

Consecration

Hebrews 4:12

After God forgives our sins, He teaches and transforms us in through the power of His word. It's not just that we read, hear, sing, and consider and believe Scripture, as living and powerful it pierces, discerns, and exposes us (Heb. 4:12). This occurred through the ascension offering in the old covenant, and now we through Christ.

Reasons for Rites

Liturgy means “work of the people” and we do it be it accomplishes things, namely our and world's transformation. We tend to value relationships over religion, setting things at odds which actually go together. We're in covenant with God, which is a divinely appointed and governed relationship. When we come into covenant with God, we go through a rite, a formal and ceremonial act. Because Jesus is *the* Word, all words matter, but rites change people and public reality. Rites typically consist of oaths, binding words, and ceremonial actions, and they turn men and women into husbands and wives, foreigners into citizens, civilians into soldiers, graduates into lawyers and doctors, lawyers into judges, citizens into government officials, laymen into clergy and so on. Most important jobs require some rite. If you are ignorant of what is happening in a rite, it seems like *hocus pocus* (from “Hoc est corpus”), but we worship God with our minds as well as our bodies and therefore understand His ministry to us through these rites (1 Cor. 14:15).

Ascending to God

The order of offerings is sin, ascension, and then peace (Lev. 9:7). The ascension (usually translated “whole burnt”) offering would be arranged on the altar, burned and transformed completely by fire, and ascend as “a sweet aroma to the LORD” (Lev. 1:9). Having been cleansed from his sins, the worshipper is symbolically consecrated, changed, and transformed by the sacrificial sword of the Spirit and the word of God. David sings that the one who ascends into the hill of the LORD has clean hands and a pure heart (Ps. 24:3-4). God's people have always worshipped on Him on mountains—high places where the God of heaven meets with us. Now we go up to heaven, up to Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem where we meet with the Lord, all His host, and Jesus Himself (Heb. 12:22-24). After confessing sin, we go up singing (2 Chron. 29:27-28).

Confessing Our Faith

The Philippian jailer ask Paul and Silas, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household’” (Acts 16:30-31). We believe and therefore confess with our mouths (cf. Rom. 10:9). The Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed (325 AD), and Creed of Chalcedon (451 AD) confess the primary and foundational beliefs of all Christians. We don't confess because we've forgotten what we believe (though we might if we don't), but because we love God and what He has done and therefore need to talk about it.

Hearing the Word

Listening to the word of God read recognizes its authoritative power over us. When we read to ourselves, we are in control. We can pick it up, put it down, stop or start, and go wherever we want in the book. But when Scripture is publicly read to us, we have no control over it, and those words are going to be spoken

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whether we like it or not. Jesus said, “Take heed what you hear” (Mk. 4:24). We honor and submit to the authority of the Bible, believing it to be infallible in the original writings and the canon preserved over the centuries by the providential work of the Holy Spirit: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The effect of the Bible is not limited to the worship service and never returns void to the Lord (Is. 55:11; Heb. 4:12). The ministry of the Gideons, placing Bibles into hotels, relies on God’s powerful work through His word which is like seed that goes into the ground of our hearts and lives and bears much fruit (Mk. 4:14). Most Christians can remember all kinds of critical conversations when someone share the gospel with them, when someone confronted them on sin, when they read a certain passage, when God somehow used His word to transform their life. We respond with “Thanks be to God”, acknowledging it’s His word, receiving it, and expressing our gratitude. This is how we want to hear and obey: no problem passages, no explaining away, no embarrassment (Lk. 11:28). We preach straight through books of the Bible, generally alternating between the Old and New Testaments, letting the Lord have His way with us. In the preached word we have Scripture explained in its original context and applied to our times and lives (2 Tim. 2:15). Illustrations are good and necessary, but preaching ought not to be personality-driven.

Praying to God

Jesus taught the disciples how to pray, so the Lord’s Prayer becomes a model for all of prayer, including adoration, confession, and supplications. Paul instructs Timothy, “first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence” (1 Tim. 2:1-2). We want to live quiet and peaceable lives so the gospel can flourish here, and God hears our prayers to that effect.

Giving to God

In our worship service currently we give thanks in prayer for our tithes and offerings. The tribute offering of meal or grain was placed on top of the ascension offering (Lev. 2:1-3; Num. 15:8-10). This is a tithe of the worshipper’s profit (Gen. 14:20; Lev. 27:30-32). Freewill offerings could also be given at this time (Lev. 22:29; 2 Cor. 8:2-4). If you gave material things that your hands produced, you would feel the connection between your daily work and the God who empowered you to accomplish it. It’s a blessing to have currency and the ability to easily give it to God, but remember it represents the offering of yourself, a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1). He delights to receive through His Son Jesus Christ and pledges to continue the good work He began, working in You the holiness that pleases Him so much.