

THE STEPS OF  
**S**alvation

Christ – the great Shepherd

PART 6

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with Peter Hay & David Baker

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# Chapter I

## The fellowship of Yahweh

### Introduction

The purpose and plan of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for mankind is summarised by the statement, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness'. Gen 1:26. This statement communicates the shared initiative of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to create and bring to glory a great multitude of sons. The sons of God would be born from above of Their life, and joined to Their fellowship. Heb 2:10. Rev 21:3,7. God called this His Everlasting Covenant. It reveals the fervent love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for one another, and Their love for us. For this reason, the apostle John exhorted us to, 'Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.' 1Jn 3:1.

We are able to behold and participate in the love and fellowship of Yahweh when we receive the word of the cross. 1Jn 1:1-3. This was the objective of Paul's ministry. He endeavoured to portray Christ, and Him crucified, among his hearers. Gal 3:1. 1Co 2:2. By this means, he revealed to them the mystery of God. Col 4:3-4. This mystery is God's covenant purpose to birth a multitude of sons, and to bring them to maturity and glory in Christ. Heb 2:10.

When we receive the word of Christ in the fear of the Lord, God's grace, which comes with the word, enables us to recognise that our natural and familiar ways of living and relating with others are fallen. We are also illuminated regarding the holiness of Yahweh's culture and fellowship, to which we are being called. Aided by a spirit of grace and supplication, we are able to turn in repentance from our fleshly ways of living and relating. The Holy Spirit joins us to the travail of Christ's prayer in Gethsemane. This is where the fellowship of Yahweh is revealed. The culture of this fellowship becomes our culture as we participate in Christ's offering and sufferings.

### Yahweh is one

We often begin our consideration of who God is and how He lives by first identifying Him as *Elohim* – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – three unique identities who are one Spirit, and who live by one life as 'Yahweh'. We attempt to understand Their offering by differentiating the unique capacities of each Person, and the contribution that They each make to the fulfilment of Their covenant purpose.

Of course, God is three Persons who each have unique capacities. However, this is not how He is first revealed. Neither is it the beginning point for understanding how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit live and fellowship together. It is the one Spirit and one life of Yahweh that is first expressed. We note, in this regard, that God revealed Himself to Moses as 'Yahweh *Elohim*', not '*Elohim* Yahweh'. Exo 3:15.

Jesus emphasised this great truth by quoting Moses. He declared, 'The first of all the commandments is: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, *the Lord [Yahweh] is one.*" ' Mar 12:29. Deu 6:4. Jesus also prayed, 'And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that *they may be one just as We are one*: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.' Joh 17:22-23.

Many Christians have little understanding of how Yahweh *Elohim* is both one and three at the same time. *Elohim* – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – are not one because They have a shared goal to which each Person makes a contribution from the capacities inherent in Their own name. This would be collegiality. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not 'colleagues' of one another! They are one life and one Spirit.

Likewise, the oneness and capacity of God is not the sum of Their individual capacities. Certainly, the sum of the capacities of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the fullness of all possible expression. However, if the fullness of Their expression were the sum of each Person's capacity for expression, then nothing could be multiplied beyond Themselves. In other words, Their end would be in Themselves. We know that this is not the case, because, through offering, They made room within Themselves for our creation. Their life is being multiplied beyond Themselves, in and through the sons of God.

## One Spirit

In the Old Testament, the term 'the Spirit of the Lord [Yahweh]' communicates the expression and capacity of God who is one. Isaiah's prophecy, concerning the anointing of Jesus Christ for His earthly ministry is particularly helpful in understanding the nature and expression of the oneness of Yahweh. Isaiah declared, 'There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse [Christ, in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells in bodily form], and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the Lord [Yahweh] shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.' Isa 11:1-2.

This prophecy reveals seven aspects of the Spirit of Yahweh. The first aspect is 'one Spirit', which is the fullness of the other six expressions of the Spirit of Yahweh – wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and the fear of the Lord. The key point is that one Spirit is the capacity for the expression of each Person of *Elohim*. For example, the Father is not the source of His own wisdom. His wisdom is from Their oneness; it is the spirit of wisdom. The same is true for the Son and the Holy Spirit. James called this 'the wisdom from above'. It is spiritual. Jas 3:17. The wisdom from beneath is not simply human wisdom; it is wisdom that is sourced from oneself. This is why James associated this wisdom with envy, self-seeking, confusion, and every evil thing. Jas 3:15-16.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul used the term 'one Spirit' to describe the oneness of Yahweh's fellowship. In particular, he explained that one Spirit is the capacity to be one with the Lord and with our brethren in the body of Christ. For example, Paul wrote, 'But he who is joined to the Lord is one Spirit with Him'. 1Co 6:17. Furthermore, he taught, 'There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one

hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all'. Eph 4:4-6.

God, as one, is revealed by the capacity of one Spirit. To this end, the Scriptures teach us that:

- God *is* word. Joh 1:1.
- God *is* life and light. Joh 1:4. 1Jn 1:5.
- God *is* love. 1Jn 4:16.
- God *is* Spirit. Joh 4:24.

These are not merely characteristics of God; nor are they statements of what God does. They are who He *is*. Through offering, by one Spirit, these dimensions of Their one life are multiplied and ministered to us. To demonstrate this principle, in Chapter 4 we have considered how the Everlasting Covenant purpose of God proceeds from 'God who is Word'.

### Laying down life to reveal another

Yahweh is a fellowship of offering. This is the culture of Their life in one Spirit. The way of offering in the Godhead is not the way in which we would instinctively view offering. Isa 55:8-9. From a fleshly perspective, a person is likely to view offering as something that they give from their own possessions or capacities in order to meet what they perceive to be the needs of others. This way of offering is fleshly. It is not the culture of offering in Yahweh.

The offering of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is spiritual. This is because They make offering by the capacity of *Eternal Spirit*. Eternal Spirit is one Spirit. Paul used the term 'Eternal Spirit' to highlight the understanding that the capacity of one Spirit, in the fellowship of God's own covenant is the capacity by which His Eternal, or Everlasting, Covenant is accomplished through offering.

By the capacity of Eternal Spirit, each Person in the Godhead lays down His life to reveal the other two. The other two, by the capacity of Eternal Spirit, lay down Their lives to reveal the one. This is the nature of Their offering, and demonstrates that Their end is not in Themselves. What do we mean by this?

## An endpoint

Laying down one's life means offering to an endpoint, or a death. It is the limit of a person's offering. The Scriptures define this limit as a person's 'sanctification'. When the Father, Son and Holy Spirit lay down Their lives by Eternal Spirit to reveal one another, Their endpoint is not in Themselves. That is, They don't define the endpoint of Their own offering. This is a most significant point.

What does it 'look like' when a person in the church defines the endpoint of their own offering? They might say, for example, 'I have this capacity or these resources to offer in the church.' Another person might say, 'It is my name to be involved in this activity or to perform that task.' Others may offer wherever, and however, they possibly can, in an attempt to derive some definition for themselves through what they do, and from the affirmation of others. These approaches to offering are really initiatives to reveal oneself.

When the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in offering, lay down Their lives by Eternal Spirit to reveal one another, Their life is multiplied so that it is not only *revealed in* the other, but also *reveals* the other. The end of Their offering is not for Themselves, otherwise Their endpoint would be in Themselves. Rather, where They end, others are revealed. In the fellowship of offering, this principle of life is multiplied toward all. In nature, we see this miracle of offering demonstrated in a seed. As Christians, we do not define the endpoint of our own offering.

## The example of Christ in Gethsemane

The offering of Christ in Gethsemane reveals the mode of Yahweh's fellowship. Christ's end was not in Himself in Gethsemane. This is because there was no self-centredness in Him. By this, we mean that Christ's offering was not a self-defined contribution that He made from His own resources, which was compatible with the initiatives of the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Instead, by the capacity of Eternal Spirit, the Son laid down His life to reveal the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the names of the sons of God who were written in Him as the Seed of the Father. Speaking about His offering, Jesus said, 'My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No-one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. *I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.* This command I have received from My Father.' Joh 10:17-18.

At first glance, it appears as though the power for Christ to lay down His life, and to take it up again, was inherent in Himself. However, in his letter to the Hebrews, Paul clearly stated that the Son offered Himself by Eternal Spirit. Specifically, he wrote, 'Christ, who through the *Eternal Spirit offered Himself* without spot to God'. Heb 9:14.

It is also important to note that Christ presented Himself for offering by the faith that He received through the command, or word, of the Father. We know this because Jesus testified that He had received this command. Joh 10:18. We know that faith comes by hearing the word of God the Father. Rom 10:17.

For Christ, the obedience of faith took Him down into darkness and death. He was not in control of the end of His offering. As we will consider below, His end was defined by the Father. Faith-obedience meant that He could use no mechanism, whether natural or spiritual, to save Himself. His obedience was unto death. Php 2:8.

### Christ's offering journey

Christ laid down His life by the power of Eternal Spirit, for the purpose of revealing the Father and the Holy Spirit, as well as a great multitude of sons.

When Jesus, the Son of Man, was made sin, He died the death of sin. He drank the cup of God's wrath on the sin of the whole world, which the Father had given to Him. Drinking this cup was an action of obedience. The initiative did not originate from the exercise of the Son's will. Christ emptied Himself, by Eternal Spirit, to reveal the will of the Father. The Father's will was for the Son to be an offering for sin. Luk 22:42. The Son did this to reveal the Father.

In this same action, the Father and the Holy Spirit, by the capacity of Eternal Spirit, were revealing Christ. In order to be revealed by the Father and the Holy Spirit, *Jesus needed to be willing*. This was His confession - 'Not My will, but Yours, be done.' Luk 22:42.

His submission to being revealed was His obedience. Paul said that Jesus emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondsman. He then humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Php 2:7-8. *Obedience reveals faith, which comes by hearing the word of God*. Christ received faith for obedience from the word of the Father, even though He was Yahweh the Son.

Paul also said that it was the Father who brought Christ back from the dead by the blood of the Everlasting Covenant. Heb 13:20. This statement by the apostle conveys to us the understanding that in every wounding event that Christ endured by Eternal Spirit, His blood was being shed and sprinkled upon Him. The blood was also enabling Him to endure His sufferings, and was bringing Him back from the death of sin.

Christ's blood was shed as a result of the abuse that He suffered. As His blood flowed from His wounds, Christ was brought back from the death of sin as the Father's Firstborn, the great Shepherd and Overseer of our souls, and as I AM. These were aspects of His new-born identity that, by faith, were also revealing the Father and the Holy Spirit.

In each wounding event, He was being trained by the Father and the Holy Spirit, who were revealing Him. At the same time, He was revealing Them, as the Firstborn, as the Shepherd, as I AM and as a Priest. This is the point that Paul was making when he wrote, 'So also Christ *did not glorify Himself* to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, today I have begotten You." As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek"; who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek".' Heb 5:5-10.

The revelation of His name was the outcome of the training that He received as He laid down His life to reveal the Father and the Holy Spirit. Through training, He learned the obedience of new creation sonship. Heb 5:8. In this way, His sonship was revealed.

### Christ's end was not in Himself

On His journey, alone, the Son of Man was being brought back from the dead by the Father, through the shedding of His blood. Heb 13:20. However, at the same time, He was dying the full death of sin. As we noted earlier, the endpoint of His death *was not in Himself*. His end was in the hands of the Father who had made Him an offering for sin. At the conclusion of His offering, the Son declared that He had laid down His life and had fulfilled all obedience. He then cried, 'Why have You forsaken Me?' Mat 27:46.

This cry, after His obedience had been fulfilled, was the expression of His broken heart. It had been broken by the reproaches that the Father had laid on Him as He hung on the cross. Psa 69:20. The Son of Man likened these reproaches to a great flood that had come up to His neck and was 'overflowing' Him. Psa 69:1-2.

He had been completely forsaken by the Father. However, His end, or death, was in the hands of the Father. Acknowledging that His end was not in Himself, but in the hands of the Father, the Son then cried out with a loud voice, 'Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.' Luk 23:46.

As Christ breathed His last breath, the Father reached out His hands to rescue Him. He sent and drew Him out of many waters, drawing Him into His embrace. King David prophesied of this event, declaring, 'He sent from above, He took me; He drew me out of many waters.' Psa 18:16.

Christ's death was His entry into life. This was because it was the end of His offering. It was also the end of the Father making Him an offering for sin. His body now rested in hope, awaiting the seventh wound. This wound granted, to all who would receive His propitiatory work, an entry to the pathway of salvation that He had just pioneered.

### Three dimensions of the Son's identity

Jesus Christ is the Son of Man, the Son of God the Father, and Yahweh Son. These are the three dimensions of His identity. They were equally expressed in Gethsemane, and then in each wounding event as He journeyed to the cross. In each wounding event, He was manifest as the sin offering, the peace offering, and the burnt offering. The apostle John was highlighting these three dimensions of Christ's identity when He wrote, 'In the beginning was the Word [Son of Man], and the Word was with God [Son of God the Father], and the Word was God [Yahweh Son]'. Joh 1:1-2.

#### *As Son of Man*

Christ was established as the *beginning* of the new creation when, as the Word made flesh, He was made an offering for sin and was brought back from the death of sin by the Father through the shedding of Christ's blood. Christ's blood was given to us as the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, to be our life, when it was sprinkled on the altar of His body. Heb 13:20.

The first point to note is that Christ did not make Himself an offering for sin. It was the Father who made Christ an offering for sin. Paul made this clear, writing 'He [God the Father] made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him'. 2Co 5:21. However, the Father did not do this by His own capacity or according to His own wisdom. How do we know this?

When Isaiah prophesied concerning the offering of the Son as a sin offering, he declared, 'Yet it pleased [Yahweh, one] to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin.' Isa 53:10. Isaiah identified Yahweh as the One who made Christ an offering for sin. When we consider these two passages together, we understand that it was the Father, by the capacity of Their oneness as Yahweh *Elohim*, who made Christ's soul an offering for sin.

### *As Son of God the Father*

The Holy Spirit enabled Jesus to offer Himself, by Eternal Spirit, as *the Son of God*. As the Son of God, He laid down His life to reveal the Father. The outcome of laying down His life in this manner was that He was made in the likeness of men. This is the literal meaning of Paul's statement to the Philippians - 'But [He] did empty Himself, the form of a servant having taken, in the likeness of men *having been made*'. Php 2:7. YLT. As the Son of Man, Christ's focus was to reveal the Father. Joh 14:9.

When this happened, the life of the Father, which was the Son's life, was now in His blood as a son of man. Jesus testified to this, saying, 'For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgement, because He is the Son of Man.' Joh 5:26-27.

The life of God, which had become the Son's life when He was born of the Father, was now the life of God that was in the blood that belonged to His body. It could, therefore, be given to make atonement for mankind. The Lord communicated this principle through Moses, saying, 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood [by reason of its life] that makes atonement for the soul.' Lev 17:11.

The shedding of the Son's blood was the means by which the life of God could be given to mankind to become their life. In this way, He was making peace through the shedding of His blood. Col 1:20. This is because we were reconciled to God as the life of Yahweh was given to us

to be our life. *This revealed the peace offering.* We are recipients of this peace when, in the fellowship of Christ's offering, our heart is sprinkled with His blood. Christ's life gives us the power to serve the living God. Heb 9:14. In other words, we are able to 'priest' ourselves as a living sacrifice in the fellowship of Yahweh's own offering, according to our name and sanctification as a son of God. Rom 12:1.

### *As Yahweh the Son*

Yahweh Son laid down His own life, by the capacity of Eternal Spirit, to be born by the word of the Father, thus becoming His Son.

Although being in the form of God, Yahweh Son 'did not consider it robbery to be equal with God'. Php 2:6. Having been born of the Father, the Son now had the life of the Father; and this life was the life of God. Yahweh Son, laying down His life in this manner, was the full expression of committed love. This revealed *the burnt offering*. This love was typified by the nails that secured Him to the cross as an offering. Yahweh the Son remained as a whole burnt offering from when He offered Himself to God in the fellowship of Their covenant dialogue, until His offering was finished on the cross. Through this offering, He became the full revelation, realisation and expression of our sonship. He was then revealed by the Father as 'the pattern Son' and Pioneer of our salvation and sonship.

### **Multiplication through training**

Our sanctification is established and proven through the training that we receive in the fellowship of offering. It is most important that we understand this great truth. When we understand this, we cease from striving to reveal ourselves and our own name. We accept that our end is not in ourselves. The wonderful fruit of this understanding is that we become part of the ministry of offering that Christ has pioneered, by which the life of God is multiplied. Through our obedience, His life is multiplied in us, giving us life and a name even beyond what we could have conceived of for ourselves.

This principle was demonstrated when Jesus sent out the seventy before Him as labourers into His harvest. Luk 10:2. He gave them instructions and set specific parameters to guide them as they ministered. For example, they were not to carry a money bag, nor a knapsack or sandals. And they were not to greet anyone along the road as they travelled to the places where Jesus sent them. Luk 10:4. In these places, they were to heal

the sick and to say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' Luk 10:9.

As they presented themselves to reveal Jesus, through obedience to the word that defined the parameters of their offering, the fruit of their offering was greater than they had expected. They returned to Jesus with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.' Luk 10:17. In response, Jesus said, 'Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.' Luk 10:20.

The seventy had presented themselves to make offering, and Jesus had defined their offering for them. They laid down their lives to reveal Christ. The outcome was that the life of God was multiplied and ministered in a manner that was far beyond what they had expected. Furthermore, they were revealed because their names were written in heaven. That is, they were proving the will of God, and obtaining their sanctification as sons of God. Rom 12:2. 1Th 4:3.

In summary, we must receive the word that defines the ground of fellowship and offering. The apostle John was making this point when he explained that the word ministered from a presbytery by Christ's messengers joins those who receive it to the fellowship of the presbytery, which is fellowship with the Father and the Son. 1Jn 1:1-3.

In the faith that we receive by hearing this word, we are to present ourselves for offering. Rom 12:1. In this fellowship with the presbytery and with the Lord, we receive from the hand of the Lord the offering that He requires from us. We receive the capacity to make offering by Eternal Spirit as the Holy Spirit pours the love of God into our heart. King David was addressing this principle when he testified, 'But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You.' 1Ch 29:14.

### **Body ministry at communion**

As we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the fellowship of Yahweh is the content and goal of the word of the cross. It is no surprise, therefore, that the implications of this message for presbyteries, churches, families and individuals, are vast. As we come to the close of this chapter, let us make some specific, yet preliminary, comments regarding the application of this word to body ministry at the communion gathering.

The offering culture of Yahweh's fellowship should be the culture of body ministry when we gather together for the weekly communion service. As we have been considering, the foundation of this culture is the laying down of our lives, by the capacity of Eternal Spirit, to reveal another. What does this mean in relation to body ministry?

First, we recognise that it is the Holy Spirit's initiative to speak to the church. Jesus highlighted this reality in His letters to the seven churches in Asia. He wrote, 'He who has an ear, let him hear *what the Spirit says to the churches*'. Rev 2:7. However, the Spirit does not reveal Himself or His own word in the body ministry. If He did, His end would be in Himself. By the capacity of Eternal Spirit, the Holy Spirit lays down His life to reveal the Son and the members of Christ's body.

Making this point, Jesus said, 'When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for *He will not speak on His own authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for *He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.*' Joh 16:13-14. The Spirit reveals Christ, and expresses His word and mind through the members of Christ's body.

Christ is the Head of His body. However, He does not reveal Himself through them. Rather, He reveals the Father and the Holy Spirit by calling the church to hear the word that proceeds from the Father and is revealed by the Holy Spirit through the members of the body. The Holy Spirit, through the spiritual gifts that He gives to members of Christ's body, is revealing the mind of Christ. The initiative of the Holy Spirit is always in submission to the headship of Christ.

Christ's headship is expressed through the presbytery. In this regard, the light from His face shines from the stars in His hand as the light of present truth. Hab 3:4. Rev 1:16,20. Craftsmen facilitate the headship of Christ in the body ministry of the communion service. Each member of the body is being revealed as a member of Christ, according to their ability and unique function (as a 'finger', 'foot', etc). Each body member is submitting to Christ as they are led by His messengers, who are functioning under His headship.

The overseers of body ministry, and the members of Christ's body, meet in fellowship. That is, individual body members present themselves for offering, and then are given in offering by craftsmen who are priesting their gift.

The apostle Paul used the gift of tongues as an example of the need for craftsmen. He wrote, 'If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.' 1Co 14:27-28. Paul's point was that an interpreter is given grace to explain the content of the message that is being ministered in a language that others are unable to comprehend. If there is no-one to interpret the tongue, then the one with the burden is to speak quietly to himself and to God. 1Co 14:28.

This principle of an interpreter holds true for all of the gifts of the Spirit. That is, interpreters are the craftsmen. To this end, if there are no craftsmen to express the headship of Christ for a particular course of spiritual gift or there is no interpretation of that gift, then the body member with that particular gift is to hold their song or word. They can speak it to themselves and to God as a prayer travail.

Craftsmen step forward in faith to guard the fellowship of offering at the communion table in submission to the headship of Christ. They lay down their life to be revealed by individual members who have each received a manifestation of the Spirit. They call for a particular course of body ministry, whether it be in prayer, worship, prophetic gifts, etc. They fellowship with body members who present themselves for offering.

Individual body members receive a manifestation of the Spirit for the benefit and edification of the body. 1Co 14:26. They may have received a gift and an unction by the Holy Spirit; however, they are listening for the interpreting craftsmen to call for the particular gift that they have received. 1Co 14:32.

The apostle Paul explained that only two, or at the most three, are needed to express a particular course of body ministry. 1Co 14:27. Craftsmen host each particular course, giving the interpretation so that the whole body grows in understanding. The two or three, with the craftsmen, are a 'package' of body ministry.



# Chapter 2

## Christ's ministry as Melchizedek

### Introduction

Christ was begotten by the Father as the Firstborn from the death of sin. Col 1:18. When the Father said, 'You are My Son, *today* I have begotten You', He was referring to the whole day of Christ's offering. Heb 5:5. The Father offered the Son as the Lamb for His house when He offered up Christ as His Firstborn Son. This offering of the Son commenced when He began to sweat great clots of blood in Gethsemane, and concluded some fifteen hours later when His side was pierced with a soldier's spear. We know that Jesus was progressively manifest as the only begotten Son through the wounds that He suffered. The apostle Paul wrote, 'Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience [or was trained] by the things which He suffered'. Heb 5:8. When His sufferings had finished, His training was complete. Christ had been perfected as a Son through offering, to become the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him as their Shepherd-King and High Priest. Heb 5:9.

In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul wrote, 'For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the *captain* of their salvation perfect through sufferings'. Heb 2:10. The Greek word translated as 'captain' in this passage of Scripture is *archegos*. It can equally be translated as 'prince' or 'author'. Christ was the Prince, or Head, of His people. He was God's Firstborn Son and, as such, the nation of God's people would spring from Him.

The Prince, or Author, of life must be He who has life in Himself, and not from another. Otherwise, He cannot be the Head. In the same way that the Father has life in Himself, He granted the Son to have life in Himself, and gave Him authority to execute judgement as the Son of Man. Joh 5:26-27. As the Prince and Author of life, the Son's life did not come from another. It was the life that He had in Himself.

Paul called Christ the Author and *Perfector* of our faith. Heb 12:2. He is the One who takes precedence in faith, and is thus the perfecter and exemplar of faith. In the days of His flesh, Christ trod the path of faith without deviating. Heb 5:7-8. As the perfecter of the pathway of faith, He brought it to a perfect end in His own Person.

Because Christ is the leader, or captain, of all who tread the pathway of faith, we are told to consider Him as our Apostle, or Messenger, and our High Priest. Heb 3:1. All that He exemplified through His offering, He now commands His followers to obey. Heb 5:9. It is to be our confession. Heb 3:1. That is, our confession is to be our obedience to Christ; it is to be the testimony of our life.

Addressing this aspect of the Son's offering journey, the Father declared, 'I will make him My Firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.' Psa 89:27. When Christ was being begotten as the Firstborn from the dead, this was the expression and manifestation of the Son of God as the express image of the Father. Heb 1:3-4. He was also being revealed as the King of kings and Lord of lords. 1Ti 6:15. Christ was fully manifest as the *highest* of the kings of the earth when He was *lifted up* on the cross. Significantly, Jesus said, 'When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I AM.' Joh 8:28. We see, then, that His name, I AM, reveals His kingship.

Regarding Christ's ministry as a king, the psalmist prophesied, '*His seed* [or, sons] also I will make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven.' Psa 89:29. These were the same sons of which Isaiah spoke, saying, 'When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His*

*seed*, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.' Isa 53:10. Christ's kingly ministry is connected to the sin offering. The outcome of this ministry is that sons of God are born and brought to maturity.

Through His offering journey, Jesus was *also* anointed by the Father as a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. Heb 5:6. He was perfected through suffering, and became the author of eternal salvation to all who *obey His word*. Heb 5:9. Having been called by God as the High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, He now ministers His word to us as the bread and wine of communion. Heb 5:10. Joh 6:53-56. Joh 6:63. Luk 22:19-20. The bread is His flesh, which we eat in faith for participation in His body. 1Co 10:16-17. The wine is His blood, which we drink in faith for participation in His offering. 1Co 10:16. In the fellowship of His offering, we are being cleansed from our sin, and the life in His blood is becoming our life. 1Jn 1:7. Gal 2:20.

*Kingship* and *priesthood* are the two offices of the Melchizedek order. Each office is signified in the Scriptures by a crown. The Lord told the prophet Zechariah to make a dual crown out of silver and gold. These two crowns, together, formed one elaborate crown, which was to be placed on the Man whose name is the BRANCH. This, of course, was Christ. Through Zechariah, the Lord declared, 'From His place He shall branch out, and He shall build the temple of the Lord; yes, He shall build the temple of the Lord. He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and *rule* on His throne; so He shall be a *priest* on His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.' Zec 6:12-13.

Paul was referring to the fulfilment of this prophecy when he noted that Jesus was *crowned with glory and honour* because of the sufferings of death that He experienced. Heb 2:9. We also recognise that, through His offering, Jesus built the temple of the Lord. He told the Jews that He would do this, saying, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' Joh 2:19. Jesus was referring to 'the temple of His body'. Joh 2:21.

Christ's physical body was destroyed through His death on the cross. However, it was raised as an immortal body after three days and three nights. He was the immortal Head of a corporate body that had been created through His offering on the cross. Eph 2:14-16. The apostle Peter described Christ's corporate body, which was composed of Jews and Gentiles, as being a spiritual temple made out of living stones. 1Pe 2:5. The ministry of son-priests within this temple is according to the order of Melchizedek. We are taught how to minister this way by Melchizedek, our

great High Priest. This happens in the fellowship of Christ's offering as we take His yoke upon ourselves and learn from Him. Mat 11:28-30.

The purpose of this chapter is to show how the dual offices of Christ's Melchizedek ministry were established through His offering. We will give particular attention to Christ's kingship. This is because, in Part 5 of *The Steps of Salvation*, we emphasised Christ's priesthood.

As we begin our consideration of this subject, it is important to acknowledge that both Melchizedek offices are active at each stage of Christ's offering. That is, Jesus is never only priesting Himself, nor is He ever only exercising kingship. He is Melchizedek, the King-Priest. His kingship is revealed as He priests Himself. Equally, through the declaration of His name, I AM, the elements of His priesthood are being revealed.

### A priest in the temple

Let us begin by reminding ourselves of some of the key points of Christ's ministry as High Priest. Christ was a suffering high priest who offered Himself as a living sacrifice. The apostle Paul said that through the sufferings that Christ experienced as He offered Himself, He was tempted and tried in relation to all points of human frailty. Yet, He did not sin by defending or preserving Himself. Because of this, as our High Priest, He is able to sympathise with our weaknesses. Heb 4:15. Furthermore, He gives us grace so that we can participate in His offering, and can be delivered from our own fallen propensities to preserve our life and pursue our own way. Heb 4:16.

As we noted above, Christ established the true temple of His body. Christ's body is an administration through which God's Everlasting Covenant purpose is accomplished. This temple was foreshadowed in the angelic administration in heaven. It was then copied by Moses, in symbolic form, as a tent in the wilderness. Based on this pattern, Solomon built a temple as a permanent dwelling place for God in Jerusalem. The temple and vessels of the Old Covenant represent specific lessons, or applications, of the true temple of Christ's body.

Paul taught that Christ was set forth as a propitiation, or mercy seat. Rom 3:25. The mercy seat was the top piece of the ark of the covenant. In this regard, it was like the seat of a throne. On the Day of Atonement, the mercy seat was sprinkled seven times with the blood of the offerings. Likewise, blood was sprinkled seven times on the altar. Lev 16:14,19. The

sprinkling of blood, seven times, on both of these vessels of the tabernacle marked their connection to each other. Together, the ark and the altar represent the two offices of the Melchizedek order.

The ark of the covenant is the place where God's Everlasting Covenant is ratified and proclaimed. The promises of the covenant are appropriated through the sprinkling of blood on the mercy seat of the ark. The altar is the place of offering where atonement is made. The life of Yahweh is in Christ's blood. This life is multiplied through offering, and is given on the altar of Christ's body to become our life.

All the other pieces of furniture in the temple were an extrapolation of the ark of the covenant and the altar. Heb 9:4. As Christ was being wounded, and His blood was being sprinkled on His body, the elements of His administration, depicted in the Scriptures as the other pieces of furniture, were being sprinkled with His blood and activated. As we journey with Christ in the fellowship of His offering, these elements of Christ's administration have specific applications for our life. Furthermore, as son-priests, we are joined to the ministry of these elements of Christ's one administration.

As Christ ministered in the true temple during His offering journey, He proclaimed and confessed His name as I AM through His kingly and priestly work. For example, He proclaimed, 'I AM the bread of life', at the table of showbread; He proclaimed, 'I AM the light of the world', at the lampstand; He proclaimed, 'I AM the door of the tabernacle, which is also His sheepfold. Joh 6:35. Joh 8:12. Joh 10:9. We will develop these points further in the next book in *The Steps of Salvation* series.

Christ's offering as the Lamb of God, which was finished in less than one day almost 2000 years ago, is being uniquely applied, today, to the life of each son of God who is in Christ. Christ is able to do this through His Melchizedek priesthood, which operates by the power of an endless life. Heb 7:16. As believers, we receive all that happens in our day, including our sufferings - whether big or small - as our unique participation in the events of His offering. They are being priested to us by Melchizedek. In this fellowship, the blood that He shed, which fell on His body as our Mercy Seat and Altar, also falls upon our heart. By this means, His life is being transferred to us. Heb 9:14.

## The Father's Lamb

Before the beginning, Yahweh the Son offered Himself within the fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim* to be the Lamb of God. As the Lamb of God, He was the provision for Their Eternal Covenant purpose of bringing into being a multitude of sons. These sons would be born of God the Father to become part of His family and household. By His priestly capacity, and through the power of Eternal Spirit, the Son offered Himself to God the Father to be the Father's Lamb. That is, He would be the Lamb of offering for the Father's house.

Christ's manifestation as the Father's Lamb was typified in the offering up of Isaac by Abraham on Mount Moriah. Isaac was the son of promise, and the fruit of Abraham and Sarah's faith. Isaac was the heir of Abraham's house, and the one through whom Abraham was to become the father of an innumerable company of sons. The Lord had said to Him, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called.' Gen 21:12. There would be no further sons unless they came through Isaac, the firstborn.

God called Abraham to offer up Isaac in order to establish a principle of faith through which every son of God would be born. Gen 22:1-2. Both Abraham and Isaac understood that Isaac was being sacrificed like a lamb for a burnt offering. Gen 22:7-8. However, Isaac was not priesting himself as a burnt offering. It was his father, Abraham, who was offering him.

In response to Abraham's faith and Isaac's obedience, the Lord declared, 'By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son - blessing *I will bless you*, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations [or, families] of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.' Gen 22:16-18.

Abraham's offering of Isaac paralleled the Father's offering of the Son, and revealed the principle by which many sons would be born through Christ. The Son is the Head of the nation from which every citizen of God's kingdom would come. There would have been no sons, nor entry into the kingdom, unless it was through the Son. This is because Christ emptied Himself to become the Father's Son and Seed. In Him were written the names of every son and daughter of God who would be brought forth to be part of the Father's family. It is for this reason that one of the Son's names is 'Everlasting Father'. Isa 9:6.

Significantly, Paul also identified Jesus as being Abraham's Seed. He said, 'Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made.' Gal 3:16. Those who are baptised into Christ are joined to the fellowship of His offering. Isaac was also joined to the fellowship of this offering through his obedience to Abraham. Paul said that if we are in Christ, then we are Abraham's seed, and are heirs of the promises that were made to Abraham and Isaac. Gal 3:28-29. That is, we are the sons of God through the faith of Christ Jesus. Gal 3:26.

As both the Seed of God and the Seed of Abraham, the Son was offered by the Father. Isa 53:10. 2Co 5:21. Jesus said, 'Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.' Joh 12:24. The Son was born from the dead as a firstfruits of the new creation when the Father offered Him as a sin offering in Gethsemane, and shed His blood through seven wounding events. Heb 13:20. Through these wounds, Christ's blood became the blood of the New Covenant. The shedding of His blood was the means by which the life of God would germinate and come forth as a multitude of sons who were born of God with Christ.

This multitude included all those who had died in faith before the offering of Christ, as well as those who would be born after He had risen from the dead. This was possible because the Father had set forth the Son as a propitiation by His blood, and had passed over the sins that *previously* had been committed. Rom 3:25. These sons of God, as well as those who would be born of God after His resurrection, were brought out of sin by Christ's priestly work. Christ, by the Holy Spirit, sanctified these sons with His own blood by joining them to the fellowship of His offering. Heb 13:12. Heb 2:11.

This capacity to birth and to sanctify sons who had previously died, as well as those who would be born later, was a feature of Christ's Melchizedek ministry as I AM. In the book of Revelation, Jesus spoke of Himself, saying, 'I AM the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End ... who *is* and who *was* and who *is to come*, the Almighty.' Rev 1:8. I AM is *ever present*. He gathers up the past and the future into Himself. Accordingly, Melchizedek is able to priest all of the elements of His one offering, once for all time, to those who died in faith before His offering, and to those who respond in faith to the word of the cross after His offering.

## The Shepherd-King

Kingship is expressed through shepherding. We see this principle exemplified in the life and appointment of King David, of whom it was said, 'You shall shepherd My people Israel, and be ruler over My people Israel.' 1Ch 11:2. Christ's kingship was described in the same manner. Quoting the prophet Micah, Matthew wrote, 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a *Ruler* who will *shepherd* My people Israel'. Mat 2:6.

Christ, the Son of David, is the great Shepherd of the sheep. Heb 13:20. Mic 5:2,4. He testified, saying. '*I am* the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.' Joh 10:11. We note in this passage that Jesus connected shepherding with His name, I AM.

The 'sheep' of the Son's sheepfold were given to Him by the Father. Joh 10:29. They are the Father's sons and daughters. As Jesus prayed, 'You [the Father] have given Him [the Son] authority [as a Shepherd-King] over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as *You have given Him*.' Joh 17:2. This multitude was given to the Son before the creation of the heavens and the earth, when the Father predestined every person to adoption as a son of God in Christ. Eph 1:5. All of our names were written in Christ, the Seed of God. He would fall into the ground and die, and then come up like an ear of corn, full of grain. Each seed within the ear of corn represents a son of God. Joh 12:24.

Christ, the Shepherd, laid down His life for the sheep when He was struck by the Father with a sword. Zec 13:7. This was the fulfilment of Zechariah's prophecy, when he declared, ' "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the Man who is My Companion," says the Lord of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd [with this sword], and the sheep will be scattered; then I will turn My hand upon the little ones".' Zec 13:7.

Through a prophetic psalm of King David, Christ described the sword with which He was struck as being the reproaches that He suffered through the words and actions of sinners, who were likened to dogs, lions and wild oxen. Psa 22:20-21. David was referring to the whole of humanity when he spoke of this event. The key point to note is that it was the Father who laid these reproaches on Christ. Psa 69:9.

When Mary and Joseph went to the temple to dedicate Jesus, Simeon took Him in his arms and blessed Mary and Joseph. He then said to Mary, 'Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a *sword* will pierce

through your own soul *also*), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.' Luk 2:34-35.

Simeon's prophecy revealed some fundamental aspects of Christ's ministry as the Son of Man. In particular, it addressed the purpose of the sword of reproach that would pierce Christ, causing Him to suffer as He offered Himself to God as the Shepherd of the sheep. When Simeon disclosed to Mary that a sword would pierce her soul *also*, this prophecy revealed that the sword of reproach would cause the fall and rising of many in Israel.

Christ was the sign *spoken against*. The sword was the *word of reproach* that was used by the Jewish and Gentile leaders to try Him and to condemn Him as an imposter. It included the abuse and mocking that He suffered from the crowd as He hung on the cross. This sword, with its word of rejection and judgement, pierced Christ and broke His heart. Psa 69:20. The railing reproach that fell on Christ was in fact the human race's rejection of God as the Father of mankind. It was mankind's reproach of the Father that fell on Christ. Psa 69:7. Christ, through King David, testified, 'The reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.' Psa 69:9. As the Shepherd of His straying sheep, Christ suffered the punishment of our insubordination against the Father.

## Christ's name as King

Christ, the Shepherd-King, was smitten with a sword of reproach through the six wounding events that He endured as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary. Through each wound, He was coming back from the death of sin by the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, and His name as the Shepherd-King was being manifest. That is, His name, I AM, was being established and proclaimed as He was being ordained and sanctified, as the Son of Man, to His eternal office as King and Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Before we consider the proclamation of Christ's name at each stage of His offering, a brief comment on the mode of His kingship will be helpful. Jesus did not exercise kingship in the same way as do the kings or leaders of the world. The ministry of His kingship was through *slavehood* and *obedience!* Jesus made this clear to His disciples when He washed their feet at the first communion service. He said to them, 'You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so *I am* [a king and ruler]. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.' Joh 13:13-14.

Jesus took the form of a slave and humbled Himself to the point of death at each wounding event. This culminated in His death on the cross. Php 2:7-8. The outcome of Christ's obedience was that the Father highly exalted Him, and that Christ's name, I AM, was proclaimed. He was manifest as the highest of the kings of the earth. Php 2:9-11. Psa 89:27. By exhorting us to have the same mind as Christ, Paul was revealing that slavehood is to be the mode of our kingly expression as son-priests after the order of Melchizedek. This was also Christ's instruction to all of His disciples. We participate with Christ in His offering by washing one another's feet, and by presenting ourselves for offering as slaves of obedience. Joh 13:14. Rom 6:16,22.

### *I AM in the garden of Gethsemane*

Christ's first wound, in the garden of Gethsemane, revealed the offering fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Christ's blood was not shed by the hands of wicked men in Gethsemane. Within the fellowship of Yahweh, Christ surrendered Himself to the Father, as the Father, by Eternal Spirit, laid His hands upon Christ's head, making Him a sin offering on our behalf. By the capacity of Eternal Spirit, the Son responded to the Father by offering Himself as the Lamb for the sin offering, the burnt offering and the peace offering. The word from His mouth was, 'Not My will, but Yours, be done.' Luk 22:42. The sword of judgement, because of sin, was then wielded against Christ. As it struck Him, through the agency of the Spirit, His blood began to flow as sweat from His body. Luk 22:44. This revealed the fellowship of Yahweh within the holy of holies of the true tabernacle.

Christ was cut off from God as He died our death in Gethsemane. His death and separation from God, as a sin offering, was for the purpose of accomplishing a redemption that could deliver us from death through rebirth. In Gethsemane, as His blood began to flow, He, with those who believe in His name, were born again from the dead. Christ the great Shepherd, with His sheep, came back from the dead by the blood of the Eternal Covenant. Heb 13:20. This happened within the fellowship of Yahweh, before the hands of wicked men were laid upon Him at the gate of Gethsemane.

At the gate of Gethsemane, Jesus was able to proclaim His *born-again identity* as I AM. When the cohort came to the garden of Gethsemane to arrest Christ and His disciples, He confronted them with His word. He asked them, 'Whom are you seeking?' Joh 18:4,7. Twice, He proclaimed to them that He was I AM. With the first proclamation, all those who had

come to arrest Him – approximately one thousand men – fell to the ground. The power in the proclamation of His name as the Shepherd of His sheep protected the disciples, whom He had kept within His name. He then insisted that the cohort let each of His disciples go to their house.

Christ, as the great Shepherd, had protected His disciples in His name. His prayer on the Mount of Olives was fulfilled. Joh 18:8-9. Not one had been snatched from His hand, nor from the hand of His Father. Joh 10:28-29. He had delivered His sheep from Satan, the thief and murderer, who had sought to steal and devour Christ's sheep through the hands of Judas, the officers of the Jews, and the Roman cohort. Joh 10:10. Joh 8:44. Joh 18:4-8. We have considered this further in Chapter 3.

### *I AM in the house of Caiaphas*

In the house of Caiaphas, the accusation was made against Jesus, 'This fellow said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days." ' Mat 26:61. In the light of this accusation, Jesus was asked, 'Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' Mar 14:61. Jesus answered, saying, '*I AM*. And you will see the *Son of Man* sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.' Mar 14:62.

In response to these words, Caiaphas should have made haste to collect the double crown, which Zechariah had crafted and had entrusted to the priesthood to give to the Christ when He revealed Himself as Melchizedek. Instead, the high priest 'tore his clothes and said, "What further need do we have of witnesses?" ' Mar 14:63. Caiaphas then condemned Jesus to death, and the crowd began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him and beat Him with rods. Mar 14:65. The priesthood was stripped from the house of Aaron when Caiaphas tore his priestly garment, and then incited the crowd to strike Christ, the One who had been appointed by the Father as a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. Lev 21:10. Heb 7:17. Psa 110:4. Consequently, the Old Covenant priesthood was brought to an end, and the priesthood of a new covenant was revealed.

### *I AM before Pilate*

In response to Pilate's question, 'Are you a king?,' Jesus said, 'You say rightly that *I am* a king. For this cause *I was born*, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.' Joh 18:37. Here, Christ was

speaking as the Shepherd-King. As He had previously declared, 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.' Joh 10:27. All these sheep were sons who would be born from the dead when they heard His voice and received His message. The word gave them life, causing them to be born again. They were the flock of the Shepherd-King. Joh 10:28.

The apostle Paul described Christ's declaration to Pilate - '*I am a king*' - as 'the good confession'. 1Ti 6:13. He drew attention to the interaction between Christ and Pilate for the purpose of exhorting Timothy to fight the good fight of faith. 1Ti 6:12. Jesus fought the good fight of faith as He bore our reproach in obedience to the Father. In fellowship with Christ, Timothy would be able to flee, or overcome, every fleshly temptation that would rob him of eternal life, and would be able to fulfil His call as a son of God. 1Ti 6:11-12.

Interestingly, Paul's encouragement to Timothy was preceded by the statement, 'For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows'. 1Ti 6:10. This, of course, was Judas' experience. Judas' confession was that there was a better way to life than through Christ's death. This was not a good confession. It only resulted in betrayal. Instead of obtaining his predestination as a son of God who would sit on a throne and judge the twelve tribes of Israel, he was appointed to the torment of eternal damnation by the sword of the word. We have discussed this further in Chapter 4.

## **I AM lifted up**

At the beginning of this chapter, we noted the words of Jesus, who declared, 'When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that *I am* He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.' Joh 8:28. This declaration was in relation to the sixth and seventh wounds that Christ received.

The sixth wound that Jesus received on His offering journey was from the nails that pierced His hands and feet. Having been fastened to the cross, Christ was lifted up from the earth. In relation to this wound, we can identify four distinct aspects of the declaration of His name, I AM.

### ***Why have You forsaken Me?***

The Shepherd's sixth and final blow was reproach that broke His heart. As His heart was broken, the Son cried with a loud voice, '*Eli, Eli, lama*

*sabachthani?* that is, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me [I AM]? ' Mat 27:46. Our reproach had fallen on Jesus, and He had fully endured this reproach by the power of Eternal Spirit. The reproach was now finished, and had been completely taken away. The cry of distress, as I AM, was now a victorious cry of faith.

### *I am thirsty*

After He knew that all things had been accomplished, to fulfil the Scripture, Jesus said, '*I am thirsty.*' 'A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth.' Joh 19:28-29. This was the second statement of I AM associated with the sixth wound. Prior to this point, Christ had refused any relief from the hands of men, including wine that had been supplemented with an analgesic. Luk 23:36. This was because He was the High Priest who was offering Himself as a living and suffering sacrifice. He was enduring by *exanastasis*. When He declared His thirst and received a drink, it revealed that His priestly work, in offering Himself as a *living sacrifice*, was complete.

### *It is finished!*

Christ's third statement of I AM was 'It is finished!' Joh 19:30. At this point, the Father, by the Holy Spirit, drew Him out of many waters. King David prophetically declared this, writing, 'He [the Father] sent [the Holy Spirit] from above, He took *me* [the Son]; He drew *me* out of many waters [because the work was finished]'. Psa 18:16. The Father, by Eternal Spirit, reached His arms down to receive the Son into His bosom. The Son stood up out of the water, declaring the work finished. This was also by Eternal Spirit, from the Holy Spirit. We know this because the Son's statement was one of faith. His faith was working by the love of God that the Holy Spirit was pouring into His heart. Rom 5:5.

### *Into Your hands I commit My Spirit*

The fourth and final statement of I AM in the sixth wound was, 'Into Your hands *I commit My Spirit.*' Luk 23:46. The Shepherd was back from the death of sin, having triumphed over all principalities and powers as King of kings and Lord of lords. Col 2:15. He presented Himself to the Father and was received to the Father's throne.

### *The seventh wound*

The seventh wound revealed the reality that the Son was with the Father in His throne. This is because the seventh wound was the fruit of His hope, as He rested in peace. This fruit was blood, water, and a spirit of grace and supplication that was flowing from His heart. Although flowing from His heart, the source of these elements was the throne of grace. Zec 13:1. Heb 4:16. Rev 22:1.

Christ was enthroned with the Father while His pierced body hung on the cross. A spirit of grace and supplication from the throne was being poured out from His pierced side upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem. By this action, the Son, who was the brightness of the glory of God and the express image of the Father's likeness, began to shine forth from the darkness. Heb 1:3. The light of the gospel of the glory of God was shining from the face of Jesus upon the nations. 2Co 4:6.

Under the influence of grace and supplication, the crowd who had gathered at the cross received illumination and were able to look upon their King whom they had pierced, who was now high and lifted up on His throne with the Father. They began to mourn as one mourns for a firstborn son. Notably, Zechariah likened this mourning to the grief experienced by the nation of Judah when King Josiah died on the plains of Megiddo. Zec 12:10-11. Those who begin to mourn bow their hearts in reverence and submission to their King, and then supplicate and find repentance. They are blessed because they mourn, and then they return to their houses, restored to God as part of His covenant people. Mat 5:4.

### **The offering of incense**

In the same way that Christ's sonship and name as I AM was manifest in the garden of Gethsemane and was then proclaimed throughout His offering journey to Calvary, His offering of prayer with incense also continued until His seventh wound.

On the Day of Atonement in the tabernacle of Moses, Yahweh appeared in a cloud above the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant. Lev 16:2. The golden altar was brought into the holy of holies, and incense was placed on the coals of the golden altar. The smoke from the incense mingled with the cloud of Yahweh's presence. Lev 16:2-3. The blood of bulls and goats was then sprinkled seven times on the mercy seat. Lev 16:14-15. This, of course, was a shadow of what occurred when Christ priested Himself as a living sacrifice from Gethsemane to Calvary. Heb 8:5.

The garden of Gethsemane was the expression of the holy of holies in the true tabernacle. Here, as Christ commenced praying by the capacity of Eternal Spirit, His blood began to be shed on His body. Heb 9:14.

Luk 22:44. Christ's prayer, with the incense of grace, continued until His blood was sprinkled a seventh time after He had died on the cross.

Christ's prayer began with, 'Not My will, but Yours, be done', in the garden of Gethsemane, and concluded with, 'Why have You forsaken Me? Into Your hands I commit My Spirit', on the cross at Calvary.

Christ's prayer accompanied each declaration of I AM. The content and effect of His prayer was twofold. First, Christ's prayer was establishing and fulfilling the word and will of the Father. As we have already noted, Jesus said, 'When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that *I am* He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak [or pray] these things.' Joh 8:28. Second, Christ's prayer was proclaiming judgement upon the enemies of the Lord. These two sides of Christ's prayer reflect the two-edged sword of the cross.

These two dimensions of Christ's prayer, and the offering of incense, are captured in the Messianic psalms. For example, revealing the Son's obedience to the Father, the Son declared, through the Psalms, 'Let not those who wait for You, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed because of Me; let not those who seek You be confounded because of Me, O God of Israel. *Because for Your sake I have borne reproach*; shame has covered My face ... but as for Me, My prayer is to You, O Lord, in the acceptable time; O God, in the multitude of Your mercy, hear Me in the truth of Your salvation.' Psa 69:6-7,13. We know, of course, that Christ was heard by the Father because of His godly fear. Heb 5:7.

In the same psalm, the Son prayed to the Father *against* those who abused Him and refused His salvation. He prayed, 'Pour out Your indignation upon them, and let Your wrathful anger take hold of them. Let their dwelling place be desolate; let no-one live in their tents. For they persecute the ones You have struck, and talk of the grief of those You have wounded. Add iniquity to their iniquity, and let them not come into Your righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.' Psa 69:24-28.

These statements of judgement, which are contained in the Psalms, are sometimes referred to as 'imprecatory psalms'. They are psalms in which the authors called for cursing and misfortune to strike the enemies of God's people. This was the prayer of Christ toward those who refused the invitation to join the fellowship in His offering and sufferings. Christ had

authored the pathway of salvation for all mankind. The way of the cross brings blessing and salvation to all who receive its message. Those who refuse the word of the cross fall under the judgement and curse of the cross.

Many people reject the reality that Christ is equally our Saviour and Judge. Christ proclaims the salvation of everyone who receives His word. He also proclaims the judgement and damnation of every person who rejects the salvation that He authored through His offering journey. There is a view of Jesus as the meek and mild Saviour. This is, in reality, a figment of people's imagination. They either forget or are ignorant of the fact that Christ slaughtered His own covenant people – the children of Israel – in the wilderness, because of their *unbelief*. Jud 5.

### Two dimensions of Christ's offering

There are two dimensions of Christ's offering journey. One dimension was Christ's *ascension* from the death of sin and separation from God, in Gethsemane, back to the bosom of the Father when He committed Himself into the arms of the Father as He died on the cross. Luk 23:46. Jesus then ascended to His own throne after His resurrection when He had received His immortal, spiritual body. A second dimension of His offering journey was that He *descended* by emptying Himself to the lowest point of all creation. This was His death as I AM, through six conquering steps from Gethsemane until He was crucified on Calvary. This emptying, in obedience to the Father, concluded at the lowest point, which was His death on the cross. Php 2:7-8.

We recall that Simeon prophesied concerning the ascending and descending implications of Christ's offering, saying, 'Behold, this Child is destined for the *fall* and *rising* of many in Israel.' Luk 2:34. As we noted earlier, Simeon associated these two implications of Christ's offering to the two edges of a sword. Luk 2:35.

Christ's capacity to *ascend* to the highest point, and to *descend* to the lowest point, through His one offering journey, is a feature of the mystery of the cross. The outcome of these two dimensions of His offering was that Christ *filled all things*. This was Paul's point when he wrote, 'Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.' Eph 4:9-10.

## *The ascending of the Son*

Through the sufferings that Christ experienced in His mortal body, He was being made alive from the death of sin. His ascension through *exanastasis* reached its conclusion when He breathed His last and was received into the hands of the Father. After three days and three nights in the tomb, Christ rose through *anastasis*. He received an immortal, spiritual body. After ministering for forty days following His resurrection, He ascended back to His own throne, and to the glory that He had before. Act 1:9. Joh 6:62. Eph 1:20-21.

*Exanastasis* is a Greek word which means 'resurrection life in mortality'. Paul identified this as the resurrection life that a person experiences in their mortal body because they are conformed to Christ's death and are joined to the fellowship of His sufferings. Php 3:10-11. Jesus demonstrated *exanastasis* when, from Gethsemane, He was progressively brought back from the death of sin by the blood of the Everlasting Covenant. Heb 13:20. This happened while He was still in a mortal body that was dying through suffering. Amazingly, not one bone of His body was broken as He endured such extreme violence. Joh 19:36. This was the effect of *exanastasis* in His mortal body so that the covenant word of the Lord concerning His offering would be fulfilled. Psa 34:20. When Jesus declared from the cross, 'It is finished!', He had been fully made alive from the death of our sin while in mortality.

Addressing the inherent contradiction of resurrection life in a mortal and dying body, Paul explained, 'Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' 2Co 4:16-17. When those who are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering experience sufferings in the course of their life, they are being made alive with Christ through *exanastasis*. This is evident because they do not lose heart in the midst of their sufferings. 2Co 4:16. Rather, they find capacity from the Lord for their participation in His offering and sufferings.

*Anastasis* is the Greek word which refers to 'resurrection to immortality'. This is the resurrection that Jesus experienced after He had physically died and His body had rested in the tomb for three days and three nights. Through *anastasis*, Jesus received an immortal, spiritual body. His body no longer had any blood in it. It did not need to be sustained by eating food.

If we continue in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings that He experienced in His mortality, we will receive an immortal, spiritual body, like His, on the day of resurrection. As John explained, 'Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.' 1Jn 3:2-3.

### *The descending of the Son*

Throughout the course of His offering journey, Christ was suffering. At each wounding event, He obediently descended further as a conquering Slave, proclaiming Himself as I AM. Christ's journey was to the lowest parts of the earth. This was the manifestation of the fullness of darkness, and was the lowest point of the entire universe; even lower than the Lake of Fire. The Scriptures record that as Christ hung on the cross, great darkness fell over the whole land from 12:00pm until 3:00pm. Mar 15:33. Luk 23:44. As He hung on the cross during this period of darkness, the final Gehenna of the Lake of Fire took hold of Him. Psa 116:3.

The torment and suffering that Jesus experienced on the cross was the judgement of God upon the sin of the whole world. Concerning this torment, Christ testified, 'The pains of death surrounded me, and the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow.' Psa 116:3. This psalm reveals that Jesus did not go down into hell for three days and three nights, as some appalling heresies suggest. The eternal death and darkness of hell reached up and took hold of Him on the cross. Yet, death could not hold Him; He was not abandoned in hell. Act 2:24,27. As Christ's heart was broken by reproach, He cried out, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' Mat 27:46. The Father heard His cry and delivered His soul from death. Psa 116:4,8. This was because the Father is 'near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit'. Psa 34:18.

The reproach that the Father laid upon the Son took Him to the end, and then beyond the eternal dimension of the Lake of Fire. By this means, Christ was the full manifestation of reproach and eternal judgement. Amazingly, He exhausted eternal judgement by the power of Eternal Spirit, bringing it to an end in less than one day!

Before Christ said, 'It is finished!', He had accomplished all things necessary for both mercy and judgement. Jesus said that when He was lifted up on the cross, He would draw all men to Himself. Joh 12:32. This

was not merely an evangelistic implication of Christ's death on the cross. Rather, Jesus was saying that the death that He died on the cross would become the death of every person in the world. On account of Christ's death for all, we all died. 2Co 5:14. However, He was also proclaiming the only way to life as a new covenant.

We recall that those who believed Christ's word were scattered to their houses. These people were not damned. Nevertheless, the beginning point for their salvation was to mourn for Him whom *they had pierced*. Here is a key point. The salvation of every person begins when they accept that they are under the judgement of damnation for their sin that caused Christ's suffering and death. As they are illuminated and cut to the heart, and begin to mourn, they are joined to the fellowship of Christ's death. They are delivered from their slavery to sin, and become the captives of Christ, calling Him 'Lord'.

For those who remain unrepentant, Christ has personified their judgement. That is, Christ's torment in the three hours of darkness from 12:00pm to 3:00pm revealed the eternal torment of hell that those who die in their sins will endure forever. This is the fruit of their own choice. In hell, for those who have been damned, it will take an ageless age of years, countless and interminable, to show forth the vindication of divine wrath against sin. Isaiah prophesied that when the citizens of the new heavens and earth gather to worship the Lord, 'They shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.' Isa 66:24.

## **The two thieves**

The deaths of the two thieves who were crucified on either side of Christ represent the possible deaths of every person on earth. Both men were dying with Jesus on crosses. And, initially, both men were abusing Christ with insults, mocking His kingship and His sonship. Mat 27:44. Mar 15:32.

However, at some point nearing 12:00pm, one of the thieves began to receive illumination as he looked on Jesus, who was suffering for his sin. The blood of Christ, which the thief was causing to be shed, was speaking to him and bearing witness to the love of God. Heb 12:24. In repentance, the thief began to fear the Lord and to accept that he was dying under judgement, having been justly condemned for his sin. Luk 23:40-41. In repentance, and in the obvious travail of recognising that his sufferings

were just, he cried out to Jesus, saying, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.' Luk 23:42. By calling Jesus 'Lord', the thief was demonstrating that he had become the captive of Christ the Shepherd-King, and was a recipient of salvation. Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.' Luk 23:43. This sheep had been found by the great Shepherd and was gathered into His sheepfold.

Significantly, salvation did not deliver this thief from suffering. Instead, his sufferings were now being given to him by Christ, as a fellowship in Christ's offering. In the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, the thief was receiving the same resurrection life (*exanastasis*) that Christ was receiving as He endured the sufferings of the cross. He was coming back from the death of sin with Christ! Php 3:10-11. His sufferings were now the birth pangs of immortality, as he died in peace, with Christ. Rom 8:23-25.

For approximately three hours, the believing thief was sustained by the same grace and power that sustained all of the Old Testament men and women of faith in their participation in the sufferings of Christ, and in the fulfilment of the works of righteousness that had been prepared for them. Heb 11. However, once the soldier pierced the side of Christ, so that the blood, water and the Spirit flowed from the heart of Christ, the thief was born again as a son of God, and became one of the first to die in Christ under the New Covenant.

In contrast, the other thief continued to insult and abuse Christ, saying, 'If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.' Luk 23:39. This thief's expectation was that if Jesus was the Messiah, He should save the thief from his suffering and death. Evidently, this thief believed that the Christ would be a vicarious saviour, only. This blinded him to the need to participate with Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. Consequently, he was hostile to God and remained an enemy of the cross. Luk 23:40. Rom 8:7. Php 3:18-19.

Like the first thief, this man continued to suffer the death of the cross. However, his sufferings *were not achieving salvation*. He was not experiencing *exanastasis*. His sufferings were a foretaste of the eternal burnings that awaited him once he breathed his last breath.

## A sign spoken against

The reproaches that Christ endured as He hung on the cross were the culmination of all the abuse and mocking that He experienced along the course of His journey. However, as His priesthood, sonship and kingship were being spoken against and rejected by men, these aspects of His identity as I AM were being established and lifted up as an ensign, or banner, to the whole world.

The Messianic psalms testify to this implication of the reproach that Christ endured on the cross. Drawing attention to the reproach that broke Christ's heart, King David prophetically declared, 'O God, You have cast us off; You have broken us down; You have been displeased; Oh, restore us again!' Psa 60:1. The outcome of this reproach was that Christ was given as a banner for the deliverance of God's people from their captivity to sin. 'You have *given a banner* to those who fear You, that it may be displayed because of the truth. That Your beloved may be delivered, save with Your right hand, and hear me.' Psa 60:4-5.

An ensign, or standard, is the banner of a conqueror which marks the territory that they have acquired through warfare. David was making this point concerning Christ when he wrote, 'God has spoken in His holiness: "I will rejoice; I will divide Shechem and measure out the Valley of Succoth. Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim also is the helmet for My head; Judah is My lawgiver. Moab is My washpot; over Edom I will cast My shoe; Philistia, shout in triumph because of Me".' Psa 60:6-8. These regions, representing the nations of the earth, had become Christ's possession when He was lifted up as a banner.

When Jesus was lifted up from the earth on the cross, the name of the Lord, which was the standard, was proclaimed over the whole earth. He was the meek, or broken-hearted, One, who was inheriting the earth. Mat 5:5. It now belonged to the conquering Slave. And every person in the world was being drawn to Him. Joh 12:32.

In the same way that everyone dies the death of the cross because Christ died for all, everyone - whether they are damned or saved - becomes a sign. Those who reject the salvation of God, and continue in the idolatry of pursuing their own image and name, become a sign and a proverb. This is what the Lord proclaimed through the prophet Ezekiel. 'For anyone of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who separates himself from Me and sets up his idols in his heart and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, then comes to a

prophet to inquire of him concerning Me, I the Lord will answer him by Myself. I will set My face against that man *and make him a sign and a proverb*, and I will cut him off from the midst of My people. *Then you shall know that I am the Lord.*' Eze 14:7-8.

Alternatively, a person can receive the word of the cross, be born again from above, and join the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. These are the sons of God and members of the body of Christ who journey with Christ outside the gate of Gethsemane, bearing His reproach. Heb 13:13. Regarding these people, Jesus testifies, 'Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me! *We are for signs and wonders* in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells in Mount Zion.' Isa 8:18.

### A light to the whole earth

Concerning this outcome of Christ's offering, Isaiah prophesied, 'There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots ... and in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall *stand for an ensign of the people*; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.' Isa 11:1,10-12.

When Christ was lifted up as an ensign, the Father was giving Him to the world as the New Covenant. The New Covenant began to shine as a great light to all the nations of the earth. In this regard, Isaiah prophesied, 'I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house. *I am the Lord, that is My name.*' Isa 42:6-8. Through the ministry of the word of the New Covenant, those who were captive to sin could become the captives of the Lord.

Significantly, Paul and Barnabas quoted this Scripture in reference to themselves and their ministry as messengers of Christ to the Gentiles. They testified, saying, 'For so the Lord has commanded us: "I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends

of the earth”.’ Act 13:47. Luke recorded that, in response to the words of Paul and Barnabas, the Gentiles ‘were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed’.  
Act 13:48.

Through their ministry, Paul and Barnabas were proclaiming and portraying Christ as crucified. Gal 3:1. They were ministers of the New Covenant, and part of the expression of the ensign that was lifted up to the nations. This should be true for every member of the body of Christ, which is the church. Col 1:24.

When the Lord, through Isaiah, identified Christ as a branch who would stand as an ensign to the people, He was revealing that the ensign would become Christ’s *lampstand church*. The branch that He referred to was the branch of an almond tree. Jer 1:11. We know that the lampstand in the tabernacle is crafted in the form of an almond tree. In the book of Revelation, seven lampstands symbolised Christ’s seven churches. A key function of Christ’s lampstand churches is to proclaim to the world the message of the cross, which is the light of the gospel. Mat 5:14-16.

While the standard, or banner, defines the territory that belongs to a conqueror, it is also a rallying point for those who have been taken captive by the conqueror and who now belong to him. Revealing this point, the Lord said, ‘I will make each of My mountains a road, and My highways shall be elevated. Surely these shall come from afar; look! Those from the north and the west, and these from the land of Sinim [China] ... behold, I will lift My hand in an oath to the nations, and set up My standard for the peoples; they shall bring your [born again] sons in their arms, and your [born again] daughters shall be carried on their shoulders.’ Isa 49:11-12,22.

Isaiah’s prophecy reveals the eschatological implications of a standard being lifted up. In the book of Revelation, we read that Christ – the Lion of Judah, and the Root of David – overcomes to open the seven seals. Rev 5:6. This brings judgement upon the seventh world kingdom and establishes a rallying point for a great multitude of the redeemed of the Lord. Rev 6. Rev 7:9-17. The focal point for this gathering is the fulfilment of the great Day of Atonement, as the seventh seal is broken. Rev 8:1-5. John observed, ‘A great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” ’ Rev 7:9-10.

## The ministry of Christ's administration

Yahweh is infolding, offering fire, given as offering love, through the Son. Eze 1:4. Son 8:6. The apostle Paul described the Son as 'the brightness of the glory of God and the express image of the Father's likeness'. Heb 1:3. This is how the Son makes Himself known to us, and how we see Him when the word of the cross is proclaimed to us.

We recall that the Lord made Himself known to Moses when God called to him from the burning bush. Exo 3:2-4. The burning bush was the fire of Yahweh's offering fellowship, on a 'tree'. The Lord first revealed Himself to Moses as I AM, and then revealed Himself as 'Yahweh *Elohim*'. Exo 3:14-15. The burning bush was a representation of the Son of Man on the cross. Jesus said, 'When you lift up the Son of Man [on a tree, or cross], then you will know that *I AM*, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.' Joh 8:28.

Significantly, Christ's manifestation as I AM, when He was lifted up on the cross, revealed Him as the Son of Man *on a throne*. As Isaiah witnessed, 'I saw [my] Lord sitting on a throne, *high and lifted up*, and the train of His robe filled the temple'. Isa 6:1. In response to seeing his Lord in this way, Isaiah confessed that he was undone, because he was a man of unclean lips, and his eyes had 'seen the King, the Lord of hosts'. Isa 6:5.

However, the Lord ministered to Isaiah through a seraphim who was above the throne. The seraphim, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar, touched Isaiah's mouth and declared, 'Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.' Isa 6:7. We note that the altar is the place where the fire of Yahweh's offering fellowship was made available to God's people. The fire was applied to the lips of Isaiah to purge the sinful motivations that emanated from his heart, 'for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks'. Mat 12:34.

Through Isaiah's experience, we learn that the declaration of I AM reveals the Son's throne and the ministry of His kingship and His priesthood. Kingship and priesthood are the two offices of the Melchizedek order. As Paul explained, Melchizedek is Jesus Christ, the King of peace and Priest of the Most High God. Heb 7:1.

The prophet Ezekiel also saw the Son of Man on a throne. He testified, saying, 'Then I looked, and behold, a whirlwind was coming out of the north, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing [or, infolding]

itself.' Eze 1:4. A fourfold administration proceeded from the fire. This administration was under a firmament. Above the firmament was a throne, upon which was a figure with the appearance of a man. Eze 1:5-26.

Describing this man's appearance, Ezekiel wrote, 'Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the colour of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around ... *this was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of [Yahweh]*'. Eze 1:27-28. Ezekiel was describing the appearance of Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, who is the brightness of the glory and the express image of the Father.

### The administration of the Son

Light proceeds from the fire of Yahweh as a word that shines in the darkness. Joh 1:1,5. Referring to Jesus, the apostle John wrote, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'. Joh 1:1. The word of God, proclaimed by faithful messengers who are part of a presbytery in the right hand of Christ, brings the light, revelation and illumination of the Son of Man on the throne. He is clothed as a priest, ruling as a king, and He ministers in four dimensions of one administration. The administration has faces, wings, hands, feet, eyes, wheels, voices, etc. Eze 1:5-21.

The Son's king-priest throne is expressed through a fourfold administration that is active in all the earth. Under the Old Covenant, the four dimensions of the Son's administration were with the angels. Heb 2:2. Eze 1:5-14. As Stephen declared, the word was received through the disposition of angels. Act 7:53. However, in the church age, the administration is now angels *and* men in their right order.

Christ's administration is His body. He is the Head of His body, and His administration proceeds from Him. We are the members of His body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, as long as we 'eat His flesh' and 'drink His blood'. Col 2:19. Jesus said that if we would eat His flesh and drink His blood, we would abide in Him and He would abide in us; we would be of His very substance. Joh 6:56.

## Melchizedek ministers bread and wine

Angels and men serve in this Melchizedek administration. Its primary work is to bring forth the substance of Yahweh; that is, to bring forth bread and wine to the children of Abraham. These are the sons of God. Those who are joined to the administration of the Son minister the Spirit and life of God to the sons of men, through the word. Joh 6:63. This is what it means to minister the bread and wine at the communion table.

Through the ministry of this administration, all the families of the earth can be blessed. That is, the blessing of the divine nature, which has been given to men, can come to all the families of the earth. Those who are in these families can be born again of the life of Yahweh Himself, and can be joined to His fellowship.

This ministry was inaugurated when Melchizedek revealed Himself to Abraham. The Scripture recorded, 'Then Melchizedek *king* of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the *priest* of God Most High'. Gen 14:18. As He ministered the bread and wine to Abraham, Melchizedek the King-Priest blessed him, saying, 'Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.' Gen 14:19-20.

Moses was introduced to the ministry of Melchizedek when, in the desert, he turned aside to look upon the burning bush. Exo 3:1-3. As we considered earlier, Moses met I AM, who was later revealed to be Jesus when He was lifted up on the cross. It was through this offering that Christ's body was broken and His blood was shed. His body and blood were given to us as food, as a participation in His offering. In this regard, He was the tree of life, which Moses saw as a burning bush.

At the time of Moses, the Melchizedek ministry was typified through all the offerings and sacrifices of the Old Covenant. The glory of the Lord that rested upon the tabernacle was a great cloud with fire in it. Exo 40:34-38. The tabernacle and its offerings were a shadow of the substance, which is Christ. Col 2:17.

## Sanctified by the Holy Spirit

While Christ comes to us revealing Yahweh as an infolding fire, it is the Holy Spirit who enables us to receive Christ in this way. The capacity to see the Lord by the Spirit was exemplified by the experiences of Ezekiel and the apostle John. For example, John was *in the Spirit* on the Lord's Day when he saw the Son of Man. Rev 1:10,13. He said that Christ was

coming with clouds and that every eye would see Him. Rev 1:7. We note that when Ezekiel was in the Spirit, he saw a great cloud with raging fire infolding itself. These two men were witnessing the same ministry of the Son.

The Holy Spirit is the Helper, who takes of that which is Christ's and reveals it to us. Joh 14:16. Joh 16:14. We are sanctified by the Holy Spirit, who guides us into all truth. Joh 16:13. Our sanctification is not merely the expression of our identity and name. Sanctification is much more than this. It is the fellowship of the Spirit that gives us access to relationship *in Yahweh* so that God may dwell with men. Rev 21:3. This is Their Everlasting Covenant with us.

This Everlasting Covenant initiative is revealed in the name Immanuel, which means 'God with us'. Mat 1:23. We know, of course, that this was Christ's name. Isa 7:14. Mat 1:23. We see, then, that the Holy Spirit enables us to receive Immanuel, who is high and lifted up, sitting on a throne with His administration. Isa 6:1. It is evident that we have received Christ when we are joined, through new birth and an ongoing participation in His offering, to the fellowship that He is revealing.

## The ministry of peace

The word that reveals Christ and invites us into the fellowship of Yahweh is a *ministry of peace* which the Spirit enables us to receive. This is the counsel of peace that is between the two Melchizedek offices of kingship and priesthood.

Christ's messengers, who minister as part of His one administration, preach the word of God by the Holy Spirit. 1Pe 1:12. They are coming with peace, which settles upon those who receive them. When Jesus sent the twelve disciples out to find worthy houses, He said to them, 'If the household is worthy, *let your peace come upon it*. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.' Mat 10:13.

The peace that rests upon a hearer accompanies the grace of God. God's grace enables the hearer to receive and respond to the word of Christ. By this means, they are joined to a process through which they obtain blessing. Mat 5:3-12. We note that grace and peace are from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit. 1Co 1:3. 2Co 1:2. Eph 1:2.

## Joined to the fellowship of offering

Offering to God is through Eternal Spirit. Eternal Spirit is the capacity by which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit make offering, and the means by which we are joined to the fellowship of Their offering.

Explaining Eternal Spirit, John the Baptist said, 'For He whom God has sent [i.e. the Son] speaks the words of God; for He *gives the Spirit without measure.*' Joh 3:34. In the same way that the Spirit is given without measure, we are caused to increase and abound in love for one another. 1Th 3:12. Php 1: 9. This is because it is the Holy Spirit who pours the love of God into our heart. Rom 5:5.

Love sanctifies identity expression within fellowship. As we have already noted, this love is infolding, offering fire. For this reason, a person can only see Christ and receive Him in the way that He is coming, by the Spirit. It is the Spirit who enables a person to hear and respond to the word of God. Rom 10:17. 1Pe 1:12. By receiving the Holy Spirit, they are born to see the kingdom. Joh 14:17. Joh 3:3. Their human spirit, which Jesus described as the 'eye', or spiritual sight, of their body, is being restored. Pro 20:27. Mat 6:22. By this means, their eye becomes receptive to the light that shines from the face of the King of kings. 2Co 4:6. They are able to receive the light of the knowledge of the glory of God that is being ministered by the Son of Man through His administration.

## Chapter 3

# The Feast of Passover

In his letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul declared that ‘Christ, *our Passover*, was sacrificed for us’. 1Co 5:7. The fulfilment of the Passover feast included Christ’s journey from the first communion meal with His disciples, all the way to His physical resurrection in an immortal and incorruptible body. We recall that the Feast of Passover included the Passover meal, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the waving of the sheaf of firstfruits. Lev 23:4-14. The offering of Christ fulfilled each of these elements of the Passover. Christ is the true Passover Lamb, the Unleavened Bread, and the Firstfruits of all those who die in Him. 1Co 15:20.

Christ is our Passover, and He has been sacrificed for us. However, we must join Christ in the fulfilment of each element of the Passover feast. Having said that Christ is our Passover, Paul continued, ‘Therefore *let us keep the feast*, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.’ 1Co 5:8. The *first element* of the Feast of Passover was the Passover meal. We ‘keep’ this element of the Passover feast when we eat and drink the communion meal. The communion grants us a participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ.

As we join the fellowship of the wounding events that Christ experienced from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross, His blood is sprinkling our hearts. His blood is a treasure that ransoms and redeems us from the power of sin and death. 1Pe 1:19. Mat 20:28. Through faith in His blood, we receive the forgiveness of sins. Rom 3:25. Paul summarised this application of the blood of the Lamb in our lives by writing, 'In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace'. Eph 1:7.

The redemptive capacity of the blood of Christ was foreshadowed when the Lord instructed the children of Israel to apply the blood of a lamb to the doorposts and lintel of their homes. Exo 12:7. By this means, their firstborn sons were delivered from the judgement of death that the Lord proclaimed upon Egypt, which symbolised the world. Moreover, the whole nation of Israel, whom God called *His firstborn son*, was released from their captivity in Egypt. Significantly, we are *born* as sons of God through our participation in the true Feast of Passover. We are born from the dead with Christ in the fellowship of the sin offering. Isa 53:10-11.

The *second element* of the Feast of Passover was the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The nation of Israel was required to purge leaven from their houses and then to eat unleavened bread for a period of seven days. Moses described this unleavened bread as 'the bread of affliction'. Deu 16:3. This reveals that there is a process for the circumcision of the other law from our hearts, and the removal of sin from our lives, as we participate in the sufferings and afflictions of Christ. Col 2:11. The 'seven days' of this feast represents a 'whole of life process' in which we are purging leaven from our lives and from our households. Lev 3:6.

The *third element* of the Feast of Passover was the waving of the sheaf of firstfruits. On the day after the Sabbath, which fell during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a sheaf of the firstfruits of the harvest was to be waved before the Lord. Lev 23:10-11. Christ fulfilled the waving of the sheaf of firstfruits when He was raised from the dead after three days and three nights. We know that Jesus was raised on the day after the weekly Sabbath. He had received an immortal, spiritual body. He presented Himself to the Father as the firstfruits of all those who die in Him. Joh 20:17. We recall that Jesus said that if we eat His flesh and drink His blood, He will raise us up on the last day. Joh 6:54. We will have an immortal and incorruptible resurrection body that has been fashioned like His glorious body. Php 3:21. 1Co 15:54.

The Passover is the focal point of our ongoing participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians is focused on the importance of Passover and the need to 'keep this feast' in the New Covenant. 1Co 5:8. We are born as sons of God and clothed with our priestly garments through our participation in the Feast of Passover, not in the Feast of Pentecost, nor in the Feast of Tabernacles. It is important for every Christian to recognise and appreciate this reality. If we fail to keep the Feast of Passover, we will be unable to participate in the fulfilment of the Feast of Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles.

## The first Passover

The *first Passover* meal was celebrated by the nation of Israel on the night before they were delivered from their bondage in the land of Egypt. The Lord instructed Moses that this would be the beginning of months for them. Exo 12:2. On the tenth day of this month, the head of every house needed to take a lamb for his household. Exo 12:3. If the household was too small to eat a whole lamb, they were able to share a lamb between households. Exo 12:4. The lambs needed to be killed at twilight on the fourteenth day of the month. The flesh was to be roasted with fire and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Exo 12:8. The most significant feature of the first Passover was that the head of each household applied the blood of the lamb to the doorposts and lintel of his house. Exo 12:7.

We learn some important lessons when we consider the detail of the first Passover in Egypt. First, the Passover was a *farewell dinner* from Egypt. The Lord instructed the Israelites to eat the Passover in a state of readiness. They needed to be fully dressed, with their sandals on their feet and their staffs in their hands. Exo 12:11. The first Passover was to be a joyful occasion. It was a night of deliverance from bondage and slavery. In the same way, we eat and drink the communion in the faith that the Lord is delivering us from the death of sin and the culture of the world.

Second, the Israelites received the strength for one day's journey from the Passover meal. They were not permitted to salt any of the meat and take it with them! If any of the meat was left until the morning, it needed to be burned with fire. Exo 12:10. This ensured that the Israelites were reliant upon the Lord for their daily provision. We observe this same principle of *daily provision* in relation to the manna that fell from heaven in the wilderness. Exo 16:15-19. In the same way, the weekly communion

meal strengthens us for our daily participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

Third, the major lesson of the first Passover in Egypt is that there is a midnight hour! The head of every household needed to use hyssop to apply the blood of the lamb to the doorposts and lintel of his house. The Lord said to Moses, 'I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast, and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgements.' Exo 12:12. He concluded this statement, by saying, 'I am [Yahweh].' We know that this was the Son who was speaking to Moses. The midnight hour was an expression of His judgement upon the world as I AM.

The Lord said to Moses, 'The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood *I will pass over you*, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.' Exo 12:13. The name of the Feast of Passover is derived from the Lord's statement, '*I will pass over you*'. Moses further explained to the Israelites, 'It is the Passover sacrifice of the Lord, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.' Exo 12:27. In this regard, the Passover included a *great deliverance* and a *great judgement*. This is an important point. The cross is a place of deliverance and judgement.

At the midnight hour, the Lord struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt. This included the firstborn in every family, all the way to the firstborn in Pharaoh's own house. Exo 12:29. The outcome of this judgement was that 'a great cry' was heard through all the land of Egypt 'for there was not a house where there was not one dead'. Exo 12:30. This was a great cry of anguish and distress. It was not godly sorrow that leads to repentance. 2Co 7:10. It was worldly sorrow, which is an expression of hopelessness. The sorrow of Egypt was a harbinger of the weeping and gnashing of teeth that every unbeliever will experience in the lake of fire, for eternity. Mat 24:51.

Moses instructed the Israelites to keep the Feast of Passover at the same time each year 'as an ordinance for you and your children forever'. Exo 12:24. The nation of Israel celebrated the *first Passover* in their houses in Egypt. However, once they had entered the promised land, the Israelites were required to celebrate the Passover feast in the place where the Lord chose to place His name. Moses instructed the people, 'You shall sacrifice the Passover to the Lord your God, from the flock and from the herd, in the place where the Lord chooses to put His name.' Deu 16:2. The

Lord placed His name in the tabernacle of Moses, and later in the temple that was built in Jerusalem. He said to Solomon concerning the temple, 'I have consecrated this house which you have built *to put My name* there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.' 1Ki 9:3.

The Passover feast was still the provision of the Lord for every house. However, the people could not sacrifice nor eat the Passover in their houses. Moses emphasised this by saying, 'You may not sacrifice the Passover within any of your gates which the Lord your God gives you; but at the place where the Lord your God chooses to make His name abide ... *you shall roast and eat it* in the place which the Lord your God chooses, and in the morning you shall turn and *go to your tents*.' Deu 16:5-7. The Passover was not the initiative of a person's house. It was the Lord's initiative to invite every household to join a house to house fellowship. This fellowship was on *the holy ground* of the name of Yahweh, not on the ground of an individual's house.

### The meaning of the Passover Lamb

In the first case, the Passover Lamb is the Lamb for the Father's house. Christ offered Himself to the Father to become the Father's offering and provision for many sons. We recall that Abraham had faith for this provision. On the way to Mount Moriah, he said to Isaac, 'God will provide for Himself the lamb.' Gen 22:8. Abraham was specifically referring to the Passover lamb as *a burnt offering*. The burnt offering reveals the fellowship of Yahweh in the offering of Christ. It is called *Yahweh's Passover* for this reason. Exo 12:11. Lev 23:5 It reveals the offering of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in the fellowship of Yahweh, to multiply Their life and to include us in Their fellowship. It is the Passover Lamb *as a burnt offering* that enables the families of the earth to be blessed, in Christ, with the life and grace of God. Gen 22:18.

Further to this, the Lord explained to Abraham that his descendants would spend four hundred years in captivity in the land of Egypt. He declared that, after this time, the nation of Egypt would be judged, and that the descendants of Abraham would be delivered from their captivity with great possessions. Gen 15:13-14. As we have considered, they were delivered from the judgement of Egypt by the blood of the Passover lamb. This deliverance and judgement revealed that the Passover Lamb is also *a sin offering*. The prophet Isaiah declared, 'When You [Father] make His soul [Son] an offering for sin, He shall *see His seed*.' Isa 53:10. When Isaiah spoke of 'seed', he was referring to bringing forth many sons from

the death of sin. As we have already said, we are born as sons of God in the fellowship of the sin offering.

The communion meal grants us a participation in the offering of Christ, who is the Passover Lamb. He is both the burnt offering and the sin offering. The outcome of our participation in the fellowship of the burnt offering *is blessing*. It is access to the grace in the fellowship of Yahweh. The outcome of our participation in the fellowship of the sin offering *is redemption and new birth*. It is our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering, as both the burnt offering and the sin offering, that *ministers peace* to our lives and families. A house that has the blood of the Passover Lamb applied to its doorposts and lintel is *a house of peace*. Luk 10:5-6. In his letter to the Colossians, the apostle Paul declared that Christ has 'made peace through the blood of His cross'. Col 1:20.

We do not understand the significance of the Passover Lamb as a burnt offering, sin offering, and peace offering by studying the instructions concerning the Passover feast in the Law covenant alone. It is helpful to remember that both Abraham's faith toward the provision of the Passover lamb, and the deliverance of the nation of Israel by the blood of the Passover lamb, *predated* the Law covenant. In this regard, the significance of the Passover was established *before* the nation of Israel received the Law covenant at Mount Sinai. The Lord was not relying on the types and shadows of the Law covenant to convey the substance of Passover. Moses declared that it was the responsibility of *the elders of Israel* to explain the real meaning of the Passover to each generation. Exo 12:26-27.

The significance of Christ as the Passover Lamb was also explained by prophets such as Isaiah. Isa 53:7. The greatest of all the prophets was John the Baptist. When John saw Jesus approaching him, he proclaimed, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' Joh 1:29. In this way, he proclaimed that the Passover Lamb is *a sin offering*. On the next day, John the Baptist observed Jesus walking, and said to his disciples, 'Behold the Lamb of God!' Joh 1:36. In this way, he proclaimed that the Passover Lamb is also *a burnt offering*. The mandate of John the Baptist was to go before the face of the Lord to prepare His way. Luk 1:76. In this regard, he was a messenger of peace who had been sent to 'guide our feet into *the way of peace*'. Luk 1:79.

## The Shepherd of the sheep

John the Baptist proclaimed that Jesus is the Passover Lamb. He is also our great High Priest and the great Shepherd of the sheep. He is Melchizedek – both King and Priest. Even though the Lord did not introduce Himself as a shepherd to the nation of Israel, the Psalms and the prophetic Scriptures highlight that He was a shepherd who was leading His flock out of Egypt and through the wilderness. The psalmist proclaimed, ‘He made His own people go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.’ Psa 78:52. Likewise, the psalmist said, ‘We are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you will hear His voice.’ Psa 95:7. This refers to the voice of Christ as the great Shepherd of the sheep.

Concerning a shepherd, Jesus said, ‘He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.’ Joh 10:3-4. When the disciples did not understand what He was talking about, Jesus explained that He is the good Shepherd. He said, ‘I am the good Shepherd; and the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.’ Joh 10:11. Likewise, He said, ‘I am the good Shepherd, and I know My own [sheep] and My own know Me ... I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will *hear My voice*; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.’ Joh 10:14,16.

We read in the Gospel of Matthew that ‘Jesus was going through all the cities and the villages, *teaching in their synagogues*, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness’. Mat 9:35. In the early phase of His ministry, Jesus recognised the legitimacy of the synagogues. At that time, the synagogues were the sheepfold of Israel. However, those who gathered at the synagogues were like sheep without a shepherd. Having identified that Jesus taught in the various synagogues, Matthew continued, ‘And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them because they were *distressed* and *downcast* like sheep without a shepherd’. Mat 9:36.

In the synagogue of his home town in Nazareth, Jesus announced that He was the Shepherd-King who had come to set free those sheep who were distressed and downcast. He stood up and read from the book of Isaiah, ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor, He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favourable year of the Lord’. Luk 4:18-19. It is significant

that it was in a synagogue that Jesus first proclaimed that He was the Christ. However, the synagogues lost their validity as the sheepfold in Israel when the leaders resolved that any person who confessed that Jesus was the Christ would be cast out. Joh 9:22.

The leaders of the synagogues were the doorkeepers, who should have heard the voice of Christ and recognised that He was the good Shepherd of the sheep. Joh 10:3. Jesus had come to give sight to all who were blind - including the Pharisees. However, the Pharisees were unwilling to accept their spiritual blindness and, therefore, could not receive spiritual sight. Joh 9:40-41. The evidence of their spiritual blindness was revealed by the way in which they cast out of the synagogue, the blind man who had been healed by Jesus. Joh 9:34. This healed man had become a sheep without a sheepfold. However, he was no longer a sheep without a shepherd. Jesus personally found him and placed him within the care and protection of the *new sheepfold* that He was establishing in Israel. Joh 9:35.

Jesus replaced the synagogues with a house to house fellowship throughout the nation of Israel. He began to establish this *new sheepfold* in Israel by sending the twelve disciples to look for worthy houses. He sent them to the *lost sheep* of the house of Israel. Mat 10:6. In sending the disciples to look for lost sheep, Jesus was beginning to train the twelve disciples as under-shepherds who would later become an apostolic administration in the church. Jesus said to them, 'Whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave that city. As you enter the house, give it your greeting. If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace.' Mat 10:11-13.

Jesus also sent another seventy disciples as labourers into the harvest. Luk 10:1. In contrast to the twelve, He did not send the seventy as under-shepherds who were looking for sheep. Jesus sent the seventy as 'lambs in the midst of wolves'. Luk 10:3. When we compare the mode of the twelve and the seventy, we observe the distinction between the work of an apostolic administration and the work of elders and deacons within a presbytery. However, in terms of ministering the gospel of peace, Jesus gave similar instructions to both the twelve and the seventy. He said to the seventy, 'Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace be to this house." If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you.' Luk 10:5-6.

The Gospel of Luke recorded that Jesus sent the seventy disciples 'in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to

come'. Luk 10:1. It is evident that Jesus sent them to specific places. He used the twelve and the seventy to establish a strategic network of worthy houses throughout the nation of Israel. These worthy houses were firstfruits houses because they had received Christ and His word. When Jesus came to a certain town or village, He would stay in one of those worthy houses. He would minister to those in the household in a fellowship of giving and receiving as they expressed care and hospitality toward Him. At times, Jesus would use the house as a place of retreat, rest and refreshing. At other times, He would use the house as a base for His ministry into the surrounding region.

### The anointing of Jesus in Bethany

The house of Simon the leper was an important part of this house to house fellowship in the nation of Israel. Mar 14:3. Simon's house was in a town called Bethany, which was only a short walking distance from Jerusalem. It is likely that Simon was healed by Jesus during the early part of His ministry, and was later found by one of the twelve disciples or one of the seventy, to be a man of peace with a worthy house. We know that his house became a regular lodging place for Jesus. Most significantly, Jesus lodged at Simon's house during the week before His death, burial and resurrection.

The Gospel of John identified that the house of Simon was also the house of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Joh 12:1-3. We know that Mary and Martha were sisters, and that Lazarus was their brother. It has been suggested by some that Simon was their father, and by others that Simon was Martha's husband. The latter is more likely to have been the case. We recall that when Jesus visited their house earlier in His ministry, it was Martha who 'welcomed Him into *her home*'. Luk 10:38. When we consider a harmony of the Gospel accounts, it suggests that it was Simon and Martha's home.

The house of Simon was a place of hospitality and ministry. In the week before the Passover, the family hosted a supper for Jesus and His disciples. John recorded the fact that Martha was serving. Joh 12:2. She was willingly ministering to the needs of all those who had gathered to her home. This ministry of hospitality was an important part of the name and work that Martha had received from the Father, through Christ. John also recorded that Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead by Jesus, was among those who reclined at the table. Joh 12:2. During the supper, Mary came to Jesus with an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil called 'spikenard'. She poured this oil upon His head. Mat 26:7. Mar 14:3.

She also anointed His feet and wiped them with her hair. The whole house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. Joh 12:3.

When Mary had finished anointing Jesus in this way, Judas began to reprimand her by saying, 'Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?' Joh 12:5. Jesus replied, 'Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand *to anoint My body for burial.*' Mar 14:6-8. It was God the Father who had given Mary the privilege of anointing Jesus for His offering. She anointed the physical body of Christ for His journey from the last supper, all the way to His physical resurrection from the grave to immortality.

The fragrant anointing oil ran from the head of Christ right down to the hem of His priestly garments. Psa 133:2. Mary anointed Jesus as both our great High Priest *and* our great Shepherd. He was anointed to fulfil His priestly *and* kingly ministry according to the order of Melchizedek. Jesus proceeded from this household with the aroma of the anointing oil upon His garments and His whole body. The same aroma that filled the house of Simon in Bethany remained on Him as He celebrated the first communion with His disciples in the upper room. The aroma of the anointing oil remained on His physical body all the way to His death on the cross. As Jesus made His way from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross, His body was covered with His blood *and* with the anointing oil.

Speaking of the name of Yahweh, the Scriptures proclaim, 'Your name is ointment poured forth.' Son 1:3. Another translation reads, 'Your name is like purified oil'. Son 1:3 NASB. Having been anointed by the Father to offer Himself for our sake, the name of the Son as 'I AM' was revealed in each wounding event. As we considered earlier in this book, Jesus proclaimed Himself to be I AM at the gate of the garden of Gethsemane. Joh 18:6. He proclaimed Himself to be I AM before Caiaphas and, in the same way, He proclaimed Himself to be I AM before Pilate. Mar 14:62. Joh 18:37. From the cross, Jesus also proclaimed Himself to be I AM, with a fourfold declaration, before the eyes of all men. Mat 27:46. Joh 19:28,30. Luk 23:46.

The revelation of His name was 'the aroma of death' to all those who were abusing Him and causing His blood to be shed. However, this same revelation is 'the aroma of life' to all those who join the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. Later in this chapter, we will consider that we are

anointed with this same oil through our participation in the Feast of Pentecost. It is the capacity of the sevenfold Spirit of God, by the Holy Spirit, that enables us to be the witnesses of Christ in every place. Act 1:8. As a messenger who was bearing the reproach of Christ in the world, the apostle Paul said, 'We are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life.' 2Co 2:15-16.

### The first communion meal

Soon after He was anointed in Bethany, Jesus instructed His disciples to prepare the Passover meal in Jerusalem. Luk 22:8-12. When Jesus sat down with His disciples in the upper room, He said to them, 'With fervent desire, I have desired to eat *this Passover* with you before I suffer.' Luk 22:15. The *first Passover* was celebrated by the Israelites in the land of Egypt. The *last Passover* was celebrated by Jesus and His disciples in Jerusalem, in an upper room. This was the end of the ordinance of the Passover with all of its sacrificial lambs, unleavened bread and bitter herbs. From that time on, the sacrifice of any lamb for a Passover meal was an abomination to God and an offence to Christ. Isa 66:3. It is an offence to Christ, because He is the true Passover Lamb. 1Co 5:7.

Jesus celebrated the *last Passover* meal with His disciples. However, more significantly, He inaugurated the *first communion* meal. It was the disciples who prepared the lamb for the last Passover. It was God the Father who prepared Christ to be the Lamb for the first communion. The shift from Passover to communion took place when Christ made the Passover meal a *participation*, or *communion*, in His own Person and life. As we have considered, for the firstborn of Israel, the Passover provided protection from death at the hand of the Lord through His angel. It was also a celebration meal to commemorate their deliverance from bondage and slavery to the Egyptians. The communion meal is more than this. It signifies that we have become members of Christ's own body, and participants in the New Covenant that He has made with us in His own blood.

Jesus said, concerning the bread, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' Luk 22:19. And He said, concerning the cup, 'This cup is the New Covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.' Luk 22:20. Jesus invited the disciples to join the fellowship of the New Covenant in the communion meal. The New Covenant was then

inaugurated through the seven wounding events that Jesus experienced during His journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. These wounding events caused His blood to be sprinkled 'seven times' upon His physical body.

During the first communion service, Jesus revealed that He is the Lamb of God. He also declared that He is the great Shepherd of the sheep. The disciples were 'sheep' who were part of His flock. Addressing His disciples as sheep, Jesus said, 'All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: "I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered".' Mat 26:31. Mar 14:27. Jesus was quoting from the prophecies of Zechariah. We read in the book of Zechariah, "Awake. O sword, against My Shepherd, against the Man who is My Companion", says the Lord of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; then I will turn My hand against the little ones".' Zec 13:7.

This verse may be translated as, 'I will turn My hand against the little ones' or 'I will return My hand on the little ones'. Zec 13:7. It shows that there are *two sides* to this action of the Father's hand. Isa 1:25. Amo 1:8. It is the promise of judgement for those who reject Christ as the Shepherd, and it is the promise of comfort and protection for those who belong to Christ's sheepfold. The sheep who belong to Christ are 'little ones' who are meek and humble. Zep 3:12. Mat 11:29. Jesus addressed His disciples as 'little ones' when He said to them, 'Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' Luk 12:32.

## The Mount of Olives

Jesus went from the first communion service to the Mount of Olives to pray. He prayed for all those whom the Father had given to Him out of the world. Joh 17:9. He was referring to the 'sheep' who belonged to His sheepfold. This included the disciples and all those who belonged to the house to house fellowship that He had established during His ministry. Jesus prayed, as the great Shepherd, 'While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.' Joh 17:12. He was referring to Judas, who had rejected his predestination in the kingdom of God and had been appointed to his own place in the lake of fire.

When Jesus prayed for the sheep who belonged to His sheepfold, He was acutely aware that the midnight hour was approaching and that a thief was coming. Satan had entered Judas at the last supper, and was coming to steal, kill and destroy the sheep. Joh 13:27. Jesus knew that He would be struck down as the great Shepherd so that His sheep would be scattered. He prayed that the Father would keep the sheep from the evil one so that they would not be lost and destroyed. Joh 17:15. Significantly, as Jesus prayed, He was sanctifying Himself by presenting Himself to the Father, so that all of His sheep could hear the truth of their names. Joh 17:19. Jesus prayed for His disciples. He also prayed for all the sheep who would be gathered into His sheepfold because of the word that is proclaimed by His under-shepherds in each generation. Joh 17:20.

On the Mount of Olives, Jesus foresaw the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the sheep from every nation of the world. Isaiah proclaimed, 'Surely these shall come from afar; look! Those from the north and the west, and these from the land of Sinim.' Isa 49:12. The land of Sinim is the nation of China. There will be a multitude of sheep from every nation who will walk in the fellowship of Christ's offering to become part of His sheepfold. Isaiah said, 'They shall feed along the roads, and their pastures shall be on all desolate heights. They shall neither hunger nor thirst, neither heat nor sun shall strike them; for He [the great Shepherd] who has mercy on them will lead them, even by the springs of water He will guide them.' Isa 49:9-10.

## The garden of Gethsemane

Following His prayer for all of His sheep, on the Mount of Olives, Jesus took the disciples, as a little flock, into the garden of Gethsemane. He prayed that the Father would protect them. The Father answered this prayer in Gethsemane by striking Christ as the great Shepherd of the sheep. This seems to be a strange way for the Father to answer Christ's prayer! It also appears to be a peculiar way of protecting sheep! Why was it necessary for the Father to strike Christ as the Shepherd to protect the sheep? From a natural perspective, such an action does not make any sense to us.

Before we can answer this question, it is necessary for us to understand some important distinctions. We observe that, in the garden of Gethsemane, Christ was the Shepherd who was *struck down* under the judgement of God. He was also the Firstborn Son who was *born* by the word of the Father. He was the Priest who travailed and *offered Himself*

as a Lamb. He was also the Lamb of God who was *offered by* the Father. These are all important distinctions. Furthermore, Christ was the Door of the sheepfold, upon whom the blood of the Passover Lamb was applied for the protection of all the sheep who were recovered by the great Shepherd, and who belong to the Father's house. The garden of Gethsemane is a very integrated picture!

The garden of Gethsemane was a continuation of the worship, prayer and dialogue within the fellowship of Yahweh, that established the Everlasting Covenant. It reveals *the offering* of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which proceeded from this dialogue, to accomplish Their covenant purpose. 1Pe 1:20. Before the foundation of the world, Yahweh the Son offered Himself to the Father's bosom to become the Father's Firstborn and the Lamb for the Father's house. Php 2:6-7. This was the expression of the Son's faith and initiative that proceeded from the covenant dialogue of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Son's offering toward the Father was a *priestly action* by the power of Eternal Spirit. Jesus said, 'For this reason the Father loves Me.' Joh 10:17.

In response to the Son's priestly initiative and offering, the Father, by His word, *birthed* Yahweh the Son as the Son of God. This birthing initiative of the Father was also by the power of Eternal Spirit. The Father declared, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.' Psa 2:7. Act 13:33. Heb 1:5. Heb 5:5. Jesus referred to this word as 'the command' that He had received from the Father. Joh 10:18. As the Father's Firstborn Son, He became *the Shepherd-King* and the Head of the nations. The Father committed the name of every foreknown son of God to Him. He was the covenant Seed *in whom* every son was named. Gal 3:16. Furthermore, He was the Shepherd-King *through whom* every son would be called by name. Joh 10:3,14.

Christ, who is called 'the Last Adam', was the origin of man, through creation. 1Co 15:45. He preceded Adam in headship, and was the Lord of hosts, ruling over creation. At the appointed time, He became a man through incarnation. Gal 4:4. Christ partook of our flesh and blood that was sourced in Adam. Heb 2:14. However, Adam was not His father, because He did not derive His identity from Adam. God was His Father. Jesus came among us as Immanuel. Mat 1:23. He was I AM (Yahweh) in the flesh. Jesus testified that He came as the Shepherd of the sheep. Joh 10:14. As such, King David said of Christ, 'The Lord is my Shepherd.' Psa 23:1. As the Lord of glory, Christ was delivered by the predetermined purpose and foreknowledge of God to be crucified by the hands of

wicked men. Act 2:23. 1Co 2:8. When He was lifted upon the cross, Christ became the Head of the new creation as 'the Last Adam'.

Before He suffered at the hands of godless men, Christ was *smitten by God* in the garden of Gethsemane. Isa 53:4. He was not smitten by God as the Priest or the Lamb. He was smitten by God as the Shepherd of the sheep. Isa 53:4. The prophet Isaiah declared, 'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.' Isa 53:8. Our iniquity was laid upon Christ as *our great Shepherd*. Furthermore, as our great Shepherd, the Father made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us. This means that the full wrath and judgement of God upon our sin fell on Him. Isaiah continued, 'He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people [the sheep], He [the Shepherd] was stricken.' Isa 53:8.

In the first case, Christ protected His sheep by suffering the judgement of God on our behalf. We could liken this to the mode of a shepherd who places himself between a predator, such as a lion or a bear, and his flock of sheep. The shepherd places himself in harm's way for the sake of protecting the sheep. Joh 10:11-12. In this case, the roaring lion, or the thief, is Satan, who seeks to steal, kill and destroy the sheep by bringing them into captivity to the fear of death. Christ's care for the sheep required Him to go to the place where we had been taken captive, so that 'through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil'. Heb 2:14. When Christ laid down His life for the sheep, the power of Satan, sin, and death were all destroyed.

Furthermore, it was necessary for the Father to strike Christ as the Shepherd so that He could recover all the sheep in the place where they had been lost. To understand this point, it is helpful to remember that when the Son of God created man, He committed the seed of every human identity to Adam. Gen 2:7. Adam was called to be the father of mankind and the head of the nations. However, when Adam fell, the whole human race was cut off from the life of God. Gen 2:17. In his letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul explained that 'in Adam *all die*'. 1Co 15:22. The whole human race was *lost to God*. This was a hopeless predicament.

As our Shepherd, Christ entered the place of our judgement. There, the Father struck Him with the stroke of eternal judgement that was due to fall on us. Isa 53:8. Christ bore our punishment in His physical body as He went from Gethsemane and was hung on a tree, while, at the same

time, He gathered us up into His arms, carried us on His shoulders and rescued us from so great a peril of death. 2Co 1:10.

As the Shepherd, Jesus became our sin, and suffered our eternal judgement. However, as the Priest, He continued to offer Himself without spot to God as the Lamb of the burnt offering. Heb 9:14. Furthermore, as the Lamb of God, the Father made Him to be *our sin offering*. Isa 53:10. We note this distinction between becoming our sin as the Shepherd, and becoming our sin offering as the Lamb of God. The blood of the Lamb of God was not corrupted by sin. It was the precious blood of Christ that redeemed and birthed a multitude of sons of God. 1Pe 1:19. The blood is *the life of God*. In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul called it 'the blood of the Everlasting Covenant'. Heb 13:20.

In the tabernacle of Moses, we recall that the mercy seat was placed on top of the covenant, or the testimony. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest sprinkled the blood of bulls and goats on the mercy seat, and then on the ground in front of the mercy seat. Lev 16:14-15. We observe some important differences in the fulfilment of this sprinkling of blood in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus Christ was the embodiment of the Testimony of God as the Word made flesh. Joh 1:14. The blood that was sprinkled upon His physical body, as the Mercy Seat of the true tabernacle, came from *within His body*. It was the fruit of the travail of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the garden of Gethsemane.

The Gospel of Luke recorded that the sweat of Christ became like great clots of blood that covered His body and then fell to the ground. Luk 22:44. Christ died our death as the Shepherd, but it was His blood as the Lamb of God that brought Him back from the death of our sin as the great Shepherd of the sheep. Paul said that the God of peace 'brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant'. Heb 13:20. Significantly, Christ brought with Him every sheep who hears His voice and follows Him back from the death of sin. We are born again from the dead by the word of the Father that is proclaimed by the Shepherd, and by the application of the blood of the Lamb as the sin offering.

When the blood of Christ fell like great clots to the ground, it signified that this phase of His offering was complete. This included His propitiatory work as our great High Priest. It also signified that the Father had finished applying the blood of Christ, as the Passover Lamb, to the door of His house. Exo 12:23. We know that Jesus Himself is the Door of the Father's house, which is also the sheepfold. We recall that Jesus said

to the Jews, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, *I am the door* of the sheep.' Joh 10:7. Following the fellowship of offering in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus could confidently proceed to the next stages of His offering in the knowledge that the sheep had been recovered and protected.

### The gate of the garden of Gethsemane

As the great Shepherd of the sheep, Jesus said to the disciples, 'Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.' Mar 14:42. Judas had come like a thief in the night to betray Jesus into the hands of wicked men. He came with a great multitude of people who carried swords and clubs. Mat 26:47. This multitude included the officers of the high priest and a whole cohort of Roman soldiers. Joh 18:3. There were probably well over a thousand people who accompanied Judas to the gate of the garden of Gethsemane. The crowd had come to arrest Jesus *and all His disciples*. When Jesus said, 'Let us be going', He knew that He was going to the cross and that the disciples needed to go to their houses.

Jesus was prepared for this midnight hour. He did not initiate the revelation of His name to those who had come to arrest Him, because this was not an hour of blessing for them. Joh 12:13. It was an hour of judgement. He simply asked the crowd who they were looking for. They said that they were looking for 'Jesus the Nazarene'. When Jesus replied, 'I AM', the whole crowd drew back and fell to the ground. Joh 18:4-6. The power of His testimony literally knocked every one of them onto their backs. The proclamation of His name was the expression of Christ's new-born identity as the Son of God. It was also the expression of His kingship as the great Shepherd of the sheep.

The revelation of Christ's name revealed His authority to lead His sheep to the safety of the sheepfold. Once the crowd had staggered back to their feet, Jesus asked them again for whom were they looking. He restated His testimony and demanded that they let all the disciples go to their houses. Joh 18:7-8. This protection of the disciples fulfilled the words of Christ in the Scripture, 'Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one'. Joh 18:9. When Jesus was struck down as the Shepherd at the gate of Gethsemane, the disciples were scattered. However, they were not scattered to be lost and destroyed. This is a key point. They were scattered to their houses.

We know that the disciples would not have had their own homes in Jerusalem, because they were from Galilee. Luk 22:59. The disciples went

to the houses that Jesus had established in the region of Jerusalem as part of His sheepfold. They were protected in this house to house fellowship. As we have said, the blood that Christ shed as great clots from every pore of His body, in the garden of Gethsemane, had already been sprinkled upon the doorposts and lintel of each of these households. This whole interaction reveals the wisdom of God. The Father had *returned His hand* to protect the little ones who belonged to Christ's flock, by *turning His hand* against their great Shepherd to strike Him down. Zec 13:7.

### Peter and John

Peter and John were the only disciples who did not go from the garden of Gethsemane to their houses. John followed Christ to the house of Caiaphas, and Peter also *followed at a distance*. Luk 22:54. John recorded that he was known to the high priest, so he was able to enter the courtyard and then bring Peter into the courtyard with him. Joh 18:15-16. Having been let into the courtyard, on three occasions Peter denied that he knew Jesus. Joh 18:17,25-26. The denials of Peter demonstrated that he was a lost sheep. He was still *kicking against the goads* by resisting the voice of the Shepherd. Nevertheless, as the great Shepherd of the sheep, Jesus *went looking* for Peter.

We read in the Gospel of Luke that, at the conclusion of the second and third wounding events, Jesus *turned and looked* at Peter. Luk 22:61. He had been bruised for the iniquity of Peter and chastened for his peace. Isa 53:5. When Jesus looked at Peter, His eyes revealed the iniquity that resided in Peter's heart. Heb 4:12-13. Peter understood that he had gone his own way. However, he also knew that Jesus was his merciful High Priest, *and* his great Shepherd who had come to rescue him. Peter remembered the words that Christ had spoken to him as the Shepherd. These words included the truth concerning his denials. However, they also included the promise that Jesus would *go ahead of him* to Galilee as his great Shepherd. Mat 26:32. Mar 14:28.

When Peter went out from the courtyard of Caiaphas and wept bitterly, his tears were the outcome of godly sorrow. He was mourning because of the suffering that he had inflicted upon Christ. We know that godly sorrow leads to repentance. 2Co 7:10. As Peter returned to Christ's sheepfold from the courtyard of Caiaphas, he was beginning his return to the Shepherd and Overseer of his soul. 1Pe 2:25. We recall that Jesus had said to him, 'When you have *returned to Me*, strengthen your

brethren.' Luk 22:32. The return of Peter was complete when Christ met him by the Sea of Galilee and appointed him to be an under-shepherd in the church. Joh 21:15-19.

The apostle John continued to follow Christ, as a witness to His offering and sufferings from Gethsemane all the way to the cross. We know that John was standing near to the foot of the cross, because Jesus spoke to him immediately before the completion of His offering. When Jesus saw His mother and John standing nearby, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold *your son!*' He then said to John, 'Behold, *your mother!*' Joh 19:26-27. This was a significant interaction. Until this time, Mary had borne the reproach of Christ with Him. We recall that, on the day of Christ's circumcision as a baby, Simeon had prophesied to Mary, 'A sword will pierce even your own soul.' Luk 2:35.

When Jesus used the sword of the word of the cross to break the filial connection that Mary had with Him, the sword of reproach ceased from piercing her heart. Jesus separated Mary from Himself so that He could suffer the final reproach of the cross *alone*. Mat 27:46. He also separated her so that she could join the fellowship of His offering, along with every believer, when the spear pierced His side. The piercing of His side caused blood and water, and a spirit of grace and supplication to flow from His heart. Joh 19:31-37. This final wound was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Simeon that *the end* of Christ's offering would cause the thoughts and intentions of many hearts to be revealed. Luk 2:35.

Further to this, Jesus established a new mother-son relationship between Mary and John. Mary now had an expression of motherhood toward the apostle John. And likewise, John had a mandate to care for Mary as part of his household. Mary now belonged to Christ's sheepfold as part of the household of John. We know that John remained at the foot of the cross until the spear pierced the side of Christ. However, after the seventh and final wounding event, John took Mary into his own home. Joh 19:27. At that same time, the Gospel of Luke recorded that a great multitude who witnessed the seventh wound began to mourn and to beat their breasts. Luk 23:48. As a great flock of sheep, they were also returning to the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls.

## Keeping the Feast of Passover

When the crowd began to mourn because a spirit of grace and supplication had been poured out upon them, it signified that they were beginning to keep the true Feast of Passover. This mourning was *like* the

bitter cry that was heard throughout the land of Egypt when the Lord killed the firstborn in every house. However, it was also *a very different cry*, because the people were not weeping bitterly over the death of their own firstborn. Rather, they were weeping bitterly over the death of Christ, the Firstborn. Zec 12:10. They were mourning because they had killed the Father's Firstborn, who was also their great Shepherd and King. This was godly sorrow that leads to repentance and faith to participate in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

The apostle Paul identified that there were many within the Corinthian church who were not keeping the true Feast of Passover, because they had not yet *mourned* in this way. He said, concerning their sophisticated religious response to the immorality among them, 'You are puffed up, and have not rather *mourned*.' 1Cr 5:2. When Paul used the term 'puffed up', he was referring to the yeast in bread that causes it to rise. The presence of leaven in the Corinthian congregation was also the evidence that they were not keeping the Feast of Passover. We recall that the second element of Passover is the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It represents the process of removing the other law from our hearts through our participation in the circumcision of Christ.

Paul identified six different kinds of leaven among the Corinthian congregation. We have considered these leavens in more detail in other writings.

1. The first was the leaven of *self-righteous judgements* that leads to factions within the church. He referred to those who were 'puffed up on behalf of one against the other'. 1Co 4:6. In many cases, this refers to those who have become offended because of a perceived injustice that they believe another person has experienced.
2. The second was the leaven of *religious independence* that belongs to those who do not recognise the need to receive and obey an apostolic administration that proclaims the wisdom of God that comes down from above. Paul said, '[You] are puffed up as though I were not coming to you.' 1Co 4:18.
3. The third was the leaven of *religious sophistication* that was among those who believed that they could embrace and normalise aberrant behaviour in the name of love and tolerance. It was this leaven that Paul was addressing when he said, 'You are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.' 1Co 5:2. Further to this, he said, 'Your glorying is

not good, do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?’ 1Co 5:6.

4. The fourth was the old leaven of *religious tradition* and law-keeping. Paul instructed the Corinthians to ‘Purge out the *old leaven*, so that you may be a new lump, since you are truly unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.’ 1Co 5:7. We know that Paul was speaking to a Gentile church, so it is unlikely that they were trying to keep the ordinances of the Law covenant. However, like the Galatian believers, many of them had reverted to *the mode* of the Old Covenant. The Corinthians needed to accept and embrace the mode of the New Covenant.
5. The fifth was the leaven of *malice and wickedness*. Paul said, ‘Let us keep the feast [of Passover], not with old leaven, *nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness*, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.’ 1Co 5:8. Paul used ‘malice and wickedness’ as a summary for all evil behaviour that violates the fellowship of the body of Christ. 1Co 6:9-10. The immorality that existed among the Corinthian congregation was an example of this wickedness. Paul said, concerning one unrepentant and disobedient church member who continued in immorality, ‘Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.’ 1Co 5:13.
6. The sixth was the leaven of the *knowledge* of good and evil. Paul said, ‘We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge *puffs up*, but love edifies.’ 1Co 8:1. This statement contrasts the outcome of eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil with the outcome of eating the fruit of the tree of life. The fruit of the tree of life is the fellowship of first love. This must be the culture and fellowship of every communion gathering so that the body of Christ is edified in love. Eph 4:15-16. We observe that Paul spent a significant amount of time in his first letter to the Corinthians addressing the culture of the communion service and the ministry of the Spirit when they gathered together. 1Co 11-14.

In his letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul also identified that Christ is the fulfilment of *the third element* of the Feast of Passover; that is, Jesus Christ is the firstfruits of all those who die in Christ. 1Co 15:20,23. He has been raised with an immortal and incorruptible spiritual body. On the day of His resurrection, Christ was waved, or presented, to the Father as the fulfilment of the sheaf of firstfruits in the Feast of Passover. Joh 20:17. The Father verified that the substance of His resurrection body

is the inheritance that every believer who dies in Christ will receive in the resurrection at the last day. Php 3:20-21. Paul was referring to this inheritance when he said, 'When this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory".' 1Co 15:54.

## Passover to Pentecost

Jesus Himself was the firstfruits in the Feast of Passover. When we join the fellowship of His offering and sufferings by keeping the Feast of Passover, we are raised as a certain firstfruits, while still in our mortality, in the Feast of Pentecost. For this reason, the Feast of Pentecost was also called the Feast of *Firstfruits*. Exo 34:22. The Feast of Pentecost was fulfilled fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus. We read in the book of Acts that 'when the Day of Pentecost had fully come [was being fulfilled], they were all with one accord in one place'. Act 2:1. On this day, Christ anointed the disciples with the power of the sevenfold Spirit of God, through the Holy Spirit. This power enabled them to serve as priests in the true temple of God, and to be Christ's witnesses in the world as firstfruits Christians. Act 1:8.

Under the Law covenant, the priests of old were ordained for ministry by the application of blood and oil. The blood of the covenant and the anointing oil were sprinkled upon the priests and upon their garments. Lev 8:30. In the same way, we require the application of both blood and oil upon us so that we can minister as priests in the true temple. When we are baptised into Christ, and into the fellowship of His offering, we receive our priestly garments. Gal 3:27. The blood of Christ is sprinkled on our heart and upon our priestly garments as we participate in the seven wounding events that Christ experienced from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. Heb 9:14. Rev 7:14. This is our participation in the Feast of Passover. However, we do not receive the anointing oil in the Feast of Passover. We receive the anointing oil in the Feast of Pentecost. It is the anointing of Pentecost that empowers us to minister as priests in the true temple, according to the sanctification of our name as sons of God.

This highlights the importance of the Feast of Pentecost. A believer should not be claiming to be a firstfruits Christian, and perhaps even the leader of a church, if they have not been baptised with the Holy Spirit. Luk 3:16. Act 19:6. The baptism of the Holy Spirit will include the ability to pray in the Spirit; that is, in a prayer language that is too deep for

words. Rom 8:26. 1Co 14:2. Jud 1:20. However, it is important to recognise that the baptism of the Spirit is *much more* than the ability to pray in other tongues. There will be many believers who have the capacity to pray in other tongues, but this does not mean that they are firstfruits Christians. 1Co 13:1. A firstfruits Christian will be manifesting the resurrection life of Christ in their mortal body. Significantly, if a person has been baptised with the Holy Spirit without having a commitment to keep the true Feast of Passover, the fire of the Holy Spirit will become a judgement upon them.

The anointing oil in the Feast of Pentecost must be applied upon the foundation of the blood of Christ in the Feast of Passover. The Lord does not want to anoint the filthy garments of our own self-righteousness. Isa 64:6. Zec 3:4. Luk 5:36. Rev 3:4. He wants to pour the anointing oil over our heads, and upon our garments that we have received from Him, and that are being washed in the blood of the Passover Lamb. Rom 7:14. Significantly, the priestly garment that a married man receives in the Feast of Passover includes the mandate for him to stand up in headship to sanctify his wife and family. 1Co 11:3-12. The priestly garment of a married woman includes the mandate to stand up in centrehood in her home. Furthermore, every woman is called to be a sister among the brethren within the fellowship of the church. Rom 16:1. The lesson of Mary and Martha is that the nature of a woman's sisterhood in the church will be unique for every woman. Luk 10:38-42. Joh 12:2. Martha had been given a mandate of hospitality. Mary had been given a mandate to minister the word of God.

The anointing of the Spirit in the Feast of Pentecost is not the empowerment of a religious projection. It is the power to stand up as a son of God, and to embrace the name that we have received from the heavenly Father, and then to begin to serve as a priest in His house. The Holy Spirit is currently highlighting the need for right relational order in our marriages and in the church, so that we can receive this anointing of the sevenfold Spirit of God, through the Holy Spirit. The Lord wants to pour out the oil of His anointing upon a true house to house fellowship within a lampstand church, so that the communion gathering is effective in every place.

The communion gathering should be the expression of a true house to house fellowship. The communion is not a public meeting, even though it may be held in a building that is open to the public. Neither is the communion gathering the expression of any individual's household, even

though it may be held in a house that belongs to a certain individual. The venue does not define the nature of the meeting. The communion must be a house to house fellowship where the flock is *among the elders*. The elders are the presbytery of a lampstand church. We recall that Peter instructed all overseers to 'shepherd the flock of God *which is among you*'. 1Pe 5:2.

### The public ministry of the apostles

The anointing of the sevenfold Spirit of God, through the Holy Spirit, is necessary for an effective house to house fellowship. It is also necessary for an effective public ministry. The ministry of the early church in Jerusalem was both public and house to house. Following the Day of Pentecost, the believers were 'continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread [having communion] from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and sincerity of heart'. Act 2:46. In a similar way, the apostle Paul testified concerning his time in Ephesus by saying, 'I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house.' Act 20:20.

The public ministry of the church belongs to the apostolic administration of Christ in His right hand. The book of Acts recorded that the apostles regularly used Solomon's Porch for their public ministry in Jerusalem. Act 5:12. In this public place of ministry, the apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. This was an effective evangelistic ministry. A great crowd gathered to Jerusalem from the surrounding cities to hear the apostles. Those who were sick, and those who were tormented with unclean spirits were healed. Act 5:16. Furthermore, a multitude of men and women were *added to the Lord*; that is, they became members of His body and participants in His offering. Act 5:14-16.

During this time, Caiaphas and the rest of the Jewish rulers were filled with indignation. They were indignant because they had expressly commanded Peter and John not to preach or teach in the name of Jesus. Act 4:18. The apostles were openly defying them and disregarding their command. Endeavouring to regain some control, the chief priest and the Jewish rulers had the apostles arrested and thrown into a common prison. However, in the middle of the night, the angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out. Act 5:19. They were delivered at *the midnight hour*.

The angel instructed them to 'Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all *the words of this life*.' Act 5:20. The angel's instruction confirmed that Christ had removed the authority of the Jewish priesthood to minister in the temple. Christ had delivered the temple buildings to the apostles to be their 'cathedral'. He had given them the authority to preach and teach in the temple precinct without hindrance. Early the next morning, the apostles returned to the temple and continued to proclaim the words of eternal life to all the people. Act 5:21.

Early the same morning, Caiaphas called together the whole Jewish Sanhedrin and sent officers to bring the apostles from the prison. Act 5:21. Of course, the officers found no-one inside the prison, and reported this back to the high priest. While the Jewish leaders were wondering about this, another person came and told them that the apostles were openly standing in the temple and freely teaching the people! Act 5:25. Upon hearing this, the captain of the temple peacefully retrieved the apostles and brought them before the Jewish Sanhedrin. Act 5:26.

The high priest said to the apostles, 'Did we not strictly command you not teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!' Act 5:28. We know that the judgement of the blood of Christ had already been invoked upon Caiaphas and the Jewish Sanhedrin. They came under this judgement when they abused Jesus and then delivered Him to Pilate to be crucified. Peter replied to the Sanhedrin, 'We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus *whom you murdered by hanging on a tree*.' Act 5:29-30.

In response to this confronting statement by Peter, the Jewish leaders were furious, and began to plot the death of all the apostles. Act 5:33. The word that is translated as 'furious' in this verse means that they were 'sawn asunder'. Until this time, it would have been possible for Caiaphas and the other leaders to recognise that they had crucified the Lord of glory, to begin to mourn, and to turn to Him in repentance. This demonstrates the mercy of God to all men. However, when the Jewish leaders rejected the word of the cross that was directly preached to them by Peter, the opportunity for their repentance came to an end. The word of Peter was a sharp two-edged sword that cut each of these leaders in two, and assigned them their portion in the lake of fire.

At that same time, the apostles were *completely delivered* from any perceived authority that the Jewish leaders had over them. The evidence

of this deliverance was seen when Gamaliel stood up and commanded that the apostles be taken outside while he addressed the Sanhedrin. Gamaliel was an eminent Pharisee, a teacher of the Law, and was respected by all the people. Act 5:34. We recall that he was also the teacher of a young man named Saul. Act 22:3. Gamaliel said, 'Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men.' Act 5:35. He then proceeded to identify several examples of leaders who had risen to prominence and attracted many followers.

In each case, when the leader was killed, the followers were scattered and the movement came to nothing. On this basis, he recommended to the Sanhedrin that they keep away from the apostles and leave them alone, 'for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it - lest you even be found to fight against God'. Act 5:36-39. These examples that were used by Gamaliel are significant because, when Christ was struck down as the great Shepherd, the sheep were not scattered and lost. They were scattered to their homes and preserved in the house to house fellowship that Christ had established.

The Scriptures record that the Jewish council agreed with the political advice that had been given to them by Gamaliel. After beating the apostles with rods, the Jewish leaders released them. Act 5:40. The apostles had joined the fellowship of Christ's third wound as they were being sanctified to the work and mandate that Christ had given to them. They rejoiced that they had been counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ's name. Act 5:41. This account highlights the fact that the right of the Jewish priesthood over the temple precinct had been broken by Christ, and that the temple buildings had been given to the apostles for the sake of their public ministry.

In our present season, the Lord is calling us to understand, and to embrace, a genuine house to house fellowship within a lampstand church. We do not, currently, have the opportunity for an effective ministry in the public square. However, the Scriptures are clear that, in the days ahead of us, the Lord will restore the authority and mandate of a public ministry to His apostolic administration. The mandate to proclaim the coming day of the Lord in the public square is symbolised in the Scripture as 'the morning star'. Rev 2:28. This was the mandate that belonged to John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah, to prepare the way of the Lord. Luk 1:17. In the same way, Christ will give to His apostolic administration the authority to announce the coming day

of the Lord. When the authority of the morning star is given to Christ's apostolic administration, the ministry of the church will truly be both public and house to house.



## Chapter 4

# The word of the cross

### The manifestation of the word

Through the progressive revelation of God's word, He makes Himself known. Furthermore, by His word, God's Everlasting Covenant purpose is established. Isa 55:11. From the Scriptures, we can identify seven phases in the progressive revelation of God's word by which He established His Everlasting Covenant with man. In summary, these phases include:

1. The Word was God, revealing the Everlasting Covenant discussion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
2. The Word was with God, revealing the offering of the Son to become the Father's Son and Lamb.
3. The Word established the beginning of the creation. By the Word, the heavens and the earth were created.
4. Christ, the Word, coming in the flesh and ministering under the Old Covenant.
5. Christ, the Word, establishing and proclaiming the New Covenant through His offering journey from the first communion service to Calvary.

6. The establishment of Jew and Gentile in one corporate body of Christ, as the substance of the New Covenant.
7. The establishment of the new heavens and earth, in which the tabernacle of God is with men.

In the opening statement of his Gospel, the apostle John outlined the first three phases of the revelation of the word. He wrote, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'.

Joh 1:1. John was describing how the word proceeded beyond Their own covenant discussion to establish the beginning of creation in which Their Everlasting Covenant purpose would be accomplished. This happened through offering, as each Person of the Godhead laid down Their life by Eternal Spirit to reveal the Others.

Significantly, John commenced His description of the next phase of the revelation of the word, writing, '*The same* was in the beginning with God'.

Joh 1:2. The primary implication of John's statement is that the mode of offering, through which the word proceeded from the covenant of Yahweh to establish the beginning of the Everlasting Covenant, was the same mode of offering through which the other aspects of the word were manifest.

### *The first phase*

God is Word. Joh 1:1. This first phase of the word reveals the Everlasting Covenant dialogue within the fellowship of Yahweh, 'before'. Before the beginning, there was only the fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim*. Their fellowship is depicted in the Scriptures as an infolding fire within a thick cloud of darkness. Eze 1:4. Psa 97:2-3. Psa 18:11.

This imagery reveals that Their covenant dialogue is prayer worship. In this regard, the cloud of darkness is the incense of Their own prayer fellowship. Lev 16:2,13. Significantly, King David likened the fellowship of Yahweh within the cloud to 'the secret place' of prayer. He wrote, '[Yahweh] *made darkness His secret place*; His canopy around Him was dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. From the brightness before Him, His thick clouds passed with hailstones and *coals of fire*.' Psa 18:11-13.

### *The second phase*

In the second phase of the manifestation of the word, Yahweh the Son offered Himself within the fellowship of Yahweh to be the Lamb of God.

As the Lamb of God, He was the provision for the fulfilment of Their Everlasting Covenant desire for a multitude of sons who were born of Their life and joined to Their fellowship.

As the provision for the Everlasting Covenant of God, the Son did not consider equality with the Father a thing to be grasped but, rather, emptied Himself. Php 2:6-7. In doing so, He made room in Himself for a multitude of sons of God. He was the Father's Seed, in whom was written the names of all the sons of God who would be brought into being.

The outcome of being begotten as the Son of God by the word of the Father was that He who *was* God, was now *with* God. Joh 1:1. The Father, who, by the offering of Yahweh, had become the source of the Word, was the Head of the Son. 1Co 11:3.

### *The third phase*

The third phase of the manifestation of the word established the beginning of the creation. John explained, 'He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.' Joh 1:2-3.

From this beginning, the heavens and earth, and all that is in them, were brought into being by the word of God. Writing to the Colossians, Paul declared, 'For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.' Col 1:16-17.

### *The fourth phase*

Describing the next manifestation and expression of the word, John then wrote, 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt [lit: tabernacled] among us.' Joh 1:14. In this passage, John was obviously referring to the Son of God coming in the flesh. Jesus was the Word made flesh. His birth and life under the Old Covenant was the *fourth phase* of the revelation of the word of God. In relation to this phase, the Scriptures teach us that when Jesus was born as the Son of Man, He came in the likeness of sinful flesh. Rom 8:3. Significantly, Jesus was born under the Old Covenant, which was under the administration of the angels. Gal 4:4. Heb 2:2. It was under this Old Covenant that He ministered in the region of Judea for three and a half years.

### *The fifth phase*

In Part 4 of *The Steps of Salvation*, we considered how the Son's journey from the Father reached its conclusion at what has, historically, been called 'the last supper'. Joh 13:1-3. At this point, Christ began to pioneer a pathway back to the Father. From the last supper, which He inaugurated as the first communion service, Jesus, the Word made flesh, was revealing the way of the *New Covenant*. Luk 22:20. The bread and the wine were given by Christ as the elements for our participation in the New Covenant as members of His body. 1Co 10:16-17.

Regarding *this fifth* phase of the revelation of the word, John declared, 'We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' Joh 1:14. Christ's glory as the only begotten of the Father was witnessed by the disciples in the garden of Gethsemane. Here, the way of the New Covenant was initiated as Christ was born again from the death of sin through the agency of water, blood and Spirit, as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary. He first made this offering journey alone, as the pioneer, or author, of our salvation. Heb 2:10. Heb 5:9. The New Covenant was fully manifest and proclaimed to the world when He was lifted up on the cross. He was manifest as a banner, or an ensign, to which the redeemed of the Lord would gather. Isa 11:10-12.

### *The sixth phase*

Christ's own physical body was 'destroyed' when He suffered as a living sacrifice and then yielded His Spirit to the Father. Speaking about His physical body, Jesus had said, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' Joh 2:19. After three days and three nights, Christ's body was raised as a corporate temple, built of living stones. Joh 2:19. 1Pe 2:4-8. These living stones were Jews and Gentiles from whom He created one new man. Eph 2:14-18.

The Father made us alive with Christ, and raised us up and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Eph 2:4-6. Christ was now the immortal Head of a corporate body. Col 1:18. It is a mortal corporate body until He brings us forth into immortality at the last day. The corporate body of Christ is the *sixth manifestation* of the word made flesh, and is now the substance of the New Covenant. This is a most magnificent reality!

The apostle Peter described those who are born of God, and are baptised into Christ, as being living stones who are 'being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ'. 1Pe 2:5. He then said that, as living stones, 'you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, *that you may proclaim* the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light'. 1Pe 2:9.

In this sixth phase, the expression of the word of the New Covenant into all the earth is through the body of Christ. As members of the body of Christ, which is Christ's lampstand church, the word that is preached to us is to be in our mouth and in our heart. Rom 10:8. We are to proclaim and portray Christ as crucified, through our words and conduct. Through the obedience of faith, and by the capacity of Eternal Spirit, we are the expression of the word of the New Covenant in the church age and in the new heavens and earth to come. Rom 16:25-26.

### *The seventh phase*

The seventh and final phase of the revelation of God's word and the establishment of His Everlasting Covenant is the creation of the new heavens and earth. John proclaimed this final phase in the book of Revelation, writing, 'Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God".'  
Rev 21:2-3.

This company of people have received their spiritual body, having been clothed with immortality. 1Co 15:53-54. They serve as son-priests in the temple of their God, forever. Rev 7:15. There is no end to the increase of God's righteousness, as the sons of God, who are members of Christ's body, multiply and express, by the Holy Spirit, the righteousness of God. Isa 9:7.

### **The ministry of the word**

When summing up all that he had written as a preacher, Solomon said that with the wisdom of God he had taught the people knowledge. He had sought out acceptable words, and had written down, rightly, the words of truth. Pro 1:1-7,20-23. Ecc 12:9-14. He concluded his teaching by saying that 'the words of the wise are *as goads*, and as *nails* fastened by the

*masters of assemblies*, which are given from *one shepherd*. Ecc 12:11. In this passage, Solomon was describing two distinct dimensions of the word – a goad and a nail. As we will consider further, these are but two of many dimensions of the word.

Jesus Christ is the chief Shepherd. He is the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. 1Pe 2:25. He has appointed some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be teachers, and some to be evangelists as part of a star presbytery that is in His right hand. Eph 4:11. Rev 1:20. These are Christ's messengers who are sent to proclaim His word to His church. Mat 10:40. Through the ministry of the word of His grace, they are equipping the saints for their work of ministry. Eph 4:12. This shepherding work of Christ's messengers can only be exercised in fellowship with Christ. Joh 21:15-17. Having received this shepherding mandate from Christ, His messengers are to care for His flock as His 'under-shepherds'.

To this end, Peter exhorted the elders of the church, writing, 'Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, *servicing as overseers*, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.' 1Pe 5:2-4. We note in this passage that Peter did not describe the elders as being among the flock. Rather, the flock are those who are among the elders. They are among the elders because they receive their message and walk in fellowship with them. 1Jn 1:1-3.

Overseers, who shepherd the Lord's flock, are the 'masters of assemblies', described by Solomon. Ecc 12:11. Jesus also referred to the masters of assemblies as stewards of His household, whom He had appointed over the other servants who served in His house. He said, 'Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time?' Luk 12:42. The preoccupation of overseers is feeding and caring for the sheep who belong to the Lord's household. They do this by proclaiming the word of present truth in the midst of the presbytery and in the church.

## Dimensions of the word of the cross

The word of God is the wisdom of God which comes down from heaven. 1Co 2:7. Jas 3:17. Paul's description of the wisdom of God as being manifold, or variegated, reveals that there are many dimensions to the word of God. Eph 3:10.

Christ was the incarnate word of God. At each wounding event that caused Christ to suffer as He journeyed from the first communion service to Calvary, a specific element of the word of the New Covenant was being revealed.

As the Son went forth in obedience to the Father, the word was not returning to the Father, void. Rather, it was accomplishing the Father's will and prospering in relation to the purpose for which the word was sent. Isa 55:11. In relation to the Father's will, there are *two implications* of each specific dimension of the word. One implication of the word is eternal life, while the other implication is judgement leading to destruction.

In summary:

- *Gethsemane - the word as a seed was revealed.*

When the Father made Jesus an offering for sin in the garden of Gethsemane, He was revealed as the seed that went into the ground and died, and came up as a great multitude of sons of God. Luk 22:41-44. Isa 53:10. Joh 12:24.

A person who receives the word as a seed is born from above. 1Pe 1:23. By faith, which they receive as they continue to hear the word, they are able to participate in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Gal 2:20. By this means, they are being born from the death of sin with Christ, and are maturing as a son of God. Isa 53:10. Eph 2:5.

If a person rejects the seed of the word, they are unable to participate in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Consequently, the sonship life they received when they were born from above does not bear fruit unto salvation. This is the lesson of the wayside, stony and thorny grounds. Mar 4:14-19.

- *Bruised for iniquity - the word as the light was revealed.*

The word as light was revealed when Christ's face was beaten and bruised for our iniquity in the court of Caiaphas. Isa 53:5. Mar 14:65. The light of life was expressed from Christ's bloodied and marred face, through His eyes that were like a flame of fire. Rev 1:14.

Believers are those who walk in the light of the word that is preached to them, and who seek fellowship with Christ's messengers. Through this fellowship, they are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering,

where the blood of Christ cleanses them from sin and becomes their life. 1Jn 1:7.

A person who rejects the word of the messenger loves the darkness of their own perspective more than the light of the word. Joh 3:19. Blindness is God's judgement upon a person who rejects the word of His messengers. Mat 6:23. Joh 12:40.

- *Chastened for our peace - the word as a shepherd's rod, staff, and goad was revealed.*

In the court of Caiaphas, Jesus was chastened with rods for our peace. Isa 53:5. Mat 26:67. This wounding event revealed the word as a shepherd's rod, staff and goad.

The purpose of the rod is for the discipline and instruction of sons. It is the initiative of the Father, in Christ, to train a son of God in the way that he should go so that, as he matures, he will continue in the pathway of sanctification. Pro 22:6. The rod of iron is the instrument of judgement that Christ uses to make a division between sheep and goats. This judgement begins in the house of God. 1Pe 4:17.

Christ's staff is an instrument for the administration of the word of God, as Spirit and life, to His sheep. Psalms 23:5. The Lord removes the staff of bread and the staff of water from a church when its leaders deviate from the word of truth as a result of idolatry. Isa 3:1. Preaching a gospel other than the word of the cross fosters disorder in the church and in families. Isa 3:12.

Christ, the Shepherd, uses the goad of the word to prod sheep who are going their own way, in order to motivate them to obedience. The word as a goad pierces the heart of a hearer, revealing its deceitful and wicked condition. Heb 4:12-13. Those who mourn and find repentance are established in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Act 2:37. In contrast, those who reject the word as a goad fall backwards, are broken, snared and caught. Isa 28:13. They become hostile towards God and His messengers. Act 7:57-58. Rom 8:7.

- *Scourged for our healing - the word as stripes was revealed.*

Under the direction of Pilate, Jesus was scourged with the cat o' nine tails. Joh 19:1. This was for our healing. Isa 53:5. Through this wounding event, the word as stripes was being expressed.

We are chastened in Christ with stripes because of disobedience. When our disobedience is the consequence of ignorance, we are chastened with a few stripes. Joh 12:48. These stripes are a fellowship in Christ's sufferings. For this reason, they are sustained by resurrection life (*exanastasis*).

When a person knowingly disobeys the word that the Lord is ministering to His church, they come under the judgement of many stripes. Luk 12:47. A person who is receiving many stripes has been handed over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that their soul may be saved in the day of the Lord. 1Co 5:5. Their sufferings are not a fellowship with Christ. Therefore, they do not experience *exanastasis*. Instead, they become weak and sick and may even die before their time. 1Co 11:30.

The final form of judgement for disobedience is to be 'cut asunder'. Luk 12:45-46. This is the effect of the sword of the word upon a Christian who remains defiantly rebellious to the word of the Lord.

- *Crown of thorns - the word as a crown was revealed.*

In the Praetorium, the soldiers fashioned a crown out of thorns, which they beat into Christ's head with a reed. Mat 27:27-30. Through this wounding event, the word as a crown was revealed.

The Lord ministers the word as a crown for the purpose of joining us to the fellowship of this wound. In this fellowship, we are delivered from pride and from the spirit of Babylon. 2Co 12:7-9. We become recipients of the crown of life, which is also a crown of righteousness. 2Ti 4:7-8. Rev 2:9-10.

A person who rejects the word as a crown remains under the curse of sin. In the first instance, their lives are beset by thorny circumstances that frustrate their pursuit of success. Often, they become prickly toward others. Without the crown of life, a person is left with their own crown. The Scriptures describe this crown as 'a crown of pride'. Isa 28:1. Eternal burning is the judgement that is reserved for those who maintain a crown of pride. Mat 6:30. Heb 6:8.

- *Pierced through for transgressions - the word as a nail was revealed.*

The word as a nail was revealed when Christ's hands and feet were nailed to the cross and He was lifted up from the earth. He was pierced through for our transgressions. Isa 53:5.

Christ's death on the cross revealed the pathway of eternal salvation leading to life, as well as the judgement of eternal death. When a person receives the word of the cross, it becomes a nail that maintains their connection to the offering of Christ. In this fellowship, they are being delivered from sin and death and are able to express the love of God according to their name and sanctification as a son.

When the word of the cross is rejected, it becomes a nail that holds a person to the curse of the law. Rather than finding deliverance from death through faith in the Son, they remain fastened to the death of sin that Christ revealed on the cross. They are cursed for hanging on a tree, and are recipients of eternal death. Deu 21:22-23.

- *Christ's heart was pierced - the word as a fountain for sin and uncleanness was revealed.*

Christ's seventh wounding event occurred when the soldier pierced His side with a spear. As a consequence of this wound, blood, water, and a spirit of grace and supplication were poured out from His heart. Joh 19:34-35.

The prophet Zechariah described the water and blood that flowed from Christ's heart as being a fountain for sin and uncleanness. Together, these elements of the word cleanse a hearer so that they are able to join the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. In this fellowship, the elements of water and blood are ministering Yahweh's life to them.

A person who rejects the water and blood of the word has no access to the fellowship of Christ's offering. This means that they are unable to obtain salvation.

In the sections that follow, we will consider these elements of the word in more detail. We begin our consideration of the word of God with the communion meal. This is because the first communion service was the first stage of Christ's journey back to the Father. This meal was where the word of the New Covenant was first manifest, and it marked the beginning of Christ's journey as a living sacrifice. We eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood by receiving and believing the word of the cross. Joh 6:56. Joh 6:61-64. This is the beginning point for inheriting eternal life. Joh 6:54. Jesus said that if we believe His word, we will abide in Christ, and He will abide in us, forever. Joh 6:56.

## The word as the bread of life

The word of God is the bread of life that is given by the Father from heaven. Joh 6:33-35. At the last supper, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to the disciples, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' Luk 22:19. The bread was Christ's flesh which His disciples were to eat. Mat 26:26. Christ was giving Himself as food, or bread, for their participation in His body.

When Jesus taught about the necessity to eat His flesh and drink His blood in order to have eternal life, He explained that the words that He speaks are spirit and are life. Joh 6:63. His word as *spirit* is the *bread* that we are to eat. By eating the bread, we are becoming spiritual. In this first instance, this means that we are able to be one Spirit with the Lord and with our brethren in Christ. 1Co 12:12-13.

The breaking and eating of the bread of life - which is the word - identifies us as part of the one body of Christ. As Paul explained, 'For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.' 1Co 10:17. This body belongs to Christ and was created as He offered Himself according to the will of the Father. Eph 2:14-16. Heb 10:5-7. In Christ, we are able to fulfil the Father's will as members of the body of Christ. In the same way that doing the will of the Father was Christ's food, the bread of life defines the works of our obedience as sons of God in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Joh 4:34.

Each wound that Christ endured along the way of His offering journey was a specific event where His body was being broken and His flesh was being given to us to eat. That is, the virtues, or excellencies, of Christ were being proclaimed and made available to us. 1Pe 2:9. These include His diligence, faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. 2Pe 1:5-7. As we receive His word, and walk in the fellowship of His offering, these virtues become our possession, and are multiplied within us. By this means, we are made useful and fruitful in relation to the expression of the word and the fulfilment of the Father's will. 2Pe 1:8.

The word, which we 'eat', expresses the culture of the body of Christ. As we feed on this word, the culture of Christ's body, which is the fellowship of Yahweh, becomes the culture of our lives, individually, as households, and as a community of believers. It was for this reason that Paul implored believers to eat the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth rather than the bread, or message, that was leavened with malice, wickedness and

fleshly, religious activity. 1Co 5:8. Purging leaven from our lives and from the church is necessary if we are to eat the bread of life and keep the feast of Passover. Keeping this feast is fundamental to becoming sons of God and inheriting the kingdom. We have considered this subject in detail in Part 6 of *The Steps of Salvation*.

Satan offers us other food that appeals to our flesh and draws us away from the fellowship and culture of the body of Christ. Paul warned us of this temptation, writing, 'But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted - you may well put up with it!' 2Co 11:3-4. The only way that we can overcome Satan's temptation is to feed on, and live by, every word that proceeds from the mouth of God as it is ministered by Christ's messengers. Mat 4:4.

As those who are spiritual, our engagement with the word is not based on theology, nor on our natural intellect. As we receive the word that is ministered by Christ's messengers, we have the same mind of Christ. 1Co 2:13-16. We are able to discern between that which is of the Spirit, and that which is of the flesh, even though what is of the flesh may have the appearance of the spiritual.

### **The word as water and blood**

After Jesus had broken the bread and given it to His disciples, He took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the New Covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.' Luk 22:20-21. He also poured water into a basin and washed the disciples' feet. Joh 13:5.

We can view the water and blood, together, as being one dimension of the word. John highlighted this point when he wrote, 'This is He who came by water and blood - Jesus Christ [the Word made flesh]; not only by water, but by water and blood'. 1Jn 5:6. Notably, it was John who bore witness to the blood and water which flowed from Christ's heart when His side was pierced by a soldier's spear. Joh 19:34-35. Through this seventh wound, access to the New Covenant was granted to every person who would receive the word of the cross.

John explained that this was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Zechariah, who declared, 'In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of

David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.’ Zec 13:1. This cleansing was for those who, under the influence of grace and supplication, looked upon Him whom they had pierced and began to mourn. Zec 12:10.

We see that water and blood are both agents for cleansing. Regarding the agency of water, Paul said that Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her ‘that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word’. Eph 5:26. In relation to the blood, the apostle John witnessed a great multitude which no man could number, who had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Rev 7:9,14. The cleansing that we receive from the fountain that flows from Christ’s pierced heart is necessary for our entry to, and participation in, the fellowship of Christ’s offering. In the fellowship of His offering, the elements of water and blood are granting to us His life.

The blood and water, together, reveal the *word of life*. Joh 6:63. In this regard, Jesus said, ‘The words that I speak to you ... they are life.’ Joh 6:63. Concerning blood, the Lord said, ‘For the *life of the flesh is in the blood*, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls.’ Lev 17:11. Notably, the water which flows from the throne in the New Jerusalem is described as the ‘a pure *river of water of life*.’ Rev 22:1.

Paul described the cup, which contains the blood of Christ, as ‘the cup of blessing which we bless’. 1Co 10:16. As we share in Christ’s blood through our fellowship in His sufferings, His blood is a blessing. This is because the kingdom of heaven belongs to us as we continue in the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings. By this means, we have an eternal reward in heaven. Mat 5:10-12. The precious blood of the Lamb is a treasure that is becoming our eternal inheritance. 1Pe 1:19.

In the fellowship of Christ’s offering and sufferings, His blood is sprinkling our heart from an evil conscience so that we can serve God acceptably as son-priests. Heb 9:14. Heb 10:22. His life is becoming our life. Gal 2:20.

## The word as a seed

In His explanation of the parable of the sower and the seed, Jesus identified the word of God as a seed. Luk 8:11. It is the means by which we are born of God. As the apostle Peter wrote, ‘For you have been born

again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God'. 1Pe 1:23.

Jesus, the Word made flesh, was revealed as the Seed in the garden of Gethsemane when the Father made Him an offering for sin. Jesus said to His disciples, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat [i.e. a seed] falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.' Joh 12:24. Significantly, through His death as a sin offering, Christ brought life and immortality to light through the word of the gospel, and made it available to all mankind. 2Ti 1:8-12. Through Christ's progressive travail as the sin offering, sons of God are brought to birth out of death. This is what the prophet Isaiah was referring to when he wrote, 'When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His seed* [offspring], He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord [His covenant desire for many sons] shall prosper in His hand'. Isa 53:10.

We first join this birthing process when the word of the cross is preached to us and we are born from above of incorruptible seed. 1Pe 1:23.

Through baptism, we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. In this fellowship, we are progressively being born from the death of sin with Christ. This is an ongoing implication of receiving the word as a seed. Jesus said that we would experience tribulations and persecutions because of the word, or seed. Mat 13:21. These tribulations and persecutions are the sufferings of Christ. Php 3:10.

Because of its connection to the bread of life, the seed, or grain, of the word becomes the sustenance for our ongoing participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. We recall that a grain offering - representing unleavened bread - could be made as a sin offering for those who were poor. Num 28:3-6. Lev 5:11-12. The implication of this point is that those who are poor in spirit because they receive the word in repentance and faith are able to obtain the blessing of sonship life that is available in the fellowship of the sin offering. Mat 5:3.

In the fellowship of Christ's offering, the seed of the word is also in our mouth to sow to others. Paul summarised these two implications of the word, writing, 'Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God'. 2Co 9:10-11.

If a person rejects the seed of the word, they reject the faith of the Son of God that is necessary for their participation in the fellowship of His offering. Gal 2:20. Jesus likened this faith, which is necessary for obedience, to a *mustard seed*. Luk 17:6-10. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Heb 11:6. That is, without faith, a person is not being born from the death of sin as a son of God with Christ. Instead, they may continue to live by their traditional understanding of the gospel. Consequently, because of the hardness of their heart, the seed of the word that is present among us is snatched away by the Devil so that they are unable to believe and be saved. Luk 8:12. Alternatively, they may stumble when they suffer, because they are not being sustained by *exanastasis* life in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Mat 13:21. Finally, they may remain unfruitful as sons of God because their focus in life is on the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. They have not set their mind on the Spirit and on fulfilling the works of their sonship, in Christ. These works are defined and enabled by God's word. Mat 13:22.

### The word as a lamp for illumination

In the court of Caiaphas, when Christ's face was bruised for our iniquity, the *word as light* was revealed. This light was expressed from Christ's bloodied and marred face through His eyes that are as a flame of fire. Rev 1:14. Rev 2:18. When Peter looked into the eyes of Jesus, he was illuminated concerning the wickedness of his religious, self-righteous heart, and the darkness of his own way. Luk 22:61.

Importantly, the light also lit a pathway for Peter's recovery to his name and sanctification as a son of God. On the shore of Galilee, Peter had fellowship with Christ in the light of the word that Christ had proclaimed to him in the house of Caiaphas. The Lord called Peter to his name and works as an under-shepherd of the church. Peter's adequacy for this call would only be found in the fellowship of Christ's dying and living. This was the pathway that Christ was illuminating to Peter. Joh 21:15-19.

The apostle John described Jesus, the Word, as 'the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man'. Joh 1:9. Describing the outcome of being enlightened, the psalmist wrote, 'Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path'. Psa 119:105. The word lights the path that Christ pioneered for our salvation. The messengers of Christ bring the light of the word to a hearer and also present them with a context for fellowship. 1Jn 1:1-3. Those who walk in the light of this word, and have

fellowship with their brethren, are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering. In the fellowship of Christ's offering, the blood of Christ cleanses them from sin and becomes their life. 1Jn 1:7. By this means, they are being made pure, and are obtaining the blessing of *seeing God*. Mat 5:8.

In contrast, those who reject the word of the messenger continue in their own way as those who love the darkness. Joh 3:19-21. These people believe, as Judas did, that the darkness of their own way and their own perspective is the light. However, they are deceived. On this point, Jesus said, 'If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!' Mat 6:23. Blindness is God's judgement for rejecting the word of His messengers. Drawing on the words of Isaiah, John noted this impact of the word, writing, 'He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them'. Joh 12:40.

### The word as a rod, a staff and a goad

Referring to Christ, the good Shepherd, King David wrote, 'Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me'. Psa 23:4. David was not identifying two separate shepherding utensils but, rather, two aspects of the one instrument in the hand of Christ. A shepherd's staff can be used as a rod to chasten sheep, and as a crook to rescue sheep who have found themselves in peril because of their disobedience. The Scriptures also identify a third element of the Shepherd's staff - a goad. As we noted earlier, Solomon described the word of the great Shepherd, spoken by His messengers, as a *goad*. A goad is the sharp, or pointed, end of a shepherd's staff. A shepherd uses the goad of the staff to prod sheep who are going their own way, in order to motivate them to obedience.

#### *The word as a rod*

The instrument of Christ's shepherding ministry as King-Priest was the rod of iron. Establishing this point, the psalmist prophetically declared, 'Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break [lit: rule] them with a *rod of iron*; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' Psa 2:8-9. Elsewhere, the psalmist described this rod of iron as 'a sceptre of righteousness'. Psa 45:6.

The word as a rod was revealed when Jesus was beaten with rods for our peace in the court of Caiaphas. Isa 53:5. It is our foolishness and rebellion that caused Christ to be beaten with rods at the hands of Caiaphas and the Jewish Sanhedrin.

The purpose of the word as a rod is for the discipline and instruction of sons. It is the initiative of the Father, in Christ, to train a son of God in the way that he should go so that, as he matures, he will continue in the pathway of his sanctification. Pro 22:6. In relation to the application of the rod in their life, a son of God does not need to have done anything wrong to be disciplined by the Father. This is because, through chastening, the Father is driving the foolishness associated with immaturity far from them. Pro 22:15. The implication of this initiative of the Father is that a son of God is separated to their name.

Judgement is the outcome of rejecting Christ's rod of iron. A son of God comes under the judgement of the rod of iron when they deviate from the pathway of offering that Christ is priesting to them. Outside of His finished offering for them, they have no access to resurrection life in their mortal body (i.e. *exanastasis*). Consequently, their sufferings are causing them to become weak and sick. 1Co 11:30. The purpose for this judgement is to turn them again to the Lord so that they might become the righteousness of God in Christ. 2Co 5:21.

The rod of iron is also the means by which a separation is made within the church between the sheep and the goats, the just and the wicked, by the great Shepherd. Mat 25:31-46. Exo 34:11-31. The apostle Peter noted that this judgement has already begun in the house of God. 1Pe 4:17. The point to note is that Christ, our Shepherd, does not tolerate wickedness within His house. He is removing iniquity from it, through judgement.

Christ has committed the work of shepherding to the presbytery. They are the sceptre, or rod, in His right hand. Through the word that they proclaim to the church, each hearer is able to be joined to the fellowship of Yahweh. However, if a person is unwilling to hear and receive the word of truth that is established within the presbytery, the presbytery has the responsibility to make a separation between the culture of godliness and the wicked cultures of those people in the church who persist in their rebellion and seek to draw others to their wicked ways.

This is what Jesus meant when He taught, 'If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one

or two more, that “by the mouth of two or three witnesses *every word may be established.*” And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.’ Mat 18:15-17.

The key point to note is that ‘every word established’ is the word of the cross which secures those who receive it for their sanctification. This is what it means to *win a brother*. However, the presbytery must not accommodate alternative cultures and gospels within their fellowship, nor in the fellowship of the church. True under-shepherds feed the sheep and protect them from those who seek to devour the sheep. Importantly, the application of ‘the rod of iron’ by presbyters is not an exercise of the other law. Rather, it involves the establishment of the culture of godliness through the word of the cross in the mouth of two or three witnesses.

### *The word as a staff*

The staff is an instrument for administering the word of God, as Spirit and life, to His sheep. To this end, we note that after identifying the rod and the staff, David then testified, ‘You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.’ Psa 23:5. In this verse, David was referring to the bread and wine of the communion, as well as to the anointing oil of the Spirit.

The specific connection of the communion elements to the staff was revealed through God’s judgement upon Judah and Jerusalem. Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord declared, ‘For behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, takes away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stock and the store, the whole supply [lit: staff] of bread and the whole supply [lit: staff] of water.’ Isa 3:1. The Hebrew word that is translated ‘supply’ in this passage of Scripture is exactly the same Hebrew word that is translated ‘staff’ in Psalm 23.

The Lord took away the staff of bread and the staff of water because of Judah’s idolatry. In particular, the leaders of Judah had caused the people to depart from the path that the Lord had prepared for them. Isa 3:12. This happens in the church when the elders teach strange doctrines that are inconsistent with the message of the cross that Paul proclaimed. Gal 1:8. They cannot avoid deviating from the word of truth when they fail to receive Christ’s ministry through ascension-gifted brethren within the presbytery. The impact of this behaviour is that the people in the church are starved of bread and water. Moreover, they are caused to

depart from the pathway of offering that Christ pioneered for their salvation.

The implication of this sin, which has become a judgement, is that the order of life within families and within the church is devastated. Children become oppressors of the people, and women rule in their houses and in the congregation. Isa 3:12. Furthermore, division and strife between brethren is heightened. As the Lord declared, 'I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. The people will be oppressed, every one by another and every one by his neighbour; the child will be insolent toward the elder, and the base toward the honourable.' Isa 3:4-5. The grace of life is not being ministered in a church such as this.

### *The word as a goad*

Referring to the word as a goad, the apostle Paul wrote, 'For the word of God is living and powerful, and *sharper* than *any* two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart'. Heb 4:12-13. The word as a goad is sharper than *any* two-edged sword – even the sword of the Spirit.

As a goad, the word pierces the heart of a hearer, revealing its deceitful and wicked condition. Jer 17:9. This deceitful and wicked condition is the consequence of a principle of evil within us that Paul described as 'another law'. Rom 7:21,23. It is the desire to go our own way. Isa 53:6. The purpose of the goad is to reveal the operation of the other law within us so that we can turn in repentance from our own way, and can walk in the way of sonship that the Father has prepared for us. We note, however, that the word as a goad does not remove the other law from our heart. The other law can only be removed from us through our fellowship in the circumcision of Christ.

Jesus said to Saul on the road to Damascus, 'Why are you *persecuting Me*? It is hard for you to *kick against the goads*.' Act 26:14. The wounds that Saul was inflicting upon the members of Christ's body when He dragged them off to be beaten and killed was his persecution of Christ. They were a manifestation, in time, of the suffering that Paul had already inflicted upon Christ. Saul had wounded Christ in Gethsemane through his sin and willfulness; bruised and beaten Christ in the house of Caiaphas through his self-righteous zeal; scourged and mocked Christ in the Praetorium through his unhinged persecution of the Christians; and nailed Christ's

hands and feet to the cross as he vigorously pursued a course of life that was contrary to God's plan for him.

We see that the word of Christ comes like a goad in relation to each wounding event that Christ experienced on His journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. There is a specific point of confrontation and a specific illumination that is relevant for each wound. For example, in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus goaded the disciples, asking, 'Could you not *watch* with Me for one hour?' Mat 26:40. In the house of Caiaphas, Jesus goaded the Jews when He declared, 'I say to you, hereafter you will *see* the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.' Mat 26:64. This prod with the word of truth caused Caiaphas to react by tearing his garments and condemning Christ to death. Mat 26:65-66. The point to note is that the goad of the word will provoke a response from a hearer. They will either find repentance and deliverance, or they will be condemned as they harden their heart in reaction to the word of the cross.

### *The effect of the goad*

The word of the cross preached by the Holy Spirit through Christ's messengers comes with grace and supplication that flows from Christ's heart, which was pierced when He was wounded a seventh time. This wound was the sum of all of Christ's wounds. Under the influence of grace and supplication, a person's own heart is pierced, or cut, as they are illuminated to see how the thoughts, attitudes and behaviours of their own way have specifically wounded Christ. That is, they are caused to look upon Him whom they have pierced. Zec 12:10.

Those who do not resist the conviction of the Holy Spirit begin to groan as they realise that Christ was wounded because of their sin and rebellion, and that they are under judgement for wounding Him; yet they are unable to change themselves. The Holy Spirit turns their groaning to a travail as He joins them to the fellowship of prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. Rom 8:26. Here their heart, which has been exposed by the goad of the word, lies open before the eyes of Christ. Heb 4:12-13.

Christ's eyes are as a flame of fire, revealing the jealous love of God. Rev 1:14. If the hearer does not draw back as Christ's eyes search their iniquitous heart and mind, they are illuminated concerning God's love for them and their calling as a son of God in Christ.

A person who has been illuminated in this way will desire to walk in the light of the word that they have received. They do this by finding fellowship with Christ's messengers and with their brethren in Christ. 1Jn 1:3,7. In this fellowship, they learn how to proceed in the fellowship of Christ's offering. This will include restoring relationships that they have violated. As they continue each day in the fellowship of Christ's offering, all things work together for their maturity as sons of God. Rom 8:28.

This effect of the goad was exemplified on the Day of Pentecost. Peter proclaimed, '*You nailed [Him] to a cross* by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.' Act 2:23. Peter was clear that every individual in the crowd was personally responsible for driving the nails through the hands and feet of Christ. He said, further, 'Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, *whom you crucified*, both Lord and Christ.' Act 2:36.

The word of the cross proclaimed by Peter was a goad that pierced the hearts of his hearers. The book of Acts recorded, 'Now when they heard this, they were *cut to the heart*, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call".' Act 2:37-39.

In contrast, those who reject the word of the cross as it pierces their heart are, instead, progressively provoked to anger, and will resist the messenger and his word. This was the response of those who heard the message of Stephen. In the same manner as Peter, Stephen declared, 'You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom *you now have become the betrayers and murderers*.' Act 7:51-52.

In response to the goading of the word of the cross, they were cut to the heart. Instead of turning to the Lord in repentance, they gnashed their teeth at Christ's messenger, Stephen. The sin-sick condition of their heart was exposed. 'Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him.' Act 7:57-58.

### *Progressively goaded*

The word of the cross *progressively* goads a hearer who believes in the integrity and uprightness of their own way. This was certainly the case for Paul, whose psychological torment only increased as he kicked against the word of the cross as it was portrayed by those whom he persecuted. Act 9:1-5.

Our responses to the word as it continues to be ministered to us line on line, and precept upon precept, reveal whether it is having a goading effect upon us. Isa 28:10,13. For example, some people may become increasingly agitated and overwhelmed by the content and volume of the word they are hearing, and its inconsistency with what they have formerly believed. Others may doubt the legitimacy of a messenger and may respond to their teaching with indifference and increasing cynicism. Even in the unlikely event that these feelings are not communicated to others, they are indicative of the state of the person's heart. The Lord looks upon and weighs our heart. 1Sa 16:7. Pro 21:2.

As we will demonstrate later in this chapter, the Lord allows us to be goaded by His word, and gives us two or three specific opportunities to turn in repentance to Him. However, if we will not turn and, instead, we harden our hearts against the word of the Lord and His messengers, the word itself appoints us to the condemnation of our own way. We do not even know that we have fallen backwards, been broken, snared and caught. Isa 28:13. Jesus described this condition as 'wayside ground'. Mar 4:15.

### **The word as stripes**

Speaking of Christ, the prophet Isaiah declared that 'by His stripes we are healed'. Isa 53:5. Under the direction of Pilate, Jesus was scourged with the cat o' nine tails. Joh 19:1. This caused Christ's blood to flow from multiple wounds that peeled the skin from His back. This wounding event revealed the sufferings of humanity resulting from our disobedience, and the sufferings of Christ that were for our healing. When Jesus, the Word made flesh, was scourged in the Praetorium, the word as stripes was being expressed.

The scourging that we experience in the fellowship of Christ's offering is a chastening that reveals God's love toward us. As Paul exhorted us, 'My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and

scourges every son whom He receives.' Heb 12:5-6. The chastening of scourging is different from the chastening of rods. As we noted earlier, we are chastened with rods for the purpose of our formation and maturity as sons of God. However, we are chastened in Christ with stripes because of our *disobedience*.

A person receives a few stripes in fellowship with Christ when their disobedience is the outcome of ignorance. Jesus said, 'But he who did not know [his master's will], yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few.' Luk 12:48. When a person is beaten with a few stripes, their sufferings are a fellowship in Christ's sufferings. For this reason, they are sustained by resurrection life (*exanastasis*). Php 3:10-11. Describing this chastening principle, the prophet Daniel wrote, 'Some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge and make them pure until the time of the end'. Dan 11:35. The 'little help' that they receive in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings is *exanastasis*. Dan 11:34.

When a person knowingly disobeys the word that the Lord is ministering to His church, they come under the chastening of many stripes. Jesus said, 'And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.' Luk 12:47.

A person who is receiving many stripes has been handed over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that their soul may be saved in the day of the Lord. 1Co 5:5. When a disobedient and unrepentant church member is handed over to Satan for the destruction of their flesh, the result will be that they will become weak and sick. They may even die before their time if they do not find repentance. 1Co 11:30. The destruction of the flesh refers to the health of a person's physical body, which includes their mental stability and emotional well-being. A person who is receiving many stripes at the hands of Satan is not connected to the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. They are not receiving the power of His resurrection life in their mortal body. Php 3:10-11.

This will be the outcome for a person who is unwilling to be delivered from the snare of the Devil. In his letter to the Romans, Paul described the snare of the Devil as being the power of sin over our life because of the weakness of our flesh. Our flesh is weak because of the other law that resides within our heart. Rom 7:23. The other law was fathered by Satan. We are held captive by him to do his will when we are motivated by our own law to lay hold of the Law of God to satisfy our self-centred desire for life. This brings us under the judgement of the Law.

The mandate to admonish those who have been caught in the snare of the Devil belongs to the messengers of Christ. Paul said to Timothy, 'The Lord's bondservant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the Devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.' 2Ti 2:24-26.

If a person refuses to heed the admonition of Christ's messengers for the sake of their *deliverance from* the snare of the Devil, they will be *delivered into* the hand of Satan for the destruction of their flesh. This means that they will be delivered to the judgement and bondage of their own sinful and wicked behaviour. Unlike 'the few lashes' that are measured by Christ as a scourging for the sake of their restoration and recovery, 'the many lashes' are not measured, and they represent the indiscriminate consequences of a person's wilful sin and disobedience to the Lord.

The only hope for salvation is that they 'have the fill of their own ways' and that this motivates them to seek the Lord for illumination, which enables them to find godly sorrow and repentance. 2Co 7:10. With this in view, Paul delivered the immoral man in Corinth to Satan in the hope that 'his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus'. In the same way, Paul said to Timothy that Hymenaeus and Alexander had been handed over to Satan 'so that they will be taught not to blaspheme'. 1Ti 1:20.

The final form of judgement for disobedience is to be 'cut asunder'. Jesus said, 'But if that servant says in his heart, "My master is delaying his coming," and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.' Luk 12:45-46. This is the effect of the sword of the word upon a Christian who remains defiantly rebellious. They are cut in two and appointed to their own places with the sons of perdition. We will consider this in more detail later in this chapter.

### **The word as a crown**

Following His scourging, Jesus was taken by the soldiers into the Praetorium, where He was stripped and dressed in a scarlet robe. They then twisted thorns into a crown, which was placed on His head. They put

a reed in His hand as a mock sceptre. After spitting on Him, humiliating Him, and mocking Him, the soldiers used the reed to strike Jesus on the head. Mat 27:27-30. This caused the thorns to be driven into His head. Through this wounding event, the *word as a crown* was revealed.

The Lord ministers the word as a crown for the purpose of joining us to the fellowship of this wound. In this fellowship, we are delivered from our pride, and from living by the spirit of Babylon. The spirit of Babylon is the ruling principle of the world, and is characterised by a person's proud endeavour to make a name for themselves. Gen 11:4.

Paul likened his fellowship in the sufferings of Christ to a thorn in his flesh. This thorn was a messenger of Satan that had been sent to buffet him so that he would not be exalted in pride through the abundance of his revelation. 2Co 12:7. In relation to this experience, the crowning word to Paul was, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' 2Co 12:9. Instead of crowning himself, through pride, Paul was obtaining a crown of righteousness through fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings. At the end of his life and ministry, he was able to testify, 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me *the crown of righteousness*, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.' 2Ti 4:7-8.

Our repentant response to 'the word as a crown' is evident when we humble ourselves and, in the fear of the Lord, receive the word that is preached to us. Jas 1:21. The secret of the Lord is made known to us as we are crowned with the knowledge of the Holy One. Pro 14:18. Psa 25:14. We demonstrate this knowledge when we lay down our lives, by the capacity of Eternal Spirit, to reveal another. This is the same authority that Christ possessed. Joh 10:18.

Solomon described the crown of knowledge as being the riches that belong to the wise. Pro 14:24. In the book of Acts, Luke recorded that the Bereans 'received the word with great eagerness [or, a willing mind], examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so'. Act 17:11. Significantly, Luke described these hearers as '*noble-minded*'. Act 17:11. That is, by receiving the messenger, and applying themselves to understand the word that was proclaimed to them, they were being crowned with knowledge as *believers*. Act 17:12.

We come boldly to the throne of grace by the faith that we receive as we hear God's word. Rom 10:17. Heb 4:16. At the throne of grace, we receive grace to remain in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. In this fellowship, the Lord crowns us with lovingkindness (or grace) and tender mercies. Psa 103:4. This is the implication of learning from Christ how to minister as a son-priest to God. Mat 11:29. Rom 12:1. To this end, the Lord Himself is becoming our crown. As Isaiah prophesied, 'In that day [of His one offering] the Lord of hosts will be for a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty to the remnant of His people.' Isa 28:5.

The crown of life belongs to those who hold fast to the word of truth. These faithful sons are able to discern the false teaching of those who are part of the synagogue of Satan. Rev 3:9,11. They remain faithful to Christ's word because they are poor in spirit. In fellowship with Christ, they diligently fulfil the works that the Father has prepared for them, and patiently endure tribulation. Rev 2:9-10.

The outcome of being crowned in this manner is that the sons of God are able to show forth, or reveal, the glory of the Lord to the world, as part of Christ's lampstand church. This is particularly pertinent for those who have been called to minister as part of a lamp presbytery in the hand of Christ. Rev 1:20. As the Lord declared, 'For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will name. You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.' Isa 62:1-3.

A person who rejects the word of God and the invitation to join the fellowship of Christ's offering remains in captivity to sin and death. They are subject to the curse of sin. Thorns and thistles were a central feature of the curse upon the whole of mankind because of Adam's disobedience. Gen 3:17-18. Thorns and thistles represent the difficult and conflicting situations that frustrate us in life. They undermine the work and success of our hands. It is the pride of life that drives our pursuit for this success.

The thorns and thistles also include the psychological torment that people often experience as they pursue their own life, and endeavour to make a name for themselves. This distress may include anxiety, depression, agitation and fear. Their pain is an outcome of wearing a

cursed crown that they have made for themselves. Those who experience this anguish are often prickly towards others.

When we reject the word as a crown, we are left with our own crown. The Scriptures refer to this as a 'crown of pride' that belongs to a person who pursues their own glory. They do recognise that the glory of the flesh is temporary. Consider the words of Isaiah, 'Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower which is at the head of the verdant valleys, to those who are overcome with wine!' Isa 28:1. The end for those who are like the grass, and like the fading flower, is the same as for the thorns and briars. It is the judgement of eternal burning. Mat 6:30. 1Pe 1:24. Heb 6:8.

### **The word as a sword**

The word of God is described as a two-edged sword that proceeds from the mouth of Christ. Rev 1:16. Rev 2:12,16. The purpose of the sword is to divide between the wicked and the just. It is either a weapon for our deliverance through admonition and edification or it is an instrument of judgement and destruction. 2Co 13:10.

The sword is the prophetic word concerning the name and destiny of every person. Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord declared, 'For My sword shall be bathed in heaven; indeed it shall come down on Edom [Idumea], and on the people of My curse, for judgement.' Isa 34:5. This prophetic word was fulfilled when Jesus was sent by Pilate to appear before Herod, the Idumean. Luk 23:6-7. Herod, the descendant of Esau and Ishmael, desired to see a sign from Christ to support his claim over Jerusalem and the temple. Luk 23:8. If Herod's kingship and temple were validated by Christ, the yoke of Jacob would have remained broken from off the neck of Esau and his descendants. Gen 27:40.

However, Christ answered Herod not a word. Christ's only resolve was, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up'. Joh 2:19. As Herod mocked Christ's kingship, and sent Him to the Romans to be abused and crucified, Herod's temple was left desolate. Moreover, the Old Covenant which was serviced by Herod's temple was also destroyed. This was the impact of the sword of the Lord upon Idumea and natural Jerusalem as Christ disempowered them and conquered them through His obedience to the Father.

Isaiah's prophecy concerning Edom did not apply only to Edom, but also to the lives of every individual from every nation on earth. In the Old

Testament, Edom is used as a code word to describe all of the Gentile nations of the world. We know this because, earlier in His address, the Lord said, 'Come near, you nations, to hear; and heed, you people! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, the world and all things that come forth from it. For the indignation of the Lord is against all nations, and His fury against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to the slaughter.' Isa 34:1-2

'The sword bathed in heaven' is the word of the Lord that has been forever settled in heaven. Psa 119:89. As we have just noted, it can proclaim judgement and cursing upon a person. However, it equally proclaims and confirms a person's name as a son of God. This reality was revealed by Jesus when He said, 'Rejoice because your names [as sons of God] are written in heaven.' Luk 10:20. Cursing and the blessing of sonship are the two sides, or edges, of the sword of the word. *They are in fact two prophetic destinies, written in the Scriptures for each individual.*

The implication of the first edge of the sword is that it proclaims liberty to those who are in captivity to sin and death. Christ Himself testified that the word from His mouth proclaimed liberty to the captives. Luk 4:18. This is because it addresses the principle of evil within us, called the 'other law', which Satan fathered in mankind when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Paul taught that a person who lives by the other law is brought into captivity to the law of sin and death. Rom 7:23-24.

Motivated by another law within them, a person seeks to create an image and to define a name for themselves. The works that they do - irrespective of whether they are well-intentioned or not - are sin, because they are contrary to whom the Father predestined them to be. Unless they are delivered from this principle of evil, they can only live in sin. Thankfully, for those who join the fellowship of Christ's offering and circumcision by eating His flesh and drinking His blood, the sword of the Lord cuts this 'body of sin' from them. Rom 6:6. In this same action, they are being cut into the covenant of sonship.

While the goad of the word reveals the condition of our heart, the sword of the word is the initiative of the Father, through the Son, to cut the other law from our heart. This happens in the fellowship of Christ's circumcision. At the same time as the other law is being cut from our heart, we are being cut into the covenant of sonship. In other words, as we are delivered from our own projections, we are being released and enabled to fulfil our sonship name, which was written in heaven. The

prophetic word of our name is being made more sure in our life as we become the son whom the Father predestined us to be. 2Pe 1:19.

Condemnation and damnation are the implications of the second edge of the sword that proceeds from the mouth of Christ. Those who continually resist the Holy Spirit when the word of the cross is proclaimed by Christ's messengers stumble backwards, are broken, snared, and taken captive. Isa 28:13. Because they choose their own way, rather than obedience to the word, the word itself appoints them to their own place as a son of perdition. Act 1:25.

The sword of the word carries within it two destinies for every person. The prophetic word of one destiny or the other is made sure through a person's response to the word. Either they turn in repentance and faith from their own way, obtain their name, and bear the fruits of the Spirit, or they choose to continue in their own way and are appointed to their own place. Their own place is damnation. The experience of Judas provides a helpful example of this scriptural principle.

### *The example of Judas*

Judas had a name as a son of God that the Father had prepared for him before the heavens and earth were created. In line with his name, Judas was predestined to sit on one of twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Mat 19:28.

About thirteen months before His offering on the cross, Jesus declared that He was the Father's Passover Lamb, and that a person could not have eternal life unless they ate His flesh and drank His blood. This proved to be a goad to all who heard it. Joh 6:53-55,60,66. It appears that Judas found this particularly provocative. As Jesus said, ' "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him.' Joh 6:64,70-71. Judas did not believe that Christ was speaking the words of eternal life. He rejected the necessity for Christ to abide in him, and for him to abide in Christ.

From this point, the actions of Christ, the Word, continued to goad Judas and to reveal the condition of his heart. The Scriptures record two other specific events where Judas was goaded in this way. Significantly, they both happened during meals. Each goading effect of the word upon Judas was an opportunity for illumination, repentance and recovery. However, as he hardened his heart, he progressively went backwards, and was

snared. This reveals the principle of every word being established by the witness of two or three. Deu 17:6. Mat 18:16-17. 2Co 13:1.

The second goading event occurred at Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, which was also the house of Mary and Martha. Mat 26:6-13.

Joh 12:1-8. Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the head and feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. Mat 26:7.

Joh 12:3. Judas and the other apostles were indignant at this interaction. Mat 26:8. Judas queried why the oil had not been sold, and the proceeds given to the poor. Joh 12:4-5. Jesus responded by saying, 'Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always.' Joh 12:7-8. He also said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.' Mat 26:13.

In response to this goad, Judas went to the chief priests. He said, ' "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?" And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver.' Mat 26:15. Judas' response to the goad that was the activity of preparing Christ for His burial, revealed his religious and deceitful heart, his manipulative nature, and the fact that he was a thief who loved money. Joh 12:6. He could not see that Jesus was teaching the disciples about the nature of His offering.

The third time that Judas was goaded by the Lord was at the first communion service. Judas had already rejected the necessity to eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood. Now, as the elements of communion were being given to him, they revealed that he was a betrayer and a murderer. This was the third opportunity for Judas to repent. The Gospel of John recorded that Jesus even identified Judas as His betrayer. ' "It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it." And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.' Joh 13:26. Instead of humbling himself before the Lord, Judas departed from the fellowship of the communion with the intention of delivering Christ to the Jewish rulers.

On the Mount of Olives, Jesus prayed, 'Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, *that the Scripture might be fulfilled.*' Joh 17:12. The Scriptures that Jesus was referring to were the prophetic Psalms, which were both songs and prayers. For example, prophetic of Christ's betrayal, King David wrote, 'But it was you, a man my equal, My companion and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in the

throng. Let death seize them; let them go down alive into hell, for wickedness is in their dwellings and among them.' Psa 55:13-15. Through this prayer of Jesus, the sword of the Lord was being wielded against Judas. From this point, there was no avenue for his recovery. The prophetic word concerning the sin of his betrayal, and his condemnation, was being made sure.

Many people erroneously believe that because Judas' betrayal and death were written in the Scriptures, he was then predestined to damnation. Act 1:20. Psa 69:25. Psa 109:8. However, this is not true. As we have already considered, Judas had a sonship destiny which was also written in the Scriptures. However, because He rejected the goad which called him to eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood, he was progressively taken, snared and then appointed to his own place by the sword of the word.

The implication of Judas' experience is that the Scriptures declare two destinies for every person - their name as a son of God, and their destruction as a transgressor. The word of the Lord makes one or the other of these prophetic destinies 'more sure' on the basis of how we respond to the word of the cross.

### *The example of Ananias and Sapphira*

Christ has now committed the ministry of the word as a goad and a sword to a presbytery that is in His hand. This reality was demonstrated through the interaction between the apostle Peter and Ananias and Sapphira.

In the same way that Judas had been goaded several times by the word, Ananias and Sapphira had several opportunities to repent and walk in the truth. The initial goad of the word was a call for people to make offering from their resources to support the needs of the burgeoning congregation. Act 4:33-35. No doubt, in response to the word, Ananias and Sapphira were provoked by the Spirit to participate in the fellowship of offering.

These works of offering had been predestined for Ananias and Sapphira by the Father before creation. In this regard, their offering was according to their sanctification. However, like Judas, Ananias and Sapphira loved money. Having begun in the Spirit, they reverted to the flesh and became enemies of God. We remember the words of Paul, who wrote, 'The mind set on the flesh is *hostile* toward God; for it does not subject itself to the

law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God'. Rom 8:7-8.

Peter said that even when they had sold the land, the money belonged to them. However, the goad of the word, by the Spirit, was revealing the corruption in their heart. They desired to make offering for a good showing in the flesh, while at the same time maintaining their financial security. At this point, Satan entered their heart, motivating them to lie to the Holy Spirit. Act 5:3.

Finally, as they came to the feet of the apostles, which is the place of judgement, where the eyes of the Lord were searching their heart, they lied to Peter. However, Peter said that they had not lied to men, but to God. Act 5:4. Ananias and Sapphira violated the sanctified ground of their sonship. This was a sin against the Holy Spirit. Bringing their corruption onto the holy ground of Yahweh's offering prompted swift resistance, rebuke and death by eternal judgement against them. Christ Himself slew them as Peter spoke to them. They were appointed to their own place by the sword of the word. That which was prophetically written concerning Judas became the prophetic word made sure in relation to their lives.

### *The effect of Christ's word*

Christ speaks to His church through the apostolic administration that is among the presbytery that is in His right hand. On this point, we remember the words of Jesus, who said, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.' Joh 13:20. The word of the messenger is the voice of Jesus to His church.

Through the rebuke that comes by His word, the Son endeavours to provoke in us a zeal for repentance. However, if there is no repentance, Christ's actions turn to judgement upon us. In this regard, we note the way in which Christ addressed the woman, Jezebel. First, He spoke to her and gave her a season in which to repent of her sexual immortality and idolatry. Likewise, to those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, and those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, He said, '*Repent, or else I will come to you quickly* and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.' Rev 2:16.

Because of Jezebel's failure to repent, Jesus declared, 'Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great

tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts.’ Rev 2:22-23. This is the exercise of Christ’s judgement toward Jezebel and her children. They do not receive resurrection life through the suffering that they experience as a consequence of this judgement.

The sickbed into which Jezebel was cast reminds us of the words of Paul, who noted that those who eat and drink in an unworthy manner, not discerning the Lord’s body that is being priested to them by Christ, become weak and sick, and many die before their time. 1Co 11:29-30.

At this point, recovery is found by requesting prayer from the elders and through the confession of sin. As the apostle James wrote, ‘Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.’ Jas 5:14-16.

When a person rejects the word of Christ, and forgoes the opportunity for repentance, they bring themselves under eternal judgement. There comes a point when there is no longer an opportunity for their recovery. This is what Paul meant when he wrote, ‘For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.’ Heb 6:4-6. Paul was talking about people who had ‘drawn back to perdition’. Heb 10:39. Like Judas, the son of perdition, they are reserved for eternal damnation, having been appointed to this end by the sword that proceeds from the mouth of Christ.

## The word as a nail

As we consider the next dimension of the word, let us remind ourselves of Solomon’s key point – ‘The words of the wise are as *goads*, and as *nails* fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd’. Ecc 12:11. While the purpose of the goad is to provoke faith obedience, the word as a nail reveals the love of God, expressed through faith obedience.

The word as nails was revealed when Christ, the word made flesh, was nailed to the cross on Mount Calvary. Isaiah declared that Christ was pierced through (with nails) for our transgressions. Isa 53:5.

The word as nails maintains a person's connection to the offering of Christ, in which the works of faith are fulfilled. We note, in this regard, that Christ's love held Him to His offering journey. He said, 'No-one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.' Joh 10:18. Laying down His life in this way revealed the love of God. Joh 15:13.

The word of the cross that is proclaimed to us is also the word of faith. Rom 10:8. If we receive it, then faith comes with the word. We know that faith comes by hearing, and hearing comes by the word of Christ. Rom 10:17. This faith motivates, or goads, us to join the fellowship of the cross where, by offering transfer, we join the fellowship of His circumcision. In this regard, the words of faith become *the nails* that join us to the cross of Christ so that we are crucified with Him.

Faith works by love. Gal 5:6. In the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, the faith we have received, working by the love of God which is poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit, is ensuring that the works that we do are according to our sanctification. By this means, we are not deviating from the works associated with our name in the pursuit of another will or through the exercise of our flesh. We know the peace of God, because we are being the person whom He named us to be.

When the word of the cross is rejected, it becomes a nail that holds a person to the curse of the law. Rather than finding deliverance through faith in the Son, the impenitent hearer remains fastened to the death of sin that Christ revealed on the cross when He was lifted up as the serpent on the pole. Joh 3:14. Consequently, they remain under the curse associated with hanging on a tree. Deu 21:22-23. Gal 3:13. The most acute example of this reality was the unrepentant thief who died with Christ on Calvary. He was nailed to the cross with Christ. Unlike his fellow thief, he did not receive salvation, but remained cursed and damned forever.

### *The example of Peter*

The experience of the disciple Peter provides us with a comprehensive example of the impact of the word as a *goad*, then as a *sword*, and then as a *nail*. In the first instance, Peter was goaded by the word of Christ,

which confronted his belief in the integrity of his own heart and his capacity to love in the same manner as God loves. In response to the Lord's word, 'Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward', Peter replied, 'I will lay down my life for You.' Joh 13:36-37. Jesus goaded Peter by saying that he would deny Him *three times* before the rooster crowed.

Prior to this interaction, Peter responded to the goad of the word that called the disciples to eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood by saying, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Joh 6:68-69.

Although Peter had been confronted by the word calling Him to eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood, he believed Jesus. This revealed that Peter had received faith. In relation to this faith, Jesus said, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.' Luk 22:31-32. Rather than Christ's prayer condemning Peter, it proclaimed a way forward for him after his self-righteousness had been addressed by the sword of the word in the house of Caiaphas.

When Peter looked into the eyes of Jesus after his self-righteous love and integrity had failed, he began to mourn. He was delivered from his fleshy self-righteousness as it was cut from his heart. We know this happened because, when Jesus found him on the shore of Galilee, he confessed that he was unable to love with the *agape* love of God. Joh 21:15-16. After Paul had been delivered from his self-righteous integrity, the prophetic sword of the word was making Peter's sonship name more sure. In this regard, Jesus spoke to him about his work as an 'under-shepherd' of Christ.

Significantly, Jesus also spoke to Peter about the nature of his death. John recorded this conversation between Jesus and Peter. 'Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep. Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish." This He spoke, signifying *by what death he would glorify God*. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me".' Joh 21:18-19.

Christ's word was now a nail that was securing Peter to the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. As Peter continued in this fellowship, he would be able to do the works associated with his name. That is, he would be able to feed and tend Christ's sheep as an overseer in the church. Now he would be part of the proclamation of the word of the New Covenant, which operated in all the ways that Christ had revealed through His offering.

### *The example of Ezra*

When Ezra the scribe arrived in Jerusalem, he heard that the people of Israel, the priests and the Levites, had *taken wives* for themselves from the surrounding *nations*. He noted that the princes and the rulers had been foremost in this unfaithfulness. Ezr 9:1-2.

Ezra understood that such behaviour elicited a curse from God. We recall that Joshua said to the children of Israel, 'Therefore take careful heed to yourselves, that you love the Lord your God. Or else, if indeed you do go back, and cling to the *remnant of these nations* - these that remain among you - and *make marriages with them*, and go in to them and they to you, know for certain that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. *But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes*, until you perish from this good land which the Lord your God has given you.' Jos 23:11-13.

In travail and mourning for this wickedness, Ezra tore his robe and garment, and pulled out some of the hair from his head and beard. Ezra 9:3. Through this travail, he was joined to the suffering that Christ experienced in the Praetorium under the hands of the soldiers of the Roman Empire, which was the ruling kingdom of the world. During this abuse, Jesus was scourged, and a crown of thorns was beaten into His head with a mock sceptre. He was mocked, humiliated and abused, spat on, and His beard was plucked out. Mar 15:15-20. Isa 50:6.

At the time of the evening burnt offering, Ezra supplicated himself before the Lord and prayed, 'Since the days of our fathers to this day we have been very guilty, and for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plunder, and to humiliation, as it is this day.' Ezr 9:7. The prophet Daniel identified these consequences associated with the iniquities of the kings and priests as being the Lord's judgement upon those with insight in order to refine, purge and make them pure. Dan 11:33-35.

Ezra then prayed, 'And now for a little while grace has been shown from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg [lit: nail] in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes [or, illuminate our understanding] and give us a measure of revival in our bondage.' Ezr 9:8. Ezra understood that the nail was the word of the cross that would illuminate the hearts of those who heard it, and that it would revive them in the fellowship of offering. This was the pathway upon which the Shepherd of Israel would lead them.

### *The promise to Eliakim*

Ezra's reference to the Lord giving the nation a peg, or nail, in the holy place, reminds us of the word of the Lord concerning Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah. The Lord declared that Eliakim would replace a man named Shebna, who was the steward over the royal house. Isa 22:15. Because Shebna had misappropriated his authority, and had defrauded the royal house, the Lord deposed him from the office to which he had been appointed.

Concerning Eliakim, Shebna's replacement, the Lord declared, 'The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; so he shall open, and no-one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no-one shall open. I will fasten him as a peg [lit: nail] in a secure place, and he will become a glorious throne to his father's house.' Isa 22:22-23.

This is the way that Christ referred to Himself when He addressed the star presbytery of Philadelphia. He said, "These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no-one shuts, and shuts and no-one opens. I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no-one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name". Rev 3:7. Christ was identifying Himself as the peg, or nail, in the holy place.

The name Philadelphia means 'brotherly love'. The key that Christ gave to this church was the word of first love which was manifest among them as brotherly love. The same nails that held Christ to the cross were holding them together in fellowship as a presbytery. This resulted in a door being given to the presbytery and the whole church for service and utterance within their region.

Concluding His letter to the presbytery in Philadelphia, Jesus said, 'Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no-one may take your crown.' Rev 3:11. The presbytery and church in Philadelphia

would be able to hold fast what they had if they were secured by the nail in the holy place, who is Christ.

## The song of the Lord

As an expression of the word of God, the song of the Lord reveals the nature of God's life as worship. Yahweh is one Spirit and one life. In this fellowship of one Spirit and life, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit lay down Their lives to reveal one another. By this means, Their one life is multiplied and given to be our life. Abraham recognised this culture of offering as being *worship*. Gen 22:5.

The symbol of incense is fundamental to worship. With this understanding, we can identify four aspects of incense. *First*, incense represents an offering of prayer that may be spoken or expressed through song. Prayer communicates the desire to be revealed by another, and is a request to reveal another through offering. *Second*, incense is the pure note of worship that may be spoken or sung. *Third*, incense is the prophetic word made more sure through word or song. 2Pe 1:19. *Fourth*, incense is the confession of faith, made by a person who has received and believed the word of God. Their confession may be communicated through song or spoken as a testimony. 1Ti 6:12.

The principle of incense as a prayer of worship is most acutely demonstrated in the book of Revelation. Prior to the opening of the seven seals, the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb of God. They each had a harp and a golden bowl full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. Rev 5:8. They sang a new song, saying, 'You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals.' Rev 5:9. The Lamb was revealed through their prayerful song, which was joined by myriads of angels, the living creatures, and every living creature in heaven and on earth. They were all revealed as the Lamb stood to open the seals. Rev 5:11-14. Rev 6:1-2.

The song of the Lord is an expression of worship, or the culture of offering. We note, for example, that under the leadership of King Hezekiah, 'When the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord also began, with the trumpets and with the instruments of David, king of Israel. So all the assembly worshipped, the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; all this continued until the burnt offering was finished.' 2Ch 29:27-28.

As an expression of offering, the song of the Lord communicates and brings to pass God's covenant will. With this in view, it is depicted in the

Scriptures as a weapon through which the truth is established, and everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God is cast down. 2Co 10:4-5. This dual effect of the song of the Lord indicates its connection to the sword of the word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. This association between the song and the sword is conveyed by the psalmist, who wrote, 'Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance on the nations, and punishments on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute on them the written judgement - this honour have all His saints. Praise the Lord!' Psa 149:6-9.

Like the two-edged sword of the word, the song of the Lord is able to bring deliverance to those who are in captivity, so that they are able to participate in the fulfilment of God's covenant will. As we noted above, the song of the Lord, or the high praises of His people, also executes judgement on those who choose to remain enemies of the Lord.

The Scriptures reveal many examples of these two implications of the song of the Lord - deliverance and judgement. To illustrate the point, let us now consider some of these examples.

### *Deborah and Barak*

As we consider the song of the Lord, we are reminded of the deliverance of Israel according to the prophetic word of Deborah. She called Barak to lead the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali against the king of Canaan.

Through song, Deborah and Barak declared, 'Village life [or house to house fellowship] ceased, it ceased in Israel, until I, Deborah, arose, arose a mother in Israel ... far from the noise of the archers, among the watering places, there they shall recount the righteous acts of the Lord, the righteous acts for His villagers [or every individual] in Israel; then the people of the Lord shall go down to the gates. "Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, sing a song! Arise, Barak, and lead your captives away, O son of Abinoam!" ' Jud 5:7,11-12.

The song of the Lord, sung by Deborah, and received by Barak, enabled him to go forth and to conquer the enemies of the Lord. For this reason, he is listed among the heroes of faith. Heb 11:32.

### *Jehoshaphat*

Judah was delivered from the hands of Ammon and Moab by singing the song of the Lord. As a great multitude came against Judah, King

Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast and gathered all the people to Jerusalem to seek help from the Lord. In the midst of the assembly, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel, of the family of Asaph, and he prophesied concerning the Lord's deliverance of God's people. In the faith of this word, Jehoshaphat said, 'Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, *put your trust in the Lord your God and you will be established.* Put your trust in His prophets and succeed.' 2Ch 20:20.

The Scripture then recorded, 'When [Jehoshaphat] had consulted with the people, he appointed those who sang to the Lord and those who praised Him in holy attire, as they went out before the army and said, "Give thanks to the Lord, for His lovingkindness is everlasting." When they began singing and praising, *the Lord set ambushes against the sons of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir*, who had come against Judah; so they were routed.' 2Ch 20:21-22.

### *Paul and Silas*

In the book of Acts, Luke recounted the experience of Paul and Silas in Philippi. Act 16:22-34. Having been beaten with rods, they were put into prison, and their feet were fastened in stocks. At midnight, they were praying and singing hymns by the capacity of the Holy Spirit. Rom 8:26. The Lord, by the Spirit, had given them a song in the night. As the psalmist declared, 'The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime; and His song will be with me in the night, a prayer to the God of my life.' Psa 42:8.

A great earthquake occurred as they sang, causing the prison doors to be opened and the chains that held Paul, Silas and the other prisoners to be loosed. Supposing that the prisoners had escaped, the jailor drew a sword to kill himself. However, Paul called with a loud voice, saying, 'Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.' Act 16:28. The jailor 'called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ' Act 16:29-30.

As Paul and Silas sang the song that the Lord had given them in the fellowship of His offering, they were delivered from their chains. Moreover, the song of the Lord brought salvation to the Philippian jailor, who was a captive to sin and death. The jailor's response was to call for the light of the word, which would reveal to him the pathway of salvation. The song in the night, sung by the messengers of the Lord, brought salvation to the jailor and his whole household.

## *The 144 000*

In the book of Revelation, John recorded seeing a Lamb standing on Mount Zion with one hundred and forty-four thousand people. They played harps and sang a new song, which is the song of the Lord; and the sound of their voices was like the sound of many waters. The expression of this song was unique to them and to their mandate. Rev 14:1-3. The effect of the song of the Lord in their mouths, and their playing of harps, was the judgement and destruction of the eighth world kingdom.

### *Jesus sang the song of the Lord*

On the day that He was crucified, during the Feast of Passover, Christ proclaimed the song of the Lord before the great congregation. He sang the song of the Lord from the first communion service until His journey was finished and He breathed His last while nailed to the cross on Calvary.

Jesus calls us to journey with Him in the fellowship of His offering. He wants His song to be in our mouth. Although we are to sing exactly what He sang, the song will be a unique expression of each individual member of the body of Christ. This is because every member of the body of Christ has a unique name.

The Gospels of Matthew and Mark recorded that Jesus and the disciples went to the Mount of Olives after concluding their Passover meal with the singing of a hymn. Mat 26:30. Mar 14:26. Many commentators agree that they are likely to have sung what are referred to as the 'Hallel Psalms'. Some scholars identify the Hallel as Psalms 115-118, while others indicate a more expansive suite of six songs drawn from Psalms 108 to 118. These psalms were songs of deliverance and thanksgiving, prophetically declaring the offering of Christ. Jesus and His disciples also may have sung other Messianic psalms.

Psalm 40, in particular, is a prophetic song, written by David, which outlines all the events of Christ's offering and sufferings. As we will demonstrate below, Christ was singing this psalm as He fulfilled its content through His offering. In fact, we could say that through His offering journey Jesus sang *every psalm*. This is because they are all songs of prayer and worship that communicate, or depict, an aspect of Christ's one offering for all. Inspired and enabled by the Spirit, the writers of the psalms were able to articulate and participate in the Lord's own song.

Jesus went forth with singing from the first communion service which He had just inaugurated. Mat 26:30. Mar 14:26. Isaiah prophesied concerning Christ's offering journey, writing, 'For you shall go out *with joy*, and be led out with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.' Isa 55:12-13. This was the joy that was set before Christ, for which He endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Heb 12:2.

Christ went forth from the first communion to fulfil all obedience as the King of kings and the Lord of lords, dressed in the garments of a slave-priest. He went forth, casting down every argument that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. He went forth to bring every thought into captivity to His own obedience. He went forth to punish all disobedience as His obedience was fulfilled. 2Co 10:4-6.

The song of the Lord was the first weapon that Christ, the Slave-Priest, used as He went forth to conquer sin and death, and to take captivity captive. Heb 2:14-15. Eph 4:8. He priested Himself as the Lamb of God for a burnt offering, a sin offering and a peace offering. In this regard, He entered the gates of the true tabernacle with thanksgiving. The psalmist declared, 'Enter into His gates with thanksgiving [or with a peace offering], and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.' Psa 100:4. As those who have received the song of the Lord, we are to go forth with Christ, singing in the same manner as He did. When we sing the song of the Lord in fellowship with Him, 'we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us'. Rom 8:37.

Christ's song was the song of the Lord. It was a new song of praise to the Lord. He said that many would see it and would fear and trust in the Lord. Psa 40:3. To this end, we recall the effect of Christ's song on the thief who was converted while hanging on the cross next to Him. This thief, who was now illuminated, rebuked the impenitent thief, saying, 'Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom'.' Luk 23:40-42.

Throughout His journey, Jesus would take captive all those who heard His song, and they would mourn for Him as Yahweh's Son. This was the

aim of His song. We note that when Jesus finished singing the song of the Lord, the crowd that had gathered against the Lord and His anointed were taken captive. Under the influence of a spirit of grace and supplication, 'All the crowds who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, began to return, beating their breasts [in mourning]'. Luk 23:48.

The words of Christ's song, through which He took the captives of sin captive to Himself, are recorded in Psalm 40. 'Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require. Then I said, "Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of Me. I delight to do Your will, O My God, and Your Law is within My heart".' Psa 40:6-8. When Christ did this, He took away the Old Covenant and established the New Covenant. Heb 10:9. He birthed the New Covenant through the song of the Lord.

The Lord set ambushments against His enemies as He sang as a slave-priest. 2Ch 20:22. Obedience triumphed over disobedience. Those who sought to destroy His life were brought to mutual confusion. Psa 40:14. All those who said, 'Aha, aha!' and wagged their heads were confounded and brought to silence because of their shame. Psa 40:15. Mar 15:29.

Christ's song expressed His trust in God. As He died on the cross, His last words were the final words of Psalm 40. 'Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; let such as love Your salvation say continually, "The Lord be magnified!" But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinks upon Me. You are My help and My deliverer; do not delay, O My God.' Psa 40:16-17.

Christ's heart was broken because of the reproach that the Father had laid upon Him. That reproach was a sword by which the Father allowed the great Shepherd of the sheep to be struck down. This was the fulfilment of Zechariah's prophecy, 'Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the Man who is My Companion,' says the Lord of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered".' Zec 13:7.

This reproach broke His heart. Psa 69:20. Jesus cried out with a loud voice, ' "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?"; that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" ' Mat 27:46. Psa 22:1. However, He was not forsaken, for the Lord is near to the broken-hearted, and saves those who have a contrite spirit. Psa 34:18. Jesus committed His soul into the arms of the Lord for safe-keeping, and then He died. Luk 23:46. As we have already

noted, the nations began to mourn for Him and to find obedience. Thus He triumphed through obedience!

### *The new song in our mouth*

Christ's song is the song of obedience, which He has now placed in our mouths. This means that we are to go to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. As the apostle Paul exhorted us, 'Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.' Heb 13:13-15.

When we are delivered from our captivity, we are able to sing the song of the Lord, because the Lord Himself becomes our song. This was the testimony of Moses when the people were delivered by God from their slavery in Egypt. Moses and the people sang, 'The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will exalt Him.' Exo 15:2.

We are unable to sing the song of the Lord while we remain captive to a culture that is other than the culture of offering in the body of Christ. As the psalmist testified, 'How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill! If I do not remember you, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth - if I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy.' Psa 137:4-6.

The Lord gives us a song to sing in the midst of the darkness of night, which we experience at times in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. This song brings healing and refreshing to our spirit, sets ambushments against disobedience, and can minister deliverance to others who remain captive to sin.

Importantly, singing the song of the Lord is not an exercise of a person's own will when they experience difficulties in life. Singing the song of the Lord is only possible when we eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood at the communion table, and when we discern our participation in His offering and sufferings as a member of His body.

The psalmist declared, 'Praise the Lord with the harp; make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; play skilfully with a shout of joy.' Psa 33:2-3. The new song is the word of present truth in our mouth. Where we presume to live and minister from

the basis of an 'old', fleshly gospel, we are not singing a new song, and our ministry is not of the Spirit.

In the fellowship of Christ's offering and circumcision, we are being delivered from our former, fleshly gospels. The word of present truth is in our mouth and heart when we receive and obey the word that is preached by Christ's messengers. As we devotionally and diligently apply ourselves to understanding the word, we increasingly become skilled in the word of righteousness. Heb 5:13. It is in our mouth to proclaim, and it is portrayed by the way that we live. This is how we bear Christ's reproach. It is the implication of singing a new song and playing skilfully with a shout of joy.

### **Do not go beyond the words of the wise**

The words of wisdom are the words of the Spirit spoken by Christ through His messengers. Solomon warned God's covenant people against going beyond the words spoken by the Shepherd through the under-shepherds, writing, 'But about going further [than the words given by one Shepherd], my son, be warned. Of making many books [containing alternative theologies, theories, and wisdom] there is no end [so do not believe everything you read], and much study is a weariness of the flesh.' Ecc 12:12. This weariness is the effect of coming under the judgement of the Lord. 1Co 11:29-32. A person comes under this judgement for living outside of the word of the cross by entertaining gospels that are an alternative, or hybrid, version of the gospel.

The apostle John, likewise, warned believers, writing, 'Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.' 2Jn 9-11.

Similarly, the apostle Paul introduced his letter to the Romans by testifying, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith".' Rom 1:16-17. An implication of Paul's statement is that there are other gospels proclaimed within Christendom, of which we should be ashamed. These are contained in the many and endless books that Solomon referred to in his final statements in the book of Ecclesiastes. These alternative gospels

shamefully encourage believers to pursue a righteousness of their own through the exercise of their flesh.

With this point in view, Solomon concluded all his instruction, by writing, 'All has been heard; the end of the matter is: Fear God [revere and worship Him, knowing that He is] and keep His commandments, for this is the whole of man [the full, original purpose of His creation, the object of God's providence, the root of character, the foundation of all happiness, the adjustment to all inharmonious circumstances and conditions under the sun] and the whole [duty] for every man. For God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it is good or evil.' Ecc 12:13-14.

## Chapter 5

# Salvation through the cross

### We wounded Christ

The thoughts and behaviours of those who live according to their own law are sin. Our sin is against the Father who named us and prepared the works of our sonship before the heavens and earth were created. The Father laid the reproaches for these sins on the Son, when He made the Son an offering for sin. Psa 69:7,9. Rom 15:3. As a sin offering, the iniquities of every person were laid on Christ, and His soul was made our sin. Isa 53:5,10. 2Co 5:21.

The wages of sin is death. Rom 6:23. Paul explained that when Jesus drank the cup of the wrath of God, He tasted the judgement of death for everyone. Mat 26:39. Heb 2:9. The sufferings that Jesus endured because of this judgement were not simply on behalf of humanity as a collective; He tasted the suffering of death for *every individual*. This is what Paul meant by 'everyone'. The sufferings of death that Jesus experienced as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary were for the specific sin of each person.

Every deviant thought that we have, and every sinful action that we take, caused Christ's body to be wounded and His blood to be shed. This is because the sufferings that He experienced were the penalty for our sin.

For example, when we are living according to our own will, Christ is sweating clots of blood. When we are self-righteous, Christ's face is being bruised. When we are being disobedient and become angry with others, Christ is being beaten with rods. When we indulge in the lusts of the flesh, including our aberrant thoughts, Christ is being scourged. When we are proud, and deny the headship of Christ, the crown of thorns is being driven into His head. All of these sufferings, and our sin that caused them, were gathered up into the sixth wound that Christ suffered when He was nailed to the cross for our transgressions. Isa 53:5. This explains how we all crucified Christ, even though we were not there on the day that He died almost 2000 years ago.

In this sixth wound, Christ was nailed to the cross and was lifted up as the serpent on the pole. Joh 3:14. The writhing serpent pinned to a pole is a fitting illustration of the torment that is justly inflicted upon the reprobate - meaning those reserved for judgement. This torment was inflicted by the Father on Christ, who was made our sin. 2Co 5:21. The image of the serpent on the pole depicts our sinful condition, as well as the impact of our sin upon others, and the judgement of God upon our sin.

By abusing others, we abuse Christ, and cause His blood to flow. When we do this, we demonstrate the most significant action of reprobation that a person can commit. *We are reprobate* because we are causing the death of an innocent Man. The torment that Christ suffered as the serpent on the pole reveals the torment of everlasting death that awaits those who reject the salvation of God that is found in the fellowship of His offering.

The wonderful message of the gospel is that Christ has intervened in human history, and has become a mediator between every person and his neighbour. He came to reconcile us to God and to our neighbours, in Himself, and to make peace through the blood of His cross. Eph 2:14-18. Christ's ministry of reconciliation and peace is only available in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

The whole world was reconciled to God through the death of the Son. However, a person is only saved by receiving His life. Rom 5:10. The life of Yahweh is in His blood. In the fellowship of Christ's offering, His blood is given to us to become our life. Lev 17:11. Furthermore, our heart is being sprinkled clean from the evil of living by our self-defined good. Heb 10:22. This happens as our self-centredness, which was laid on Christ, is being removed from us in the fellowship of His circumcision. Col 2:11-12. In Christ, we are able to minister this life to others. That is,

we are given the privilege of ministering reconciliation to others.  
2Co 5:18.

In the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, we are born from the death of sin, with Christ. Through this process, the *peace* of God is becoming our possession. This is evident because we stop striving with the Lord, and with others, in the pursuit of making a name for ourselves. Instead, we delight in the name and works that the Father has prepared for us in Christ. More than this, we are becoming 'peacemakers' who are motivated to reveal the name and sanctification of other sons of God.  
Mat 5:9.

### The beginning point for salvation

A person in the world begins their journey of salvation with Christ when they hear the word of the cross proclaimed to them. This word began to be proclaimed to the whole world when Christ's side was pierced by the soldier's spear. This seventh wound caused blood and water, and a spirit of grace and supplication, to flow from His heart. Joh 19:34. Zec 12:10. The Holy Spirit bears witness to these elements by convicting those who hear and receive the gospel of sin, righteousness and judgement. 1Jn 5:6. Joh 16:8.

The apostle John witnessed the blood and water flowing from Christ's heart. Joh 19:34-35. In his first epistle, he emphasised the truth that water and blood, together, are one dimension of the word of God. 1Jn 5:6. This word brings cleansing and life to a hearer. The blood, in particular, contains the life of Yahweh. Lev 17:11. This life is *the light of men*. Joh 1:4. As Christ's blood sprinkles a person's heart, they begin to see the specific thoughts, motivations and actions that have caused the shedding of Christ's blood. The Holy Spirit ministers grace to their heart, bringing the conviction of sin to their conscience. Then, under the influence of a spirit of grace and supplication, they begin to supplicate and mourn in repentance. Zec 12:10.

This was the effect that Christ's seventh wound had on the great multitude who witnessed Christ's crucifixion. The Gospel of Luke recorded, 'And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, *seeing what had been done*, beat their breasts and returned'. Luk 23:48. Under the influence of grace and supplication, the people looked at Christ and saw what they had done to Him. They went to their houses, mourning for their sin and for the death of the Firstborn. Zec 12:10-11. Although they did not realise it at the time, they were beginning to receive the blessing

of God. Jesus Himself declared, 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.' Mat 5:4.

## The work of the blood

As we have already noted, Christ's blood is shed as a consequence of the wounds that a person inflicts upon Him through their wilfulness, other law and sin. He sprinkles this blood on them; they do not sprinkle it on themselves. This is the high-priestly action of Melchizedek. As Christ sprinkles their heart with His blood, it begins to do a work in them.

*First*, through faith in the blood, their sins are passed over. That is, the hearer receives the forgiveness of sins. Rom 3:25.

*Second*, the blood redeems them from their captivity to sin as they are being cut into the covenant of sonship. The apostle Peter explained that they are redeemed from the aimless, or vain, conduct of their own way by the precious blood of Christ, the Lamb of God. 1Pe 1:18-19. They are freed from their slavery to sin so that they are able to do the works of obedience that the Father prepared for them to do in Christ. Rom 6:17-18.

*Third*, they are born of the seed of the Father by the word of Christ's messengers. 1Pe 1:23. Through this birth, they receive the divine nature that makes them a son of God. 2Pe 1:4.

*Fourth*, in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, the blood cleanses them and becomes their life. They join this fellowship through baptism into Christ. The outcome of new birth and baptism into Christ is that a believer is clothed with the mandate of priesthood. Gal 3:27. Rom 13:13-14. They are then able to serve God as a son-priest in Christ's church.

As they walk in the light of the word of present truth, and have fellowship with those who proclaim this word to them, the blood of Christ cleanses their conscience from the dead works of their own way. 1Jn 1:7. Heb 9:14. This is how their garments are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. Rev 7:14. The word lights the pathway of their participation in Christ's offering and sufferings. Psa 119:105. His blood continues to sprinkle their heart, and it also becomes their life. Gal 2:20.

## Ceasing from sin

The light of life that we receive when our heart is sprinkled by the blood of Jesus grants to us a knowledge of the truth. Even though we caused Christ's blood to be shed, we recognise that this blood is granting to us forgiveness, redemption and cleansing. However, this does not mean that we can continue to sin by living in the manner that caused Christ's blood to be shed as a sin offering. To do so brings us back under the judgement of God.

Making this point, Paul wrote, 'For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgement, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.' Heb 10:26-27. Paul was saying that a person may be illuminated concerning the wounding effect of their sin on Christ, and yet mistakenly choose to continue to pursue the righteousness of God through their self-defined works.

Paul described such behaviour as trampling the Son of God underfoot, counting the blood of the covenant as a common thing, and insulting the Spirit of grace. Heb 10:29. If a person does this, they are neither joined to, nor are beneficiaries of, Christ's offering for sin. This means that they are not being born from the death of sin, with Christ. The only thing that Christ's blood ministers to them is judgement. Concerning those who trample the blood of Christ in this manner, the Lord Himself says, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' and, 'The Lord will judge His people.' Heb 10:30.

Paul addressed this same vicarious mindset in his letter to the Romans. After outlining the amazing gift of the grace of life, which Christ made available to us through His offering, Paul asked, 'Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?' Rom 6:1. The answer, of course, was, 'Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death?' Rom 6:2-3. Baptism into Christ's death is a *participation* in His sufferings. In the fellowship of His sufferings, our relationship with sin comes to an end. This has not been well understood by many people, because baptism has been widely viewed as confirmation of a person's salvation, and as a means of inducting them into a Christian denomination.

Paul was saying that when we sin, grace abounds through the word of the cross that is ministered to us by Christ's messengers. Rom 10:14-15.

Their word carries within it the spirit of grace and supplication, which is the peace of God. Mat 10:13. Luk 10:5-6. This grace is poured out upon us, enabling us to see and to turn from our sin. Zec 12:10. By this means, we find justification and peace with God. Rom 5:1-2. The Holy Spirit joins us to the fellowship of Christ's travail in Gethsemane. Here, at the throne of grace, we obtain mercy and grace for our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Heb 4:16. In this fellowship, we cease from sin. 1Pe 4:1.

### Baptism into the name

A person who has truly been born of God will desire to be joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering. This is because they know that unless they join His death, which leads to life, they will die again in their sin. Like the Ethiopian, to whom Philip the evangelist preached, they will be illuminated concerning Christ's offering and suffering, and will say, 'See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptised?' Act 8:36. Having been illuminated by a messenger regarding the true implications of baptism, they will eagerly present themselves, by faith, for this fellowship.

Baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is the response of faith that a new-born believer makes to the word of the cross. Their faith is to become a member of the body of Christ, and to join the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. Baptism itself is a fellowship. In the water, the elders lay their hands on the new believer and baptise them into Christ and into the fellowship of His body. At the same time, the new believer clothes themselves with Christ by calling His name upon themselves. Gal 3:27. This is their declaration of faith for participation in the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ as a member of His body.

The name of the Lord Jesus Christ is blasphemed, or taken in vain, when it is used as some kind of theological and legal fetish. A person does this when they invoke the name of Jesus as a mystical power, which they presume to exercise over some contrary condition or circumstance.

This has been a common feature of ministry within evangelical and Pentecostal churches. People draw from the words of the apostle Peter, who declared, 'Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that *by the name of Jesus Christ* of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the "stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone." Nor is there salvation in any other, for *there is no*

*other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.'*  
Act 4:10-12.

Using this statement, many have reduced salvation and the forgiveness of sins to an invocation of the name of Jesus. By this, we mean that after a hearer has confessed their sins and prayed the sinner's prayer, the preacher proclaims the respondent's forgiveness and salvation on the basis of the name of Jesus. Other people take this principle of invocation even further. To achieve some religious goal, they presume to use the name of Jesus to claim various things such as buildings, money, health and even people.

Within our own stream of churches, some leaders have used baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ as a means of inducting new members into the church. The outcome of this misuse of Christ's name has been the adherent's loyalty to the leader. This has been to the detriment of their participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering as a member of His body.

### **The fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings**

Having been born again, and baptised into Christ, the communion meal is our ongoing participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. As we participate in the communion meal, we partake of the altar. Heb 13:10. 1Co 10:18. The altar is the symbol of Christ's sacrifice. To eat of the altar means that we are joined to His offering. The elements of the bread and the wine are ministered to us by Christ. The bread represents Christ's word, which is Spirit. Joh 6:63. We eat the bread in faith for our participation in the fellowship of His body. 1Co 10:17. We drink the wine in faith for our participation in His offering and sufferings. In this fellowship, His life is given to us to be our life.

The bread and the wine are the elements of the word of the cross. We must not harden our heart to this word, because it proclaims both judgement and the blessing of sonship. As we eat and drink the elements of the communion by receiving the word of Christ's messengers, we are able to judge ourselves rightly. Jas 1:21. 1Co 11:31.

How do we judge ourselves rightly? Under the influence of grace and supplication that comes with the word that is ministered at communion, we are illuminated regarding our sonship. The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, revealing to us how we have wounded Christ through our unbelief and disobedience to the word. Joh 16:9. He convicts us of righteousness

by revealing the works that belong to our sonship in Christ. Joh 16:10. The Spirit also convicts us of judgement, so that we are not judged with Satan, the ruler of this world. Joh 16:11. Instead, by the love of God that the Spirit pours into our heart, we judge ourselves to be dead with Christ, our Lord and Saviour. 2Co 5:14. We confess that it is only in the fellowship of Christ's death and resurrection that we are able to be delivered from living for ourselves, and can live for Christ. 2Co 5:15.

If a person rejects the word of Christ by denying its relevance for their life or by denying that the capacity for their obedience to God is found in the fellowship of Christ's death and resurrection, they will come under the judgement of the word. Paul said that for this reason, many are weak, and sick, and even die before their time. 1Co 11:30. The sufferings that these people experience are the judgement of God because of their disobedience to the word. They are not receiving *exanastasis* in their mortal bodies, even though they may be born again and baptised.

There are many implications of our participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ that He priests to us each day. Our daily fellowship in prayer is essential to the efficacy of our participation in Christ's offering and sufferings. Prayer is our entry into the fellowship of Yahweh Himself. In this fellowship, we are being delivered from our own wilfulness, and we are being enabled to fulfil the will of the Father, in Christ.

We have already noted that our conscience is cleansed when Christ sprinkles our heart with the blood that we, through our sin, have caused Him to shed. Christ gives to us the fruit of this sin, which is the sufferings of death, as a participation in the fellowship of His sufferings. These sufferings may be the difficulties in our life, including our relational quandaries, which have been caused by our own sin. Our sufferings may be the consequence of the sin of others. There are also many things that we suffer that are common to all men. 1Co 10:13.

Irrespective of the cause of our sufferings, we are to receive them from Christ as a participation in His sufferings. In this fellowship, we are being delivered from self-centredness and sin, and are being made alive with Christ. Furthermore, we recognise that our sufferings are part of bearing Christ's reproach in the world as a member of His body. Heb 13:13. As we portray the dying and the living of the Lord Jesus Christ through our ongoing fellowship in His offering, the word of the New Covenant is being ministered in every place where the Spirit leads us. It is in our mouth, and it is demonstrated by the way that we live. Rom 10:8. Gal 3:1. Joh 16:13.

It is only as we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, through baptism, and through an ongoing participation in the communion, that our sufferings are working for us an eternal weight of glory. 2Co 4:17. Outside of this fellowship, our sufferings are signalling our condemnation, and eventual damnation. They have no merit, and achieve no eternal life.

## Filling up the sufferings of Christ

In Part 2 of *The Steps of Salvation*, we highlighted how Paul's fellowship in the sufferings of Christ was foundational to his ministry as a messenger. Paul boasted in and took pleasure in his infirmities. This is because he understood that when he was joined, through sufferings, to the weakness of Christ, the power of God was effective toward his hearers for their salvation. 2Co 12:9-10. 2Co 13:9.

Writing to the Colossians, Paul similarly testified, 'I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church.' Col 1:24. In this statement, Paul was making a further point about the implications of his participation in the sufferings of Christ. That is, he was 'filling up what was lacking in the afflictions of Christ'. Certainly, there was no lack in Christ's one offering, which was finished as a completed work for every person; it is efficacious, forever. Heb 10:12,14. What, then, was the lack to which Paul was referring?

We can best explain this principle using the example of Paul's own conversion. The first point to note is that Christ experienced the sufferings of death that were caused by Paul's self-righteous persecution of Christians. Through this offering, Christ also endured and finished the sufferings of death for Paul's salvation.

Although Paul had violently persecuted Christians, his sin was *injuring Christ*. Jesus said to Him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' Act 9:4. Here is a key point. The people who were being abused by Paul were not suffering on behalf of Christ. Nor were they suffering something that Christ had not already suffered.

What was lacking was the *manifestation* of Christ's sufferings in the life of Christians in their day. The Christians who were persecuted by Paul were revealing the sufferings that Christ had already experienced on account of Paul's sin against others. They were joined to Christ's sufferings for Paul, in their time of history. Through these sufferings, the

word of the cross was being ministered to Paul, as Christ was portrayed as crucified to him through their sufferings. The word of the cross was a goad to Paul. As he kicked against this goad, Paul was being disempowered and humbled so that he could come into Christ.

The same is true for us. Each day, Christians are to manifest Christ's sufferings in their flesh, for His body's sake. The members of Christ's body manifest that which has not yet been revealed of Christ's finished work, but which has already been accomplished for every person. We understand, then, that 'filling up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ' means revealing, in time, what has already been finished. This is our participation as son-priests with Christ, according to the order of Melchizedek.

In this regard, a member of the body of Christ does not suffer what Christ has not already suffered for them. Instead, in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, they are filling up and revealing what He has already suffered for them, and for those who are causing their suffering.

### Crucifying the Son again

We risk losing our salvation if we harden our heart to the word of Christ, and turn away from walking according to the Spirit in the fellowship of His offering. We do this when we trust in ourselves and in our own perspectives, rather than receiving with meekness the word of Christ, which is able to save our soul. Jas 1:21.

Our salvation becomes tenuous when we cause harm to others in the body of Christ through our self-righteous thoughts, words and actions. Often, we don't even realise that our fleshly perspectives, cynical complaints and self-defined religious endeavours are an abuse of our brethren in Christ. The sober reality is that when we abuse others in this way, we crucify Christ again. This rebounds upon us in judgement because it is wilful sin. As we continue to resist the word, we increasingly come under the judgement of the word. Eventually, the word itself causes us to be separated from Christ and His people. Isa 28:13.

Paul was making this very point when he wrote, 'For it is *impossible* for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.' Heb 6:4-6.

## The fellowship of offering in Gethsemane

The betrayal and sufferings that Christ experienced as He commenced His offering journey came upon Him as a thief in the night. In the garden of Gethsemane, Judas betrayed Him with a kiss. Judas was a *thief*. Joh 12:6. He had been paid thirty pieces of silver to betray Jesus into the hands of wicked men who were seeking to kill Him. Mat 26:15.

Christ had prepared Himself for this ordeal by watching and praying. He obeyed God and went to the Mount of Olives, and then to Gethsemane, to pray. In His prayer to the Father on the Mount of Olives, Jesus said, 'Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.' Joh 17:12. Jesus was testifying that He had not been robbed in relation to His ministry on earth.

As He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was strengthened with Eternal Spirit and became a living sacrifice. Luk 22:43. Heb 9:14. At the gate of Gethsemane, after He had finished praying, Jesus protected His disciples from the representatives of the nations of the world, and from Satan and the powers of darkness that had come to rob Him. Satan came against the Son and found nothing in Him that could rob Him of His reward.

## Learning to pray with Christ

Christ often comes to us when we are not aware or are not expecting Him. He said to the church in Thyatira that He comes with eyes as a flame of fire, and with feet like fine brass as though refined in a furnace. Rev 2:18. Rev 1:15. What is this experience like?

Christ uses His word as a goad to pierce our heart, exposing the thoughts of our mind and the motivations of our heart. By this means, we are provoked to give an account of ourselves to God. Heb 4:12. Christ confronts us, personally, by meeting us eye to eye and searching our mind and heart, which has been laid bare by His word. Heb 4:13. The imagery of Christ's feet as fine brass that burns in a furnace signifies that He comes in judgement to give to each person according to their works. Rev 2:23. Jesus comes to us at the request of the Holy Spirit so that They, together, can teach us how to pray. Rom 8:21-30.

Christ comes to search our heart and to judge our ways, in order to show us the iniquity that is in our heart. Jer 17:10. Rev 2:23. He asks us to watch and pray with Him as He joins us to the fellowship of His

sufferings. As we pray with Him, we find grace to endure temptations and to overcome in the midst of trials. As the apostle James wrote, 'Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him'. Jas 1:12.

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus asked Peter, James and John to watch and pray with Him. Mat 26:36-44. Earlier, He had warned them that, because of Him, they all would be made to stumble, and would be scattered from Him as His flock. Mat 26:31. The only way that they could escape from being stumbled, and from denying Him, was to watch and pray with Him. As they watched and prayed with Him, they would find grace and strength from God, in the same way that He would find grace and strength.

When Christ comes upon us as a thief in the night, we should not be those who are plundered because of disobedience, laziness or fear. This is because we should not be of the night, but of the day. 1Th 5:4-5. On this point, Paul exhorted us, saying, 'Therefore let us not sleep [through the sorrow which results from living according to the principles of the flesh], as others do, but let us watch and be sober [or, watch and pray with Christ]. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.' 1Th 5:6-7. In fellowship with Christ, we must endure the midnight hour of His trial and testing, which He suffered on our behalf. This is called, in Scripture, 'the trial of faith', which is essential for our perfection and reward as sons of God. 1Pe 1:6-9. Jas 1:2-4.

Trouble and difficulties can come upon us suddenly. Situations and circumstances arise and come against us, assaulting us, in an endeavour to rob and devour us. It is because we have received Christ and His word that these trials and testings come upon us as a thief in the night. Jesus Himself said that we would experience tribulation and persecution 'because of the word'. Mat 13:21.

Paul, in his letter to the Romans, wrote about our sufferings, calling them 'the sufferings of this present time'. Rom 8:18-30. At a basic level, we all suffer the trial of mortality. With mortality comes, what Paul called, 'the bondage of corruption'. Rom 8:21-22. Sickness and the threat of poverty surround us. The fear of death motivates us, posing as a survival mechanism. Satan uses the fear of death as a weapon in his endeavour to control us. Heb 2:14-15. However, Christ subjects us to the suffering of mortality, in hope. Rom 8:20.

Once we are joined to the sufferings of Christ, the sufferings of mortality become for us the birth pangs that are bringing us forth as sons of God. More than this, because we have the Spirit of God dwelling within us, He sustains us with resurrection life in our mortality and weakness, even though we are still groaning within ourselves. We are buoyed up in hope by the power of the Spirit while we wait for our adoption as sons of God to be manifest; that is, the redemption of our body from its corruption into immortality. Rom 8:22-23.

A person who has become poor in spirit acknowledges their spiritual weakness and accepts that they do not know how to pray as they ought. However, they are blessed because the Holy Spirit helps their weakness. Mat 5:3-4. Rom 8:26. He joins them, in one Spirit, to the fellowship of prayer in Gethsemane.

The Holy Spirit turns the groanings of our mortality into prayer. Rom 8:23,26. What a wonderful provision! At the request of the Holy Spirit, the Son comes to our aid and teaches us to pray with Him by the power that the Holy Spirit supplies to us. Rom 8:27.

The Son searches our heart and mind, exposing our motives, and revealing to us what the mind of the Spirit is for our life. Rom 8:27. Rev 2:23. He makes it clear to us that our sufferings are birth pangs that the Holy Spirit is turning into prayer. This is a prayer that is too deep for words, and that He is communicating to the Son on our behalf. Rom 8:26.

The Son completely understands the prayer of the Holy Spirit, because He is the full expression of these groanings. He was, as the prophet Isaiah declared, 'A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ... surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.' Isa 53:3-4.

In this fellowship of prayer, patience and endurance are ministered to us as we are assured that all things are working together for our good because we love God and have been called according to His purpose. Rom 8:28.

As the Son searches our heart and mind, He communicates to us God's will for our life. The Son does this so that He can reward us according to our work - whether good or bad. Rev 2:23. Mat 13:48-49. 2Co 5:6-11. When He comes to us in the fellowship of prayer, He rebukes or commends us during the season of visitation, through the word of the messengers whom He sends to proclaim His word to our life.

In the fellowship of His offering and prayer for us, the Son then teaches us to pray in line with the mind of the Spirit, and in relation to our need for repentance and change. Our groanings then become the Son's travail, which is enabled in us by the power of Eternal Spirit, ministered to us by the Holy Spirit. These groanings are no longer the evidence of our mortality and corruption; they are now the evidence that we are being born again as sons of God.

### **Resisting to the shedding of blood**

Christ prayed, 'Not My will, but Yours, be done' because the wilfulness of every individual had been laid on Him. By the capacity of Eternal Spirit, Christ began to sweat great drops of blood as He resisted our wilfulness, and was obedient to the word of the Father's will. The Holy Spirit joins us to the travail of this prayer. In the fellowship of Christ's prayer, we are joined by Eternal Spirit to the wound that He experienced, and we receive the blessing of life that He obtained.

In the first instance, we recognise that our wilfulness and sin are what caused Christ to sweat great drops of blood. However, the blood that Christ shed as a consequence of our wilfulness is sprinkled on our heart as we travail and sweat with Him. As Christ's blood is sprinkled on our heart, we find that we have the capacity to resist our own wilfulness and sin, and to walk according to the will of the Father - even to the point where we experience the shedding of blood through suffering with Christ. Heb 12:4. 1Pe 4:19. Because Christ's life is becoming our life, we have the capacity to strive against the sin that He is exposing to us. Praise the Lord!

## Chapter 6

# The pastoral approach of the New Covenant

### The ministry of Christ

In the third year of His ministry, Jesus began to speak to His disciples about His death and the reasons why the people were going to crucify Him. For example, the Gospel of Matthew recorded that, after Peter had identified Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, '*From that time* Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day'. Mat 16:21. We note that Matthew recorded two other specific occasions when Jesus spoke of His impending death. Mat 17:22-23. Mat 20:17-19.

Jesus knew that the Jews desired to kill Him. He said to them, 'I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, *because My word has no place in you*. I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father.' Joh 8:37-38. Jesus highlighted the reality that their murderous intent was because His word had no place in them. Christ's word had proceeded from His fellowship with the Father. However, the Jews were part of a different community,

with a different fatherhood. The Jews' intention to kill Jesus was not readily apparent at this early stage of their interaction. Rather, their first response to the word was to defend themselves by asserting their cultural and religious heritage. They said to Jesus, 'Abraham is our father.' Joh 8:39.

Jesus then said, 'If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, *a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God*. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father [the devil].' Joh 8:39-41. The Jews dismissed the truth that Christ had been sent to give to them. In their minds, they were already sons of God through Abraham and Moses. They claimed, 'We were not born of fornication; we have one Father - God.' Joh 8:41. Because Christ failed to acknowledge their religious station, they were emboldened to question His right to speak to them, and to treat His word with suspicion.

As the interaction progressed, the Jews further hardened their hearts against Jesus and His message. Instead of merely defending themselves, they began to malign Christ and to accuse Him of self-promotion. They did this for the purpose of denying His eligibility to speak to them about their deeds and the condition of their hearts. They said to Jesus, 'Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?' Joh 8:48. Furthermore, they asked, 'Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make Yourself out to be?' Joh 8:53.

In response to this question, Jesus revealed the focal point of His message. He proclaimed, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.' Joh 8:58. Provoked by Christ's word, the Jews immediately took up stones to kill Him. Their actions revealed the wickedness of their hearts, and demonstrated that what Jesus had said to them was true. It is astonishing that, in the course of one conversation, these Jews went from believing Christ to preparing themselves to kill Him! Joh 8:31,59.

A person will be incited to hatred and murder by the word of the cross when they reject the truth, and when Christ's words find no place in their heart. Joh 8:39. Joh 8:37. Of course, in our current Western society, it is unlikely that a hearer will literally kill Christ's messengers. Rather, a hearer's anger and hatred, directed towards a messenger and the presbytery, reveal the murder in their heart. Mat 5:21-22. As the apostle John declared, 'Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.' 1Jn 3:15.

Jesus was hated and murdered by the Pharisees, Sadducees, elders, chief priests and scribes because His words addressed and exposed the true condition of their hearts. For example, Jesus said, 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms [e.g. through confidential confession] will be proclaimed on the housetops.' Luk 12:1-3. Jesus also said that He was hated by the world because He testified of the world that its works are evil. Joh 7:7.

When Christ reveals Himself as I AM through the word of His messengers, this exposes a person's evil deeds and the true condition of their heart. Christ's primary objective for revealing Himself as I AM is to join a hearer to fellowship with Himself and with His people. In the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, they are being delivered from sin, and are being established in their calling as a son of God. This is the outcome of what the apostle John described as walking in the light of the word. 1Jn 1:7.

Illustrating this point, we recall the interaction between Moses and the Lord at the burning bush. The burning bush was a manifestation of the light of Yahweh's fellowship. From the fire, Yahweh invited Moses to speak with Him on the holy ground of Their fellowship. This required Moses to remove his sandals, which were symbolic of walking his own way and according to his own religious gospel. Exo 3:5. In this regard, we can contrast Moses' sandals with the gospel of peace that a believer is supposed to have on their feet. Eph 6:15. On holy ground, Yahweh revealed Himself to Moses as I AM and defined the works that Moses was to do as a servant of the Lord. Exo 3:10,14.

Significantly, Paul said that, by faith, Moses kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood. Heb 11:28. This is helpful to note because, at the same time that Jesus began to speak to His disciples about His offering, He *also* taught them about the necessity to eat His flesh and drink His blood. That is, Christ's followers need to keep the Feast of Passover. 1Co 5:8. We do this, in the first instance, by receiving Christ's word at the communion gathering. This is the word that is ministered by Christ, who said, 'I AM the bread of life.' Joh 6:48.

The word of Christ that He ministers as bread and wine is His initiative toward us. His word does expose our deeds, and it does reveal the thoughts and intentions of our heart. If we are to receive eternal life, we must not harden our heart to this word, nor turn our face from

fellowship with Christ's messengers. This was a third point of instruction that Jesus gave to His disciples in the final year of His earthly ministry. Having shown His disciples that He must suffer, be killed and be raised up on the third day, Jesus then said to them, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.' Mat 16:21,24.

Christ's disciples are those who hear and receive His word as bread and wine, as it is ministered by His messengers. His disciples deny themselves by walking in the light of the word and by having fellowship with those who preached the word to them. This means that they do not dismiss God's word, nor His messengers, on the basis of their own heritage and perspective. Rather, they turn from the sight of their own eyes, and apply themselves to understanding the word and its implications for their lives. They do this through personal devotion and in fellowship with their brethren. This 'walking' then involves taking up their cross and following Christ on the pathway of salvation and sanctification which He pioneered through His offering journey. In this fellowship, they have the sentence of death in themselves so that they are delivered from the propensity to trust in themselves and, instead, trust in God who raises the dead. 2Co 1:9.

## Two responses to the word

This same ministry was revealed on the Day of Pentecost. The climax of Peter's sermon was, 'Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ'. Act 2:36. The effect of Peter's message was that his hearers were cut to the heart, and they said to Peter and the rest of the disciples, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Act 2:37.

The word of the cross proclaimed by Peter exposed the motivations and deeds of his hearers. The goading effect of this word upon them was illumination and conviction, leading to fellowship *with Peter and the disciples*. Evidently, those who were convicted by the Holy Spirit were not seeking a confidential or private counselling session with Peter. They were presenting themselves to the fellowship of the apostles. The apostles' fellowship was with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. 1Jn 1:3.

In the context of this discussion, Peter was able to connect his hearers to the fellowship of Christ's offering, saying, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and

to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.' Act 2:38-39. Peter's pastoral counsel involved calling his hearers to repentance and to join the fellowship of Christ's offering through baptism. In this fellowship, they would be delivered from their own way and enabled to lay down their life for their brethren.

Of course, not every person who hears the truth responds in conviction with repentance and faith. Whereas Peter's message resulted in the salvation of his hearers, Stephen's preaching concluded with his death. As Luke recorded in the book of Acts, 'Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him'. Act 7:57-58.

Jesus explicitly taught His disciples that these would be the two possible responses to the word of the cross. He said, 'Remember the word that I said to you, "A servant is not greater than his master." If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.' Joh 15:20-21.

## **Fellowship in the light**

Overseers, elders, deacons and firstfruits brethren who are a part of a lamp presbytery in the right hand of Christ are called to care pastorally for Christ's church. This is fundamental to walking in the light of the word, and having fellowship together. For this reason, the mode of pastoral care in the church must be the fellowship of the Spirit. It cannot be an exercise of the flesh.

Elders and leaders who are *spiritual* provide pastoral care in a spirit of gentleness, and with discretion. For true shepherds, pastoral care is not an opportunity for the fleshly exercise of power over others. Neither do they derive some form of identity verification as an elder or leader through pastoral care. They understand that they have no right or capacity to grant another person absolution from sin. Moreover, they recognise that spiritual insight regarding the matters that they are discussing with a seeker is not resident in themselves. It is found in the fellowship of one Spirit with the Lord and with the presbytery. Isa 11:2. Jas 3:17-18. In this regard, they also recognise the limits of their pastoral care, as well as the limits of their accountability to address particular matters in the church.

Elders and leaders are able to meet others in the light because they are relating and living in the light themselves. They are not independent of the presbytery, nor are they disconnected from the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. 1Pe 5:1-4.

When a person comes to talk with an elder, they recognise that the elder is part of a presbytery fellowship. They are coming for fellowship in response to a word that has brought them illumination and conviction by the Holy Spirit. In the light, elders connect hearers to the fellowship of the Father and His Son. 1Jn 1:3. As we have been considering, they are connecting hearers to the fellowship of Christ's offering. In this fellowship, a believer relates to the historical event of Christ's 'once for all' offering as it is specifically applied to their life and pilgrimage, through Christ's king-priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek. In the fellowship of His offering, they are granted the capacity for repentance, receive the forgiveness of sins, and experience the atoning work of the blood.

When fellowship in the Spirit is not understood or is refused by a hearer, the alternative is to pursue a soulish and *legalistic* process involving casuism. Casuistic counselling involves the apportioning of blame concerning some breach of relationship. As we considered in Part 3 of *The Steps of Salvation*, this form of counselling involves a person taking hold of the Law of God, by the other law, in order to make a distinction between good behaviours and their outcomes, and evil behaviours and their outcomes. Such a conversation, mediated by a counsellor, is sourced from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is fundamentally self-righteous and only produces death.

Absolution from a leader is sought by a sinner within this interaction. Moreover, forgiveness is presumed on the basis of the sinner's prayer or some other form of religious recitation. However, rather than delivering a person from sin, these fleshly practices only serve to further establish and perpetuate self-righteousness. Consequently, the sinner remains in captivity to sin and death. Rom 7:23.

*Amorality* is another expression of casuism within religious and secular communities. This is demonstrated when individuals become puffed up into factions on behalf of one against another. 1Co 4:6. Empowered by the same presumptions that motivate the media - including freedom of speech - people bite and devour one another through their self-righteous perceptions of others and their circumstances. However, they find no resolution through these discussions. Instead, they only reinforce

divisions within the congregation. Their discontent has a leavening effect in the church when those who are part of the faction become puffed up over and against others. 1 Co 4:6. This includes becoming puffed up against the Lord's messengers.

When a person endeavours to fellowship with others in the flesh, there is no grace available for deliverance from their sin. They are not joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering. The apostle James wrote that they do not have deliverance from sin because they do not ask for deliverance from their own way. Jas 4:2-3. They are not relating in the manner of those who responded to Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost. Those who received salvation on that day found fellowship with the messengers of Christ, asking, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Act 2:37. Evidently, they recognised that their own way and their own perspective could not save them.

### **The nature of deceit and idolatry**

The fundamental reason for pursuing deliverance through fleshly counselling is that motive governs mind. A person's motives are sourced in their heart and seek to govern their mind, or the way that they think about themselves, about others, and about the circumstances of their life. Consequently, the good that they wish to do, they do not do. Instead, they practise the very evil that they did not want to do. Rom 7:19. This is because the heart of natural man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Jer 17:9. It is affected by a principle of evil within it, called 'the other law'. Rom 7:21,23. For this reason, a person is unable to know the true condition of their own heart. Jer 17:9. Their own perspective is fleshly, and unavoidably affected by the other law.

The natural and the spiritual are incompatible with each other. As we have already considered, fellowship is a spiritual activity. Natural man is unable to understand or to participate in fellowship unless he is born from above and becomes spiritual. Joh 3:6. Unless a person receives illumination and conviction by the Holy Spirit, they will neither recognise nor accept the limits of their fleshly perspective. They will trust in the sight of their own eyes. Their repentance can only be a worldly sorrow leading to death. 2Co 7:10.

A person in this condition will cleave to a messenger with deceit or flattery, in the deceived pursuit of absolution from their sin. Their deception is that they believe in the integrity of their own heart and in the truth of the self-righteous image that they have created for

themselves. This is an idol in their heart. If a messenger of Christ receives them and blesses their idol through casuistic counsel, they come under the same judgement as the one who has sinned by setting up an idol in their heart. Eze 14:4-11.

### Love covers a multitude of sins

Drawing from the book of Proverbs, the apostle Peter wrote, 'And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "*love will cover a multitude of sins*".' 1Pe 4:8. Pro 10:12. In this passage of Scripture, Peter was not saying that a person's charitable deeds offset or compensate for their sin. Neither did he mean that Christian love demands the maintenance of confidentiality when a person confesses their sin. Peter was referring to the implications of walking in the light.

Love defines who God is and how He lives. It is expressed in the fellowship of offering. In the fellowship of Christ's offering, His blood sprinkles our heart and is given to be our life. Heb 9:14. Gal 2:20. The Scriptures teach us that this is the principle of atonement. Lev 17:11. The Hebrew word for 'atonement' can also be translated 'to cover'. As we walk in the light, we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering, where His blood sprinkles our heart and cleanses us from sin. This is how love covers, or atones for, a multitude of sins. 1Pe 4:8. We see that *sin is not hidden by love*. Rather, the adequacy to deal with sin and with the effect that our sin has had on others is found in the fellowship of offering. This is fundamental to living in first love. Rev 2:4,7.

Access to this fellowship requires confession, repentance and faith. Act 2:38. Jas 5:16. A person's confession and repentance must be commensurate with their sin; otherwise, their sin remains hidden in the dark. In this regard, we note that a man who has sinned against the church as a leader must confess his sin to the church. This is particularly the case if he has been a minister of Satan. 2Co 11:14-15.

### Christ's administration is spiritual

Jesus stated that His kingdom is not of this world. Joh 18:36. That is, He does not minister or function as one who belongs to the structures of administration that are governed by men. Consequently, every time that He spoke to the Jews, it precipitated a clash. The reason for this conflict was that He spoke from the basis of the spiritual, while they received what He was saying according to their natural and the carnal condition. Paul noted this conflict, writing, 'For the flesh sets its desire against the

Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another'. Gal 5:17.

Christ's authority is spiritual, and His servants function in His administration by the Spirit. In contrast to those who live by the principle of the flesh, they do not engage in conflict as a means for advantage or conquering. They minister in weakness so that they are motivated by the power of God, and so that the power of God is effective for the salvation of their hearers. Fellowship is facilitated by those who have the Holy Spirit. 1Co 12:13-14. Php 1:27. Eph 4:13-14. Their weapons are not carnal, but mighty through the Holy Spirit. 2Co 10:4-6.

In this regard, we note that Paul did not exercise his apostolic authority in the Corinthian church by overpowering those who spoke evil of him. Rather, he was humiliated among them, and in this weakness spoke to them in Christ. He did this so that they might receive salvation by joining the same fellowship of offering and suffering that he was demonstrating. 2Co 12:19-21. 2Co 13:4-5.

### **The sentence of death in ourselves**

Concerning their ministry in Asia, the apostle Paul testified that he and his fellow presbyters were excessively burdened beyond their strength, so that they even despaired of life. 2Co 1:8. He described their condition as having the sentence of death within them so that they should not trust in themselves, but in God who raises the dead. 2Co 1:9.

The implication of Paul's testimony is that, without the sentence of death in them, they would have trusted in their own capacity to fulfil God's will and to obtain eternal life. Christ was the only Man who fulfilled the will of the Father. He did this by offering Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Php 2:8. Through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, God raised the Son of Man from the death of our sin, which He died in Gethsemane. This blood was shed as a consequence of the six wounding events that Christ endured as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary. Heb 13:20.

To 'trust in God who raises the dead' is to join the process through which those who are dead to God because of sin are raised by Him. This process is the fellowship of Christ's offering and circumcision. To trust in ourselves is to believe that we can fulfil God's will and have life through our own religious endeavours. With this mindset, we remain captive to sin and death, even though we may be engaged in many good works.

These are not the good works that God the Father prepared for us; rather, they are the works associated with a projection. We know that it is possible to minister while remaining captive to sin and death, because Jesus said, 'Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practise *lawlessness!*" ' Mat 7:22-23.

Through Paul's letters to the Galatians and the Romans, we can identify two primary reasons for this sentence of death in ourselves. The first reason is that we have another law within us. A Christian who lives by this other law will be motivated to take hold of the Law of God in pursuit of their own righteousness. This is because the Law, or the word of God, is meant to give life. Rom 7:10. These people misappropriate the word because they covet life and fear death. Rom 7:7. However, because they covet, they transgress the Law, which says, 'You shall not covet'. Exo 20:17. Having broken one law, they become guilty of the whole law and come under its condemnation, which is death. Jas 2:10.

The second reason why we have the sentence of death in ourselves is because the Holy Spirit sets His desire against the flesh so that we are not able to do the things that we wish to do. Gal 5:17. It is the Holy Spirit who is resisting us as we pursue the desires of the flesh. He frustrates our endeavours so that we suffer loss. He does this so that we will forsake our own way and walk in sanctification, by the Spirit.

When we experience the sentence of death in our lives, it is an opportunity to turn to the Lord and to receive our sufferings as a fellowship in His offering and sufferings. We acknowledge that the circumstances of our life are being priested to us as a participation in His one offering that was 'once for all'. As we journey with Him and in Him, we are being delivered from our fallen, fleshly ways and enabled to live by love as a son of God.

This is what it means to walk according to the Spirit, and is the reason why we must set our minds on the Spirit. The mind set on the Spirit is life and peace. Rom 8:6. Life and peace are only obtained through fellowship in the offering of Christ. Paul was making this point when he explained, 'Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.' Heb 12:11.

## The delusion of desire

Paul wrote to the Galatians, as well as to the Corinthians, to help them to see through the fog of delusion that comes upon a person when they turn away from walking according to the Spirit. 2Co 11:3. Gal 3:1. In this regard, we recall that Eve's mind was clouded with darkness, by delusion, when she gave heed to Satan's lie. Satan proposed that self-righteous living is a viable alternative to the true service of offering, through which a person receives the benefit of life and sanctification, resulting in eternal life. Rom 6:22.

Eve's *first delusion* was that the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was good for food. That is, she believed the lie that this fruit would give her life. Her *second delusion* was that the fruit was a delight to the eyes. From Eve's perspective, this meant that it would enable her to fulfil the desire of her flesh, which was for self-righteousness. Her *third delusion* was that the fruit was desirable to make her wise.

When Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, these delusions became what the apostle John described as the desires, or lusts, of the flesh. He wrote, 'For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world'. 1Jn 2:16. Paul summarised these desires of the flesh as being another law at work within a person. Rom 7:21,23.

## Flesh and Spirit are in opposition

Paul's statement to the Corinthians, 'We had the sentence of death in ourselves, *that we should not trust in ourselves*', was the same point that he was making to the Galatians when he wrote, '[Flesh and Spirit] are in opposition to one another, *so that you may not do the things that you please*'. Gal 5:17. Clearly, we are unable to trust in ourselves if we are unable to accomplish the things that we set out to do.

Establishing this point further, Paul said, 'Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire[s] of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire[s] against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.' Gal 5:16-17. The desire of the flesh is to have life through self-righteousness. However, the Spirit within us is at war with our flesh. The Holy Spirit resists and frustrates our attempts to have life through self-righteousness.

As we noted earlier, the other law was fathered in us by Satan's lie that it is possible to have life apart from fellowship in one Spirit with the Lord and His people. When Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil, the other law became the life-principle of the flesh. A Christian who lives by this principle is self-righteous. They believe that their capacity for life and ministry is what they draw from the Law, or word, of God. This becomes the basis for how they live their life and even how they make offering in the church. When they do this, they are revealing *themselves*.

Evidently, they are deceived. The word is not a resource for revealing ourselves. Rather, the word enables a son of God to present themselves, by faith, in the fellowship of Yahweh and the body of Christ. 1Jn 1:1-3. This fellowship is one life and one Spirit. By the capacity of one Spirit, a person lays down their life to reveal another through obedience. Their name is revealed by others as the will of God is proven through offering. This is what it means to be 'in the Spirit'. The Holy Spirit guards this fellowship and resists the flesh.

When Christ died on the cross, the Law and its associated ordinances were taken out of the way as the reference point for obtaining righteousness. Col 2:14. However, the Law *was not destroyed* through this action. Rather, it was nailed with Christ to the cross. Col 2:14. The Law was now established in, and was operative through, the cross.

The other law within us motivates us to take hold of the Law apart from the cross. We do this for the purpose of using it to make a name for ourselves. In this way, the flesh lusts against the Spirit, whose desire is to be the expression of our name and identity in the fellowship of Christ. Gal 5:17.

The Holy Spirit sets Himself against our fleshly motivations because He wants to deliver us from our captivity to the law of sin and death. The Spirit takes the Law, which was nailed in Christ to the cross, and with it lusts in us against our flesh. This causes us distress. Our distress, as a suffering, is a *judgement* that we experience. The purpose of this judgement is to turn us again to Christ and to the fellowship of His offering. This suffering of judgement, caused by the Holy Spirit, is not accruing any reward for us. It is not working for us the reward of an eternal weight of glory. Rather, Paul likened these sufferings to a fire that burns upon the works of the flesh. Although we may suffer loss, we will be saved through the fire of this judgement. 1Co 3:12-15.

When we turn in repentance to the Lord, *He turns our judgement to a chastening*. Our sufferings are now a fellowship in Christ's sufferings. In this fellowship, our other law is removed from us by the circumcision of

Christ. We acknowledge that we have died with Christ and our life is hidden with Him in God. Col 3:3. By the love of God poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit, our motivation is to reveal Christ and the members of His body. We are no longer motivated to reveal ourselves. As we reveal Christ and the members of His body, by the capacity of Eternal Spirit, the Holy Spirit reveals us. That is, He expresses our identity, life and name. When our identity, life and name are expressed by the Holy Spirit in Christ, we establish and fulfil the Law, rather than transgress it through self-centredness. Rom 3:31. In fact, the Holy Spirit writes the Law on our heart. This is the New Covenant. Heb 10:15-16.

We can see that the frustrations and the personal failures that we experience in the pursuit of our own way are opportunities for us to learn that we cannot trust in ourselves. Instead, we can trust in God who raises the dead. That is, we can accept our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering. In this fellowship, we are being saved by His life. Rom 5:10.

Even when we are faithless, and persist in our self-righteous endeavours, God remains faithful by bringing us to the end of ourselves. God demonstrates His faithfulness when He frustrates the desires of our flesh through the Holy Spirit. He does this in mercy so that when the day of judgement comes, we will not be condemned with the world. 2Ti 2:13. 1Co 11:30-32. This is an expression of God's love for us, which the Scriptures describe as a vehement, or jealous, flame that waters cannot quench. Son 8:6-7.

Paul explained that if we are led by the Spirit, we are not under Law; nor are we under the condemnation of death that results from our failure to fulfil the Law. Gal 5:18. A person who is led by the Spirit has been born of the Spirit. They have received their name and sanctification, and are fulfilling a will that is not their own, in Christ.

## **Severed from Christ**

Earlier in his letter to the Galatians, Paul addressed a false teaching that had gained traction in the church and was drawing believers away from walking by faith, in the Spirit. A number of Christians in Galatia had been deluded by the lie that, in order to obtain the righteousness of God, they needed to fulfil the Law by being physically circumcised. Paul strongly confronted this corrupt message, proclaiming, 'If you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.' Gal 5:2.

By choosing to pursue righteousness through the works of the Law - in this instance, receiving circumcision in the flesh - the Galatian Christians would no longer receive the benefits of being *slaves of God*. As he explained to the Romans, 'But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, *you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.*' Rom 6:22.

Paul was making a key point. A slave must be obedient to his master. The works that the master of the house requires the slave to do are, therefore, the master's accountability. This is because the slave is simply revealing his master. Having been freed from slavery to sin, we become slaves of God in Christ. The benefit that we derive is that, through His word, the Father defines for us His righteous works. We are able to fulfil the Father's will by participating in the fellowship of Christ's offering. This should be a great relief for us. Because we are not fulfilling our own will, we are no longer under the condemnation of death. As Paul so helpfully explained, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.' Rom 8:1.

Significantly, the works that we do as a slave of obedience in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings are the works that the Father prepared for us to do as His son. They are consistent with our new-born name and identity. In this way, fulfilling the works of obedience as a slave is resulting in our sanctification as a son of God, and we are progressively inheriting eternal life. Rom 6:22.

Paul reinforced the dilemma for a person who seeks to obtain the righteousness of God through their own efforts, writing, 'And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law'. Gal 5:3. That is, having determined that self-righteousness is a valid way of life, a person is then under obligation to keep the whole Law.

Importantly, Paul explained that a person who receives circumcision in order to achieve the righteousness of God by keeping the Law is *severed from Christ*, and has fallen from grace. Gal 5:4. To be severed from Christ is to be disconnected from the fellowship of His offering, and from the benefits that are available in Him through offering transfer. When a person has fallen from grace, *exanastasis* - the resurrection power that Christ received in His mortal body as He came back from the death of our sin - is no longer available to them.

In contrast to those who are severed from Christ, Paul wrote, 'For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness'. Gal 5:5. This means that to be severed from Christ is to be cut off from the Spirit, through whom the righteousness of God is revealed in us. Instead of becoming the righteousness of God in Christ, they re-establish self-righteousness as the preoccupation of their life.

Paul said that 'in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working by love'. Gal 5:6. By this, Paul meant that faith, working by the love of God, is the principle of the new creation. This is the life of a person who has been born of the Spirit. Significantly, Paul noted that those who are born of the Spirit are persecuted by those who are born of the flesh. Gal 4:29. This persecution is a feature of their fellowship in the sufferings of Christ, which they experience as they receive and abide in God's word. Mat 13:21. Through these sufferings, they are perfected in love. 1Jn 2:5.

### **Hindered from obeying the truth**

Noting that the Galatians had begun in the Spirit, and had been 'running well' on the pathway of salvation that Christ had pioneered for them, Paul asked, 'Who hindered you from obeying the truth?' Gal 5:7. When the Galatians were obeying the truth, they were slaves of obedience. Rom 6:16. As we considered in Part 5 of *The Steps of Salvation*, slaves of obedience are slaves to the doctrine of baptism.

Of course, the motivation to pursue self-righteousness as slaves of sin does not come from Christ! Gal 5:8. This motivation comes from Satan. In the same way that Eve had been deceived and deluded by Satan's lie, the Galatian Christians had begun to believe a lie, and had fallen under the same delusion as Eve. They believed that they could have life through self-righteousness. Paul said that they had been 'bewitched'! Gal 3:1.

Nevertheless, Paul declared to the Galatians that he was confident in the Lord that, having received his message, they would adopt no view other than that which he had ministered to them, by the Spirit, as a messenger of Christ. He also warned that those who, through their own self-righteousness, endeavoured to persuade believers to live according to the principles of the flesh would be judged by God. Gal 5:10. We note, in this regard, that anyone who promotes this kind of leaven in the church, and in so doing fosters a faction or division among the Lord's people, will come under judgement.

Concerning these ministers of condemnation, Paul wrote, 'I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves'. Gal 5:12. Of course, these people were already circumcised in the flesh. Paul was indicating that he wished that these agitators would cut themselves off, or be circumcised, from the community of the body of Christ.

Paul then reminded the Galatians that they, as sons of God, had been called to freedom. Gal 5:13. This was the same freedom that Christ spoke of when He said that freedom is deliverance from sin, which has control over our life. Joh 8:34-35. This freedom, however, must not become an opportunity for the flesh. That is, it is not an opportunity for self-righteous projection. Such a mindset only serves to bring a person back into bondage to fear and death. Heb 2:15.

The whole *Law is fulfilled* in one word, 'You shall *love* your neighbour as yourself'. Gal 5:14. This is the same point that Paul was making in his letter to the Romans when he wrote that 'the righteous requirement of the Law might be *fulfilled in us*, who do not walk according to the flesh but *according to the Spirit*'. Rom 8:4. The righteous requirement of the Law is love, which can only be fulfilled as the Holy Spirit pours the love of God into our heart, and as we then walk according to the Spirit. Rom 5:5. Gal 5:16.

It is notable that Paul specifically referred to loving our neighbour as ourselves. He did this because he was drawing attention to 'biting and devouring one another' as being a significant outcome of living by the flesh in the pursuit of self-righteousness. Gal 5:15. Paul's point is that the fruit of self-righteous assessments is relational discord in the church, and the evidence that a person is in the flesh and not in the Spirit.

As we considered at the beginning of this chapter, Paul highlighted the reality that a person who walks by the Spirit does not carry out the desires of the flesh. This is because the Spirit is in opposition to the flesh so that our self-righteous endeavours are frustrated. Those who are born of the Spirit are being led by the Spirit. This is the reality of their life. They are neither preoccupied by, nor hindered by, self-righteousness. This is because a person who is born of the Spirit is committed to being a slave-priest. As a slave of God, offering is the context of their life. They are receiving the benefits, or fruit, of fellowship in the offering of Christ. These benefits are *exanastasis* in their mortal body, and their sanctification; the end result of which is eternal life. Rom 6:22. *This is the definition of salvation.*

In contrast, Paul noted that the deeds of the flesh are evident: 'immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practise such things *will not inherit the kingdom of God*'. Gal 5:19-21. These deeds are the fruit of living according to the principle of evil within us. Paul noted that even his self-righteous good was evil, acknowledging that '*nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not*'. Rom 7:18.

The failures associated with pursuing a righteousness of our own are an opportunity to accept and confess, in repentance, that we cannot do as we wish. *This is a good outcome*, because we cease from trusting in ourselves and, instead, learn to trust in God who raises the dead. With this perspective, we recognise the importance of partaking of communion. We eat and drink the elements of communion in faith for participation in the offering of Christ. In this fellowship, we obtain life and sanctification in Christ, and are being delivered from the other law, which brings us into bondage to sin and death.

A person who is receiving illumination and conviction regarding their sin should be encouraged, therefore, to eat and drink the elements of communion in faith for participation in Christ's offering. The Holy Spirit pours the love of God into their heart so that they are convicted, or compelled, to judge that their participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ is the only means by which they can be delivered from their sin and self-centredness, and can obtain life. 2Co 5:14.

## **Freed from the law of sin and death**

In the book of Romans, Paul detailed the same process that he described to the Galatians. As we noted earlier, Paul said to the Galatians, '[Flesh and Spirit] are in opposition to one another, *so that you may not do the things that you please*.' Gal 5:17. In his letter to the Romans, Paul described 'the things that you please' as '*the good that I will to do*'. Rom 7:19. He noted that he was unable to do the self-defined good that he willed to do and, instead, practised the very evil that he did not want to do. Consequently, he was a prisoner of the law of sin and death that was in his body. Rom 7:19,23.

When Paul spoke of his 'will', he was referring to the initiative of his own spirit, or identity, to achieve the righteousness that was defined by the

law, or word, of God. In the exercise of his will, Paul set his mind on doing the works of righteousness. Although his will and his mind were set on good, he always failed to achieve what was expected of him according to the Law. Rom 7:14-15.

Paul explained that his problem was 'another law' within his spirit that was warring with the law of his mind. Paul did not mean that the focus of the other law and the focus of his mind were contrary. Rather, he meant that the impact of the other law upon his will, which was part of his mind, was that it motivated him to achieve life through the faculties of his flesh. Thus, he always failed to achieve life, because the mind set on the flesh is death and is hostile to God. Rom 8:6-7. The way of the flesh is inherently and fundamentally contrary to the way that God lives.

The more that Paul desired to have life through the motivation of the other law, and took initiatives to obtain life this way, the more he failed and came under the condemnation of the very law he had set his mind on keeping. Paul acknowledged that this was a wretched state, declaring, 'O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?' Rom 7:24.

Paul was able to be delivered from his wretched condition because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus was intervening in his life. The law of the Spirit of life set him free from the law of sin and death. Rom 8:2. He had been born from above of the Spirit and baptised into Christ. He was a slave of God and of the doctrine of baptism. Rom 6:17-18. In the likeness, or fellowship, of Christ's death, his old self was crucified with Christ so that the body of sin might be done away with, and he would no longer be a slave of sin. Rom 6:5-6. In Christ, by the Spirit, Paul was able to present the members of his body as instruments of righteousness. Rom 6:13.

Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh. He did so in order to condemn sin in the flesh. This was so that the requirement of the Law - to love our neighbour as ourselves, and therefore to cease from biting and devouring one another - might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Rom 8:3-4.

Those who walk according to the flesh are self-righteous. They *will* to do good, and their *minds* are set on achieving good through their own efforts. In contrast, those who walk according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. This does not mean that they think only 'spiritual' thoughts. Their mind is a faculty through which their identity

is expressed. 'Setting our mind on the Spirit' means allowing the Spirit to be the expression of our identity in the fellowship of Christ's offering. This is a significant point.

We note, therefore, that the mind set on the flesh is death, while the mind that is set on the Spirit is life and peace. Rom 8:6. This is because the Holy Spirit is the expression of our name and identity. When our mind is set on the Spirit, we are not anxiously endeavouring to project a name of our own making. Rather, we are one Spirit with the Lord and with our brethren in the body of Christ. We are enabled by the Spirit to lay down our lives in offering to reveal another's name. This is our preoccupation, because the love of God is poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit. Through offering, we are becoming the son whom the Father predestined us to be, and we are fulfilling the works that He prepared for us. In this way, our hope of obtaining eternal sonship is not being disappointed; rather, it is being realised! Rom 5:5. In contrast, a person who sets their mind on the flesh is unable to achieve the righteousness that they are striving for. They are in a wretched and hopeless condition.

Even after a person has been born of the Spirit, it is possible for them to turn again to the flesh. When, like the Galatians, we set our mind on the flesh, the body is dead because of sin on two accounts. As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, the first reason for this is that the Law kills us as we pursue life by attempting to keep the Law. The second reason is that the Spirit Himself is resisting us.

If we persist in setting our mind on the flesh, we will die. We will find that we are hostile toward God, and are unable to subject ourselves to His Law. Of course, this simply highlights the reality that nothing good dwells in us. Rom 7:18. We are unable to please God. Instead of having life, we find ourselves weak or sick, and we may even die before our time. 1Co 11:30.

However, we are not in the flesh if we have been born from above! Rom 8:9. We belong to the Father because the Spirit of Christ dwells within us. When, at times, we are overcome by sin, so that the body is dead because of sin, we do not need to lose heart. This is because, in Christ, through faith, our spirit is still alive because of righteousness. In our wretched state, we cease from trusting in ourselves. We believe, instead, for Christ's righteousness to be revealed in us by the Spirit, as we submit ourselves in fellowship within the body of Christ. We acknowledge and receive the circumcision of Christ that the Father is applying to our life, in the Son. Through this circumcision, the body of

sin is being cut from us, and we are being cut into the covenant of sonship.

Paul further explained that if the Spirit of Him who raised Christ from the dead dwells in us, He will give life to our mortal body. Rom 8:11. Paul was referring here to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables us to live according to the new creation identity, name, works and sanctification that belong to us. In the fellowship of Christ's offering, to which we are joined by the Spirit, we are progressively attaining to resurrection life in our mortal body. Php 3:10-14.

As those who have been born of God and baptised into Christ, we are not under obligation to the flesh. Rom 8:12. In other words, the Law is not our master. However, if we set our minds on the flesh, and deny the necessity for participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering, we will die. And yet, if, by the Spirit, we put to death the deeds of the flesh in the fellowship of Christ's offering, we will be saved by His life. Rom 8:13. Rom 5:10. This is what it means to live and progressively mature as a son of God.

We did not receive a spirit of slavery leading again to fear. Rather, we received a spirit of adoption, by which we are able to cry, 'Abba! Father!' Rom 8:15. Heb 2:15. The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are sons of God, even though we are encompassed with a body that is bound by mortality. Rom 8:16. Moreover, *exanastasis* is operative through our prayer fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as all things that we experience each day work together for our good as sons of God. Rom 8:26-28.

### The free gift

Earlier in his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote, 'For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life'. Rom 5:10. To be saved by Christ's life means that we are setting our minds on the Spirit. As we noted earlier, 'to be spiritually minded is life and peace'. Rom 8:6.

To be saved by Christ's life means that we are being delivered from living according to the desires of the flesh. Paul referred to living according to the desires of the flesh as 'the transgression of Adam'. Rom 5:14. He explained that Adam sinned through disobedience. Rom 5:19. Deluded by Satan's lie, Adam ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and

evil in the pursuit of life through the exercise of his own initiative, rather than finding his life in fellowship with Yahweh. Not only did Adam die as a consequence of his sin, but death also spread to every son and daughter of man. Rom 5:12. Moreover, the whole of humanity was lost to God.

Paul then contrasted the transgression with the free gift of life that is available to us *in Christ*. Rom 5:15. Through this gift, grace abounds to us. If grace is abounding to us, it means that we are connected to the throne of grace in fellowship with Christ as members of His body. We have not fallen from grace in the manner of those who have been severed from Christ's body. Gal 5:4. As we noted earlier, a person is severed from Christ when they believe, as Adam did, that they can have life apart from the fellowship of Christ through their self-defined good works.

Paul contrasted the transgression that resulted from believing Satan's lie, with the free gift of life from God, which results in justification.

Rom 5:16. This justification is our sanctification because we are able to fulfil the will of God in Christ Jesus. For example, Paul wrote, 'For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous'. Rom 5:19.

Significantly, Paul declared, 'The Law came in so that the transgression would increase.' Rom 5:20. However, where transgression because of sin increased, grace abounded all the more. In this way, as sin reigned in death, grace would reign through righteousness to *eternal life* through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom 5:20-21. The eternal life that Paul was referring to here is the same eternal life that he referred to in the following chapter of his letter. Rom 6:22. We receive eternal life because, as slaves of God, we receive our sanctification as sons. What is born of God has eternal life, which is the divine nature. The divine nature within us is able to overcome the world when we follow the leading of the Spirit.

When we fall short of the glory of God, we are aware of our inability to fulfil the righteousness of God according to the works of our flesh. At this point, we are acutely aware of our wretchedness. However, as we present ourselves as slaves to the doctrine of baptism, the Holy Spirit within us bears witness with our spirit that we are sons of God.

Rom 8:16. We are increasingly learning to trust in God, who raises us up from the dead, in Christ. In this fellowship, we are waiting for the hope of righteousness, rather than endeavouring to fulfil what we believe to be God's will.

When we believe this gospel, we present ourselves, by faith, for participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and suffering. Rom 12:1-3. We accept the need to have our heart circumcised in Christ. However, we are equally able to testify to the life and sanctification that we are obtaining in Christ. We recognise the faithfulness of God toward us as He joins us to the process by which we are being saved by the life of God.

### **The restoration of fallen messengers**

It is important to note that the sentence of death that is experienced by Christ's messengers is the means by which the Lord purifies, sanctifies and restores His fallen star messengers. The death that they experience is by sword, flame, captivity and plundering. Dan 11:33-35. Daniel prophesied that the afflictions of those with insight would continue for two thousand, three hundred years. Dan 8:13-14.

Those messengers who recognise that Christ joined them in their fallen condition when He became sin and died in the garden of Gethsemane, and then receive their sufferings as a participation in His death, are made alive with Christ in the fellowship of His offering. As they suffer with Christ, it may appear as though their ministry is being frustrated. However, this is not the case. Rather, as Christ's messengers minister from the basis of fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ, Jesus Christ is being clearly portrayed among their hearers as crucified. Gal 3:1. The word of the cross is being ministered to the hearers with power, and is effective toward those who believe. 1Co 1:23-24. Eph 1:19.

We note this reality in the testimony of Paul. 2Co 1:8-11. He experienced all the sufferings described by Daniel. Even though he was frustrated by a thorn in the flesh, regularly beaten, imprisoned, physically unwell, and humiliated, the message of the cross was proclaimed to the whole world.

### **In summary**

If we are preaching or believing that we can achieve sanctified living, or sonship, through circumcision or through any other self-righteous and fleshly activity, we are ministering condemnation; we are not ministers of the Spirit.

The quality of life for those who pursue religion from the basis of self-righteous effort is poor. Paul was very clear on this point, noting that

such a person is unable to achieve anything of the righteousness of God because they are cut off from the grace of God. Gal 5:4.

Those who use the Law are judged by it. And, if they have the Holy Spirit, they find that they are in opposition to Him, and that He is in opposition to them. The Holy Spirit, in mercy, resists them, and frustrates their religious endeavours. His purpose is to turn them to the Lord, so that the veil of their own religious idealism can be removed from their understanding. Why is this so? It is because the self-righteous are unable to remain consistent with what God says. They *cannot* obey Him. Those who are slaves of sin are unable to obtain their sanctification, and are not recipients of eternal life.

When we turn to the Lord, the veil of our own fleshly perspective, which keeps us in bondage to sin and death, can be removed from us, in Christ. In the fellowship of His offering, we can testify with Paul, 'Thanks be to God ... for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.' Rom 7:25. Rom 8:2.



## Chapter 7

# A testimony of restoration

Speaking to the elders of the church in Ephesus, the apostle Paul said, 'I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. *Therefore* take heed to *yourselves* and to *all the flock*, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.' Act 20:27-28.

The whole counsel of God is the word of the New Covenant. This is the word that Christ revealed and proclaimed through His offering journey from the first communion service to Calvary. It is the word of the cross. Paul's point was that the word of the cross addresses the life of every individual person, as well as the culture and fellowship of the whole church. These two points have been the primary focus of this seventh book in *The Steps of Salvation* series.

Paul warned the Ephesian elders that, following his departure, savage wolves would come among them and would devour the flock that Christ had called them to shepherd. Act 20:29. Some of the elders would deviate from the word of truth that Paul had ministered to them. They would draw men and women away to themselves, no doubt believing that they were preserving their followers from some perceived harm. However, the outcome of their actions would be their disconnection from fellowship in

the light of present truth. They would only be able to minister from the darkness of their own perspective. Their gospel would define a form of godliness that was powerless to deliver their hearers from captivity to sin and death. 2Ti 3:5.

This corruption, resulting in darkness, took hold in the church even before Paul had passed away. 2Ti 1:15. Sadly, in the church today, many people remain veiled to the word of the cross. They are unable to truly testify of the deliverance and life that is found in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

Through the apostle John, Jesus wrote to His church, calling them to be restored to the administration that Paul had established through the message of the cross. Rev 1:19. These letters, which document what Christ said to the seven Gentile churches in Asia, are also the final word of the written Scriptures. Rev 22:18-19. They are words of prophecy that belong to every Christian until they are all fulfilled at the end of this present age.

The Holy Spirit is still addressing the churches in our day, taking these prophetic Scriptures and applying them to our lives. Christ is calling believers in every generation to overcome the world, the flesh, and the Devil. In relation to this call, we are urged to read, and to keep, the prophecies contained in the book of Revelation. Rev 1:3. This is because they foretell the issues that will confront the church, which is to continue as a lampstand administration until the time of the end. After this, the prophetic words of the book of Revelation reveal the events that will take place under the reign of Antichrist in the seventh and eighth world kingdoms.

We are exhorted by the Lord to have an ear to hear *what* the Spirit is saying. Rev 2:7. This first requires us to consider *how* we hear and respond to the word of the Lord. Luk 8:18. We can hear and respond to the word of the Lord either 'in the flesh' or 'in the Spirit'. The fruit that we bear as individuals, families, presbyteries and churches reveals how we are hearing.

If we receive the word of God in the flesh, our endeavours to fulfil His word will be accompanied by the deeds of the flesh. These include 'adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like'. Gal 5:19-21. Obviously, the deeds of the flesh are inconsistent with

the culture of first love in the church. More than this, they undermine fellowship in the Spirit. Paul said that those who practise these deeds will not inherit the kingdom of God. Gal 5:21.

Repentance and the obedience of faith are the hallmarks of a person who responds to the word of the Lord, in the Spirit. By the Spirit, they are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Gal 5:24. Php 3:10. In this fellowship, they are being progressively delivered from their fleshly propensities and self-righteous perspectives, and are being enabled to express the love of God and the other fruits of the Spirit through offering. Gal 5:22-23. We see that to take heed to ourselves in response to the word of the cross means to 'set our minds on the Spirit'. Act 20:28. Rom 8:5. The word of the cross is ministered by Christ for the purpose of our salvation, and to restore us to an administration that is suitable for the fullness of times. Eph 1:10.

To illustrate the points that we have endeavoured to make in this book, the next section contains my testimony. In this testimony, I have highlighted the way in which the Lord has addressed me as a presbyter and as an overseer in His church. In particular, I have drawn attention to the matters that the Lord has taken issue with me over, regarding His call on my life and our restoration to His lampstand church administration. This includes attesting to the implications of responding in the flesh, and in the Spirit, to the directions that the Lord has given to us.

As we reflect on our journey as a Christian movement, it is clear that *all* the matters that Christ raised with the seven churches in the book of Revelation have applied, and continue to apply, to us. In relation to many of these issues, we still need sight so that we can continue to turn in repentance from our fallen, fleshly practices, and can walk in the way that Christ is directing us. The Spirit is urging us this way because the end of the age is drawing near. Moreover, Christ is calling another generation to stand up and to carry the burden of overseership in the church.

## **My testimony**

In 1974/75, during a season of unprecedented revival in a local church in Brisbane where I pastored, I had become fatigued. At that time, as a solo pastor, I was caring for between three and four hundred people. The church program involved many meetings, including outreach into country towns outside of Brisbane, and the running of a Bible School. People were being saved and baptised with the Holy Spirit. Accompanying the

preaching of the word were many manifestations of the grace of God through the ministry of spiritual gifts.

This period of revival brought with it a heavy burden of pastoral care, with many people in need of personal counselling. Many of those who were joining the church were young university students. Youth drug addiction was increasingly prevalent in the community and, for this reason, a ministry to those taking drugs was also part of our consideration.

Weary from this work, I sought the Lord and adjusted the pace of my program. Things slowed down, and the momentum of our ministry became more regulated.

After some months, I began to seek the Lord regarding the restoration of some of the momentum of revival that we had previously experienced. I believed that if a preacher had unction in the pulpit, they would have action in the pews. The way to unction was through a committed and disciplined prayer life. I therefore gave myself to more earnest prayer and intercession.

### **A revelation from Christ**

Early one morning in 1975, some weeks after I had begun this new regime, I was in my office, behind my desk, studying the Scriptures and meditating in prayer. The sliding glass door to my office was slightly ajar because it was winter time and the morning was cold.

I looked up from my desk, through the glass door, and toward my front door, which was across from the corner of the house where I sat. I saw a man moving around at my front door, as though seeking entry to my house. Suddenly, He was standing before me, in front of my desk. He was not looking at me, but was looking at the wall at right angles to my desk.

I reflected in myself upon the speed of His entry into my office. I particularly noted the fact that I had not seen the glass door move. There was no way that He could have passed through the gap in the door, unless He had moved the door – and this had not happened.

The Man in front of me was a little less than average height, and of olive complexion. His clothing was non-descript. He wore something like a gown. Having appeared in the room, He then began to speak to me.

The speed of all this had me off-balance. However, I was particularly focused on what was happening in front of me, and what He was saying to me. He said, 'I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place - unless you repent.' Rev 2:4-5. As He spoke the words, 'Remember therefore from where you have fallen', He raised His hand and opened the heavens with His finger. At that moment, in the Spirit, I saw the heights from which we had fallen.

I was aghast and in shock. I knew that the Person who was speaking to me was Christ. I knew the verses from the book of Revelation, chapter two, that He was quoting to me. I understood that He had aligned me, and every minister whom He had appointed to lead His church in our city, with the Ephesian presbytery. He was coming to take His people - those who belonged to His lampstand church - away from us, unless we repented of our self-centred and self-motivated religious programs, and returned to the fellowship of first love.

Having known that, through baptism, a Christian is raised together, and seated together, with Christ in the heavenly places, I was completely staggered that we had fallen from heavenly places to the earth. Eph 2:5-6. The heights of spiritual perspective, and the realities of living together in Christ in the heavenly places, were no longer our possession.

It was clear from Christ's admonition that His thoughts about the way in which we were leading the church were not our thoughts, and that our ways of ministering were not His ways. As the Lord declared through the prophet Isaiah, 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.' Isa 55:9. This is how far we had fallen.

We were a star messenger group - Christ's ministers of light - who were no longer walking with Him. We had fallen from His hand. We were a fallen star.

## **A fleshly response**

To be confronted by Christ with the charge that I had fallen from first love completely undid my personal and ministerial self-righteousness. I had believed that I was serving Christ, and considered the season of entreaty and prayer that I had initiated to be a demonstration of my sincerity and committed service.

I thought to myself, 'We are being likened to Satan.' He was a star who had fallen from heaven. Isa 14:12. I was completely affronted by what Christ was saying to me. I responded to the Lord like a petulant child. I said, 'The world is against me; the religious denominations are against me; and You are telling me that You are against me!'

As I spoke, the Lord turned and looked at me. His eyes amazed me, for his gaze pierced my spirit and exposed all of the innermost machinations of my heart. He exposed the reality that I was functioning by the other law, spoken of by the apostle Paul in Romans chapter seven.

I began to weep uncontrollably. Speaking from my own self-righteous law, I said, 'I can repent for myself, but I can't repent for the leaders of other churches.' I repeated this as Christ looked at me. His eyes became quizzical as He noted my response. Then the vision ended.

I was completely overcome and off-balance because of this event. As I recovered my composure, I began to castigate myself, saying, 'For a lifetime you have prayed and sought to hear from Christ; and now He has come and spoken to you, this is how you respond!'

### **The call to repent is a word of faith**

The heat and emotion of this experience continued with me, lessening from day to day over the next three months. In my prayer each day, I sought to repent for myself, but asserted that I did not know how to repent for the other ministers whom Christ had appointed in our city. Nevertheless, I knew that Christ would not receive us as His star messengers, unless we were restored together in the fellowship of first love.

After three months, I was praying in my office, reiterating that I could repent for myself, but that I did not know how I could repent for others. As I prayed, I was suddenly in the Spirit again, and heard, as it were, someone shaking the branches of a vine to the right of where I sat. A voice then spoke to me from this position, and said, 'If I can call you to repent, can't you believe that I can bring it to pass?'

As I heard this word, I was able to move from my ambivalence. I said to myself, 'Of course I can believe! Of course I can believe!' A strong motivation then began to burn within my spirit to start declaring the word that the Lord had spoken to me.

I began to understand that we cannot repent without receiving illumination. Repentance comes when faith comes, and faith comes as we hear and receive God's word. Rom 10:17. Repentance is given to us as a gift. This is because repentance begins when we believe the word of faith that has been spoken to us. The call to repent is a word of faith. When God asks us to repent, He expects us to believe that He can accomplish repentance in us and in our brethren.

### **An invitation to other leaders**

With this word and motivation, I went to the Charismatic Ministers' Fellowship and began to speak to them on what the Lord had shown me. From this group, a number of ministers embraced the word that I was declaring, and we formed ourselves into a fellowship of lampstand churches.

The Brisbane congregation, which was comprised of a number of smaller congregations, was then reorganised and came together to become one local church, gathering to one communion table. This one congregation was submitted under the leadership of a presbytery, which consisted of the leaders from the smaller congregations. To form a presbytery, these leaders were committing to lay down their own communion initiatives that were variously personality-centred, ministry-centred, and denomination/doctrinally-centred.

### **The emergence of collegiality**

Within this new congregation, I endeavoured to promote a public and house to house structure. This was to be a *two-level* structure, with the elders of the presbytery living in suburbs, coordinating all-age Sunday school teaching and evangelistic programs in local outreaches. The citywide elements of the program included the presbytery fellowship, communion, music and worship, the Young Adults program, and a Bible School program.

However, the leaders who joined the lampstand model effected a *three-level* structure. This was the implication of their locally-focused pastoral initiatives, and the ensuing loyalties of their congregants. The consequence of this leadership orientation was that the outreaches were rendered semi-autonomous groups.

The shepherding of the flock should not have been constrained to the structure of the suburban outreaches. However, many people from these

various congregations were unwilling to relinquish their claim upon those who had formerly been their solo pastors. Their loyalty was to a local pastor and not to the fellowship of the communion and a presbytery. Many of the leaders were either empathetic to, or reinforcers of, this local mindset, as it fortified a sense of mutuality which was mistakenly deemed by them and others to be fellowship.

As a consequence of this orientation, the leaders viewed one another within the presbytery as *colleagues*. They considered themselves to be equal in terms of ministry expression. Furthermore, they were empowered by their position in the presbytery to exercise self-defined initiatives in their local areas. The word that was being laid down in the context of the presbytery was viewed and selectively appropriated by them as a resource for their own ministry activities.

### Deaconing misunderstood

More than 1100 people had come together as part of this fellowship initiative, and this presented a notable burden of care. The workload was divided up into various departments. Different presbyters, according to their skill, then became the leaders of these departments. Each leader became the undisputed head of his department. There was no reference group from the presbytery to facilitate the direction and care of the departments.

Under these collegial conditions, there was little understanding of deaconing. The emphasis was on multiple eldership, and a deacon was viewed as a person who served the program of an elder and his wife.

Individuals were seconded to serve as deacons under the oversight of the elder in charge. There was often rivalry over personnel. Skilled people frequently found themselves overloaded, and caught between obligations to various leaders.

The elder, as he saw fit, discussed within the presbytery elements of his department and the needs that he had. He then received from the presbytery the resources necessary to facilitate his program. The outreaches functioned in a similar way. The leading elder and his wife ran their program. The program of each outreach progressively became autonomous in relation to pastoral care, teaching and Christian education, and evangelism.

The music department and choir became the sole province of one individual for the whole church, and this arrangement continued for many years.

## **Latter Rain influence**

During this time, there was also a strong and prevailing 'Latter Rain' view that the five ministry gifts of Christ took precedence over the authority of elders. Furthermore, some men who had been part of the Charismatic Renewal also styled themselves after this model, and likewise saw themselves as being superior to presbytery.

Two of the senior leaders of the wider fellowship of Latter Rain churches to which I belonged had, for many years, identified themselves as an apostle and a prophet. Although viewing themselves to be above the presbytery, these men also appeared to embrace what I was proclaiming. To this end, I was invited to Melbourne, and presented to the fellowship of churches in Victoria what the Lord had shown me by revelation. I had previously been designated by these leaders as an elder, or pastor, and within the movement I was subject to them.

These men formed a *Latter Rain presbytery*, which was a group of brethren who travelled together to minister in various places. They asked me, along with some other men, to travel with them to Indonesia and then to the USA to preach this word of restoration among a number of churches where they had affiliations. As an outcome of these trips, and through many subsequent Bible seminars in Australia and overseas, the lampstand message has been preached to thousands of ministers.

## **The impact of collegiality**

The collegiality of the presbytery in Brisbane had an unfavourable effect upon the Ephesian Pattern, hindering our return to a true first love expression of relationship together as leaders. It was also detrimental to the lampstand church structure to which the Lord was calling us to return.

Those who adopted a clergy-style profile that characterised the three-level structure placed themselves somewhere between an ascension gift ministry approach and an eldership approach. This undermined the eldership approach that I was encouraging, which was to be rooted in a godly family culture. Symptomatically, family piety was often lacking in the culture of fulltime ministry couples.

The understanding of Christian initiation into the kingdom of God was traditionally evangelical in nature. There was no understanding of the divine nature in a home as part of the covenant that belongs to Christian families. This meant that the nurture and admonition of the Lord was often lacking in the families of leading couples.

Children were left to make a personal decision for Christ in some crisis-oriented, evangelical meeting that called them to make a response. Inevitably, many children did not follow their parents in maintaining the Christian covenantal position. This same culture had a negative impact on many other families among the congregations. A balanced Christian culture that was real in married and family life seemed to evade many. In its place was the projection of religious ideals, cloaked in the vernacular of current popular religious authors, that belonged in the circuit of seminar promoters.

Corruption and moral impropriety and personality disorders claimed a disproportionately high percentage of those who followed the collegial model, causing them to leave the ministry.

The fallout associated with collegiality, including the misunderstanding of how ascension gift ministries are to relate to, and operate within, a presbytery, became instructive. We came to understand that those who claim apostleship should not model themselves and their authority on the profile of the twelve apostles and the apostle Paul. Paul and the twelve apostles had laid the foundation of the Jewish and Gentile church, and had established an apostolic administration within the church. This apostolic administration was modelled for us in the books of Timothy and Titus and is to continue until the second coming of Christ. We will discuss the key elements of this administration later in these notes.

## **A second visitation**

We continued to experience growth, and to spread the word among the Latter Rain churches in Australia. Other leaders from different backgrounds and denominations also joined us, bringing with them congregations and properties.

However, some of these connections brought with them new pressures. These pressures were because of the moral and financial impropriety of some of the leaders within their own congregations. They were able to continue in these corruptions after they had joined with us, because of

the culture of collegiality that was among us. However, when their corruptions were exposed, we took action to address them.

In 2007, during a ministry tour in Asia, some of the health difficulties that I had been experiencing for a number of years became quite acute. Nearing the end of this tour, I was seeking the Lord in private prayer. As I prayed, the anointing of the Holy Spirit was heavy upon me. The Lord then met me again in revelation. He gave me the option to die. However, at the same time, He asked if I would continue to serve another generation. I took up the second direction because the unction of the Spirit was urging me this way.

The Lord addressed me as a steward to whom He had given authority and had appointed over His house. Luk 12:42. He said that He was displeased with how I had functioned among the presbytery. Under my oversight, men had crept in unawares and had devoured the resources that belonged to His little ones.

The Lord was looking at me during this episode. His eyes expressed powerful disapproval. I felt mortified and ashamed before Him.

I acknowledged the financial corruption and immoralities of those who had come among us. They had brought groups of people with them who financed their ministry and were deemed by these people to be their leaders. However, I said to the Lord that when we had become aware of the corruption of these leaders, we responded and dealt with the issues.

Christ said that this was not good enough. I had let the thief in, and the thief had robbed the little ones. Luk 12:39.

I then said to the Lord that I had laid down my own priority into the fellowship of the presbytery and had submitted to the corporate view. Again, He disagreed with my actions, and said that He had not given authority, by name, for direction to these men; He had given authority to me. I was responsible for what came into His house. I understood that this authority also included the mandate to minister the word of present truth as He had revealed it to me. This word had to do with the restoration of the presbytery and the lampstand church. I was therefore expected to confront collegiality when it posed as an alternative to first love relationship in the presbytery. Calling leaders to repentance, and to the need to walk in the light together, was essential to finding true fellowship with the Father and the Son. 1Jn 1:3.

## The chastening of the Lord

Christ then said that my life was under His chastening hand, and that I would be chastened with mourning, lamentation and woe. Eze 2:10.

I took this all very hard. I responded from the basis of the other law within me in the same way that I did when He first met me in 1975. I was afraid of the Lord and did not understand that He had fallen with me when He took on my sin and guilt in the garden of Gethsemane.

He had tailored His death to include my failures. He had died my death with me. He was now including me in the fellowship of His death, which was a death that would redeem me and the ministry that He had called me to. His death was a circumcision that would cut from my life my own self-righteousness and my self-protecting, self-preserving motivations. In this way, He was commuting my judgement to a discipline and a chastening.

Christ had joined me to His travail in Gethsemane and had joined me to His mourning, lamentation and woe. It would become a chastening that would cause me to make straight the pathway of my feet, and to cease from my lameness so that I would not be turned out of the way as an overseer. Heb 12:13.

The Lord acknowledged that I had been ignorant and naïve in relation to the corruption that was among us. This was particularly the case in some of the country churches, as well as in some of the growing number of overseas churches that had aligned themselves with the word of present truth that we were proclaiming. He said that because of my ignorance and naivety He was going to chasten me with a few stripes. This was consistent with Christ's teaching in the Gospel of Luke. Luk 12:48.

On my return from Asia, my health issues became more serious. At the same time, I was held up for public humiliation in our national media. The church was accused of being a cult, and I was vilified as a cult leader. As a consequence of these accusations, the church and I were investigated by numerous government authorities, including the police. Furthermore, for two full years I was the target of legal action in the Supreme Court, under spurious accusations. All these sufferings were my participation in the mourning, lamentation and woe of Christ, and were the 'few stripes' with which the Lord was chastening me.

Although we were being falsely accused in the media and in the courts, we were also exonerated by the relevant authorities. A number of

community leaders provided helpful advice, and even withstood the media, publically, for what had been done to us.

Through this time, the Holy Spirit made it plain to me that I was to hold my peace and to remain quiet under the pressure, interrogation and abuse that I was suffering.

## **Cultivating the divine nature**

After returning from Asia, and in the midst of this season of chastening, I began to address the culture within the presbytery that had made the church vulnerable to thieves.

I asked a number of elders around Australia to stand aside so that room could be made for a deaconing administration to be raised up among us that would be directly connected to the presbytery. Most of the brethren agreed to do this, and an administration based on the teaching of Paul began to take shape in the church.

At the same time, I began to teach on the divine nature being resident within a family as part of the covenant that had been given to Abraham, and which was now available to believers in the church. I understood this to be a foundational pillar for our structure as a lampstand church.

The structure of a lampstand church followed the pattern that Paul had established in the region of Ephesus. It had a public face through the ministry of the presbytery, and its fellowship was also house to house. The Ephesian Pattern was a two-level administration.

After Paul left Ephesus, he committed the apostolic administration to the oversight of the presbytery. The presbytery was to take heed to itself as a governing body, and also to care for the church with its many communion venues within the region of the Ephesian state.

The church could function in fellowship from house to house because the covenant of the divine nature was in the homes. Because the covenant of the divine nature was in Christian homes, parents were able to raise their children in the admonition of the Lord. The divine order of headship was in operation in a home when a husband and a wife, by faith, lived together in divine order. 1Co 11:3. Fatherhood and motherhood became capacities that delivered the grace of life to their children. 1Pe 3:7.

From headship, eldership was to be developed as part of the structure of administration in the church. If a man did not know how to guide his

home and to minister the life of Christ to his children, he would be unable to take care of the church. 1Ti 3:5. The culture of a true godly father was to be a cornerstone of the authority and oversight of the presbytery.

### **Resistance to godly fatherhood and motherhood**

There was some resistance to the teaching of the divine nature in Christian homes. Some leaders rejected the scriptural principle that the children of covenant households are recipients of the blessing of Abraham - which means being born of the Spirit - from conception. 1Co 7:14. By implication, these leaders were resisting the view of Christian homes as contexts of fellowship from which the gospel could be proclaimed in the world. This was particularly the case for leaders who maintained their belief in the historical notion that salvation is in the church and at the disposal of the ministers of the church.

There was also a teaching and culture among us that facilitated the practice of giving absolution for sin in the counselling process or at an altar call. This, too, was based in historical theologies that positioned the clergy as mediators between Christ and His church.

However, the influence of these traditional understandings and practices within the church have been disempowered, as households have accepted and walked in the accountability of cultivating the divine nature. This has also delivered these families from the perceived control that some in the clergy group have had over their families.

### **Concluding comments**

The Lord first came to me with a revelation of His lampstand church and a call to return to first love. Christ was not addressing only me at that time. This was His word to every man whom He had called to shepherd His lampstand churches. Significantly, it was also His word to the heads of every family within His church.

Since that time, it has been apparent to me that unless we are delivered from our own fleshly perspectives and religious practices, we will inevitably misappropriate the things of the Spirit. The actions that we take, believing that we are walking in obedience to the word, will unavoidably be at odds with the initiative of the Spirit. The collegiality that emerged within the presbytery of Brisbane Christian Fellowship after

the leaders had received the word on Ephesian Pattern exemplifies this point.

Although the word was calling for a two-level structure, the outcome of responding to the word of the Ephesian Pattern from the basis of our own history, experience and fleshly perspective, was the emergence of a counterproductive three-level structure. This had a detrimental effect on the lives of a number of people within the church, as the deeds of the flesh, such as immorality, contentions, selfish ambitions, dissensions, etc, flourished among some leaders. The three-level structure, and its collateral damage within the congregation, was the fruit of the flesh, even though the word had come by the Spirit.

Christ first comes to us in judgement, confronting our self-made projections, and calling us to repentance. As we respond in faith, He commutes our judgement to chastisement by joining us to the fellowship of His offering. In particular, He chastens overseers and heads of houses with a few stripes when their disobedience to the word and culture of Christ is the consequence of ignorance. He does this to deliver them from the spiritual lameness that is caused by the other law. By this means, they are able to make their paths straight so that they are not turned out of the way of holiness. Heb 12:13.

Unfortunately, there have been some people among us who have not received the word of the Lord, nor repented from their self-righteous practices. These ones have received many stripes, and some have been cut in pieces and assigned a place with the unbelievers. Luk 12:45-47. They did not make straight paths for their feet. Because they continued in their spiritual lameness, they were turned out of the way. Heb 12:13.

Thankfully, the Lord does not wish for any person to perish in this way. He desires for us all to come to repentance and to obtain our sonship in Christ. 2Pe 3:9. If we are to bear good fruit as sons of God and members of the body of Christ, repentance and faith must be foundational to the way in which we receive God's word. Heb 6:1,7.

When Christ comes to meet us, He is not coming to affirm our self-righteous endeavours, however noble and fruitful they may appear to be. He comes to meet us eye to eye, and to illuminate our heart concerning the inadequacy of our own way. Most often, our first response to the word of Christ that searches our heart and brings illumination is to respond in the flesh and to justify ourselves. However, if we will humble ourselves and receive His priestly initiative and word to us, He grants us

faith to believe what He is saying, and to repent from our own way. Significantly, Christ equips us for our participation in His offering. The fellowship of His offering is the context of first love. This has implications for how we are to meet and to relate with one another in the presbytery and in the church.

The Lord is restoring to His church the message of the cross, which is the gospel of sonship. As we receive His word, and join the fellowship of His body, we are made adequate to minister this word of life to others. It is in our mouths to proclaim, and in our hearts as the cultural reality of our lives, individually, as families, as presbyteries and as Christ's church.