

# The mystery of God

EDITION 1

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# Chapter I

## Overview of the mystery

### Without controversy

- The apostle Paul testified that he had been separated to preach ‘the gospel of God’. Rom 1:1. He specified that this gospel is the message concerning Jesus Christ our Lord, ‘who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh [from the womb of Mary], and [then] declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead’. Rom 1:3-4.
- Elsewhere, Paul described the content of the gospel of God as ‘the mystery of God’. Writing to the Colossians, he said, ‘For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, *to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*’ Col 2:1-3.
- The first point to note from this passage is that true encouragement, and the capacity for participation in the *agape* fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, requires us to know, or be illuminated to, the knowledge of the mystery of God. This knowledge is

demonstrated as understanding when it becomes our culture and we progressively obtain the riches that are promised in the gospel.

- In this statement, we also note that Paul emphasised two fundamental aspects of the mystery of God which we must understand: *both* of the Father *and* of the Son. The aspect of the mystery, which is 'of the Father', pertains to our birth from above as sons of God. The aspect of the mystery, which is 'of Christ', pertains to our regeneration and adoption as sons of men through the Son's everlasting fatherhood.
- Paul further specified the mystery of God in his letter to Timothy, writing, 'And without controversy [meaning, the only true confession, or statement of the gospel] *great is the mystery of godliness*: God was manifested [lit: *manifestly declared, or shown forth*] in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels [*aggelos*], preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.' 1Ti 3:16.
- By introducing the mystery of godliness with the statement 'without controversy', Paul was insisting that this was the *only gospel*. There are no alternatives to this message. In order to be illuminated concerning the mystery of godliness, which is the content of the gospel of God, and to obtain its promises, we must, as Paul did, forsake every other message and religious practice through which we find validation and expression. We must count them as loss and as rubbish to 'gain Christ and be found in Him'. Php 3:7-9. The mystery of godliness is to be our common understanding and confession as believers.

### *God was manifested in the flesh*

- The first statement of the mystery of godliness is that God was manifested in the flesh. The Son was manifest as God in the flesh, and justified in the Spirit, when He was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, through His resurrection from the dead. This was the culmination of the emptying offering of Yahweh, *before*. Let us summarise this offering, which we have detailed further in Chapter 2.
- In his letter to the Philippians, Paul provided a precis of the offering through which Christ was manifest as God in the flesh. Paul's first statement concerning the offering of Yahweh – 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied

Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men' – involved multiple steps. Php 2:5-7.

- To accomplish Their Everlasting Covenant initiative to make man in Their image and likeness, the Holy Spirit first emptied Himself to become the Helper of the Father and the Son. Then, by the capacity of Eternal Spirit from the Holy Spirit, the Son emptied Himself to be begotten of the Father. By Eternal Spirit, the Father emptied Himself to the Son when He declared, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You'. Heb 1:5. Through this declaration, the Son was begotten of the Father. The Father's glory was now only revealed by the Son, beginning with the creation of the heavens and the earth. Joh1:1-3. Joh 1:18. The Son then emptied Himself to become flesh as the Seed of Abraham and the Son of David, when He was born of Mary. At around the age of thirty, He commenced His earthly ministry, which continued for 3 ½ years. Joh 12:27-28. Joh 14:9. These are the stages of offering by which the Son emptied Himself and came in the likeness of men. Php 2:6-7.
- At the last Passover, Jesus was 'found in appearance as a man', where He emptied Himself again. Describing this process, Paul said that Jesus Christ 'humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.' Php 2:8. After three days and three nights, Jesus was begotten from the death of emptying by the word of the Father, who declared a second time, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You'. Heb 5:5. As we noted above, this is when God was manifested in the flesh. Describing this declaration, Paul said, 'Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name'. Php 2:9.

### *Seen by angels*

- The glorified Son of Man was first *seen* by angels when, following His resurrection, He breathed on the disciples and they were born to see their calling as sons of men and sons of God. They were established as the foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem, and as the first angels, or *aggelos* messengers, to the church. Rev 1:20. When they saw the risen Son of Man, they were illuminated to see who they were to become as sons of men and sons of God. This is what it means to be witnesses of the resurrection. Act 2:32. This is what every person who is part of an *aggelos* presbytery is to see and to bear witness of as a messenger proclaiming the gospel of God. 1Jn 1:1-3.

*Preached among the Gentiles and received up in glory*

- Christ's witnesses are those who are joined to the fellowship of *aggelos* presbyteries, having heard the gospel and been illuminated to the mystery of God. This is the gospel that is to be 'preached among the Gentiles'. 1Ti 3:16. Those who receive this message and believe on the glorified Son of Man, are born from above and then baptised into the fellowship of His glorifying offering as members of His body. Only those who believe the gospel of God, and who participate in the process through which the Son of Man was glorified, will themselves be received up in glory.

**What is man?**

- God's Everlasting Covenant initiative to create and bring to glory a multitude of sons who are born of Their life and who are participants in Their fellowship is encapsulated in Their statement, 'Let Us make *man* in Our image, according to Our likeness.' Gen 1:26. Contrary to the common interpretations of man's creation, Adam was *not* the manifestation of a man created in the image and likeness of God. In fact, Paul explained that Adam was 'a *type* of Him [the man] who was to come'. Rom 5:14. In other words, he was not the substance of God's Eternal Covenant initiative. The man who was to come, of whom Adam was a type, is Jesus Christ. Adam is called 'the first man', and was made a man of dust. 1Co 15:47.
- King David recognised that Adam was not the full expression of God's initiative to create man in His image and likeness. He knew what Moses had written in the Scriptures concerning the creation of man. Although armed with this knowledge, he still asked, '*What is man* that You are mindful of him, and *the son of man* that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honour.' Psalms 8:4-5.
- Significantly, Paul quoted this very psalm to explain the implications of Jesus Christ's offering journey from the last Passover until He declared it to be finished on Calvary. Heb 2:5-8. Having quoted the psalm, Paul then explained, '*But we see Jesus*, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, *in bringing many sons to glory*, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who



sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them *brethren*.' Heb 2:9-11.

- Paul was saying that the declaration of Jesus as the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, answered the questions 'what is man?' and 'what is the son of man?'. In other words, the risen Christ was manifest as the Man who was made in the image and likeness of God. Evidently, the Everlasting Covenant initiative, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness', was complete when Jesus proclaimed from the cross, 'It is finished!' Gen 1:26. Joh 19:30. This was declared to be so when He was begotten from the dead by the Father who said a second time, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You'. Heb 5:5.
- Importantly, Paul explained that through His offering journey, Jesus became the captain, or author, of our salvation. As we are joined to the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, we are being made like Him; we are being made into the image and likeness of God as sons of men and sons of God. In other words, the fellowship of His offering and sufferings is the only way that a person can be saved and can obtain the inheritance that belongs to their predestination as a son of man and a son of God. Let us consider this seminal point, further.

## The first man and the last Adam

- The apostle Paul detailed the mystery of godliness in his first letter to the Corinthians. He launched his statement with the point, 'There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory.' 1Co 15:41. Reading these words, we are reminded that Abraham received faith from the word of the Lord to see and believe that his sons would be as the stars of heaven. Gen 15:1,5-6.
- Having directed our attention this way, Paul then said, '*So also is the resurrection of the dead*. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.' 1Co 15:42-44. We see in this statement the two dimensions of Christ's offering as the Lamb of God and the Seed of God – descending as the scapegoat, and ascending as the Lord's goat. Speaking of this offering, Jesus said, 'The hour has come that the Son of Man should be *glorified*. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain

of wheat falls into the ground and dies [that is, sown], it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.' Joh 12:23-24.

- The sowing of Christ's natural, mortal body began in the garden of Gethsemane when the Father gave the cup of our cursing and corruption to Christ. He drank this cup and became sin. Once He took on our corruption, He began to be sown as a seed that went into the ground to die two kinds of death. We also were sown with Christ when we were joined to His offering, suffering journey from Gethsemane. One kind of death was to end sin and corruption, and the other was to multiply life. These two kinds of death were typified in the Law Covenant by the two goats that were offered on the Day of Atonement. Christ was sown as a natural, corruptible man as the *scapegoat*, and He was sown as a spiritual and incorruptible man as the *Lord's goat*. In Chapter 2, we have described these two dimensions of His offering in further detail.
- Paul then stated that these points were explained by the statements, 'And so it is written, "The *first man* Adam became a living being." *The last Adam became a life-giving spirit*. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.' 1Co 15:45-49.

### *The first man*

- Adam was 'the first man'. His creation was the first stage in the process through which man was made in the image and likeness of God. As the first man, Adam was a living soul. 1Co 15:45. By this, Paul meant that every identity would be brought forth from his fatherhood through the process of procreation. We could say that Adam, and the identities brought forth from him, were predestined to sonship as men in the image and likeness of God.
- Following his creation as a living soul, Adam was placed by God in the garden of Eden where he fulfilled the works that the Father had chosen for him to do. The fulfilment of these works did not indicate that Adam had chosen what God had chosen for him. Adam's choice was not whether or not to exercise dominion over the creation; rather, it was whether he would believe, accept and embrace the call to be a

son in fellowship with Yahweh *Elohim*, and reveal Them through this work.

- God prepared Adam for this choice and warned him of the consequences of choosing something other than the glorious predestination that the Father had chosen for him. The Lord God said to Adam, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.' Gen 2:16-17. The death nominated by God in this statement *was the death of the cross*. It would be the means of judgement or recovery.
- The death of the cross was foreshadowed for all men by the lamb that was offered for Adam and Eve after they had fallen, but before the Lord sent them out of the garden. This lamb was slain as a sin offering for the atonement of their sins and to impute righteousness to them, signified by the covering of skins. Gen 3:21.
- It is significant that this offering provision was made for Adam and Eve prior to the choice that they had to make outside the garden, as to whether or not they would pursue their predestination as sons of men and sons of God in the image and likeness of God. This provision reflected the reality of Christ's offering for the whole of mankind. As Paul explained, writing, 'But God demonstrates His own love toward us, *in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*'. Rom 5:8. This atonement was offered to all men.
- The offering of the lamb established a choice for Adam even though he was sent from the garden. He could now participate in the death of Christ by making offering at the gate of Eden and walking in obedience to the word of the Lord that was proclaimed through the cherubim. As Adam walked in this manner, the ground was cursed for his sake. This is because he joined Christ who carried the curse of our death in His death on the cross. Gal 3:13. Fellowship in this death was the means by which Adam was recovered to his predestination as a man and as a son of God.
- This choice was then given to Adam and Eve's children, Cain and Abel. Abel chose offering, and became a prophet who died the martyr's death with Christ. Cain rejected his participation in the sin offering and spurned his obedience to the word of God pertaining to his sanctification. Consequently, Cain, and all of his children, died

with Christ and passed into the death of eternal judgement in the waters of judgement in the days of Noah.

- As we have been considering in this present season, Yahweh initiated the recovery of mankind to their predestination as sons in the image and likeness of God, in Abraham. That is, Abraham replaced Adam as the beginning of a new humanity. 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 Son then gave Himself to Abraham to become his Son according to the flesh. Through His offering, Abraham's children would be brought to glory in the image and likeness of God. 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 Abraham's fatherhood. Gen 15:5.
- Through Christ's death on the cross, a choice has been established for every person. We must choose what has been offered in the death of Christ and accept the implications of how we die with Christ – either eternal death or eternal life. This is the polarising effect of the word of the cross. The two thieves who were crucified with Christ on the day that He died, represent the two possible responses to the choice established by Christ's death on the cross.
- Having been born of the Spirit, we make this choice every day as we, by the Holy Spirit, set our minds on things above and walk after the Spirit. Col 3:2. Rom 8:3-6. Each day, we participate in the seven wounding events of Christ's offering, where the curse was manifest. However, having been conformed to His emptying death, we also participate in the seven redeeming and glorifying implications of His offering and sufferings. This is the implication of taking up our cross, which is Christ's cross, and dying with Him, *daily*. Mat 16:24. 1Co 15:31.

### *The last Adam*

- Paul identified Jesus as 'the last Adam', saying, 'The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit'. 1Co 15:45. Evidently, there was a process through which Christ became the last Adam. This means that He was not manifest as the last Adam at the last Passover. Rather, He was the Son of God and Son of Abraham according to the flesh, or the dust of the earth. He was like us. As Paul said, 'in all things He had to be

made like His brethren' and He came 'in the likeness of sinful flesh'. Heb 2:17. Rom 8:3. Through His offering journey, He was to be glorified as the substance of a man in the image and likeness of God.

- In the course of His offering journey as the Lamb of God, He testified before the Sanhedrin to being Christ, the Son of God. However, He said to them, '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. This would be the outcome of His offering. Because of this statement, the Sanhedrin condemned Jesus to death. Luk 22:71. Mar 14:63.
- As we have already noted, Jesus was manifest as the last Adam following His resurrection from the dead. After three days and three nights, He returned to His physical body, which had been made immortal and perfect through His offering journey. Having risen from the death of emptying to the cross, Jesus Christ was now God the Son, Son of God, and Son of Man, in an incorruptible and immortal body. Truly, 'Immanuel', God with us, was fully revealed. Isa 7:14. As the last Adam, Jesus Christ was the full manifestation of a man in the image and likeness of God. He is 'the perfect Man' into whose stature and fullness we are to grow up. Eph 4:13.
- Describing the implications of Christ's resurrection from the death of emptying, Paul wrote, 'Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and *given Him the name which is above every name*'. Php 2:9. This is His name as the Lord Jesus Christ. He was given this name, so that 'at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father'. Php 2:10-11.
- His name 'Lord Jesus Christ' is the name that declares that He is the full manifestation and expression of the Godhead as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in bodily form. Receiving this name was necessary, for we are not able to be made man in the image and likeness of the triune God, who said, 'Let Us make man in Our image and according to Our likeness', unless we are made complete in Christ as members of His body. Col 2:9-10. His name is now declared through the Melchizedek order, as Isaiah prophesied. He wrote, 'For unto us a Child *is* born, unto us a Son *is* given; and the government *will be* upon His shoulder.

And His name *will be* called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.’ Isa 9:6.

- The four aspects of this name, which the Son received when He was manifest as the immortal Son of Man in the image and likeness of God, correspond with the four faces of His Melchizedek administration, symbolised by a lion, an ox, an eagle and a man. Importantly, having received this name, and ascending as the Son of Man to His throne, where He was before, He gave gifts to men – ‘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, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ’. Eph 4:11-13. We will consider this ministry further in Chapter 5.
- Through His offering journey, and then resurrection, Jesus Christ moved forward from being the Son of Abraham and David after the flesh, and the Son of God, to become the full expression of the image and likeness of God as man, revealed as the last Adam. Significantly, as the last Adam, He became a life-giving Spirit. That is, He became the *source* of eternal salvation, as Everlasting Father, to all who obey Him. What does this mean for us?

### Born to see and to enter the kingdom of God

- The last Adam’s first action as a life-giving spirit was to breathe on the disciples and give to them the Holy Spirit. Joh 20:22. By this means, they were born from above as sons of the Father. 1Pe 1:23. However, this was the beginning of the first aspect of the fulfilment of the mystery of God – ‘of the Father’. Through this action, they were made sons of Abraham and sons of God. We recall that at the last Passover, Jesus was found having this appearance. Php 2:8. Heb 5:8-9.
- The image of the man of dust is now found in Abraham, who is our father according to the flesh. Gen 13:16. He became our father according to the flesh when we received the faith that belongs to God. Gal 3:7. This was the same faith that Abraham received when the Word of the Lord came to Abraham in a vision saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield [of faith], your exceedingly great reward’. Gen 15:1. By this faith, Abraham was illuminated to see that his children, who would be as numerous as the dust of the earth, would be brought to glory as the stars of heaven. The faith of

Abraham is now our motive in life, and this faith gives us access to the riches of sonship that is made available to us in Christ.

- To become as the stars of heaven, the disciples needed to be baptised with the baptism with which Christ was baptised, as He journeyed from Yahweh's *agape* meal at the last Passover, to Calvary. Mar 10:38-39. This was the journey through which He was glorified as the Son of Man. This is true for everyone who is born from above as a son of God. As we journey with Christ, we move forward with Him from sons of Abraham and sons of God to the full expression of the image and likeness of God as man, the last Adam. Explaining this implication of the fatherhood of the last Adam, Paul wrote, 'As we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.' 1Co 15:49.
- We begin to become man in the image and likeness of God, through baptism. Baptism is into the new Man, Christ, who is the last Adam. He is our Everlasting Father, from whom we receive the regeneration and the adoption, for He is our resurrection and life. Joh 11:25. We are His seed because of His travail for us. Isa 53:10-11.
- A key implication of our baptism, which we must understand as a cultural reality, is that when we died with Christ, we joined His *emptying* death. Paul exhorted us to this implication of baptism, saying, '*Let this mind be in you* which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but *emptied Himself*.' Php 2:5-7. As we will consider in our next chapter, 'emptying' is foundational to the offering of Yahweh, and it is only possible by the capacity of one Spirit. It is a motivation and capacity that belongs to the *divine nature*; it is not simply a mindset that a person adopts.
- The emptying of the Son to reveal the Father and the Holy Spirit, and to bring a multitude of sons to glory, was manifest through His *obedience*. Php 2:8. Sons of God who have been baptised into Christ's death, and who are setting their minds on the Spirit, likewise empty themselves *through obedience to Christ's word*. As they receive this word, they are joined by the Holy Spirit to the fellowship of the presbytery, which is the fellowship of the Father and the Son. 1Jn 1:1-3. In this context, they participate in offering *through obedience*. Paul emphasised this point, explaining that Christ 'became the author of eternal salvation to all who *obey Him*'. Heb 5:9.

- Jesus emptied Himself, by Eternal Spirit, from the *agape* meal of Yahweh at the last Passover, to Calvary. Having been born of God and baptised into Christ, the *agape* meal is the provision for our participation in the offering of Yahweh as a son of God and as a mortal member of the body of Christ. Proceeding from this meal, we receive our daily circumstances as a participation in the descending and ascending dimensions of Christ's offering, which the Holy Spirit is leading us in. We accept that suffering is the means by which we are ceasing from sin, as our alternative options and projections are being revealed and circumcised from us through chastening. 1Pe 4:1-2. However, we are also being regenerated as a son of man, and the divine nature is being multiplied to us as our life, as we are ascending with Christ.

### *Members of the body*

- By the Holy Spirit, our sonship life is emptied and hidden in the Father, and our preoccupation in the church age is the revelation of the immortal Son as mortal members of His corporate body. Paul exhorted the Colossians to this implication of baptism, writing, 'If then you were raised with Christ [by being born again], seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above [having the same mind as Christ, who emptied Himself all the way to the death of the cross], not on things on the earth. For you died [through baptism], and your life [sonship *zoe*] is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him *in glory* [i.e., you will have been glorified as a son of man and son of God with an immortal spiritual body; you will be just like Jesus who is God in the flesh]. Col 3:1-4.
- Through baptism, and by one Spirit, we are made members of Christ's immortal body. Emphasising this point, Paul wrote, 'For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many.' 1Co 12:12-14. As members of Christ's body, we are mortal as we journey through life, progressing in blamelessness, revealing Him in our mortality. This was the apostle Paul's motivation, testifying, 'That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being



conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.' Php 3:10-11.

## Bringing many sons to glory

- We began this chapter with the seminal point that there are two aspects of the mystery of God: 'of the Father' and 'of Christ'. Col 2:2. Those who remain hidden with Christ in God, and journey each day with Him in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, will receive the fulfilment of these two aspects of the mystery of God on the day of resurrection.
- The apostle Paul was referring to these implications of our pilgrimage as believers, likening our glorification as sons of God and sons of men to the attainment of a heavenly body and a spiritual body. He identified these two aspects of our one inheritance, saying, 'For this corruptible must put on incorruption [a heavenly body], *and* this mortal must put on immortality [a spiritual body]'. 1Co 15:53-54.

## *The heavenly body*

- Paul likened the implications of baptism into Christ's emptying death as a member of the body, to building upon a foundation with different materials. In this regard, he wrote, 'For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; *for the Day will declare it*, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.' 1Co 3:11-15.
- Of course, this raises the questions, 'What is this building?' and 'Where is it being built?'. Jesus addressed these questions at the last Passover, saying to His disciples, 'Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many *mansions*; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.' Joh 14:1-2. We learn from Paul that this mansion, prepared for us by Christ in God the Father, is a *heavenly body*. He wrote, 'For we know that if our earthly house [our mortal body], this tent, is destroyed, we have a building [a body] from God [the Father], a house not made with hands, *eternal in the heavens*.' 2Co 5:1.

- Our heavenly body is the same as the body that Christ received when He was begotten as the Son of God from the bosom of the Father, *before*. Our heavenly body is from the Father. It is without sin, as the apostle John noted, writing, 'Whoever has been born of God *does not sin* [is incorruptible], for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God'. 1Jn 3:9. Paul was referring to this aspect of the mystery of God when he wrote, 'The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in *incorruption*'. 1Co 15:42.
- Our heavenly body, hidden in God, is progressively being made glorious as we walk after the Spirit in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. That is, as we remain hidden with Christ in God, and reveal Christ and the Father through obedient offering, our body in heaven is being built with gold, silver and precious stones. However, when we walk after the flesh, according to the sight of our own eyes and understanding, seeking to reveal ourselves, we build with wood, hay and stubble. The fire of God's judgement, which we experience in the course of our Christian pilgrimage, reveals how we have been building. This is a mercy so that we can forsake our own way and be established in the way that leads to eternal life.

### *The spiritual body*

- In the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, we are being brought to glory as sons of Christ, our Everlasting Father. In this fellowship, we are joined to the process of *regeneration*, through which we are being changed from glory to glory, into the image of the Son. On the day of resurrection, when the trumpet sounds, those who have continued steadfastly in the faith, will receive their immortal, spiritual body, as sons of men. Col 1:22-23. 1Co 15:58. Heb 3:14. Referring to this dimension of God's purpose for us, Paul wrote, 'It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.' 1Co 15:44.
- Paul described the attainment of our spiritual body, through regeneration, as the redemption of our body on the day of resurrection. This is the fulfilment of our adoption as sons of the Son. Consider the words of Paul, who explained, 'Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our [immortal] body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance

[through steadfast participation in Christ's offering and sufferings].'  
Rom 8:23-25.

- When we receive our spiritual body, which is the body of immortality, the work of regeneration that is forming within us the image of Christ, the last Adam, will be completed. This now is the adoption. We will have the likeness of Christ, our Everlasting Father, who is the image and likeness of God. We will then bear, in our immortality, now having moved beyond adoption, the fulness of the image of the heavenly Man.

### *The resurrection*

- On the day of resurrection, we will receive our heavenly body in which our name and glory presently resides. It will clothe our mortal body after our mortal body has been changed to immortality by the word of Christ. This will occur when the last trumpet is blown by the archangel, Michael, to declare that the day of resurrection and immortality has come. The glory of our immortal, physical body, will be clothed with our heavenly body, which we will now wear as the expression of our glory. As man, we will look like God. And as sons of God, we will look like man.
- Referring to this event, Paul declared, 'Behold, I tell you a *mystery*: We shall not all sleep, but *we shall all be changed* – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption [the heavenly body from the Father], and this mortal must put on immortality [partakers of Christ's spiritual body]. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, *and* this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory".' 1Co 15:51-54.
- In this passage, Paul clarified that although all those who belong to Christ will be changed, not everyone will have died. There will be a great multitude who are alive on the day of Christ's second coming. What is clear is that those who have previously died in Christ, will be raised with their immortal body from Christ, first. Then, we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, where we are clothed with our heavenly body. 1Th 4:16-17.

- Christ's life, as *exanastasis* life, sustains us until we, as sons and daughters of Abraham, are made like Him when we see Him as He is. Proclaiming this wonderful promise, the apostle John wrote, 'Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.' 1Jn 3:2-3.

# Chapter 2

## Emptying

### Yahweh *Elohim*

- Before we overview the unfolding of God's Eternal Covenant purpose to make man in the image and likeness of God, let us remind ourselves of who Yahweh *Elohim* is and how He lives. Our beginning point for understanding the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and Their covenant offering, is *not* the expression of Their one life. This would be the revelation of *Elohim*. Rather, Their first expression is 'Yahweh', who is one Spirit. Moses established this point, declaring to the children of Israel, 'Hear, O Israel: The LORD [Yahweh] our God [*Elohim*], the LORD is one!' Deu 6:4.
- Further establishing this point, and its significance, Jesus proclaimed, '*God is Spirit*, and those who worship Him must worship *in spirit and truth*.' Joh 4:24. The beginning point of expression is one Spirit. Then, from the fellowship of one Spirit, we see the expression of each Person, which is the truth of Their name.
- Beginning with this orientation, we recognise that Yahweh is '*Elohim* I AM', the three Persons and sum of all diversity. Through offering, They are the manifestation of one life as Yahweh because They are one Spirit. If the beginning point of Their fellowship, and the

expression of Their life, is not one Spirit, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit would be collegial.

- The substance of an identity is expressed through their name. We note this principle in Moses' interaction with God, who said to him, 'You have found grace in My sight, and I *know you by name*.' Exo 33:17. In this regard, name is one's identity. This is true in the Godhead. Each Person has a name – the name of the Father, the name of the Son and the name of the Holy Spirit. Mat 28:19. Their name is Their identity.
- The word, or volition of a person as an identity, is their self-expression. It is the communication of their name. In the Scriptures, we can distinguish between the word of the Father, the word of the Son, and the word of the Holy Spirit. From Yahweh, the word of the Father is revealed by His only begotten Son, Yahweh Son. However, Yahweh Son is, in His time within the Eternal Covenant, revealed by the Father.
- The communication of a person's name is the revealing of the glory of who they are. In response to Moses' request, 'Please show me Your glory', Yahweh said to Moses, 'I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.' Exo 33:18-19. Their glory is Their character, Their capacities, and Their attributes.
- What is God's substance? The substance of the three identities in God is Spirit. As we noted earlier, Their worship, which is Their communication and offering to each Other, is in Spirit and is the expression of all reality, meaning truth. The character of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is love. 1Jn 4:16. The activity of love is revealed through freely giving. Giving of self is an action of faith, not trading. It is therefore revealing *freedom*.
- The purpose of an identity giving itself in offering is to multiply Their glory so that it can be given to another. Through the emptying process of offering, Their glory becomes, through a birthing or creative process, multiplied life. Accordingly, the birth or creation is able to reveal the one who brought them into being. Gen 1:26. Psa 19:1-4. If this is not true, then nothing was given. We note, for example, that Jesus emptied to become of bondservant. In this regard, He became the possession of the Father. He also became a servant

to us. We know this to be true because Paul said, 'When Christ [the Person] *who is our life* appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory'. Col 3:4. Evidently, the Person and the life are the one thing.

- Christ gave Himself to the Father. The Father gave the Son to us. As Jesus Himself noted, 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.' Joh 3:16. Paul further explained, 'He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?' Rom 8:32.
- He, when given to us, took on the form of a servant. And now, He is giving to us all things that come from God. This is the reason why He came. His appearing and offering reveals love, for He gave Himself for us. Eph 5:2. The fruit of this life, from the beginning, is a multiplication of sons of men who become sons of God. That is, love is multiplying itself as life through the multiplication of identities.

### *God is love*

- The apostle John exhorted us to love one another, writing, 'Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for *God is love*.' 1Jn 4:7-8. Clearly, love is essential to God's nature and expression. To understand the implications of being made in the image and likeness of God, we must, therefore, comprehend and apprehend the love of God. Eph 3:18-19.
- As we noted above, love is manifest by giving, through which life and identities are multiplied. The 'giving' that belongs to love is revealed through the action of 'emptying'. The fruit of emptying is glorification. This was exemplified by the offering of Christ who emptied Himself to reveal the Father and the Holy Spirit, and to reveal us by pioneering the pathway upon which we could be glorified as men in the image and likeness of God.
- Christ's offering demonstrates the principle that the one who empties themselves, is doing so to be given by another. Paul highlighted this point, saying, 'Although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but *emptied Himself*, taking the form of a bond-servant [slave], and being made in the likeness of men.' Php 2:6-7. Having emptied to become a slave, He now belonged

to the Father. The Father had not taken dominion over the Son's faith; rather, His slavehood was the fruit of giving Himself by emptying.

- We see that emptying is giving oneself to glorify another. And yet, in doing so, the one who empties is himself being glorified. In this regard, the outcome of Christ's emptying death was His glorification as the Son of God and Son of Man in the image and likeness of God. This happened by the word of the Father and with power according to the Spirit of holiness. King Solomon noted this principle, declaring, 'The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.' Pro 11:25.
- When a person empties themselves to reveal another, they are now only seen through the one to whom they emptied to reveal. That is, the 'emptier' is revealed by the one to whom they emptied. This reveals the character of love as a 'moral giving attribute'. This attribute is particularly apparent in the emptying of the Father. As we will consider later in this chapter, the Father emptied Himself to beget Yahweh Son as the Son of God. In doing so, the Father is now only revealed by the Son. John highlighted this point, writing, 'No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him'. Joh 1:18.
- Emptying in this manner is only possible by the capacity of Eternal Spirit, from the Holy Spirit. Heb 9:14. In this regard, the Holy Spirit brings the multiplication of the life of Yahweh *Elohim* as the El Shaddai power of God. This is the power that enables giving-love to function, demonstrating the character of the offerer who is giving, and the name of the one who is given.
- Wonderfully, Jesus said that we would receive this power when the Holy Spirit comes upon us. In other words, when a person is baptised with the Holy Spirit, they receive power to participate in the emptying offering of Yahweh. In doing so, they are able to reveal Christ, and the members of His body, causing life and thanksgiving to abound to God. As Paul observed, 'For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God'. 2Co 4:15.
- The attributes of God are the sum of His diversity, properly given by love, through the 'Yahweh' dimension of one Lord in *Elohim*. This is the life of God multiplied through offering *in freedom*. The principle of freedom affirms the point that *Elohim* is not an expression of



mutual dependence. In other words, *Elohim* is not Yahweh in three parts. Rather, it is three Persons who are the sum of all diversity through offering love.

## Emptying before

- Emptying to reveal another is the nature of offering through which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit extended Their covenant life and fellowship to mankind as an Everlasting Covenant. We can identify seven actions of emptying that belong to this offering.
- *First*, the Holy Spirit emptied Himself to become the Helper of the Father and 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.
- *Second*, by Eternal Spirit, Yahweh Son emptied His glory into the hands of the Father. The apostle Paul highlighted this dimension of emptying, writing, concerning Christ, 'although He existed in the form of God, did not regard *equality* with God a thing to be grasped, but *emptied Himself*'. Php 2:6-7.
- The *third emptying action* was by the Father. By Eternal Spirit, the Father emptied His glory as Father and Word to Yahweh Son when He declared, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You'. Heb 1:5. Through this declaration, the Son was begotten of the Father. This birthing action was by the Holy Spirit. Heb 3:7. 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 as the Son of God. Joh 6:63.
- The Father's glory was then to be proclaimed and known *only* through the Son of God as the Word of the Father. The apostle John made this point clear, writing, 'No one has seen God [the Father] at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has *declared Him* [as the Word]'. Joh 1:18.
- The emptying action of the Son, through which He now revealed the Father as the Son of God, was not only manifest through His birth. Rather, He continued to empty and reveal the Father, as He proceeded

from Him to create the heavens and the earth and proclaim the word of the Father as I AM.

### Emptying to become flesh

- The Son of God emptied Himself to become flesh as the Seed of Abraham and the Son of David, when He was born of the virgin Mary. In this *fourth action* of emptying, the Son of God emptied Himself, laying 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 physical body, and a human soul and spirit. Heb 2:17. Paul summarised this aspect of emptying, writing that Christ took the form of a bonds slave and came in the likeness of men. Php 2:7.
- During His 3½ year ministry, the Son of God revealed only the Father, making Him known. At the conclusion of this work, He 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; so how can you say, “Show us the Father”?’ Joh 14:9.

### Emptying as the Lamb of God

- The *fifth action of emptying* was as the Son of Man. From the last Passover, as the Son of Man and Son of God, Christ emptied Himself to the death of the cross. He did this through seven wounding events. Focusing our attention on this aspect of Christ’s emptying, Paul wrote, ‘And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross’. Php 2:8.
- The death of the cross included emptying into the great void of forgetfulness. This place of forgetfulness is the sum of all judgement and exclusion for those who choose the folly of darkness, summed up as a lie that is against the truth. Jas 3:14. Jesus emptied Himself in this manner to save mankind from darkness by destroying it, and then redeeming and regenerating mankind to His full measure as the last Adam. The Lord’s goat and the scapegoat illustrate these two dimensions of His saving work. When we look at the two goats, we are beholding the Lamb of God.

### *The scapegoat*

- The dimension of Christ's offering, symbolised by the scapegoat, revealed Him to be the conquering Slave of God. Through His descending journey as the Son of Man, He took every thought and expression that sets itself as an alternative to the word of truth captive to Himself, and He destroyed the devil who has the power of death. 2Co 10:5-6. He did this to release those who, through the fear of death, live by the other law and are, consequently, captive to Satan and to the law of sin and death. Heb 2:14-16. Rom 7:23. He found all the sheep who heard His voice and responded with repentance and faith, and He gathered them to Himself. We see in this descending dimension of His offering as the Lamb of God, the expression of the face of a lion (revealing kingship) and the face of a man (revealing His shepherding initiative).
- As the lion of Judah, Jesus conquered and destroyed sin and death. He did this, having been made sin by the Father. Sin is falling short of the glory of God. Rom 3:23. It refers to every thought, action, and expression motivated by the other law. The other law was fathered in mankind when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, believing Satan's lie that they could become the source of their own expression and destiny. As the corporate body of sin, Christ became the embodiment of this sin of projection that sought to be 'like God'.
- As He progressively emptied Himself to the death of the cross, through seven wounding events, He condemned sin in His flesh. Rom 8:3. He did this by progressively exploring every expression of mankind that had set itself against God, exhausting, judging and destroying its capacity to be an alternative choice. He emptied in this manner until He had gone to the end of all the options of nothingness. By 'alternative options of nothingness', we mean 'the lies fathered by Satan that oppose the truth of God's word and will'. They were circumcised from Him and destroyed, through each wounding event, and were left in the sea of God's forgetfulness. That is, He emptied them into the void of forgetfulness and nothingness.
- Note that, in the beginning, the Son created this void from within Himself, into which He placed the heavens and the earth. Joh 1:2-3. As Moses recorded, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep [lit: 'abyss']. And the Spirit of God was hovering over

the face of the waters [describing the word of the Everlasting Covenant that would fill the void].’ Gen 1:1-2.

- As the great Shepherd, Jesus emptied to the very lowest parts of the earth to find and gather to Himself every sheep who would hear His voice, forsake living according to the iniquitous lies fathered by Satan, and follow Him. Testifying of this ministry, through His offering, Jesus said, ‘I am the good shepherd. *The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep* ... I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; *and I lay down My life for the sheep*. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and *they will hear My voice*; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.’ Joh 10:11,14-16.

### *The Lord’s goat*

- The Son exposed all of these elements of the lie as darkness. He did this with the light of the only true choice. This choice has substance. It was symbolised and epitomised as the Lord’s goat. Through seven offering steps as the Lord’s goat, Christ proclaimed all reality, and all fellowship, and light, through the shedding of His blood. In this regard, He is the proclamation of the revelation of the light of God’s glory and love. This light, proclaimed from the Lord’s goat, is the *substance* of faith, hope and love. This was Yahweh *Elohim* giving Himself to us in Eternal Covenant. Identifying these three elements as the substance of the life and fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim*, the apostle Paul declared, ‘And now *abide* faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love [*agape*].’ 1Co 13:13.
- We could say that as Christ emptied all the lies and alternative choices and expressions to nothingness in the lowest parts of the sea of God’s forgetfulness, all that was left is what had been progressively exalted as the only true choice – the life and fellowship of God’s covenant.
- A person who is joined to the process through which the alternative choices motivated by the other law are being dealt with, are also being filled with the fullness of God. Consequently, they will only make one choice. Their confession will be the same as King David’s, who declared, ‘*One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek*: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple. For in the

time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock.' Psa 27:4-5.

- We see in this ascending dimension of His offering as the Lamb of God, the expression of the face of an ox (revealing a prophetic priesthood). In this regard, the Son fulfilled the prophetic word concerning the name and obedience of every son of God and, through the shedding of His blood, multiplied the life of God to become our life. Furthermore, when He ascended to the bosom of the Father, He brought with Him the names of every son of God. This aspect of His ascension revealed the expression of the face of an eagle.

### *Pioneering the highway of holiness*

- Christ as Yahweh Son, Son of God, and Son of Man, was the Father's only begotten Son. He fulfilled the offering journey of Yahweh *Elohim*, until it was finished on the cross. His offering journey pioneered the highway of holiness to the Father's house; this was a journey from earth to heaven. Isa 35:8-10. The highway of holiness has been given to us to walk on so that we can be progressively glorified as sons of men and sons of God as we follow Him in the path of discipleship that He pioneered.
- We noted above that as the Seed of the Father, Christ took our names with Him on His offering journey. Through His offering work, He fulfilled all of the works that belong to our sonship. Isa 26:12. When Christ declared, from the cross, that His overcoming work was finished, He was lifted out of the death of sin and darkness by the hands of the Father. Joh 19:30. Luk 23:46. He was taken to the Father's bosom, which was the place of fellowship from which the Eternal Covenant had proceeded. It is where He was *before*. However, at this point, the Son was not seated on His own throne with the glory that He had *before*. He was brought to the bosom of the Father, meaning the throne of the Father.
- As He was received into the bosom of the Father, our names were hidden with Him, there. The bosom of the Father is where the glory of Yahweh Son was kept guarded and hidden in God. It was the place where Yahweh Son's life was preserved, to be revealed on the day of His resurrection, as resurrection life.

## The resurrection from the death of emptying

- Christ's body, although already immortal and perfected as a Son of Man, lay in the grave for three days and nights. After this time, He returned to His body, raising it from death as He was declared to be the Son of God with power as the Son of Man, by the resurrection from the dead. Rom 1:4. This was the second time that the Father declared, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You'. Heb 1:5. Importantly, He was *not* raised from the death of sin and corruption through this declaration, for He had already been drawn out of this judgement by the hands of the Father. Psa 18:16. Rather, He was raised from the death of having been fully *emptied*!
- As we noted in our overview of the gospel of God, this was the full manifestation of a man in the image and likeness of God. Christ was now manifest as the Son of God and the Son of Man. He was clothed with His incorruptible, heavenly body from the Father and with a spiritual body that had been immortalised through the seven wounding events that He suffered. The finished Everlasting Covenant was now manifest by the glorified Son of Man.
- Once initiated, *before*, from the bosom of the Father, which is the throne of the Father in the covenant of Yahweh, the Everlasting Covenant had a beginning and an end. The Everlasting Covenant was accomplished as the work of God through Christ, who, as the word of God the Father, was the expression of the love, faith and hope of God. His work, by Eternal Spirit, was to begin and end (or accomplish), in time, the eternal purpose of God. This was completed when He said, 'It is finished'. Joh 19:30. This is the reason why the glorified Son of Man, identifies Himself as 'the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.' Rev 22:13.
- We recognise that the Everlasting Covenant has a beginning and an end. Christ, who is the full manifestation of this finished work, proclaims to us the word through which we can be joined to Yahweh's covenant and be made into the image and likeness of God. The word of the cross brings us to the valley of decision in the lower parts of the earth, where, by the mercies of God, we can choose, through repentance and faith, to join ourselves to Yahweh's covenant. The two thieves on the cross represent this decision and its implications.
- Those who choose life, then follow in the way of salvation that Christ pioneered, participating each day in the fellowship of His offering and

sufferings. In this fellowship they are being regenerated as a son of man, and fulfilling the works that belong to their name as a son of God. By continuing in this glorifying process now, they are being made like the Son. On the day of resurrection, they will appear like Him, for they will receive their glorified, incorruptible, spiritual body, which is the substance of His body. Let's consider this further.

## The New Covenant of the Spirit

- Having been 'declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead', Jesus Christ then began to minister as an immortal man in His glorified body. Rom 1:4. He ministered to His disciples as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, by the power of endless '*zoe*' life. Heb 7:16. This He did by breathing the Holy Spirit upon them as the incorruptible seed of God the Father, causing them to be born again as sons of God. Joh 20:22. 1Pe 1:23.
- The *sixth aspect of emptying* is demonstrated by the Holy Spirit, who has emptied Himself to be given to us by the Father and the Son, so that we can be brought to glory as sons of God and sons of men through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ as members of His body. Jesus described this emptying of the Holy Spirit, saying to His disciples, 'Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgement, because the ruler of this world is judged.' Joh 16:7-11.
- For this to be activated within us, we must first become a temple of the Holy Spirit. 1Co 6:19. Our body became a temple of the Holy Spirit when the Son breathed on us through His word, and gave to us the Holy Spirit, causing us to be born again. However, we must also receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit in order to empty ourselves and participate in the fellowship of offering through which we are glorified as sons of God.
- On the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was sent to us by the Father and the Son to become our Lord and to lead us into a full appropriation of all that is true. Joh 16:13. 2Co 3:17. That is, the Holy Spirit enables us to possess God Himself as an everlasting possession.

The apostle John described this as eternal life, writing, 'And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding [through the anointing of the Holy Spirit], 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.*' 1Jn 5:20. 1Jn 2:20,27.

- The Father and the Son gave the dispensation of the church age *to the Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit has emptied Himself to our hearts, and we have become His temple. He is not revealing Himself to us. He is revealing the Father and the Son to us. As Jesus noted, 'He [the Holy Spirit] will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.' Joh 16:14-15. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is revealing each of us to one another as members of Christ's body! Our names as sons of God are hidden in Christ in God and we are known now in this age as members of Christ. Col 3:3-4.

### Following after Christ

- The *seventh aspect of emptying* is seen in us, who have been born again as sons of God. Through baptism, we are joined to Christ's offering so that we can reveal Christ to this world as members of His body. Jesus explained this point to His disciples, saying, 'But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.' Act 1:8.
- As we considered in Chapter 1, the Holy Spirit enables us to empty our new-born identity into Christ so that we can reveal Him by joining His offering and by participating in Yahweh *Elohim's agape* meal as members of the body of Christ. When we were baptised into Christ, our new-born identity was hidden with Christ in God, and Christ became our life. Col 3:1-3. Our preoccupation is to reveal Christ as members of His body. Our baptism is into the emptying death of Christ, through which He was glorified as the Son of Man in the image and likeness of God. We are to set our mind on things above. This means, we are to have the same mind as Christ who, 'although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself'. Php 2:6-7.
- The love of God is *daily* poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Rom 5:5. It is poured into our heart so that we can know the things that have been freely given to us by God. 1Co 2:12. With this



knowledge, and the capacity of Eternal Spirit, we are enabled to function as members of Christ's body, and to serve in the temple of the Father as kings and priests. We serve the Father in the world, according to the order of Melchizedek. We are to minister the *zoe* life of the Father to the nations by the capacity of the Holy Spirit. This is the power of endless life. This is the New Covenant of the Holy Spirit. 2Co 3:6.

## The glorification of the sons of God

- Our glorification as the sons of God is when the Spirit is glorified at the *anastasis* – the Day of Resurrection. At this point, His intercession is completed. With this in mind, we are told not to grieve the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption, for the Holy Spirit Himself is the Spirit of resurrection. Eph 4:30. The Day of our glorification is the day of His glorification.
- As we noted above, our life as a son of God is now hid with Christ in God until the day of our resurrection. However, it is held in trust with the Son where He sits, at the Father's right hand, on His throne, for Christ is now the resurrection and the life of God, fully revealed as Man, and for mankind. Joh 11:25. In the same way that Christ, the Father's only begotten Son, was declared to be the Son of God with power from the Father's throne, we will be manifested and glorified as sons of God from the Father's throne on the Day of Resurrection.
- Why are we first revealed from the Father's throne before the resurrection, for it is from the Son's throne that we receive our immortality on the last day? The answer is that when the Father takes His seat to rule over the earth through the agency of Christ – the lion and king of Judah, and the Lamb of God – the overcoming church begins to shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Mat 13:43. This is a full revelation of *exanastasis* life in our mortality. That is the beginning of the manifestation of the sons of God in the time of the end.



## Chapter 3

# The covenant of the Spirit

### Our Helper, the Holy Spirit

- Jesus honoured the Holy Spirit by explaining to His disciples that it was to their *advantage* that He return to the Father, saying, 'For if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.' Joh 16:7. Notably, He identified the Holy Spirit as the Helper. He is the Helper of the Father and the Son, and He is our Helper.
- The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of sanctification and of truth, who enables the fellowship of worship in Yahweh. 1Pe 1:2. Joh 16:13. Php 2:1. He is the One who gives us the life of God, and who joins us to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings through which we are being sanctified to our name and works as sons of the Father. He has devoted Himself to our sanctification as sons of God, leading us in the truth of our name as a son of God, and resisting us when we endeavour to walk after the flesh. Joh 16:13. Rom 8:7.
- Once a believer has been born of God, their body becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit. 1Co 6:19. They are a vessel for His expression. We worship the Holy Spirit with reverent honour by walking after the Spirit in the way that He is leading, rather than by walking according

to the flesh. This worship is evident through our speech and conduct, particularly in the *agape* meal. Accordingly, Paul wrote, 'Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.' 1Co 6:19-20.

- Fellowship is the capacity and initiative of the Holy Spirit. When we have become a temple of the Holy Spirit, He makes our whole being – body, soul and spirit – a temple of God, through Eternal Spirit. 1Co 3:16. This means that our whole being becomes a temple for the *agape* expression and fellowship of Yahweh Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He brings this fellowship to us. The evidence that we have received this fellowship is our desire for fellowship with one another, in one Spirit. This is a fundamental implication of the love of God being poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit. Rom 5:5.
- Evidently, worship of the Father and the Son, in Spirit and in truth, is essential to our worship of the Holy Spirit. We can only participate in this fellowship as we respond with repentance and faith to the conviction of the Holy Spirit when the word of God is proclaimed to us from the fellowship of a presbytery. Joh 16:8. 1Jn 1:1-3. The way that we relate with one another in the fellowship of the presbytery, which is the fellowship of the church, demonstrates the extent to which we have received, and been joined to, the fellowship of the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit.

### The grief of the Holy Spirit

- The grief of the Holy Spirit is particularly manifest after a person has been born of God and joined to the fellowship of the body of Christ. As we noted before, our body becomes a temple for the Holy Spirit, and He enables us to express the life of God that He has birthed within us according to our name as a son. This is a key implication of receiving the seal of the Spirit. To this end, the apostle Paul declared, 'In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, *you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise*, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.' Eph 1:13-14.
- The Greek word that is translated 'sealed' in this passage is '*sphragizo*'. It means 'to be stamped with a signet for security or

preservation'. Being sealed with the Holy Spirit is more than an identification that we are a son of God. It means that He has *dedicated Himself* to ensuring that we obtain the blessing of sonship. With this in mind, the apostle Paul exhorted us, saying, 'And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed [*sphragizo*] for the day of redemption.' Eph 4:30. The question, of course, is how do we grieve the Holy Spirit?

- We grieve the Spirit when, having begun to walk according to the leading of the Spirit of truth, we give heed to Satan's lie, and choose to walk according to the sight of our own eyes and the understanding of our own heart. When we set our minds in this way, acting on the basis of our own fleshly perspective, we reject the word of the messengers, which is proclaimed by the Holy Spirit. Consequently, we do violence to the one Spirit *agape* fellowship that belongs to the presbytery, and to the Father and the Son.

### *Distress caused by enmity with the Spirit*

- In the first instance, worldly sorrow in response to the initiative of the Holy Spirit is evidenced by a person's impassioned resistance to the conviction that He brings. Joh 16:8. Stephen noted this response in his hearers as he proclaimed to them the gospel of God. He said, 'You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always *resist the Holy Spirit*; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.' Act 7:51-53.
- Hearing this message, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed their teeth at Stephen, revealing their fallen angst. Driven by these emotions, they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears. They ran at the messenger with one accord, casting him out of the city and stoning him.
- A person who has been born of God, baptised into Christ, and filled with the Holy Spirit, will experience distress when they choose to walk after the flesh. Their distress, or grief, is caused by the Holy Spirit who is at enmity with the flesh. Highlighting this reality, Paul wrote, 'For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish'. Gal 5:17. Evidently, the distress that a

person experiences is caused by the Holy Spirit who frustrates their fleshly endeavours.

- However, the Holy Spirit will not strive with a person forever. He can be taken away from us. Psa 51:11. A key indicator that the Holy Spirit has departed from us is that we are relieved of the distress associated with His resistance to our carnal ways. A person in this condition is no longer simply a carnal believer. They have now returned to the condition of the natural man, being unable to receive the things of the Spirit. 1Co 2:14. They erroneously believe that relief from their distress is the evidence that their own way is the truth. They do not know that they are now reserved for destruction.

### *Dedicated to destruction*

- If a believer sets themselves against the Spirit by walking after the flesh, they begin to '*quench*' the Holy Spirit. 1Th 5:19. If they fail to repent of their carnality, even presuming to use the power of the Holy Spirit to achieve their self-centred projections, they revile, or show contempt for, the Holy Spirit. In doing so, they *blaspheme His name*. This rebellious idolatry is not tolerated by the Father or the Son. Jesus Himself said, 'Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.' Mat 12:31-32.
- Because a believer blasphemes the Spirit, who has devoted Himself to their blessing as a son of God, they are *devoted to destruction* by God the Father. Summarising this principle, the prophet Isaiah declared, 'I will mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has bestowed on them according to His mercies, according to the multitude of His loving kindnesses. For He said, "Surely they are My people, children who will not lie." So He became their Saviour. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old. *But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; so He turned Himself against them as an enemy, and He fought against them.*' Isa 63:7-10.

- It is confronting to realise that God makes enemies of those who rebel against the Holy Spirit. He becomes set on, or dedicated to, their destruction. The Hebrew word for one's dedication to destruction as a cursed thing is '*cherem*'. For example, the Lord said to the children of Israel that idols were cursed things and that they were to be utterly destroyed. He warned them that if they did not destroy idols from their midst, those who touched them, or even touched materials associated with them, were themselves dedicated by God to destruction. He said, 'Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction [*cherem*] like it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it is an accursed thing [*cherem*].' Deu 7:26.
- As we considered earlier, the Holy Spirit brings to our person the fellowship of God, making us a temple of God. 1Co 3:16. This is a feature of His dedication to our blessing as a son of God. Eph 1:13. Rom 8:16. However, if we sin against the Holy Spirit and defile the temple of our body, the Scripture is clear, *God will destroy us*. 1Co 3:17. If we find no place of repentance, we will become *cherem* – an accursed thing.
- Describing the defilement of our bodies resulting in this destruction, Paul was clear, writing, 'Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.' 1Co 6:9-10. Although there is a season of grace, when the Holy Spirit resists our flesh in the hope that we will turn again to walk after the Spirit, there is no halfway ground between blessing and cursing. Once God has taken away His Holy Spirit from us, we are dedicated to destruction.
- Paul highlighted that the principle of *cherem*, which was outlined in the Old Testament, applied even more definitively in the New Covenant of the Spirit. He noted that they were all baptised, and ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink that we do, for they drank of the spiritual Rock that followed them, who was Christ. However, because of unbelief and disobedience, God was not well pleased with them, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. 1Co 10:1-5. The wilderness symbolised the eternal judgement of God in the place of His forgetfulness.

- Importantly, Paul said that these things are our example, to the intent that we should not lust after the things for which they lusted, and were destroyed. Outlining these accursed practices, Paul wrote, ‘And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, *and were destroyed by the destroyer*. 1Co 10:7-11. Paul concluded this specific exhortation with the warning, ‘Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.’ 1Co 10:12.
- Concerning this judgement, the apostle Paul warned that if we sin wilfully after we have received a knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. In other words, Christ’s offering no longer avails for our salvation. It only defines our condemnation as one dedicated to destruction. Paul described this dedication as ‘a certain fearful expectation of judgement, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries’. Heb 10:27. He noted that, under the Old Covenant, anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. With this in mind, he asked, ‘Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?’ Heb 10:29.
- Returning to the principle of *cherem* described in the book of Deuteronomy, we note an important and sobering principle. If God has dedicated a person to destruction because of their idolatry, we must not embrace them, or pray for them, in some deluded initiative of love, lest, by taking hold of them in this way, we are devoted by God to destruction *with them*. Instead, we are to pray according to the Spirit for our loved ones who are pursuing the flesh, warning them of the judgement to come, and beseeching them to fear God. Luk 23:40. We will only be able to save some if we fear the Lord ourselves, and hate even their garments which are defiled by the flesh. Jud 1:23.

### *Embracing truth in the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings*

- King David demonstrated the godly sorrow that belongs to a person who is turning from the desires of the flesh to walk again according to the Spirit. In his repentance, he prayed, ‘Create in me a clean heart,



O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and *do not take Your Holy Spirit from me*. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and *uphold me by Your generous Spirit*. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You.' Psa 51:10-13.

- A son of God is established in the godly sorrow that belongs to fellowship with the Holy Spirit when they set their minds on the Spirit. Acknowledging the weakness of their fleshly perspective and understanding, they *cooperate* with the Holy Spirit who prays within them to the Father and the Son. This prayer is with *groanings too deep for words*! Rom 8:26. The Son hears the prayer of the Holy Spirit and intercedes for us to the Father according to what He hears from the Holy Spirit. He then priests to us a participation in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings so that we can fulfil the will of God as we walk after the Spirit.



## Chapter 4

# The process of glorification

### The Son's heavenly body and immortal body

- When Yahweh the Son was begotten of the Father as the Son of God, before, *He received a heavenly body*. The Son of God laid aside His heavenly body to take on a mortal body when He emptied again to be born of Mary as a Son of Man. Christ's heavenly body remained with the Father in the Father's house.
- At the last Passover, Jesus proceeded from the *agape* meal of Yahweh to empty Himself to the death of the cross, as the Son of Man. Php 2:8. He did this to author a pathway of salvation upon which sons of men, who were born as sons of God, could be brought to glory as men in the image and likeness of God. Significantly, as the only begotten of the Father, the life of the Father was in His blood. Furthermore, He was enabled with Eternal Spirit from the Holy Spirit to offer Himself in this manner.
- The seven wounding events that Christ endured as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary were seven emptying steps. That is, they were seven stages of His offering through which the Father and the Spirit were being revealed, and we were being revealed.

- In each wounding event, Christ was fulfilling the will of the Father. He testified, 'Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but *a body You have prepared for Me*. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, "Behold, I have come – in the volume of the book it is written of Me – *to do Your will, O God.*" ' Heb 10:5-7. Psa 40:6-8. The will of the Father was to bring a multitude of sons to glory. Heb 2:10. As Christ revealed the Father by doing His will in the course of His offering journey, His *heavenly body*, which was hidden in the Father, was being *glorified*.
- Furthermore, Jesus was revealing the Holy Spirit. Highlighting this point, Paul explained that through His offering, the Son progressively took away the Old Covenant and established the New Covenant in His blood. Heb 10:9. Luk 22:20. Paul identified the New Covenant as the Covenant of the Spirit. 2Co 3:6.
- When Christ entered the garden of Eden, the Father made Him an offering for sin. He did this by making every person, who had been lost to God through Adam's transgression, to be a member of Christ's corporate body. All were given to the Son for judgement or mercy. Specifically, Paul explained that the Father made Christ, 'who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him'. 2Co 5:21. We see two elements in this offering – dealing with sin, and fulfilling the obedience that belongs to our sonship.
- As we detailed in chapter 2, the one 'emptying offering' of Christ as the Lamb of God has two dimensions, symbolised by the scapegoat and the Lord's goat. This offering was *for our sake*. We note, in this regard, the words of the prophet Isaiah, who declared, 'But He was wounded *for our* transgressions, He was bruised *for our* iniquities; the chastisement *for our* peace was upon Him, and by His stripes *we are* healed.' Isa 53:5.
- In each wounding, emptying event of his one offering, Jesus descended as He experienced, with us, the suffering of death that belongs to our judgement on account of our sin. In doing so, He was bringing every lie against the truth to nothing, taking it out into eternal forgetfulness. Each one of us was being taken out with Him because we all have sinned by embracing Satan's lie that we can be the source of our own life and destiny. Isa 53:6. Consequently, we have all fallen short of the glory of God. Rom 3:23.

- Sin was being destroyed in Christ's body as He was dying. Significantly, the disfigurement of His mortal body, caused by the suffering of each wounding event, reflected the ugliness of our sinful condition.
- This principle was acutely manifest in the court of Caiaphas. Christ's face was being increasingly bruised as the reality of Peter's iniquitous self-righteousness was being manifest through his agitated denials. That is, Christ was being bruised for Peter's iniquity. Isa 53:5. Following his third denial, when Peter looked at Christ, he saw in Christ's marred face the reflection of his own condition. As he maintained Christ's gaze, acknowledging his iniquity and its impact on Christ, this iniquity was broken within him. Significantly, Peter never saw Christ's face marred in this way again. However, once Peter was joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, others would see the disfigurement of Christ's face, caused by their iniquity, as Christ was portrayed as crucified before them through Peter's ministry. We will say more on this, later in this chapter.
- The physical trauma that Jesus endured in any one of His seven wounds would have been sufficient to kill Him. However, as His blood was being shed as a consequence of a particular wound, His mortal body was being preserved and healed, and He was being progressively glorified. This was the evidence of *exanastasis*, or resurrection life, in his mortal body. It demonstrated that sin and death in His mortal body were being overcome by resurrection life for our sake, as our obedience was being made complete in Him.
- Christ's emptying journey continued all the way to the lowest parts of the earth, where the body of sin was completely circumcised from Him and destroyed. Furthermore, He fashioned us all according to the names that were in Him as the Seed of the Father. Psa 139:15-16. In the lowest parts of the earth, a full redemption and regeneration was accomplished by Christ for each one of us.
- Following His seventh wound, the two dimensions of His one offering were complete. Sin and death had been judged and destroyed forever, and everlasting righteousness had been fulfilled. Significantly, his physical body had been changed through *exanastasis* life. It was now manifest, or revealed, as a perfect, immortal, spiritual body! Joh 19:28-30. This is the reason why Christ's physical body did not experience decay as it lay in the tomb for three days and three nights.

- The Son committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father. Luk 23:46. The Father drew Him out of His physical, immortal body, which was hanging on the cross, and brought Him to His throne. Importantly, we were all drawn out of the waters of God's judgement and were received into the bosom of the Father, with Christ. *This is where our names as sons of God, were hidden.*
- Christ, as Yahweh Son, Son of God and Son of Man, in identity, remained in the bosom of the Father, in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, while His physical body, which was already immortal and made perfect through His offering, rested in the tomb for three days and three nights.
- After three days and three nights, the Father declared a second time, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You'. Heb 5:5. The Son returned to His immortal body, which was also clothed with His heavenly, incorruptible, and glorified body from the Father. He was manifest as the perfect man in the image and likeness of God. Christ was now revealed in *anastasis*, having risen from the death of emptying.
- Significantly, the Father highly exalted the Son and gave to Him the name which is above every name. Php 2:9-11. Moreover, Jesus Christ was established as the immortal head of His corporate body, which is composed of mortal sons of God on earth. As the apostle Paul declared, 'And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence'. Col 1:18.

### The glory of a name

- Before we consider the implications of being joined, through baptism, to Christ, the immortal head of His many membered body, let us remind ourselves of some foundational principles regarding our predestination as sons of men and sons of God.
- Our name as a son of God was chosen and known in the fellowship of Yahweh, before. We were chosen for the glory of revealing the image and likeness of Yahweh. Gen 1:26. The names of all the sons of God as glorified sons of men are symbolised by the stars of heaven which Abraham was caused to see by the Word of the Lord. Gen 15:1-5. The glory of our name, which the Father has chosen for us, is also likened in the Scriptures to a precious jewel. It is described as a white stone

upon which is written a name that no one knows except him who receives it. Rev 2:17. Each jewel has a unique expression through which the light of God's life is variegated and multiplied.

- The prophet Malachi noted that those who respond to the word of the Lord with fear, join a fellowship. Their names are written in a book of remembrance. This book contains the names of all those who fear the Lord and who set their mind to participate in the fellowship of His name. Mal 3:16. Regarding these believers, the Lord said, 'They shall be Mine, says the Lord of hosts, on *the day that I make them My jewels*. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him. Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.' Mal 3:17-18.
- The apostle Paul likened becoming a glorious jewel, to building on Christ, a living stone, *chosen* by God and *precious*. 1Co 3:10-11. 1Pe 2:4. He explained, 'If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.' 1Co 3:12-15.

### The vinedresser, vine and branches

- Evidently, we are chosen in Christ. Expressing the glory that was chosen and known before, is only possible as a member of the body of Christ. When God calls us by our name, He calls us to join Christ in the fellowship of His offering *as the tree of life*.
- Jesus Christ is the tree of life. Jesus described the tree of life as a vine, saying, 'I am the vine, you are the branches... And My Father is the vinedresser'. Joh 15:5,1. Clearly, we are not only partakers of the fruit of the tree of life. As the branches of the vine, we are to bring forth the fruit of the tree of life! This was, in fact, foreshadowed by Adam in the garden of Eden. He ate from the tree of life in fellowship with Yahweh each day, and then ministered that life to the whole of creation as a steward.
- To be branches of the tree of life is a fundamental implication of our baptism into Christ. Through baptism, by one Spirit, the Father

specifically and particularly places us in the body. 1Co 12:13,18. He does this according to our name as a son of God. This is His prerogative as the husbandman of the vine.

### *The work of the vinedresser*

- Essential to abiding in the vine and bearing much fruit, is receiving the pruning and adjusting initiative of the Father towards us. Concerning this work of the Father, who is the vinedresser, Jesus said, 'Every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit'. Joh 15:2. King David prophetically witnessed the Father speaking to the Son about this work. He recorded, 'The LORD [the Father] said to my Lord [the Son], "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool." The LORD [the Father] shall send the rod of Your [the Son's] strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies!' Psa 110:1-2.
- Significantly, on this pathway, we who were once enemies of Christ and the Father, are being made the footstool of Christ, by the Father. We note, in this regard, that those who are being made a footstool for Christ are not being trampled by Him. Rather, as mortal sons, they are being established as part of His administration *on the earth*. As the Lord said, through the prophet Isaiah, "'Heaven is My throne, and *earth is My footstool*. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist," says the Lord. "But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word".' Isa 66:1-2. This is the demeanour of one who is beginning to inherit the kingdom of God!

### *Revealing the glory of the Son*

- The Father has chosen us to reveal the glory of the Son. This is the work that belongs to our name as a son of God. The full glory of the Son is revealed through the members of His body. The whole body has been given the total, glorified *anastasis* of the Son. That is, the one *anastasis* of the Son is *exanastasis* for each member of the body. The expression of this life is therefore the glory of the Son through every member of the body. What does this look like?
- Each day, through prayer in the Holy Spirit, we come boldly to the throne of grace. The throne of grace is the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant in the true tabernacle. It is Christ Himself. Recognising



that this is first a place of judgement, we heed the instruction of the psalmist, who wrote, 'Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish *in the way*, when His wrath is kindled but a little.' Psa 2:11-12. As we approach the throne of grace with fear, and by the Spirit, we obtain mercy and grace as the Son priests to us a specific participation in His offering and sufferings as members of His body. This is our fellowship in the descending and ascending dimensions of His emptying death.

- We accept that our daily pilgrimage on the pathway of salvation that Christ has pioneered, involves a circumcision in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, causing us to cease from sin. 1Pe 4:1. However, our sufferings are also a participation in Christ's death through which He is publicly portrayed as crucified to others. Although we suffer in the flesh, we endure by the power of Christ's *anastasis*, ministered to us as *exanastasis* in our mortal bodies. Paul testified of his participation in this ministry of Christ, writing, 'I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church'. Col 1:24.
- Through our fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ, each wounding event of Christ's death is being revealed by the members of the body. This was Paul's testimony as part of an *aggelos* presbytery, stating, 'But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed – always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you.' 2Co 4:7-12.
- In this statement, we see that the experiences of Paul, and his fellow presbyters, were manifesting the specific wounding events of Christ's offering journey. For example, in being hard pressed, they were showing forth the bruising of Christ for our iniquity. As they were perplexed, they were manifesting the rods with which Christ was chastened for our peace. The *exanastasis* life by which they were sustained was from the *anastasis* of the Son. It was the light of Christ's life that was being shone from the branches of the vine.

As Paul also testified, saying, 'For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' 2Co 4:5-6. The light that was shone into their hearts and caused them to be joined to the vine, is the light that shone from their faces as the branches of the vine.

- The face of Christ is symbolised in the Shekinah that shines between the cherubim that are part of the ark of the covenant. The ark is a symbol of the throne of the Son. The Shekinah is the glory of His administration, symbolised in a seven-branched lampstand. The glory of the seven wounding events of the cross, is the light shining from the lamps of the lampstand. The lamps are a symbol of the seven-five administration of the presbyteries, showing forth Christ's death before He comes. As we receive their word and are joined to their fellowship, we abide in the Son and are enabled to shine forth the light of His glory as a branch on the tree of life.
- We multiply the glory of the Son as branches of the vine. Importantly, we cannot multiply glory unless we abide in the vine. Jesus made this clear, declaring, 'I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.' Joh 15:5. The glory that we reveal as branches of the vine is the glory of the Son. Paul exhorted us to this work, which involves, 'being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God'. Php 1:11.
- In addition to highlighting that we are only able to bear fruit by Christ, Paul was highlighting that this was to the praise of the Father. That is, the Father is glorified as we bear the fruit of the Son, for the Son is still revealing the Father. As Jesus said, 'If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. *By this My Father is glorified*, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.' Joh 15:7-8.
- This fruit, which is the glory of the Son, is then harvested by the Father. It is the glory of the Son, multiplied by the many members of His body as they participate in His dying and living. The harvested fruit is then placed by the Father in the heavenly house, where our name is, in the Father's house.

- The glory of our name that is now in our heavenly house will become the glory that will clothe our immortal body on the day of resurrection. Our resurrected body is called in Scripture the spiritual body. It will be the same kind of body that Jesus possesses. The implication of this aspect of the gospel is that we do not obtain the glory of our resurrection body other than from the fruit that is produced from the vine of which we are branches. The Father harvests this fruit and places it in our heavenly house as the glory of our name.

## The old and new commandments

- In his first epistle, the apostle John further explained these implications of the New Covenant. Notably, he wrote, 'Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.' 1Jn 2:7-8.
- We understand from this statement that the old commandment and the new commandment *are the same*; it is the word from the beginning, revealing the *agape* love that belongs to Their fellowship. As John also said, 'But whoever keeps *His word*, truly the *love of God* is perfected in him'. 1Jn 2:5. We see, therefore, that the old commandment, which is true in Them, is Their agape fellowship, which John called 'light'. The new commandment is that this fellowship is true in us. That is, we are joined to Their fellowship by receiving the word from the beginning - 'God is light and in Him is no darkness at all'. 1Jn 1:5. By receiving and obeying this word, we are joined to the fellowship of the body, which is the fellowship of the Father and the Son, by the Holy Spirit. 1Jn 1:1-3.
- Concerning the new commandment, John then exhorted us, saying, 'Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning [God is light and in Him is no darkness; the word of the Everlasting Covenant]. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you [as a new commandment], you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us - eternal life.' 1Jn 2:24-25. John was emphasising this point to mark a distinction between the gospel of God and the alternative expressions of the

gospel, proclaimed by messengers of Satan, by which a person can be deceived and stray from the truth.

- Importantly, and helpfully, the Holy Spirit teaches the word from the beginning as the new commandment. This is the New Covenant operating in our lives. The darkness of our own perspective is passing away because the word from the beginning, (proclaimed through the gospel of God) which is true in Them, is true in us.
- This light of life is the word from the beginning. It is how They live, which is Their love, Their faith and Their hope. It is evident that the new commandment is active within us because our perspective is changed. We are delivered from the darkness of our own way and perspective, as illumination concerning the gospel of God takes a hold of our lives and we are connected to the word from the beginning. As we obey this commandment, we abide in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in us.

### Dealing with sin

- Everyone who has laid hold of the hope of being made into the image and likeness of God, *purifies themselves*. This was the apostle John's point when he wrote, 'Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed [on the Day of Resurrection, at the last trumpet], we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.' 1Jn 3:2-3.
- A believer purifies themselves by embracing the process that Christ, through His offering journey, established to deal with sin and uncleanness. John outlined this process in the introduction to his first epistle. This process is distinct from the sacramental approaches to dealing with sin that belong to the clergy/laity distinctions of many traditional, denominated churches. We must be delivered from these shameful practices, which are informed by carnal gospels and are observed by those whose self-righteous orientation to the Christian pilgrimage is at odds with the gospel of God.
- The foundation for our participation in this cleansing and purifying process is 'the word from the beginning', which initiated the Everlasting Covenant. This is the statement, 'Let Us make man in Our image and according to Our likeness'. Gen 1:26. Referring to this message, John declared, 'This is the message which we have heard

from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.' 1Jn 1:5. To be made in the image and likeness of God, by following in the pathway of salvation that Jesus Christ pioneered, is to be born of light and to abide in the light of the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

- The Holy Spirit is the Helper of the Father and the Son in relation to the Everlasting Covenant. He is given by the Father and the Son to join us to, and enable our participation in, the process through which we are brought to glory in the image and likeness of God. Describing the work of the 'Helper', Jesus said, 'And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment'. Joh 16:8.
- The conviction of the Holy Spirit accompanies the ministry of the gospel of God, granting to us the opportunity to choose the life and light being proclaimed in the word. The conviction of the Spirit continues to accompany the word of God, so that those who receive this word, and continue to walk in it, come to the maturity that belongs to the fullness of the stature of the perfect man.
- The most fundamental dimension of purification that a believer receives, and to which they apply themselves, is deliverance from the darkness of their own sight and understanding, to walk in the light of the word from the beginning. We have addressed this aspect of repentance and faith in chapter 6. Importantly, those who walk in the light of the proceeding word have fellowship with their brethren in Christ and the blood of Christ cleanses them from all sin.
- Having been born of God and baptised into Christ's death, we journey with Him each day in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. In the course of life, we will sin. John made this clear, stating, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us'. 1Jn 1:8. Furthermore, he said, 'If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us'. 1Jn 1:10. In other words, the word from the beginning, revealing the fellowship of Yahweh, and the provision for the fulfilment of Their covenant purpose, is not true in us. Accordingly, we are not walking on the pathway through which we are obtaining our predestination.

### *The confession of sin*

- As we noted earlier, those who are illuminated to the process through which they are being brought to glory as a son in the image and likeness of God, *purify themselves*. That is, they are committed to the process through which their iniquity is taken away and their sin is purged. John identified the confession of sin as an essential aspect of this purifying process. Specifically, he wrote, '*If we confess our sins*, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness'. 1Jn 1:9.
- The confession of sin, which belongs to the process of purification, is not the sacramental practice of divulging one's misdemeanours or vagrant thoughts to a clergy figure in a confidential setting for the purpose of obtaining some form of absolution. This practice is a manipulation of shame, belonging to the institutionalisation of the church and its leadership.
- It is not the role of a leader, or counsellor, to give absolution or to make a person feel better or worse about themselves following a transgression. It is to help a brother or a sister to find perspective on how to properly recover relationship with the people who have been affected by their sinful actions. Although confidentiality is a legal expectation for religious counsellors, their purpose for maintaining confidentiality should not be for keeping the matter concealed, or for maintaining their position of power over the one who is bringing their sin to the light. Instead, they are to remain circumspect in relation to these matters, because they accept that the matters of sin they are discussing are not their business. They are the business of the one who has sinned and the people who have been sinned against.
- A person who is seeking absolution in a confidential setting is desiring to be made righteous through a fleshly activity that is driven by fear and shame. Those who insist on confidentiality, do so in order for their shame to remain hidden. For many people who hold to the traditional gospels and practices of the church, the confession of sin is largely a cathartic endeavour. Through confession, they seek relief from the guilt associated with their sin and find some assurance of acceptability before God, despite their shameful actions. This is not the culture of fellowship in the light.
- The true confession of sin is to the one to whom we have sinned against. The apostle James made this patently clear, stating,

‘Confess your trespasses *to one another*, and *pray for one another*, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.’ Jas 5:16. The confession of our sins is not a self-centred endeavour. It demonstrates that we have been convicted of sin, righteousness and judgement. We are motivated to resolve relational breaches because we are members of one body. Moreover, we are compelled by the love of Christ to judge ourselves dead with Christ. In the fellowship of His death, we are being delivered from our iniquity and cleansed of our sin so that we no longer live for ourselves but live to reveal Christ and the members of His body. 2Co 5:14-15.

### *Restoring others*

- When other people in the body of Christ sin against us, we are quick to forgive for we know that our sins have been forgiven for Christ’s name’s sake. In doing so, we demonstrate that we have begun to journey with Christ on the pathway of salvation that he pioneered. As John said, ‘I write to you, little children [new born sons who have joined the fellowship of Christ’s offering and sufferings], because your sins are forgiven you *for His name’s sake*’. 1Jn 2:12.
- On this pathway, Jesus, as a Man, was progressively glorified as a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Likewise, as we journey with him, we are learning to minister as priests in the same manner. This is what it means to be spiritual. In a spirit of gentleness, we are able to restore the one who sins against us. Gal 6:1.
- We mature as the word of God abides in us and we overcome the wicked one through our obedience to the proceeding word. Rom 16:19-20. Referring to this development as a son of man and son of God, John said, ‘I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.’ 1Jn 2:14. Finally John wrote to fathers, identifying them as those who have known Him who is from the beginning; that is, Christ. 1Jn 2:13,14. What is true in God is true in them and they are established on the pathway of salvation.





## Chapter 5

# Turning to the Lord to receive understanding

### The polarising effect of the gospel of God

- In this book, we have been considering the mystery of godliness. The mystery of godliness declares God's covenant purpose for us and is the means by which His purposes are accomplished. For this reason, Paul described the gospel of God as 'the power of God unto salvation'. Rom 1:16. It is important for us to recognise that this message is not benign. Rather, it has a *polarising* effect upon those who hear it.
- Those who are hearing and being illuminated by the gospel of God are realising the darkness of their former understandings. As they acknowledge this darkness and turn in repentance to receive the word of the Lord, proclaimed by His messengers, they are rejoicing in the light of the word and its implications for how they live and walk as a believer. Their hope is being realised as they walk by faith with Christ on the pathway that He has pioneered for their salvation. On this pathway, they are being changed from glory to glory into the likeness of the Son. 2Co 3:18.

- In contrast, others are becoming increasingly dull to the content of the mystery of God and its implications for their lives. The reasons for this increasing insensitivity to the gospel are varied. For some of these people, the word may be theologically engaging, and even novel, but it has little effect on how they see the kingdom and how they live. It is merely information that is added to a corpus of knowledge, the pursuit of which is an identity-verifying endeavour. For other people, the unfolding revelation of the gospel of God appears to be little more than another statement of what they already know. Others, as they hear the word, are thinking and asking, 'What is all the fuss about?'. They do not understand what is being declared. These responses to the word demonstrate that a hearer is being overtaken by darkness, and is falling asleep. 1Th 5:4-6. 1Co 11:30. They succumb to delusion because they love the darkness of alternative gospels that accord with their own understanding, rather than the light of illumination that belongs to the ministry of the word by the Spirit.
- The Lord Himself said that these would be the two contrasting effects of the word of God upon *His people*. This polarising ministry was given to Isaiah and was also exemplified in the ministry of Jesus as He instructed His disciples concerning 'the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven'. Mat 13:11-15. Joh 12:38-41.

### *Entering rest*

- Let's first consider the effect of the gospel of God upon those who receive this word and mix it with faith. The prophet Isaiah declared, 'For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little. For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people, to whom He said, "*This is the rest* with which You may cause the weary to rest," and, "*This is the refreshing*"; yet they would not hear'. Isa 28:10-12.
- The 'rest' and 'refreshing' that the Lord refers to in this passage of Scripture is the rest that belongs to those who enter the kingdom of God by being born of water and the Spirit. In this regard, we recall the words of Jesus, who said, 'Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot *enter* the kingdom of God'. Joh 3:5. Through baptism into Christ, and by walking after the Spirit, we enter the kingdom of God as we journey with Him on the pathway of glorification and salvation that He pioneered for us. Speaking of this journey, Jesus said, 'Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and *I will give you rest*.

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will *find rest for your souls*'. Mat 11:28-29.

- Exhorting his readers to understand this message, Paul said, 'Therefore, since a promise remains of *entering His rest*, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, *not being mixed with faith* in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest'," although the works were finished from the foundation of the world'. Heb 4:1-3.
- From this passage, we recognise that unless we *love* the word that reveals the mystery of God, and *choose* the fear of the Lord, we will not see, nor enter the kingdom of heaven through participation in the offering journey that Christ pioneered for us. We will be given over to the darkness of walking according to our own sight and understanding. This implication of how the gospel is received was observed by King Solomon, who wrote, 'Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord, they would have none of my counsel and despised my every rebuke. Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled to the full with their own fancies'. Pro 1:29-31. They are unable to be filled to the fullness of God. Eph 3:19.
- A person who loves the word and the messenger, and who fears the Lord, will be *obedient* to the word. Paul commended the believers in Corinth for this response to the ministry of Titus, writing, 'His affections are greater for you as he remembers the *obedience* of you all, how with *fear and trembling* you received him'. 2Co 7:15. This demeanour towards the messengers and their message is not a carnal dependency upon them for salvation. Such a connection would be cleaving to the messenger with deceit. Dan 11:34. Rather, it is a participation in the fellowship from which the word proceeds. Abiding in this fellowship, a hearer is able to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. Php 2:12-13. The gospel is effective in their life because they have an anointing from the Holy One and they know how to walk in obedience to the word from the beginning. Walking in this manner, they are being brought to glory as a son. Heb 2:10.

### *Going backward*

- Returning to the Lord's description of the polarising effect of the word, Isaiah then wrote, 'But the word of the Lord was to them, "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little", that they might go and fall backward, and be broken and snared and caught'. Isa 28:13.
- Unless a person turns to the Lord as the word is being spoken by His messengers, a veil remains over their heart. 2Co 3:15-16. Ambivalence to the word, theological curiosity, contention, and confusion are all responses to the word indicating that such a veil lies over one's heart. In this condition, a hearer is unable to be enlightened by the gospel. Paul described this implication of failing to receive the word with repentance and faith, writing, 'But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them'. 2Co 4:3-4. Such a hearer has been taken captive by Satan, the god of this age.
- The Galatian church serves as an example of believers who formerly walked according to the Spirit, but had ceased from receiving the word of present truth ministered by Christ through the four faces of His administration in the church. Paul said to them, 'O *foolish* Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so *foolish*? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain - if indeed it was in vain?'. Gal 3:1-4.
- Evidently, these Christians in Galatia had fallen backwards, were broken, snared and caught in Satan's lie. Significantly, they were unaware of their condition, believing that they were walking in the way that leads to life. They believed that their darkened perspective was light. Jesus said that this was great darkness indeed. Mat 6:23.

### *Forsaking what was gain*

- To understand the mystery of God, which Paul described as the primary focus of his ministry, we need to have the same attitude that

he had towards this message. Paul testified that he counted all things that were previously gain to him, as loss. These included the old gospel that he had believed, his religious practices and traditions, his cultural heritage, and his former exploits. These had previously been a source of purpose, security and identity verification for Paul. Php 3:7-8.

- Paul not only counted these things as loss, but he counted them as rubbish for the excellence of knowing Christ Jesus and to gain Christ. He further professed the desire to 'be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith [that comes in the word of present truth]; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead'. Php 3:9-11.
- In other words, Paul recognised that walking in the light of the word from the beginning, which is the mystery of godliness, was only possible as he continued to forsake the darkness of his former understandings and practices. This is an ongoing process, noted by Solomon, who taught, 'The path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines *ever brighter unto the perfect day*. The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble'. Pro 4:18-19. As we let go of our former understandings, forsaking them as the basis for our reception of the proceeding word, we are to lift up our voice for understanding concerning the mystery of godliness. In doing so, we will be increasingly illuminated to the gospel of God and our participation in its fulfilment.

### Do not let the word pass by

- A person who lifts their voice for understanding is not letting the word of present truth pass them by. Consider the example of Cleopas and his friend. Jesus, the risen, glorified, Son of Man came alongside them as they journeyed away from Jerusalem to Emmaus following Christ's crucifixion. Jesus was the substance of what they were predestined to become; *yet they could not see Him*. Symbolically, they were walking away from the heavenly Jerusalem, which they were to enter by joining the offering and suffering journey that Christ had just pioneered for them.

- It is likely that Cleopas and his friend were part of the seventy-two whom Jesus sent before His face into every city and place where He was about to go. Luk 10:1-12. As they talked with Christ, they reflected on His 3 ½ year ministry. On the basis of what they had seen Jesus do, and what they had heard Him say, Cleopas and his friend thought that Jesus was the Christ, the Redeemer of Israel. Luk 24:19-21. However, Christ's death contradicted their understanding of the Scriptures concerning the Messiah. It challenged their view to such an extent that they were now questioning whether He had been the Christ. Furthermore, the testimonies of the women who had seen and interacted with the risen, glorified Son of Man, seemed too astonishing and confounding to believe. Luk 24:22-24.
- In response, Jesus admonished the men, saying, ‘ “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and *to enter into His glory?*” And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself’. Luk 24:25-27. In their sightlessness, they were not so different from the ‘foolish Galatians’. However, instead of being offended or despondent at this rebuke, they received the instruction of Christ as He taught them line on line, precept upon precept. No doubt, Jesus began in Moses’ first book, reminding them of God’s Everlasting Covenant initiative, ‘Let us make man in Our image and according to Our likeness’. Gen 1:26.
- When they drew near to their destination, Jesus indicated that He would be proceeding on from them. However, Cleopas and his friend constrained Him, saying, ‘*Abide with us*’. Luk 24:28-29. This is a key response to the word that is characteristic of those who are lifting up their voice for understanding. The men did not simply let the word pass them by because of their inability to comprehend the word. They demonstrated faith by entreating and abiding in the fellowship of the word which was causing their hearts to burn within them. As they participated in the *agape* meal that Jesus extended to them, Luke records, ‘their eyes were opened and they knew Him’. Luk 24:31.
- In seeing the Son who had emptied Himself to the death of the cross and had been glorified as the Son of Man and Son of God, they saw who they were to become in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. Now illuminated to the gospel, Cleopas and his friend rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem. They immediately began

to do the works of repentance, walking in the light of the illumination that they had received.

## The confession of Agur

- In order to obtain knowledge and understanding regarding the mystery of godliness, we must acknowledge the darkness of our own understanding. As the Lord noted in relation to Cleopas and his friend, this darkness is our foolishness and the outcome of being slow of heart to believe the word of present truth. Making this confession, Agur the son of Jakeh declared, in the book of Proverbs, 'Surely I am more stupid [equally, foolish] than any man, and do not have the understanding of a man [in the image and likeness of God]. I neither learned wisdom nor have knowledge of the Holy One'. Pro 30:2-3.
- Having acknowledged his foolishness and the inadequacy of his own understanding, Agur was then able to engage in the conversation of faith established by the gospel of God. Accordingly, he asked, 'Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His Son's name, if you know?'. Pro 30:4. Of course, the One who ascended and descended was Christ. Through His resurrection, He received the name above every name. Importantly, in the light of the gospel, we know that we are the sons of His everlasting fatherhood! Isa 9:6.

## The testimony of Job

- In the book of Revelation, the apostle John observed that the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem were those who overcame the devil by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony, and because they did not love their lives to the death. Rev 12:11. These aspects of overcoming belong to those who have entered the kingdom of heaven, who are attaining to their predestination as men in the image and likeness of God.
- Job, likewise, overcame the devil. Accordingly, his experiences provide helpful detail concerning how a person obtains the understanding necessary for entering and possessing the kingdom of heaven. With this in view, James, the brother of Jesus, exhorted us to remember the *patience, or perseverance*, of Job. Jas 5:11. He is a man

we can imitate as a notable example of a believer who, through faith and patience, inherited the promises contained in the gospel of God. Heb 6:12.

- Job was described by the Lord as ‘a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil’. Job 1:8. However, Job’s own righteousness was insufficient to ensure his salvation. We know this because at the conclusion of his encounter with the Lord, he confessed, ‘You asked, “Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?” Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, “I will question you, and you shall answer Me”. I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, *but now my eye sees You*. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes’. Job 42:3-6.
- Job acknowledged that through his own sight, knowledge and understanding, which were based on the gospel he had previously heard, he had been unable to see the Lord. Job’s own knowledge and understanding had produced a religious culture from which he needed to turn, in order to walk in a manner worthy of the illumination that he had received through his encounter with the Lord.
- Prior to the impact of the word of the cross in his life, Job endeavoured to live in a manner that was pleasing to the Lord. However, it is clear that he was unable to train his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Instead, he compensated for their hedonism and mixed culture, making offering on their behalf in the mistaken belief that their sins could be covered by his piety. Job 1:4-5. In reality, on account of their own cultural depravity, Satan was able to take advantage over his children and they lost their eternal salvation.
- The godlessness of Job’s children was indicative of a carnal union between Job and his wife. It seems that none of the children were godly seed, which is the fruit of a couple who have been made one by receiving a remnant of the Spirit. Mal 2:15. Furthermore, under the pressure of losing the lifestyle afforded by Job’s wealth and influence, his wife said to him, ‘Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!’. Job 2:9.



- Job revealed himself to be the measure of truth as he brought his case before God. He believed in his integrity and righteousness, and he was ready to give a defence for the way that he *walked*, or the nature of his 'Christian' pilgrimage. For example, he said, 'Oh, that I had one to hear me! Here is my mark. Oh, that the Almighty would answer me, that my Prosecutor had written a book! Surely I would carry it on my shoulder, and bind it on me like a crown; *I would declare to Him the number of my steps*'. Job 31:35-37.
- With this statement, Job revealed the content of the gospel that he had heard and through which he had known God. Job 42:5. It was a gospel of acceptability on the basis of sinlessness and works. His suffering was perplexing because he had not sinned. Job's three friends maintained similar gospels, arguing that Job's plight was the fruit of some sin, which they endeavoured to identify. Job 22:5-11. Their observations and counsel with respect to sin reflected the doctrines that belong to the traditional church denominations in our day. However, Job rejected their accusations and the need to make confession to these men, maintaining his innocence and his incredulity at what was happening to him.
- Job was determined to understand why he was in such a predicament, recognising that his former gospel was unable to answer the matter. He began to lift his voice for understanding, declaring, 'Oh, that my words were written! Oh, that they were inscribed in a book! That they were engraved on a rock with an iron pen and lead, forever! For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!'. Job 19:23-27.
- The Lord answered Job, saying, 'Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself *like a man*; I will question you, and you shall answer Me'. Job 38:2-3. This is an amazing statement. The Lord was not calling Job to be a man like Adam. Rather, he was inviting him into the discussion that belonged to the offering, emptying death of Christ, through which He was made a man in the image and likeness of God!
- The outcome of this first initiative of the Lord was that Job's sight was only partially recovered. He responded to the Lord's first discourse, saying, 'Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; yes,

twice, *but I will proceed no further*'. Job 40:4-5. Job recognised that his view of himself and his situation was at odds with the proceeding wisdom of God. He put his hand over his mouth, indicating that he was no longer presuming to speak as the measure of truth. However, he did not know how to converse or conduct himself in this fellowship. His response indicated that he was like the blind man whom, when Jesus spat on his eyes and put his hands on him, looked up and saw men like trees, walking. Mar 8:24.

- God addressed Job a second time, saying to him, 'Now *prepare yourself like a man*; I will question you, and you shall answer Me: Would you indeed annul My judgment? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified? Have you an arm like God? Or can you thunder with a voice like His? Then adorn yourself with majesty and splendour, and array yourself with glory and beauty'. Job 40:7-10. With this statement, Yahweh was revealing to Job that the entitlement to answer in the fellowship of Yahweh required a particular adornment, marked by glory. He was referring to the glory that is progressively obtained by a man through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Job could not array or glorify himself. However, he was being illuminated to the fellowship of offering and sufferings through which he was able to obtain such an eternal weight of glory. 2Co 4:16-18.
- As we noted earlier, Job obtained knowledge and understanding as he received the word of the Lord and forsook his own knowledge and understanding. Illumination brought him to bankruptcy of spirit, leading to repentance, and to faith for his *participation* in the sufferings of Christ. He understood that he would *not* obtain an eternal inheritance simply because of sinlessness. Rather, eternal life in fellowship with Yahweh would only be attained through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. As a man, he was now able to embrace his fellowship in the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ, for he saw Jesus and understood the process by which he would be made like Him in the resurrection.
- Amazingly, while Job was still sitting on the dung heap with boils all over his body, the Lord directed his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, saying, 'Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and *My servant Job shall pray for you*. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you according to your folly [the foolishness of your

old gospels and own understandings]; because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has'. Job 42:8.

- Evidently, in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, Job was now learning and being equipped for a priestly ministry to those who had been caught in a trespass. Gal 6:1. As Job bore in his body the dying and the living of the Lord Jesus Christ, death was working in him, and life, through reconciliation, was able to be ministered to his friends. 2Co 5:18-21.
- These men represented collegial presbyters, whose gospels and associated sacramental practices were not of God. In this regard, they were like those of the synagogue of Satan, of whom Jesus said to the angel of the church of Philadelphia, 'Indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you'. Rev 3:9. Notably, the *aggelos* presbytery of Philadelphia was commended by the Lord for keeping His command to *persevere*. Rev 3:10. They had observed and imitated the patience of Job. Jas 5:11.

## Receiving the word from faith to faith

- As we have been considering, obtaining understanding involves deliverance from the darkness of the gospels that accord with our own perspective. We can liken this darkness to the blindness that belongs to those whose minds Satan has *blinded* lest they should be illuminated to the true gospel which reveals the only way to life – that is, the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings through which we are made into the image and likeness of God, as He was. A person who does not see by illumination will, like Job, inevitably presume to be the measure of what is true.
- It is only when we have faith that we cease to be the measure of the truth. We receive faith through illumination. Illumination is the knowledge of what is true, which then becomes understanding as this knowledge becomes true in us; that is, as our culture is reformed.
- We must not measure what we hear by what we know. While we do this, we are the source and cannot receive illumination. In order to get wisdom and understanding we must turn from this approach to the word. Instead, we must receive the word today as new; a word that brings new creation. Only then the veil of our own measuring, by our own knowledge, can be taken away. We must turn from our

measuring classifications, or clarifications, or definitions, and turn to the Lord. In His face we see the reflection of our sonship from Christ who is, for us, the last Adam.

- Those who are blind and lacking understanding need their sight healed. As we alluded to in the account of Job's salvation, the healing of one's blindness often requires more than one encounter with Christ, the word. In this regard, we remember the account of the blind man who was healed by Jesus at Bethsaida.
- Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town, spat on his eyes, and put His hands on him. In response to Christ's query regarding what he saw, the man replied, 'I see men like trees, walking'. Mar 8:24. We note several key elements to this interaction. First, Christ, the Word, led the man away from the place where he was abiding in darkness. Likewise, we must allow the word to lead us away from our doctrinal traditions and natural rationalisations, which are the habitations of our blindness. We also note that the healing of the man's sight was a recreative initiative by Christ. This healing belongs to the process of regeneration in our fellowship with Christ.
- Christ, the messenger, engaged the blind man in a discussion to ascertain what he was beginning to see. Likewise, when we lift up our voices for understanding, we need to converse with the messenger, and share what we are seeing. Initially, it is unlikely that we will see clearly. We might see a vague outline of the message, or get clarity on one or two points. We must accept that we are in need of further assistance.
- In relation to the blind man, Jesus again placed His hands on his eyes and made him look up. The man's sight was restored, and he saw clearly. Similarly, as we continue to entreat fellowship with the messengers who are in Christ's hand, looking up to see the risen Christ, we will also be further illuminated to the mystery of godliness. The mark of this illumination is thanksgiving, and faith to walk in a new way.
- Having been established in the fellowship of illumination, we continue to receive the word of present truth each week. We mix this word with the faith we have received previously, in order to obtain faith for the obedience that belongs to the next step of our pilgrimage on the pathway of sanctification. In this way, the righteousness of God is being fulfilled in us from faith to faith. Rom 1:17.