

# The Divine Service of the Celestials

(Essay No. 13)

ISRAEL'S PAST DIVINE SERVICE on earth, was an example to them and a shadow from the divine service of the celestials, that is, the divine service engaged in by the celestials (Heb. 8:5). Thus, that of which Moses was apprised, it already, to some degree, operated among the celestials. The model of the tabernacle shown to Moses, in the mountain, pertained to the details of the divine service which Moses was to institute on the earth among the people of leue, the sons of Jacob. In this way was intimated the parity of need and situation of each class of creatures, the celestial and the terrestrial.

There was no value reflected from Israel's divine service back to the celestial things. They needed better sacrifices than those which were instituted in Israel to accompany the example given to them from the divine service of the celestials. The better sacrifices required for the celestial things, these came to them at Christ's entry into heaven itself, for Christ, in offering Himself, entered into the holiest of the celestial sanctuary (Heb. 9:24). This made evident that His was a "better sacrifice" for it cleansed the celestial things (Heb. 9:23). Nor was there any element of "often" about His offering (9:25), for its effectiveness reached back to the disruption (9:26). Thus, Christ has happened upon a ministry which brings value to the celestials, as well as to Israel, and, eventually through Israel, to the nations of the earth. God's Son, being the Allottee of all, effected a cleansing corresponding to His allotment (Heb.1:2)

These heavenly creatures engaged in a divine service which could not include a system of sacrifice, nor could those who engaged in the divine service provide such a feature. Yet there was need for the spiritual values which flow from sacrifice. This position is most significant, and its solution is equally so. Its parallel existed in the priesthood of Melchizedek, which was a service without sacrifice, yet with an objective to promote righteousness and peace. Though the Lord Jesus was, by the swearing of leue (Ps. 110:4) constituted a Priest of that order which did not engage in sacrifice, yet the Lord Jesus did provide the needed sacrifice to cleanse the celestials, as well as to hallow those of the new covenant which leue will conclude with the House of Israel and the House of Juda. Because of His provisions, these matters will ensue to the heavens and the earth.

In the past, the celestials did not have the knowledge of the multifarious wisdom of God; nor was such knowledge immediate for them when Christ entered into heaven itself. Yet now, this is being adjusted, for apart from, and from outside their sphere, the celestials are perceiving the values of this present administration on earth. The grace of God's evangel is providing a display for them to know that wisdom through the ecclesia. That this is so, does, indeed, stress that the present administration was a secret, not only untraceable in the Scriptures given to Israel, but really hid in God until the point made known to His apostle to the nations.

That the priestly service in Israel afforded nothing toward the celestial service, this indicates how highly spiritual and exclusive was the character of the ministry of Him Who did effect the better sacrifices. For Him, the earthly sanctuary, that made by hands, had no standpoint. Descent apart, He could not follow those who engaged in a ministry which was but typical. As was said to Nicodemus: "if I should be telling you of the celestial matters:" and forthwith, He told of the type, used by Moses in the wilderness, from the fulfilment of which would come the better sacrifice for the celestial things (John 3:12,13), and which later would be also for Israel. Truly the manner of his death was not known before, though there existed a feature which could be used to show it. These words (John 3:14) (cf. 8:28 and 12:33) were celestial teaching and information given by Him Who had descended from heaven.

It would seem to be a fact of the universe that affliction produces glory, especially when it is related to the purpose of the Benign One. So, too, does it seem that reconciliation is effected through suffering which removes estrangement. Sin does not deal out death to the celestials, but it does estrange them from God. The

circumstances of the celestials did not afford the means to readjust them to God by sacrifice. To provide such agency, it was necessary that God's Son be made some bit inferior to messengers because of the suffering of death. The return of God's Son to "heaven itself," after the experience of death, was evidently sufficient to command attention from some of the celestials (1 Pet.3:22). The understanding of the matter, what it means to humans and to celestials, the perception of this must ensue and become plain (1 Peter 1:12).

By the death and resurrection of Christ, not only do humans learn of God's love to them, but so too do the celestials. They are being instructed by watching the ecclesia, whose members are displaying the values of faith in the death of God's Son and the blood of His Christ. The celestials see the persistence and the triumph of the faith of the saints, making them intimates of the Father. They see, too, how faith relates them to the Son of His love.

## FROM THE CELESTIALS

In what respect may we understand Israel's divine service to be an example and shadow from the divine service of the celestials? It seems certain that the fact of a service of the celestials, which could afford a model with clues to sinning and estranged creatures of the earth, this must also indicate the estrangement of the celestials from the Invisible Subjector. Truly there was sin and its estrangement in the earthly people, not to speak of other features which developed amidst their disaffection from God.

The model shown to Moses was such that it made plain to Israel that the way into the presence of God was not open to them. The same must be the truth for the celestials, for to the details of their divine service pertained the state figured in the model. We can hardly conclude that the celestials engaged in a sacrificial system such as, or comparable to, that which the priests of Israel ministered on behalf of themselves and the people. Yet, the existence of a service, from which such a model could be drawn, implied that, for the celestials, there was some sense in which the divine presence is indicated or located, and that access thereto was restricted. There could be no boldness of approach, even for the celestials.

These thoughts make the tabernacle model, shown to Moses in the mount, and reproduced by Moses through the hands of Bezaleel, to be the counterpart showing what things exist in the heavens for the celestials and their divine service. This model, so supplied to Israel, was also quite agreeable to the ritual of sacrifice which came to surround it in Israel. Thus, too, the reason for the divine service, in each case, must find a common basis, that of the existence of restraint from approach to leue from these details, viewed in reverse, we confirm the character and meaning of the divine service of the celestials: they were estranged from God, and were not able to provide the means to remove the estrangement. This lack on the part of the divine service of the celestials becomes as evident as are the ineffectual sacrifices of Israel's divine service, in their repetition. In each case, the lack was only met and filled by the blood of Him Who is seated at the right hand of the Majesty in the heights (Heb. 1:3).

The items of the service of the celestials, and the character of any ceremony which entered into it, can hardly be stated in precise terms, but we may be sure that the service would teach the features not only related to the creature's approach to God, but also the expressing of subjection and allegiance to Him. We will look at chapter four of the Unveiling and note what confirmation may be there.

The vision detailed in Unveiling four appears to give us a glimpse of heaven's proceedings. It may well be that this view shows more features than existed in the worship of the days of Moses. This we see in the reference of the elders to the slain Lambkin: "Thou .... dost buy us for God by Thy blood" (Unv. 5:8-9). The elders evidently fill an official position, representing and leading the worship of the heavenly government. They sit on thrones, and present the worship of others, and speak for God (4:10-5:5). They also have wreaths, and these they cast before Him Who lives for the eons of the eons. The description given appears to indicate that the elders combine the office of prophet, priest and king, as is typified in the course of Israel's divine service, which items also pointed to features concerning Him Who is the slain Lambkin.

The tabernacle, constructed on earth, in accord with the model, intimated to Israel great lessons around the righteousness of God and His holiness. So, too, to the celestials, for them the reality which lay behind the model would teach the same spiritual values. Yet there would be a lack in respect of understanding the love of God. This was a subject for the future understanding and revealing.

The sacrifices of the ritual given to Israel, these were apparently an addition, a service related to the model shown to Moses in the mount, and were intended to emphasize the estrangement shown in the design of the model. The sacrifices, when engaged in by Israel, through the medium of their priests, would exhibit for attention by the celestials, the type which lay ahead in the death and blood of Christ. Thus, the divine service of the celestials, copied in part for Israel's benefit, was made to bring deeper insight and knowledge to the celestials. This was without carrying to the celestials any immediate profit, other than affirming the existence of discord in the universe, which called for rectification.

From the viewpoint of displaying spiritual values to the celestials, the sacrifices in Israel would not simply point forward, but also backward to the fact that the Lambkin was slain from the disruption of the world. That slaying, in purpose, corresponded with the call for light in Genesis 1:2. This call for light was the beginning of that movement which would, in due time, lead to the actual slaying, and death, of Him Whose title is the Lambkin. By the ritual in Israel, the celestials would connect these two points, and learn thereby that a cleansing was to be effected, the prelude to the eventual repudiation of sin, when it will no longer be in mind against the creature. This corresponds with the end of the fourth eon for the terrestrial, and it will make preparation for entry into the last eon when all is to be headed up in Christ.

From their divine service, the celestials would know the need for the "shedding of blood", or, at least, that its equivalence was required for them. Yet it was a feature which they could not at all provide. Jesus was made "some bit inferior" to messengers with a view to the suffering of death. This suffering of death was to be for all. When Christ entered into heaven, then the divine service of the celestials received its reality. This had long been intimated to them, for their divine service had regard to their own needs.

The messengers (as distinct from the celestials) could not provide this feature for the divine service, however much some may partner God's Son (Heb. 1:9). At no time did God say to any of them, sit at my right. That place is for Him Who is able to effect God's righteousness, to the creature. The messengers cannot achieve subjection as does the Son. Some messengers may act as helps to aid deficiencies which lie around those who are about to be enjoying the allotment of salvation (Heb. 1:13) in regard to Israel, but this will not be so in the next eon (Heb.2:5) when the inhabited earth is not subjected to the messengers.

These thoughts are distinguishing created beings into categories. It is the celestials who have particular need to engage in divine service, and it seems that the messengers are not able to provide the additions for the celestial divine service, that is, the additions which have the embrace and extent and character equal to the needs which conciliate to God, for, truly, there is need in the heavens for conciliation to be brought about (Eph. 1:10).

Here we reach the view which finds agreement with the making known to celestials, by means of the ecclesia, the multifarious wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10). That this was in prospect, had been kept secret from them, though they have learned a little by the additions made to Israel's ritual, around and beyond the feature of which their own celestial service supplied the model for Israel. Now the celestials see grace displayed, grace which is able to effect God's intentions, despite failure on the part of Israel. This is a most important aspect, and one which we need to mark well, for it shows the real depth of our God and Father's plans, and His ability to proceed and achieve them when all seems contrary.

The celestials now see God's love in operation. They see His love taking hold of some out of the nations to be the complement of Christ, His body, for God's grace is giving to its members the stature, fitting them for

service to the Son which He is to exercise among the celestials, a ministry which displays conciliation to them. These are matters which have in view that future administration which is the complement of the eras, in which all will be headed up in the Christ, that in the heavens and that on the earth.

The foregoing thoughts sketch the course which has been followed in the events of the universe in respect of the celestials. They arise out of the fact, and the consequences of the fact, which ensued following the creating of the Adversary. Then came the nullifying of those values of God's Son in His capacity of the Image of the invisible God. In place of invisibility, there came to be, and to exist, God's unapproachability: this was due to the taking office of the counterworker, for he sowed the seeds of discord, and this required that the celestials be taught what had occurred, and its meaning. This teaching is effected by means of their divine service. The position was somewhat as in Israel, for they learned gradually their position and their need, from the divine service given to them.

The original position of God's Son was such as to remove the barrier of invisibility around God. By sin's entry, which is a matter related to the Adversary entering upon his jurisdiction, darkness comes to dominance. Glory must needs be acquired by God's Son in face of, and in spite of, darkness, and this in order to remove the estrangement and achieve reconciliation. To this end, God's Son becomes the Firstborn from the dead — but that first required that the creature showed his estrangement in and at the cross. Roused from the dead, He became the Firstborn therefrom, and is then God's Complement, in whom God has concealed all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Now these treasures have been revealed and are being displayed in the course of the EONS which remain. By these thoughts, it is intimated how humanity, and the events upon the earth, came to have inherent relationship to matters in the heavens.

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