

THE MYSTERY OF THE LITURGY

1. God created everything in a Heavenly Liturgy

- a) "heaven and earth", the visible and the invisible creation offered "the unbloody sacrifice" of themselves to God
 - * a service of praise and thanksgiving as a response to the creating love
 - * a service pleasing to God and not designed to entertain those who offered it
 - * a service naturally resulting from the state of thanksgiving of the creatures aware of the love, the power, the wisdom, the holiness of the Creator
 - * a "praising mirror" reflecting God's infinite glory
- b) the bad angels chose to worship themselves rather than the Creator
 - * the worship of the evil one began with self-worship, self-praise, self-entertainment, etc.
 - * the evil one is incapable of creating true worship, thus, all evil worship is AN EVIL REPLICA OF THE REAL THING!
- c) one of the consequences of the original corruption of Adam and Eve was their isolation from the heavenly worship
 - * but THE HEAVENLY WORSHIP CONTINUED IN THE INVISIBLE DIMENSION
 - + the heavenly powers never stopped worshipping God, thus perpetuating "the heavenly liturgy" of which Isaiah catches a glimpse and describes in ISAIAH 6.
 - * man was left with the awareness of the heavenly worship and the nostalgia for heavenly worship but he tried to reinvent it, coming up with man-made worship, often very influence by the "prince of this world", which intentionally or unintentionally he worshipped.

2. God gives the Jewish people the shadow of the heavenly Liturgy

- a) in Exodus and Leviticus God commands Moses how to lead the Jewish people in worship
 - * see Exodus 25, 40
 - * see Hebrews 8, 5 & Hebrews 9, 23
 - * God gave so many details, and He doesn't change as we do, thus He gave them with a purpose to fulfil them
- b) in the times of faithfulness, the Jewish people were keeping their worship, which was a copy, or shadow of the Heavenly Liturgy
 - * at the same time, the Heavenly Liturgy continued in the invisible dimension, with the heavenly powers performing it!
 - * the "shadow" was only a temporary, limited reflection

of the real thing, which continued in the invisible dimension.

- c) as they came in contact with "other nations", the Jewish people added to their worship, to the point of almost totally replacing the God-given worship with man-made worship

* they felt that their worship was:

- + outdated
- + repetitive
- + boring
- + hard to explain
- + not entertaining as the pagan worship they saw others enjoy
- + not praising man, but asking him to repent and humble himself
- + we can say, that the Jewish people REFORMED GOD'S WORSHIP

* Elijah was sent to show the futility of pagan worship

* Isaiah was given a vision of the Heavenly worship as a guide for the restoration of the shadow, or copy given to Moses

3. Christ's life and Sacrifice restores the Heavenly Liturgy

- a) His Sacrifice is the fulfilment of all the sacrifices offered in the "shadow" worship.

* He is the High Priest of the Heavenly Liturgy

* in Him, and through His Cross all believers have mystical access now, and full access in the end, to the Heavenly Liturgy

- b) Christ's life is the "ladder of divine ascent", which makes it possible for "heaven and earth" to be together

- c) the Church is the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit she REACTUALIZES THE VERY LIFE OF CHRIST making possible for the believers to ASCEND AND DESCEND ON THE MYSTICAL 'LADDER', TOGETHER WITH THE HEAVENLY POWERS

* the Church mystically enters the eternal now of the sacrificial life of Jesus Christ, which is "the ladder" into the Heavenly Liturgy

* the communion with His Body and Blood is the highest point of the Heavenly Liturgy

- the highest form of praise and thanksgiving
- the true restoration of the worshipping man, in full communion with God

- d) Christ specifically asked the Disciples to "do this in remembrance" of Him (see Luke 22, 19)

* the Greek word remembrance is a lot more than thinking of some memories; it is a reliving of the moment, an expansion of the moment into someone else's life

4. The names of the Early Church service

- a) the Breaking of bread
 - * see Acts 2, 42
 - * see Acts 20, 7
- b) the Lord's Supper
 - * see 1 Corinthians 10, 21
 - * see 1 Corinthians 11, 20
- c) the Cup of blessing
 - * see 1 Corinthians 10, 16
- d) the Cup of the Lord
 - * see 1 Corinthians 11, 26-27
- e) the Eucharist
 - * see Luke 22, 19
 - * translated with "the giving of thanks"
- f) the Liturgy
 - * originally given to public service
 - * it means the work of the people
 - * the translators of the Septuagint used the word liturgy to render the Old Testament word "ABODAN" which was used to describe THE FUNCTION of the levitical priests, which was then fulfilled by Jesus the High Priest
 - + in Luke 1, 23, the word Liturgy is used to describe Zacharias' work as a priest of the temple
 - + in Hebrews 9, 21, Paul describes the liturgical vessels of the ancient temple
 - + in Hebrews 8, 2 & 6 Paul refers to Jesus as the Liturgist of the sanctuary and the true tabernacle (compared to the shadow tabernacle of the Old Testament) and he describes His office as an excellent Liturgy
 - + Acts 13, 2 shows the people of the Church liturgizing and fasting
 - * originally used for an all-encompassing description of Christian worship, it was eventually specifically describing the service of the Eucharist in the East

5. A brief history of the evolution of the Liturgy

- a) the Apostolic times
 - * a two folded service up until A.D.44
 - + the liturgy of the word, during which they joined the Messianic service of the synagogue
 - + the liturgy of the breaking of bread, performed

- as a rudimentary prototype in the upper room
- * the New Testament was not intended to be a rubrics book
- * the "hints" of liturgical structure from the New Testament are:
 - + bringing bread and wine
 - + the reading from the Old Testament
 - + the homily
 - + the kiss of peace
 - + the confession of faith
 - + the chanting and singing of Psalmodic hymns
 - + remembering passion, Crucifixion, Death and Resurrection
 - + repeating the words of institution
 - + blessing the bread and wine through the invocation of the Holy Spirit
 - + the breaking of bread and communion of both Body and Blood
 - + the Lord's prayer
 - + the collection for the poor

b) the Second Century

- * the First Apology of Justin the Martyr, chapters 65-67, gives us more details about the Liturgy
 - + the Liturgy of the Catechumens
 - reading from Scripture
 - homily
 - hymns
 - + the Liturgy of the Eucharist
 - general prayer
 - kiss of peace
 - the bringing of bread, wine and water
 - the thanksgiving prayers of remembrance of the Passion, the Death and Resurrection
 - the words of institution
 - the invocation of the Holy Spirit
 - the breaking and the communion

c) the Third and Fourth Century

- * persecution are over
 - + permanent places of worship
 - + less secrecy of the rites performed
 - + the faster growth of the Church brought in the practical dimension of writing down the forms of worship
 - + the worship was used as a vehicle of teaching and defending against the heresies of the times
- * the original version of the Liturgy of Saint James and Saint Mark, were expressed through many local liturgies, with differences only in anaphora prayers
- * in the East, the above were organized into the Byzantine Liturgies of Saint Basil and Saint John

- * in the West, the above were organized into the Roman Rite(beginning with Damasus and Gelasius) and the more ancient Gallic Rite(more common in today France, in Southern Italy and England)

6. The Christian worship is the Heavenly Prototype

- a) true Christian worship must be similar to the Jewish worship commanded by God through Moses
 - * in Christ, we join the heavenly prototype
 - * the prototype must be similar to what used to be its shadow
 - * the Apostles and the Early Church were considered to be a Jewish sect
- b) the service itself is a reactualization of the Lord's life and:
 - * it cannot be added to
 - * it is not designed to entertain us, but praise Him
 - * it is not subject to modernization
 - + man and his needs change
 - + God and His glory remain the same
 - * true worship is always threatened by the world and its ways, just as the authentic Jewish worship was