

Worship Today

Direct parallels exist between the Old Testament sacrificial system and modern worship. As Israel was to come before Yahweh, we are to appear in worship before Him now.

Bible commentators have pointed out that Yahweh took only six days to create this world, but took 30 days to reveal to mankind His prescribed and proper worship, Ex. 40:17-Nu.1:1.

The worship Yahweh expects and desires of us is very precise, and building the proper spiritual character within mankind requires much time. Even getting His attention is prescribed for us in His word, and we must diligently seek Him.

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that comes to Yahweh must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him," Heb. 11:6.

The Corban Offering

Notice Lev. 1:2: *"...If any man of you bring an offering unto Yahweh, you shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd, and of the flock."* This voluntary offering is known as the "corban," an admittance or approach offering.

To approach a monarch or superior in the East, a gift is brought to secure an audience with him. It is often referred to as *"the face-offering."* After the "corban" was accepted and admittance gained, then the real offering or present was given.

Ancient Israel was to present an offering of cattle or sheep, an animal or creature with which Yahweh had already blessed His people. Wildlife such as a deer or a wild fowl was not acceptable. The people's sacrifice was to come from what they had raised and earned.

A Deeper, Spiritual Meaning

These animal sacrifices indicate something deeper, and carry a profound spiritual lesson for those who accept Yahshua as Savior. Sacrifices are still with us in the New Testament, but take on a deeper and more personal spiritual meaning in our worship and daily walk. Let us examine the lessons to be learned underlying the commanded animal sacrifices and spiritual understanding we are to perceive from the various sacrificial offerings.

In the New Covenant era, we do not bring an animal to be sacrificed at the Temple. There is no longer a functioning priesthood. These animal sacrifices pointed to the atoning work of Yahshua the Messiah, Who as the perfect sacrifice paid the ransom price for the sins of all mankind. Since Yahshua's death and resurrection, sacrificing of animals is in abeyance.

The Book of Hebrews reveals that sacrifices of animals is no longer done because of the change in the priesthood from the Levitical to that of Melchisedek. Chapter seven of Hebrews points out that Yahshua the Messiah is our High Priest of the order of Melchisedek.

Yahshua is the firstborn from the dead, and is referred to as our Elder Brother. As the firstborn son, He also became the priest of the family. We are a type of the firstborn, or firstfruits, James 1:18; Rev. 14:4. We are being called to become priests in the Kingdom under

Yahshua. We are to be teachers of Yahweh's way of life.

The Calves of Our Lips

It is the "*fruit of our lips*" in giving thanks to Yahweh which is the spiritual sacrifice we are to make today, Hebrews 13:15. (Hosea 14:2 reads "*calves of four lips.*")

Thus, instead of presenting the "corban offering," we enter into the presence of Yahweh with songs of praise (Ps. 100:2), the fruit of our lips. We are the living stones being built into "*a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to Yahweh by Yahshua the Messiah,*" our High Priest, 1Peter 2:5.

Our Savior condemned the "corban" offering wherein one might bring a gift to Yahweh, but willfully neglect his other duties such as obligations to his parents, Mark 7:11. We are to be examples for others even now. The offering was just the beginning step of pure worship, a gift to get Yahweh's attention.

Our Bodies A Spiritual Sacrifice

Paul clarifies what is now expected of us who have accepted Yahshua's sacrifice: "*Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of [Yahweh's] mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasant to [Yahweh]—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what [Yahweh's] will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will,*" Romans 12:1-2 NIV.

We come to worship Yahweh on the Sabbath, a day He Himself has set aside for us to worship Him. With songs of praise and thanks, we extol and lift up His Name, Yahweh, as He has commanded us to do in Psalm 68:4. He clearly tells us to sing praises to His Name, which we know is Yahweh. We are not to follow the rebellious who substitute another name or title, calling Him "L-rd, G-d, Eternal," or whatever their carnal minds imagine.

Singing Peculiar To Biblical Worship

Singing is distinctive to the worship of Yahweh. Most clubs or fraternal organizations do not include singing in their gatherings. Eastern religions characteristically have a chant or mantra which is constantly repeated. The Bible encourages us to sing spiritual songs.

Singing is first mentioned when the joyful Israelites crossed over the Red Sea in Exodus 15. They were no longer in Egypt and were now free of bondage. The Song of Moses is a great song of deliverance and victory, praising Yahweh for the miracles He had wrought for Israel. This song will again be sung at the end of age (Rev. 15:3) by the victorious overcomers.

It was King David who appointed certain of the Levites to minister before Yahweh and to thank and praise Him with instruments and song as the ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem, 1Chron. 16:1-6.

The Disciples Sang

When taken captive, Israel refused the demand of the Babylonians to sing the songs of Zion. They would not sing Yahweh's songs in a foreign land, Psalm 137:3-4. Rather than sing

these precious songs and give their captors an opportunity to ridicule their worship, blaspheming Yahweh's name, the captive Israelites refused to sing Yahweh's song in Babylon.

There was a period of time before the New Testament was written in which the early believers studied and followed only the Old Testament, for that is all they had. Singing the Psalms was common, for all 150 Psalms are appropriate for our worship.

Some Psalms command us to use musical instruments to accompany the singers: "*Praise Yahweh with harp; sing unto Him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings; sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise,*" Psalm 33:2-3. A number of Psalms tell us to praise Yahweh with timbrel, harp, and trumpet. Obviously used in the Old Testament, instruments are therefore acceptable in the New Testament. Some churches erroneously teach against any musical instruments in their services.

Singing was a custom of the Savior and His disciples (Mat. 26:30) as they sang the great Hallel Psalms at Passover before He was impaled.

We Stand—Out Of Respect

Because singing praises to Yahweh and lifting up His Son is the spiritual counterpart of offering a "face or audience offering," it is only proper that we stand when we address the King of the universe and give Him the honor and respect He deserves.

Assuredly, we would stand if we offered a gift to the president of the United States or to the queen of England. How much more should we show respect by standing in the presence of Yahweh when we address Him in song or prayer! Whoever heard of anyone offering a sacrificed animal sitting down?

Yahweh Is Our Audience

When assembling on the Sabbath in obedience to Yahweh's will, the earthly human gathering joyfully directs their praises to our Heavenly Father. The moderator of the Assembly is simply the coordinator of the gathering as he guides us along in harmony to praise and give thanks to Yahweh in the heavens. We are the performers, Yahweh is the audience.

The preacher merely teaches the Word as the Spirit of the Heavenly Father moves him to speak. The entire service is directed to Yahweh and His Son. He is the audience. We are performing for His benefit.

Songs and special music are not for the benefit of the assembled brethren. Everything is done to please our Heavenly Father. Applause and clapping for any performance is not to be done by the assembly, for the singers, musicians and others with special offerings are directing those to Yahweh. He is the one we are trying to please. We gather to worship Yahweh and feed His sheep. The offerings made to exalt Yahweh will inspire the worshipers and through these offerings the assembly is blessed.

The Savior expected His followers to gather as a body each Sabbath for praise and worship, "*Exhorting one another; and so much the more, as you see the day approaching,*" Hebrews 10:25.

When Yahshua ascended, the Holy Spirit was sent to this earth, and inspired brethren were raised up to edify the assembly. Thus, we find that apostles, prophets, evangelists, pas-

tors, and teachers were promised us by the Savior for today's *"perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Messiah,"* Eph. 4:12. Thus, we see that Yahshua makes provision for His Assembly to be a viable, living organism.

We Are Living Stones

Each of us has a place in the body of Messiah, we are told in 1Cor. 12:14-20. We may be a toenail, a part of a finger, an ear, or whatever we are best fitted for according to Yahshua's choosing. Every member of the body is necessary, says Paul in verses 21-27.

We are expected to join with others in worship each Sabbath so that we learn to work together. We are to do more than tolerate one another, but are to exhibit Yahshua's agape love and compassion within the body of believers. We are to grow in the maturity of the Messiah, Eph. 4:13.

The shaping, cutting, grinding and polishing of the *"living stones"* of Yahweh's spiritual temple is needed to fit us properly into the spiritual house built upon Yahshua the Chief Cornerstone. We read: *"You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to Yahweh by Yahshua the Messiah."* (1 Peter 2:5)

Scattered Especially Need The Feasts

Gathering to worship Yahweh and sing praises to His Name is expected of all believers. However, many are isolated and scattered, unable to get together with the body of believers as they would like. They can benefit in listening to a cassette tape or watching a video each Sabbath. A growing number do this, singing along with the tapes and taking full advantage of our reaching out in extended fellowship and sharing.

Paul wrote of a similar experience and told the Corinthians that as they were gathered in the Name of Yahshua the Messiah, he was with them in spirit and the combined spiritual power would give them special wisdom, 1Cor. 5:4. Prayer works wonders! Worship today centers on the spiritual growth of Yahweh's people. Ancient Israel assembled around the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and were in Yahweh's very presence, the priests officiated in their midst. They saw the pillar of fire by night and the cloud in the day.

Today we do not have the Tabernacle nor Levitical priesthood. Nor do we have the sanctuary furniture such as the lamp stand, the brazen altar, the laver, altar of incense, nor the ark of the Covenant. Each of these represented a spiritual aspect of worship. We should strive to mature spiritually and assemble when possible for, *"where two or three are gathered together in [Yahshua's] Name,"* He is there in our midst. The gathering of the saints (who are Yahweh's treasure, His purchased possession) as a body sanctifies the gathering.

The building itself is not holy, but is sanctified by the presence of the saints. When they disband, the departing brethren each retain their portion of Yahweh's Spirit: *"Know you not that you are the Temple of Yahweh and that the Spirit of Yahweh dwells in you?"* 1Cor. 3:16.

Following Yahshua with little fellowship is indeed a lonely walk. With only the Holy Spirit monitoring our lives, we must lean more and more on Yahweh's Word and follow as closely as we are able. It takes determination and strength to stand for truth. Many true believ-

ers are the only ones in their town, or may be the only believer in the family. Perhaps this is why the Feast of Tabernacles and other Feast days in Yahweh's calendar are really special times of gathering and much-needed fellowship.

Yahweh tells us that He is calling but a few now to rule with His Son: *"Turn, O backsliding children, says Yahweh; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion."* (Jer. 3:14)

Meeting together with the brothers and sisters helps clarify some of the doctrines that may be a bit fuzzy. We can get support or correction from others who are also good Bible students. We must let His word teach us, as this is a part of learning and growing.

The chiseling, grinding, shaping and polishing of the "living stones" for that "spiritual Temple" continues when we assemble. We are actually meeting with those who have been chosen to become royalty—kings and priests under Yahshua in the coming Kingdom. To do this, Yahweh expects us to make every effort and take every opportunity to gather on His Sabbaths and Feast days. *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is..."* Heb. 10:25.

May Yahweh keep you on the narrow way that leads to life eternal. We pray that Yahshua's coming Kingdom will be in the forefront of your mind until He returns, and that you will be encouraged to worship with others of this precious faith, *"...and so much the more as you see the day approaching."*

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