (preceded by the wilderness Tabernacle, Solomon’s temple and the post captivity temple). All of the previous temples only had a single entrance.. with that same, but exclusive, eastern access. This

precedent was set upon mankind's ejection from the Garden of Eden. They were sent out eastward, requiring a westward re-approach to Eden's access where the cherubim with the flaming sword kept the way to the tree of life. That same westward approach was repeated in so many other divine shadows, such as all three of the doors of the wilderness Tabernacle, the journey of Abram to the promised land from Ur, the crossing of the Jordan River to inherit the promised land under Joshua, the return to the promised land from the Babylonian captivity and the fact that Christ parallels his glorious return as the lightning that progresses from east to west (Matt. 24:27) thereby leading mankind back to God. The eastern gate of the Sabbath Kingdom temple will be closed for six days... and then the prince will enter.

Christ's Burial Anointment Six Days Before His Burial

The final observation we will note is that Jesus was anointed for his burial exactly six days before Passover, the day of his death (John 12:1-8; Matt. 26:6-13). Mary anointed the Messiah for his burial on both his head and his feet, quite appropriately. Sin's reign would be interrupted after six days. The power of sin would be broken in the divinely demanded 'unbroken body' of the Messiah upon his crucifixion.... after six days.

It will be after six divine days of 1,000 years each that the power of sin will be more than interrupted. Sin will be chained in a bottomless pit. The rest from sin in the seventh divine day will naturally result in a rest from the physical effects of sin. Mortal life will be extended to the degree that a man dying at merely 100 years old will be mourned as dying far too young... as a child. Dangerous carnivorous predators will become harmless herbivores. Poisonous reptiles and insects will become harmless. Deserts will become lush gardens. Blind, deaf and crippled mortals will see, hear and leap. Barren ground will yield incredible harvests. The unrestrained reign of sin will end.... after six times.

Bro Jim Dillingham

The Stone Covenant

The two stones upon which the finger of God wrote the ten commandments on Mount Sinai were divinely appointed to be the physical representation of the covenant that the Creator of heaven and earth made with the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. These stones became the point of identification for everything in the divine sanctuary and by extension, the entire wilderness camp. These stones not only signify the covenant itself but also project each party of the stone covenant, as will be demonstrated.

Why Are Stones Used to Memorialize Covenants

In order to witness the glory in the perfect divine symmetry radiated through all divine expressions (in the context of these covenant stones with their ten commandments) we will first need to identify the primary shadow identification of the stone within the terms of creation. Stones are incorruptible. Unlike metal and wood, stones do not bend. Unlike food, plants and wood, stones do not rot. Unlike metal, stones do not rust or corrode. Unlike people, stones are not subject to disease and do not decay with age. Stones are not flammable, remaining unconsumed by the touch of the flame. Stones are forever, as long as there is no pressure or friction to wear or crack. In fact the hardest substance known to man is a stone (diamond). These basic scientific observations are why stones were created with these properties, so that they might consistently be used to embody the terms of a covenant.

- Jacob memorializes Yahweh's covenant by anointing a stone at Bethel when he leaves his family in the promised land (Gen. 28:12-22).
- At God's direction, Jacob memorializes the confirmation of that covenant with a stone pillar upon his return when his name is changed to Israel (Gen. 35:1-15).
- Jacob and Laban memorialized their covenant with a heap of stones. Those stones became the physical representation of the covenant between them (Gen 31:44-45,52).
- Yahweh commanded the children of Israel to place 12 stones as a memorial by the Jordan River to memorialize how the Ark of the Covenant miraculously reversed the course of the Jordan from the living Sea of Galilee into the Dead Sea in order to allow the children of God to enter the promised land (Josh. 4:2-7).
- Joshua understood that application of the appointment of the stone to be a witness to a covenant. When he makes a covenant with the people at Shechem he commissioned a great stone as a witness to that covenant (Josh. 24:27).
- The two sets of stones, cut out without human hand, with the ten commandments inscribed by the finger of God were given to Moses as the divinely appointed physical representation of the covenant with Israel. *When I was gone up into the mount to receive the tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant which the Lord made with you, then I abode in the mount forty days and forty nights, I neither did eat bread nor drink water: And the Lord delivered unto me two tables of stone written with the finger of God; and on them was written according to all the words, which the Lord spake with you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly. And it came to pass at the end of forty days and forty nights, that the Lord gave me the two tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant (Deut 9:9-11).*
- When the temple Solomon constructed was dedicated at Jerusalem the only remaining deposit inside the Ark was the two stones, defined as the covenant (1 Kings 8:9,21).
- Jesus validates the capacity of stones to testify when he declares that if the multitudes praising him upon his triumphant Jerusalem entrance were silent then *the stones would immediately cry out (Lk. 19:40).*

Once the stones are understood to serve as a memorial to a covenant we will be able to begin to see the very extensive network of applications for this appointment in both the written (Bible) and spoken (creation) communications of our Creator. Our consideration of the Mosaic covenant will have to address the two forms of delivery for that covenant. The first covenant delivery procedure was through the spoken word of God. His voice boomed out from the burning mount to the understandably cowering Ecclesia below (Ex. 20; Deut. 5:2-21). The second delivery procedure was through those stones cut out without human hands with divinely carved words impressed into the eight surfaces of the two sets of covenant stones .

Broken By Stones for Breaking the Stone Covenant

One thread of that application network would be the judgment for breaking the stone covenant. This was death by stoning. While there seem to be countless and quite imaginative procedures for executing a person, the divinely prescribed procedure was to be stoned to death. Those who broke the stone covenant were to be broken by stones. We reap what we sow. Breaking the first of the stone covenant commandments demanded an execution by stoning (Deut. 13:6-10). By divine law, anyone sacrificing their children to Molech (breaking the second stone covenant commandment) had to be executed by stoning (Lev. 20:1-5). When a man broke the third stone covenant commandment through a verbal blasphemy, God commanded him to be stoned to death by the Ecclesia (Lev. 24:10-16). The man breaking the stone covenant's fourth commandment by gathering firewood on a Saturday had to be stoned to death, by divine command (Num 15:32-36). Achan broke the stone covenant's eighth command by stealing from Yahweh at Jericho. The Ecclesia not only stoned him and his family to death, they also raised a heap of stones as a dire testimony to all those who would consider breaking the stone covenant (Joshua 7).

As a perfect extension of this consistent application we see how the enemies of the parties of the stone covenant are expressed as also being broken by stones. The mighty and fearsome Goliath is taken down by a single stone, driven to bullet speed by a faithful teenager through the centrifugal force of his sling and the divine accuracy of a head-shot... just as the son of David (the stone the builders rejected) would bruise the head of the serpent. It is the stone cut out of the mountain without hands (like the covenant stones themselves at Sinai) that not only breaks but also grinds the multi-metalead image of the kingdoms of men to a chaff-like dust to be blown away by the wind. That wind blowing away the dust that the Christ-stone will have pulverized represents the immortalized saints who will have been 'born again' into spirit nature, having become *like the wind* (John 3:8). This same wind representation of the immortalized faithful assisting Christ is witnessed in the four winds that fill the reconstructed Jewish bodies on the valley floor, representing the second resurrection stage (1. political resurrection; 2. spiritual resurrection) when Israel will repent upon being saved by Christ and the immortalized saints at the Gogian annihilation (Ezek. 37:9; Zech 12:10-14; Ezek. chap. 38 & 39; Ezek. chap. 9-11; Zech. 12:10-14).

The Egyptians (certainly enemies of the parties of the stone covenant) would sink like stones into the Red Sea (Ex. 15:5; Neh. 9:11). The destruction of the Babylonians is similarly described as sinking like a stone into the Euphrates (Jer. 51:60-64). Even the enemies of the stone covenant parties are expressed as being broken by stones.

The Point of Reference for All That Was Holy

The extreme significance of these stones was emphasized by serving as the original and ultimate point of reference to everything that was holy in the wilderness encampment. The golden Ark *of the Covenant* itself is defined by the covenant stones within. It should be understood that these stones were also defined as *the tables of testimony* (Ex. 31:18; 32:15). This is why we read of the Ark *of the Testimony*, the Tabernacle *of the testimony*, the Mercy seat *above the testimony*, the veil *of the testimony*. The golden bowl of uncorrupted manna was laid *before the testimony* (Ex. 16:34). Aaron's resurrected rod, identifying him as the divinely appointed

High Priest (to the absolute shock of the wilderness Ecclesia), was described as laying all night *before the testimony* with the other eleven Ecclesial leadership rods that remained dead (Num 17:4,10). Everything holy in that camp was defined by its relationship with the tablets of testimony, the two covenant stones. This understanding of their foundational significance licenses the extreme attention we will apply to these stones and this stone covenant in our continuing considerations as we prepare ourselves for the hopeful appointment to our dream job of serving as the immortal king/priests in the restored Kingdom of God on earth.

Just as the covenant stones are identified as *the testimony*, we see how Christ declared the ‘testimony’ of Peter that Jesus was the Christ, the son of God, would be the ‘stone’ upon which Christ would build his ecclesia (Matt. 16:16-18). This is also the basis for the parable of building on a rock as opposed to sand (Matt 7:24-27). This observation can serve as a platform from which to ascend the next set of stairs in our determined pursuit to witness the glory our heavenly Father veils in the covenant stones.

The Covenant Stones Represent the Parties of the Covenant

These stones do not simply serve as the physical embodiment of the covenant, but also represent the parties of the covenant. This understanding is consistent through layer after layer of examination, through the endless shadow parables in the historical records, prophecies, miracles, construction details, laws and rituals. The parties of the covenant would initially be Yahweh and Israel, when the terms of the stone covenant were presented and ratified at Sinai (Exodus chapters 19-20). However, since the descendants of the original covenant parties are bound by the covenant of their fathers, then Jesus Christ is also a party in this covenant as he is the exclusive descendant of both original covenant parties.

Our Creator is frequently defined as a rock and a stone in the context of their created features, exhibiting safety, strength, defense, consistency and the absence of corruption (2 Sam. 22:2-3; Ps.62:6-7; Ps. 92:15; Ps. 18:31-32; Ps. 42:9; Ps. 71:3). Therefore, on the basis of the principle of God manifestation alone we must expect to see those through whom our Creator manifests Himself to be similarly defined as stones and rocks. In compliance with this expectation, we hear David defining Yahweh as being the God of the rock of his salvation (2 Sam. 22:47). This is just another way of saying that Yahweh would be the God of His son, Jesus (Ps. 110:1; John 20:17; Eph. 1:13; 1Pet. 1:3). The greatest son of David is also the rock of David’s salvation. The identification of Jesus as both a rock and a covenant is a very familiar relationship with any Bible student. Jesus is the chief cornerstone, the foundation stone, the stone rejected by the builders, the stone set at naught by the builders, the rock of offense, the stone of stumbling, the spiritual rock Israel drank from at Rephidim and Kadesh, as well as the rock upon which some can fall and be broken but will fall upon others, crushing them to dust. Jesus is also given as a covenant to the people (Is. 42:6-7; 49:8).

This relationship between Christ and the two sets of covenant stones is quite substantial, offering depth and breadth. In fact the story of the two sets of covenant stones prophetically projects the experiences of our Messiah who serves as the antitypical stone covenant. Let’s review observations we have noted previously in our continuing commentaries, in order to begin this ascent into a greater vision of our Creator’s veiled glory from a solid platform.

Review the Past to See the Future

There were two sets of two covenant stones upon which the finger of God wrote the terms of the covenant (the 10 commandments) on all eight surfaces of those four stones. The first set of two stones were broken at the base of Sinai. The second set was preserved in the golden Ark and become the reference point for all that was holy in the wilderness encampment. Eight is the number of immortality. Therefore Jesus is the man of eights, confirmed by how his titles and roles are constantly identified by the number eight: Jesus cuts off the flesh in all of creation (circumcision on the 8th day) at the introduction of the eighth millennium. Noah typified Christ’s

salvation role by being the 8th person on the ark of salvation (2 Pet. 2:5). Christ's role of king is identified through David, the 8th son of Jesse. Christ's role of mediator between heaven and earth is typified by the 8 heaven and earth sacrificial components in the covenant with Abram (Gen. 15). Christ's sacrificial role is typified by the fact that a sacrificial animal would be acceptable at the altar exactly 8 days after birth (Ex. 22:30). The clearest application in this pattern would be how the six Greek letters in the name of Jesus, meaning savior, add up to 888 (iota=10, eta=8, sigma=200, omicron=70, upsilon=400 and sigma=200...888). Those three eights veiled in the name of our savior project the three immortalizations in the Creator's plan: (1. Jesus Christ; 2. The saints at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom and 3. The remaining saints at the end of the Millennial Kingdom). **Very obviously**, those eight stone surfaces upon which the finger of God wrote the words of the covenant project our savior, as well as the original covenant parties.

Two Sets of Four

The next step is to separate those eight surfaces into the two separate applications identified initially with first Sinai and secondly Jerusalem. The last place the first set of covenant stones were seen is where they were broken at the base of Sinai. The last place the second set of covenant stones were seen was in the golden Ark of the Covenant in Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. Each set of two stones had four surfaces. Doubled fours is another very consistent scriptural pattern in relation to our savior. Noah's ark of salvation not only had 8 people, but there were four men and four women. Abram's heaven and earth covenant not only had 8 sacrificial components but they had to be arranged into two parallel rows of four. The divinely designed wilderness encampment had 8 quadrants with the four political exterior east-south-west-north quadrants and the inner four spiritual quadrants hosted by the Merarites, Gershonites, Kohathites and priests. The four-square Christ altar of burnt offering was assigned four blood offering categories (burnt, peace, sin, trespass). The four cherubim (multitudinous Christ) had four faces. The four wheels beneath those cherubim all had four wheels within those four wheels. The last of many remaining examples we will highlight is the two handfuls of incense (constructed of four equal spices that were crushed to dust) the High Priest tossed into the fire inside the Most Holy Chamber every year on the Day of Atonement in order to save his own life (*that he die not*; Lev. 16:12-13). That conversion of the 8 component (2 sets of four) incense in the two hands of the High Priest from dust to cloud through the fire on the Day of Atonement that saved the life of the High Priest was an absolutely perfect projection of the atonement (salvation) of the ultimate High Priest, that man of eights: Jesus Christ. Therefore not only is Christ projected in the eight surfaces of the covenant stones, but the two individual sets of four.

Now that we have reconstructed our platform of understanding from previous observations, we can pursue this relationship between the detailed history of the covenant stones and the antitypical stone covenant, our Messiah. Like the two sets of covenant stones, Christ's work is basically accomplished in two stages. These would be death and resurrection. We were reconciled by Christ's death but we shall be saved by his resurrection (Rom. 5:10). While Christ's personal salvation has already been accomplished, we await his second coming for that second stage of our promised salvation. These two stages (reconciliation through death and salvation through renewed life) are shadowed prominently in scripture by both obvious and subtle images, such as the two stage memorial meal when we partake of the broken bread followed by the wine; the two stages of the baptism ritual of being first buried in water to be followed by rising again from that water grave; the laws of the early and the latter rain (Deut 11:10-18 cp. to Js 5:7 and Ps. 72:6); the two sets of sacrificial animals in Abram's heaven and earth covenant that are defined by the three earthbound animals being severed and the two fowl of heaven being left whole; and the two miraculous fountain stones at the beginning (Rephidim) and end (Kadesh) of the wilderness journey where the first stone had to be broken and the second stone was to be petitioned.

That first stage of reconciliation achieved through the death of our Messiah, according to the divinely righteous terms of the divine covenant at Sinai, is demonstrated in the breaking of the first set of covenant stones at the

base of Sinai due to Israel's unrighteousness. This is mirrored in the breaking of the bread of the Messiah's body in the memorial service, the baptismal death simulation of water burial, the cleaving of the first fountain stone at Rephidim and the severing of the three sacrificial earth-bound animals in Abram's covenant.

The Story of the Covenant Stones Testifies of the Stories of the Covenant Parties

Following the breaking of the first set of covenant stones with their four surfaces, Israel is judged by Moses. In similar fashion Jesus Christ sent his army (the Romans under General Vespasian and then his son General Titus) against Israel over the four years of 66-70AD. Just as Moses ascends the mountain to be given the second set of covenant stones, so Jesus left earth to be with his Father in heaven. Just as God once again gave Moses the stones cut out without human hands and personally impressed with the covenant in order to return to a now humbled and obedient Israel ... so God will send Jesus back to Israel to renew the covenant. Israel will humbly and obediently comply with the terms of the covenant upon Christ's return, as they did with Moses. Just as this second, unbroken set of covenant stones was placed inside the golden Ark of the Covenant to become the point of reference for all that was holy in the camp... so the immortal Jesus (the antitypical stone covenant) will become the world-wide standard for all that is holy. The story of the covenant stones is the story of the antitypical stone covenant, our Messiah.

The story of the covenant stones also projects the temporary nature of the breaking of Israel. Because Israel rejected Jesus (the antitypical stone covenant) they were broken on the basis of the judgments contained in the stone covenant given to them at Sinai. Just as the first set of stones were broken but not crushed to dust at the base of Sinai for Israel's betrayal, so Israel would be broken but not pulverized to dust (as opposed to how the four empires of the children of men will be pulverized to dust and blown away by the wind in Dan. 2). In compliant fashion, Israel was prophetically presented as dried out bones on a valley floor (Eze. 37), looked down on by the surrounding mountain nations. Israel would be broken but not ground to dust to disappear forever in the blowing wind. Just like the broken covenant stones at the base of Sinai, the evidence of a broken Israel could be witnessed beneath the mountain. This is why the two stage resurrection of the dead nation of Israel is initially depicted as dried out, disjointed human bones strewn across a valley floor. They weren't simply assembled skeletons of human remains. They were 'broken' skeletons whose bones needed reassembling, mirroring the broken shards of the first two covenant stones at the base of Sinai. The nation was truly dead before its political resurrection, but the evidence of its previous existence was clearly evident to all the mountain nations of the world in its broken form, just like the broken set of covenant stones. Although there was no Jewish nation, the distinct and separate nature of the Jewish people in all the nations to which they were driven testified to the nature of their broken but not dissolved condition.

Just as Israel was humbly obedient when Moses returned with the second set of covenant stones, so Israel will be humbled and obedient when the prophet like unto Moses returns from heaven to renew the covenant and restore the Kingdom of God.

We will be continuing our considerations of the stone covenant and the ten commandments in subsequent commentaries.

Bro Jim Dillingham

The Power of the Stone Covenant

It seems highly appropriate that commentary number “68” in our series should address the ‘power’ of the stone covenant. The combination of these two numbers take us from the beginning to the end, from mortality to immortality and from corruption to incorruption. The number six is an obvious and repetitive numerical representation of the curse of sin and death with all its effects. Eight is the scriptural number assigned to project immortality, which is a distinctive pattern we have validated repeatedly in this series. The progression of 6 to 8 (as opposed to being 8 to 6) is a validation of the divine principle of death preceding life, which is the exact opposite testimony from apostate Christianity, embracing and promoting the original serpent lie that denied a real death due to sin (*thou shalt not surely die*). The serpent based philosophy, focused through various religious structures, maintains an immortal life that is deposited into a mortal frame. This projects the opposing message of life preceding death (8 before 6), just like the highly insulting concept of an immortal God deceptively disguising himself within a mortal, dying frame where he somehow qualifies as his own son (the signature doctrine of the antichrist system; 1Jn. 4:3, 2 Jn. 7). Paul defines the correct progression in his rebuke to the Corinthian Ecclesia concerning challenges to the true gospel that were being promoted from within. *And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual* (1 Cor. 15: 45-46). Natural precedes spiritual just as mortality precedes immortality... just as reconciliation through the death of our Messiah precedes salvation through the resurrection of our Messiah (Rom. 5:10). This pattern is repeated in baptism where we are buried with our Messiah in our water grave before we rise again from that water burial, projecting a resurrection. The six to eight progression is evident in the name of our savior where the six Greek letters of his name numerically total 888. This not only demonstrates the same progression but prophesies the three ultimate progressions from mortality to immortality in the three immortalization events over the last 3,000 years in the divine plan.

The Tokens of the Covenant

Therefore, respecting both the spiritual projection of being the 68th commentary and the context of the covenant stones’ power, we will consider the story of the twelve memorial stones that were drawn from the Jordan River by divine command as a memorial to the power of the covenant embodied in the two covenant stones that were divinely inscribed with the terms of the covenant. In our previous commentary we noted the very consistent scriptural pattern of using stones to memorialize a covenant, thereby representing the parties of the covenant. Those who follow this series may recall the reference made in an earlier commentary concerning the testifying capacity of the 12 stones assembled at Joshua’s command into a memorial of the Jordan miracle. These 12 stones were assigned as a ‘token’ of where and when the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the Ark of the Covenant (Josh. 4:6-7). The Hebrew word used to identify the 12 stones as a sign/token is *oth*. This is the same word used to describe circumcision as the token of the Abrahamic covenant, the rainbow as the token of the covenant with Noah and the Sabbath as the token of the Mosaic covenant and the red cord hung from Rahab’s window as a token to the covenant the Hebrew spies made to save her and her family upon Jericho’s destruction (Josh. 2:12). This is the word that Hezekiah uses to inquire about what sign might validate the truth of Isaiah’s promise that God would extend his life by fifteen years (2 Kings 20:8-9). This is the word used to define the sign of the virgin birth of Emmanuel, who would be the very flesh and spirit embodiment of the divine covenant (Is. 7:14).

These 12 stones drawn from the Jordan River were assigned the status of a being a physical representation of the power of the covenant stones (by which the golden ark was identified) when the river flowing from the living Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea were cut off at the very mouth of that sea of death.

The children of Abraham, the promised seed of the covenant promises, entered the promised land by passing through the dried Jordan riverbed, under Joshua's leadership. This is a high resolution photograph of how the saints are both reconciled and eventually saved by the Messiah's death and resurrection. The complimentary shadows in this historical record extend out in perfect alignment, identifying the substance of this foundational understanding upon which the divine light of truth shines to create those perfectly aligned shadows. Let's examine the shadows in the record in order to 'see' with seeing eyes that veiled substance.

Going West to the Tree of Life

The first observation is the highly appropriate western approach to return to the promised land. West is always the scripturally presented direction back to God. This is due to the presumed eastward ejection from the Garden of Eden since the Cherubim was posted to the east of Eden to keep the way to the tree of life. This is why the only possible direction to approach the divine presence resting on the mercy seat (referenced as being "above the testimony", identifying the two covenant stones below) was exclusively west. Each of the three Tabernacle entrances faced east, therefore demanding a westward approach. These three progressive westward entrances 1) into the Tabernacle courtyard and then 2) the Holy Chamber and finally through 3) the veil into the Most Holy chamber serve as yet another of the endless divine shadows of the three progressive immortalization events in the divine plan (1. Jesus Christ; 2. the saints at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom and 3. the remaining saints at the end of that same Millennial Kingdom). We are also told that the glory of Yahweh will approach the Millennial Kingdom Temple at the east gate, indicating a westward direction (Ezek. 43:1-4). That eastern gate of the fourth and final temple is to be reserved for the Prince (indicating Christ; Ezek 44:1-3). Jesus defines his triumphant return in power and glory as being the lightning that shines from east to west (Matt. 24:27). When Israel is deported to Babylon they must travel directly east and therefore directly west in order to return to the promised land. This is a shadow that runs all the way across the surface of scripture. Despite the origin of Israel's journey from Egypt being to the south and west, they circled around east and north in order to re-enter the promised land in a western direction. Therefore they had to face a swollen Jordan River on the tenth day of the first month, almost forty years to the day from being saved from their Egyptian slavery on the first day of that first Feast of Unleavened bread that always immediately follows Passover.

Seven Days before Passover

The timing of the command to cross the Jordan came exactly 7 days before the second Passover. The first Passover had been observed in Egypt. Apparently no Passovers were observed in the wilderness as there were no circumcisions in the wilderness and no uncircumcised person was ever allowed to eat the Passover (Josh. 4:5-7; Ex. 12:48). This second Passover took place in Gilgal (meaning roll away, due to Yahweh's rolling away Israel's reproach upon their national circumcision after crossing through the cut off Jordan waters). The observation that the command to cross the Jordan was 7 days before that second Passover can be confirmed by combining two facts. The day Israel crossed through the cut off waters progressing from the sea of life to the sea of death was identified as the 10th day of the first month (Josh. 4:19). The command to cross the Jordan preceded the event by 3 days (Josh. 1:10-11). That would confirm the invitation to enter the promised land across the miraculously dried river bed was issued on the 7th day of the first month, exactly 7 days until the celebration for the passing over of death. This part of our high resolution snapshot highlights the original promise of reconciliation and salvation offered to Adam and Eve concerning how the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent. It would be the 7th divine day when that promise would be realized in the faithful sons of God from the first 6,000 years.

The Three Day Wait

So the next question might be why they had to wait 3 days from the promise of the miraculous crossing to the actual experience. It should be noted the crossing was actually on that 3rd day and not after three days. Joshua makes that perfectly clear: *within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan*. This is a 2nd projection (from a

divine perspective) of a time frame from promise to experience. It will be the third day from the resurrection of our Messiah that we will experience the promise of crossing over the cut off life to death water to inherit the promises of the Patriarchs. Hosea expresses that experience in exactly these terms: *After two days will he revive us. In the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight* (Hos. 6:2). Both timing expressions indicate that same 3rd day (1. after two days; 1. on the third day). This is one of several subtle confirmations of the two separate “raising up” events in that 3rd divine day after the reality of that promise is witnessed in our Messiah. That 3rd divine day from the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the 7th millennium from the original promise made to Adam and Eve. These two resurrections during that 7th day from creation that is also the 3rd day from Christ is also validated in the cleansing ritual where the red heifer ashes were spattered on the death defiled on both the 3rd day and the 7th day so they could re-enter the God-centered camp of the children of God (Num. 19:12). This is why the promise for entering the promised land in a westward progression across the cut off waters of life to death was issued three days before the actual event. Our generation is now at the brink of that 3rd day, which is also the 7th day... the ‘day’ of Yahweh... the Sabbath Millennium.

Waiting About 2,000 Cubits Away

Another perfectly aligned shadow in the record confirming this 2 divine day waiting period for that 3rd day experience would be the observation that Israel was commanded to wait about 2,000 cubits back while the Ark of the Covenant would cut off the waters progressing from the sea of life to the sea of death. *Yet 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* (Josh. 3:4). Just as the children of God would have to progress about 2,000 cubits to pass through the waters cut off by the Ark, so the sons of God have waited almost 2,000 years from when Christ anti-typically cut of those antitypical waters through his death and resurrection. This same wait is projected in the 2 years Joseph continued in prison after revealing the meaning of the bread and wine dreams of the butler and the baker where one died and one regained his life, rising to the right hand of power (Gen. 41:1).

The Great Blessing of Hindsight for Those With Seeing Eyes

Hindsight is a great blessing in the context of the private confirmation our Creator offers exclusively for the enlightened with eyes to see and ears to hear. Our generation has been identified as the last generation of the Ecclesial Age, since we have witnessed the sign of the blossoming fig tree. We have witnessed the political resurrection of the national first born son of God, confirming the generation that will witness the return of the resurrected first born son of God. We are authorized to look back over all the historical records, miracles, divine laws, features of creation and promises to see how our Creator veiled the confirmation of His unfolding plan and timing. This encouraging glory is veiled from everyone else. That veil over the face of the Jews and the nations (Is. 25:7-8; 2Cor. 3:13-16) will be removed when Christ returns with power to reveal that hidden glory of Yahweh that only a few can see in this age of darkness when seeing eyes and hearing ears give us the miraculous capacity to take the light of our Creator’s glory out of the thick darkness of this age.

Cutting the Waters and the Covenant

When the feet of the Levites and priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant stepped into the Jordan River, those waters were “cut” (Josh. 3:13). This water flowed from the living Sea of Galilee into the Dead Sea. The Jordan River is a geographic parable component representing the mortal flow of life to death in the Creator’s plan. The creational lesson of water is consistent and perfectly complimentary in every application, from clouds to rain to salt water to fresh water to moving and still bodies of water to the principle of evaporation to life’s dependence on water and even right down to the molecular construction of the water molecule. The full demonstration of that claim will have to wait for the appropriate time and space. For now we will have to consider the range of that claim as simply sustenance for the spiritual mind to ruminate. However, this depth of understanding is significant to our comprehensive view of the event we are considering. Those waters reversed all the way back to two reference points: the city of Adam by Zaretan (meaning their distress). That reversal of the waters

flowing from life to death by the power of the covenant shadows the covenant promise that extends all the way back to our distress initiated by Adam (the curse of sin and death). The fact that this event took place right at the gaping and insatiable mouth of the dead sea is perfectly appropriate. An interesting geographic feature of the Dead Sea is that water does not flow out... only in. This is like the grave, which is never satisfied and never says *enough* (Prov. 30:15-16).

The divine expression of ‘cutting’ the Jordan waters is quite interesting. *And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above* (Josh. 3:13). The cutting reference within the context of the power of the covenant is rather extensive. In fact this same Hebrew word (*karath* translated as *cut off*) is repeatedly translated as ‘making’ a covenant. We read that Yahweh made (cut/*karath*) a covenant with Abram in Genesis 15, where the 3 sacrificial animals were cut in two and laid out in two rows with the 2 whole birds. Abram and Abimelech cut/made a covenant (Gen. 21:27,32), as did Isaac (26:28). Jacob cut/*karath* a covenant with Laban (31:44). Yahweh commanded Israel not to cut/*karath* any covenant with the Canaanites or their pagan gods (Ex. 23:32; 34:12,15). Yahweh cut/*karath* a covenant with Israel through Moses (Ex. 34:27). This expression of ‘cutting’ a covenant is quite a common Hebrew scriptural expression. In America the sales community expresses this concept as “cutting a deal”. However it is also the same word frequently used to express how an offending Israelite would be permanently ostracized by being “cut” off from his people. The question we need to address is **why... why** did our Creator use the term ‘to cut’ in reference to making a covenant and also to the effect that the Ark of the Covenant had on the Jordan waters?

The Cutting Edges of Truth

In perfect alignment with this theme is the divine assignment of the two edged sword to represent the principle of truth. Truth cuts. Eternal principles are sharp. Just like a sword, divine truths and principles can defend life as well as take life. Truth is not defined as a pillow or a marshmallow. It is a weapon. But it is not like a rock hurled from a sling, a thrown spear or even an arrow shot from a bow. All those weapons are impersonal and offer distance in the conflict. A sword is up front and personal in a singular conflict. Just like its two edged construction it serves to defend as well as attack, parry and thrust. The two edged nature of this sword of truth is yet another confirmation of the many dual aspects of divine principles necessary for balancing each truth. Examples would be the two aspects of righteousness being the universally accepted imputed righteousness and the often challenged personal righteousness (meaning individual works that demonstrate Yahweh’s right-ness in our personal lives); the dual aspects of sin (the universally accepted law transgression and the endlessly challenged sin nature); the two aspects of the fear of God (the universally accepted reverence as well as the constantly challenged fear of kindling His anger); the two resurrections (1. resurrection to mortality before judgment and 2. resurrection to immortality following judgment); the two categories of life we may experience (mortal and immortal) and the two categories of death (the temporary death of those accountable to judgment and the permanent death of those denied eternal justification). The dual nature of divine principles has always been the first casualty in the endless progressive apostasies within the body of the enlightened, just as we are experiencing today in the global Christadelphian community. The heart controlled mind craves simplicity and oversimplification, which imbalances divine principles. Brethren seeking the itching ears of our community readily promote the elimination of many of these balancing dualities, such as the sin-nature aspect of sin. There are also those who contend there is only one category of resurrection so they can pretend that the terms for the resurrection to immortality can somehow be applied to the resurrection to judgment (as the Unammended community has sadly maintained for over 100 years). There are those who suggest that righteousness cannot be personal, but only imputed, despite the endless references to personally assigned righteousness in scripture on the basis of personal deeds. This oversimplification is the launching pad for the progressive baby steps eventually leading to the conclusion that we don’t have to do anything besides baptism into the truth and being

nice people in order to be saved. The oversimplification that is now an uncontrolled conflagration in the current enlightened community is the suggestion that the fear of God is nothing but reverence, that people as wonderful as Christadelphians have absolutely nothing to be afraid of from Yahweh and that our salvation should be taken for granted... despite the fact that Jesus warns that only a few of the many called to judgment will actually be chosen. Sadly, we just aren't nearly as wonderful as we are being told we are.

How Prepared Are We To Do the Cutting

Truth is a two edged sword. Truth cuts, just like the waters of the Jordan were cut. Covenants are cut. The memorial bread of our Messiah's body has to be cut. Yet his Father would not allow a single bone of His son to be broken, thereby shouting the significance of the cleaving/cutting of that memorial bread to any of us with hearing ears. The fountain stone at Rephidim clave in two when Aaron's rod struck it, wielded by Moses. The 3 covenant binding animals with a total of 12 legs that were all 3 years old had to be cut in two to make that heaven and earth covenant with Abram, with the 2 fowl of heaven remaining un-cut. Even that 12 hooved foundation for those 3 dust bound sacrificial animals were each "cloven" hoofs. Those 8 hoof components of each of those 3 'cut' sacrificial animals in the heaven and earth covenant is yet another of the many scriptural shadows framing the 3 immortalization events in the divine plan that we have referenced so frequently in these commentaries. Are we going to be prepared to wield that sword of truth against the enemies of Yahweh? That same two edged sword issuing from the mouth of the King of Kings will cut open the earth in earthquakes and rend the heavens with lightning storms and volcanic fire from heaven (Rev. 19:11-21; Ezek. 38-39). Will we also rejoice at the geographic and deadly destruction of Rome or lament the loss of human life... despite its history of torturing, murdering and exploiting the children of God ever since Emperor Nero lit his evening garden strolls with the burning oil soaked bodies of our Christadelphian Brothers, Sisters, nieces and nephews? Would we have been able to drive out or kill every Canaanite man, woman and child in the promised land under Joshua's command, as Yahweh commanded? We not only have to love righteousness, we also have to hate wickedness in order to be transformed into the dual features of the "image and likeness" of our Creator.

Toleration for Unity or Cutting Away for Harmony?

It must be understood that harmony with our Creator is never achieved on the basis of a unity founded in a toleration of diversity. Yahweh's ultimate harmony with all of creation is based on **cutting away** all that is diverse from Him. Unity based on the toleration of doctrinal diversity (as it is being inappropriately pursued in the North American Christadelphian community on the basis of the UA08 document) contradicts the principle of harmony. Harmony (the divine definition of peace) is achieved through complete agreement and not respecting differences (the flesh's definition of peace).

That cutting off of the Jordan waters portrays our reconciliation through the death of our Messiah, the antitypical covenant, just like the broken memorial bread and the cleaved fountain rock and the severed animals in Abram's covenant. We witness this water being cut off from about 2,000 cubits away but do not participate, until we actually cross that dry riverbed into the promised land. That 'participation' projects our salvation, on the basis of our Messiah's resurrection. *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* (Rom. 5:10). This is atonement: the highly appropriate two stages of reconciliation followed eventually by salvation.

It seemed appropriate to integrate the significance of the 68th commentary in the series with the current sub-theme of the power of the stone covenant by considering the miraculous high-resolution snapshot Yahweh offers us through the record of how the power of the covenant cut off the waters flowing from life to death and was memorialized by the 12 stones taken from the riverbed. In our next commentary we will begin to consider the terms of the covenant, the ten commandments.

Bro Jim Dillingham

The Second First

The first of the stone covenant commandments declared: *I am Yahweh thy Elohim, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods (elohim) before me* (Ex. 20:2-3; Deut. 5:6-7). However this was not what Jesus declared to be the ‘first’ commandment. Yahweh’s son declared the ‘first’ commandment to be: *The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment* (Mk. 12:29-30).

Before we consider this first of the stone covenant commandments we should consider the apparently confusing issue of being ‘first.’ Misapplying a ‘first’ distinction, through exercising the heart’s great offensive weapon of oversimplification, can lead to highly dangerous conclusions. We always need to determine which ‘first’ we are identifying in a particular context, respecting the foundational divine communication model of intentional complexity. The purpose of that intentional complexity is to filter out those among the enlightened community who do not have eyes to see or ears to hear (Matt. 13:10-14), giving to those who have and taking away from those who have not.

The First and the Second “First” Fruits

One example of this conditional ‘first’ distinction would be the assignment of a “firstfruits” status. Scripture applies this expression two separate ways. *But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept* (1 Cor. 15:20). Jesus was certainly not the first person to be brought back from the dead to a living state; however he was the first to continue rising beyond that initial sleep-like death to mortality and then continue rising from mortality to immortality. In one context he was not the firstfruits (death to mortal life) but in the full context of death to mortal and then continuing from mortal life to immortal life he qualifies perfectly as the firstfruits. This distinction is not insignificant, as the doctrinal separation from the Unammended Christadelphian community is based on their misapplying the terms of the resurrection to immortality following judgment as if they are also the terms to qualify for the resurrection to mortality that precedes judgment. Therefore we should be very careful in how we define our understanding of a ‘first’ qualification.

The second application of the firstfruits status identifies the resurrection to immortality of the saints at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. *These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God* (Rev 14:4-5). The obvious distinction here is that while the saints also qualify as “firstfruits” they are the firstfruits of both God and the Lamb, while Christ was the firstfruits of exclusively Yahweh. The fact that both Jesus and the saints can both qualify as firstfruits in a progressive format is shadowed in the parallel (2) firstfruits harvest celebrations under Kingdom Law. The first harvest week celebration was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, initiated by waving the barley grain sheaf from the immediately preceding barley harvest. The second harvest feast week was the Feast of Firstfruits (also called Feast of Weeks and Pentecost). This second harvest feast week was initiated by waving two leavened loaves made from the firstfruits of the wheat harvest. However, despite the Feast of Tabernacles being identified as the “*final ingathering*” representing the remaining agricultural crop categories, there is no distinction whatsoever concerning “firstfruits”. The reason for this is that these three harvest feast weeks serve as shadows of the three divine harvests of creation when the image and likeness of our Creator, planted and nurtured in the Garden of Eden, is harvested in three successive stages. The glory of the light in these three feast week shadows is hidden for the exclusive review of those among the enlightened community with seeing eyes and hearing ears. The

firstfruits status of the first two feast weeks, as opposed to the glaring absence in the third, is a flawless projection of the two ‘firstfruits’ distinctions of the first two immortalization (harvest) events in the divine plan while the third (at the end of the Millennial Kingdom) does not qualify in any way as “first” fruits.... but simply as fruits.

‘First’ Born In Two Ways

This doubled ‘first’ fruits application is only one potential stumbling stone in the path of our necessary progressive enlightenment concerning the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh Elohim. Another stumbling stone would be Christ’s “firstborn” status, as opposed to “firstfruits”. The misapplication of this particular ‘first’ status is a stumbling stone that apostate Christianity cannot progress beyond. Jesus was not the chronological first son of God, as Adam has that distinction (Lk. 3:38). However, Jesus was God’s chronologically first son that was *born* from the dead. Although Lazarus awakened from his death-sleep, he certainly was not *born* from the dead. He was simply returned from the dead, and only temporarily. The resurrection to a state of mortality for the purpose of judgment is testified through the features of creation by awakening to the light of a new day each morning. However the resurrection to immortality is definitely not an awakening. Awakening returns us to the same state prior to falling asleep. This is not true in reference to the resurrection from mortality to immortality. That is a new birth. Jesus Christ was actually “born” again... from the dead. This is the context when Jesus confuses Nicodemus with the declaration that in order to participate in the Kingdom of God one will have to be born again. Christianity sadly mistakes this new birth status referenced by the Messiah as signifying merely a religious conversion. Jesus defines that born again status as becoming *like the wind* (Jn. 3:6-8), indicating being born into a spirit nature and not merely a spiritual consciousness, as the Greek word translated air and wind is the same word translated as spirit. The distinction of being born from the dead (Col. 1:18) qualifies Jesus as the ‘firstfruits’ in a chronological context. At this point in the divine plan absolutely no one else has ever been “born” from the dead except Jesus Christ. There will be three death-birthing events in the divine plan. These are the three divine harvests which are the three immortalization (salvation/atonement) events. These three born-from-the-dead events in the divine plan are framed by the shadows of the three Day of Atonement rituals performed in the Most Holy Chamber; the three doorways to the progressively holier enclosures of the Tabernacle design; the three outpourings of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the Ecclesial Age; the three harvest feast weeks; etc.

The Son of God’s Second First-born Qualification

However that ‘first’ born status of Jesus Christ is not limited to simply a chronological context. One does not have to be born first (chronologically) to be awarded the firstborn status in a family. Jacob was born second but deceived Isaac into awarding him the firstborn blessing and purchased the firstborn birthright with a bowl of pottage from his slightly older but highly foolish brother. Joseph was not the first son of Jacob but was assigned the firstborn status. A ‘first’ qualification can also indicate significance as opposed to chronology.

Therefore, two questions bubble up that require attention. 1) Why does this particular command enjoy the ‘first’ position among the ten commandments within that incredibly significant stone covenant and 2) why wouldn’t it also qualify as the commandment the Messiah would identify as both the first as well as the greatest? The logical presentation of both answers will require making the last question first and the first question last.

All Commandments Are Not Created Equal

One of the last questions Jesus was peppered with on the day after he violently cleared the temple commerce was this question: *And one of the scribes came.... asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these* (Mk 12:28-31). The first thing to recognize about

Christ's answer is the elimination of the concept of equality when it comes to divine commandments. Clearly, there are commandments that are greater than others.

We have seen this principle of layered significance before in our consideration of why the ritual of Circumcision Law was greater than Sabbath Law. We also saw this principle in the three great love commandments. We have noted the serious danger of applying the evil serpent philosophy of equality to these three great love commandments. Some of those false teachers that Peter and Jude prophesied would trouble the brotherhood in these "last days" of the Ecclesial Age have sadly promoted the misconception that if one loves their neighbor as themselves that they will 'automatically' be fulfilling the first and great commandment to love Yahweh our Elohim with all our heart and mind and strength. That suggestion is based on dramatically reducing the standard of our love for our Creator to the lowest of the three love standards... the love of self. Yet we almost never see these God-degrading and commandment diluting statements being challenged in our community when they are publicly presented or published. Why is that? Is it because we have inappropriately adopted the immensely popular but highly foolish societal philosophy of exclusively practicing positive reinforcement while avoiding the social unpleasantness of a firm correction? The reinforcement of praise without the discipline of correction will imbalance educational progress, providing a significant advantage to the heart generated presumptions that dilute our Creator's right-ness but seem so instinctively correct to the *itching ear*.

Why Is It Both The 'First' As Well As The Greatest Commandment?

Therefore we need to understand why Jesus defines this commandment as both the first as well as the greatest commandment. We should not presume that the reference to being 'first' has to be limited to significance without any reference to chronology, as we already see the significance qualification of being the greatest commandment. While our heavenly Father certainly uses repetitive expressions, that intentional redundancy should never be dismissed as nothing more than an emphasis inflator. That is how we can miss the far greater but hidden glory in divine expressions.

The Expression of the Original Divine Plan

The key to understanding why this commandment is identified as both the first as well as the greatest is the initial qualifying phrase Jesus includes as part of the commandment: *Hear O Israel, Yahweh our Elohim is one Yahweh*. This quote from Deuteronomy 6:4 that precedes the actual command phrasing is the very foundation of everything. It states.... *Listen closely to this Israel, He Who Shall Be our Mighty Ones is He Who Shall Be one*. This phrase expresses the original divine intention for the entire creation project. Our Creator will become many who will become one in Him. This is God manifestation. This is the principle of multitudinous singularity that is demonstrated throughout creation. The human body is a single unit made up of complex, interdependent components. A family is made up of many separate members; but it is all one family with one name, just like the children of God that are baptized into that one family name of the Father, the son and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). Our global ecological system is a single entity made up of many separate, interdependent, complimentary components. These are all expressions of the original creational model that is expressed simply but perfectly in this "first" as well as greatest commandment.

The Destination and the Map

The first part of that first and greatest commandment serves as our destination (*Hear of Israel, He Who Shall Be our Mighty Ones is He Who Shall Be one*). The second part of the commandment is the roadmap to that destination: *You shall love He Who Shall Be your Mighty Ones with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength*. The fact that Christ quoted verse 4 as well as verse 5 of Deut. 6 is why this can be understood as both the chronologically first and foundational commandment as well as being the greatest of all the commandments. If we diminish the intensity of the love for Yahweh that this commandment requires to nothing more than the love of self, that is the qualifying intensity for the love of our neighbor, then we have missed the point entirely. There is no equality in love. Equality is an instinctive

defensive posture to protect our ego. It is a treasured delusion of the deceitful heart to excuse the absence of a meek and submissive self-image. We love our wife (or husband) more than our parents and more than our children. We love our children more than our nephews and nieces. We love our friends more than we love our societal neighbors. If there are no layers to our various loves, then our life will be incredibly imbalanced and full of disappointments. The greatest love of all, to which all other loves must surrender, is the love for Yahweh our Elohim.

This is why the first of the ten stone covenant commandments did not qualify to be what the son of God identified as either the first of all or the greatest of all commandments. However, in the context of the stone covenant that first commandment emphasized a very similar understanding, which is why this covenant condition enjoys its position as commandment number one out of the ten. *I am Yahweh thy Elohim, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods (elohim) before me* (Ex. 20:2-3). Just like the first and greatest commandment, this is an issue of significance and intensity. Just as the first and greatest commandment, this commandment requires Yahweh's preeminent position in our lives.

The 'Mighty One' That Must Never Challenge Yahweh In Our Decisions

The very first term of the stone covenant was that Yahweh would not suffer anything but first place in our lives. No other "mighty one" (elohim) could be placed in front of Him. The disrespect demonstrated against Yahweh by accommodating other *mighty ones* violates the terms of the covenant. In essence there is ultimately only one other possibility. Just like in the Garden of Eden, the choice was between Yahweh's testimony and the serpent's testimony. The validation of the serpent testimony above the Creator is what introduced sin, corrupting all of creation with the necessarily accompanying curse of sin, death, decay, disease, frustration and violence. That serpent philosophy was internalized into mankind, claiming the human heart as its throne. This is why 'heart' circumcision is divinely required. Every single alternative form of worship is a product of that default serpent philosophy everyone is born with... Paganism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Evolutionism, and coveting (as Paul defines a covetous person as an idolater Eph. 5:5). Elevating alternative '*mighty ones*' above Yahweh is the result of inventing a self-worshipping focus. Every form of false doctrine shares two common features, without exception: 1) every false doctrine degrades the spirit and 2) inappropriately exalts the flesh. This is why truth and accurate understanding is a foundational condition of salvation that must be sustained or any legitimate hope for salvation is forfeited (1 Cor. 15:1-2; John 4:22-24; Rom. 10:1-2; Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Tim. 4:16; John 17:3). Every single form of false doctrine is simply mirror worship. The human heart creates *mighty ones* its own image and likeness to worship. This is why the foundation for all forms of false worship begin with the serpent lie, that sin does not demand death. This is the foundation for all the Yahweh despising delusions about immortal souls and reincarnation as well as immortal angels that have the capacity to sin against Yahweh without dying. The doctrine of the trinity is a complete inversion of the original intent for creating man: *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*: The trinity asks us to believe that the Creator recalibrated himself to the image and likeness of mortal man in order to save his supposedly wrecked creation. Mortal man becomes the standard to which the Christian 'mighty one' must re-make himself. This not only completely reverses the Creator's original plan, it diminishes God and exalts those who believe this blasphemous lie.

The Absence of Righteousness

This principle is similarly true of all forms of false doctrine. Every false doctrine places an illegitimate "*mighty one*" before Yahweh our Elohim. Any contradiction to the right-ness of Yahweh Elohim qualifies as 'sin' whether that contradiction is doctrinal, behavioral or physical in nature. This is why John presents the most comprehensive understanding of sin as: *All unrighteousness is sin* (1 John 5:17). Anything that does not validate the right-ness of Yahweh qualifies as "sin". This is why sin is used as a synonym for sin cursed human nature,

although there is no guilt assigned to this aspect of sin as it is with behavioral sin. This is a principle expressed endlessly in scripture and in our community's foundational understandings expressed in Elpis Israel. Mortality (sin cursed human nature) is a direct contradiction to divine standards. Corruption, decay, mortality, disease, suffering and unfruitfulness could never have been part of the original order that our Creator declared to be not simply good (as declared at the end of most of the first 5 evenings and mornings of creation) but *very good*, as expressed at the conclusion of those six evenings and mornings of creative activity. Suggesting that mortality preceded the introduction of sin but still qualified as being "very good" would contradict our Creator's testimony concerning how the touch of death is defiling and divinely separating (Num. 6; Lev. 21:1-3,11). In fact all rituals are divinely designed to validate Yahweh's right-ness, even the four Ecclesial Age rituals of baptism, memorial service, sisters' head coverings and sisters' silence. Refusing to participate or modifying the terms of any of these highly appropriate 'four' rituals will contradict the particular features of Yahweh's righteousness that are intended to be projected through these rituals. We have noted in previous commentaries how Jesus highlights the primary purpose of baptism as demonstrating "*all*" the righteousness of his Father (Matt. 3:15). Our participation in this divine right-ness validating ritual has wonderful side benefits such as initiating a covenant binding relationship with Yahweh Elohim and the forgiveness of our past sins (on the basis of the feature of Yahweh's right testimony that death eliminates sin). A sister covers her head during any prayer in which she participates in order to validate her beloved Creator's right-ness in creating her gender second and neither first or simultaneously with man, recognizing and submitting to the 'right-ness' of her help-meet status. This same principle is projected in the required head covering of the Mosaic High Priest, whose turban head covering separated his head from the golden crown declaring Yahweh's holiness. Aaron also had a 'head' greater than him, between himself and Yahweh's holiness. This was the antitypical High Priest, the future son of Yahweh. Therefore, just like the sisters of the Ecclesial Age, Aaron had to wear a head covering when he directly approached Yahweh. He demonstrated the Creator's righteous policy that he had been assigned a power (or authority) above his head. If a Sister refuses to cover her head when she approaches Yahweh directly in prayer, she is contradicting His righteousness in His creational order and the four-stage hierarchy of Yahweh being the head of Christ being the head of man being the head of woman. Contradicting our Creator's righteousness is not an inconsequential matter.

The Uncomplimentary Prophecies of the 'Last Days' Enlightened Community

Everything in the context of our struggle to pursue the spirit and deny the flesh rises from the foundational requirement to understand and appreciate (above everything and at any cost) our Creator's right-ness. This is why knowledge is so incredibly significant. It is very sad that the pursuit of spiritual 'knowledge' is being so horribly degraded in our enlightened community currently. This growing emphasis on feelings, emotional experiences, doctrinal diversity toleration and a distinct absence of correction or ecclesial discipline are all symptoms based on the fulfillment of the many prophecies concerning how the enlightened community in the "last days" will suffer those within our community that Peter & Jude describe as waterless wells, fruitless trees, brute beasts, scoffers walking after their own lusts and twice dead. Paul also warns us of these members of our "*last days*" community, describing them as lovers of their own selves, unholy, despisers of what is good and having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. The presumptive and illegitimate deflection of these uncomplimentary prophecies to those outside the enlightened community offers a rather frightening demonstration of how easily some perfectly clear but unpalatable divine warnings can become invisible to us. The first of the ten stone covenant commandments is all about making choices. When we choose one thing above another we declare its greater significance in our life. Expediency and convenience are not justifiable excuses. That was the reasoning Caiaphus offered the Sanhedrin for plotting the death of Jesus. *And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not* (Jn 11:49-50). Peter's three denials of Christ were temporarily shielded from his conscious review by the

expediency of his presence at Christ's trial, as he wanted to be ready when an opportunity for escape with his Master might appear. The priests were mystified with Yahweh's condemning question from Malachi about how they were despising His name and offering polluted bread on His altar (Mal. 1:7). Offering lame or sick or blind sacrifices is always far more convenient and expedient than offering healthy, valuable animals. Expediency and convenience do not reconcile the sins resulting from even temporarily preferring any other mighty one above Yahweh our Elohim. Ultimately the only true 'mighty one' we can place before our Creator... is an uncircumcised heart, from which all those inappropriate choices originate.

Bro Jim Dillingham

The Stone Covenant's Second Commandment

Of all the ten commandments inscribed into the highly appropriate 'two' stone tablets by the finger of God it is the second commandment that enjoys the greatest emphasis through explanation. Deut. 20:4-6 *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.*

The Innocent Practice

It is no secret that we human beings associate special emotional significance to inanimate objects. We have a lucky tie or a piece of sentimental jewelry that has no dollar value but we consider priceless. We give our cars and boats names. We even humanize objects. This can also serve as a communication tool called personification. In the terms of our defense of our heavenly Father's righteousness we explain how this personification expression tool is used in relation to several Bible terms. Sin, wisdom and money are all personified. We explain this when addressing the God despising doctrine of an evil immortal angel. We use this form of expression in the English language when we assign a female or male gender to inanimate objects despite the fact that using the indefinite pronoun would be technically correct (i.e. that car, 'she' is a beauty... as opposed to 'it' is a beauty). We seem to have an instinctive need to deposit special emotional value in inanimate objects. We may even sometimes hear that some object is 'holy' to a person who truly has no religious association whatsoever, merely indicating that object has a unique personal identification and value to them.

The Guilty Practice

The limited application of this behavior is reasonable. That 'object' frequently represents something greater than itself to our heart and mind. There is an emotional investment, anchoring fond memories or future hopes. This habit is not uncommon or illegitimate. It is when we permit an uncircumcised heart to expand the borders of this indulgence into issues related to our Creator that serious offenses develop. Popular Christianity reveres the cross, originally the Pagan symbol of Tammuz and the form for the 'cakes' Israelite women baked to honor the queen of heaven. Instead of Babylon's Semiramis, the wife of Nimrod, Christianity has renamed that same Pagan queen of heaven as Mary, the mother of Jesus. Idols, images and supposedly holy artifacts abound as much or more today as they have since Nimrod founded Babel.

We certainly understand Paul's declaration that an idol is truly nothing in the world (1 Cor 8:4). That is the technical truth. They are completely meaningless. Eating food that had been dedicated to pagan idols did not defile a Brother or Sister in first century ecclesial life, unless of course their conscience (or a witnessing weaker minded Brother or Sister) assigned some illegitimate defiling value to that food that foolish pagans had dedicated to nonexistent gods generated from their own imaginations (1 Cor. 8:7-11; 10:25-29). That is another matter, being personally responsible and guilty for another believer's resulting sin. There are a number of applications for this, such as the 10 spies who incited the murderous wilderness conspiracy against Moses and Aaron for their evil report, King Jeroboam in his setting up the two golden calves in Bethel and Dan as well as the guilt of the inappropriately silent watchman (Ezek 33).

No Statues or Carvings At All

It is rather interesting that there are two stages to that second commandment inscribed on the two covenant stones. The first commandment was never to make any graven image of anything in creation, whether above them in the sky, with them on the earth or beneath them in the sea. There were to be no statues or carvings... at

all. Secondly they were forbidden to adopt any statues or carvings as objects of worship. The warning was that Yahweh their Elohim is a jealous God (El/Mighty One) and that fathers would jeopardize their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren if they were foolish enough to show any level of respect to pagan idols. While some may immediately object to this clear statement of divine policy on the basis of the declaration that God will not assign the guilt of the father's sins to the son, that is an entirely different issue. It is not 'guilt' that is being assigned to subsequent generations in this divine warning in the second commandment. It is the extended results of that father's original guilt that is being addressed. Guilt cannot be inherited, as opposed to the inappropriate understandings promoted by Bro JJ Andrews about 120 years ago that resulted in a sustained fellowship separation. That highly inappropriate understanding (guilt inheritance) can be denied on the basis of many separate but parallel avenues of reasoning.

To the Third and Fourth Generation

The warning about visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to specifically the third and as well as the fourth generation is a far deeper subject than might first be presumed. The foundational precedent for this declaration would be how Yahweh is visiting the iniquity of the ultimate father (Adam) to his children within the third and fourth divinely appointed 'ages'. What separates the first three ages from the fourth would be the accommodating subtlety of divine education that changes dramatically in the fourth 'Age'. As we have noted on several occasions in these continuing commentaries, a new Age begins when there is a change in divine laws, which requires a change in the priesthood with that appointed transition always being validated by an ever ascending degree of publicly displayed divine power. The first three divinely appointed ages for the maturing of the Messiah's bride (Patriarchal Age, 1st Kingdom Age, Ecclesial Age) all shared a common divine policy of accommodating the illegitimate self-promoting delusions of mankind. The initiation of the fourth Age (the Millennial Kingdom Age) marks the end of the divine silence prophesied for the Ecclesial Age (Is. 42:13-14). The divine communication policy will change dramatically. Yahweh will 'make bare His arm'. The fear of our Creator will be the catalyst transforming the current global ignorance paradigm into either enlightenment or death. In the ultimate sense, Yahweh will have visited the iniquity of our original father (Adam) upon Adam's children to the third and fourth Age. As a hint to witnessing a greater measure of the divine glory hidden in the shadows of divine expressions, you might start noting the many patterns of three within a pattern of four in divine expressions (i.e. Noah and three sons as well as his wife and three daughter-in-laws on the first salvation ark; the three severed 3 year old animals with a whole bird in two parallel rows in Abram's heaven and earth covenant (Gen. 15); the four divine sanctuaries where the first is a mobile tent and the next three are stationery temples; the inner circle of Jesus attending the raising of Jairus, the transfiguration and Gethsemane being Jesus plus the same three disciples on each occasion; etc, etc). There are far too many of these patterns of three within a pattern of four to be nothing but a coincidence, as the list is extensive.

This natural human behavior pattern of investing emotional value into an inanimate object can be an innocent exercise as long as that urge is restrained. When that emotional investment becomes excessive then that inanimate object qualifies as the category of an idol that challenges our devotion and respect for our Creator. The foundational motivation that must be recognized to prevent that degree of error is that this 'idol worship' is 'heart' generated. While the unenlightened revere the instinctive impressions of the heart as ultimate truth and foolishly respect that every person's separate ultimate truth can each be individually legitimate, we (the enlightened) know that the heart is the throne of the serpent philosophy. The divine testimony is that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). First instincts (that are untrained by relentless spiritual re-education) are always wrong. The heart must be circumcised... not trusted. The heart is the source of the uninvited but endless rationalizations challenging us.

The Self Worshipping Nature of Idol Worship

The core issue of idol worship is actually an extension of the first of the ten commandments, which is the warning to assign the greatest significance to our Creator. Nothing should ever be placed in front of Him in our significance assignments... not a wife or a child or a job or a parent or an educational or financial opportunity. By reproducing a feature of creation into a carved or graven image we diminish its created glory. We cannot give that image life, despite the wishful Pinocchio style fairy tales to the contrary. This is truly the foundational problem created by the human heart. Ego, which is always heart generated, is promoted by Psychologists as the ultimate human motivator, possessing more potential motivating power than love, intimacy urges, empathy, pity and even self-preservation. Idol worship is simply an extension of the same principle demonstrated in all false understandings: self-worship. The common thread in every single feature of all false doctrine is that it is always God despising and flesh exalting, without exception.

It is this significance reversal between ourselves and our Creator that is so objectionable to Him. This is why the signature doctrine of the Christian apostasy was prophesied as being the denial of the flesh of Christ (1 John 4:3; 5:7; 2 Peter 2:1). Promoting the concept that the flesh nature of our Messiah was only a disguise that was abandoned upon the pretend death of an immortal god paints our Creator as not only a liar (just as the serpent testified to Adam and Eve) but that He had to recalibrate Himself to the image and likeness of man to save his supposedly wrecked creation project. This blasphemous doctrine reverses the original intent to make man in God's image and likeness. This doctrine declares that man must be the standard to which God must readjust himself or be a failure. The incredibly blasphemous nature of this doctrine is why John assigns it that apostasy signature status. This is the exact same mental process as taking a block of wood, carving it into whatever our imagination prescribes and then presuming this lifeless object that is so far beneath us is actually a depository of divine holiness... on the basis of our own egotistical presumptions.

At the potential offense of using such a strong anti-social term I cannot honestly assign a more polite term to this sin of idol worship than extreme stupidity. Yahweh's argument in Isaiah 44:18-20 will defend this expression: *They have not known nor understood: For he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; And their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considereth in his heart, Neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; Yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: And shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? Shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes: A deceived heart hath turned him aside, That he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?*

The Divine Policy of Reinforcing A False Perspective

The fact that God proactively shuts the eyes of the idol worshippers, developing from within the body of the enlightened, is an extension of the divine communication policy of reinforcing a preferred perspective. Jesus demonstrated this policy when he explained to his disciples that his exclusive public 'parable format' of preaching was designed to give to those who had but also to take away from those who had not (Matt 13:12). It has to be understood that Jesus was directed to preach in this fashion to the enlightened who were in covenant relationship with his Father, in other words the 'Christadelphians' of his generation. This principle is also how we understand that God would send a strong delusion against those who refused to 'love' the truth (2 Thess. 2:11-12), despite being familiar with that truth. Those who love 'truth' (as a principle) above everything else in their lives will get more and more. Those who prefer the comfortable deceptions of the human heart shared by many will lose more and more. What is gained or lost is 'truth' itself. Truth is always progressive, either positively or negatively. There is no ending point for learning as our Creator's wisdom is infinite. The layers of symmetrical beauty in His expressions and creative activities is beyond the comprehension of our pitifully limited minds. The glory in that truth will begin to be revealed in that imminent fourth Age when enlightenment will no longer be voluntary. No generation before this last generation of the third Age has ever had the capacity

to witness the degree of that glory hidden in plain sight in the things that have been made (Rom. 1:20). The scientific knowledge available today has revealed the incredible extent to which even molecular and atomic structure testifies to the truths of our Creator. It is just as David told us: *The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, And night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, Where their voice is not heard* (Ps. 19:1-3). The only thing we really need to actually hear creation's gospel is "hearing ears". It is "itching ears" that drain away that divine truth (2 Tim. 4:3).

Idolatry, Stubbornness and Covetousness

Any consideration of that second of the ten commandments should certainly address Paul's statement that covetousness qualifies as idolatry (Col. 3:5). This equates the second commandment with the tenth, which forbid coveting anything belonging to one's neighbor. However Samuel also equates idolatry with the sin of stubbornness, in the context of when Saul refused to annihilate the Amalekites right down to their flocks and herds (1 Sam. 15:23). Defining covetousness is not a simple equation, as temptation is not a sin but covetousness does qualify as a sin. James defines guilt assigning sin as the second in a three stage process. First lust, generated from our default serpent based frame of reference, prompts a temptation. However experiencing temptation assigns no guilt whatsoever. We are told perfectly clearly that Jesus was tempted in all points as we, but without sin (Heb. 4:15). Therefore temptation itself assigns no guilt from which repentance is required. It is the surrendering to temptation (guilty sin) that requires repentance. That is the second stage James identifies as the conception of sin. The third stage is the maturing of sin into death. Our Messiah broke that pattern, breaking the power of sin but suffering with the first stage (temptation) and the third stage (death) but never the second stage (the conception of sin). Since covetousness qualifies as guilt assigning sin, then covetousness has to be more than simply a passing temptation and more of a longing that can fuel inappropriate imaginations of how to go about possessing that which belongs to our neighbor.

The real problem facing our Ecclesial Age's last generation is that covetousness has been raised to an art form. The expanding avenues of stimulating communication are mined relentlessly by the marketing professionals who covet our attention for its influence and buying power. We are taught to endlessly want, to crave and to demand. Our rights are loudly chanted but our responsibilities are rarely even whispered. We are taught to band together in order to be a force to be heard and not to accept being unaccommodated any longer. The battle for the loyalty of our wallets, political and ideological support has reached epic proportions. Society's eager embrace of this coveting based philosophy exaggerates the challenge of the faithful who must live, work and communicate in this world of the children of men.

Defeating Covetousness Through Thanksgiving

The defense and the very contradiction to the unGodly challenge of coveting is thankfulness. Coveting is a denial of the legitimacy of our prayers and alms of thanksgiving. When we are truly thankful for whatever it is we have then coveting offers very little challenge. Consider the 'Christadelphians' in the Sinai wilderness. They suffered under severe heat, had no privacy due to nothing but tent walls between families, ate the same diet of manna every single day, sometimes went without water for up to three days and had to walk a long distance outside the camp to relieve themselves. What did Yahweh do when they had the gall to actually complain about their conditions? He **killed** them. *And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp* (Num 11:1-2). When one concentrates on what they consider to be missing from their life, the wonderful blessings become invisible. The Israelites/Christadelphians should have been thankful that they were no longer whipped, persecuted slaves; they enjoyed a blanket of food every day for which all they had to do was gather it; if water was needed it would be provided (miraculously if necessary); they had walked along a dry seabed while the waters of the Red Sea stood at attention on either side of them but

collapsed on their murderous pursuers; they heard the very voice of God booming from the miraculously burning mountain; military marauders like the Amalekites fell before them despite their military inexperience and absence of weapons; and their very clothes and shoes did not decay. Depending on one's perspective we can either empathize with Israel's disastrous complaining or be appalled by it.

The current limitation of our heavenly Father's interaction with us being only the shadows of providence does not unshackle us from the default perspective of our unappreciative nature. The dangerous challenge of covetousness has never been greater, and covetousness is idolatry. We may shake our heads at the steeples and crosses and paintings and religious relics and statues; but if we embrace the blatantly covetous nature of today's society, we are no different from the idolaters.

Our next consideration will address the odd way both Jewish and Christian commentators have misunderstand the intended application of the third commandment, resulting in distorted understandings of our Creator's name and titles.

Bro Jim Dillingham

Taking the Name

The wholesale misunderstanding of the third stone covenant commandment by both Jews and Christians eventually resulted in a distorted but commonly referenced misrepresentation of our Creator's name. *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain* (Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11). The great problem with correctly applying divine expressions has always been the extreme oversimplifications that the enlightened obsess and trip over. Instead of pursuing the broadest application for a law, ritual or principle we instinctively reduce divine expressions and then package them separately so that we can observe them on a technical basis and not as an integrated principle foundation. Then we debate the appropriate application of these oversimplified expressions, often accommodating personal conveniences and thereby completely missing the point. Jesus highlighted this inappropriate thought process demonstrated by the enlightened community's spiritual leaders as straining at a gnat while being able to swallow a camel (Matt. 23:24).

The great stumbling issue for the Jewish enlightened community was framing this third commandment exclusively into nothing more than a verbal application. This minimal obsession fermented over 2,000 years into the 'jehovah' corruption of the divine name. The final development stages of that name corruption is documented in the preface of the Revised Standard Version translation, published in 1952. This next paragraph is a quote from the interpreting team's prefacing statement which is printed at the beginning of every copy of that translation.

RSV Preface

"A major departure from the practice of the American Standard Version is the rendering of the Divine Name, the "Tetragrammaton." The American Standard Version used the term "Jehovah"; the King James Version had employed this in four places, but everywhere else, except in three cases where it was employed as part of a proper name, used the English word LORD (or in certain cases GOD) printed in capitals. The present revision returns to the procedure of the King James Version, which follows the precedent of the ancient Greek and Latin translators and the long established practice in the reading of the Hebrew scriptures in the synagogue. While it is almost if not quite certain that the Name was originally pronounced "Yahweh," this pronunciation was not indicated when the Masoretes added vowel signs to the consonantal Hebrew text. To the four consonants YHWH of the Name, which had come to be regarded as too sacred to be pronounced, they attached vowel signs indicating that in its place should be read the Hebrew word *Adonai* meaning "Lord" (or *Elohim* meaning "God"). The ancient Greek translators substituted the word *Kyrios* (Lord) for the Name. The Vulgate likewise used the Latin word *Dominus*. The form "Jehovah" is of late medieval origin; it is a combination of the consonants of the Divine Name and the vowels attached to it by the Masoretes but belonging to an entirely different word. The sound of Y is represented by J and the sound of W by V, as in Latin. For two reasons the Committee has returned to the more familiar usage of the King James Version: (1) the word "Jehovah" does not accurately represent any form of the Name ever used in Hebrew; and (2) the use of any proper name for the one and only God, as though there were other gods from whom He had to be distinguished, was discontinued in Judaism before the Christian era and is entirely inappropriate for the universal faith of the Christian Church."

It is fascinating to note how the opposite extremes of the Jewish and Christian perspectives in relation to the divine name result in the same exact divinely disrespectful mistake. The Jewish extreme resulted in never verbalizing the divine name for fear of possibly "taking the name in vain". The Christian extreme was exactly

the opposite, presuming there is absolutely no significance to the Creator's name whatsoever, suggesting that the only purpose for a name is to establish an individual distinction. Therefore both communities completely miss the powerful significance and purpose in that name. The blind Jewish leaders strained at a gnat while the deaf Christian leaders swallowed a camel.

The process of "taking" the divine name is not merely some simple verbalization. Certainly it is disrespectful and unwise to use the names and titles of our Creator as well as our Messiah as expressions of surprise or anger in casual language. That obvious application would qualify as the least level of observation in our efforts to avoid 'taking' the name in vain. In order to understand every potentially dangerous application of 'taking that name in vain' we first need to understand the procedure for 'taking' the name.

How Do We "Take" the Name?

The Hebrew word *nasa*, translated "take" in this third commandment, presents the concept of lifting up and baring, or carrying something. The item that is being lifted up upon oneself and carried in this context would be the divine name. This is the same word used by Joshua in describing how the priests would lift up and bear (Heb. *nasa*) the Ark of the Covenant into the swollen Jordan River that would reverse the water flow from the mouth of the Dead Sea all the way back to Adam by Zaretan (Josh. 3). It is the memorial name of our Creator that we lift up and bare. We must not bare (take) that name casually or disrespectfully (in vain) or we risk igniting the indignation of the Creator of the universe, whose name we can disparage. That is not an inconsequential prospect, despite the foolish who are leavening our community by promoting the extremely unwise concept that we no longer have any reason to ever be afraid of God. The warning is perfectly clear: *for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain*. Once we 'take' the Holy Name upon ourselves we bear a great responsibility to honor that name. We will be held accountable.

As we have noted many times, creational patterns always confirm divine principles. Just as one could both voluntarily and involuntarily "take" the divine name under the laws of our Creator, so this is also true in the patterns of mortal life. In the initial Patriarchal Age and the subsequent First Kingdom Age a boy came into a covenant relationship with Yahweh involuntarily at eight days old when his flesh was cut off in the ritual of circumcision. That covenant binding relationship assigns that Holy Name to that boy, in the prophetic sense of how the name of God is written on the foreheads of all the immortalized at the conclusion of the Millennial Kingdom, the eighth divine day (Rev 22:4) when all "flesh" is cut off and only spirit life remains. The current Ecclesial Age has experienced the temporary replacement of the circumcision ritual with baptism, where a mature man or woman chooses to enter into a covenant relationship with our Creator. In that process they "take" that Holy Name. They lift up and bear that divine family name upon themselves through baptism. This is exactly the expression Jesus uses in his command to baptize: *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit* (Matt. 28:19). This is the singular family name, that multitudinous singularity (God manifestation) name into which we are baptized. We are warned never to take that name, to lift up and bare that name upon ourselves, in a casual or disrespectful manner.

The Assigned Names of the Newborn and the Bride

In standard mirror fashion we see how the historic patterns of mortal life validate these ritual demonstrations of the divine principle. A newborn is involuntarily given the family name of the father of the child, just as the eight day old Hebrew boy was involuntarily circumcised into a covenant relationship with Yahweh. However, like baptism, a mature bride voluntarily chooses to take the family name of her husband upon marriage. A bride in our current society who somehow maintains her maiden family name in marriage highly disrespects the divine principle involved in 'taking' the name and then bearing it with honor. This foolish pattern would also contradict the point of the divinely appointed Ecclesial Age rituals of a sister covering her head during prayer and her required silence to avoid usurping the authority of her divinely appointed male headship.

These two avenues of name assignments (birth and marriage) are both highlighted in divine expressions as demonstrations of the divine plan of salvation. We should all be familiar with how our heavenly Father has visited the Gentiles to take out (of us) a people for His name (Acts 15:14). That name assignment is scripturally expressed in both terms of birth and marriage.

The Principle of Dual Applications

As a side note, we should recognize another validation of a pattern we have repeatedly highlighted in this series of commentaries concerning the repetitive dual applications of a single principle... the two categories of death, the two categories of resurrection, the two categories of the fear of God, the two categories of sin, the two categories of righteousness, the two comings of Jesus Christ validating his two name assignments (Jesus and Christ), the law of the early and the latter rains, the two categories of the living and the dead that will be accountable to Christ's judgment, the two possible results of that judgment being eternal death or eternal life, the two chambers of each divine sanctuary (Holy and Most Holy), the two categories of the divine intention of man being in the image as well as the likeness of the Creator, etc. This pattern is again validated in the two avenues by which a societal name is assigned... birth and marriage.

As noted, the salvation application for 'taking the name' can be seen in both birth and marriage. We know of how Yahweh identifies Israel as his bride (Jer. 3:20; 31:32; Ezek. 16:32). The Ecclesial bride of the Messiah is presented throughout the Song of Solomon. We have many references identifying those that Christ chooses at the judgment to participate in immortalization as his bride (Rev 19:7-9; 2 Cor. 11:2) and that immortalization ceremony is paralleled to a wedding (Matt. 22; 25:10). Additionally that immortalization/salvation procedure is also defined as being 'born' (again). Sadly, the response of Jesus to Nicodemus concerning the nature of being born again in order to inherit the Kingdom is often minimized into nothing more than just a mental and emotional rebirth. The definition Jesus offers in defining that rebirth as becoming like the wind (pneuma/spirit) completely eliminates such a minimal presumption (John 3:8). The process of salvation will be a complete rebirth when flesh nature is covered/atoned with spirit nature. It will also be a marriage where the bride of the Messiah is clothed with immortality, that white bridal gown of righteousness that is made white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 19:8; 7:14-17). This is why Jesus is appropriately identified as the everlasting 'father' along with the other titles of mighty god, prince of peace, wonderful and counselor (Is. 9:6). That fatherhood of Jesus is qualified on the basis of his reconciling the redeemed on the basis of his sacrifice. *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand* (Is. 53:10). It is on the basis of our Messiah making his life an offering for sin that he *will see his seed*... becoming a father of those who will be everlasting. The fact that this fatherhood is a future reality does not contradict the immediate nature of the verb tense in Isaiah's recorded promise. This unique divine expression tool of speaking of a future event as a historical fact is used a number of times in scripture, such as when God declares He has already made Abraham a father of many nations when he didn't even have a son (Rom. 4:17). Our Creator has the right to call things that are not as though they were... because His intentions are absolutely certain. Unlike ourselves, He has the right to speak of a future event as a historical reality.

Being Born of God Is An Expression of Salvation

The relationship between a newborn taking the family name of the father is a divine precedent. That second resurrection to immortality (following judgment - as opposed to the resurrection to mortality preceding judgment) is repeatedly presented as a birth. Jesus is the firstborn from the dead (Col 1:18). He certainly was not the first to re-awaken from the dead (as the resurrection to mortality for judgment is depicted, i.e. Lazarus, the daughter of Jairus). However Jesus was the first to ever be born again into the spirit nature following his death. That re-birthing designation is extended to the faithful Jesus will invite to inherit the Kingdom prepared

for them since the beginning. Jesus was the first born among many more who will follow (Rom. 8:29). Those who are chosen to experience this re-birth, truly and forever taking the name of Creator, will no longer have the capacity to sin. *Whosoever is **born** of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is **born** of God* (1 Jn 3:9). *We know that whosoever is **born** of God sins not; but he that is **begotten** of God keeps himself, and that wicked one touches him not* (1 Jn. 5:18). These references have no application to our current cursed state, as the wicked one most certainly still touches every one of us and we certainly can commit sin at this time. These, as well as many other references, highlight the change in nature in the rebirth of the children of Jesus Christ on the basis of his death and resurrection (Ps. 22:27,31; 1 Jn. 2:28-29; Is. 66:5-8). A birth, even a re-birth, will require a new name. Upon that re-birth from death defilement we can be confident we will not have the capacity to take that name in vain... ever again.

Currently we are in our qualifying trials for whether or not we share the same original vision of creation as our Creator. That original creational template included our being in the image and likeness of our Creator... physically and spiritually. That is our goal. In order to be reborn into that spirit image without physical flaws like aging and disease we will have to endlessly demonstrate an ultimate loyalty and preference for our Creator's likeness. Understanding, appreciating and valuing Yahweh's right-ness above everything else in our lives demonstrates that intended "likeness" that is sought out among the enlightened in every age. This hopeful re-birth into the eternal image and likeness of our Creator is often scripturally capsulized into that very 'name' we are warned not take upon ourselves in a casual or disrespectful manner (in vain).

There Are Many Ways to Take Yahweh's Name in Vain

The forbidden vanity in taking the name of Yahweh is demonstrated in the shameful and ungodly manner the enlightened sometimes live their lives.

Prov 30:9 *Lest I be full, and deny thee, And say, Who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor, and steal, And **take the name of my God in vain.***

Jer 34:16 *But ye turned and **polluted my name**, and caused every man his servant, and every man his handmaid, whom ye had set at liberty at their pleasure, to return, and brought them into subjection, to be unto you for servants and for handmaids*

Ezek 30:39 *As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but **pollute ye my holy name** no more with your gifts, and with your idols.*

Mal 1:6 *A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: If then I be a father, where is mine honour? And if I be a master, where is my fear? Saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that **despise my name.** And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; And ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil?*

1 Tim 6:1 *Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the **name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.***

James 2:6-7 *But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not **they blaspheme that worthy name** by the which ye are called?*

If we obsess on the little things (straining at a gnat) we will miss the big things (swallowing a camel). The Jewish scholars obsessed over the tiniest application of how inappropriately verbalizing the divine name could qualify as taking that name in vain. That microscopic perspective inflated that image, creating a mountain out of a molehill, resulting in a corruption of that name they supposedly feared taking in vain. We Gentiles who have taken the name of our God upon ourselves, in the hope of forever being assigned that name through a spirit-

nature rebirth and a divine marriage, must respect the seriousness and danger in disrespecting the name we have chosen to bear before Yahweh, Christ, the sons of God and the sons of men.

It seems appropriate to conclude this commentary with the same verse I closed every CYC class over 28 years. At the end of every class the young people would have to competitively find and read a Bible verse. This was a valuable exercise I learned from Bro Ron Abel at Wilbraham Bible School over 45 years ago. The first to find and read the assigned verse (or recite perfectly by memory) would drop out and help themselves to a sweet prize. Although the previous search assignments were quite varied, the last verse was always the same. Malachi 3:16 *Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: And the Lord hearkened, and heard it, And a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.*
Bro Jim Dillingham