



The gospel of God

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Chapter I

The progressive revelation of the name

Separated to the gospel of God

The apostle Paul introduced his letter to the church in Rome, writing, 'Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to *the gospel of God* which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures'. Rom 1:1-2. Paul's description of his message as 'the gospel of God' is significant. The gospel of God is the word through which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit make Themselves, and Their covenant purpose, known to us. For this reason, Paul also described the gospel of God as 'the *testimony* of God' and 'the *testimony* of our Lord'. 1Co 2:1. 2Ti 1:8. Through Their testimony, the Covenant of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, *before*, is proclaimed to us as an Everlasting Covenant.

This great mystery was revealed to Abram when *El Shaddai* (I AM, Almighty God) declared, 'As for Me, behold, *My Covenant* is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations.' Gen 17:4. By this word, which is the gospel of God, Abram received a new name and was connected to the works that belonged to his sonship. Gen 17:5-6. This is the name and works which were foreknown in the counsel of Their Covenant, even before the Everlasting Covenant was inaugurated. Yahweh *Elohim*, as *El Shaddai*, then made His Covenant an Everlasting Covenant with Abraham, saying, 'And I will establish *My Covenant* between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for

an *Everlasting Covenant*, to be God to you and your descendants after you.' Gen 17:7. Their Covenant was signified in Abraham's flesh by circumcision. Gen 17:10-11. By receiving circumcision, Abraham was connected to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. This was the offering of Yahweh, *before*, through which Their covenant purpose was accomplished.

The Everlasting Covenant is the initiative of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to create and bring to glory a multitude of sons who are born of Their life and participants in Their fellowship. It defines the purpose for our creation and reveals God's predestination for each one of us. The apostle John was illuminated to see the fulfilment of God's own Covenant established as an Everlasting Covenant with us. In the book of Revelation he testified, saying, '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.

With this in mind, we recognise that the gospel of God is not simply a message *about* God. His word is declared so that we can meet Him and know Him, and can, thereby, truly know ourselves and each other. This is a most important point! Unless we know the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we are unable to believe in Them or to put our trust in Them. Psalms 7:1. In other words, we have no faith, for Paul explained that a person of faith believes in God and believes that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek relationship with Him. Hebrews 11:6. To believe in God without knowing Him, is not faith at all. It is loyalty to a creed, or to a theological proposition, or to a religious ideology. This is not the knowledge of the Holy One through which a believer obtains the cultural understanding necessary for their citizenship in the kingdom God. Proverbs 9:10.

The apostle John defined relationship with God as the sum of all reality and the very purpose for which we exist. He wrote, 'And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an *understanding*, that we may *know Him* who is true; and we are *in Him* who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.' 1 John 5:20. Note this wonderful point! The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit want us to know Them and to be established in fellowship with Them, forever.

The invitation to know God, and to abide in Him, comes through the ministry of the gospel of God from the fellowship of an *aggelos* presbytery. Through the proclamation of the word, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit make Themselves known to us and establish us in a fellowship. The apostle John opened his first epistle with this invitation, writing, 'That which was *from the beginning* [the Word of God], which we [as a presbytery fellowship] have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and

our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life – the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness [or testify], and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us – that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and *truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.*’ 1Jn 1:1-3.

What is Your name?

Establishing and maintaining a relationship with a person requires us to know their name. This is true for those who desire relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God knows our name, for He predestined us as sons even before the beginning of creation. Eph 1:5. However, if we are to obtain the eternal reward that belongs to those who diligently seek relationship with God, we need to know His name. The name of the Lord is not merely an identifier. It is much more than this. His name reveals who He is, how He lives, and how we are to relate with Him.

Moses understood this point. When the Lord first made Himself known to Moses, he exemplified the response of faith that belongs to those who desire to know God. We recall that Moses was tending the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, and came to Horeb, which he described as ‘the mountain of God’. The Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. Exo 3:1-2. Moses noted that the bush was burning with fire, but it was not being consumed. In other words, the fire did not need fuel to be sustained. This is because it was the fire of God’s own Presence, which is described in the Scriptures as a vehement flame, enfolding itself. Son 8:6-7. Eze 1:4. Moses ‘turned aside’ from the way that he was going, to see this great sight, which was a manifestation of the tree of life. Exo 3:3.

When the LORD (Yahweh) saw that Moses turned aside to look, God (*Elohim*) called to him from the midst of the burning bush, saying, ‘Moses, Moses’. Exo 3:4. Moses’ use of the different names, ‘Yahweh’ and ‘*Elohim*’, in this account was deliberate and significant. We will consider this further in our next section. The point to note here is that the word that proceeded from the midst of the burning bush was an initiative of God to establish Moses in the works that belonged to his predestination.

The first direction that Moses received from God was to remove his sandals, for the place where he stood was holy ground. Exo 3:5. This was the ground of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit’s offering fellowship. Nothing of the world was to be brought into this spiritual conversation. *Elohim* spoke to Moses through the word of the LORD, expressing His awareness of the plight of the children of Israel and His initiative to deliver them from their captivity in Egypt. The LORD then specifically said to Moses, ‘Come now, therefore, and I

will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.’ Exo 3:10.

Moses could have received his commission and then proceeded to perform the tasks to which God had called him. However, he personally desired to *know God*, who had already introduced Himself as ‘the God of your father – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’. Exo 3:6. Moses did not want to know God as the God of someone else; he wanted to know God as *his* God. For this reason, he asked to know the name of God, saying, ‘Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you,” and they say to me, “*What is His name?*”, what shall I say to them?’ Exo 3:13.

I AM, the LORD God

Elohim responded to Moses’ query, saying, ‘I AM WHO I AM’. Exo 3:14. He further declared, ‘The LORD [Yahweh] God [*Elohim*] of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. *This is My name forever*, and this is My memorial to all generations.’ Exo 3:15. Significantly, God was making Himself known to Moses, and to the children of Israel, as ‘I AM Yahweh *Elohim*’, in order to establish them in the Everlasting Covenant. This was the Covenant that He had made with their fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, when He met them as *El Shaddai* – Almighty God. Gen 17:1. In God’s declaration of His name to Moses, we note three key aspects of His name – ‘I AM’; ‘Yahweh’; and ‘*Elohim*’.

God first revealed Himself to Moses as ‘I AM’. He did this because, as I AM, He is able to meet us, and be met by us, and to join us to His everlasting purpose. Without this initiative of God to make Himself known to us by revelation, it is impossible for man, who is a finite creature, to know, relate with, and receive from Yahweh *Elohim* who is *before* the creation of the heavens and the earth.

As I AM, the LORD God progressively reveals to us ‘today’ what was established and finished in Their offering ‘*before*’. Significantly, Jesus said that when He was lifted up on the cross, we would know that He is I AM. Joh 8:28. This is because the cross is the manifestation, in time, of the finished offering of Yahweh, *before*. Accordingly, in the book of Revelation, Jesus Christ, in whom dwells the fulness of the Godhead, introduced Himself as I AM, saying, ‘ “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord [Yahweh], “*who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty*”.’ Rev 1:8.

Inherent in the name ‘I AM’ is the name ‘*El Shaddai*’, meaning ‘Almighty God’. As we have considered in Chapter 2, the name ‘Almighty God’ reveals Yahweh, the Covenant God, who possesses the power to realise His promises. This is how the patriarchs knew the Lord. Significantly, as they met and

received *El Shaddai*, they obtained the faith that was necessary for their participation in God's unfolding covenant will.

When I AM reveals His name as 'Yahweh', we first behold Him as *one*. Note the explanation of Moses, which was quoted by Jesus - 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one!' Deu 6:4. Mar 12:29. 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.' Joh 17:22-23. The name, 'Yahweh', reveals that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one Spirit and live by one life.

The Hebrew word, '*Elohim*', means 'gods'. That is, it is the plural of the Hebrew word, '*El*', meaning 'god'. This name reveals that God is three Persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It further communicates that each Person is a unique, named identity with intrinsic capacities for the expression of Their one life and one Spirit.

Importantly, the name, 'Yahweh *Elohim*', reveals that God is equally and concomitantly one and three. He is not more one than He is three, nor is He more three than He is one. We first observe Yahweh as one Spirit and one life. By the capacity of one Spirit, each Person lays down Their one life by the capacities that belong to Their unique name, revealing three distinct Persons. As each Person lays Their life down to reveal the other two in *Elohim*, Their offering is so complete that the Godhead is seen as one Lord.

It is important to note that *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 was 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.

Show me Your glory

Having already met 'I AM Yahweh *Elohim*', Moses later said to the LORD, 'Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, *show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight*. And consider that this nation is *Your people*.' Exo 33:13. Moses' request revealed that knowing the name of the Lord is only the beginning of relationship with Him. Moses desired to *participate* in the life and fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim*,

which is made known by I AM. To this end, he made the request, '*Please, show me Your glory*'. Exo 33:18.

The Lord directed Moses to come to Mount Sinai. He was to present himself to Yahweh 'on the top of the mountain'. I AM had earlier made His Everlasting Covenant known to Moses through the revelation of His name, Yahweh *Elohim*. We know that this established Moses in a relationship with the LORD because, prior to the revelation of His *glory*, the LORD was already speaking to Moses 'face to face, as a man speaks to his friend'. Exo 33:11. The top of the mountain represented the beginning of God's covenant initiative towards humanity.

Figuratively, this was the same mountain upon which the devil, in a moment of time, showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, saying to Him, 'All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.' Luk 4:5-7. However, Satan was only able to see, and to put on display, what proceeded from the beginning (that is, from the creation of the heavens and the earth) with respect to God's Everlasting Covenant. He could not see the Covenant of Yahweh *Elohim*, *before*, where the Everlasting Covenant was established and finished.

In response to Satan's claim that he could give the kingdoms of the world to the Son of Man if He worshipped him, Jesus said, 'Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God [Yahweh *Elohim*], and Him only you shall serve." ' Luk 4:8. With this statement, Jesus indicated that the true worship of God is not an activity within, or confined to, the natural created realm. Rather, true worship is a person's participation in the very fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim*, *before*! Reiterating this point, Jesus later explained to the woman at the well, 'God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and truth.' Joh 4:24. Joined to this fellowship, a person is connected to, and equipped with grace for, the works that belong to their sonship.

Yahweh said to Moses that, when he ascended the mountain, he was to stand on the rock beside Him. Exo 33:21. He further said, 'So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.' Exo 33:22-23. By manifesting His glory to Moses, Yahweh *Elohim* was revealing a reality that was *before* the beginning of the Everlasting Covenant, and outside of time and space. It was the glory of Their own covenant fellowship from which the Everlasting Covenant proceeded. Significantly, Moses was observing the fellowship through which his name was foreknown and established in the Son.

Let us now consider the revelation of the glory of Yahweh *Elohim*, *before*, and summarise the progressive revelation and fulfilment of Their Everlasting Covenant.

The establishment of the Everlasting Covenant

Before the creation of the heavens and the earth, there was only Yahweh Father, Yahweh Son, and Yahweh Holy Spirit. There was no 'emptiness' or 'nothingness' outside of Yahweh. Eph 1:23. The dynamic and fully satisfied fellowship of these three Persons, *before*, is referred to by the Lord as 'My Covenant'.

In Their covenant fellowship, *before*, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are completely co-equal. The Father is not the first among equals. He is not the Father of the Son, nor is the Holy Spirit the Helper of the Father and the Son. Each Person of Yahweh has Their own intrinsic capacity to express Their one Spirit and life. The Scriptures describe these distinctive capacities as the *glory* that belongs to each Person, *before*. We note, for example, that when Christ prayed to the Father on the Mount of Olives, He said, 'And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with *the glory which I had with You before the world was.*' Joh 17:5.

'Glory' refers to the expression of life through the capacities and works that belong to one's name. The glory of the Father is His unique expression as the inexhaustible source of names and identities. Jas 1:17. Heb 12:9. The glory of the Son is that He is the expression of all sonship. Moreover, He has the unique capacity to empty Himself to an endpoint, or death. The glory of the Holy Spirit is His expression as the fellowship and Spirit of sanctification in Yahweh.

Within Their own covenant fellowship, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit agreed together to create and bring to glory a multitude of sons of God who are born of Their life and joined to Their own covenant fellowship, declaring, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.' Gen 1:26. Significantly, this statement encapsulates the dialogue of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit concerning the sonship predestination of every person who would ever live. The Scriptures identify *Elohim's* discussion as 'the counsel of the Lord', 'the whole counsel of God', and 'the counsel of His will'. Psa 33:11. Act 20:27. Eph 1:11.

God's Everlasting Covenant was not initiated out of need or some lack in Their fellowship. Rather, it was an expression of love, which is who They are. 1Jn 4:16. Speaking of the love of God proceeding as a covenant from the fellowship of Yahweh, the prophet Jeremiah declared, 'The Lord has appeared of old to me [from *before*], saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an *everlasting love*; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you." ' Jer 31:3.

The offering of Yahweh, before

In order to bring Their Everlasting Covenant purpose to pass, each Person of the Godhead laid down Their life, by name, to reveal the Others. The Holy Spirit laid down His life to become the Helper of the Father and of the Son by empowering and sanctifying Their unique offerings with Eternal Spirit. Moreover, as the Helper, the Holy Spirit revealed the Father and the Son by becoming the life of the Father through which Yahweh Son would be begotten as the Son of God. Highlighting this point, Paul explained that it is ‘the Spirit who gives life’. Eph 3:16. 2Co 3:5-6.

By Eternal Spirit, Yahweh the Son emptied Himself of His prerogative to express all sonship. Drawing our attention to this offering initiative, the apostle Paul noted that Yahweh Son, although equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ‘did not regard *equality* with God a thing to be grasped, but *emptied Himself*’. Php 2:6-7. By this means, the Son made room for the sonship expression of a multitude of new creation sons, whom the Father had named. Furthermore, through this action of emptying, Yahweh the Son entrusted the glory of His own sonship to the Father, to be begotten of the Father, by the Holy Spirit, as the *Son of God*. The outcome of His emptying was that the name of the Son was hidden in the bosom of the Father, with our names. Col 3:3.

The Father, by Eternal Spirit, laid down His life by giving to the Son the fullness of His own expression as Father. Heb 1:1-3. Joh 16:15. When the Father said, ‘Today I have begotten You’, the Holy Spirit, who had laid down His life to reveal the Father as the life of God, brought the Spirit of the Father to the identity of the Son, causing Him to be born anew from the bosom of the Father as the Son of God. Joh 6:63. Through this birthing action, the Son’s identity was born again as a new creation Son of God, and He received a heavenly body.

The portion of the Father’s Spirit, which the Son received through the Holy Spirit, is the seed and name of every son of God who would ever be brought to birth through the gospel. Each name was discussed in the counsel of *Elohim*. By this begetting action, the Son became the Word and Seed of the Father. Joh 1:1,14. All the names of the sons of God, of which the Father is the source, were now in the Son. Furthermore, all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him. The apostle Paul drew attention to this outcome of Their offering, *before*, writing, ‘For it pleased the Father that in Him [the Son] all the fullness should dwell’. Col 1:19.

Through this offering, *before*, the order of Melchizedek was established. Heb 5:5-6. The order of headship was also established as an aspect, or expression, of the Melchizedek order. 1Co 11:3. Accordingly, the Father was established as the source of the word through which Their Covenant would

come to pass; the Son was brought forth as the Word through which the knowledge of God would be revealed; and the Holy Spirit was established as the Helper, enabling offering through Eternal Spirit, and sanctifying the end (the Father's initiative) from the beginning (the Son's initiative), so that Their covenant purpose would come to pass through an ordered and timely process. *Note that the order of Melchizedek is the fruit of Their offering.* It established the means by which Their life could be multiplied beyond Themselves to a great multitude of sons of God.

The covenant will of Yahweh *Elohim* was *finished* in Their fellowship even before the beginning of creation. As we have noted in previous publications, *Elohim* said of Himself, 'I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring [or manifesting] the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done.' Isa 46:9-10. For this reason, Paul explained that the Lord's 'works were finished from [before] the foundation of the world'. Heb 4:3.

The proceeding word

In his final statements to the children of Israel, Moses said, 'The secret things belong to the LORD our God [Yahweh our *Elohim*], but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.' Deu 29:29. This profound declaration brings into focus a distinction between the foreknowledge of God (the secret things that belong to Him), and what progressively belongs to those who receive the word of God's Everlasting Covenant, as I AM makes Himself known to them. However, these words also reveal that the foreknowledge of God is not in conflict with the revelation of Yahweh *Elohim* as I AM, and the dignity and accountability of choice in response to the word that belongs to every person. Our comprehension of God's purpose, and how it comes to pass, requires an understanding of this point.

Within the secret counsel of Yahweh *Elohim*, *before*, the Word articulated the purpose of God into being. The details of the finished work of God, which was established in the counsel of Their will, *before*, is *the foreknowledge of God*. The matters of Their counsel and foreknowledge *belong only to Elohim*. Through this knowledge, *Elohim* creates good and evil. As He declared through the prophet Isaiah, 'I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.' Isa 45:6-7.

The apostle John summarised the progression of the Word from the counsel of Yahweh *Elohim*, stating, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.' Joh 1:1-3.

'The Word was God' reveals the word that belongs to the secret counsel of *Elohim*. 'The Word was with God' reveals the Son who became the Word of God when He was begotten of the Father. Through this action, the Father laid down to the Son all the names of the sons of God. He was 'with God' as the Seed of the Father. This all happened in Their Covenant, before the beginning of creation.

'He was in the beginning with God' reveals that the Son was the One through whom the creation was brought into being according to God's purpose. Furthermore, it reveals that Yahweh *Elohim*, as I AM, was made known as, and through, the Word, as the source and life of creation. We understand, from the writings of Paul, that the Father created all things, through the Son, who is the Seed of the Father and the Word. Heb 1:1-2. Col 1:15-18. Joh 1:1-3.

The first creative initiative proceeding from the finished offering of Yahweh, *before*, was the creation of the heavens and the earth. As Moses declared, 'In the beginning God [*Elohim*] created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.' Gen 1:1-2. Although this was the beginning of creation, it was not the first day of creation. Moses explained that the first day of creation was when God said, 'Let there be light.' Gen 1:3-5. We note that the creative dimension of Yahweh *Elohim* was brought into the midst of the garden of Eden and was represented in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The apostle John further stated, 'In Him [the Word] was life, and the life was the light of men.' Joh 1:4. With this in mind, we recognise that the word of God is the life of God and was represented in the tree of life which was placed in the midst of the garden of God. This life is Their fellowship *made known*. Yahweh *Elohim*, I AM, is Him who is, who was, and who is to come. Rev 1:8. This is the nature of who He is as the Word of God.

The tree of life

Before we further discuss the unfolding revelation of the name of God, it is helpful to consider the establishment of the tree of life. From the writings of John in the book of Revelation, we understand that the term 'tree of life' can equally be translated 'book of life' in which our names, as sons of God, are recorded. Rev 22:19. The papyrus of the book of life, in which are written the names of the sons of God, is taken from the inner rind of the trunk of the tree of life. Each name is the substance of one's sonship. This substance, which is necessary for one's expression as a son of God, is fed to us through the fruit of the tree of life, which Jesus described as 'the hidden manna', or 'bread from heaven'.

This was true in the garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve ate from the tree of life each day, in fellowship with Yahweh *Elohim*. They had been created by

Yahweh *Elohim* from the dust of the earth and had received life from the breath of God. Gen 2:7. A great multitude of sons and daughters of men was to be brought forth from them through procreation. Procreation comes close to creation, for through this biological action, a son or daughter of man, with an eternal identity, is brought into being.

Adam and Eve were not born of God through their creation. Nevertheless, they did not live by bread alone. That is, their natural lives were not sustained only by eating from the fruit of the trees in the garden of Eden. Rather, they lived by every word that proceeded from the mouth of God. Deu 8:3. Luk 4:4. The word that they received each day in fellowship with Yahweh, was the food that was fed to them from the tree of life. In this regard, they were fed with the food that belongs to the sons of God.

On this subject, another point that is worthy of note was raised by John the Baptist. When the Pharisees and Sadducees came to him for baptism, he said to them that they should not consider themselves as belonging to Abraham because they were of his natural lineage. John declared that God, if He so desired, was able to bypass procreation in order to raise up children to Abraham from the stones of the ground, who would then become sons of God. Mat 3:7-12.

This begs the question; what was the origin of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree life? The answer is quite simple; it was the Seed of the Father. Christ, who was brought forth as the Seed of the Father in Their Covenant, *before*, was 'planted' in the void. Through His creative work, He was revealed as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Through the multiplication of His life, He was revealed as the tree of life.

Significantly, prior to His offering, Jesus had said, 'When you lift up the Son of Man [on the cross], then you will know that I AM, and I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.' Joh 8:28. On the cross, He was revealed as Him 'who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty [*El Shaddai*].' Rev 1:8. This is how He could be the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world, 'being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God', and, at the same time, be 'the Lamb slain *from the foundation of the world*'. Act 2:23. Rev 13:8. This revealed the essential understanding that the cross was the manifestation, in time, of the offering of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, *before*, through which Their own covenant life and fellowship was extended to us as an Everlasting Covenant.

When Jesus Christ was lifted up on the cross, He was manifest as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the Tree of Life. In the course of His redemptive journey from Gethsemane to the cross, Jesus was bringing the old creation to an end under the judgement of God, and He was establishing a new heavens and earth. Isa 65:17-18. This was a creative work proceeding

from the fellowship of *Elohim*. In the three hours of great darkness, as He hung on the cross, He authored and finished the works of obedience that belonged to every person's name as a son of God. This was recorded in the book of life. Psa 139:15-16. We also know that, through this offering, Christ gave His body and blood for us to eat and to drink, revealing Him to be the Tree of Life. Mat 26:26-27.

His will made known

In the book of Genesis, Moses carefully distinguished '*Elohim*' as the Creator of the heavens and the earth, from '*Yahweh Elohim*' as the Creator of man. Moses was highlighting the magnificent truth that mankind was created and established in the fellowship of Their Covenant, *before*, when the Father, Son and Holy Spirit agreed together, saying, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.' Gen 1:26. Their covenant initiative was manifest, in time, on the sixth day of creation. It was brought to pass through the order of Melchizedek.

Moses received this revelation when he asked to see the glory of Yahweh *Elohim*. As Yahweh *Elohim* passed by Moses, he witnessed in Their covenant fellowship, *before*, the name and predestination of a great multitude, of which he was a part. Abraham received this same revelation when 'the Word' met him, and said to him, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them. ... So shall your descendants be.' Gen 15:5. Wonderfully, when we are born of God and baptised into Christ, we are not only illuminated to see that we are named in Their fellowship, but this becomes the place where we live as those who are raised and seated with Christ in heavenly places!

Significantly, Yahweh *Elohim* created man into the fellowship of the tree of life, so that man could participate in the work of creation, once He had established it through His word. The particular work that we are speaking about here is *procreation*. The ongoing fellowship of Adam and Eve in procreation was to be through the fellowship of the word. The hidden things of God that belonged to His foreknowledge about persons not yet born, *are new things*, and can only be created when He declares them as I AM. Yahweh made this point clear, declaring, 'I have made you hear new things from this time, even hidden things, and you did not know them. They are created now and not from the beginning; and before this day you have not heard them, lest you should say, "Of course I knew them." ' Isa 48:6-7.

This principle of the hidden things, which belongs to the foreknowledge of God, being brought into existence through the word, was exemplified in Isaiah's prophecy concerning the Persian king, Cyrus. Cyrus' named identity, and the works that he would do, was the creative work of God, which was declared 150 years before Cyrus was brought forth through procreation.

The LORD declared, 'Thus says the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held - to subdue nations before him and loose the armour of kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut: I will go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the LORD, who call you by your name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me.' Isa 45:1-5.

This dimension was given to Adam for the human race as sons of men, as well as for all living creatures, as a fellowship with Yahweh *Elohim* through offering at the tree of life. For this reason, all died in Adam when he fell through disobedience. 1Co 15:22. This included every creature that had breath. Rom 8:20-21. As the LORD said when He repented that He had made man, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.' Gen 6:7.

Adam was cut off from the fellowship of the word at the tree of life. It was the LORD God who 'called to Adam', saying, 'Where are you?' Gen 3:9. God provided a way of recovery to fellowship with Him, through the offering of a lamb. This access remained for the children of Adam, who sought the Lord's face through offering at the gate of the garden of Eden. Notable prophets are listed in the genealogy of the Antediluvians, of those who held to the predestination of sonship - Seth calling himself by the name of the LORD; Abel prophesying; Enoch, Lamech, Noah, and so on.

Faith to believe and participate

Responding to the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, Jesus said that even Moses showed, in the burning bush passage, that the dead are raised, 'when he called the Lord [Yahweh], the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him.' Luk 20:37-38. As we noted earlier, the burning bush was a manifestation of the tree of life, where the Lord revealed Himself to Moses as Yahweh *Elohim*, I AM.

Yahweh *Elohim* is not the God of the dead but of the living, for He was I AM to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, even though they did not know Him by that name. Exo 6:2-3. Rather, they knew Yahweh *Elohim* by the *capacity* of His name as '*El Shaddai*'. That is, they believed in hope, and, through *El Shaddai*, by the revelation of His word, saw coming into existence the things that God had promised, as if they already existed. Rom 4:16-22. Yahweh *Elohim*

remains their God as I AM, for they are still alive in Him. The key point to note is that without the revelation of *El Shaddai*, they were unable to believe in the hope of sonship. That is, they could not join the 'I AM' dimension of what they were now able to foresee, as He revealed Himself to them by His word.

The glory of the Son of Man

As we considered earlier in this chapter, the dynamic and fully satisfied fellowship of Yahweh Father, Yahweh Son, and Yahweh Holy Spirit is Their Covenant. Within Their Covenant, Yahweh *Elohim* declared, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.' Gen 1:26. Importantly, this declaration defined the predestination of sonship for every person who would ever live. Referring to the destiny of every son of God, the psalmist declared, 'Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.' Psa 119:89. Every identity that would ever be conceived was predestined by Yahweh *Elohim* to be born of Their life and joined to the fellowship that defined Their Covenant, *before*. Highlighting this point, Paul explained that we were chosen in Christ 'before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love'. Eph 1:4.

To accomplish Their covenant purpose, each Person of the Godhead made offering, by name, so that They could be revealed to all the sons whom They had foreknown in the counsel of Their will. It was through this offering, *before*, that Yahweh Son was begotten as the Son of God. The Son of God was a new creation in the Godhead. Although the corporate new man had already been established in the Son of God, it could not be *revealed* until it became flesh, and the sons of men were born of God and brought to glory through fellowship in His offering.

Accordingly, the first initiative of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, through the order of Melchizedek, was the creation. As we noted earlier, the Son of God, proceeding according to this order, was the One through whom the physical creation was brought into being. Paul explained that 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. Col 1:16.

This creation is the context in which the Everlasting Covenant purpose of Yahweh *Elohim* is being fulfilled. That which was *before*, in Their Covenant, is progressively brought into time and space as an everlasting covenant, through the creative work of the Son of God. The offering and creative work that Yahweh *Elohim* began before creation, both in heaven and then on earth, was *finished on the cross*. In other words, the cross was not simply manifesting, in time, the offering of Yahweh *Elohim before*. Rather, what began with the declaration, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our

likeness', was complete when Jesus declared from the cross, 'It is finished!' Gen 1:26. Joh 19:30.

The incarnation of the Son

Jesus came in the likeness of men, as the Seed of Abraham and the Son of David, when He was born of the virgin Mary. The angel Gabriel explained this birth to Mary, saying, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.' Luk 1:35.

The Son of God laid aside His heavenly body to take on a mortal body, and was brought to the womb of Mary as the Seed of the Father, by the Holy Spirit. The Seed of God, in conjunction with the egg of Mary was planted in her womb, marking the conception of the Son of Man. Through this process, He was *made like us - having a body, a soul, and a spirit*. Heb 2:17. He received these elements of His humanity from Abraham and David, through their descendant, Mary. The outcome of this birthing action was that a new dimension was added to the Son's identity as Yahweh Son and Son of God. Even though, in identity as Yahweh Son, He is part of one Spirit of Yahweh, He also became a son of man with a physical body and with a soul and human spirit.

It is important to note that He did not lay aside His identity as Yahweh Son, nor its expression as Son of God, when He came in the flesh. We know this because, at certain points in the course of His earthly ministry, He testified that He is I AM. For example, in His discussion with the Jews regarding Abraham's children, He said, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.' Joh 8:58. When He was begotten as the Son of Man, He was *God in the flesh*. This was the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy, 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name *Immanuel* [meaning 'God with us']'. Mat 1:23. Isa 7:14.

Ministering as the Son and Lamb of God

Jesus Christ's baptism in the hands of John the Baptist marked the beginning of His earthly ministry. Significantly, John was, himself, part of the Melchizedek order, revealing the face of the prophet. Acknowledging that his ministry was possible only because of the priestly initiative of the Son of God, John said to Jesus, 'I need to be baptised by You, and are You coming to me?' Mat 3:14. However, Jesus answered him, saying, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to *fulfil all righteousness*.' Mat 3:15. Jesus was indicating that His baptism belonged to a particular expression of the Melchizedek order through which the Father would be revealed during Jesus' earthly ministry.

Jesus was baptised by John in the Jordan River. When He came up from the water, the heavens parted and the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove, alighting upon Him. And a voice came from heaven, saying, 'You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.' Luk 3:21-22. The following day, John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' Joh 1:29. The day after that, John said to two of his disciples, 'Behold the Lamb of God!' Joh 1:36.

For three and a half years, the Son, as the Lamb of God, proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom of God, and ministered grace and healing to the multitudes. As the sick were healed and demons were cast out, the iniquity of the whole world was being progressively laid upon Him. Isaiah prophesied concerning this ministry, writing, 'The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all'. Isa 53:6.

Revealing the glory of the Father was a priestly work of the Son as He proceeded from the fellowship of Yahweh in the order of Melchizedek. Although He was the Son of God in the flesh, His priority was to reveal the Father. The Son did not reveal Himself, even to His disciples. For example, in response to Peter, who identified Him as 'the Christ, the Son of the living God', He said, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.' Mat 16:17. Further emphasising His priestly initiative to reveal the Father, Jesus said to Philip, 'Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? *He who has seen Me has seen the Father.*' Joh 14:9.

The offering of the Son of Man

In his Gospel, the apostle John noted that, as the last Passover approached, 'Jesus knew that His hour had come'. Joh 13:1. What was this 'hour'? Christ's journey from the last Passover until He cried, 'It is finished!', on Mount Calvary, was the offering of the cross. In the course of this offering journey, He proceeded from the upper room to the Mount of Olives, where He prayed to the Father, declaring, 'The hour has come.' Joh 17:1. With this statement, the Lamb of God was acknowledging that the offering journey that He had commenced was the offering of Yahweh, *before*. What was happening, *now*, was the very offering within the covenant fellowship of Yahweh, outside of time.

The acknowledgement of this hour marked a shift in the nature of Christ's journey. As we have just noted, Jesus revealed only the Father during His 3½-year ministry. Now His prayer was, 'I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You *before* the world was.' Joh 17:4-5. Jesus was asking to be glorified, through seven

glorifying steps, with the glory that He had *before*. Significantly, He was asking to be glorified *as the Son of Man*.

Through Christ's offering journey from the last Passover to Calvary, we know that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. 2Co 5:19. However, Jesus, the Son of Man, also offered Himself without spot to God, through Eternal Spirit. Heb 9:14. That is, He priested Himself in a new way. Through His offering journey, He learned to priest Himself as a son of man. This was something more than being the Son of God in the flesh. Moreover, He was progressively glorified as the High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. He learned this priesthood through the things which He suffered and, in doing so, became the author (Greek, *archegos*) of salvation to all who obey Him and follow after Him. Heb 2:10. In this regard, Jesus said to His disciples, 'Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward [as fellow sons of men].' Joh 13:36.

Wonderfully, through this offering journey, He was manifest as 'the last Adam' - the first of the new humanity that was promised to Abraham! Gen 15:5. Contrasting Christ with the first man, Paul wrote, 'And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.' 1Co 15:45. Christ became a life-giving Spirit through His offering journey as the Son of Man. This is because He authored the pathway upon which the sons of men could be born from above, and be brought to glory as sons of God.

This priestly work commenced at the last Passover. After Judas departed from their midst, Jesus said to His disciples, '*Now the Son of Man is glorified*, and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately. Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, "Where I am going, you cannot come," so now I say to you.' Joh 13:31-33. Note that Jesus did not say, 'Now the Son of God is glorified.' This is the key point that we are making. It is through Christ *as the Son of Man* that we are redeemed and saved, and are restored to our predestination as sons of God. Because He offered Himself in this way, we can follow after Him!

He said to His disciples, 'With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.' Luk 22:15-16. With this statement, Jesus was inviting them to partake of this meal in faith for their future participation in the offering journey which He was about to complete for them.

During this meal, Jesus priested His flesh and His blood to His disciples as their participation in a new covenant. Describing this event in his Gospel, Luke wrote, 'And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to

them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you".' Luk 22:19-20. Through His offering as the Son of Man, His body and blood were established as the elements of the *agape* meal, which are made available for *our* daily participation in His offering and sufferings.

Although Jesus said to His disciples that they could not follow Him on His offering journey, He did make provision for the disciples to return to their houses until He had completed His journey back to the Father. At the hour of His betrayal, He said to those who had come to arrest Him, 'I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way.' John noted that this was the fulfilment of Jesus' prayer to the Father, 'Of those whom You gave Me, I have lost none.' Joh 18:8-9.

From the Mount of Olives, Jesus entered the garden of Gethsemane where He began to pray, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless *not My will, but Yours, be done.*' Luk 22:42. The Father made the Son of Man to be sin by making every person, who had been lost to God through Adam's transgression, to be a member of Christ's corporate body. 2Co 5:21. All were given to the Son for judgement or mercy. An angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him with Eternal Spirit from the Holy Spirit. 'And, being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.' Luk 22:43-44. This was the beginning of seven glorifying steps through which the Everlasting Covenant purpose of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was coming to pass through the offering of the *Son of Man*.

Reiterating the point that, although Jesus was Yahweh Son and Son of God in identity, He was being glorified and fulfilling the Everlasting Covenant purpose of Yahweh *Elohim* as the Son of Man, we note His confession before the Sanhedrin. In response to their demand, 'If you are the Christ, tell us', Jesus said, 'If I tell you, you will by no means believe. And if I also ask you, you will by no means answer Me or let Me go. Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God.' Luk 22:67-69. They all then said, 'Are You then the Son of God?', to which He replied, 'You rightly say that I am.' Luk 22:70. This initiated the wounds which He experienced at the hands of sinful men.

On the cross, in the three hours of great darkness from 12pm until 3pm, the Son took the whole of humanity out with Him into the sea of God's forgetfulness. It was here, in the lowest parts of the earth, that He fashioned us all according to the names that were in Him as the Seed of the Father. As He was separated from the Father, going to the lowest parts of the earth *with us*, He cried, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' Mat 27:46.

This was Christ's expression of the grief that was experienced by the Father as the reproaches against the Father were fully laid upon Him.

Prophetically speaking of the Son's grief that was caused by the separation of humanity from the Father, the psalmist declared, 'Reproach [against the Father, which has been laid on Me] has *broken My heart*, and I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.' Psa 69:20. When the heart of Christ was broken by the grief of the Father, His physical heart was also broken; it stopped beating because it had ruptured. The breaking of Christ's heart, by the sorrow of God, was the seventh wounding event that He experienced as He journeyed from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross.

The Father heard the cry of the Son, for, 'The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit'. Psa 34:18. In response to the Son's cry, the Father drew Him out of the waters of His forgetfulness and set Him on the ground of new creation. Psa 18:16. He was the Firstborn from the dead.

The fruit of this labour was the declaration, 'And I will wait on the LORD, who hides His face from the house of Jacob; and I will hope in Him. 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 8:17-18. Hosea also prophesied concerning this implication of Christ's offering in the sea of God's forgetfulness, writing, 'In the place where it was said to them, "You are not My people," there it shall be said to them, "You are sons of the living God".' Hos 1:10.

After Christ's offering was finished, He cried out with a loud voice, 'Father, "Into Your hands I commit My Spirit".' Luk 23:46. The Spirit of the Son was received into the hands of the Father as He was brought to the throne of the Father as the Son of God. After three days and three nights, the Son returned to His immortal, resurrection body and began to build the church.

You will follow after

As we considered earlier, Jesus told Peter that he was unable to follow Him now, but would follow afterward. When Jesus spoke of 'afterward', He was referring to after His resurrection. In the evening of the day that He rose from the dead, Jesus appeared to His disciples in the upper room. He said to them, 'Peace be with you.' Having proclaimed peace to them, He showed them His hands and His side, and the disciples were glad 'when they saw the Lord'. Joh 20:19-20. Evidently, the disciples received illumination as they 'looked upon' and 'handled' the physical body of Christ. He then breathed on His disciples, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' Joh 20:22. By this means, they were born again as sons of God. Jesus then continued this ministry for

forty days, causing over five hundred believers, who had previously been established as worthy houses through the ministry of the seventy-two, to be born again as sons of God. 1Co 15:6-8.

It is important to recognise that, although Christ's followers were able to be born of the Father during Christ's forty-day ministry, they were not able to meet their name and function as the son whom they had been predestined to be, until Christ ascended into heaven and was seated on the throne, where He was *before*. Why is this so? It is because Yahweh Son's intrinsic glory is His expression of all sonship. We are able to meet our name and expression as a son of God only when we behold it by looking, as in a mirror, into the face of the glorified Son of Man. This is the fullness of the stature of Christ into which we are to grow. Eph 4:13. We are then enabled by the Holy Spirit to function as a member of Christ's body, the church, as a son of God. 2Co 3:18.

At the conclusion of His forty-day ministry, the Son ascended from the Mount of Olives into heaven. He did not go to the Father's throne. Rather, He sat down on His own throne at the right hand of the Father, having received, again, the glory that He had *before*. This was His glory as Yahweh Son. He is now seated on the throne as Yahweh Son, Son of God and Son of Man.

Drawing attention to the implications of Christ's ascension to where He was *before*, the apostle Paul quoted a psalm of King David, 'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men'. Eph 4:8. Psa 68:18. Paul explained that this meant, 'He Himself [Christ] gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.' Eph 4:11-12.

Evidently, through His glorification as the Son of Man, the four aspects of the Melchizedek order have now been established as ascension gift graces within the presbyteries of lampstand churches. Those who receive the word that is proclaimed from the fellowship of the presbytery, are joined, by the Holy Spirit, to their fellowship. Notably, this is the fellowship of the Father and the Son, *before*. 1Jn 1:1-3. In this fellowship, they are equipped for their service as a member of the body of Christ.

The ministry of grace through the proclamation of the word is not only to the members of the body of Christ; it is also proclaimed as light to the whole world. Prophesying concerning the glorification of the Son of Man, King David declared, 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool." The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies!' Psa 110:1-2.

The rod spoken of by the Father refers to lampstand churches through which the gospel of God is proclaimed to the world. The Father, through the Son, first sent the rod of His strength from Zion when the Holy Spirit was poured

out upon the 120 believers on the Day of Pentecost. Through the ministry of the gospel of God, their hearers were born of God and were raised with Christ to become citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, as they repented and were baptised into the fellowship of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Act 2:38-39. The gospel of God has continued to be proclaimed by faithful messengers in every generation of the church.

A son of man can be born of God when they receive the ministry of the gospel of God from those who are part of lampstand churches. Importantly, when a person is born again, they are made alive from the death of sin. They are then directed by Christ to join the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, through baptism. We see that, through baptism, a new creation son of God dies with Christ. Conformed to His death and resurrection, they are raised, and are seated with Him in heavenly places. This is the context of Yahweh's offering, *before*, through which the Son of Man was glorified as He authored the pathway of salvation.

Highlighting that it is the new creation that dies with Christ in baptism, Paul said, 'For you died, and your life [*zoe*] is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life [*zoe*] appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.' Col 3:3-4. When a son of God dies with Christ, their *zoe* life from the Father, which belongs to their name as a son of God, is hidden with Christ in God. As they continue to live as a member of Christ's body, they will progressively obtain the sonship that He finished for them through His offering, and they will appear with Him in glory at His second coming. 1Jn 3:2. However, their preoccupation is not with the revelation of their name but, rather, to reveal Christ, as a member of His body.

Through daily fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ, as we are being led by the Spirit, we are being delivered from sin and from the other law that Satan fathered within us. Yet, this is not the primary reason for our fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Rather, as we journey with Christ, we are learning from Him, and are being made adequate for, our priestly service as part of a kingdom of priests to His God and Father. Rev 1:6. We are learning how to worship the Father by doing the works of sonship that belong to our name, and how to minister life one to another. Wonderfully, we are being glorified with Christ as the son whom we were predestined to be, *before*!

Having been raised to sit with Christ in heavenly places, we are being changed from glory to glory as we receive, and walk in, the light that shines from His face as the glorified Son of Man. This light is ministered to us when the word is proclaimed from the presbytery through the ascension gift graces of Christ. Importantly, to be progressively sanctified and glorified as a son of God means that we are changing to be just like Him through regeneration and the cultivation of the divine nature within us. Note the wonderful words of

Paul, who said, 'For both He who sanctifies [the Son of Man] and those who are being sanctified [those connected to His offering and sufferings] *are all of one*, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.' Heb 2:11.

Every believer must be illuminated to this reality. That is, they must be born to see what Abraham saw when the Word caused him to see that his children would be like the stars of heaven – sons of light who dwell in heavenly places. And, then, they must be born of water and of the Spirit to enter the heavenly kingdom that belongs to the fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim*.

It is confronting to realise that the heights of *first love*, from which the *aggelos* presbytery of the church in Ephesus fell, was from the fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim*, *before*. Rev 2:4. In this season, the Spirit is calling us to remember from where we have fallen, to repent, and to do the first works that belong to our sonship in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, as members of His body. Christ promised to restore us to the *agape* meal at the tree of life, which is in the midst of the heavenly places, if we will hear, repent, and respond with faith to His word. Rev 2:7.

Chapter 2

The Scriptures

In his letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul wrote, 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work'. 2Ti 3:16-17. Importantly, the Scriptures are not merely a compilation of sacred texts, communicating historical events and providing sage advice. In fact, the apostle Peter warned 'that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit'. 2Pe 1:20-21.

The source of the Scriptures

The true nature of the Scriptures is revealed by their source, by the process of their composition, and by their communication. With this in view, Paul explained, 'The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed"'. Gal 3:8. In this passage, it is notable that the Scripture was *personified*. The Scripture preached the gospel to Abraham even before a scriptural text had been composed. The first written Scriptures were authored by Moses, 430 years after the gospel was preached to Abraham. Gal 3:16-17.

This raises the questions: What, and who, were the Scripture, in that it preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham? What motivated the Scripture?

As we have just read, it was *the foreknowledge of God*. The foreknowledge of God was established in the counsel of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, *before*. It is the word detailing Their everlasting covenant purpose for mankind – that is, to bring to glory a multitude of sons and daughters of men who are born of God and are participants in the fellowship of Yahweh.

The Word, proceeding from the counsel of Yahweh, through which Their covenant purpose comes to pass, is Jesus Christ. The apostle John introduced his Gospel with this seminal point. He wrote, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' Joh 1:1-4,14.

The offering of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, *before*, established an order, or administration, by which Their covenant purpose would come to pass according to Their word. The Scripture was established by this order and is essential to the fulfilment of God's covenant plan. The writings of the prophets reveal this order and, therefore, the true nature of the Scriptures. For example, in his prophetic book, Daniel recounted an interaction that he had with the angel Gabriel, who had been commanded by the Son of God to make Daniel understand the vision concerning the kingdoms of Medo-Persia and Greece. Daniel testified, 'And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, who called, and said, "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision." ... And he said, "Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end shall be". ' Dan 8:16,19.

As Daniel recorded the word of the Lord made known to him by Gabriel, that which he wrote became the Scriptures. It is noteworthy that, in a later interaction, Gabriel referred to the Scriptures that Daniel had written, as he gave further insight to Daniel concerning God's purpose and plan. In other words, Daniel was illuminated from the Scriptures which he had written earlier. Gabriel said to Daniel, 'Do you know why I have come to you? And now I must return to fight with the prince of *Persia*; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of *Greece* will come. *But I will tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth*. (No-one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince.' Dan 10:20-21.

Through this example, we note the order by which the Scriptures were established. The Scriptures proceeded according to the foreknowledge of God. This is the word that was forever settled in the heavens, *before*, in the counsel of Their will. Psalms 119:89. Eph 1:11. God the Father is the source of this word, and the Son of God is the Messenger of Yahweh's covenant word,

which is the gospel of God. Mal 3:1. Rom 1:2. That is, as the Son of God, He is the Proclaimer, or expression, of Yahweh's covenant word. The word proceeds from the counsel of Yahweh through the order of life, by the capacity of the Holy Spirit. 1Pe 1:12. From His administrative throne, the Son communicated this word through an angel, Gabriel, to the holy prophets. As the prophets wrote down what they were caused, by the Holy Spirit, to hear and see, their writings became the Scriptures. Verifying this principle, the Lord Himself said, 'Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.' Amo 3:7.

Further illustrating the order by which the Scriptures were written, we note the testimony of the apostle John in the book of Revelation. He opened his prophetic book, writing, 'The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God [the Father] gave Him to show His servants - things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.' Rev 1:1-3.

As we observed in the example of Daniel, although the Scriptures were written by the prophets, the prophets themselves sought and obtained understanding from the Scriptures. 1Pe 1:10-12. Daniel also testified, 'I, Daniel, *understood by the books* the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.' Dan 9:2. Consider, also, the example of King David, who wrote, 'All this, *the Lord made me understand in writing* [lit: in, or by, the Scriptures], by His hand upon me, all the works of these plans'. 1Ch 28:19.

Following His resurrection, Jesus proclaimed the gospel of God to Cleopas and his friend, giving understanding to them 'from the Scriptures'. Luk 24:27. Significantly, the capacity to see Christ through the proclamation of the word from the Scriptures required their participation in the fellowship of Christ's body and blood, affirming Peter's point that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation. Luk 24:30-31. 2Pe 1:20. Jesus also noted the importance of fellowship in obtaining understanding from the Scriptures, reproaching the Jews for their unwillingness to come to Him. He said, 'You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.' Joh 5:39-40.

Returning to Christ's proclamation of the gospel of God from the prophetic Scriptures to Cleopas and his friend, we note the record of Luke, 'And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Then they drew near to the village

where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. But they constrained Him, saying, "*Abide with us*, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And He went in to stay with them. Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" ' Luk 24:27-32.

Beginning with Moses

The writings of Moses are the beginning of the scriptural text. A number of Bible commentators have suggested that Moses commenced writing the Pentateuch during his forty years of exile in Midian. They propose that the book of Genesis, in particular, is a compilation of historical accounts and genealogies that had been passed down from generation to generation, which Moses had assembled and rationalised into a narrative text.

While there may be some validity to this suggestion, it is clear that Moses' understanding of the gospel of God, outlined in the book of Genesis, was *enabled by the revelation of Yahweh's name*. Moses received this revelation when the LORD introduced Himself as I AM – Him who is, was, and is coming – at the burning bush, and when Yahweh *Elohim* revealed to him the glory of Their covenant fellowship before the beginning of creation. Exo 3:1-15. Exo 33:12-19. Exo 34:5-8.

In this regard, we note *Elohim's* words to Moses, 'I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name LORD [Yahweh] I was not known to them. I have also established My Covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers.' Exo 6:2-4. Although Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not know God as Yahweh *Elohim*, Moses, by the Spirit, and having received the revelation of the name of the Lord, recognised who the patriarchs encountered. Furthermore, in the light of this revelation, he understood how the everlasting covenant purpose of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was revealed and fulfilled through Their interactions with the patriarchs.

Beginning with the texts penned by Moses, we have the word of the Lord written as the Scriptures. The word 'Scriptures' means 'something written which is given as a genealogy or a statement of the word of God's Covenant'. They are a record of what is true, and a statement of God's unfolding purpose; they cannot be broken. Joh 10:35. Reflecting the unfolding nature of the word, the apostle Peter described Paul's letters as being the Scripture, writing, 'Consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation – as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the *wisdom given to him*, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are

some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also *the rest of the Scriptures*.'

2Pe 3:15-16.

Two elements of the Scriptures

There are two elements to the Scriptures. The first is the creative word of *Elohim*, exemplified in the first chapter of the book of Genesis. This statement describes the establishment of the elemental principles, or *stoicheion*, in creation. It reveals the ambit of the angels, who were created to uphold the natural laws of the creation as the context in which God's covenant purpose for mankind would come to pass. This is part of their work as servants to the heirs of salvation. Heb 1:14.

Satan, and a third of the angels, fell from this designation. Satan rejected God's purpose for his creation. He fell from heaven, having said in his heart, 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'

Isa 14:13-14.

Satan's statement revealed his perception of an hierarchy in God and in the creation. It also exposed the nature of his idolatry. Satan believed that he could define and fulfil his own destiny, by advancing himself over others within this hierarchy. In the book of Ezekiel, we learn that Satan endeavoured to ascend through *trading*. Highlighting this point, the Lord said, 'By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; ... You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trading.' Eze 28:16,18. Trading is the nature of Satan's sorcery through which he strives to attain the idolatrous image which he crafted for himself.

In his presumptuous delusion, Satan does not recognise that the Son of God is Yahweh Son, and is coequal with the Father. Moreover, he does not believe in the incarnation of Yahweh. He addressed Christ only as the Son of God. His disbelief was poignantly revealed by his endeavours to tempt Christ, asking Him, '*If You are the Son of God...*?' Mat 4:6. The implication of Satan's query is that he accepts that God the Father is the source of all things. However, he believes that the Son proceeded from the Father, in the same way that he himself was created and proceeded from the Father.

In this regard, Satan considers himself to be equal with the Son and, therefore, able to ascend above Him, and even above the Father, by manipulating the energies that come from God. We know this because the devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and said to Him, 'All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.' Mat 4:8-9. Testifying of His own nature, Jesus answered Satan, saying,

‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God [Yahweh], and Him only you shall serve”.’ Mat 4:10.

The belief that the existence of the Son of God is dependent upon, and proceeds from, the Father, is foundational to the trinity theologies of traditional denominations. Arguably, the most influential figure in the development of these theologies was Origen, who claimed that the generation of the Son is eternal, and also continuous; the Father is begetting the Son at each instant, just as light is always emitting its radiance. This view of the Godhead and, in particular, of the Son of God, was endorsed by the creeds and confessions of the major churches, marking those who hold to these heresies as being part of the synagogue of Satan. Note, for example, the content of the Athanasian Creed and, later, the Westminster Confession: ‘The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son’.

The second element of the word called ‘the Scriptures’ is the history of the heavens and the earth, revealing the initiative of Yahweh *Elohim*. This aspect of the Scriptures expresses the unfolding covenant purpose of God for man, who was to know Him who is, who was, and who is coming, the Almighty. It reveals that mankind was predestined to be born of God and to be established in fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Although the Scriptures are ministered to us through an administration involving the angels, the work of the word is to bring us above the *stoicheion*. This is because the Scriptures are revealing to us the gospel of God, which was first preached to Abraham, and which caused him to see that his children would be as the stars of heaven! Gen 15:4-5. The word is ministered to us so that we can believe that which Abraham believed, as he received the gospel preached by the Scripture.

The Scriptures bring us to Christ

The source of the written Scriptures is the Word of God. As we noted earlier, the Word of God is the Son of God, for He, the Son, reveals the Father. In the Covenant, *before*, the Father committed everything of Himself – all the names of all the sons who ever would be – to the Son. He did this so that, through offering as the Father’s Seed, a multitude of sons and daughters of men could be born of God, and be established in the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Having created the heavens and the earth, Yahweh *Elohim* formed the biological body of man from the dust of the earth. He then breathed the breath of lives into man’s nostrils, and he became a living soul. Gen 2:7. Through this creative action, the Son laid down to Adam all of the identities who were named as sons of God in Himself. However, the Son did not give

Himself to Adam as the Seed of the Father. This was to be a later step in the unfolding of God's everlasting covenant purpose so that the sons of men could be born as sons of God.

The identities were laid down to Adam through creation, because the breath of Yahweh *Elohim*, breathed by the Son, contained the potential to bring into being the identity of every individual, who would be born as Adam and Eve's descendants through procreation. Procreation is man's participation in the creative process that belongs to God's everlasting covenant purpose.

However, all the identities were lost to God when Adam fell, through disobedience. As Paul summarised, 'Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned – For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.' Rom 5:12-14.

Note that the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is not the Law of God. As Paul observed, Adam, Eve, and their children, sinned and died before the Law was given to Moses. In other words, they did not die under the condemnation of the Law; they died having been disconnected, through disobedience, from the fellowship of Yahweh at the tree of life.

Following the fall of Adam and Eve, the sons and daughters of men became increasingly wicked. The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that the thoughts and intent of his heart were only evil, continually. Gen 6:5-6. The Lord repented that He made man, saying, 'I will destroy man whom I created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.' Gen 6:7. However, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. He was a just man, perfect in his generation, who walked blamelessly with God. Gen 6:9.

For Noah and his family, the ark, which God directed Noah to build, was the way of escape from God's judgement upon all flesh. When Noah had completed the ark in obedience to God's instructions, Yahweh said to him, 'Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation.' Gen 7:1. Note that the Lord did not say, '*Go* into the ark.' Rather, He said, '*Come*', because Yahweh was speaking to Noah *from the ark*. After Noah entered the ark with his family and the animals, Yahweh shut them in the ark. Gen 7:16.

As a type, the ark was Noah's connection to the body of Christ. The floodwaters, through which the sons and daughters of men were destroyed, were the waters of God's judgement, in which Christ was immersed when He was on the cross during the three hours of great darkness. This is when He took the whole of the old creation out with Him in judgement. God ended His

relationship with the sons and daughters of men. His only focus now, was on *the sons of God* – those who would receive His word and be joined to the fellowship of Christ's corporate body.

The apostle Peter taught this great truth in his first epistle. Referring specifically to Noah's deliverance from the floodwaters of God's judgement, he wrote, 'There is also an antitype which now saves us – baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.' 1Pe 3:21-22.

All of the sons and daughters of men who would believe to become sons of God were recovered to God's predestination for them, in Abraham. In Genesis Chapter 15, Moses recounted that Christ, the Word, as the Seed of God, gave Himself to Abraham so that the sons of Abraham could be born of this Seed as sons of men. As we read earlier, He said to Abram, '*I am* your shield, your exceedingly great reward.' Gen 15:1. Through illumination, Abram saw all the names of the sons of God who would come from him, signified as 'the stars of heaven'. God had already said to Abram that he would become a father of many nations. In fact, He said that all of the families of the earth would be blessed in him. Gen 12:2. Gen 17:4-5. Abram believed and received the gospel that was proclaimed to him.

Through Himself, Christ confirmed this as a covenant with Abram. The Covenant was cut through the offering that Abram made with the Son. In obedience to the direction of the Lord, Abram brought the animals that were to be sacrificed, cut them in two, and placed the pieces opposite each other. He diligently drove the vultures from the sacrifice. From heaven, the Lord brought to the offering, the smoking oven and the burning torch, and the word of the Covenant. Through this joint offering, and the word of the Covenant, the Son made it a joint covenant between Himself and Abram.

From this time, the Word, the Son, was coming with Abraham to Moriah, where the multitude of sons were offered back to God. In the course of this journey, *Elohim* the Father, by the Spirit, revealed Himself to Abraham as *El Shaddai* – Almighty God. Gen 17:1. Several commentators, such as Keil and Delitzsch, and the editors of *The Pulpit Commentary*, have asserted that this name means, 'Jehovah, the covenant God, as possessing the *power* to realise His promises, even when the order of nature presented no prospect of their fulfilment, and the powers of nature were insufficient to secure it'. God Almighty said to Abram, 'As for Me, behold, My Covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.' Gen 17:4-5.

During this encounter, Abraham received circumcision as the sign of this covenant. Gen 17:10-11. By this means, the Covenant *was now in his flesh*. The seven elements of the offering of Christ had become his, and he had been born, figuratively, of water and of the Spirit. Significantly, as Abraham carried about in his body the dying and the living of the Lord Jesus Christ, through fellowship in Christ's offering and suffering journey, *the power of El Shaddai was upon him*. 2Co 4:10. 2Co 12:9. He then walked in the attitude of circumcision, *as a prophet*. In this regard, he had, himself, become the embodiment of the Scriptures. We note, for example, that when God came to kill Abimelech for taking Sarah from Abraham, He said to the Philistine king, 'Now therefore, restore the man's wife; *for he is a prophet*, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours.' Gen 20:7.

Having been established in the way of blamelessness, Abraham and Sarah gave birth to Isaac, at the appointed time, through the supernatural intervention of God. Gen 18:14. Abraham and Sarah received resurrection power from God as they walked, blamelessly, in the faith of the circumcision that Abraham had received. Significantly, Paul highlighted the reality that Isaac was born to these two believing parents, 'according to the Spirit'. Gal 4:28-29. God said to Abraham that 'in Isaac your seed shall be called'. Gen 21:12.

After twenty years, Abraham was directed by God to offer his son Isaac on one of the mountains of Moriah. Gen 22:1-2. Through this offering, Abraham gave all the sons and daughters of men who had been given to him, through the Word, back to the Father to become the sons of God. These sons and daughters of men, whom Abraham had been illuminated to see as being like the stars of heaven, included Christ. He had given Himself to become Abraham's Son after the flesh, when, as the Word, He said to Abram, 'I am your exceedingly great reward.' Gen 15:1.

In order to understand how Abraham was offering all of the sons and daughters of men back to God the Father, through this offering, it is necessary to remember that Abraham had already received Christ as his Seed, as recounted in Genesis Chapter 15. The Covenant, which was cut at this time, promising a multitude of sons through Christ, had come in his flesh when he received circumcision. Isaac's birth was the *fruit* of this covenant in his flesh. For this reason, when Abraham took Isaac up the mountain, he was also taking up every person who would receive their calling as a son of God, including Jesus Christ.

We recall that when Abraham had bound Isaac on the altar and stretched out his hand to slay his son, the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven, staying his hand. He released Isaac from the altar and stood him to one side. Abraham was then instantly illuminated to see a ram caught by its

horns in the thicket. This ram was, in reality, Jesus Christ. At this point, the Word, who had given Himself to become the Son of Abraham, was manifest as the Lamb of God. He was giving Himself to be the offering of His heavenly Father, and of His father, Abraham. Abraham took the ram and offered it up instead of his son, Isaac. Symbolically, in this action, Abraham and the Son offered all the sons of men back to God. Through Christ's death and resurrection, they would be born as sons of God.

God then spoke to Abraham a second time from heaven, and confirmed, with an oath, what He had previously said to him; that is, that the blessing of the multiplication of the divine nature of God that comes from the fellowship of Yahweh, through offering, would now also come through Abraham, because Christ was now, not only the Father's Son; He was also Abraham's Son, given to him to offer in fellowship with the Father on Calvary. By this means, the life of God would be multiplied and made available to all nations!

The cross of Christ

After Moses had received the revelation of the name of God and had begun to write the books that are known as 'the Pentateuch', the Scriptures confined all men under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. Gal 3:22. Before faith came, the Scriptures gave us over to the Law, and the Law kept us under guard by its statutes and judgements. Gal 3:23. The Law did this, until Jesus Christ was revealed through birth, death, and then through resurrection from the dead. The Law was a tutor, whose work was to bring us to Christ. Gal 3:24.

Once the Scriptures put us under the Law, the Law came with us, tutoring us all the way to the cross. It joined us, and itself, to Jesus Christ in judgement on the cross, by being nailed into the fellowship of His sufferings. Col 2:14. The reason that the Law did this, was so that we could be justified by believing in Christ, and by joining the fellowship of His offering as members of His body. Gal 3:24. Significantly, *the Law did this in obedience to the Scriptures*.

When Paul spoke of the cross, he was referring to the whole offering journey of Jesus Christ, which commenced in the upper room with the last Passover. Here, Jesus gave His body and blood to His disciples as a fellowship, or participation. Then, in the garden of Gethsemane, the Father made Jesus, who had no other law and who was sinless, to be sin for us. He made Him to be an offering for sin so that we might become sons of God in Christ. 2Co 5:21. That is, for the purpose of judgement and blessing, the Father made every single identity, who had been lost to God through Adam's transgression, to be a member of Christ's corporate body, the Seed. All were given to the Son, for judgement or for mercy.

Significantly, this is when the Father gave to the Son all the identities whom He had received from Abraham on Mount Moriah. We were all named in Christ, the Seed, who then fell into the ground and died, as He commenced the seven wounding events that belonged to His offering and suffering journey.

Christ's crucifixion was the culminating point of His offering journey. It revealed the full implications of the Law bringing us to Christ. This is where we were named in Him, and His body was manifest as the Seed of the Father. In his Gospel, Mark explained that this happened when Jesus was 'numbered with the transgressors', fulfilling the prophetic Scripture of Isaiah, who wrote, 'Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.' Isa 53:12.

Through His offering on the cross, Christ took the Law out of the way. He made it entirely His own, and fulfilled it for each of us. He thus removed the Law from being over and against us in judgement. He did this by dying our death under the judgement of the Law. He experienced the sufferings of death that belonged to each of us, who were made part of His body. Every single identity went under the waters of judgement with Him, which the Scriptures describe as 'the sea of God's forgetfulness'.

In the three hours of great darkness, in the depths of the waters of God's judgement, He suffered and satisfied the eternal judgement of God, which belongs to each of us because of our sin. However, in these lower parts of the earth, He formed each of us according to our name as a son of God. King David was illuminated to this wonderous work, writing, 'My frame [lit: power] was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skilfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book [the book of life] they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.' Psa 139:15-16.

Through this work, in the lowest parts of the earth, each person's days, for eternity, were written in the Scriptures. The Scriptures have two aspects. First, they detail the judgement under which the Law confines a person who rejects the so great salvation that is offered through the word of the cross. The Scriptures equally detail, in the book of life, the name and works that belong to the sonship of every person.

When the Son had fully satisfied the judgement that belongs to each of us, and had finished the works of obedience that belong to us, He cried to the Father, from the depths, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' Mat 27:46. As the Son was drawn out of many

waters by the Father, He brought all the sons of God with Him to the Father. This work of Christ on the cross was *His baptism*. Mar 10:38.

The formation of Zion

Having completed His offering work, and having been established as the Head of the body, the corporate new creation, Jesus committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father and breathed His last breath. Luk 23:46.

Later, a soldier pierced His lifeless body, causing blood, water, and a spirit of grace and supplication to flow from His side. These elements were fundamental to the establishment and nourishment of the heavenly Jerusalem. This city, which the apostle John described as 'the bride' of Christ, was fashioned by the Father from the side of Christ. Foreshadowing this event, the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on the first man, Adam. He took a rib from Adam's side, with which He formed a woman to be Adam's helper. Gen 2:18,21-22. The prophet Zechariah described these elements flowing from Christ's side as 'a fountain for sin and uncleanness'. Zec 13:1. The apostle John observed this fountain as being the river of life that flowed from the throne of God and the Lamb, in the midst of the bride city. Rev 22:1-2.

Jesus' body was taken down from the cross and was laid in a tomb. After three days and three nights, the Spirit of the Son returned to His physical, immortal body. For the next forty days, Jesus formed His bride. First, He established the twelve foundations of the heavenly city. This happened in the evening of the day of His resurrection, when He appeared to His disciples, who had assembled together in a closed room. The apostle John recounted, 'Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained".' Joh 20:21-23. Through new birth, and their commission to proclaim the gospel, the disciples had become the apostles of the Lamb and the foundations of the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem. Rev 21:14.

Having established the foundation of the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem, it is likely that Jesus then built the seventy-two disciples into the walls of the city, for the Scriptures reveal that Jesus made Himself known to many other believers during these forty days. As the apostle Paul noted, 'After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.' 1Co 15:6-8. These people were being made ready to receive, and care for, the many who would be born through the ministry of the gospel by the Spirit.

On the Day of Pentecost, as the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the twelve apostles and the 120 men and women who were with them, the bride city was manifest as coming down out of heaven. Through the ministry of those who had been established as part of this heavenly city, three thousand souls were born again and were raised with Christ to become citizens of this city. This work of bringing sons of God to birth through the gospel of God belongs to the heavenly Jerusalem. It is the reason why Paul described her as 'the mother of us all'. Gal 4:26.

The pathway of salvation

Through His offering on the cross as the Seed and Word of the Father, Christ enabled mercy and grace, which are inherent in the Scriptures, to abound toward us through the faith that He then gave to us as a shield to protect those who receive the word of the gospel, from the judgement of the Law. The faith that He gives as a gift is the faith of God the Father. It is the faith to believe and to receive the proposition that is spoken to us on the cross. This is the same faith that was given to Abraham. In a vision, the word of the Lord came to Abraham, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield [of faith], your exceedingly great reward.' Gen 15:1. Eph 6:16.

Through the Scriptures, Jesus is saying to us, 'You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.' Gal 3:26. We hear this message because we have all been crucified with Christ. The message is ministered to us by grace, through the Scriptures, granting to us the capacity to believe and receive it. Hearing this message, the repentant thief who was crucified with Christ responded by faith, saying, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.' Luk 23:42. Thus, his name was written in the book of life.

When we respond with repentance and faith in the manner of the penitent thief, the cross shifts from being, to us, a place of judgement, to become *a place of mercy*. Through illumination, we recognise that we are dying with Christ under the judgement of God. We acknowledge that He has made our sufferings and death to be His, and that He has already completed the works of our sonship for us. Isa 26:12. We are born again as we receive and believe His word, and are raised with Him from the death of sin. We have been begotten from the dead as a son of God, in Christ. That is, by resurrection life, we come up out of the waters of judgement, with Christ, as a new-creation son of God. 2Co 5:17.

Through baptism into water, we identify ourselves with Christ's baptism. Having been conformed to the likeness of His death in baptism, we are raised in the likeness of His resurrection, to walk in newness of life as a son of God. Rom 6:4-6. We are able to testify, with the apostle Paul, who said, 'For I through the Law died to the Law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the

life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.' Gal 2:19-20.

The Father baptises us into Christ by one Spirit. 1Co 12:13. Because we are no longer part of the body of sin that went out in judgement, we are now a living member of the body of Christ, and He places us in the body where it pleases Him. 1Co 12:18. That is, we are placed in the body according to our name as a son of God, so that we belong to Christ. We are a living member of His body, and we are receiving resurrection life in our mortal body (*exanastasis*).

The Scriptures say that once we are made to be members of Christ's body, we have become Abraham's children, and heirs of the promise of the word that was given to Abraham. Gen 15. Establishing this point, the apostle Paul declared, 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed [as one of the stars of heaven], and heirs according to the promise.' Gal 3:28-29.

This is the promise that was given to Abraham when the Word said to him, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them. ... So shall your descendants be.' Gen 15:5. Gal 3:29. This word signified that Abram would be the beginning of the new race of humanity. They would become the sons of God. These children, Abraham gave to God, with Isaac, on Mount Moriah, to become His sons.

The consummation of this offering is revealed in the book of Revelation. John heard a loud voice from heaven, declaring, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men [all the sons of Abraham], and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. ... He who overcomes [that is, who walks these steps blamelessly] shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.' Rev 21:3,7. This is the fulfilment of the everlasting word of the Scriptures.

Chapter 3

The steps of sanctification in Abraham's life

The fatherhood of a new humanity

The apostle Paul identified Abraham as the father of all who believe. Rom 4:16. His fatherhood is not merely symbolic; he is the actual father of all the sons and daughters of men who become sons of God through new birth. For this reason, to understand the nature of our sonship, and the process of new birth, it is necessary to comprehend how, and why, Abraham became the father of all who believe.

In the counsel of Yahweh, before the creation of the heavens and the earth, Yahweh Son emptied Himself and was begotten as the Son of God by the word of the Father. Heb 1:5. By this means, He became the Father's Seed and the substance of His word. Through the Son, the Father then created all things. Heb 1:1-2. Col 1:15-18. Joh 1:1-3.

Following the creation of the heavens and the earth, Yahweh *Elohim* formed man from the dust of the earth. The Son then breathed the breath of Yahweh into man's nostrils, and he became a living soul, or identity. Gen 2:7. We see that Christ, the Son of God, was the Seed of the Father, and the Creator of Adam. He made man in His image and likeness; that is, in the image and likeness of God. Gen 1:26.

Importantly, the Son breathing into Adam was a *creative action*. As the Seed of the Father, the Son breathed into man, giving him breath, or spirit; but *He did not give Himself to Adam as the Seed of the divine nature*. In this regard, Adam received identity and was named as a son of man through a creative action. However, he did not receive his name as a son of God in this creative action. This means that when Adam fell, the *name* of every son of God was retained in Christ as the Seed of God. We will consider, later in this chapter, that the names of the sons of God were committed to Abraham when Christ gave Himself to be his Seed.

The breath of Yahweh Son, which caused Adam to become a living soul, contained the potential to bring into being the named identity of every individual who would be born as Adam and Eve's descendants through procreation. Procreation is, itself, part of the creative process by which mankind is brought into being. Through the creative initiative of the Son, mankind received self-possessed and accountable identity in the image and likeness of God. Gen 1:26.

Adam's life, self-awareness, and expression as a son of man were resident in the name that he received as the Lord breathed into him the breath of life. We note, therefore, that Adam, and every person who came from him through procreation, possessed a 'natural' name by this procreative action. Concerning the 'name' of a son of man, Solomon explained, 'Whatever one is, he has been *named* already [in Adam], for it is known [who he is]; and he cannot contend with Him who is mightier than he.' Ecc 6:10. To be clear, Solomon was not referring to a person's name as a son of God but, rather, was defining the expression, or 'glory', of a person's identity as a son of man.

Mankind fell from their predestination to become sons of God when Adam disobeyed God and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam did this in an endeavour to become the source of his own life and destiny. Consequently, through this one act of disobedience, all the sons and daughters of men were lost to God. Summarising this point, Paul wrote, 'Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned'. Rom 5:12.

The ensuing degeneration of mankind multiplied their wickedness, causing the earth to be filled with violence. As a result, the Lord was sorry that He made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. Gen 6:6. He said, 'The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.' Gen 6:13. As we noted in the previous chapter, having rejected God, mankind degenerated to such a state that, 'every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually'. Gen 6:5. God repented that He had made man, and destroyed all the sons and daughters of men through the flood.

Only Noah and his family were saved, having found grace in the eyes of the Lord, because he walked blamelessly in his generation. Paul explained that Noah, 'being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.' Heb 11:7. God redeemed Noah in the ark, which symbolised salvation. Noah's deliverance through the flood waters of God's judgement symbolised baptism, 'which now saves us'. 1Pe 3:20-21.

The significance of God's 'repentance' concerning the sons of men must not escape our attention. Having proclaimed the 'end of all flesh', the Lord's initiative was now *only* toward the children of Noah who, in the course of history, would become sons of God. The apostle John established this point at the beginning of his Gospel, explaining that our name as a son of God could only be apprehended in Christ through new birth. He wrote, 'But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God'. Joh 1:12-13. Reiterating this principle, Paul declared, 'For to be carnally minded [to live by the flesh as a son of man] is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ... But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.' Rom 8:6,9.

Yahweh initiated the recovery of all mankind to their predestination as sons of God, when He called Abram to leave his country, his family, and his father's house, to enter a land that He would show him. 1Co 15:22. Gen 12:1. He said, 'I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' Gen 12:2-3. Paul defined the blessing that had been extended to all the families of the earth in Abraham, as 'the promise of the Spirit through faith'. Gal 3:14. Through the Lord's initiative toward him, Abraham replaced Adam as the *beginning of a new humanity*.

Once Christ, the Seed of God, gave Himself to Abraham to become Abraham's Seed, those who proceeded from Abraham and Sarah, by birth, had the right to receive the divine nature and become sons of God. They would not simply be restored to the condition of Adam, as sons of men, prior to the Fall. They would, firstly, be adopted as sons of God in Abraham, and then would be born as sons of God with the divine nature, through Christ! Notably, Abraham's children were first given to him as the 'dust of the earth'. The Lord said to Abram, 'I will make your descendants as the *dust of the earth*; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered.' Gen 13:16. The 'dust of the earth' refers to the sons of men who had been lost in Adam. Gen 3:19. By identifying Abram's descendants in this way, the Lord was explaining that they would begin as

sons of men who, through new birth and baptism into Christ, would become the sons of God.

Melchizedek priested Himself as the Word to Abram. He gave Himself to Abram and became his Seed when, as the Word of the LORD, He came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield [of faith], your exceedingly great reward.' Gen 15:1. With this statement, Christ, the Seed of the Father, was giving Himself to Abram, so that all the sons and daughters of men who would be born again as sons of God would come from him. In this regard, Abram was receiving something more than what Adam had received in his creation.

This was signified to Abram when Christ took him outside of his tent to see the stars as representing this named multitude from all nations, *coming from Abram's fatherhood*. As Moses recorded, 'Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." ' Gen 15:5.

Abram received Christ into his life and was able to believe in the word of God as a hope. The hope was that, from his body, through Christ (who was now Abram's Seed), a multitude of sons of God would be born again as sons of men, to become sons of God.

Speaking of this event, recorded in Genesis Chapter 15, the apostle Paul wrote, 'Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, *who is the father of us all* (as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed - God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "*So shall your descendants be.*" ' Rom 4:16-18.

Abram's capacity to believe this promise was given to him by the Son, who said, 'I am your shield [of faith].' Gen 15:1. Eph 6:16. By this faith, he believed in God who gives life to the dead. That is, he believed for the recovery of a multitude of men and women, whom God would redeem *from the human race*, who had been cut off from Him because they were dead in trespasses and sins. 1Co 15:22. Mat 3:9. They would be given to Abraham as the dust of the earth and then become his sons and daughters. He also believed in God who calls into existence those things that do not exist as if they did. That is, he believed that all of these sons and daughters of men, who were brought back from the dead and made his children as the dust of the earth, would be born of the divine nature as sons of God; these are the ones whom he had seen as the named 'stars of heaven'. He understood that these were all his descendants. Gen 15:5. Rom 4:18.

It is clear that Abram received Christ, the Seed, into his life when he believed this amazing promise, for the Scripture recorded that 'he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness'. Gen 15:6. This was Abram's righteousness and it qualified him to become the father of a new humanity.

This promise was confirmed to Abram as a covenant, which was cut through the offering that Abram made with the Son. Through this joint offering, and the word of the Covenant, the Son made it a joint covenant between Himself and Abram. Significantly, the Son made this covenant with Abram in response to Abram's request for understanding, concerning how the promise of God would come to pass. Gen 15:8.

Abram was, symbolically, connected to the fellowship of Christ's offering. In the course of this offering, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and horror and great darkness fell upon him. Gen 15:12. In this event, he was specifically connected to the three hours of great darkness that came upon the earth between 12pm and 3pm, as Jesus hung on the cross. Importantly, this was when Jesus went to the lowest parts of the earth, suffering the judgement of death that belongs to the whole human race on account of their sin. However, He also authored and finished the works that belonged to their sonship, and brought those who received Him, up out of the waters of judgement to be established as new creation sons of God, in Him. Through this offering of Christ as Abraham's Son after the flesh, we would all have the opportunity to be partakers of His flesh, and members of His body, as sons of Abraham.

This covenant, assuring that Abram would become the father of the new humanity, was established in his flesh when he received circumcision as a sign of the Covenant. The Covenant of sonship was then established, by oath, as an Everlasting Covenant between the Father and Abraham, and His Seed, Christ, on Mount Moriah. What had been lost to God in Adam, because of sin, was regained in Abraham through faith!

The history of Abraham's life can be broken up into seven sanctifying stages, in which he was established as the father of all who would believe to receive the predestination of sonship that was initially promised to Adam. Let us now overview these seven stages, with the understanding that they define the steps of the faith of Abraham in which we are to walk in order to obtain our eternal inheritance as sons of God.

Receiving the faith of Abraham

Writing to the church in Rome, Paul explained that Abraham apprehended the promise of God's Covenant 'through the righteousness of faith'. Rom 4:13. Further clarifying this point, he wrote, 'Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham,

who is the father of us all'. Rom 4:16. The covenant purpose of Yahweh, revealed to Abraham in Genesis Chapter 12, identified the specific elements of sanctification and faith that would be necessary for Abraham to inherit this promise. Each of these elements necessitated a distinct action of obedience through which Abraham was 'made a father of many nations'. Gen 17:4.

The steps of faith of our father Abraham are the same steps we all must tread if we are to have his faith. Rom 4:16. With this in view, we can appreciate that the issues of obedience that Abraham resolved in his journey of faith were *sanctifying steps*, or stages in his life, which will also be applicable to our pilgrimage. We are made heirs of all the promises of God as we demonstrate the same obedience of faith, and find sanctification commensurate with our circumstances in life. Like Abraham, our sanctification will involve separation from the cultures and practices of the world, deliverance from our iniquity and uncleanness, and cleansing from sin. As we journey this way, by the faith that we receive in God's word, we can express the truth of our name as a son of God, which is our sanctification. Joh 17:17. With this in view, we can appreciate the words of Paul, when he declared, 'For this is the will of God, your sanctification.' 1Th 4:3.

However, more than this, Paul explained that our inheritance as a son of God requires us to be *children of Abraham*. That is, Abraham must be our father if we are to be sons of God. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul observed that Abraham is our father and that we are, therefore, heirs according to the promise, *if we abide in Christ*. Gal 3:29. We abide in Christ when the Father baptises us, by one Spirit, into Christ's corporate body. 1Co 12:13. Confirming this point, Jesus said, 'No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.' Joh 6:44.

Paul specifically referred to Abraham's life as a *walk* of faith. Rom 4:16. In this chapter, we will consider the steps of Abraham's life, expressed as faith and obedience to his sanctification, through which he was made an heir of all the promises of God. We will do this with reference to the specific waypoints emphasised by Paul in the book of Romans and the book of Hebrews. Each of these steps of sanctification is associated with an initiative of Yahweh to speak with Abraham, which then established a context of offering between Abraham and the Lord. By offering, God revealed His name and faith to Abraham, as the substance of His Covenant with mankind.

The substance of the New Covenant – the Lord's word to Abram

In the book of Genesis, Moses recorded that the word of the Lord first came to Abram when his father Terah had died, and he was living in Haran. The Lord said to Abram, 'Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation;

I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' Gen 12:1-3. In this first interaction with Abram, Yahweh proclaimed the substance of the new covenant relationship that He was making with mankind. The blessing of sonship that had been lost in Adam, would be recovered in Abram as he received, believed, and obeyed the word of the Lord.

As we consider the content of Yahweh's discussion with Abram, we can identify twelve elements of His word that make up the substance of the New Covenant that God was establishing with man. Faith and obedience on Abraham's part would be necessary for these elements to become substantial in his life. The twelve elements of the word of God's Covenant are:

1. Get out of your country
2. From your family
3. From your father's house
4. To a land
5. I will show you
6. I will make you a great nation
7. I will bless you
8. I will make your name great
9. You shall be a blessing
10. I will bless those who bless you
11. I will curse him who curses you
12. In you, all the families of the earth will be blessed.

These twelve elements reveal the blessing of sonship to which all mankind has been called. Before the foundation of the world, God had predestined every person to be a son of God, and to live in fellowship with Him. Through the Lord's initiative to Abraham, a person can become the son whom the Father named them to be, as they receive the same faith as Abraham. This is the faith to live in covenant relationship with the Lord. In this regard, Paul explained that 'only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham'. Gal 3:7.

To inherit the substance of the New Covenant, in all of its twelve elements, Abraham would need to trust in the integrity of God. That is, he would need to believe that God Himself was faithful to complete the work that He had begun when He called him to leave his father's house. Proclaiming the faithfulness of God, the prophet Ezekiel declared, 'LORD, You are my God; I will exalt You, I will give thanks to Your name; for You have worked wonders, plans formed long ago, *with perfect faithfulness*.' Isa 25:1. In his letter to the Philippian church, Paul described the confidence that we can have in the faithfulness of God, writing, 'He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ'. Php 1:6. Through the obedience of faith, Abraham would come to know that Yahweh is 'the *faithful God* who

keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments'. Deu 7:9.

Moreover, as we reflect upon the pilgrimage of Abraham, we can identify specific steps of sanctification that were required for him to become the father of a multitude of nations. This multitude would, through new birth and baptism into the fellowship of Christ's offering, become the sons of God and heirs of salvation. Paul defined this as the 'mystery of Christ', explaining that 'the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel'. Eph 3:6. In light of this mystery, Paul taught that 'the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."* So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.' Gal 3:8-9.

Reiterating our framework, we can appreciate clear steps of sanctification through which the word of God's Covenant was made substantial in Abraham's life. This word of promise was then ministered to him, in the fellowship of offering, at five altars and two *agape* meals.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called

In obedience to the Lord, Abram departed Haran accompanied by his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all the people and possessions that he had acquired during his time in Haran. He came into the land of Canaan, passing through to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. Gen 12:4-6. In the book of Hebrews, Paul identified Abraham's obedient departure from Haran as the first expression of his faith. He wrote, '*By faith Abraham obeyed* when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.' Heb 11:8. This act of faith obedience marked the beginning of Abram's sanctification to God's covenant purpose for his life.

It is notable that Abram departed Haran with Lot, Sarai, his servants, and all of his possessions. His nephew Lot represented the familiar cultures and traditions that he had inherited as part of his natural family. Sarai represented the fallen marriage culture that would require reformation in order to multiply the divine nature within his household. Even though they believed God, and stepped out in faith to obey Him, Abram and Sarai's relationship defined the limitations of their natural culture and identity, which were inherited from their forebears. The sanctifying journey of faith would need to result in the reformation of their marriage covenant so that they could bear the promised son, according to the Spirit. Abraham's servants symbolised those with whom he connected, and related to, in the world. Finally, his possessions epitomised his connection to the economy of the 'world' as the source of his wealth and influence.

To inherit the substance of the Everlasting Covenant, Abram would need to be sanctified in relation to these elements of his former life. The familiar and fallen cultures in Abraham's life were *leaven* that would need to be purged out, as he journeyed in faith, so that he could obtain the blessing of sonship. Describing this process, Paul said, 'Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. 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 5:7-8.

The first altar of fellowship in the land of promise

It was at Shechem that the Lord appeared to Abram, and spoke to him again, saying, 'To your descendants I will give this land.' Abram's response to this visitation was to build 'an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him'. Gen 12:5-7. This is the *first altar of fellowship* established between Abram and the Lord *in the land of promise*. In the building of this altar, we see the principle of offering established as the expression of Abram's faith in response to the word of the Lord.

It is notable in this encounter that the Lord promised to give the land to Abram's *descendants*. For the land to become *his* possession, he would have to fully obey the word, which the Lord had spoken to him when He first called him to 'get out of his country'. It would be through sanctification and the obedience of faith that Abram would receive the land of promise as his inheritance. Moreover, he would know the peace and rest of God as he found fellowship in the sufferings of Christ. Highlighting this point, Paul wrote, '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 second altar of fellowship

Abram moved from Shechem to the mountain east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. The book of Genesis recorded that, there, Abram built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord. Gen 12:8. This *second altar* marked a significant upgrade in the life of Abram. The first altar symbolised his commitment to *fellowship in the land of promise*. Now, at Bethel, Abram's second altar revealed his commitment to *fellowship with Yahweh*. Notably, Abram established both altars in response to Yahweh's initiative to declare the word of the Covenant to him. With this in view, we recognise that offering is the response of faith that a person makes when the Lord proclaims His word to them.

It is important to appreciate that the Lord *did not respond* to Abram when he first called on His name, at this second altar of fellowship. As we considered earlier, Abram needed to demonstrate the obedience of faith in relation to the

command of the Lord, before the land would be given to him as his possession. This would involve dealing with his familiar culture, as well as addressing the culture of his marriage to Sarai, as he continued on his pilgrimage of faith into Egypt.

Abram and Sarai in Egypt

Severe famine in the land necessitated Abram and Sarai's relocation from Bethel to Egypt, south of the land of Canaan. In the Scripture, 'Egypt' is a symbol of 'the world', revealing that Abram and Sarai would have to 'overcome the world' in order to inherit the promise of the Covenant. They would overcome through sanctification, or separation, from the culture and economy of the world, typified by the palace and harem of Pharaoh. It was, as they came close to entering Egypt, that Abram asked Sarai to identify herself as his 'sister', for he feared that the Egyptians, on account of Sarai being his wife, would kill him and let her live. In response to Abram's request, Sarai did identify herself as his 'sister', revealing her faith for the re-ordering of her marriage relationship with Abram. She did this as an act of kindness toward Abram, through which he became protected and wealthy in the land of Egypt.

The apostle Peter encouraged Christian wives to be 'as Sarah', who was not 'afraid with any terror' when she, at the word of the princes of Egypt, was taken to Pharaoh's harem. 1Pe 3:6. However, the Lord plagued Pharaoh, and his house, 'with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife'. Gen 12:17. Reacting to the judgement that had fallen upon Egypt, Pharaoh sent Abram away, with his wife, and all that he had. Gen 12:10-20. It is notable that among those who departed Egypt with Abram, was Hagar, Sarai's Egyptian maidservant.

Paul identified Hagar as representing the 'Old Covenant', which proceeded from Mount Sinai. He explained that Mount Sinai now corresponded to natural Jerusalem, whose citizens continue to live under the conditions of the Old Covenant, and remain in bondage to the flesh. This designation also includes Christians who endeavour to attain to the righteousness of God through the keeping of the Law. Gal 4:24-31. The issue of Hagar, expressed in the enmity between the child of the flesh (Ishmael), and the child of the Spirit (Isaac), would need to be resolved in Abraham's journey of faith so that he could be the 'father of many nations'. Rom 4:17. We will consider this central aspect of Abraham and Sarah's pilgrimage, later in these notes.

Abram journeyed from Egypt with his entire household, including Lot with his flocks, herds, and tents. He settled again on the mountain between Bethel and Ai, at the place of the altar where his tent had been at the beginning, and there he called on the name of the Lord. Gen 13:1-5. The Scriptures recorded that Abram and Lot had acquired such great possessions that the land was unable to support them. Because of this, there was strife between the

herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. Abram said to Lot, 'Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren.' Gen 13:8. At Abram's initiative, he and Lot parted company, with Lot journeying eastward to dwell in the plain of Jordan, pitching his tent 'even as far as Sodom'. Gen 13:9-12. In this action of separation, Abram had finally *departed from his family and from his father's house*. Gen 12:1. Now, through obedience and faith, Abram could become the new 'Adam', through whom the identity of every person could be recovered again to the Father.

Abram sanctified from familiar culture and the third altar of fellowship

Significantly, the Lord spoke to Abram '*after Lot had separated from him*'. Gen 13:14. This encounter occurred at the place where he had previously built an altar and 'called on the name of the Lord'. Gen 12:8. Returning to this second altar, and having demonstrated the obedience of faith in relation to his familiar culture, Abram was now joined in fellowship with Yahweh *in the land of promise*. Paul explained that Abram was now dwelling in the land *by faith*, as in a 'foreign country ... for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.' Heb 11:9-10.

The city, to which Abram now looked, was 'the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem'. Heb 12:22. Those who have been born of God and baptised into Christ are raised with Him to be part of this city. In this regard, Paul declared, 'But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect.' Heb 12:22-23.

Having sanctified himself from his familiar culture, Abram called on the name of the Lord, and He answered him. The word of the Lord to Abram at this time was, 'Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are - northward, southward, eastward and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you.' Gen 13:14-17. The 'dust of the earth' refers to the 'sons of men'. In this regard, we recall the word of the Lord to Adam, when He said, 'For dust you are, and to dust you shall return.' Gen 3:19.

As we considered earlier, by identifying Abram's descendants as 'the dust of the earth', the Lord was explaining that they would begin as sons of men who, through new birth and baptism into Christ, would become the sons of God. The command to 'walk in the land', revealed the call on Abram to *possess the*

land by faith. Paul connected the expression of faith with the activity of *walking*, saying to the Corinthians, 'For we *walk by faith*, not by sight.' 2Co 5:7.

As we appreciated earlier, when God spoke to Abram at Shechem, He proclaimed that the land was 'given' to his descendants. Now, because Abram and Sarai were joined to the process of sanctification in their marriage and family, the Lord said, 'Arise [possess by faith], walk in the land through its length and its width, *for I give it to you*.' Gen 13:17. This command brought further definition to the journey of faith to which Abraham was called in order to inherit the substance of God's Covenant with him. In response to this word, Abram established a *third altar* of fellowship between himself and the Lord. Gen 13:18.

Abram made possessor of heaven and earth and participates in his first agape meal

Upon hearing of Lot's capture by the alliance of the four kings, Abram armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants, who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. Gen 14:14. Abram's journey from Mamre in the south of Canaan to Dan in the north, was fulfilling God's command to 'walk in the land through its length'. Gen 13:17. Abram and his men covered nearly 400 kilometres in pursuit of Lot, eventually departing Dan with all the possessions of the four kings, Lot and his possessions, and all of the women and people. Rather than returning to Mamre, Abram came to the Valley of Shaveh, just outside of Jerusalem. Gen 14:16-17.

Returning from his rescue of Lot, and his defeat of the kings, Abram was met by Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High. This interaction represented the *fourth word* of the Lord to Abram. Melchizedek blessed Abram and said, '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 14:18-20. By declaring Abram as *possessor of heaven and earth*, God was making him a joint heir with Himself. Abram was now 'king' in the land of promise, foreshadowing the call upon all his children to become a '*royal priesthood*, a holy nation, His own special people'. 1Pe 2:9. Significantly, the altar of fellowship, accompanying this proclamation of the word of the Lord, was an *agape meal* brought from heaven by Melchizedek. Emphasising the importance of this event, Moses recorded, 'Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High'. Gen 14:18. Later, when Abraham would offer Isaac on Moriah, the word of promise would be confirmed by the same oath through which the Son of God was begotten as the Firstborn from the dead, and was designated as a Priest forever, *according to the order of Melchizedek*. Gen 22:15-18. Heb 5:6.

Significantly, through Melchizedek's blessing, Abram replaced Adam as the *heir of the world*. Explaining this point, Paul wrote, 'For the promise that he would be the heir of the world [possessor of heaven and earth] was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect.' Rom 4:13-14. Clearly, those who are 'of the law' cannot be heirs of the promise made to Abraham. Rather, only those who are Abraham's children will inherit eternal sonship as citizens of the new heavens and earth. It is notable that Paul used Abraham's *new name* in this passage. Abram's name was not changed until he received the Covenant of circumcision in Genesis Chapter 17. However, Paul's use of the name 'Abraham' focusses our attention on faith-righteousness as the expression of Yahweh's name and nature that is given to us through participation in the circumcision of Christ.

Following his *agape* meal with Melchizedek, Abram gave a tithe of all his possessions. The king of Sodom then said to Abram, 'Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself.' Gen 14:21. Abram's response to this request demonstrated his commitment to sanctification in relation to his possessions. As we considered earlier, Abram had left Haran with all of his possessions, which represented his relationship to the trading economy of the world as the source of his influence and wealth. In this encounter with the king of Sodom, Abram acknowledged that it was God Most High who had delivered his enemies, and all of their possessions, into his hands. Declaring his sanctification from the worldly practice of trading, Abram said to the king of Sodom, 'I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, "I have made Abram rich".' Gen 14:22-23.

By endeavouring to take advantage of Abram through trading, the king of Sodom showed himself to be a type of Satan. As we have considered in previous publications, Satan works to gain advantage over mankind through trading. We note, in this regard, the word of the Lord through the prophet Ezekiel, when He declared, 'By the *abundance of your trading* you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; ... You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the *iniquity of your trading*.' Eze 28:16,18. As Abram raised his hand to the Lord, God Most High, he was demonstrating his sanctification from the iniquitous practice of trading that marks a person as belonging to the kingdom of the world, of which Satan is the ruler. Joh 12:31. Paul exhorted us to pursue such sanctification, without which no one will see the Lord. Heb 12:14.

Abram received Christ as his Seed

Melchizedek, who had now come as the Word of the Lord, continued His priestly ministry to Abram, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.' Gen 15:1. In this statement, Christ was declaring that He Himself would be Abram's Heir. Through this word, Abram received the faith of the Son of God as a gift, enabling him to believe that God the Son would come in the flesh as his Son and Seed. The Scriptures teach us that, before the foundation of the world, Christ emptied Himself to become the Father's Son and Seed. Php 2:5-8. 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. Now, in this extraordinary encounter, Christ was emptying Himself to become Abram's Seed. For this reason, Paul explained that if we are in Christ, then we are Abraham's seed, and are heirs of the promise made to Abraham. Gal 3:28-29. In other words, we are sons of God through the faith of Christ Jesus. Gal 3:26.

In response to the Lord, Abram said, 'Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?'. Melchizedek continued to minister to Abram, saying, 'This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.' Gen 15:4. Remarkably, the heir that Melchizedek referred to was Christ, the Seed of the Father. Emphasising this amazing point, Paul said, 'Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ.' Gal 3:16.

This ministry of Melchizedek represented a significant point of sanctification in the life of Abram. We recall that Abram left his father's house accompanied by the people he had 'acquired in Haran', typified by Eliezer of Damascus, the heir of his house. Through this initiative of the Lord, Abram was *sanctified* in relation to those who had journeyed with him from his father's house. Most commentators suggest that Eliezer continued to abide in Abraham's house and was likely the senior servant who was sent to find a wife for Isaac as Abraham neared his decease. Gen 24:1-9. Evidently, as Abraham and Sarah were sanctified to the call of God on their lives, others in their household were able to find their own sanctified connection to this covenant family.

Melchizedek continued speaking with Abram, saying, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them. ... So shall your descendants be.' Gen 15:5. By faith, Abram received Christ as his Seed, in whom all the named sons of God would be revealed. These sons were then represented, and signified, as a numberless multitude of stars that filled the heavens. As Abram received and believed the word of the Lord, he was sanctified to become the father, after the flesh, of all the sons of God.

Abram's faith, expressed through sanctified obedience, was accounted to him as his righteousness. By faith, he had become the father of a new humanity.

Referring to this encounter, Paul explained that, by believing the word of the Lord concerning his descendants as the stars of heaven, Abraham was justified by faith and enabled to stand in the grace of God. Paul observed that 'if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ... Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.' Rom 4:2,4-5.

In this fellowship, the Son of God, as Melchizedek, ministered His own personal salvation to Abram. Having received his salvation from the Lord, the substance of the Covenant was then confirmed to Abram through offering. In this regard, we specifically note Moses' account of this meeting, when he wrote, *'On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram*, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates." ' Gen 15:18. As we considered earlier, by addressing the relationship with Eliezer of Damascus, the Lord was sanctifying Abram in relation to the 'servants' that he had brought with him when he first left his father's house. This was a significant element of his pilgrimage of faith and sanctification, confirming that the Covenant would indeed be by the Spirit and not according to the flesh.

The fourth altar of fellowship

In the context of this meeting with Melchizedek, Abram enquired of the Lord concerning his inheritance, saying, 'Lord GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it?' Gen 15:8. In response, the Lord commanded Abram to establish the fourth altar of fellowship. He said, 'Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.' Gen 15:9. Moses recorded that, 'when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him'. Rev 15:12. In this regard, the fourth altar of fellowship represented Abram's participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

In the fellowship of this offering, the Lord spoke to Abram concerning the coming captivity of his descendants in Egypt. He declared, 'Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.' Gen 15:13-16.

After the Lord had spoken with Abram, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between the pieces of the offering. Gen 15:17.

His offering was ignited by the smoking furnace, revealing his connection to the acceptable offering of Christ. Moreover, it signified that there was a sanctifying, refining process through which Abram and his descendants would inherit the substance of God's covenant promises. The burning lamp brought further illumination to Abram regarding God's Covenant and the means by which he would possess the nations. Gen 15:17-21.

From Abram to Abraham

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, 'I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My Covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.' Gen 17:1. In this visitation, the Lord revealed Himself to Abram as *Almighty God* (*El Shaddai*), connecting Abram to the substance of *exanastasis*, or resurrection life. By His word, Yahweh wrote His own name into Abram, saying, 'No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.' Gen 17:5. This was the Word coming into Abraham's flesh, enabling him to become exceedingly fruitful as the father of a great multitude.

Referencing this important event, Paul wrote, 'And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief but was strengthened in faith [by Almighty God - *El Shaddai*], giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore "It was accounted to him for righteousness." ' Rom 4:19-22. Evidently, Abraham continued to walk in the strength that he had received from *El Shaddai*, enabling him to journey by faith for the next twenty years, when the Lord called him to Mount Moriah. The apostle James highlighted this point, explaining that the Scripture, which says that 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to Him for righteousness', was *fulfilled* when Abraham offered Isaac, his son, on the altar. Jas 2:21-23.

Further to this, Paul focussed our attention on the Lord's word concerning Abraham's fatherhood. He wrote, 'Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed - God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did.' Rom 4:16-17.

Highlighting our connection to the *fatherhood of Abraham*, John the Baptist addressed the Pharisees and Sadducees who had come to him seeking baptism. He said to them, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the

wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father." For I say to you that God is able to raise up *children to Abraham* from these stones.' Mat 3:7-9. The Greek word translated 'stones' in this passage is the same word used to describe Jesus as the 'stone which the builders rejected'. 1Pe 2:7. Evidently, we are sons of our father Abraham as we come to Christ, the Living Stone, 'rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious'. 1Pe 2:4.

The Covenant of circumcision

In this visitation, the Lord was joining Abraham to the offering of Christ. The Lord said to Abraham, 'This is My Covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male child among you shall be circumcised.' Gen 17:10. Through this command, the principle of offering was established *in Abraham's flesh* as a participation in the seven wounding events of Christ's offering journey. Speaking of this offering, the apostle Paul declared, 'In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.' Col 2:11-12.

It is important to note that Abraham received his new name from Yahweh *before* he received circumcision as a sign of the Covenant. In the same way, we receive our name when we are born again. This name is then 'activated' through baptism, which Paul called 'the circumcision of Christ'. Like Abraham, as we receive this circumcision, we are able to walk in resurrection life. Through his obedience, the Covenant that Yahweh proclaimed when He first called Abraham, became substantial in his flesh. With the substance of the Covenant now in his flesh, Abraham was able to initiate towards *agape* fellowship with the Lord. As the new 'Adam', Abraham could participate in the fellowship of offering in a way that the first Adam never knew.

Paul observed that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness *before* he received the Covenant of circumcision in his flesh. He explained that this understanding was central to the gospel of sonship that he, and his fellow messengers, were proclaiming. He wrote, '*For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised.*' Rom 4:9-11. Physical circumcision was the seal of the righteousness of faith, which Abraham previously received when the Lord said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield [of faith], your exceedingly great reward.' Gen 15:1.

The implication of this point must not be lost on us. Abraham received the gift of the faith of the Son of God while he was uncircumcised so '*that he*

might be the father of those who believe, though they are uncircumcised’.

Rom 4:11. Furthermore, Paul expressly stated that righteousness is only imputed to those who walk in the ‘steps of faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised’. Rom 4:12. Emphasising this point, Paul stated, ‘Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. Or is He God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.’ Rom 3:28-30.

Significantly, circumcision, which Abraham received as the Everlasting Covenant now in his flesh, marked the beginning of a new culture in his house. For this reason, the Lord said, ‘For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.’ Gen 18:19.

From Sarai to Sarah

The Lord also wrote His name into Sarai, Abraham’s wife. Notably, she did not receive her name directly from the Lord, but, rather, through the word of the Lord to Abraham. The Lord said to Abraham, ‘As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall be* her name. And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be *a mother of nations*; kings of peoples shall be from her.’ Gen 17:15-16. Through this word, the Lord instructed Abraham to give the same portion of the name of Yahweh that he had already received, to his wife so that her new name would be Sarah. By naming Sarah according to the word that he had received from the Lord, Abraham was establishing their marriage in the Everlasting Covenant that was now in his flesh through circumcision.

Sarah received her share in the inheritance that belonged to the name of the Lord through Abraham. In the authority of her own name, she was then able to proceed from Abraham to become the mother of many nations. Like Abraham, Sarah received resurrection power as she met *El Shaddai*, enabling her to conceive the promised son, though she was past the age of childbearing. Revealing Himself as *El Shaddai*, the Lord said to Abraham, ‘*Is anything too hard for the Lord?* At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.’ Gen 18:14.

In reference to this encounter, Paul wrote, ‘By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised’. Heb 11:11. Sarah’s judgement, concerning the faithfulness of Yahweh, revealed the faith that she had received to participate, with Abraham, in the unfolding of God’s covenant purpose. Paul observed that, on account of this faith, ‘from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude -

innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore'. Heb 11:12. The apostle Peter emphasised the faith of Sarah, writing, 'For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.' 1Pe 3:5-6.

Abraham obeyed God and circumcised all the males in his household, including those born in his house and those who had been bought with money from a foreigner. Moses recorded that this seminal event in Abraham's life occurred on the 'very same day' that the Lord had spoken with him concerning the Covenant. Gen 17:25-27. Abraham's timely response to the word of the Lord is a notable expression of the obedience of faith. Paul referred to this faith obedience at the end of his letter to the Romans, writing, 'Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith.' Rom 16:25-26.

Abraham initiates an agape meal

After this, the Lord appeared to Abraham as he was sitting in the door of his tent during the heat of the day. In this encounter, Abraham met *three men*, whom he addressed, collectively as 'my Lord'. This was Yahweh revealing Himself to Abraham as the Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Abraham washed the feet of the three men and prepared a meal for their refreshment. This meal was an *agape* meal, which Abraham was able to initiate because he had received the substance of God's Covenant in his flesh through circumcision. As Abraham stood by, the Lord said to him, 'I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold Sarah, your wife shall have a son.' Gen 18:10.

Following this fellowship meal, the three men arose and 'looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on their way. And the Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?" ' Gen 18:16-18. By including Abraham in the discussion concerning Sodom, the Lord was acknowledging that the land belonged to Abraham. Moreover, all the nations of the earth would be blessed in him, through Christ, who would be Abraham's Seed.

Interceding for the righteous in his land

In this fellowship with Yahweh, Abraham began to intercede for the righteous who dwelt in *his land*. The account of Abraham's intercession in the book of Genesis described him *drawing near to the Lord* and saying, 'Would You also

destroy the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare *it* for the fifty righteous that were in it? Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' Gen 18:23-25. In this work of intercession, Abraham was demonstrating that he had received faith to father his inheritance in fellowship with the Lord.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul defined intercession in relation to the hope of sonship, writing, 'But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. Likewise, the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.' Rom 8:25-27.

On account of Abraham's intercession, God rescued Lot from the judgement that fell upon the city of Sodom. It is significant that the Lord included Abraham in His fellowship concerning how His judgement would be poured out upon the wicked. Notably, the Lord did not destroy the righteous with the wicked. Rather, He waited until the sin was 'full', and then He removed 'righteous Lot' from among the wicked. 2Pe 2:7. In His parable of the wheat and tares, Jesus explained that God allows both to grow together 'until the harvest'. This harvest is the hour of judgement that will come upon the whole world when the reapers gather those who have joined the fellowship of Christ's offering into the Father's house, while those who have rejected the call of the gospel are gathered together for judgement by fire. Mat 13:30.

Abraham is established as a prophet in his land

After the destruction of Sodom, Abraham journeyed south, and dwelt in Gerar, a province south of Gaza. Here, as he had done twenty years earlier, Abraham identified Sarah as his 'sister', and Abimelech had her brought into his harem. Some commentators suggest that Abimelech's interest in Sarah was purely political. That is, Abimelech was using Sarah to pursue an alliance with Abraham, whom he perceived to be a rich and nomadic king. Others suggest, (which is perhaps more likely), that Abimelech was fascinated by Sarah's beauty, which would have been rejuvenated through *exanastasis*. Regardless, in this encounter with the king of Gerar, the Lord identified Abraham as a *prophet*. Coming to Abimelech in a dream, the Lord said, 'Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife. ... Now therefore, restore the man's wife; *for he is a prophet*, and he will pray for you, and you shall live.' Gen 20:3,7.

As we noted earlier, Abraham had previously received circumcision as the sign of the Everlasting Covenant that Yahweh had made with him. Through

circumcision, the Covenant was now in his flesh. By declaring Abraham to be a prophet, the Lord was acknowledging that the *word* of the Covenant was now *in him*. In other words, as he walked in the attitude of circumcision, as a prophet, he was now the *embodiment* of the word of the Everlasting Covenant.

As a prophet of Yahweh, Abraham was called to minister the gift of healing, through prayer, to Abimelech and his household. The book of Genesis recorded, 'So Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants. Then they bore children; for the LORD had closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.' Gen 20:17-18. Abimelech gave Abraham 1 000 pieces of silver, saying to Sarah, 'This vindicates you before all who are with you and everybody.' Gen 20:16. The Hebrew word translated as 'vindicates', means to 'veil' or to 'cover'. Sarah was 'covered' in relation to any misperceptions regarding her time in Abimelech's harem. Having received the 1 000 pieces of silver as 'vindication', Moses noted that Sarah was 'thus rebuked'. The word 'rebuked' is a weak translation of the Hebrew word used by Moses in this passage, and would be better translated as 'justified'. This draws an obvious parallel to the effect of faith, of which Abraham became known as the 'father'. Rom 4:11. The apostle Paul observed, 'Therefore, having been *justified by faith*, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Rom 5:1.

Hagar and Ishmael sent away

According to His word, the Lord visited Sarah and did for her as He had spoken. She conceived and bore Abraham a son 'at the set time of which God had spoken to him'. Gen 21:1-2. At the time of Isaac's weaning, Sarah said to Abraham, 'Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac.' Gen 21:10. It was in the context of this discussion that God spoke to Abraham again, saying, 'Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called.' Gen 21:12. Christ, who had been given to Abraham as his Seed, would be called in Isaac as Abraham was obedient and sanctified himself in relation to the 'bondwoman and her son'.

Sarah was now engaged in a discussion with Abraham and the Lord at the tree of life. Through their fellowship together at the tree of life, they had obtained a remnant of the Spirit, which was necessary for the multiplication of Yahweh's life and fellowship in their house. Mal 2:15. Through fellowship, Abraham was passing the word of the Covenant to his descendants, fulfilling the word of the Lord, when He said, 'For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.' Gen 18:19.

Abraham is called to the land of Moriah to establish a fifth altar of fellowship

Sometime after Ishmael and Hagar had been sent away, Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech. In this exchange, Abraham continued to minister as a prophet in his land, which Abimelech acknowledged, when he said, 'God is with you in all that you do.' Gen 21:22. In this statement, he recognised that resurrection life had been multiplied towards him when Abraham prayed that the women in his household would no longer be barren. Abraham made covenant with Abimelech in relation to the well at Beersheba, foreshadowing the ministry of Isaac, who was called to dig out the wells that had been stopped by the Philistines.

Approximately twenty years after the covenant between Abraham and Abimelech at Beersheba, God said to Abraham, 'Take now your son, your only *son* Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.' Gen 22:2. In this visitation, God instructed Abraham to establish the *fifth altar*, upon which he would offer his son Isaac. As we considered in Chapter 2, through this offering, Abraham offered all the sons of men, who had been joined to his fatherhood and faith, back to the Father to become the sons of God. In response to Abraham's obedience of faith, God confirmed, with an oath, what He had previously promised, saying, '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 of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.' Gen 22:16-18.

This oath confirmed that Christ, in whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed, was not only the Father's Son; He was also Abraham's Son. Through Christ's death and resurrection, the sons of men could be born again as sons of God and be joined to the fellowship of Yahweh through their ongoing participation in His offering.

Chapter 4

The heritage of faith

The faith of Abraham

Faith is not a capacity that is inherent within us. As we considered in Chapter 1, faith is ministered to us by Christ, the Word, when He makes Himself known to us as 'I AM', *El Shaddai*. Rev 1:8. The apostle Paul emphasised this point, declaring that 'faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God [who is Christ]'. Rom 10:17. A person needs to receive faith in order to believe and obey God's word and, thereby, obtain the eternal reward of sonship that belongs to His Everlasting Covenant. To this end, Paul further declared that 'without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a *rewarder* of those who diligently seek Him.' Heb 11:6.

Each step of Abraham's pilgrimage was a season of faith obedience to a word from the Lord. Abraham first received faith when the Lord directed him to depart from his country, family and father's house, to enter a land that the Lord would show him. The Lord said that He would make Abram a great nation and would bless him, and that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed. Gen 12:1-3. We know that Abram obtained faith as he heard this word, for Paul explained that 'by faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.' Heb 11:8-9.

Although Abram obeyed God's word by faith, he did not understand the promise of God and how it would come to pass. He was unable to see, or

comprehend, the promise of God through his natural sight and natural capacity for reason. This became a point of consternation for Abram. We know this because the Son of God addressed Abram's *fear*. Clearly, Abram was not afraid of anyone, for he had already conquered the kingdoms of the world and had become a king of kings. Gen 14:1-17. His fear was associated with the apparent contradiction between his calling as a father of many nations and his inability to bring forth children with Sarai.

Christ, the Word, appeared to Abram in a vision, saying, '*Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield [of faith], your exceedingly great reward.*' Gen 15:1. As the Son became his faith, Abram was enabled to believe in the Son and believe that the Son was his reward. Heb 11:16. That is, Abram believed to become the father of a new humanity through Christ. He received Christ, the Seed of Father, who had given Himself to become Abram's Seed. Abram then walked by the faith that he received through his encounter with the Son of God, believing that he would become the natural father of a multitude of sons who would be born of God.

However, for this promise to come to pass, Abraham needed a son, which he obviously could not bring forth himself. His wife, Sarah, was pivotal to the promise of God coming to pass. Her participation in the fulfilment of God's will required the same faith that Abraham had received.

In order, therefore, to understand how we are blessed in Abraham, we must consider the faith that *both* Abraham and Sarah received and demonstrated. Indeed, we are directed by the prophetic Scriptures to this very consideration. The prophet Isaiah declared, 'Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the LORD [cf. Heb 11:6]: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug. *Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you;* for I called him alone, and blessed him and increased him.' Isa 51:1-2.

Paul explained that Abraham is the father of all who believe, and he directed us to walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham. Rom 4:12,16. Gal 3:7. He identified Sarah as a type of the church, both in the world (typified by Egypt), and in the promised land, where the culture of the world imposes itself upon the household of faith (typified by the Philistines). Sarah's faith sanctified, protected, and facilitated the multiplication and expansion of her household in the kingdom of God.

The faith that Sarah received is the same faith that is obtained by every godly woman. The apostle Peter described believing women who demonstrate this faith as, 'daughters of Sarah'. 1Pe 3:6. Significantly, this same faith belongs to those who are part of the bride of Christ, the New Jerusalem, whom Paul described as 'the mother of us all'. Gal 4:26. In the time of the end, through the exercise of this faith, a great multitude will be born of God and gathered

into the heavenly city, as the gospel of God is proclaimed in all the world by those who are part of this corporate bride.

The faith of Sarah

In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul summarised the faith of Sarah, writing, 'By faith Sarah herself *also* received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. *Therefore* from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude – innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.' Heb 11:11-12.

From this passage, we understand that Sarah counted Yahweh *Elohim* faithful in relation to His promise to her husband, to herself, and to the seed who would come from them. Significantly, the faith that she demonstrated enabled God to fulfil His promise to Abraham. As we have just read, this promise was that Abraham's seed, as the dust of the earth, would be a multitude of nations. Then, through new birth and baptism into Christ, they would become a multitude of named sons in the kingdom of God, signified as the stars of heaven.

When confronted by various crises, Sarah received, and exercised, the faith that was necessary for her participation in God's will for Abraham's house. According to the apostle Peter, she did this without fear or terror. He wrote, '*Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord*, whose daughters you are if you do good [the works that belong to your sonship] and are not afraid with any terror [the fear of being lost to the void of identity obscurity].' 1Pe 3:6. Sarah obeyed Abraham without fear or terror because she was sustained by the faith that she received from the word that was declared to Abraham. It became her faith.

In this passage of Scripture, Peter was referring to two particular occasions when Sarah demonstrated the faith obedience that was necessary for the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham – first, in the house of Pharaoh, and then in the house of Abimelech.

These events have been mistakenly viewed, by many theological observers, as a failure on Abraham's part. For example, the renowned commentators Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, argued that Abraham's conduct was 'culpable and inconsistent with his character as a servant of God; it showed a reliance on worldly policy more than a trust in the promise; and he not only sinned himself, but tempted Sarai to sin also'. Other commentators have even posited that the reproof directed towards Abraham by Pharaoh and Abimelech was warranted on account of Abraham's 'deception'.

The reality is that, in both settings, Abraham was calling his wife to stand with him in faith for God's promise concerning their household. The Lord

nominated Abraham as a *prophet*. Gen 20:7. As a prophet, Abraham foresaw that his life, and the welfare of his family, would be jeopardised as they came among the Egyptians and the Philistines. For example, in response to Abimelech who asked why Abraham had said that Sarah was his 'sister', he answered, '*Because I said*, "Surely the fear of God is not in this place, and *they have slain me* for the sake of my wife".' Gen 20:11. YLT.

By asking Sarah to say that she was his 'sister', Abraham was calling her to join him in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. This was the context for their deliverance from the ravages of the world. In both settings, Sarah's faith obedience to Abraham, in submission to the lordship of Christ, was her protection. In this regard, she did not depend upon the romantic fervour of Abraham for her protection. Rather, in faith, she showed kindness to Abraham by calling herself his 'sister'. In doing so, Sarah distanced herself from him in the eyes of those who coveted her for her beauty. However, this response made Sarah vulnerable to those in power, where they lived, and she suffered the consequences of their predations. She bore this humiliation in faith and with grace. Christ became her shield of protection, and the Lord plagued and rebuked those who tried to touch her. Gen 12:17. Gen 20:3. Let us consider these two events in further detail.

In the house of Pharaoh

The first great test of faith for Sarai was in Egypt. Egypt is a type of the world. In this context, Sarai overcame the world by faith because she believed the word that the Son had declared to Abram. 1Jn 5:4-5. That is, she overcame the Egyptian king, and his kingdom was judged with great plagues because of her faith. Gen 12:17.

We recall that Abram and his household journeyed to Egypt because of a severe famine in the land of promise. As he approached Egypt, Abram spoke to Sarai, prophesying, 'Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance. *Therefore it will happen*, when the Egyptians see you, that they *will* say, "This is his wife"; and they *will* kill me, but they *will* let you live.'

Gen 12:11-12.

With this statement, Abram was indicating to Sarai that her beauty was a *disadvantage* in this circumstance. If she endeavoured to use her beauty to take control of the situation, and bring deliverance through her own enterprise, she would save her own life. However, Abram's life would be lost, and their household would be destroyed. In other words, Sarai would pull her house down through the works of her own hands. Pro 14:1. For this reason, Abram, in a spirit of offering, made a request of Sarai, saying, 'Please say you are my sister, *that it may be well with me for your sake*, and that I may live because of you.' Gen 12:13.

Abram was not simply seeking to save himself, as many pundits have argued. Rather, he understood that Sarai could only share in the promise that God had made to Abram if he lived. Hence, his assertion 'that it may be well with me *for your sake*'. In other words, if Sarai took an initiative to preserve her house through the exercise of what were 'assets' to trade with in the world, she would save her mortal life but forfeit her eternal inheritance which belonged to the household of faith.

In response to this word from her husband, Sarai abandoned her natural, fallen, inclinations to exercise control over her circumstances through the seductive and manipulative 'work of her hands'. Such endeavours belong to the spirit of the world, which was the very context in which she found herself. These fallen ways are motivated by the romantic desire that was established in the heart of a woman as a consequence of the Fall. Gen 3:16. Living by this fallen desire demonstrates that a woman remains in bondage to Satan through the fear of death. Heb 2:15.

Having turned from this fallen, carnal approach to her situation, Sarai obeyed her husband by the faith that she obtained as she received his direction for their household. Her chaste conduct, as she submitted to her husband in this perilous setting, revealed that her fear of death had been replaced with a fear of the Lord. 1Pe 3:2,5-6. By the faith that belonged to the wisdom that she had received through the fellowship of headship, she was able to 'build her house', rather than pull it down. Pro 14:1.

The Lord protected Sarai in the harem of Pharaoh. Moreover, He plagued Pharaoh and his house with *great plagues* because of her. Gen 12:17. It is remarkable that the faith obedience of Sarai, in submission to Abram, not only brought deliverance and prosperity to their household, but it was also the means by which the influence of the world upon them was vanquished. Accordingly, the Scriptures describe a believing woman who submits to her husband in the fear of the Lord, and who forsakes the conversation and conduct that is motivated by fallen desire, as 'awesome as an army with banners'! 1Pe 3:1. Son 6:10. This is how a wife and a mother, who is a daughter of Sarah, preserves her household from the destructive influence of the world.

Learning to walk blamelessly

Abram came out of Egypt with great wealth, which was given to him by Pharaoh because of Sarai. However, Sarai also came out of Egypt with Hagar who, in the Scriptures, is a type of the flesh. Hagar was to Sarah, what Lot was to Abraham. That is, Hagar and Lot were symbols of the 'flesh', and of the familiar ways of both men and women. Furthermore, these two figures represented how Sarah and Abraham would have lived if they had, themselves, walked after the flesh.

After ten years of dwelling in the land of Canaan, Abram and Sarai remained childless. In an endeavour to bring forth a child *for herself* from Abram's body, Sarai said to Abram, 'See now, the LORD [Yahweh] has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; *perhaps I shall obtain children by her.*' Gen 16:2. Driven by fallen fleshly desire, Sarai endeavoured to verify her identity as a mother by obtaining a child for herself through a surrogate, Hagar. This objective was informed, in part, by Sarai's interpretation of the word of the Lord to Abram - '*One who will come from your own body* shall be your heir'. Gen 15:4.

Abram listened to Sarai and took Hagar as a wife, and she conceived a child. As a consequence, Sarai became despised in the eyes of Hagar, who now viewed herself as superior to Sarai, on account of her mistress's inability to bear children. This became a point of distress for Sarai who, in turn, dealt harshly with Hagar. To escape this perceived unjust affliction, Hagar fled from the presence of Sarai. Gen 16:4-6. However, the Angel of the Lord spoke to Hagar and said, 'Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.' Gen 16:9. Hagar returned to the house of Abram and Sarai, and bore a son whom she named Ishmael, according to the direction of the Angel of the Lord. Gen 16:11.

After this, Yahweh made Himself known to Abram as *El Shaddai*, saying, 'I am Almighty God [*El Shaddai*]; walk before Me and be blameless.' Gen 17:1. Through this encounter, the Lord gave Abram and Sarai new names. He did this by placing an element of His own name (YHWH) within Abram's natural name, indicating that Abraham had received a portion of the capacity that belongs to the name of Yahweh. Abraham's new name represented his *share* in the divine nature of God. Notably, Sarah did not receive her name directly from the Lord but, rather, through His word to Abraham.

As Abraham and Sarah received new names, they were, symbolically, born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God. Circumcision was the mark of this covenant in the flesh of Abraham and his household. That is, through their attitude to life, they now carried about in their bodies the dying and living of the Lord Jesus Christ. This attitude of circumcision was foundational to walking before the Lord blamelessly.

Sarah ceased from her quest for identity verification through bearing children, as she was established in fellowship with Abraham at the tree of life. We note, for example, that when Yahweh appeared to Abraham at the terebinth trees of Mamre, Sarah participated in preparing Abraham's *agape* meal with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the context of this meal, her response to the word of the Lord concerning her impending motherhood revealed that she had accepted her inability to bear children. In fact, Sarah laughed within herself at the prospect of becoming a mother in her old age,

saying, 'After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?' Gen 18:12.

Yahweh said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh, saying, "Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?" Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.' Gen 18:13-14. Evidently, in the context of this *agape* meal, the thoughts and intents of Sarah's heart were exposed, and she grew in her fear of the Lord. Gen 18:15. The exposure of a person's heart by the word is a feature of walking blamelessly before the Lord. Heb 4:13. Although Sarah was resolved concerning her natural capacity to conceive, she needed to receive faith for her unique participation in this next phase of God's will for Abraham's household.

In the house of Abimelech

Sarah's second trial of faith was in the harem of Abimelech. He was a Philistine king, who lived in the land that was promised to Abraham. He was, therefore, a type of the culture of the world in the church. This encounter happened after Sarah, with Abraham, had met the Lord, and she had personally received from Him the word concerning her motherhood. The Lord's initiative towards her included the appointed time in which He would come to her again and heal her of the attritions of old age in preparation to conceive a son. The child of promise was a type of Christ, the Son of Man, with the divine nature.

After Abraham had established his camp in Gerar, Abimelech, the Philistine king of Gerar, sent and took Sarah. Gen 20:1-2. He was enamoured by her appearance, which had been revitalised by the resurrection life that she had received through the Lord's initiative towards her. In this regard, like Satan and the world in the church, Abimelech sought personal gain and fulfilment through connection with this woman, who was an heir of the grace of life. To this end, the Philistine king imposed himself upon the operation of God in the covenant household of Abraham. He endeavoured to take advantage over this godly couple, who had received a remnant of the Spirit, and whose work was to bring forth godly seed. Mal 2:15.

As was the case in Egypt, the faith of Sarah was her protection, and the judgements of God were her defence. Abimelech's house represented a religious and alternative way of life to walking blamelessly in an attitude of circumcision. It was a synagogue of Satan, steeped in, and empowered by, 'old gospels' that promoted a form of godliness, but denied that life can only be found through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. They sought life and empowerment through association with those in whom the grace of God was manifestly evident.

Significantly, Sarah did not use the word of the Lord concerning her imminent motherhood to justify a course of action which preserved her life and the life of the promised child. This would have been a carnal endeavour motivated by fear, even though it was informed by the word of present truth. This is an important point. A godly woman will not use the word to justify an approach to life that dishonours or exposes her husband. Rather, they understand that the word of the Lord will come to pass, as they trust Him, through their chaste conduct in the fellowship of headship.

Through her obedience to Abraham, Sarah was justified and rewarded with 1 000 talents of silver, because she had trusted God and counted Him to be a faithful Saviour and Deliverer. 'Silver' is the symbol of 'atonement'. It was necessary that these talents of silver be given to Sarah by Abimelech so that his household and kingdom could be redeemed from death by the prayer of Abraham, who was a prophet. By this means, salvation came to the house of Abimelech.

We can liken the salvation of Abimelech's household to the promise that Jesus Christ made to the church of Philadelphia. As one of the daughters of Zion, the Philadelphian church exemplified the faith of Sarah. Jesus commended them, saying, 'I know your works [of faith]. 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 3:8.

Like Sarah, those who belong to the church of Philadelphia are joined to the weakness of Christ, as they persevere in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. They are obedient to the word of the Lord, which is ministered through the order of headship in the body of Christ, and they keep faith with the name that they have received, and that belongs to them only in the fellowship of His name. For this reason, they are blessed with an open door. This open door not only refers to their access to the Father's house in the time of the end; it includes the capacity and opportunity to proclaim the gospel of sonship to other churches, and to those who are in the world. Jesus declared that, through this ministry, He would make those of the synagogue of Satan, symbolised by the household of Abimelech, come and worship before their feet, and also make them know that He has loved those who demonstrate the faith of Sarah. Rev 3:9.

Casting out the bondwoman

The attitude of circumcision, through which Sarah put off her carnal understanding and set her mind on the Spirit, was acutely manifest when, through resurrection life, Abraham and Sarah, whose bodies were as good as dead, brought forth Isaac, according to the word of promise. Heb 11:11-12. Isaac was born by the supernatural intervention of God in Sarah's life, at His appointed time. Gen 18:14. Paul explained that God's intervention involved

giving resurrection life to Sarah, healing her, and delivering her from the attrition of old age. Rom 4:19. God then gave her power to conceive and become pregnant. This resurrection miracle was performed by the Spirit of God as Abraham and Sarah met the Lord, and one another, at the tree of life.

Significantly, Abraham named the child, Isaac, meaning, 'one who laughs', having received the testimony of Sarah, who shared, 'God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me.' Gen 21:3,6. Isaac's name, and Sarah's testimony, revealed that, through faith, Sarah had learnt to laugh in *a new way*. Her laughter was no longer an expression of incredulity; her joy was the fruit of faith as she journeyed with Christ, crucifying the flesh with its passions and motivating desires, and bringing forth a child who was born according to the Spirit. Gal 5:24.

The apostle Paul contrasted the motherhoods of Hagar and Sarah, writing, 'But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar – for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children – but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.' Gal 4:23-26.

While Sarah had been delivered from walking according to the flesh, Hagar embodied this fallen, religious way of living. Although she returned to the house of faith, it is apparent that Hagar did not submit to Sarah, and continued to consider herself to be a victim of her circumstances in the house of Abraham. We know this, because the fruit of her conduct was a son who showed no honour to his brethren in the house. In this regard, Ishmael also embodied the presumption and conduct of those who live according to the flesh. Sarah observed Ishmael mocking Isaac, prompting her to say to Abraham, 'Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac.' Gen 21:10.

Hagar is another covenant that operates within the household of faith. This covenant must be recognised, put off, and put away from the culture of faith, for it functions by misappropriation and presumption. This work of putting away the alternative covenant from one's household is another work of faith that belongs to the daughters of Sarah. Interestingly, Abraham was displeased by Sarah's insistence upon removing these vestiges of the flesh from their house. However, God said to him, 'Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called.' Gen 21:12.

Daughters of Sarah

Sarah's faith was demonstrated by her chaste conduct in the midst of challenging circumstances. This conduct was her obedience to the word of the Lord which she had received from her husband, Abraham. She turned from her natural inclinations for control through seduction and manipulation and, instead, trusted in God, judging Him faithful. Abraham lived because of her obedience of faith, which she exercised in the fear of the Lord. Moreover, through faith, she sanctified, protected, and delivered her household from the ravages of the world. Significantly, she became the vessel of multiplication, bringing forth the child of promise.

As we noted earlier, every believing woman will experience a crisis through which they are able to lay hold of the same faith that belonged to Sarah. This marks them as 'daughters of Sarah'. Such a trial of faith was experienced by every godly woman recorded in the Scriptures. Consider, for example, the mother of Moses. Through the works of her faith, she preserved the life of her son, delivering him from death at the hands of the Egyptians by committing him to an ark of bulrushes. Moses not only escaped death, but he became the man through whom the Lord delivered Israel from Egypt, and judged Pharaoh.

Likewise, the confession of Mary, the mother of Jesus, exemplified the speech that is enabled by the faith that Sarah found. Mary responded to the angel, Gabriel, who revealed to her that she would give birth to the Son of Man, saying, 'Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.' Luk 1:38. Then, the life of Jesus was preserved from destruction at the hands of Herod, as Mary and Joseph made their flight to Egypt in obedience to an angel of the Lord. Both Moses and Jesus were like 'manchild', who were caught up to the throne for their ministry, through the faithful prayer and fearless actions of their mothers.

Rachel was caught up into this travailing faith and prayer when she gave birth to Benjamin. From this prayer, in the womb of his mother, the apostle Paul, who was from the tribe of Benjamin, was ordained by the Father to reveal His Son. Accordingly, he was sent to bring the gospel to the Gentiles, and to the lost tribes of Israel who are scattered among the nations, right to the ends of the earth. Gal 3:14. Act 13:47.

Significantly, Paul's work of establishing lampstand churches highlighted that the faith of Sarah is not just the faith that belongs to a godly woman; it is the faith that belongs to the motherhood of the church, which is necessary to bring forth sons of God into the kingdom. This faith belongs to those in churches, symbolised as the daughters of Zion, who are resolute in seeking the face of the Lord. Heb 11:6. Through this faith, they are not afraid with any terror in the midst of persecution from the world, or from the world

in the church. Rather, through their fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings, He is publicly portrayed as crucified to those with whom they have contact. Through the ministry of this word, a hearer is able to be born again and raised, as a manchild, into the fellowship of the body of Christ as a citizen of the kingdom of God.

Chapter 5

Testimony

In our present season, the Lord is continuing to speak to us concerning the culture of our marriages and families. His initiative is toward the reformation and revival of every marriage to a proper fellowship at the tree of life, so that couples continue to grow as 'heirs together of the grace of life'. 1Pe 3:7. It is this grace of life that enables a husband and wife to cultivate and nurture the divine nature within their home, and to ensure that their children are not 'given to another people'. Deu 28:32. The cultivation of the divine nature within the home is the privilege that every Christian couple has been given as participants with God in the Covenant of sonship. A key consideration in this publication has been the sanctifying stages of Abraham and Sarah's life, through which they obtained faith for their unique participation in this covenant purpose.

We have reflected, in recent years, upon our own journey of faith as a married couple, encouraging others to join us in ongoing fellowship, through testimony, in the light of the proceeding word of Christ. A key element of this consideration has been acknowledging significant points of restoration and recovery, both personally and as a couple, through which we are continuing to be established in the culture of fellowship at the tree of life. Most recently, in the publication, *Becoming the Israel of God*, we testified of how the Lord had met us in relation to the impact of a woman's desire for control, upon the marriage and family.

Specifically, Lorraine reflected upon her progressive deliverance from this carnal desire for control, which begins, for every woman, with a personal encounter with Christ. It is this personal encounter with Christ, as His word makes a breach upon the heart, through which a woman receives illumination concerning the impact of her carnality upon her husband and family. Provided she does not draw back, a woman is granted grace for repentance, and restoration to the Covenant of marriage intended by God. Of course, we understand that our deliverance from the other law, from which self-centred motivations and actions spring, *is a lifelong process* as we continue to participate in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Nevertheless, we are thankful that, by God's grace, we are making some progress toward blamelessness as we commit to abiding together at the tree of life.

Abraham and Sarah as our example

Over the course of our life together, the pilgrimage of Abraham and Sarah has been our continual meditation as we have endeavoured to embrace our own journey of faith as sons of God and members of the body of Christ. While we have appreciated the warmth and compatibility that we enjoy together on account of our individual dispositions and temperament, we have recognised that, on this basis alone, we do not possess the faith, nor the grace of life, necessary for fostering the divine nature in our home. In fact, if our marriages are not built on the foundation of offering that is revealed in the cross of Christ, 'romantic compatibility', and its associated expectation within a marriage, demonstrate our rejection of the process of refinement that Christ makes available through fellowship in His offering. These romantic aspirations are informed by our knowledge of good and evil, and they create pressure on both men and women to fulfil the expectations that they have of each other, concerning the lifestyle they desire.

In this regard, the two phases of Sarah's life involving her association with the harem of Pharaoh and the harem of Abimelech have, throughout our married life, caused us to contemplate the question of 'romance' in the marriage. For many years, we had struggled to comprehend how Abraham could ask Sarah to identify herself as his 'sister', knowing the subsequent threat that this posed to her life within those treacherous and immoral environments. How could Abraham's behaviour possibly express the love of God toward his wife? How could his request, which, on the surface, seemed far short of the standard of virtue that is reasonably expected of a godly man, possibly reveal the faith of God that we are to inherit as children of Abraham? I had always considered that my role in the marriage was to 'protect' and 'look after' Lorraine. The weakness and vulnerability that I perceived in Abraham's behaviour was certainly not in harmony with my view of a Christian husband. We thought, perhaps, that these events simply demonstrated the 'flaws' in Abraham that were to be processed through his

journey of faith. Upon reflection, and with the blessing of illumination, we have come to see that the ‘discomfort’ that we felt in relation to this element of Abraham and Sarah’s journey, revealed that our marriage culture needed reformation.

Many commentators address the subject of Sarah’s experience in the Egyptian harem, and in the Philistine harem, by suggesting that Abraham’s request reflected his anxiety, unbelief, and distrust of God. They imply that his conduct was culpable, and inconsistent with his character as a servant of God, betraying his infirmity and his disbelief in God’s providence and promise. Moreover, some scholars propose that the reproof of Abraham, communicated by both Pharaoh and Abimelech, was justified on account of his deception and because of the disregard that he demonstrated for the wellbeing of his wife. Such a view is based in a false understanding of true romance, and is a failure to comprehend the sanctifying steps of faith and obedience through which Abraham, together with his wife, was established as the father of all who believe.

The Lord was with Abraham and Sarah

In reality, *the Lord was with Abraham and Sarah* in their sojourn into Egypt, as well as in their encounter with Abimelech, king of the Philistines. Because of this, Abraham possessed wisdom and insight in relation to the cultures of both the Egyptians and the Philistines, recognising the genuine threat that they posed to the welfare of his entire household. Both nations were characterised by self-protective and self-assertive customs, expressed in their suspicion of strangers and cruelty toward travellers. The description of the men of Sodom provides an obvious example of how visitors were treated by civilisations in this period of history, and offers insight into the valid concerns that Abraham had for the wellbeing of his family. He knew that he and Sarah would have to face these dangers as a couple and would need to care for one another as they confronted the perils of the ‘world’.

As we noted in our consideration of the steps of sanctification, the Lord had established Abraham as a prophet in the land of promise. As a prophet, Abraham knew that an attempt would be made upon his life by the Egyptian and Philistine people. Gen 12:12. Gen 20:11. In relation to these threats, he and Sarah would need to work by faith in their individual roles within the family and to stand together for the protection of each other, and in the defence of their family. The particular risk to Abraham’s life was on account of Sarah’s beauty. In a sense, her beauty was a ‘disadvantage’ that resulted in a tenuous existence for Abraham and his household, both in Egypt and in the land of the Philistines. At this point, Sarah understood that Abraham’s vulnerability at the hand of Pharaoh, and Abimelech, had implications for his predestination as the father of a new humanity.

To deal with these threats, Sarah would have to protect Abraham in the way that he had asked of her. In genuine love and care, they both were able to look at the matters and to resolve, in fellowship, how they would proceed. Sarah acted in faith by taking the priority of faith. By faith, she was able to embrace the risk associated with her expression of kindness to Abraham, believing that God would be her defence. In this way, Sarah revealed herself to be a genuine sister in the faith to her husband. On account of her faith, the Lord came and rescued her out of the harem of Pharaoh, and out of the harem of Abimelech, and saved Abraham's life. In this regard, God's miraculous intervention on account of Sarah's faith, resulted in *exanastasis* to Abraham. This ensured that he could continue to be established in his predestination as the 'father of many nations'. Gen 17:4. It is notable that God's judgement upon Egypt and the Philistines, on account of Sarah's faith, fulfilled the word of His Covenant to Abraham, when He said, 'I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you.' Gen 12:3.

Fallen romance in marriage

The romantic model of marriage was exemplified by Adam and Eve. In the garden of Eden, Satan pressed the woman, with a spirit of deception, to be 'like God'. He said to her, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day that you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' Gen 3:4-5. Satan's lie motivated desire within Eve. This desire was covetousness. Jas 4:2-3. By giving ear to Satan's deceitful word, the woman became deluded, seeing herself as the one who, like God, had the capacity to multiply the identities of mankind, and to nurture them with the 'wisdom' that she had received from the knowledge of good and evil.

Eve directed her covetous desire toward Adam with the expectation that he, in turn, would become God-like and would facilitate the romantic image to which she aspired. She did this by feeding him with the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, believing that this would provide the necessary energy for him to serve her agenda. Motivated by the other law within her, Eve imposed her desire upon her husband as being 'the best thing for him, and for their marriage'. However, Adam would never be able to fulfil his wife's desire. This is because, on account of his own law, he would endeavour to rule over her or would yield to her desire by divesting himself of any initiative in his marriage and family. Gen 3:16.

The romantic model of marriage has been a common feature of ministry couples, whose endeavours to 'present well' have simply resulted in dysfunction and isolation. The mode of relating that is driven by fallen desire has produced enmity and disharmony within marriages, and has caused many ministry couples to become fatigued and discouraged in their service of God. With this in view, we have applied ourselves, as a couple, to understand true romance within marriage, as revealed in the pilgrimage of Abraham

and Sarah. Specifically, we have sought illumination regarding how our marriage is delivered from the fallen romance, typified by Adam and Eve, to the fellowship model of marriage exemplified by the faith of Abraham and Sarah. As we observed in this book, the expression of Sarah's faith, which was tried and tested through her encounters in the harems of both Pharaoh and Abimelech, was central to the fulfilment of God's promise that Abraham's descendants would be as 'the stars of the sky in multitude'. Heb 11:11-12.

Not afraid with any terror

Rather than depending on the romantic zeal of Abraham for her safety, Sarah believed in the integrity of God, judging Him as being faithful concerning the promises of the Covenant. By identifying herself as his 'sister', Sarah showed kindness to Abraham, displaying the unwavering confidence that comes through faith in God. Notably, Sarah did not question Abraham; nor did she voice any reservation concerning the implication of this seemingly contrary circumstance upon her own welfare or happiness. Her conduct was, in this regard, 'without a word', and revealed that she feared God and not man. 1Pe 3:1. Mat 10:28.

The apostle Peter encouraged Christian wives to this same faithful conduct, writing, 'For in this manner, in former times, the holy women *who trusted in God* also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are *if you do good and are not afraid with any terror*.' 1Pe 3:5-6. It is clear that Sarah was not the 'victim' of Abraham's fear and anxiety, as some commentators have suggested. Rather, through the trial of faith, she was being prophetically established as the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all, 'awesome as an army with banners!' Gal 4:26. Son 6:10.

Deliverance from fallen romance

In this season, the Lord is visiting us all with deliverance from the romantic model of marriage that is driven by fallen desire, to a genuine fellowship in one Spirit at the tree of life. In this fellowship, a Christian wife can show kindness to her husband, affording him protection from the influence of the culture of the world that would seek to assail his faith. Importantly, this is not driven by a desire for control over her husband, nor by her expectations of marriage and family life that have been informed by her knowledge of good and evil. Instead, by the faith that she has received, the wife is believing God, for the sake of her house and her children. Through her chaste conduct, she reveals that she is trusting in God 'who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did'. Rom 4:17.

It is remarkable to consider that a wife can honour the role of her husband in a Christian marriage, even if he is not accountably fulfilling his mandate as 'head' within the house. With this in mind, the apostle Peter exhorted

believing wives, saying, 'Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.' 1Pe 3:1-2. Without a word, a wife who is standing in the faith of Christ can bring life to her family and protection to her house.

The prophet Isaiah spoke of the protection that rests upon every covenant house, declaring, 'And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: *for upon all the glory shall be a defence.*' Isa 4:5. King David testified that it is *El Shaddai* (God Almighty) who is our defence, saying, 'He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty [*El Shaddai*]. I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust." Surely, He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day.' Psa 91:1-5.

Lorraine and I are rejoicing in the illumination that the Lord is granting to us as an older Christian couple who are continuing to reach forward to the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Php 3:14. Together, we are giving thanks to God for His mercy and grace, through which we are being delivered from our carnal modes of relating to a genuine *agape fellowship* at the tree of life. The 'discomfort' we have experienced over the years as we have considered Sarah's sojourn to the harem of Pharaoh, and to the harem of Abimelech, has been replaced with joy in better understanding the precious gift of faith.