

The Meaning and Significance of 'Evening' in the Liturgical Year

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Abstract: The academic paper entitled, "The Meaning and Significance of 'Evening' in the Liturgical Year" is an attempt to analyze the importance of liturgical hours in the liturgical year. In order to specify the topic for my small research paper, I have been assigned to trace the symbolic meaning of 'Evening'. This study is based on the teachings of the Fathers of the church, Biblical References and references from the Breviary on the liturgical hour "Evening". This academic paper will be progressed by defining the scientific meaning and symbolic meaning of "Evening or Dusk", and this scholastic paper will then defines 'Evening' from the liturgical perspective by giving special attention to the said factors.

Key Words: Evening Prayer, Sheemo, Breviary

1. Introduction

The four salutations in the English Culture are that dealt with different time period in a day, such as 1. Good Morning, 2. Good Afternoon, 3. Good Evening and 4. Good night. What are the distinguishing factors behind all these divisions of day? Yes, there are certain factors that cause these divisions of a day. These divisions are primarily based on the movement of Earth around the Sun. Earth takes around 24 hours for its self-rotation which makes a day and 365 days for its rotation around the Sun which makes a year. The following paragraphs define what the scientific, symbolic, Biblical and Liturgical meaning of *Evening*.

2. Scientific Meaning

Evening or twilight is primarily divided into three such as Civil, Nautical and Astronomical Twilights. Dusk occurs at the darkest stage of twilight and just before night. The term Dusk usually refers to the Astronomical Twilight. It means that the evening time can be exactly calculated from the time when the center of the Sun's disc goes 6° to 18° below the horizon in the evening (If the Sun is 6° below the horizon-Civil Dusk, 12°-nautical dusk and 18°-Astronomical dusk).¹

3. Symbolic Meaning

The time evening is good to see. It gives us a satisfactory state of mind. It is the time of

consolidation of a day's work. Therefore, people naturally tend to calm their mind in the evening time either by leisure activities or by prayers. Even the same time itself is kept for adoration. As it is defined above it is time just before night or complete darkness. Therefore, the evening time symbolizes death, end, beginning of darkness, apt time of devotion, change, transformation, romance, rest, last days of life, running for safety and stability of life.

4. References from the Bible

Evening has significant role in the Holy Bible. Now those events in which have taken place in the evening will be analyzed here in the following passages.

Old Testament

The narration of creation gives stress on to evening and affirms that it is the beginning of a day. The first day is described by saying, "...and there was evening and there was morning, the first day."² Bible Scholars interpret the first fist book of the Bible was an introduction to the entire salvation history. Therefore, some major events are happened in the evening. It symbolically shows as the light has the duty to show what truth is by illuminating the world, Jesus also presents himself as truth. According to the Bible, evening falls before morning. Here the evening represents something

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dusk>

² Genesis, 1:5



mysterious. The fall of the first man is presented in the evening time.³ It means that the same deception scene ends with the promise of Messiah and therefore it is better to say that even though there happened something sad to the entire humanity, the mercy of God also juxtaposed with this said disappointing episode. The same idea is recurring in many places in the Bible. Those events will be analyzed in the same pattern as it was stated just before. The great flood happened at the time of Noah was subsided in the evening. We get the indication about the same from the narration of the return of the dove with a fresh olive leaf to Noah.⁴ It symbolizes that evening brings peace to the people. Noah built an altar to the Lord in the evening and offer sacrifice.⁵It indicates that the best time of thanks giving is the Evening time. It is the right time to express the gratitude to God, because a day's effort is submitted gratefully in the Evening. Another evidence to say that it is the right time is that God makes covenant with Abraham in the evening.⁶

In other interpretations we can see that *Evening* is symbolized as the door to evil or romantic thoughts. It may be also true, because if a day's experiences are totally negative, it may bring negative in the evening. When this idea is brought to the Bible in order to analyze few events, we will find that it is true. See for example: The incidents such as a). The depravity of Sodom,⁷ b). The fall of man and c). Adultery between King David and Bathsheba⁸ are taken place in the evening time.

New Testament

Evening has very symbolic and theological meaning in the New Testament. The events such as the multiplication of five loaves of bread for five thousand people,⁹ the last supper or the Passover meal, the institution of the Holy Eucharist,¹⁰ the

burial of Jesus and the descend of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles are taken place in the evening time. It means that when we pray in the evening time we are remembering all these events specially. Apart from this we can see the impartial nature of God from the parable of the servants in the vineyard.¹¹ Here we see that the owner comes in the evening and give the salary upon which they are agreed. In another way it this act can be observed that evening is the time of judgment and each one will receive in accordance with their agreement. Evening is the final part of a day. In the parable those servants came to the vineyard at the ninth hour also receives equally with those who came first. It shows that a man is given time to reconcile with God even at the last hour of his life. That means evening represented in the New Testament has always a positive stroke.

5. Reference from the Breviary

The prayers in the *Shimo* (Canonical Prayers) presents evening as the time of seeking help from God to get protection from evil thoughts and requesting Him to enable us for thanks giving.¹² The said content is the main theme of Vespers in the Malankara Catholic Church. We request God to receive our offering as the evening sacrifice.¹³ The devotee seeks for peaceful evening,¹⁴ Liberation from evil,¹⁵ and requests God to enlighten him to worship God in the evening.¹⁶People are united in the evening.¹⁷

6. Conclusion

¹¹ Ibid.,20:8.

¹²*Shimo*, Vespers, Introductory Prayer,6. Menolum, Vespers, Mar Jacob's Boutho. 258.

¹³ Ibid., Masmoora, 6.

Shubho, Saturday. Qolo ii 219.

¹⁴ Ibid.,Maneeso (soothara).16.

Shubho, Vespers,Monday,Qolo.52.

Subho, Vespers, Tuesday,Qolo.86.

¹⁵ Ibid., Shubho,Vespers, Thursday, Qolo II. 154.,

Menolum, Vespers, Qolo. 257.

¹⁶ Ibid., Shubho,Vespers, Monday, Boutho.53.

¹⁷ Ibid., Menolum, Vespers, Thursday,Qolo.360.

³ Ibid.,3:5.

⁴ Ibid.,8:11.

⁵ Ibid.,8:20.

⁶ Ibid.,15:17.

⁷ Ibid.,19:1.

⁸ 2 Samuel 11:2.

⁹ Matthew 14:15.

¹⁰ Ibid.,26:20.



It is very clear from this description that the time evening place a vital role in Liturgical Year. Many of the important events in the liturgical year have taken place in the evening time. It is also better to keep in mind that according to liturgy a day begins with evening. Therefore it clear that the time *Evening* is very important in the Liturgical Year as well as among the liturgical hours.

Bibliography

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dusk>

NRSV Bible

Shimo