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## Understanding What God's Word Says About Symbols Of Our Faith

What is the purpose of symbols and symbolic events in the Scriptures? God's Word reveals that the reason for participating in things symbolic (such as the bread and wine partaking, national solemn feast days, water baptism, the meanings of some names, or certain apparel, etc.) is quite easy and plain to grasp --- namely *focus*, which in itself can be related to dedicating and remembering.

As mortals we are forgetful in our thinking process, which God tells us He wisely takes into consideration. Symbols of the Faith help us remember and maintain the proper direction in our Saxon Christian Israelite journey. There are no "magic powers" resulting from our use of Christian symbols. Real miracle happenings are gifted to us by God on condition of our friendship with Him, and a true need for them at the time. He still calls the shots in doing so, and there is no doubt as to the divine power at work. But God Almighty knows our weakness of *forgetting*, thus we see His directive for us to use certain relevant symbols for encouragement to stay on track and to pay attention to His righteousness. The purpose is genuinely helpful. How then could symbolic acts meant for us to simply remember God, be turned into religious mandates enforced by churches with threats of eternal doom if a person fails to comply?

Heathen religions are loaded with superstitious rites long touted to enable its practitioners to supposedly emit "secret energy influences" over God's creation, or of rites perceived as a doorway by which to contact God Himself. In truth these claims amount to nothing but nothing. Yet regrettably, the two most prevalent misapplications of symbolism in Christianity in trying to obtain a type of presumed "good magic", is that of the bread and wine service (Catholic type communion) and water baptism (in an attempt to get rid of sin or to "cause one to become a Christian"). This type of creed may be defined as sacramentalism where a religious performance of some sort is used in an attempt to make an apathetic deity do some divine behavioral act he normally will not do unless the performance is forthcoming. Thankfully, real Christian symbols and symbolic acts of faith do not enter into this type of shamanism. Proper Christian symbols do however serve a purpose, a very sincere purpose given to us by a caring and reasonable Heavenly Father. As mentioned -- that purpose is to help us focus on the path upon which we need to be walking.

Early in the Book of Genesis God Himself lays down the purpose of symbols, tokens, and signs in the Bible with His mention of the rainbow. That purpose was for a remembrance, not for use in any magical rites or "spiritist power" conjuring.

*"I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the Earth --- and I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh --- and I will look upon it (the bow) that I may remember the everlasting covenant --" (Gen. 9:13 - 17)*

Even for God Himself the rainbow sign was a symbolic token meant as a focal point of remembering. Only the exploitable among people could be convinced that a pot of gold awaits those who can run after and find the end of a rainbow. In a similar manner many of God's good tokens and signs of symbolism intended to help our remembrance of His mercy, deliverance, and salvation, have been used by various religious leaders as a way to manipulate multitudes for ulterior motives, most often for self promotion (i.e. "They know" secret Christian magic)

Some sincerely wonderful truth seekers within Christendom have merely been talked into believing much of this wayward enticement on the grounds that power is promised to stop Christ's enemies by following prescribed formulae of a popular leader. Scripturally these sheep are only being misled by unchaste doctrine that will only grieve the Holy Spirit within. Well meaning folks who have dabbled in supposed Christian magic need to stop and rethink what they are doing in sincere prayer along with a more thorough examination by the light of God's written Word.

There have always been those entering the fold who are bent on sacramentalism, that is, trying to earn their way into God's Kingdom by doing something through the *self* which they perceive will launch them into eternal immortality or cause some sort of "spirit energy" to form in them that will then move God to like them. This is a very dangerous philosophy aimed at destroying the true faith of untold numbers of Christians if not exposed for the "fiery dart" that it is. Diligent shepherds need to be on guard against sacramentalist elements among God's people and to shine the light of the Gospel upon this deceiving brand of doctrine.

Primarily, turning any of God's commanded symbolic customs into sacraments to "get spirit-like power" or to "self earn a way into the Kingdom" is a denial of the great unmerited love that God has bestowed upon his children. That love, repeatedly revealed in the Scriptures tells us that our life never-ending forever with God is a GIFT that He has freely given His chosen ones because of the stark reality that we cannot save ourselves unto eternal life.

*"For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Master." (Rom.6:23)*

*"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of your selves: it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph.2:8,9)*

The religion of SELF refuses to acknowledge the word "gift" within the teachings of the Scriptures. Sacramentalism is a religion of the self --"look what I can do to make God accept me into His Kingdom". There is nothing at all difficult about grasping what a gift is, and the Scriptures that confirm so are numerous and clear. A gift can not be earned or paid for.

What then of "good works" and a wholesome Christian demeanor? Yes, good works are seen in a true Christian's life. Good works *naturally follow* in a true Christian's well doing, but such works are not to earn a way into the Kingdom, nor could they ever do so. Good works proceed from true faith because a Christian loves God. (John 14:15; I John 5:3) There is a great gap of difference between walking in good works because of divine love within a person, as opposed to the person trying to use good works as the measuring rod by which to enter life everlasting in God's Kingdom. That won't ever succeed because "*All our righteousness are as filthy rags*" (Is.64:6). This includes emotionally wishing that Feast Day celebrations, feeding the poor, water baptism, assembling on the Sabbath, bread and wine partaking, other deeds, (even though these are noble activities), -- are going to somehow "get holy spirit power and eternal life" into a person. God's Word is direct on this. The Scriptures teach that we are saved by God's gift of everlasting life in order that we may *follow unto* good works, not that we are saved *by* good works. (I Peter 2:21-25) Good works are a family "*follow up*" after conversion, and are not themselves the causative action that precipitates eternal salvation.

As far as eternal salvation and Christ's redemptive victory on His cross for us, our Savior stated while hanging there in our stead "*It is finished*" (John 19:30). Nobody but nobody can add to a finished work of God, yet how many practicing the religion of self insist that you cannot be saved or even be a Christian unless you add to Christ's cross and use water baptism in an effort to "really finish things for God"? The same goes for any of the other good symbolic endeavors God provides for us in this life. This would apply to things such as keeping the Feasts Days too. We at this fellowship do celebrate the Saxon Israel Feast Days. But with this too, if these days would be viewed within a mindset of occultism or with a Talmudic twist to them, then those Feast Day celebrations would be for naught and even antichrist. Intent means everything since intent is what is held in one's heart. None of the symbolic events or tokens we see mentioned in the Scriptures can add to God's redemption of the bloody cross of His only begotten Son. To hold so is to adulterate the grace of God which manifested in Jesus' finished work at the cross and would "*turn the grace of God into lasciviousness*" (Jude 4). Nothing trumps God's grace toward us.

The religion of self devises bangles and bobbles to work "powers". It matters not whether the items used are God's misplaced symbols or flat out satanic trinkets and signs. It all amounts to witchcraft, a powerless threat of the spiritually dead. The Caribbean Island religion of Santeria uses many Christian flavored rituals mixed in with heathen superstition. Just because a prayer or symbol is invoked in "the name of Jesus" does not necessarily mean it is Scriptural or even within the arena of the Christian faith. For way too long sacramentalism has made inroads into Christian congregations and much more exposure of this menacing religion is long overdue.

So why do we need symbolic formalities at times as seen in the Scriptures if we are "filled with the Spirit" and saved unto the coming of our Master? Because even though we may presently be vessels of the Holy Spirit we are yet "leaky vessels" and regularly need renewed, not unto salvation's everlasting gift, but renewed "*in the spirit of our mind*" (Eph.4:23) and at God's appointed times (Dan.8:19; Gen.1:14; Jer.8:7) -- that is, we forget things. We need to

remember. We need to focus. Symbols for individuals such as head coverings for women in prayer or solemn assembly Feast Days for the nation help us to remember God's glorious plan of our redemption and reconciliation as friends with Him again.

In case anyone has forgotten that we do forget, let's remember what is written:

*“Beware that thou forget not Yahweh thy God, in not keeping His commandments, and His judgments, and His statutes, which I command thee this day.” (Deut. 8:11)*

*“Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number.” (Jer. 2:32)*

*“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John 14:26)*

*“I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how Yahweh having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.” (Jude 5)*

*“The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts; all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness.” (Lamen. 1:4)*

[Baptism too is a sign to remember to teach the commandments. Teach, baptize, teach] *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Mat.28:19,20)*

*“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.” (I John 5:3)*

*“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” (Ex.20:8) [This is not Catholic Sunday sabbath, but the Israel Sabbath commandment of God as directed here in Exodus]*

*“And He (Jesus) took the cup and gave thanks – and He took the bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave it unto them saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22:17-20)*

These and many more Scriptures tell us that God's signs and symbols are always for us to focus on remembering His laws and love for us. They are never for conjuring up empty “powers” or emotions of sacramentalist fervor even if attempted to do so in “the name of Jesus Christ”.

The glorious story of the Gospel tells us that Jesus has already saved His Chosen by His completed work on the cross. Jesus never said “Choose me as your personal savior and get saved”, nor did He say “Preach the gospel of salvation and power rituals”. If you are One of His you are already saved, *and know it.* (I John 5:13) Now that He has done it all for us and has saved us unto everlasting life, Jesus commissions us to teach “the Gospel of the Kingdom” which is God's government for the family and nation. *“And this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” (Mat.24:14; Isaiah 9:6,7)*

In knowing us better than we do ourselves, God has given us symbolic tokens to help us stay focused and to remember Him. Let us keep symbolism in its proper place and purpose for which it is divinely given. Sacramental “Christian magic” so called, does not measure up to the labor of love we have been commissioned unto within the family vineyard of our Heavenly Father. May we all stand firm in our calling. Symbols help us to remember all that HE does for us.