

On His Mind

Within the story of the conversion of Cornelius is a teaching that reveals to us how to be "on the mind" of our God. This is something that every believer should strive for. To be on the mind of the Eternal is to be in His will and we can expect that He will reveal more of Himself to us. Cornelius was an unusual man for his time. He was a God-fearer, a Roman officer who believed in the God of Israel and worshiped Him. An angel appeared to Cornelius while he was in prayer. He was terrified, and asked the angel what he wanted with him. "Your prayers," replied the angel, "and your acts of charity have gone up into God's presence, so that he has you on His mind." (Acts 10:4). YHWH had something special in mind for Cornelius, and He had sent a messenger to tell him.

Why Cornelius? There were other God-fearers, but Cornelius stood out so that he was on the mind of God. The answer to this question is found in the very beginning of the chapter. The angel told Cornelius that his prayers and acts of charity had caused him to be on God's mind. I believe these two things are essential in our worship of YHWH. Just as Cornelius was, so we too can be on His mind.

There has been much written on prayer, and why a regular communication with YHWH is essential in our relationship with Him, but it is not why we should pray, but when that is the subject here. In the Torah YHWH gave Moses instructions on how He was to be worshiped. These instructions also included daily worship. Exodus 29:38-46 tells us there were to be two daily sacrifices. This was the time when YHWH would meet with Moses and His people. A meeting implies that both parties are present. The Hebrew word for meet (ya 'ad) means by agreement or appointment. Interestingly it also means to engage (for marriage), to betroth. Scripture tells us these two times of meeting were in the morning and evening. At that time incense would be burned. This incense was a "special blend" that was used for this purpose. Any other use would result in the person being cut off from Israel. (Exodus 30:34-38) It was at these times that the people would gather together in the doors of their tents to worship and pray to YHWH.

In Luke 1:5-22 we find Zacharias, the father of Yochanan (John) performing the duty of burning incense in the Temple during the morning sacrifice. The angel Gabriel visited him at this time and revealed that he would have a son. All of the people were outside worshiping and praying (Luke 1:10) Incense, according to scripture, represents our prayers to YHWH.

Let my prayer be like incense set before you, my uplifted hands like an evening sacrifice. Psalm 141:2

When he took the scroll, the four living beings and the twenty-four elders fell down in front of the Lamb. Each one held a harp and gold bowls filled with pieces of incense, which are the prayers of God's people; Revelation 5:8

The smoke of the incense went up with the prayers of God's people from the hand of the angel before God. Revelation 8:4

We have daily appointments with YHWH where we meet with Him and worship Him in prayer. This was the time of the evening and morning sacrifice. Some time later, before the time of King David the noon prayer time was added. Psalm 55:17 says "Evening, morning, and at noon I cry aloud and he shall hear my voice." Daniel was thrown into the Lions' den because he prayed three times a day facing Jerusalem. Daniel kept these appointments with YHWH knowing the punishment was death. (Daniel 6)

Specific Hours

In ancient times the twenty-four hour day is divided into two twelve-hour periods - the morning (6:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M.) and the evening (6:00 P.M. to 6:00 A.M.). The hours of the morning period are numbered beginning with 6:00 A.M.. When the Bible refers to a numbered hour of the day, for example the third hour of the day, we know this means 9:00 A.M.. Remembering that our meetings with YHWH are appointments, specific times when we worship and the incense of our prayers goes up, does Scripture tell us what hours these times are?

In Hebrew these three prayer times are called Shacharit ("morning"), Minchah, ("gift offering" perhaps so named because it was not originally part of the daily sacrifices given in Exodus) and Ma'ariv (evening). Respectively these times according to Scripture are at 9:00 A.M., Noon, and 3:00 P.M. (At 3:00 P.M. the sun has begun its descent.). It is clear from Scripture that those particular times are special to YHWH. It was the noon hour when Yosef revealed himself to his brothers, (Bereshit 43:16) and also the contest between Elijah and the prophets of ba'al. In the parable of the laborers, Matthew 20, the these particular hours, figure proximately. At the feast of Shavuot (Pentecost), the disciples were gathered together and were of one accord when they were filled with the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit). Later in Acts 2:15 Peter tells us that it was the third hour of the day. (9:00 A.M.). In the third chapter of Acts Peter and John were going up to the Temple for prayers at the ninth hour (3:00 P.M.) when they came upon a man who had been crippled since birth. The Bible calls this "the hour of prayer." (Acts 3:1) Cornelius was in prayer at the ninth hour when he was visited by the angel. Acts 10:3,30 When Peter received his vision that would prepare him to meet and witness to Cornelius it was noon and he had gone up on the roof to pray. (Acts 10:9). When did Cornelius

pray? I think it is clear that Cornelius, being a God-fearer, kept his daily appointments with YHWH as did the disciples.

Is this something we should be doing? Absolutely! Think of it as making a doctor or business appointment. You make a call and are given an appointment time. The person you have arranged to see has blocked off time for you, and you don't want to miss it! So it is with YHWH. He does not do things haphazardly or on a whim, and we are not to worship Him in that manner. He is a God of order and has designed a right way for everything to be done. Shaul says "but let all things be done in a proper and orderly way." 1 Corinthians 14:40 He is waiting for you at the appointed times and you want to meet Him there, within your prayer closet. If we believe that the yearly feasts of YHWH have not been done away with, then it is easy to understand that He doesn't just want our attention on these yearly dates, but every day of our lives. He is the Eternal who has established daily (prayer), weekly (Shabbat), and annual (feasts) appointments with him.

By keeping these daily appointments we are acknowledging that He is in control of our day to day lives. We are submitting to Him and drawing closer to Him by keeping these daily appointments. He is on our minds as we take the time to acknowledge him. And what does scripture say will happen when we do this?

Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. James 4:8. As He is more on our minds then so shall we be on His!

Do we only pray at these times? Absolutely not! We should always be ready at a moment's notice to go before the throne of grace due circumstances of life on behalf of others, and for ourselves.

And at these times the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we don't know how to pray the way we should, but the Spirit himself pleads on our behalf with groanings too deep for words. Romans 8:26

What about Ephesians 6:18? In this verse Shaul seems to be telling us to be in prayer all the time. However, the Greek word for always (kairos) in this verse literally means an occasion, appointed or fixed time. Shaul is actually telling us to pray at the appointed times. To the church in Thessalonica, Shaul said to pray without ceasing. Is it possible to be in prayer twenty-four hours a day? The Greek word for without ceasing (adialeptos) means uninterruptedly, i.e. without omission (on an appropriate occasion) without ceasing. In other words, don't forget to pray at the appointed time.

Did Yeshua pray at the appointed times? Since He kept Torah perfectly He would

have prayed at the appointed times as well as all other times when prayer was needed. And we know the disciples did from the verses cited earlier.

Yeshua also instructed us to pray at the appointed times:

He said, Watch ye therefore, and pray always (kairos: at the appointed times), that ye may be counted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. Luke 21:36

If we pray at the appointed times Yesuha says we will be considered worthy to escape the things that shall come to pass. What things? The previous verses of chapter 21 are speaking of the trials the world will endure in the tribulation.

Something else to consider!

Yeshua was nailed to the cross at the third hour of the day. (Mark 15:25)

Darkness covered all the land at the sixth hour during his crucifixion. (Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44).

At the ninth hour the Messiah died. (Mark 15:34-37)

...abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. 1 John 2:28

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Sarah's Tent

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