

from one degree of glory to another

ascriptions, Psalms 120-134:

A Song of Ascents. (NIV, ESV)

A Song of degrees. (KJV)

Psalms 120-134 are known-- because of the *ascriptions* they have in common--as *Songs of Ascents* (or *Songs of Degrees*).

Many of the Psalms have an "ascription" at the beginning. Don't neglect to read these! They are part of the inspired text of the Bible. The ascription tells us by whom the Psalm was written--or for whom, or to whom, or about whom, or about what.

Every part of the Bible enhances all the other parts. So if we understand--from systematic study of Exodus through Joshua--the geographic features of Israel's journeys, then our reading of the Psalms is so much richer.

If we can trace Israel's journey--out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, through the Wilderness, over Jordan, into the promised Land; past Jericho, up to Jerusalem; into the Temple, past the brazen altar, the bronze laver; through the curtain, into the Holy of Holies, with the ark of the covenant before us--then we will enrich our reading of the gospels.

The Shekinah glory--the visible presence of God--emanated from the Holy of Holies, the inner chamber of the Tabernacle/Temple. The Shekinah glory is a theophany--a preincarnate appearance of **Jesus**:

*Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. **He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.** (Hebrews 1:1-3)*

Salvation: more to come...

We must also be aware that (according to scripture and our own experience!) the salvation of the believer is an ongoing process, *from one degree of glory to another*, which takes us

1. past the cross--represented in the tabernacle by the altar of burnt offering--where Jesus achieved our justification;
2. then through the process of sanctification, represented by the bronze laver (wash basin); and
3. on to glorification--when *we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* (1 John 3:2)

Thus we ascend by degrees:

*And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image **from one degree of glory to another.** (2 Corinthians 3:18)*

If you want to see a picture of Jesus as he is today--Jesus in glory--here it is:

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the

*sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him... when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; **listen to him.**"* (Matthew 17:1-3, 5)

There's Jesus! There's Moses and Elijah! Then we hear the voice of God, telling us to "Listen to him"--to Jesus.

Because while Moses and Elijah represent the Law and the Prophets, Jesus is the fulfillment: *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.*

But let's not just read about it. Let's go up the Mount of Transfiguration ourselves.

When the people of Israel traveled to Jerusalem for the feast days, they sang their way up the mountainside approaches to the city. The songs they sang are preserved for us in Psalms 120 to 134. The NIV Bible labels each of these a "Song of Ascents." The KJV Bible calls them "Songs of Degrees."

By degrees--one step after another--you are ascending your very own Mount of Transfiguration. Step by step, we are going up the "hill" with Jesus. That's the plan:

His death is ours; his resurrection is ours:

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. (Romans 6:5).

We are being transformed:

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (Romans 8:29)

Even his transfiguration is ours:

Those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Romans 8:30)

So we are going to end up being just like Jesus! --

Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. (1 Corinthians 15:49)

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2)

But until then, don't rush things. Remember, it's one step at a time. And most of all, as you make your way, remember what God said: *"Listen to him."*

He knows the way to the top. He's the only one who's been there before.

pictures of Kingdom Come: "brothers"

Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!

It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes!

It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion!

For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore. (Psalm 133)

biblical typology

Biblical types are pictures of Kingdom Come--of the Kingdom of God and, especially, of the King himself. These pictures constitute the most profound and far-ranging prophecies in scripture. They are a picture language which God uses to teach deep spiritual truths to his children.

From Psalm 133 we will look at these types: brothers and oil.

brothers--Aaron and Moses. Their relationship illustrates the New Testament church to come.

Aaron.

According to the genealogy of Exodus 6:14ff, Aaron was one of the two sons of Amram and Jochebed (the other being Moses) and third in line of descent from Levi (Levi-Kohath-Amram-Aaron). According to Exodus 7:7, he was 3 years older than Moses. Miriam, their sister, was older still, if she is Moses' unnamed 'sister' of Exodus 2:4, 7ff.

Aaron and his descendants are set apart to serve God as priests.

All priests of Israel from Aaron forward were Levites. The tribe of Levi consisted of several clans. Only descendants of Aaron could serve as priests. The rest of the Levites assisted with other religious responsibilities.

Aaron, as Moses' prophet, speaks Moses' word. (Exodus 7:1)

Aaron is a picture of both priest and prophet. He is **not** Deliverer.

Moses is a picture of prophet and Deliverer/King. He is **not** Priest.

It is helpful to remember that the prophet speaks "down"--from God to the people.

The priest speaks "up"-- from the people to God.

Because Jesus was priest, prophet, deliverer-savior and King, it takes both Moses and Aaron to convey different aspects of him. It takes all of the "brothers"--and sisters--in the church (body of Christ) to express Christ.

Jesus was one of us when he died on the cross. This Servant/Son of Man is seen in the gospels of Mark/Luke, respectively. The Jesus of Mark/Luke is foreshadowed by Aaron. He is of the people. The Jesus of the Second Coming is depicted in the gospels of Matthew/John as King/Son of God, respectively. He was among the people, then he was out of their sight--as Moses was. Upon His return, he will dismantle the idolatries and the power structures of man; as Moses did upon his return to Egypt, so Jesus will at his Second Coming.

Pictorially, we think of Moses on the mountain while we think of Aaron on the plain. We see Jesus as both: he is one of us, while He is One with God.

pictures of Kingdom Come: "oil"

The **oil** that is poured over Aaron's head in Psalm 133 represents the essential ingredient for a powerful and unified church--the church as it is meant to be.

Oil represents the Holy Spirit. When it is poured on Aaron (Leviticus 8:12 and Psalm 133:2) it is typical of Jesus, who was given *the Holy Spirit without measure*. (See John 3:34, which is beautifully foreshadowed by the story of the widow's oil in 2 Kings 4.)

Aaron's anointing differed from the anointing of the other priests. The distinction points directly to Jesus as High Priest:

1. Aaron, as High Priest, is anointed before the sacrifices are slain, while in the case of other priests the application of blood precedes the anointing. Christ the sinless one required no preparation for receiving the anointing oil, symbol of the Holy Spirit. (The believer, like the lesser priests, goes to the cross for the application of the blood of Christ before the anointing of the Spirit can occur.)
2. Upon the high priest only was the anointing oil poured. Upon lesser priests it was sprinkled. See John 3:34 and Heb. 1:9 for the typical fulfillment of this pattern in Christ.

"Brothers."

Moses and Aaron, as brothers, are **together** representative of the church. (See Psalm 133) Furthermore, Moses as leader and Aaron as his prophet are "one" in the sense that the head and the body are one in the unity of the Spirit. (Ephesians 4:3; see 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:5.)

We are one with Christ in the same sense: we are not the Head, but we are one with the Head; we are not the Groom, but the Bride is one with the Groom:

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:24)

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:31-32)

The oil / Holy Spirit was first upon the Head. Thereafter it fell upon the body, as depicted in Psalm 133. We see the same pattern in the New Testament:

First, at Jesus' baptism, the Holy Spirit came to rest upon the Head (Matthew 3:16).

Thereafter, at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came to rest on each one of them (Acts 2:3).

Today, as a follower of Jesus, the anointing is upon you:

And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)

But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. (1 John 2:20)

Finally, his *name* is Jesus. His *title* is Christ, which means "anointed." Oil in the Old Testament does more than point to Christ. It shouts out, "Christ to come!"

Thy Kingdom Come.

In the Old Testament, the Kingdom is promised--in picture and in prophecy.

In the New Testament, the Kingdom comes--in person and in power.