



Day 1

Changed by Beholding

Here is a principle of human nature: “By beholding we become changed.” The psalmist understood this when he wrote, “But their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands. . . . Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them” (Psalm 115:4, 8, NIV). The minds, thoughts, aspirations, and characters of those who behold idols made by man can go no higher than the human. Their characters can reflect only what they behold. The life will grow further and further away from the true God, becoming more and more the image of fallen man.

On the other hand, those who, under the Holy Spirit’s inspiration, worship the God of heaven are lifted above the sinful human character and values. They come to understand God’s character as they behold it and His love. Paul understood this when he wrote, “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18, NIV). We are changed by what we behold.

There is no greater revelation of love in the universe than the sacrifice of Christ, which is represented in the Lord’s Supper. Contemplating such love lifts one far above the tainted values of this sinful world and affects one’s life with the character revealed in Christ’s loving sacrifice for sinful man. Concerning this Ellen White wrote:

Looking upon the crucified Redeemer, we more fully comprehend the magnitude and meaning of the sacrifice made by the Majesty of heaven. The plan of salvation is glorified before

us, and the thought of Calvary awakens living and sacred emotions in our hearts. Praise to God and the Lamb will be in our hearts and on our lips; for pride and self-worship cannot flourish in the soul that keeps fresh in memory the scenes of Calvary.

He who beholds the Saviour’s matchless love will be elevated in thought, purified in heart, transformed in character. He will go forth to be a light to the world, to reflect in some degree this mysterious love. The more we contemplate the cross of Christ, the more fully shall we adopt the language of the apostle when he said, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” Galatians 6:14 (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 661).

By participating in the Lord’s Supper, Christians have a wonderful opportunity to especially focus on Christ’s great, loving sacrifice. It is a time to behold the love of God for each of His children. This is why Christ instructed His disciples, “This do in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19), when He initiated the Communion service in the upper room just before His crucifixion. He knew that beholding His loving sacrifice was, for them, essential for their personal spiritual growth in more fully reflecting God’s loving character.

This is why Christians participate in the Lord’s Supper on a regular basis. As individual Christians we need to remember Christ’s sacrifice for us every day. The Lord’s Supper gives us the opportunity to especially remember His sacrifice corporately with fellow believers. It is a time of special blessing for the

participants. “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20), according to Christ’s own words. Corporate worship and participating in the Lord’s Supper are times when He is especially present to bless and lift the thoughts of His children to the love of God.

The apostle Paul recognized the importance of corporate worship when he wrote, “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:23–25, NIV). Paul points out that the fellowship of believers plays an important role in our encouraging one another to be more loving and faithful in our service for God. Of

all the services in the church, the Lord’s Supper, with its focus on Christ’s loving sacrifice, is a unique opportunity to renew our commitment to being a loving, faithful servant of Christ. For the better we understand the love of God for us, the better able we will be to truly love God and others.

This is why John wrote, “We love him, because he first loved us. . . . And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also” (1 John 4:19, 21). We can love God only to the degree that we know He loves us. And we can love others only to the degree that we love God. The Lord’s Supper truly represents God’s love for us, which plays an essential role in enabling us to love God in return and to love one another. It is, perhaps, our greatest opportunity to behold the love of God and to be changed into the loving and loveable Christian that God has called us to become.

Personal Reflection and Discussion

1. Why is it important that individuals not worship idols? _____

2. What does this phrase mean? “By beholding we become changed.” _____

3. Why is it important that Christians participate in the Lord’s Supper? _____

4. What is the only way we can come to truly love God and one another? _____

Prayer Focus

Pray for:

- God to fill you with His Spirit
- God to reveal His love for you
- those on your prayer list.



Day 2

Ceremonies—Part 1

Ever since sin entered this world in the Garden of Eden, God has had sacred ceremonies for His people to perform. God's instructions for these ceremonies are very specific, and it is a serious matter for human beings to try to change them to fit their ideas. We see this clearly illustrated in the very beginning of the history of fallen humanity. God instructed Adam that a sacrificial offering of an animal was required in order to meet His requirements for worship. Both Cain and Abel, Adam's two sons, knew of this instruction.

Abel was a "keeper of sheep," and Cain was a "tiller of the ground" (Genesis 4:2). We read:

And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell (verses 3–5).

Cain became so angry that eventually he approached his brother, Abel, and killed him. This resulted in Cain being cursed by God and forced to become a "fugitive and a vagabond" (verse 12).

It is very important that every Christian take God's instructions seriously, including His instruction about ceremonies. Each ceremony represented an aspect of God's character of love and Christ's sacrifice for His people. Throughout the Old Testament we find example after example of the consequences of disobeying

God's instruction concerning holy ceremonies and even holy furniture. An angel of the Lord threatened to slay Moses on his way to Egypt, because Moses had not conducted the ceremony of circumcision on his youngest son (Exodus 4:24–26). In the tabernacle in the wilderness, Aaron's two sons were slain by the Lord when they offered "strange fire" instead of the sacred fire, thus showing dishonor and disrespect to God (Leviticus 10:1–11). In the time of King David, Uzzah was slain because he reached out to steady the ark of God, which only the Levites were allowed to handle (2 Samuel 6:6, 7).

The last plague on Egypt before Pharaoh let Moses lead Israel out of Egypt was the slaying of the firstborn sons. The only way to prevent the destroying angel from killing the firstborn son was to put the blood of a lamb on the doorpost. This was the origin of the Passover service. Only the blood of Christ, symbolized by the blood of the slain lamb on the doorpost, protected the firstborn that night. To deviate from God's instruction concerning the Passover ceremony would have been fatal.

It was essential for Israel to follow God's instructions for every ceremony in the Old Testament era. In its own way, each was a type and shadow pointing to the reality of Christ's sacrifice. So, when a person participated in these types and shadows, he was showing his faith in Jesus Christ, the true Lamb of God. However, when the Lamb of God appeared in the person of Jesus Christ, these types and shadows were about to come to an end. When Jesus gave Himself as the sacrifice for our sins on the cross, was buried in the tomb, and then raised from the dead early

on the first day of the week, the necessity of the Old Testament ceremonies ceased. The reality had come and fulfilled what the ceremonies pointed to.

Concerning this truth Ellen White wrote, “The need for the service of sacrifices and offerings ceased when type met antitype in the death of Christ. In Him the shadow reached the substance. . . . Types and shadows, offerings and sacrifices, had no virtue after Christ’s death on the cross” (*The Faith I Live By*, p. 106).

Does this mean there are no longer ceremonies in the New Testament era? Not at all. We will study in tomorrow’s devotional the new ceremonies Jesus established for the church to follow after the end of the

Old Testament sanctuary.

These ceremonies established by Christ before His death, including the Lord’s Supper, are as important to observe with respect and honor as were the Old Testament types and shadow ceremonies. They even more clearly represent Christ by lifting our mind from the temporal to the eternal. Neglecting these New Testament ceremonial services that Jesus instituted or regarding them carelessly leads us to miss the wonderful blessings Christ intended them to be for every believer. More than that, Paul warns us concerning the Lord’s Supper, “He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body” (1 Corinthians 11:29).

Personal Reflection and Discussion

1. How important was it for Old Testament believers to observe the types and shadows God had given His people? _____
2. Give three examples of individuals who did not follow God’s instruction concerning Old Testament ceremonies. What were the consequences? _____
3. Is it important to keep the Old Testament ceremonial types and shadows today—and why? _____
4. Did Jesus establish new ceremonies for Christians to follow? _____
5. How important is it to observe the New Testament ceremonies? _____

Prayer Focus

Pray for:

- God to fill you with His Spirit
- God to convict you of the importance of following His instructions concerning the New Testament ceremonies
- those on your prayer list.