

THE  
seventy  
weeks  
PROPHECY

UNDERSTANDING OUR PARTICIPATION  
IN THE FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST

**VICTOR HALL**  
WITH PETER HAY AND DAVID BAKER

## THE SEVENTY WEEKS PROPHECY

*Understanding our participation in the finished work of Christ*

Victor Hall

with Peter Hay and David Baker

Edition 1 - March 2021

Edition 2 for the 2022 Bible School - June 2022

Scriptures are quoted from NKJV, KJV, NASB and LITV.

© Victor Hall, Peter Hay and David Baker. 2022

# Contents

<b>PREFACE</b>	7
Daniel's prayer	8
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	
An overview of the prophecy	11
Verse 24	12
Seventy weeks	12
The outcomes of the prophecy	12
Verse 25	14
The four commands	14
Seven weeks and sixty-two weeks	14
Verse 26	15
The destruction of the city	15
Verse 27	16
An end to sacrifice and offering	16
An overspreading of abominations	16
One who makes desolate	17
The consummation	17
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	
The ministry of Melchizedek	19
I AM the beginning and the end	19
Ascending and descending	20
His descending journey	20
The three hours of darkness	21
His ascending journey	21
Seated on the throne of grace	22
Our great High Priest	22
I AM the beginning and the end	22
Him who is, and who was, and who is coming	23
Behold, I AM alive forevermore	24
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	
To finish the transgression	25
The two goats	25
The Lord's goat	25
The scapegoat	26
The first outcome	26
The continual offering	27
The beginning of the specific transgression	27
The example of Jesus	28
The finish of the transgression	29

## **CHAPTER 4**

The end of sin	31
The other law	31
Sin is missing the mark	32
The law of sin	32
Christ became the body of sin	34
The death that He died, He died to sin!	34
The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world	35

## **CHAPTER 5**

Reconciliation for iniquity	37
The definition of 'iniquity'	37
The reproach of the Father	38
Our reproach laid upon Christ	38
The reproach of men	39
My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?	39
God is near to the broken-hearted	40
The fruit of His travail	41
Godly sorrow	41

## **CHAPTER 6**

Bringing in everlasting righteousness	43
Knowing that all things were now accomplished	43
He proclaimed, 'I thirst!'	44
That the Scripture might be fulfilled	45
The inauguration of the New Covenant	46
The river of the water of life	47

## **CHAPTER 7**

To seal up vision and prophecy	49
In the volume of the book, it is written of Me	50
The end of the old creation	50
Preserved by the prophetic Scriptures	51
The days ordained for us	52
The scroll with the seven seals	53

## **CHAPTER 8**

Anointing the Most Holy	55
The Anointed One	55
The work of the Holy Spirit	56
The Most Holy	57
The body of Christ is the true temple	58
Enabling our priestly service	58

## CHAPTER 9

The going forth of the command	61
Weeks of years	61
The prophetic 'year for a day' principle	61
Sabbaths of years	62
A 'time' in the book of Daniel is a year	62
The four commands	62
1. The commandment of the God of Israel	63
2. The command of Cyrus	63
3. The command of Darius	64
4. The command of Artaxerxes	64
A brief comment on dates	65

## CHAPTER 10

The ministry of Ezra	67
The response to Daniel's prayer	67
The same pattern as Abraham	68
The return of Ezra	69
The peg in the holy place	69
The spirit of grace and supplication	70
Ezra's proclamation	71

## CHAPTER 11

The street and the walls	73
The street - the open square	73
Solomon's Porch became the apostles' cathedral	74
Rebuilding the walls	75
Nehemiah 8 - faith for the New Covenant	76
Celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles	77

## CHAPTER 12

The seven weeks	79
The seven weeks	79
The prophecy of Malachi	80
1. The culture of the Lord's table	81
2. The culture of the teaching-priests	82
3. The culture of the marriages	83
4. The culture of offering	83
The response of the people to the ministry of Malachi	83
The sixty-two weeks	84

## **CHAPTER 13**

The Messenger of the Covenant	85
A false interpretation	86
The first half of the seventieth week	87
John 2 - The first Passover Feast	87
Destroy this temple	88
The discussion with Nicodemus	88
John 5 - The second Passover Feast	88
The fourfold witness	89
John 6 - The third Passover Feast	90
The fourth Passover	90

## **CHAPTER 14**

By water, blood and the Spirit	91
Jesus Christ came by water	91
Not by water only - by water and blood	92
1. Who do men say that I am?	92
2. He began to testify about His death	93
3. The transfiguration on the mount	93
The Spirit bears witness - the gift of the Holy Spirit	94
The period of delay	95
The harmony between the first and the second half of the week	96

## **CHAPTER 15**

An end to sacrifice and offering	97
The veil torn in two	98
The abomination which makes desolate	98
The trampling of the apostle Paul	99
The first letter of Peter	101
The destruction of the temple in AD70	102

## **CHAPTER 16**

Jew and Gentile in one body	103
Confirming the covenant with many	104
Jew and Gentile in one body	104
The olive tree	105
The warning to the Gentiles	106

## **CHAPTER 17**

The ingathering of the Jews and Gentiles	109
The mystery	109
Blindness in part	110
The fullness of the Gentiles	111
In the time of the end	112

## **CHAPTER 18**

The Father will take His seat	115
When will You restore the kingdom?	115
Jesus Christ is presently seated	117
Called to be overcomers	117
The Father will take His seat	119
The Lamb with the seven-sealed book	120
The sealing of the 144 000	120

## **CHAPTER 19**

The first four seals	123
The first seal	124
A crown was given to him	124
He had a bow	124
The second seal	125
The great sword	126
The third seal	126
The fourth seal	127
Summary of the first four seals	128

## **CHAPTER 20**

The fifth and sixth seals	129
There will be great tribulation	129
The opening of the fifth seal	130
Two kinds of death	130
Crying out for judgement	131
The opening of the sixth seal	132
The judgement of Gog, in the land of Israel	132
The great multitude which no man can number	134

## **CHAPTER 21**

The end of the delay	135
The mystery of God	136
The parable about the wedding feast	137
The wise and foolish virgins	139
Rise and measure the altar	140

## **CHAPTER 22**

The one who makes desolate	141
The little book	142
On the wing of abominations	142
The 2 300-year prophecy	143
The administration of Babylon	143
The one who makes desolate	145
The consummation	146

<b>CHART</b>	147
--------------	-----





# Preface

'The Seventy Weeks Prophecy' is only four verses long, but it is one of the most important prophecies in the Scriptures! A huge volume of material has been written on this remarkable prophecy. However, despite its notoriety, the interpretation of the Seventy Weeks prophecy has remained largely in darkness.

Interestingly, *The Pulpit Commentary* makes the following summary statement about the Seventy Weeks prophecy: *Many treatises have been written on the "seventy weeks" of Daniel, and none of them have entirely cleared up the difficulties; indeed, it may be doubted whether all together they have illuminated the subject very much.*

This is not a surprising observation because, when the early church rejected the ministry of the apostle Paul, they replaced the illumination of the Spirit with Greek philosophy. They also replaced the fellowship of the *agape* meal with the sacramental practice of the eucharist.

Significantly, when the understanding of our daily participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings was lost, the prophetic key for the Seventy Weeks prophecy was also lost.

As we begin our consideration of the Seventy Weeks prophecy, it is vitally important for us to understand that the illumination of this prophecy is completely dependent upon understanding our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering. This is the case because the central feature of the Seventy Weeks prophecy is *the crucifixion of Christ*.

The main point of the Seventy Weeks prophecy is that all of the outcomes that are listed in the prophecy have been accomplished by the one offering of Christ. As our great High Priest, according to the order of Melchizedek, Christ forever lives to minister to us our participation in His finished work.

## Daniel's prayer

The immediate context of the prophecy is the Lord's response to the prayer of Daniel. Daniel recorded that, in the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede, he 'understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem'. Dan 9:2.

Daniel was evidently studying the writings of Jeremiah. Jeremiah prophesied that Jerusalem would be desolate and that the kingdom of Babylon would rule over the nations of the world for a period of seventy years.

Shortly before the first group of exiles were taken to Babylon, Jeremiah prophesied, 'This whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then it will come pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity.' Jer 25:11-12.

Significantly, Daniel was among the first group of exiles. He was taken to Babylon as a young man, probably as a teenager. It is possible that Daniel had personally heard the preaching of Jeremiah before he was taken into exile. However, he would certainly have been aware of the letter that Jeremiah sent to the exiles after the second group of captives were taken to Babylon.

The second group of exiles were taken to Babylon around eight years after the first group. Notably, the second group of exiles included the prophet Ezekiel.

Jeremiah wrote to the exiles, saying, 'For thus says the Lord: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.' Jer 29:10-12.

In response to the word of the Lord through Jeremiah, the prophet Daniel understood the number of the years of the captivity. Furthermore, having received this understanding, Daniel immediately obeyed the word of Jeremiah to pray and call upon the Lord.

Daniel recorded, 'Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.' Dan 9:3. This was the expression of his own repentance, and a prayer of intercession on behalf of the Jewish nation. Dan 9:4-14.

Daniel prayed, 'Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord's sake *cause Your face to shine* on Your sanctuary, which is desolate. O my God, incline Your ear and hear; *open Your eyes* and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name.' Dan 9:17-19.

While Daniel prayed, the angel Gabriel appeared to him. Gabriel said to Daniel, 'O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, *and understand the vision.*' Dan 9:22-23.

Gabriel then proceeded to give Daniel the Seventy Weeks prophecy. Daniel recorded it for us so that we can also consider the matter and understand the vision! There is no reason for this prophecy to be shrouded in darkness. The Lord wants us to consider it and to understand it.

In the beginning of the book of Revelation, the apostle John highlighted the blessing of illumination by saying, '*Blessed* is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy.' Rev 1:3. In the same way, we can be illuminated to understand the Seventy Weeks prophecy when we read it, hear it proclaimed to us as a word of present truth, and then apply our heart to understanding its implications by discussing it with one another.



# Chapter I

## An overview of the prophecy

In this chapter, we will take a broad, introductory approach to the Seventy Weeks prophecy. We could liken our approach in this chapter to *a brief fly-over* to identify the major landmarks. Our goal will be to familiarise ourselves with the overall scope of the prophecy without losing ourselves in all of the detail that is relevant to the prophecy.

In the chapters that follow, we will take our time to consider all of the detail that is necessary for a thorough understanding of the Seventy Weeks prophecy, including its profound implications for us as sons of God. It is helpful to remind ourselves, as we begin, that the Seventy Weeks prophecy is the prophecy that belongs *to the sons of God*.

The Seventy Weeks prophecy was recorded in the book of Daniel as follows:

‘Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.’ Dan 9:24.

‘Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.’ Dan 9:25.

‘And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.’ Dan 9:26.

‘Then He shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.’ Dan 9:27.

## Verse 24

The prophecy begins with the statement, '*Seventy weeks are determined*'. Dan 9:24. For this reason, it is generally called 'The Seventy Weeks Prophecy'. The seventy weeks have been determined by the commandment of the God of Israel. Gabriel explained to Daniel that this command was issued in response to his prayer.

### *Seventy weeks*

The phrase, 'seventy weeks', is literally translated as 'seventy *sevens*'. There is no reason to suggest that each week, or 'seven', is a period of seven days. If this were the case, then the whole prophecy would have been completed within one and a half years. Rather, each 'seven' is a period of *seven years*. This is consistent with the prophetic 'day for a year' principle which is used many times in the Scriptures, and is particularly relevant for the book of Daniel. It is also consistent with the principle of 'a week of years' which underpinned the nation of Israel's agricultural economy. That is, the seventh year in each 'week of years' was a sabbatical year.

When we identify that each week is a period of seven years, we know that the overall length of the seventy weeks is 490 years. Further to this, as we continue to read the detail of the prophecy, we find that this overall period of seventy weeks is broken up into four sub-periods of time.

1. Seven weeks (49 years)
2. Sixty-two weeks (434 years)
3. The first half of the seventieth week (3½ years)
4. The second half of the seventieth week (3½ years)

Significantly, between the first half of the seventieth week and the second half of the seventieth week, there is *a period of delay*. The period of delay is an important part of the prophecy. The period of delay is for the sake of the inclusion of both Jews and Gentiles in the finished work of Christ, and hence the fulfilment of the Seventy Weeks prophecy.

### *The outcomes of the prophecy*

In the second portion of the first verse, we read that there are six specific outcomes that belong to the Seventy Weeks prophecy. Dan 9:24. The six outcomes are:

1. To finish the transgression
2. To make an end of sin
3. To make reconciliation for iniquity
4. To bring in everlasting righteousness
5. To seal up vision and prophecy
6. To anoint the Most Holy.

The key point is that all six of these outcomes *were accomplished* by the one offering of Christ when He was lifted up on the cross. This is a major clarification!

Some commentators have suggested that only *one of the six elements* was completed by the offering of Christ on the cross. It is generally recognised that Jesus Christ 'made reconciliation for iniquity' through the shedding of His blood, but the remaining five elements have often been assigned to the future.

For example, because we still see transgression and sin in the world, it has been assumed that we are still waiting for these outcomes to be fulfilled. On this basis, the fulfilment of these promises has often been assigned to the physical second coming of Christ and the commencement of the millennial rest for the people of God.

In more recent times, the fulfilment of these promises has also been assigned to a future fulfilment of the Day of Atonement. However, it is important to recognise that Jesus Christ has already fulfilled all aspects of the Day of Atonement. We are not waiting for a future fulfilment of the Day of Atonement.

We have already been considering this point in detail over the last couple of years. On His offering journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross, Jesus suffered seven wounding events. These wounding events caused His blood to be sprinkled seven times upon His physical body, as the Mercy Seat of the true tabernacle.

At the end of His offering journey, He took His seat on the throne of grace. As our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, He is now ministering to us our participation in His finished offering. The apostle Paul declared that 'He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified' in the fellowship of His offering. Heb 10:14.

The significant implication of this point in relation to the Seventy Weeks prophecy is that, because Christ has granted us our participation in His finished work, we progressively witness the fulfilment of all these promises in us!

To illustrate this statement, in a very brief way, we can say that:

1. Because Christ has finished the transgression (which is the corruption of the continual offering), we can be restored to first love, and to the fellowship of the tree of life in the middle of the heavenly Jerusalem.
2. Because Christ has made an end of sin, we have been delivered from our bondage to the law of sin. As we continue to embrace our daily participation in Christ's offering, we can reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God.
3. Because Christ has made atonement for iniquity, the power of the other law can be broken in us as we meet Christ eye to eye and heart to heart. The other law is then circumcised from our heart in the fellowship of His seven wounding events.
4. Because Christ has brought in everlasting righteousness, we have been included in the fellowship of the New Covenant. For eternity, we will never exhaust the righteous works of sonship that Jesus Christ has already accomplished for us on His offering journey.
5. Because Christ has sealed up all vision and prophecy, we know that the mercy of God is new every morning and there is sufficient grace, in the fellowship of Christ's offering, for us to fulfil the works of our sonship each day.

6. Because Christ has anointed the Most Holy, we have received the anointing of the Holy Spirit to be witnesses of Christ as the members of His body. We have also been anointed by the Holy Spirit to serve the Father as priests, in His temple, in the heavenly places.

The above statements will be further explained, and developed, when we consider the specific outcomes of the Seventy Weeks prophecy in the coming chapters.

## Verse 25

We read in the first portion of the next verse of the Seventy Weeks prophecy, 'Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem'. Dan 9:25. To understand this phrase, 'the going forth of the command', we will need to consider four commands which are all clearly nominated in the Scriptures. All four of these commands are part of one, integrated package.

### *The four commands*

The first and foremost command was *the commandment of the God of Israel*. We recall that Gabriel said to Daniel, 'At the beginning of your supplications, *the command was issued*.' Dan 9:23. The commandment of the God of Israel gave Gabriel the mandate to speak to Daniel and to deliver the Seventy Weeks prophecy to him.

Furthermore, the commandment of the God of Israel determined the seventy weeks that belong to the prophecy. That is, when we read in the prophecy that seventy weeks have been determined, they have been *determined* according to the commandment of the God of Israel.

Significantly, the commandment of the God of Israel also *ordained the timing* of the commands that were issued by the Persian kings, which led to the beginning of the Seventy Weeks prophecy.

It was the decree of Cyrus (approx. 538BC) that brought the seventy years of captivity in Babylon to a close, and enabled the Jewish people to return to their homeland under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua.

It was the decree of Darius (approx. 520BC) that enabled the temple to be rebuilt and dedicated.

It was the decree of Artaxerxes (approx. 457BC) that enabled Ezra to return for the sake of the cultural restoration of the city of Jerusalem. In this way, we observe that the command of the God of Israel was *issued* in response to Daniel's prayer, and then it proceeded to *go forth* through the three commands that were issued by the Persian kings.

The point to note is that all three commands of the Persian kings were integral to the going forth of the command; that is, to the articulation and the facilitation of the command of God in the affairs of men. The decree that was issued by Artaxerxes marks the beginning of the seventy weeks.

### *Seven weeks and sixty-two weeks*

The second verse of the prophecy continues, 'Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince,



there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.’ Dan 9:25.

The first seven weeks of the Seventy Weeks prophecy was a period when grace for cultural restoration was extended toward the entire nation, from the *finished* offering of Christ. During this time, the street was restored. The literal translation of ‘street’ is ‘the open square’. It describes the open square to the east of the temple, which was established by Ezra as the meeting place between the Lord’s messengers and the head of every household.

Approximately thirteen years after the return of Ezra, the ‘walls’ of the city of Jerusalem were also repaired, by Nehemiah. This unique period of restoration that began with Ezra, and continued with Nehemiah, did not conclude until after the ministry of Malachi.

The ministry of Malachi brought the first period of seven weeks, or 49 years, of restoration, to a close. His ministry was followed by a period of 62 weeks, which is 434 years, when there was no prophetic ministry until the coming of John the Baptist as the greatest of all the prophets.

John the Baptist announced the coming of the Messiah. The highpoint of the ministry of John the Baptist was the baptism of Jesus. When Jesus was baptised, He was anointed with the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh, by the Holy Spirit. The baptism of Jesus was the coming of the Messiah. The Messiah is ‘the Anointed One’.

## Verse 26

We read in the next verse of the Seventy Weeks prophecy that, *sometime after* the 62 weeks – that is, sometime after the coming of the Messiah – the Messiah shall be ‘cut off, but not for Himself’. Dan 9:26. This most certainly refers to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The crucifixion of Christ is the central feature of the Seventy Weeks prophecy. Jesus Christ was ‘cut off, but not for Himself’ when He became the body of sin in the garden of Gethsemane, and then suffered seven wounding events on His journey from Gethsemane to the cross, under the curse of the Law.

In his letter to the Galatians, the apostle Paul declared that ‘Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “cursed in everyone who hangs on a tree”), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith’. Gal 3:13-14.

It is significant that the crucifixion of Christ, as the central feature of the Seventy Weeks prophecy, is the guarantee that all of the outcomes of the prophecy have been promised to both the Jews and the Gentiles, through new birth as sons of God.

### *The destruction of the city*

The prophecy continues, ‘And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.’ Dan 9:26. ‘The people of the prince who is to come’ refers to the Roman army that was led by Prince Titus. Fulfilling the Seventy Weeks prophecy, and the words of Jesus, the temple and the city of Jerusalem were destroyed by this Roman army in AD70.

## Verse 27

Having run ahead to the destruction of the city of Jerusalem in AD70, the start of the next verse returns to the coming of the Messiah. That is, it comes back to the baptism of Jesus. We read, 'Then He shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering'. Dan 9:27. The 'one' week is the seventieth week of the prophecy.

There has been a lot of argument concerning who is the One who confirms the covenant. Some have suggested that it is Titus. Others have suggested that it is a future antichrist. However, it is most certainly Jesus Christ who confirms the Covenant with many for one week. The prophet Malachi declared that Jesus Christ is the Messenger of the Covenant. He is the One who confirms the Everlasting Covenant that God made with Abraham.

We recall that God promised Abraham that 'in his Seed [Christ], all the nations of the earth would be blessed'. Gen 22:18. When the Seventy Weeks prophecy refers to 'the many', it includes both Jews and Gentiles in the one body of Christ. It is referring to the true descendants of Abraham. The prophet Isaiah declared that the true Israel of God has been brought forth from the loins of Judah, through Christ. Gen 48:1.

### *An end to sacrifice and offering*

The verse continues, 'Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; *but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.*' Dan 9:27. If the seventieth week is seven years long, we know that the middle of the week will be after three and a half years. This was the length of Christ's earthly ministry.

When we consider that the Gospel of John identifies four Passover Feasts, it supports the fact that there were three and a half years between the baptism of Jesus and His crucifixion. Significantly, the crucifixion of Christ put a stop to all sacrifice and offering according to the Law Covenant. The one offering of Christ abolished the Law Covenant and inaugurated the New Covenant. This is the central tenet and the major theme of the book of Hebrews.

When the spear pierced the side of Christ, blood, water and the spirit of grace and supplication gushed from the heart of Christ, who had already breathed His last and was seated with the Father, on the throne of grace. Significantly, at the same time, the veil in the physical temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom. This revealed that the new and living way into the true temple, in the heavenly places, was now open! Heb 10:19-20. It also signified that the temple buildings, as the context for sacrifice and offering according to the Law, were now redundant.

### *An overspreading of abominations*

Following the offering of Christ, the Jews sewed up the veil in the temple and continued to offer animal sacrifices. Every animal sacrifice after the finished offering of Christ was an abomination to the Lord. The abomination of animal sacrifice continued until the temple was destroyed in AD70.

Then, even after the destruction of the temple, the principle of 'abomination' continued in all of the sacramental practices of the early church, which had rejected the ministry of the apostle Paul. The *period of delay* for the sake of the inclusion of Jews and Gentiles in the body of Christ is also a period that is referred to in the Old King James version as 'an overspreading of abominations'.

We continue to read, 'And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate'. Dan 9:27. 'On the wing' means 'on the extremity'. It is on the extremity because the abominations continue for the entire period of delay. The abominations will continue until the final judgement of the administration of Babylon, which has ruled over all seven world kingdoms.

### *One who makes desolate*

In the end of the age, the Lord will use Antichrist, and the ten kings who will rule with him for one hour, as an instrument of judgement upon the administration of Babylon. Antichrist is identified in the Seventy Weeks prophecy as 'the one who makes desolate'. He is the desolator. We read in the book of Revelation that the reign of Antichrist will be three and a half years long. His reign in the world will coincide with the final half of the seventieth week.

### *The consummation*

The final verse of the prophecy concludes, 'And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate'. Dan 9:27. 'The consummation' means 'a complete destruction'. The fullness of the wrath of God, which is contained in the seven vials, will be poured out upon the Antichrist and upon all those who have received the mark of the number of his name. This will happen in the one hour before the beginning of his reign!

Significantly, during the final half of the seventieth week, the church will be miraculously protected and nourished by Jesus Christ. The church, as the bride of Christ, will be celebrating the wedding feast in the wilderness. The final half of the seventieth week will conclude with the physical second coming of Jesus Christ and the day of resurrection for all believers. The day of resurrection will be followed by the millennial rest for the people of God before the new heavens and new earth.



## Chapter 2

# The ministry of Melchizedek

In our first chapter, we identified that the central feature of the Seventy Weeks prophecy is the offering of Christ. Our focus in this section is that *we have a participation* in the finished offering of Christ because He is our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

The ministry of Jesus Christ as Melchizedek is the central theme of the book of Hebrews. The apostle Paul helpfully identified the main point of his letter to the Hebrews by saying, 'Now this is the main point of the things which we are saying: we have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.' Heb 8:1.

It is important to appreciate how significant the book of Hebrews is to Bible prophecy. The book of Hebrews is the interpretive key to the book of Revelation. Considering that the book of Daniel is the companion, and prelude, to the book of Revelation, it is not surprising that the book of Hebrews is also the interpretative key to the Seventy Weeks prophecy. The truth of this statement will become increasingly apparent as we continue to consider the Seventy Weeks prophecy.

### I AM the beginning and the end

As the full revelation of Yahweh *Elohim* in the flesh of mankind, Jesus introduced Himself to the apostle John by saying, 'I AM the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End ... who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.' Rev 1:8.

I AM is the most foundational statement concerning who Yahweh *Elohim* is. When Yahweh *Elohim* spoke to Moses from the burning bush, He said, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And He said, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, "I AM has sent me to you".' Exo 3:14.

I AM is not bound by space, time or eternity. We know that time has a beginning and an end. Eternity has a beginning, but no end. I AM has no beginning or end. However, even though I AM is outside of time and eternity, He meets us *in time* for the sake of

establishing the ground of fellowship with us. When I AM breaks into time, He is effectively saying, 'I AM here, now, to meet you!'

For example, I AM met Abram, as Melchizedek, when he returned from the battle of the kings, for the sake of blessing him in the context of an *agape* meal. Gen 14:17-20. Some time after this interaction, He met Abram again and said, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I AM your shield, your exceedingly great reward.' Gen 15:1. In this interaction, the Son of God proclaimed to Abram that He would become *his Son*.

At the appointed time, I AM was born in the lineage of Abraham as the Son of Man. He shared in our flesh and blood for the purpose of joining us in our death so that we can be included in His death. Heb 2:14. In this way, Jesus Christ, as I AM, emptied and humbled Himself to become the Beginning and the End.

Jesus proclaimed to the apostle John, 'I am the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the Beginning and the End.' Rev 1:8. We know that *alpha* is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and *omega* is the last letter of the Greek alphabet. However, Jesus was not simply saying that He encompasses all things. Rather, it means that He has *filled* all things to become the end of the old creation and the beginning of the new creation!

### Ascending and descending

To understand what it means for Christ to be the beginning of the new creation and the end of the old creation, we need to consider His *ascending* and *descending* journey. In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul explained that when Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross, He *descended* into the lower parts of the earth and *ascended* far above all the heavens.

Paul declared, 'Now this "He ascended" - what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.' Eph 4:9-10.

*The first dimension* of how Christ 'filled all things' in His physical body as the Son of Man was by *descending* to the lowest part of the earth to suffer the eternal judgement of God upon our iniquity and sin.

*The second dimension* of how Christ filled all things as the Son of Man was by *ascending* far above the heavens. It is important to note that He did both these things as the Son of Man. He filled all things in His physical body.

### *His descending journey*

His *descending* journey began in the garden of Gethsemane when the Father joined the whole of humanity to Him so that His physical body became *the body of sin*. Rom 6:6. On His journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross, Christ then suffered at the hands of wicked men, and under the assault of the spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places. Act 2:23.

He suffered at the hands of the religious leaders in the court of Caiaphas. He suffered at the hands of the rulers of the world before Pilate and Herod and their soldiers. He suffered the full assault of the fallen principalities and powers when He was lifted up on the cross.

Significantly, as Christ *descended* by suffering at the hands of wicked men and the spiritual host of wickedness, He disarmed and conquered all of His enemies. Php 2:8-11. As these leaders and rulers abused Christ, their authority was removed from them. They were disempowered and conquered by Christ as the obedient Slave of the Father. This is a remarkable point. Christ did not conquer His enemies by overpowering them. He conquered all of His enemies by suffering at their hands!

### *The three hours of darkness*

By midday on the day of His crucifixion, Christ had descended to the depths of the fallen human condition for the sake of our redemption. He then took the entire old creation, including the whole of fallen humanity, out into the darkness of eternal exclusion from God.

During the three hours of great darkness on the cross, He suffered the fullness of the eternal judgement of God upon our iniquity and sin. Luk 23:44. Psa 18:4-5. We could say this another way. There is nothing that the ungodly will experience for eternity, in an ageless age of years, that Christ did not experience in those three hours of great darkness. He stooped to the lowest degree of the lake of fire to fill all things in relation to our everlasting judgement.

However, when Paul said, 'the lowest parts of the earth', it was even lower than the lowest depths of the lake of fire. How is this possible? The reproach that the Father laid upon the Son took Him to the end of, and then beyond, the eternal dimension of the lake of fire. He exhausted its judgement by the power of Eternal Spirit, and brought our judgement to an end, or to a finish. Act 2:23-28.

This is an amazing point! This explains why the worm of corruption that never dies is circumcised and completely removed from our hearts as we journey with Christ from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. It is completely cut off and finished in the fellowship of His offering.

### **His ascending journey**

His ascending journey also commenced in the garden of Gethsemane when He began to sweat clots of blood from every pore of His physical body. As He prayed to the Father, 'Not My will, but Yours, be done', it was the confession of His faith-obedience. Luk 22:42. From the garden of Gethsemane to the cross, He willingly offered Himself to the Father, and obediently laid down His life for us. Joh 10:18. Php 2:8. Eph 5:2.

Every wounding event that He suffered caused His blood to be shed. The resurrection life of God in His blood brought Him back from the death of our sin. Heb 13:20. On His journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross, He learned our obedience, and fulfilled our righteousness as sons of God. Heb 5:8.

When Jesus Christ proclaimed, 'It is finished!', on the cross, He had *filled all things* as the Son of Man. Joh 19:28-30. He had suffered our eternal judgement as sons of perdition, and had fulfilled our righteousness as sons of God. He had become 'the Beginning and the End' as the beginning of the new creation and the end of the old creation! This illustrates the two sides of the cross.

### *Seated on the throne of grace*

The physical death of Christ was a pure and undefiled offering as He committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father. Luk 23:46. Heb 9:14. He was received by the Father into His bosom and was seated upon His throne. He took His seat upon the throne of grace. Heb 4:14-16. Remarkably, Christ was enthroned with the Father while His body still hung on the cross!

This means that the blood, water and Spirit that flowed from His heart when the soldier pierced His side with the spear, was coming from the throne of grace. Joh 19:34-37. Zec 12:10. It was a fountain for the cleansing of our sin and uncleanness as we participate in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Zec 13:1. However, more than this, it was a fountain of everlasting life! Psa 36:9. Rev 21:6.

The resurrection life of God that flows from the finished offering of Christ is an everlasting stream. When the apostle John was shown the bride city coming down out of heaven as a bride adorned for her husband, he saw the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb. Rev 22:1. This is the same everlasting fountain of life that flowed from the heart of Christ while He still hung on the cross.

### *Our great High Priest*

Let us consider this further. The blood and water that flowed from the side of Christ did not run forever. It flowed from His body, hit the dirt at the foot of the cross, and then came to an end. The body of Christ was then taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb for three days and three nights.

With this in view, let us ask the obvious question. If the blood of Christ ceased from flowing from His physical body, how has it become an everlasting stream? Likewise, we could also ask: 'Where is the blood now?' We know that there is no need to look for His blood in the dirt at the foot of the cross. We know that He did not take it with Him to heaven. Furthermore, we know that there was no blood in His physical body when He rose from the dead.

The reason why the blood, water and the Spirit that flowed from the heart of Christ is an *everlasting fountain* is because the Father has glorified Jesus Christ as our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Heb 7:21.

We read in the book of Hebrews that 'though He was a Son, yet He learned [our] obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected [finished His offering], He became the author [source] of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek".' Heb 5:8-10.

The apostle Paul explained that Jesus Christ is the source of eternal salvation for all those who obey Him, *because* He is our great High Priest who *forever lives* to minister to us our participation in His finished work. There was no need for Him to forever hang on the cross. Rather, He *forever lives* to join us to the fellowship of His finished offering. For this reason, the order of Melchizedek is the power of *an endless life*. Heb 7:16.

### **I AM the beginning and the end**

Returning to our key verse in the book of Revelation, Jesus said, 'I am the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the Beginning and the End ... who is and who was and who is to come, the



Almighty.’ Rev 1:8. In a similar way, Jesus said to the apostle John, when he had fallen at His feet like a dead man, ‘Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.’ Rev 1:17.

We recall that the Son, as the Word of Yahweh, said the same thing to Abram. We read in the book of Genesis, ‘After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, “*Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward*”.’ Gen 15:1. We know that when the Lord said to Abram, ‘I am your shield’, He was saying, ‘I am your faith.’

Jesus was saying the same thing to the apostle John. When He said, ‘I am the First and the Last’, He was also saying, ‘I am the Author and the Finisher of your faith.’ In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul said that we are ‘looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God’. Heb 12:2. He sat down at the right hand of God as our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Significantly, the faith that we receive as sons of God is the faith of the Son of Man who has filled all things as the Beginning and the End. He has gathered the entirety of our lives, from beginning to end, into the fellowship of His offering. In the fellowship of His offering, there is a beginning and an end that belong to each day. That is, He is bringing certain things to an end as the other law is circumcised from our hearts. And there is a beginning of what is new, as His love is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

### Him who is, and who was, and who is coming

In the book of Revelation, the phrase, ‘Him who is, and who was, and who is coming’, is used to describe both the Father and the Son. For example, in Chapter 11, it is clearly used to describe the Father who is seated upon His throne. We read, ‘And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshipped God [the Father], saying: “We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned”.’ Rev 11:17.

However, as recorded in the first chapter of the book of Revelation, Jesus also used this same phrase to describe Himself. Rev 1:8. Jesus explained the meaning of this phrase in relation to His own life and ministry by saying, ‘I am He who lives [One who is], and was dead [One who was], and behold, I am alive forevermore [One who is coming]. Amen.’ Rev 1:18.

As ‘the One who is’, Jesus Christ is I AM. He is outside of time and eternity. As ‘the One who was’, He is the One who *was dead*. He emptied and humbled Himself to the point of death, in time, to become the end of the old creation and the beginning of the new creation, for our sake. This work is finished. As ‘the One who is coming’, He is Melchizedek, who forever lives to minister to us our participation in His finished work.

When Jesus said, ‘Behold, I am alive forevermore’, He was proclaiming that He is our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. The apostle Paul declared that He is ‘without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, *remains a priest continually* ... therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He *always lives to make intercession* for them.’ Heb 7:3,25.

## Behold, I AM alive forevermore

Jesus proclaimed to the apostle John, 'Behold, I am alive forevermore', because we need to see, by illumination, that He is our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. We need illumination to behold this, because His ministry as Melchizedek transcends every reference point that we have, naturally, in this world. When we see this spiritual reality, this becomes our new reference point! This is our hope that is 'sure and steadfast' in the holy place.

Jesus emphasised this point in one of His discussions with the Jews. He said to them, 'You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.' Joh 8:23-24.

What did Jesus mean by this? If we do not believe that He is I AM who forever lives to join us to the fellowship of His one offering, we will die in our sins, because our participation in the offering of Christ is the only mechanism which delivers us from our bondage to sin, and removes the other law from our heart. It is the only context where we receive His resurrection life, which is the everlasting stream that flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

At the conclusion of our natural lifetime, our fellowship in the sufferings of Christ, as a circumcising operation in our hearts, will come to an end. Rev 21:4. There will come a time when there is no more death, no more sorrow, no more crying, and no more pain. However, our fellowship in the offering of Christ will *never* come to an end.

The offering of Christ happened in time, but it is efficacious for eternity because of the eternal priesthood of Christ. Our participation in the offering of Christ will continue for eternity because Jesus Christ has been glorified as our great High Priest forever. Our eternal participation in the offering of Christ means that the righteousness of God will increase forever and ever in the new heavens and new earth. 2Pe 3:13. Isa 9:7.

## Chapter 3

# To finish the transgression

In this chapter, we will begin to consider the specific outcomes that are nominated in the Seventy Weeks prophecy. The prophecy begins by saying, 'Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.' Dan 9:24.

We note that there are six outcomes listed. They were all accomplished by the one offering of Christ. Specifically, they were all accomplished by Christ as *the sin offering*. We recall that John the Baptist proclaimed, concerning Jesus, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' Joh 1:29.

Jesus Christ was fully revealed as the sin offering on His offering journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. As we considered in our previous chapter, we need to consider two dimensions of this offering journey - His ascending journey and His descending journey.

### The two goats

These two dimensions of the offering of Christ as the Lamb of God are illustrated by *the two goats* which comprised *the one sin offering* for the people on the Day of Atonement, each year. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest presented two goats before the Lord, at the doorway of the tabernacle. Lev 16:7. Having cast lots over the two goats, one was designated as *the Lord's goat* and the other was designated as *the scapegoat*. Lev 16:8.

### *The Lord's goat*

The high priest sprinkled the blood of the Lord's goat seven times on the mercy seat. It was also sprinkled before the mercy seat in the most holy place, sprinkled in the holy place, and sprinkled on the horns of the altar. In this way, the blood of the Lord's goat made atonement for the people and cleansed the earthly sanctuary. Lev 16:15-20.

Each wounding event that Christ experienced on His journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross caused His blood to be shed. His blood was sprinkled seven times upon His physical body, as the Mercy Seat of the true tabernacle. Rom 3:25. The resurrection life of God that was in His blood brought Him back from the death of our sin as the Firstborn from the dead. Col 1:18.

### *The scapegoat*

Following this, the high priest laid his hands upon the scapegoat and confessed over it all of the *iniquities* of the children of Israel, all of their *transgressions*, and all of their *sins*. Lev 16:21. We observe that the Seventy Weeks prophecy specifically refers to our transgression, sin and iniquity. The scapegoat was then sent away into an uninhabited land and released in the wilderness. Lev 16:22.

Jesus Christ became ‘the body of sin’ in the garden of Gethsemane, and was then *incrementally cursed and cut off* from the land of the living, on His journey to the cross. Each wounding event that Christ endured at the hands of wicked men was an incremental step on His journey to ‘the uninhabited land’, away from the presence of God. At the end of the journey, the cross was a cursed place. The apostle Paul explained that Christ became ‘a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”).’ Gal 3:13.

In relation to the Seventy Weeks prophecy, the *first key point* is that Christ finished the transgression, made an end of sin, and made atonement for iniquity, as *the scapegoat*. The *second key point* is that Christ brought in everlasting righteousness, sealed up all vision and prophecy, and anointed the Most Holy, as *the Lord’s goat*. In this regard, the six outcomes that are listed in the Seventy Weeks prophecy give us a wonderful insight into *the two sides* of the cross of Christ.

### The first outcome

The first outcome of the crucifixion of Christ was ‘to finish the transgression’. Dan 9:24. A transgression may be any violation of the Law of God. However, the Seventy Weeks prophecy refers to *a specific transgression*. It is called ‘the transgression’.

In the broadest sense, it is ‘the transgression’ of Adam. In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul explained that ‘as through one man’s offence [transgression] judgement came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life’. Rom 5:18.

The transgression of Adam was his choice to turn aside from the fellowship of the *agape* meal with the Lord, each day at the tree of life. This fellowship was the source of the wisdom and grace that he required to fulfil his mandate of tending and guarding the garden of Eden each day. When he turned aside, it was a violation of this fellowship.

The book of Daniel identified a specific application of this transgression. In the 2 300-year prophecy, it is called ‘the transgression of desolation’. This can also be translated as ‘the transgression that causes desolation’. It is a desolating transgression because it causes the Lord’s messengers, and His people, to be trampled for a period of 2 300 years.

The angel Gabriel explained to the prophet Daniel, ‘Because of transgression, an army was given over *to the horn* to oppose the daily *sacrifices*; and he cast truth down to the

ground. He did *all this* and prospered. Then I heard a holy one speaking; and *another* holy one said to that certain *one* who was speaking, “How long *will* the vision *be, concerning* the daily *sacrifices* and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled underfoot?” And he said to me, “For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed”.’ Dan 8:12-14.

### The continual offering

The transgression of desolation is the corruption of ‘the continual’, or ‘the daily’, offering, and the resulting violation of fellowship among God’s people. In the Old Covenant, the people were required to offer a lamb, with its accompanying meal offering and drink offering, every morning and evening. Num 28:1-8. This was the daily, or continual, offering. It foreshadowed the offering of Christ, who is the Lamb of God. We recall that John the Baptist proclaimed, concerning Christ, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God!’ Joh 1:36.

In the New Covenant, Christ has granted us continual participation in His one offering. In the fellowship of His offering, we are being changed to become the bread of the meal offering and the wine of the drink offering, for one another.

The apostle Paul declared that ‘the cup of blessing which we bless’ is the fellowship of the blood of Christ, and ‘the bread which we break’ is the fellowship of the body of Christ. He proclaimed, concerning the bread, ‘For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.’ 1Co 10:16-17.

Likewise, Paul testified that he was becoming the wine of the drink offering in the fellowship of Christ’s offering. He wrote to the Philippians, ‘Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all’. Php 2:17. He then immediately invited us all to join this same fellowship by saying, ‘For the same reason [that is, to be poured out as a drink offering] you also be glad and rejoice with me.’ Php 2:18.

The fellowship of the *agape* meal is the new daily, or continual, offering. We read, concerning the fellowship of the early church, ‘And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers .... so continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.’ Act 2:42,46.

### The beginning of the specific transgression

When a remnant of the Jewish exiles returned from Babylon, the continual offering was restored under the leadership of men such as Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah. However, by the time of the prophet Malachi, the continual offering had become corrupted. Malachi rebuked the priests for receiving from the people, and then offering on the altar, sacrifices that were blind, lame and sick. Mal 1:8.

The lame sacrifices were representative of the people’s attitude toward the Lord and His table. This demonstrated that they despised the fellowship of Yahweh’s name. They did not honour God as their Father, nor revere the Son as their Lord and Master. Mal 1:6. The Lord confronted the people by saying, ‘You offer defiled food on My altar, but say, “In what way have we defiled You?” By saying, “The table of the Lord is contemptible”.’ Mal 1:7.

The Lord continued by asking whether there were any priests who were willing to guard the sanctification of the altar by shutting the doors of the temple. Mal 1:10. He declared through Malachi, “Who is there even among you who would shut the doors, so that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you”, says the Lord of hosts, “nor will I accept an offering from your hands”.’ Mal 1:10.

The Lord asked this question because He had given to the priests the mandate to guard the sanctification of the altar and, hence, the fellowship of the Lord’s table. In a prophetic vision, Zechariah saw the angel of the Lord give this mandate to Joshua, the high priest. The angel of the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, “If you will walk in My ways and if you will perform My service, then you will also govern My house and also have charge of My courts, and I will grant you free access among these who are standing here”.’ Zec 3:7.

However, it is apparent that none of the priests were willing to *stand in the breach* to protect the fellowship of the Lord’s table. They continued to facilitate, and to promote, the transgression of desolation. It was *this transgression* that enabled Satan to regain access into the heavenly places. It is important to remember that Satan works only by advantage and misappropriation.

In the years that followed, during the reign of the Greek Empire, Satan empowered a series of ‘little horns’ who persecuted and trampled the Lord’s messengers and His people. A ‘little horn’ is simply a secular ruler who is empowered by Satan from heavenly places. It was revealed to the prophet Daniel that this persecution and trampling will continue for a period of 2 300 years.

The trampling began during the Seleucid Empire, which was part of the fifth world kingdom. It continued during the Roman Empire, which was the sixth world kingdom. And it has continued all the way to our present day under the seventh world kingdom. The trampling will not come to an end until the sovereign judgement of God upon the armies of Gog and Magog at the opening of the sixth seal. Rev 6:12-17. Eze 38,39.

### The example of Jesus

To understand how the transgression that causes desolation leads to the trampling of the Lord’s messengers and His people, we need to consider the example of Christ Himself.

We note that Satan gained access to the fellowship of the last Passover meal by advantage, because Judas had rejected the words of Christ concerning participation in His offering, and had embraced another doctrine. Joh 13:10-11.

The alternative doctrine was the lie of Satan. Having been deceived by Satan, Judas clung to Christ in hypocrisy, for a season, and then betrayed Him into the hands of the Jewish religious leaders. Dan 11:34. This act of betrayal was the full manifestation of the transgression which makes desolate. Luk 22:21-22.

The Jewish religious leaders delivered Jesus to the Roman secular authorities because they were envious of Him. Mar 15:10. In the days of Jesus, the ‘little horn’ who ruled over the Roman Empire was the Caesar. Pontius Pilate was the governor in the region of Judea. He was the representative of the little horn in relation to Christ. In this way, Christ suffered and was crucified at the hands of the little horn.

It is important to recognise that this trampling was possible only because of the transgression of desolation. The apostle John recorded that Pilate said to Jesus, 'Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?' Joh 19:10. Jesus immediately answered him by saying, 'You would have no authority over Me, *unless it had been given you from above*, for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.' Joh 19:11.

When Jesus Christ was flung onto His back and nailed to the cross, it was the full expression of trampling at the hands of wicked men. This was the point when Jesus Christ, as the embodiment of grace and truth, was 'flung to the ground'. Joh 1:14. Dan 8:12. Significantly, as He was nailed to the cross, Jesus Christ joined the plight of every fallen messenger *and* joined every fallen messenger to Himself.

The trampling that every messenger may experience, during the entire 2 300-year period, is now their fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings.

### The finish of the transgression

We have considered how the betrayal of Judas and the envy of the Jewish religious leaders caused Jesus to be crucified by the Roman authorities. However, the crucifixion was more than an example of how the transgression causes trampling. The crucifixion of Jesus *finished the transgression!* This is the most important point.

Jesus not only joined those who are being trampled; He also fully identified Himself with the transgressors who cause the trampling! Isa 53:12. He became the embodiment of the transgression, and was then *cursed and cut off* when He was lifted up on the cross. In so doing, He *finished the transgression* in His own physical body. Finishing the transgression in His own physical body was the first element of Christ's offering as the scapegoat.

Jesus explained to the disciples how He would finish the transgression, by saying, 'For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: "And He was numbered with the transgressors". For the things concerning Me *have an end.*' Luk 22:37.





# Chapter 4

## The end of sin

The second outcome of the crucifixion of Christ that is identified in the Seventy Weeks prophecy is 'to make an end of sin'. In our last section, we considered that Jesus Christ finished the transgression because He not only suffered the judgement of our trampling but, also, He was numbered with the transgressors. Having been fully identified with the transgressors, He finished the transgression in His own physical body. In the same way, Jesus Christ made an end of sin because He not only suffered the judgement of God upon our sin but, also, He became *the embodiment of our sin*.

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul said that the Father 'made Him who knew no sin *to be sin for us*, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him'. 2Co 5:21. The key point in this chapter is that Christ made an end of sin by becoming the body of sin, and by then progressively dying the death of our sin, on His pathway from Gethsemane to the cross. Rom 6:6-10.

We note that there are two steps in this statement. The first step is that Christ *became the body of sin* in the garden of Gethsemane. The second step is that He *made an end of sin* by dying the death of *our* sin on His journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. That is, as He died our death, sin died!

### The other law

Before we discuss how Christ made an end of sin, it will be helpful to refresh ourselves on the distinction and relationship between the other law, sin, and the law of sin. The other law was fathered in mankind by the lie of Satan. Jesus said, 'You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.' Joh 8:44.

The other law is our *self-centredness*. It is our desire to be *like God* by being the source of our own life, name and works. Desiring to be our own source, we define what is good and evil for us. Because the other law became part of our identity as fallen human beings, it impacts the expression of all our faculties, including our conscience, our mind, our will, and our emotions.

### Sin is missing the mark

The outcome of living by the other law is sin. The first dimension of sin is 'missing the mark'. The 'mark' is the truth of our name, which was discussed by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, before the foundation of the world.

Sin is *disobedience*. Every thought, motivation, judgement and action that is an expression of the other law in our heart, rather than an expression of obedience to our name, is sin. This includes what we define to be good for ourselves or others. *The good and evil* that is motivated by the other law is sin. It is our rejection of God's fatherhood toward us.

The apostle Paul illustrated this point by saying that 'whatever is not from faith is sin'. Rom 14:23. This means that sin is any action that is not an expression of the faith which Christ authored and finished for us by His offering. We receive this faith as a gift when the word is proclaimed to us.

The result of sin is death, because we are cut off from the life of God *and* it brings us under the judgement of God. James illustrated this simple progression by saying, 'When desire [the other law] has conceived [by the lie of Satan], it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death.' Jas 1:15. Sin brings us under the judgement of God, because it is a violation of the Royal Law of God, which is love.

It is important to recognise that *all sin is against relationship*. It is sin against the Father, because it is the rejection of His fatherhood. It is sin against the Son, because we are responsible and accountable for each of the wounding events that He suffered from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. We are illuminated to see this when the spirit of grace and supplication enables us to turn and look upon Him whom we have pierced. Furthermore, it is sin against others. Our projections will always be an imposition upon, or a violation of, the sanctification of someone else.

### The law of sin

The Scriptures also identify another dimension of sin. The Lord Himself identified this dimension of sin when He admonished Cain by saying, 'If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.' Gen 4:7.

We know that Cain was born with the other law in his heart. This was his desire to be like God by defining his own name and works. The offering that he brought before the Lord missed the mark because it was not consistent with his name. The Lord had no regard for his offering because it was sin; but the Lord then referred to *another dimension of sin*. The Lord *personified this principle* of sin and identified that it desired to enslave Cain. He admonished Cain that he needed to overcome, or rule over, it.

In the same way, the apostle Peter admonished all believers to 'be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour'. 1Pe 5:8.

The desire of Satan is to be like the Most High; that is, like God the Father. He has fathered this desire in us as the other law. However, there is *a further dimension* to the desire of Satan. His *desire is for us* because he seeks to *use man as his resource* to become like God.

When Adam disobeyed God in the beginning, Satan had successfully stolen all the children who had been predestined to become sons of God in the Father's kingdom. He now had his own children. We recall that Jesus said to those who were offended by His teaching, 'You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.' Joh 8:44. The sons of the devil populate his kingdom. It is called 'the kingdom of darkness'.

Following the Fall, the Lord said to Satan, 'You will eat dust all the days of your life.' Gen 3:14. The 'dust' refers to man, who has been formed from the dust.

We know that God the Father is motivated only by love to give life to His children. He is not motivated by need. He does not seek nor derive any form of identity verification from bringing forth a multitude of sons. In complete contrast to this, Satan seeks to verify his own fatherhood by feeding upon mankind. His desire was to devour Cain. In the same way, we recall that Jesus warned Peter that Satan also desired to 'sift him as wheat'. Satan's desire was to 'feed' upon him.

The apostle Paul explained that *this same spirit* is now at work in the sons of disobedience. In his letter to the Ephesians, he said, 'And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, *the spirit who now works* in the sons of disobedience.' Eph 2:1-2.

The spirit of Satan, which now works in the sons of disobedience, is also called 'the law of sin'. In our pursuit of being the source of our own name and works, which is the motivation of the other law, *the law of sin* compels us to make this projection a reality by using all available resources that do not belong to us.

If we summarise the other law as *self-centredness*, and sin as *disobedience*, the law of sin could be summarised as *coveting*. The world, including its resources, does not belong to fallen man. However, *the law of sin* motivates man to lust after the things of the world in order to satisfy his own desires and to sustain his own life.

The apostle John summarised the desire of the law of sin in the world by saying, 'For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.' 1Jn 2:16-17.

Notably, Satan uses *the fear of death* to hold a person in bondage to this mode of living, which leads only to death.

From the perspective of the law of sin, *the greatest resource* of all is the word of God. It is the law of sin that compels a religious person to lay hold of the word of God as a resource for their own agenda, in the mistaken belief that this will deliver them from death and will give them eternal life. However, the moment that we lay hold of the word

of God as a resource in this manner, we immediately come under its judgement, and we 'die'. Paul illustrated this principle in detail in Romans Chapter 7.

### Christ became the body of sin

Jesus Christ became the body of sin in the garden of Gethsemane, when the Father made every person who has ever lived, or will live, to be a member of His body. We know that Jesus did not sin; nor did He have another law in His heart. However, He became the embodiment of sin when the Father joined every sinner to Him.

When we were joined to Christ, this included the principle, or law, of sin, which controls and enslaves us in our fallen condition. We know that Jesus never died as a slave of sin but, when Christ was lifted up on the cross as the body of sin, He was also the embodiment of the spirit of Satan. Joh 3:14-15. When Jesus was lifted up as the Son of Man, Satan was cast out from his place of rulership in the world and was assigned to everlasting judgement in the lake of fire, forever.

Speaking about His crucifixion, Jesus said, 'Now is the judgement of this world, *now* the ruler of this world [Satan] will be cast out.' Joh 12:31. When Jesus said, 'now', He was not referring to some time in the future. He was referring to His offering journey, from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross.

The apostle Paul was clear that the whole world has been crucified with Christ. He said to the Galatians, 'But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.' Gal 6:14.

In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul also declared that the crucifixion of the world, with Christ, was 'the end of the ages'. Speaking about Christ as our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, he said, 'But now, *once at the end of the ages*, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.' Heb 9:26. The offering of Christ was the end of the ages, because He took the present heavens and earth out into the sea of God's forgetfulness.

### The death that He died, He died to sin!

We have considered that Christ became the body of sin, and then made an end of sin by dying our death. However, most significantly, the death that He died, *He died to sin!* Paul proclaimed, 'For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.' Rom 6:10.

Christ *died to sin* because He died our death willingly, obediently, and by the grace of God. The grace of God was the power of resurrection life in His mortal body. Jesus said, concerning His offering, 'No-one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself [willingly]. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again [by the grace of God]. This command I have received from My Father [obediently].' Joh 10:18.

What is the major implication of this for us?

Knowing that our old man has been crucified with Christ, and *believing* that if we have died with Him we will also live with Him, we reckon ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God. Paul said, 'Likewise, you also reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Rom 6:11. We can 'reckon' in this way because we have been united in the likeness of *His death* by baptism.

The key point is that if we are dead to sin, we have been completely delivered from our bondage to Satan and to the law of sin. This is true, even though we still have the other law in our heart, and we still sin by missing the mark. Because we have been delivered from our bondage to the law of sin, we can choose to set our mind on the things of the Spirit by embracing our unique participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

In this fellowship, we are ceasing from sin as the other law is being circumcised from our heart, and as the love of God is poured into our heart through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us as the firstfruits of our eternal inheritance.

### **The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world**

At the beginning of his ministry, John the Baptist proclaimed, 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' Joh 1:29. There are two important applications of this statement. The first application is the offering journey of Christ, from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. The second application is the revelation of the righteous judgement of God, and the wrath of the Lamb, in the time of the end.

We know that Jesus Christ took away the sin of the world by fully identifying with the sin of the world as 'the body of sin', and then by taking the world, with its sin, out into the eternal judgement of God.

This work has been finished! The old creation has already been abolished by the offering of Christ. The only reason why God reactivated the present elements of the universe at the ninth hour was to give mankind an opportunity to mourn and repent by looking upon Him whom they have pierced. Zec 12:10. Rev 1:7.

The key point is that the mercy of God has granted us time to escape His judgement upon the old creation, by giving us the opportunity to join the fellowship of Christ's offering *as overcomers* who belong to the new creation. The apostle Peter declared, 'The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.' 2Pe 3:9.

On this basis, the Lord's mercy is new, every morning. However, if a person spurns the mercy of the Lord and refuses to repent, they are filling up a cup of wrath for themselves. In his letter to the Romans, Paul said, 'Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God.' Rom 2:4-5.

The judgement of God upon sin is not yet being revealed in the world. However, when the Father takes His seat as the Ancient of Days, and the Lamb, who *takes away the sin of the world*, stands up at the beginning of the time of the end, the judgement of God and the wrath of the Lamb will begin to be revealed in the world. Rev 6:15-17.



## Chapter 5

# Reconciliation for iniquity

In this chapter, we will consider the third outcome of the Seventy Weeks prophecy, which is 'to make reconciliation for iniquity'. Dan 9:24. This can also be translated as 'atonement for iniquity'.

In the same way in which Christ finished the transgression by being numbered among the transgressors, and has made an end of sin by becoming the body of sin, He made reconciliation for iniquity by bearing our iniquity into the sea of God's forgetfulness. The prophet Isaiah declared, 'All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.' Isa 53:6.

### The definition of 'iniquity'

In the first case, the desire to be an *alternative source*, in opposition to the fellowship of Yahweh, was the iniquity that was found in Satan. The prophet Ezekiel said, concerning Satan, 'You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.' Eze 28:15.

In contrast to this, Jesus testified about His own ministry by saying, 'My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.' Joh 7:16-18. The word that is translated as 'unrighteousness' in this verse is also translated as 'iniquity'.

Satan has fathered, in the heart of fallen mankind, the desire to be *the source* of our name and works. This desire to be *our own source* is iniquity. It is the expression of the other law in our heart. This includes our desire to determine what is good and evil for ourselves, which means that *we are a law unto ourselves*.

If we are a law unto ourselves, we believe that we have integrity, because we live consistently with our own knowledge of good and evil. Really, if we are a law unto

ourselves, it is *lawlessness*. For this reason, we note that 'iniquity' and 'lawlessness' are used somewhat interchangeably in the Scriptures.

### The reproach of the Father

Our iniquity, which is the desire to be *our own source*, is a rejection of the fatherhood of God toward us.

When Adam and Eve turned aside to the fatherhood of Satan by listening to his word, they spurned the love of God, and rejected His fatherhood toward them. This rejection was the beginning of mankind's reproach upon the Father.

Every thought, motivation and behaviour that is an expression of the other law in our heart is a reproach against the Father. It is our rejection of God as our Father, and as the source of our life and works.

Furthermore, the unaccountable position of the fallen man is to view himself as being a victim of his circumstances. We note that when a person rejects God and goes their own way, they are then inclined to turn around and blame Him for the consequences of going their own way. This is also part of our reproach upon the Father.

Significantly, when mankind rejected the fatherhood of God, the Father voiced *His* deep grief and yearning for them as He called to Adam, saying, '*Where are you?*' Gen 3:9. This was the grief of a Father whose children had rejected His fatherhood, and who had left His house. His grief was because of this relational breach within the family of God.

### Our reproach laid upon Christ

The Son offered Himself to the Father to become our sin offering, for the sake of recovering and reconciling all of the sons who had been lost to God. In the garden of Gethsemane, the Father laid all of our iniquity, with all of our reproach toward Him, on Christ, as our sin offering. Christ bore this reproach in His physical body as 'the scapegoat'.

The key point is that the Father did this to break the power of the other law in our hearts so that we can be reconciled to Him. This explains how God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. 2Co 5:19.

Speaking prophetically on behalf of Christ, the psalmist declared, 'Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.' Psa 69:9. We note that the Father's grief was commensurate with His love for the sons whom He had lost. This grief was unimaginable, because the Father's love toward His sons is immeasurable.

The Son testified that zeal for the Father's house had 'consumed' Him. The Father was able to lay the grief of our rejection of His fatherhood upon the Son, because the Son was fully acquainted with the Father's love for His family.

It was in the garden of Gethsemane that Jesus said that His soul was *deeply grieved* to the point of death. The psalmist prophetically declared, concerning the garden of Gethsemane, 'When I wept in my soul with fasting, that became my reproach.' Psa 69:10. This prayer continued all the way to the cross.



## The reproach of men

We can identify specific elements of reproach in relation to each of the wounding events that Christ suffered at the hands of wicked men on His offering journey to the cross. All of these elements of reproach at the hands of wicked men culminated when He was nailed to the cross, lifted up before the eyes of all, and then mocked and ridiculed by all who passed by, from the third hour to the sixth hour.

It is necessary to contrast the personal reproach that Christ suffered from the third hour to the sixth hour, with the reproach that broke Christ's heart from the sixth hour to the ninth hour. Matthew recorded in his Gospel, 'And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross".' Mat 27:39-40.

This was more than the reproach of false accusation. They imposed their own test upon Him, and then used the fact that He failed this test to undermine the fundamental truth of His identity. They were effectively saying, 'If You do not come down from the cross, then You are not the Son of God.'

Matthew continued, 'In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. He trusts in God; let God rescue Him now, if He delights in Him, for He said, 'I am the Son of God'.'" ' Mat 27:41-43.

They were saying, in effect, 'If You do not come down from the cross, then You are not the King of Israel, and we are fully justified in not believing in You.' Likewise, they were saying, 'If God does not rescue You, it proves that God does not delight in You.'

We can appreciate the intensity of these reviling accusations. This was part of His personal reproach as the Son of God. However, this reproach did not breach His relationship with the Father. He kept entrusting Himself to God. It was not this *personal* reproach that broke His heart!

The apostle Peter described the reproach of Christ from the third hour to the sixth hour by saying, 'And while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.' 1Pe 2:23.

By midday on the day of His crucifixion, He had descended to the full extent of the fallen human condition. We know that it was around midday that one of the two thieves, who had previously been hurling insults at Him, was converted.

However, significantly, this was not the end of His offering! The end of His obedience was not in His own hands. It was in the hands of the Father. During the following three hours of darkness, Christ endured the eternal judgement of God in the sea of His forgetfulness. The psalmist likened the judgement of God to floodwaters that had come up to the neck of Christ and then overflowed Him. Psa 69:1-3.

## My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?

At the end of those three hours, Christ uttered the most sorrowful cry of all time and eternity. We continue to read in the Gospel of Matthew, 'Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out

with a loud voice, saying, “*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” ’ Mat 27:45-46.

The Scriptures record that this cry was misinterpreted by those who stood in the vicinity of the cross. They thought that Jesus may have been calling for Elijah. Significantly, even though the words of Jesus have been accurately recorded for us in the Scriptures, this cry has continued to be greatly misunderstood by many believers.

We need to be clear that this was not the cry of One who had been forsaken by God through His rebellion. That is, the ‘why’ associated with our rebellion was not the ‘why’ of His cry to the Father. This was not a cry of insubordination to the Father. It was not the cry of a victim.

Rather, it was the cry of His broken heart. What broke His heart? It was the sorrow of God the Father. We read in the book of Proverbs, ‘A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken’. Pro 15:13.

Our reproach against the Father, which had been laid upon Christ as the scapegoat, caused Him unimaginable grief. As Isaiah prophesied, ‘Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.’ Isa 53:4.

The grief that Jesus experienced was not the grief that we experience because of our sin. Nor was it His own grief because He had been forsaken by God. The grief that Jesus bore was the grief that was caused by *our* reproaches against the Father. This was the reproach that broke the Lord’s heart!

The cry, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’, was the acute travail of the Son, who had been fully joined to mankind’s separation from the Father. This separation had caused the Father much grief, and prompted His question to Adam immediately following the Fall, ‘Where are you?’ Gen 3:8-9.

The psalmist prophetically declared, concerning this separation, ‘Reproach has broken My heart, and I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.’ Psa 69:20.

When reproach broke His heart, Christ was completely alone. At this point, Christ was totally forsaken, forgotten and lost. This is a most sobering point. The Godhead itself was torn and rent when the Son was cut off from the Father, with us, as the bearer of our sin and reproach.

### **God is near to the broken-hearted**

This was the end of the journey of Christ as the scapegoat, into the sea of God’s forgetfulness. However, this was not the end of Christ’s offering! Because of His broken heart and contrite Spirit, God immediately drew near to Him to draw Him out of the waters of eternal judgement.

The psalmist proclaimed, ‘The righteous cry, and the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.’ Psa 34:17-18. Elsewhere, the psalmist said that the Father drew Christ out of the many waters of eternal judgement. Psa 18:16.

Significantly, the broken heart of Christ was the final breakpoint of Christ’s offering! It is the point where Christ was fully cut off as the embodiment of sin while, at the same time,

He was immediately rescued by the Father, and the body of sin was fully and finally cut, or circumcised, from Him!

That is, it was the point of Christ's final identification *with* the body of sin and His complete separation *from* the body of sin! The broken heart of Christ was both the full revelation of obedience and righteousness *and* the full revelation of sin and iniquity that is eternally separate from God.

It was the breakpoint where mercy and judgement met in the physical body of Christ, on the cross, and where mercy triumphed over judgement. Jas 2:13. Mercy triumphed over judgement because the body of sin was destroyed and *the new creation* was brought forth into the kingdom of God.

### The fruit of His travail

The Father drew Christ out of the waters of judgement *as the corporate New Creation*. He had recovered a great multitude of sons of God for the Father. This was the fruit of the sorrow of God, as a travail that brought forth the New Creation.

The prophet Isaiah declared, 'He shall see the labour [travail] of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.' Isa 53:11.

The broken heart of Christ was the end of sorrow, and was the beginning of *everlasting joy* as He brought a great multitude of the Father's children back into His family. We know that it was this joy that had been set before Christ on His entire journey from Gethsemane to the cross.

### Godly sorrow

What is the major implication for us? When the word of the cross is proclaimed to us, the spirit of grace and supplication enables us to turn, and to look upon Christ whom we have pierced. When we look upon Christ in this manner, we meet Him eye to eye and heart to heart. Our heart is broken as we are joined to His broken heart!

Significantly, when our heart is broken, the power of the other law is broken within us! As one who has become bankrupt in spirit, we are reconciled to God. *Reconciliation with God*, as our Father, is the first blessing for those who are bankrupt in spirit. Jesus proclaimed, 'Blessed are the poor [bankrupt] in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Mat 5:3.

Jesus continued, 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.' Mat 5:4. The evidence, or fruit, that we have been joined to the broken heart of Christ will be godly sorrow. This was certainly the case for the crowd who stood at the foot of the cross. Luke recorded, 'And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned [to their homes].' Luk 23:48.

When we are joined, by grace and supplication, to the broken heart of Christ, we cease from the self-centred sorrow, or grief, that is associated with our unfulfilled expectations of life. This kind of sorrow produces only death. Instead, we begin to mourn with the sorrow of God. This sorrow leads to repentance, through which we turn from our own way and follow Christ on the pathway of salvation that He has pioneered for us.



## Chapter 6

# Bringing in everlasting righteousness

In our previous chapters, we have considered that the first three outcomes of the Seventy Weeks prophecy were the result of Christ's offering as the scapegoat. Jesus Christ has finished the transgression, made an end of sin, and made reconciliation for iniquity. As the scapegoat, He removed everything that belongs to the old creation.

We will now turn our attention to the outcomes of the Seventy Weeks prophecy which were the result of Christ's offering as 'the Lord's goat'. In this chapter, we will focus on the fourth outcome of the crucifixion of Christ, which was 'to bring in everlasting righteousness'. Jesus Christ brought in everlasting righteousness by inaugurating the New Covenant.

### Knowing that all things were now accomplished

The apostle John recorded, concerning the crucifixion of Christ, 'After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" ' Joh 19:28. When John said, 'All things were now accomplished', it meant that Christ had become the end of the old creation and the beginning of the new creation.

In relation to the old creation, Christ experienced our death by being fully identified with our transgression, our sin and the judgement of God upon our iniquity. As Jesus Christ hung on the cross from 12pm to 3pm, He was completely submerged under the waters of God's eternal judgement.

In His flesh, as the Son of Man, He took sin and Satan out into the sea of God's forgetfulness. In so doing, the body of sin was forsaken and completely forgotten by God. When He cried out, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?', He was aware that everything that belonged to the old creation had been cut off and forgotten by God, forever.

This cry was not the expression of His own despair, nor the expression of our grief. It was the cry of His broken heart. His heart had been broken by the sorrow of God the Father.

This was the end of the journey of Christ, as the scapegoat, into the sea of God's forgetfulness.

However, this was not the end of His journey! Because of His broken heart and contrite Spirit, God immediately drew near to Him to draw Him out of the waters of judgement. The Father drew Christ out of the waters of judgement *as the corporate New Creation*. As the beginning of the new creation, He had recovered, and perfected forever, a great multitude of sons of God.

Jesus Christ has perfected our sonship because He has learned our obedience and completed the works that the Father has prepared for us to do as sons of God. This is a most remarkable truth. In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul declared that 'though He was a Son, yet He *learned obedience* by the things which He suffered'. Heb 5:8.

When Paul spoke of 'the things which He suffered', he was referring to the wounding events that Christ experienced in those hours from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. Jesus did not need to suffer nor to learn obedience for His own sake. He suffered for our sake, and it was *our obedience* that He learned.

Jesus Christ learned our obedience by completing the works of our sonship. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed, 'Lord, You will establish peace for us, since You have also performed for us all our works.' Isa 26:12. By performing all of our works, Christ has fulfilled our righteousness.

Significantly, the righteousness that Christ fulfilled for us is not confined, or limited, to the works of our sonship in this present age. The offering of Christ is also the full revelation of the grace of God for the works of our sonship in the age to come. Eph 2:7,10. This is a most astonishing reality, because the works of sonship in the new heavens and new earth will multiply for eternity.

The new creation that was brought forth out of the waters of God's eternal judgement includes everything that belongs to the new heavens and new earth, where righteousness dwells and increases forever. 2Pe 3:13. The offering of Christ is the source of everlasting righteousness!

### **He proclaimed, 'I thirst!'**

To fully understand how the offering of Christ has become the source of everlasting righteousness, we need to consider the significance of His statement, 'I thirst!', from the cross. We recall that John wrote, 'After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" ' Joh 19:28.

It is important to recognise that every word that was spoken by Jesus Christ on His offering journey from Gethsemane to the cross, and then as He hung on the cross, is a major point of focus. With this in view, we need to appreciate the significance of His statement, 'I thirst!'

In order to understand this statement, it will be helpful to firstly identify that Jesus was not asking for pain relief; and nor was He physically thirsty.

We recall that Jesus had earlier refused to drink the sour wine with gall that was offered to Him prior to His crucifixion. Mat 27:34. This was offered to Him as a form of pain relief. He did not drink it, because He had offered Himself to the Father to taste the fullness of our death. He tasted our death by the grace of God and had no need of, or

desire for, any pain relief. At the end of His crucifixion, Jesus did not suddenly change His mind!

In fact, by this point in His offering journey, the physical pain of the cross, and the emotional and spiritual trauma of suffering our eternal judgement and separation from God, had already come to an end.

The cry, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?', marked the final circumcision of the body of sin. When this circumcision was complete, the pain and suffering of our death immediately ceased.

Furthermore, it is important to recognise that, when the heart of Christ was broken by the sorrow of God, His *physical heart* was also broken. That is, His physical heart stopped beating!

As His physical heart stopped beating, it was broken and ruptured. When it was broken and ruptured, His blood congealed and separated into blood and water. The breaking of Christ's heart, by the sorrow of God, was the seventh wounding event that He experienced between the garden of Gethsemane and the cross.

When Christ's heart was broken, His physical capacity to sustain His mortal body came to an end. However, we know that He did not physically die at this point! Jesus remained a living sacrifice by the power of *exanastasis* that had been perfected in His mortal body. He continued to offer Himself to God as 'a whole burnt offering', by the power of *exanastasis*, until His offering was finished.

With this amazing point in view, we see that He certainly had no need for a drink to satisfy any kind of physical thirst. Let us say again. When Christ said, 'I thirst!', He was not saying, 'I am thirsty'. This was a completely different kind of thirst! Jesus referred to this unique kind of thirst when He said, 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.' Mat 5:6.

### **That the Scripture might be fulfilled**

Returning to our key verse, John explained that Jesus said, 'I thirst!', so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. John wrote, 'After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" ' Joh 19:28.

Of course, this does not mean that Jesus was working His way through a 'checklist' of Old Testament passages that needed to be fulfilled so that He could 'tick off' each one. We do read, in the prophetic psalms, 'They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink'. Psa 69:21. However, Jesus did not say, 'I thirst!', simply to fulfil this Scripture.

The apostle John was referring to 'the Scripture' as being the full revelation and fulfilment of the Father's will for every son of God. We read in the book of Hebrews, '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 10:7.

Paul quoted these same words of Christ, and applied them directly to the inauguration of the New Covenant. 'Then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God". He takes away the first [the Old Covenant] that He may establish the second [the New Covenant].' Heb 10:9.

The key point is that, having become the end of the old creation and the beginning of the new creation, Jesus Christ proclaimed, 'I thirst!', for the sake of inaugurating the New Covenant. The New Covenant is the Covenant of the Spirit. It is an eternal participation, by the Spirit, in the finished offering of Christ.

### The inauguration of the New Covenant

The major focus of the book of Hebrews is more than the fulfilment of the true Day of Atonement. It is the inauguration of the New Covenant by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ.

We read, concerning the offering of Christ, 'For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason *He is the Mediator of the New Covenant.*' Heb 9:13-15.

In this same passage, Paul compared the inauguration of the Old Covenant with the inauguration of the New Covenant by saying, 'For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of calves and goats [the sin offering], with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you".' Heb 9:19-20.

In the book of Exodus, it is recorded that Moses sprinkled the people only with blood. Exo 24:8. 'Water, scarlet wool and hyssop' is a reference to the ashes of the heifer. This is important, because it shows that Paul gathered up the whole economy of sacrifice and offering under the Old Covenant, called it 'the blood of the covenant', and applied it to the inauguration of that covenant.

He did this to show that the whole focus of Christ's 'once and for all' offering, which fulfilled and replaced all the offerings and sacrifices under the Old Covenant, was the inauguration of the New Covenant. The New Covenant is the Covenant of the Spirit.

The water, blood and Spirit are the three elements of the finished offering of Christ. As we have considered, when Christ's heart was broken and ruptured, His blood congealed, and separated into blood and water. Blood and water began to flow from His heart. However, more than this, when Christ proclaimed, 'I thirst!', it also signified that the Holy Spirit was flowing from His heart.

Referring to our participation in this element of His finished offering, Jesus said, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' Joh 7:37-38. Having quoted the words of Jesus, the apostle John then explained, 'He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.' Joh 7:39.

Jesus was glorified as our great High Priest through the seven wounding events that He experienced on His journey from Gethsemane to the cross. Having been glorified as our great High Priest, He then mixed the elements of the blood, water and the Spirit to become the elements for our purification and salvation.



When Jesus said, 'I thirst!', a soldier filled a sponge with sour wine and raised it up to the mouth of Jesus, using hyssop. Joh 19:29. Jesus drank the sour wine from the sponge on the hyssop because He had prepared a place for a great multitude of sons in the Father's kingdom.

Jesus had earlier said to His disciples, during the first communion meal, 'I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.' Mat 26:29. As Jesus drank this wine, He was drinking it *with us* as part of the corporate new creation. This is how we also drink the cup of the New Covenant in His blood, *with Him*. It is ministered to us by the water, blood and Spirit, which are the elements of the New Covenant.

### The river of the water of life

Once the blood, water and Spirit had been mixed, and the New Covenant had been inaugurated, Jesus proclaimed, 'It is finished!' We read in the Gospel of John, 'So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His Spirit.' Joh 19:30.

Jesus committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father and took His seat upon the mercy seat in the Father's throne. The mercy seat is also the throne of grace.

When the soldier pierced the side of Christ with the spear, it was not a further wounding or sprinkling event. We know that all seven wounding events were completed while Jesus was still alive and before He proclaimed that His offering was finished. The piercing of His side, after He had physically died, was an *opening*, rather than another *sprinkling*. It *opened* the fountain for sin and uncleanness for all who would come to Christ for salvation.

The blood, water and the spirit of grace and supplication flowed from the throne of grace, through the physical body of Christ on the cross, as an everlasting stream. This is the pure river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, that flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb, for eternity. Rev 22:1.

The water, blood and Spirit, in the river of the water of life, are *the bread and the wine of the New Covenant*. When the apostle John saw the river of the water of life coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb in the New Jerusalem, he also saw the tree of life in the middle, and on either side, of the river.

We read in the book of Revelation concerning the river of life, 'In the middle of its street [literally, 'in the middle of the river'], and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.' Rev 22:2. We see that the river of the water of life *is also* the bread of life as the fruit of the tree of life.

The word of Yahweh, which will continue to grow and multiply forever, is the source of our ever-increasing *agape* fellowship with Him, for eternity. Significantly, the word of the cross is proclaimed to us, by the Spirit, to join us to this fellowship, now. We eat and drink in fellowship together, in one Spirit, as our participation in the New Covenant. This is how we will commune with Him and with one another in the fellowship of His offering, forever.



## Chapter 7

# To seal up vision and prophecy

The fifth outcome of the crucifixion of Christ that is listed in the Seventy Weeks prophecy is 'to seal up vision and prophecy'. Dan 9:24. 'To seal up' means 'to make an end' of vision and prophecy. We note that it is *the same word* that is used in the phrase 'to make an end of sin'.

The key point is that Jesus Christ made an end of all vision and prophecy *by fulfilling it* in His physical body, on the cross.

In the first case, the offering of Christ was the complete fulfilment of the Law, the prophets, and the Messianic psalms. The interaction of Jesus with the two men on the road to Emmaus highlights this point. We read in the Gospel of Luke, 'Then He said to them, "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.

Later, on the same day, Jesus said to the disciples in the upper room, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.' Luk 24:44. Luke also recorded, 'And He opened their understanding, that they might *comprehend the Scriptures.*' Luk 24:45.

In this interaction with His disciples, Jesus was doing more than giving the disciples a Bible study, and highlighting the various passages that refer to Him and His offering. He opened their understanding to comprehend the nature of 'the Scriptures' themselves as the word of the Everlasting Covenant that has been forever settled in the heavens.

The Scriptures are the full revelation of the Father's will for every son of God. Likewise, the offering of Christ is the fulfilment of the Father's will for every son of God.

### In the volume of the book, it is written of Me

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to the Father, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.' Luk 22:42. Quoting the psalmist, Paul prophetically expanded this prayer in the book of Hebrews by writing, 'Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "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.

'The volume of the book' refers to the length, breadth, height and depth of the Scriptures, which contain the fullness of the Father's will for all of time and eternity. 'The will of the Father' includes the perfection of a great multitude of sons of God to populate the new heavens and new earth, as well as the complete removal of transgression, sin and iniquity into the sea of His forgetfulness.

The offering of Christ has achieved both of these outcomes. We know that there are two sides of the cross. The one offering of Christ is the full revelation of both everlasting salvation and everlasting judgement.

### The end of the old creation

At the beginning of His ministry, John the Baptist proclaimed, concerning Jesus, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' Joh 1:29. John was particularly referring to Christ as the scapegoat. Christ took away the sin of the world by fully identifying with the sin of the world as the body of sin, and then by taking the world, with its sin, out into the eternal judgement of God.

Speaking about His offering on the cross, Jesus said, 'Now is the judgement of this world; *now* the ruler of this world will be cast out.' Joh 12:31. The ruler of this world is Satan. Joh 14:30. Joh 16:11. The eternal judgement of God upon sin, Satan and the world was fully accomplished between midday and 3pm on the day of Christ's crucifixion.

In those three hours, Jesus took the whole of the first creation out into the sea of God's forgetfulness and brought forth the new creation. The Gospels of Matthew and Mark record that there was darkness over *all the earth*. It was not only in the region surrounding Jerusalem.

The Gospel of Luke confirmed this and also explained why darkness covered the whole earth. We read, 'Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. Then the *sun was darkened*, and the veil of the temple was torn in two.' Luk 23:44-45.

When Luke reported that the *sun was darkened*, it was far more than a solar eclipse. Darkness covered *the whole earth*, because the natural creation had been struck at its source of light. This was the end of the first creation.

The prophet Amos spoke of this judgement by saying, ' "And it shall come to pass in that day", says the Lord God, "That I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight; I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation. I will bring sackcloth on every waist, and baldness on every head. I will make it like mourning for an only son, and its end like a bitter day".' Amo 8:9-10.

We know that this Scripture was fulfilled on the day of Christ's crucifixion. When the spear pierced the side of Christ, the spirit of grace and supplication caused the crowd to look upon Christ whom they had pierced, and to mourn for Him as the Firstborn Son.

There are many other Scriptures that support the point that the crucifixion of Christ was the end of the old creation. Jesus said, 'Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. For assuredly, I say to you, *until heaven and earth pass away*, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the Law until all is fulfilled.' Mat 5:17-18.

In this statement, Jesus proclaimed that He had come to fulfil the Law and the prophets. We know that He did this through His offering. He then declared that the Law would not be fulfilled until heaven and earth had passed away. The simple point is that *both these outcomes* happened through the offering journey of Christ from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross.

The apostle Paul clearly declared that the entire world was crucified with Christ. He explained to the Galatians, 'But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *the world has been crucified* to me, and I to the world.' Gal 6:14.

### Preserved by the prophetic Scriptures

Let us ask an obvious question. If the present heavens and earth passed away with Christ in the sea of God's forgetfulness, why are we still here? Why does the world still exist? Significantly, God reactivated the present elements of the universe at the ninth hour to give mankind an opportunity to mourn and to repent by looking upon Him whom they had pierced. Zec 12:10. Rev 1:7.

The mercy of God has granted us time to escape His judgement upon the old creation, by giving us the opportunity to join the fellowship of Christ's offering as sons of God who belong to the new creation. The apostle Peter declared, 'The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.' 2Pe 3:9.

In this way, His mercy is new every morning. Every day is a gift from the Lord. He has made each day so that He can speak to us. He opens our ear morning by morning so that we can hear from Him and then turn to meet Him. We present ourselves to Him, by the mercies of the Lord, to participate in the fellowship of His offering each day.

The key point is that the present heavens and earth are being preserved for the sake of our inclusion and participation in that which Christ has already finished on the cross.

Specifically, the present heavens and earth are being preserved for a definitive time, because God has committed the whole universe to the prophetic Scriptures. The apostle Peter explained, 'The heavens and the earth *which are now preserved by the same word*, are reserved for fire until the day of judgement and perdition of ungodly men.' 2Pe 3:7.

In this regard, the prophetic Scriptures are presently sustaining the sun as the light of the natural creation. However, much more than this, the prophetic Scriptures have become the source of light for each day of this present creation. That is, in the context of each day, *the word itself is bringing light*. The Scriptures are proclaimed to us by the

messengers of Christ, as 'the lamp to our feet and the light to our path', for each day. Psa 119:105.

Knowing this wonderful truth, Peter declared, 'And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.' 2Pe 1:19.

In summary, the Lord reactivated the elements of the natural creation and committed every single day to the Scriptures, so that we have an opportunity to join the fellowship of His offering and to fulfil the works of our sonship that Christ has already accomplished for us.

### The days ordained for us

It is important to remember that there are two sides of the cross. Christ is the end of the old creation and the beginning of the new creation!

In the same three hours that Christ took the first creation into the sea of God's forgetfulness, He also *authored*, or *fashioned*, all the days that are necessary for us to fulfil the works of our sonship in this lifetime, so that we receive the glorious inheritance of our heavenly body for the age to come.

King David rejoiced in the psalms by saying, 'My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, *the days fashioned for me*, when as yet there were none of them.' Psa 139:15-16. We note that Jesus did this while He was in the lowest parts of the earth. Jesus descended to the lowest parts of the earth while He was hanging on the cross, between midday and 3pm. During those three hours, darkness covered the whole earth.

The psalmist, Heman, spoke prophetically of this time when he said, from Christ's perspective, 'You have laid me *in the lowest pit, in darkness*, in the depths. Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and You have afflicted me with all Your waves.' Psa 88:6-7. The waves belong to the sea of God's forgetfulness.

Heman then asked the following questions: 'Will You work wonders [lit. 'miracles'] for the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise You? Selah. Shall Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave? Or Your faithfulness in the place of destruction? Shall Your wonders (lit. miracles) be known in the dark? And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?' Psa 88:10-12.

The answer to all these questions is a resounding, 'Yes!' Jesus Christ has learned our obedience, completed the works of our sonship, and authored each day of our life for us, while He was in the lowest parts of the earth. This was the place where He worked an infinite number of miracles for every son of God, while we were still dead in our trespasses and sins.

In a similar way, Moses evidently understood that the Lord has authored the days of our natural lifetime. He prayed, 'So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Return, O Lord! How long? And have compassion on Your servants. Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days! Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us, the years in which we have seen evil.' Psa 90:12-15.

The Lord has given us a set number of days to embrace our fellowship in His offering. We know that we cannot die one minute before our time if we continue to walk in the fellowship of Christ's offering.

In the same way, according to His prophetic word, the Lord has given a set number of days to the present heavens and earth. The world is presently being preserved by His word. 2Pe 3:7. However, the offering of Christ has also established an irrevocable endpoint for the world.

### The scroll with the seven seals

The complete eschatology of the Father's will, which has been accomplished in the one offering of Christ, is contained in the scroll with its seven seals. The apostle John recorded in the book of Revelation, 'I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.' Rev 5:1. In prophetic vision, the apostle John was looking at the time when the Father will take His seat on His throne. The seven-sealed scroll is the full revelation of His will. It is written on both sides because it is the full revelation of both the salvation and the judgement of God.

Jesus Christ, as the Lamb of God, is the only One who is worthy to loose the seven seals, and to open this scroll, because it was sealed by His offering. The opening of the seven-sealed scroll, in the time of the end, will reveal to the world what has already been accomplished by the offering of Christ. Significantly, this will include the revelation of the sovereign judgement of God upon the world.

As we have considered, the Lord's mercy is new every morning. However, if a person spurns the mercy of the Lord and refuses to repent, they are filling up a cup of wrath for themselves.

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul wrote, 'Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you *are treasuring up for yourself wrath* in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God.' Rom 2:4-5.

The judgement of God upon sin is not yet being revealed in the world. However, when the Father takes His seat as the Ancient of Days, and the Lamb stands up to open the seven-sealed scroll, the judgement of God and the wrath of the Lamb will begin to be revealed in the world.

We read concerning the opening of the sixth seal, 'And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne [the Father] and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" ' Rev 6:15-17.

This will be the confession of all those who have not learned to stand each day by the grace of God's resurrection life in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.





## Chapter 8

# Anointing the Most Holy

In this chapter, we will consider the sixth outcome that is nominated in the Seventy Weeks prophecy, which is 'to anoint the Most Holy'. Dan 9:24.

Using the tabernacle of Moses as a prophetic timepiece, some commentators have suggested that 'anointing the Most Holy' refers to the millennial rest that follows the physical second coming of Christ. However, like the other outcomes of the Seventy Weeks prophecy, it is important to recognise that the anointing of the Most Holy has already been accomplished by the one offering of Christ.

The implication of this is that we have full access to the Most Holy now! 'The Most Holy' is the true temple which is in heavenly places. The *anointing of the Most Holy* was the outcome of the finished work of Christ, when He sat down at the right hand of the Father, and then gave to us the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

We read in the book of Acts, 'Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear'. Act 2:33. The Holy Spirit, who has been given to us by Christ, and from God the Father, brings *the anointing* of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh. The *anointing* is the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh, by the Holy Spirit.

### The Anointed One

In the first case, the anointing of the Most Holy is the anointing upon Jesus Christ. The literal meaning of 'the Christ' is 'the Anointed One'. We know that Jesus was anointed with the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh, by the Holy Spirit, when He was baptised. Mat 3:16.

Speaking about Christ, the prophet Isaiah declared, 'There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the Lord [Yahweh] shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.' Isa 11:1-2.

Following His baptism and anointing, Jesus Himself said, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has *anointed Me* to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.' Luk 4:18-19.

The baptism of Jesus as 'the Messiah', or 'the Christ', which means 'the Anointed One', is an important waypoint in the Seventy Weeks prophecy. However, from the very beginning of His earthly ministry, it was clear that Jesus had come to baptise us with the Holy Spirit, at the conclusion of His ministry.

Significantly, John the Baptist declared, concerning Jesus, 'I indeed baptise you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.' Luk 3:16. We know that the Holy Spirit is described as 'a consuming fire'. However, the fire is more than the Person of the Holy Spirit. The fire is the light of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh. This is the light of lampstand churches in the true temple in heavenly places.

When the apostle John saw the administration of the Father's throne in the middle of the heavenly Jerusalem, he said, 'And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.' Rev 4:5.

Speaking further about the nature of the fire, John the Baptist continued, 'His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn *with unquenchable fire*.' Luk 3:17. The ministry of messengers proclaiming the word of the cross, by the power of the Spirit, is like *a winnowing fan* in the right hand of Christ that is separating 'the wheat' from 'the chaff', in the church.

The wheat represents sons of God who continue to participate in the fellowship of the *agape* meal, as citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, until the end of their lives.

### The work of the Holy Spirit

Jesus Christ was glorified as our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, through the seven wounding events that He experienced in His journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. He then inaugurated the New Covenant when He proclaimed, 'I thirst!', from the cross. After inaugurating the New Covenant, Christ proclaimed, 'It is finished!', and committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father.

Christ took His seat on the throne of the Father, which is the throne of grace. When the soldier pierced His side with a spear, after His physical death, the river of the water of life flowed from the throne of grace, through His physical body on the cross, as an everlasting stream.

When the word of the cross is proclaimed by the messengers of Christ, with the Holy Spirit, the spirit of grace and supplication is ministered from the finished offering of Christ. It enables a hearer to turn and to look upon Him whom they have pierced, and then to flee for refuge within the veil to lay hold of their participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering.

Significantly, this is what happened on the Day of Pentecost! The apostle Peter proclaimed the word of the cross. Those who turned to look upon Christ were cut to the heart. As those who were poor in spirit, they asked, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Peter answered their question by saying, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.' Act 2:37-38.

Importantly, the Holy Spirit was not given to the nation of Israel under the Old Covenant to help them to keep the Law. Likewise, the Holy Spirit has not been given to us to empower our carnality. Rather, the Holy Spirit resists and frustrates our efforts to serve God and to obey His word in the strength of our own flesh.

Referring to our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering, Paul has exhorted us to 'Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. 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 5:16-17.

The Holy Spirit, only, enables our participation in the fellowship of the New Covenant. For this reason, the Holy Spirit could not be given until the New Covenant was inaugurated by Christ as our great High Priest. With this goal in view, Jesus explained to His disciples during the last supper, '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.' Joh 16:7.

The apostle John described the baptism of the Holy Spirit as 'the anointing' of the Holy One. The Holy One is Jesus Christ. He said, 'But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things ... the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.' 1Jn 2:20,27.

It is the Holy Spirit, as the anointing of the Holy One, who teaches us *to abide* in the fellowship of Christ's offering and the fellowship of Christ's body. The body of Christ is the true temple in the heavenly places.

### 'The Most Holy'

This brings us to the meaning of 'the Most Holy'. Under the Old Covenant, the term 'most holy' or, literally, 'holy, holy' was used to describe the inner room of the sanctuary which contained the ark of the covenant. Exo 26:33-34. This room was designated as 'most holy' because it was where the presence of God dwelt in the cloud above the mercy seat and between the two cherubim.

The bronze altar in the outer court was also sanctified to be 'most holy', because it was the place of offering and fellowship. It was where the Lord promised to meet with, and speak to, the people. The Lord said to Moses, 'You shall anoint the altar of the burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar. *The altar shall be most holy.*' Exo 40:10.

We note that the phrase 'most holy', or 'holy, holy', was also used to describe the grain offering, the sin offering and the trespass offering. Lev 2:3. Lev 6:17,25. Lev 7:1. These offerings were designated as 'most holy' because they foreshadowed the offering of Jesus

Christ as the Bread of life. In the New Covenant, the bread of life is fed to us in the fellowship of the *agape* meal as the fruit of the tree of life.

### The body of Christ is the true temple

In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul noted that the tabernacle of old was inaugurated by the sprinkling of blood. Heb 9:21-22. The body of Christ, as the true temple, was inaugurated when the blood of Christ was sprinkled seven times upon His physical body during His offering journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross.

As we have considered, the seventh sprinkling of blood occurred when the physical heart of Christ was broken. This was the completion of the ministry of the true Day of Atonement. The seven-times sprinkling of Christ's blood revealed that Christ had been set forth as the Mercy Seat, for our sake. Rom 3:25.

Significantly, when Christ finished His offering journey, by committing His Spirit into the hands of the Father, He entered the presence of God for us behind the veil of the true temple. Right there, our hope entered heaven!

When the soldier pierced His side with a spear, the veil that separated the holy place from the most holy place in the physical temple was torn in two. Mat 27:51. The Scriptures recorded that it was torn in two, from the top to the bottom. This signified that the temple, the priesthood, and all of the sacrifices and offerings that belonged to the Old Covenant had been abolished.

More importantly, it signified that *the way into the holiest place* of the true temple was now open. The Holy Spirit Himself bears witness to this reality. Paul wrote, 'The Holy Spirit indicating this, that *the way into the Holiest of All* was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing'. Heb 9:8. The pierced side of Christ opened *the new and living way* for our access to the true temple, in the fellowship of Christ's offering.

We also read in the book of Hebrews, 'Therefore, brethren, having boldness *to enter the Holiest* by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.' Heb 19:22.

### Enabling our priestly service

We have access to the most holy, which is the true temple in heavenly places, because our hearts are being sprinkled from an evil conscience with the blood of Christ, and our bodies are being washed with pure water. However, it is the Holy Spirit who anoints the most holy *by sanctifying our participation* in the true temple. The Holy Spirit has been given to us to be the expression of our name, in firstfruits measure, as a member of the body of Christ and as a son of God.

The Holy Spirit is the essence of the New Covenant. The New Covenant is the Covenant of the Spirit. The apostle Paul proclaimed that the Holy Spirit has been given to us as the pledge of our eternal inheritance, because He enables our participation in the New Covenant. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul declared, 'Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.' 2Co 1:21-22. 'Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.' 2Co 5:5.

Our work, both as members of Christ and as sons of God, is *a priestly work*. We are equipped by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, and are then anointed by the Holy Spirit to serve the living God as His priests. The apostle Paul said, 'For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?' Heb 9:13-14.

We recall that the priests of old were designated as 'holy to the Lord', and were ordained for their ministry by the application of both blood and oil. In the same way, it is the blood of Christ and the anointing of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh, by the Holy Spirit, that enable us to be ministers of the New Covenant. 2Co 3:5-6.

The apostle Peter summarised the outcome of anointing the Most Holy by saying, 'Coming to Him *as to* a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God *and* precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up *a spiritual house*, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.' 1Pe 2:4-5.

In a similar way, Paul proclaimed, 'Therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of *the household of God*, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for *a dwelling place of God* in the Spirit.' Eph 2:19-22.



## Chapter 9

# The going forth of the command

Having considered the six outcomes of the Seventy Weeks prophecy, we will now turn our attention to the timing of this prophecy. Gabriel proclaimed to Daniel that ‘seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city’. Dan 9:24. The first question is: ‘How long is the total duration of the prophecy?’

### Weeks of years

The literal translation of this verse is that ‘seventy *sevens*’ have been determined. From a purely linguistic perspective, the Seventy Weeks prophecy may refer to ‘weeks of days’ or ‘weeks of years’. When we consider the scope of the prophecy, however, it is implausible that the prophecy refers to ‘weeks of days’. If this were the case, the entire duration of the prophecy would have been completed in less than a year and a half.

For several reasons, we know that the Seventy Weeks prophecy refers to ‘weeks of years’.

### *The prophetic ‘year for a day’ principle*

First, we note that the prophetic ‘year for a day’ principle is regularly used in the Scriptures. For example, the Lord said to the nation of Israel, when they refused to enter the promised land, ‘According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, *for each day you shall bear your guilt one year*, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection.’ Num 14:34.

As another example, the Lord said to the prophet Ezekiel, concerning his identification with the judgement of God upon the house of Israel, ‘Lie also on your left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it. According to the number of the days that you lie on it, you shall bear their iniquity. For I have laid on you the *years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days*, three hundred and ninety days; so you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel.’ Eze 4:4-5.

One of the most noteworthy examples of the 'year for a day' principle is found in the prophecy concerning the transgression that causes desolation. The prophet Daniel recorded, 'Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, "How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled underfoot?" And he said to me, "*For two thousand three hundred days*; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed".' Dan 8:13-14. This means that the transgression which causes desolation will cause the trampling of the Lord's messengers and His people for a period of 2 300 years.

### *Sabbaths of years*

It is understandable that when the term 'week' is used, we naturally think of a period of seven days. However, it is important to remember that *a week of years* was equally important for the nation of Israel. From an agricultural perspective, the entire economy of Israel was structured around 'weeks of years'. Every seventh year was to be 'a sabbatical year', when the land was required to lie fallow. Lev 25:3-4. One of the reasons why the Jewish nation was sent into captivity in Babylon for seventy years was because they did not obey this instruction. 2Ch 36:21.

Notably, Scripture uses this phrase, 'sabbaths of years', in the determination of a Jubilee year. The Lord said, 'And you shall count seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years.' Lev 25:8. The Seventy Weeks prophecy uses the same principle. It is *seventy* 'sabbaths of years', or seventy times seven years.

### *A 'time' in the book of Daniel is a year*

A further reason why we know that the seventy weeks is 'weeks of years' is because one year is the standard measure of 'a time' in the book of Daniel. On this basis, the *seven times* that passed over King Nebuchadnezzar, to teach him that the Most High God rules in the affairs of men, was a period of seven years.

In the book of Daniel, we read, concerning the reign of Antichrist in the end of the age, 'He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand *for a time and times and half a time*.' Dan 7:25.

When we compare this verse to the book of Revelation, we know that each 'time' is one year. Antichrist will reign for a time (one year), plus times (two years), plus half a time (half a year), which is *three and a half years* in total. To avoid any confusion, the book of Revelation also refers to this same period as being 1 260 days, or 42 months.

Using any of these methods, it is safe to conclude that each week, or seven times, in the Seventy Weeks prophecy is *a period of seven years*. This means that the full seventy weeks refers to 490 years in total, although it is important to remember that there is a period of delay between the first half and the second half of the seventieth week.

### **The four commands**

Having established the length of the weeks, the next major question is: 'When did the seventy weeks begin?' The angel Gabriel proclaimed to Daniel, 'Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem



until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.’ Dan 9:25.

Clearly, the beginning of the seventy weeks is the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. There has been much debate regarding which command should be used to identify the beginning of the Seventy Weeks prophecy, because the Scriptures have recorded four different commands. It is important to recognise that all four of these commands are part of one, integrated package.

Ezra referred to *all four of these commands* when he wrote, ‘So the elders of the Jews built, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they built and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the command of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.’ Ezzr 6:14. The *four commands* that Ezra identified in this verse are the commandment of the God of Israel, the command of Cyrus, the command of Darius, and the command of Artaxerxes.

### *1. The commandment of the God of Israel*

The commandment of the God of Israel is the first and foremost of these commands. It was issued by God in direct response to the prayer of Daniel. Gabriel said to Daniel, ‘At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision.’ Dan 9:23.

The commandment of the God of Israel ordained the seventy weeks to achieve all of the outcomes that are nominated in the prophecy. Furthermore, the commandment of the God of Israel ordained the timing of the commands of the three Persian kings, which led to the commencement of the seventy weeks.

### *2. The command of Cyrus*

The command of Cyrus brought the Jewish exile in Babylon to an end. It enabled a remnant of the Jews to return to their homeland under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua.

Many years prior to the Jewish exile, the prophet Isaiah declared that it would be Cyrus who would issue the first decree in response to the word of the Lord. Cyrus was chosen by the Lord to be an anointed instrument in His hand. The Lord declared, concerning Cyrus, through the prophet Isaiah, ‘He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, “You shall be built”, and to the temple, “Your foundation shall be laid”.’ Isa 44:28.

In fulfilment of this prophecy, we read in the book of Ezra, ‘Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And *He has commanded me* to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah”.’ Ezzr 1:1-2.

It is likely that the prophet Daniel instructed Cyrus so that he understood the word of the Lord that was sent through the prophet Isaiah. Cyrus certainly acknowledged that his command was in response to the command of the Lord God of heaven. Specifically, his

written decree gave the Jewish remnant the mandate to rebuild the temple as the house of God in Jerusalem.

Under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua, the people rebuilt the altar and laid the foundation of the temple. Ezz 3:8-13. However, they then encountered severe opposition from the ungodly inhabitants of the land, and the work ceased for many years.

Ezz 4:1-5,24. It did not recommence until the Lord sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage and strengthen the people to finish building the temple. Ezz 5:1. Hag 1:8.

### *3. The command of Darius*

When the people recommenced the building work in response to the prophecy of Zechariah and Haggai, the secular governor of the region sent a letter to King Darius. Ezz 5:6-17. In response to this letter, Darius searched the Persian archives and found the original decree of King Cyrus. He then issued his own decree, which gave the Jewish remnant the undisputed authority to finish building the temple. Ezz 6:1-12.

King Darius did not reference the commandment of the God of Israel in the same way as King Cyrus did. However, the command of Darius was also consistent with the timing that had been established by the commandment of the God of Israel, because it was precipitated by the prophecies of both Haggai and Zechariah.

The book of Ezra recorded that, following the rebuilding of the temple, the Jewish remnant continued to experience significant opposition. When reading the narrative in the book of Ezra, it is helpful to remember that Ezra was writing 60 years after the temple was rebuilt. Like any historian, he was free to follow a theme through to a suitable conclusion before returning to resume the chronology of the historical narrative. For example, when we read Ezra Chapter 4, we note that verse 5 connects to verse 24. Verses 6 to 23 run ahead in time, because Ezra was demonstrating that the opposition was not confined to the rebuilding of the temple.

The opposition also continued in the days of Darius' son (Ahasuerus) and his grandson (Artaxerxes). When Darius was replaced by Ahasuerus, the enemies in the land wrote another accusation to the king, against the Jews. Ezz 4:6. Secular history recorded the name of this king as Xerxes. It is generally considered that this is the same Ahasuerus who married Queen Esther. Est 2:16-18.

When Ahasuerus was replaced by Artaxerxes, the enemies of the Jews again appealed to the Persian king to stop the people from rebuilding the city of Jerusalem and its walls. Ezz 4:7-16. They told the king that if he allowed the city of Jerusalem to be rebuilt, he would have no further dominion in the region. Perhaps being motivated by anxiety and fear, Artaxerxes commanded all work to cease. Ezz 4:17-24.

The initial decree of Artaxerxes, in the early period of his reign, was certainly not consistent with the commandment of the God of Israel. However, in the seventh year of his reign, he was approached by Ezra the priest.

### *4. The command of Artaxerxes*

Scripture recorded that 'Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel'. Ezz 7:10. Furthermore, the hand of the Lord his God was upon him! Ezz 7:6,28.

Ezra approached the king according to the sovereign timing of the Lord. Artaxerxes responded by issuing the most extensive of all the commands of the Persian kings. Rather than being fearful that the Jews would rebel against him, Artaxerxes gave Ezra the mandate to establish an autonomous administration in the city of Jerusalem.

The king declared, 'Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it diligently be done for the house of the God of heaven. For why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons? Also we inform you that it shall not be lawful to impose tax, tribute, or custom on any of the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, Nethinim, or servants of this house of God. And you, Ezra, according to your God-given wisdom, set magistrates and judges who may judge all the people who are in the region beyond the River, all such as know the laws of your God; and teach those who do not know them.' Ezr 7:23-25.

In contrast to the hasty decree proclaimed earlier in his reign, this command by Artaxerxes was consistent with the timing that had been ordained by the commandment of the God of Israel in response to Daniel's prayer. The command of Artaxerxes built upon the command of Cyrus and the command of Darius. However, it significantly expanded the scope of the mandate beyond the temple, to include the restoration of the administration and the culture of the city of Jerusalem.

Significantly, it was the command of Artaxerxes, according to the sovereign timing of the Lord, which marked the specific commencement of the prophetic weeks. We do not draw this conclusion by considering the content of his decree alone. The significant point is that the decree of Artaxerxes was precipitated by the provocation of the hand of the Lord upon Ezra, and it enabled him to return to Jerusalem. Ezr 7:6.

It was primarily the prophetic insight of Ezra, and the nature of his ministry among the Jews, that clearly established this as the beginning of the restoration of the holy city and, hence, the beginning of the seventy weeks. We will consider the ministry of Ezra in further detail in our next chapter.

### **A brief comment on dates**

As we conclude this chapter, we will make a brief comment on dates. According to the secular records of the kings of Persia, the command of Cyrus was issued in approximately 538BC. The command of Darius was issued in approximately 520BC. The command of Artaxerxes, in the seventh year of his reign, was issued in approximately 457BC.

This is certainly significant in relation to the Seventy Weeks prophecy. The prophecy states that there will be 69 weeks in total between the command to restore Jerusalem and the coming of the Messiah. 69 weeks is 483 years. If we count 483 years from approximately 457BC, it comes to approximately 27AD (remembering that there is no year 0; so we count directly from 1BC to 1AD).

In direct fulfilment of the Seventy Weeks prophecy, it brings us to the time when Jesus was baptised in the Jordan River, and was anointed with the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh by the Holy Spirit. He then began His earthly ministry as the Christ, or the Messiah.



## Chapter 10

# The ministry of Ezra

In our last chapter, we identified that the beginning of the Seventy Weeks prophecy was ‘the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem’. Dan 9:25. We considered the summary statement in the book of Ezra, which identified four different commands – the commandment of the God of Israel, the command of Cyrus, the command of Darius, and the command of Artaxerxes.

Our key point was that all four of these commands were part of one, integrated package. The commandment of the God of Israel ordained the seventy weeks, and it also ordained the timing of the commands by the Persian kings, which led to the beginning of the prophecy. According to the sovereign timing of the Lord, the command of Artaxerxes marked the specific commencement of the Seventy Weeks prophecy.

We observe that the command of Artaxerxes marks the beginning of the Seventy Weeks prophecy when we consider the content of the decree, the timing of the decree, and the ministry of Ezra that followed the decree. In this chapter, we will consider the return and ministry of Ezra to show why this was the beginning of the Seventy Weeks prophecy.

### The response to Daniel’s prayer

It is important to remember that Daniel received the Seventy Weeks prophecy in response to his prayer. In his prayer of repentance and faith, Daniel prayed that the Lord would cause His face to shine on the desolate sanctuary. Significantly, he also prayed that the Lord would ‘open His eyes’ on the city which is called by His name.

Daniel prayed, ‘Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord's sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate. O my God, incline Your ear and hear; *open Your eyes* and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. O Lord, hear! O

Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name.' Dan 9:17-19.

We know that the people returned to the land at the conclusion of their exile in Babylon. In the days of the prophets Zechariah and Haggai, the Lord caused His face to shine on the desolate sanctuary. The physical temple was rebuilt and dedicated. Furthermore, the Lord significantly upgraded the mandate of the priests in the heavenly places of the true tabernacle. Zec 3:7.

However, in relation to the restoration of the city of Jerusalem, we must ask the question: 'When did the Lord confront the people with eyes like a flame of fire, to address the culture of their households?' It was clearly in the days of Ezra! We know that this is the case, because the fruit of meeting the Lord eye to eye and heart to heart is *the fear of the Lord*.

It is important to remember that the going forth of the command was to restore and to build Jerusalem. We note that the priority was the cultural restoration of the inhabitants of the city, before the building of its administration and infrastructure.

It would be a mistake to consider the first phase of the Seventy Weeks prophecy only from the perspective of the buildings or infrastructure of the city of Jerusalem. A city is first, and foremost, the dwelling place of a multitude of households.

The primary emphasis of the restoration of Jerusalem was the sanctification of each household. The sanctification of each household began with the sanctification of each marriage.

### The same pattern as Abraham

When we consider *the three stages of restoration* for the Jewish remnant as the natural descendants of Abraham, we note a similar pattern to the major seasons of visitation in the life of Abraham.

First, we recall that the God of glory appeared to Abraham and called him out of Ur of the Chaldeans, which was in the region of Babylon.

Second, Jesus Christ, as Melchizedek, shared an *agape* meal with Abraham and promised him that he would become 'the possessor of heaven and earth'. Following this, Jesus Christ, as the Word of Yahweh, appeared to him in a vision and said, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.' Gen 15:1.

However, it wasn't until many years later that the Lord confronted Abraham concerning the mixed culture of his marriage, and called him to walk blamelessly. Scripture recorded, 'When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless".' Gen 17:1.

Following the same pattern, the Jewish remnant first *returned from Babylon* to the land that God promised to give as an inheritance to Abraham.

Second, the Jewish remnant received profound prophetic insight and admonition from Zechariah and Haggai concerning the Melchizedek ministry of Christ, the true temple in the heavenly places, the nature of the heavenly Jerusalem, and their prophetic destiny in the time of the end.

However, it wasn't until the return of Ezra many years later that the Lord confronted the Jewish remnant concerning their marriages, in the same way that He had confronted their father, Abraham, in his old age. Through the ministry of Ezra, the Lord met the people, with eyes like a flame of fire, and effectively said to them, 'Walk before Me and be blameless.'

### The return of Ezra

Ezra recorded that, once he had returned to Jerusalem, 'The leaders came to me, saying, "The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites *have not separated themselves* from the peoples of the lands, with respect to the abominations of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken some of their daughters *as wives* for themselves and their sons, so that *the holy seed is mixed with the peoples of those lands*. Indeed, the hand of the leaders and rulers has been foremost in this trespass".' Ezr 9:1-2.

The major issue in the days of Ezra was the mixed marriage culture among the people. Notably, the problem was most prevalent among the leaders and the rulers of the people.

Ezra said, 'So when I heard this thing, I tore my garment and my robe, and plucked out some of the hair of my head and beard, and sat down astonished.' Ezr 9:3. Ezra made this response because he feared God. He was astonished at the lack of fear among the returning remnant. Those who did fear God soon gathered to him. He continued, 'Then everyone who *trembled at the words of the God of Israel* assembled to me, because of the transgression of those who had been carried away captive, and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice.' Ezr 9:4.

Ezra recognised that even though the people had returned from their exile in Babylon, they were *still captives*, because they were not yet holy and set apart to the Lord. Having received this illumination, he prayed with the same unction of repentance and faith that had rested upon the prophet Daniel. He acknowledged that the people had been in bondage from the days of their fathers to this present day.

Ezra prayed, 'O my God, I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to You, my God; for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has grown up to the heavens. Since the days of our fathers to this day we have been very guilty, and for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plunder, and to humiliation, as it is this day.' Ezr 9:6-7.

### The peg in the holy place

However, in a spirit of faith, Ezra also proclaimed, 'And now for a little while grace has been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our bondage.' Ezr 9:8. The prophetic declaration of Ezra that the Lord had given the people 'a peg in His holy place' is particularly significant in relation to the Seventy Weeks prophecy.

The word 'peg' may also be translated as 'nail'. At first glance, this appears to be an unusual statement. Most commentators assume that the peg in the holy place refers to something in the time of Ezra. It is suggested that the peg in the holy place may be the priesthood or even the temple buildings. However, the priesthood *was not secure* in the

days of Ezra. A significant number of the priests were guilty of marrying pagan wives. They had no capacity to restore the people in this matter.

When we connect this prophetic statement to the book of Hebrews, its meaning and significance become clear. The 'peg', or the 'nail', is something that is firm, secure, sure and steadfast!

In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul proclaimed, 'Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, *both sure and steadfast*, and which enters the Presence *behind the veil*, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.' Heb 6:17-20.

The hope of our sonship is sure and steadfast because Jesus Christ, as our great High Priest, has fully identified with our death while, at the same time, He has entered the Presence of God for us. Having perfected our sonship and taken His seat at the right hand of the Father, He now priests to us our participation in His finished offering. His priestly ministry is the guarantee that the word of the Father will be fulfilled in us as we continue to obey Him and to embrace our participation in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

Prior to the return of Ezra, the prophet Zechariah also declared that Christ is 'the Peg'. He prophesied, concerning the tribe of Judah, that 'from him comes the cornerstone, from him the tent peg'. Zec 10:4.

The prophet Isaiah also identified Christ as being the Peg. Isaiah prophesied, concerning Eliakim, as a type of Christ, 'The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; so he shall open, and no-one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no-one shall open. I will fasten him as a peg in a secure place, and he will become a glorious throne to his father's house.' Isa 22:22-23. This describes the finished work of Christ. As our great High Priest and our King, He has taken His seat on the throne of the Father and on the throne of David.

Significantly, Isaiah also spoke of the offering journey of Christ by saying, 'In that day ... the peg that is fastened in the secure place will be removed and be cut down and fall, and the burden that was on it will be cut off; for the Lord has spoken.' Isa 22:25. This refers to the day of Christ's offering journey from Gethsemane to the cross. As the scapegoat, Christ was incrementally cursed and cut off from the land of the living. Isa 53:8.

Jesus Christ bore our transgressions, sin and iniquity in His physical body so that, as He was cut off, this burden was also cut off and assigned to the sea of God's forgetfulness for the sake of those who join the fellowship of His offering. As we have considered, the central tenet of the Seventy Weeks prophecy is that Christ was 'cut off, but not for Himself'. Dan 9:26.

### The spirit of grace and supplication

Ezra looked forward to the finished offering of Christ as 'the Peg in the holy place'. He understood that a spirit of grace and supplication flowed from the face of the Lord to the people in their bondage. The spirit of grace and supplication that Ezra received from the face of the Lord then flowed to the people through the prayer and supplication of Ezra, who was the Lord's messenger.



We read, 'Now while Ezra was praying, and while he was confessing, weeping, and bowing down before the house of God, a very large assembly of men, women, and children gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept very bitterly'. Ezr 10:1.

The spirit of grace and supplication enabled the people to turn to the Lord so that the veil that covered their eyes was removed. 2Co 3:16. As the veil was removed, they were able to look into the face of the Lord and to receive illumination from His eyes concerning their sin, and their sanctification as the Lord's people. 2Co 3:18. They became bankrupt in spirit, and began to mourn.

When we read this account, we note that the group of people kept growing until it became a very large assembly. The entire assembly gathered in the fear of God and began to mourn with godly sorrow. Like Ezra, they began to see that the Lord had given them a peg in the holy place; therefore, they could flee for refuge to lay hold of a hope that is sure and steadfast.

One of the men, as the head of his household, articulated this faith before Ezra and the great assembly who had gathered. We read, 'And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, "We have trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel in spite of this".' Ezr 10:2.

### **Ezra's proclamation**

Ezra then issued a proclamation throughout the whole region of Judah and Jerusalem that every man needed to assemble in Jerusalem within three days. Ezr 10:8. If anyone refused to assemble in this manner, their property was to be confiscated, and they would be separated from the assembly of the people.

We read, 'So all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered at Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth of the month; and all the people sat in the open square of the house of God, trembling because of this matter and because of heavy rain.' Ezr 10:9. The people were trembling because of their mixed marriage cultures. This demonstrated that they were receiving the fear of God. They recognised the need for obedience to the word of Ezra, and for repentance because they were under the judgement of God.

The people responded to Ezra, 'Please, let the leaders of our entire assembly stand; and let all those in our cities who have taken pagan wives come at appointed times, together with the elders and judges of their cities, until the fierce wrath of our God is turned away from us in this matter.' Ezr 10:14.

We observe that this confrontation between the Lord and the people, through the ministry of Ezra, initiated a full season of repentance. Ezra was joined by a presbytery of elders who were set apart by name to examine the matter. It took them three months to even assess the extent of the problem!

The repentance of the people in response to the word of Ezra was the beginning of the season of restoration for the people, in terms of the culture of their marriages and the culture of their households. In this way, it was the beginning of the restoration of the city of Jerusalem.



## Chapter 11

# The street and the walls

In this chapter, we will consider the restoration of the street and the walls of Jerusalem. We recall that Gabriel proclaimed to Daniel, 'Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.' Dan 9:25.

This verse identifies two significant elements in relation to the restoration of the city of Jerusalem. The first is the restoration of *the street*. This phase of restoration was the outcome of the return of Ezra. The second is the restoration of *the walls*. This was the outcome of the return of Nehemiah. The Scriptures record that Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem thirteen years after Ezra.

Many commentators focus on the rebuilding of the walls when they consider the Seventy Weeks prophecy, which has led some to erroneously suggest that the beginning of the prophecy coincided with the return of Nehemiah. It is true that the walls were rebuilt by Nehemiah so that the city could be reinhabited safely. However, it is important to recognise that the restoration of the street of the city *preceded* the rebuilding of the walls of the city.

### The street - the open square

In our last chapter, we considered that when Ezra returned to Jerusalem, he issued a proclamation for the head of every household to gather in Jerusalem. Every man was required to gather within three days to address the issue of the mixed culture in their marriages and households.

We read, 'So all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered at Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth of the month; and all the people sat in the open square [lit. 'street'] of the house of God, trembling because of this matter and because of heavy rain'. Ezz 10:9. We note that the word that is translated as 'open square' in this

verse is the same word that is translated as 'street' in the Seventy Weeks prophecy in the book of Daniel. Dan 9:25.

When we hear the word 'street', we are inclined to think of a roadway. However, the street in the days of Ezra was *an open square*. In this case, it was specifically 'the open square' on the eastern side of the temple. We know that the temple itself was rebuilt and dedicated in the days of Joshua and Zerubbabel. However, the use of the open square of the house of God, on the eastern side of the temple, was not restored until the return of Ezra.

The open square was to be the public meeting place between the Lord's messengers and the head of every household. Interestingly, this is in the same general area where Solomon's Portico, or Porch, was later built on the eastern side of the temple. We know that Jesus Himself taught in Solomon's Porch. Joh 10:23.

### Solomon's Porch became the apostles' cathedral

After the temple buildings had become redundant, following the offering of Christ and the inauguration and anointing of the true temple in the heavenly places, the Lord gave Solomon's Porch to the apostles as the context for their public ministry.

The book of Acts describes how the Lord gave Solomon's Porch to the apostles. After Peter and John healed the lame man on the way to the temple at the hour of prayer, a great crowd gathered to them in the porch. We read, 'Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, *all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's*, greatly amazed'. Act 3:11. The Scriptures record that many believed. The church grew to include approximately 5 000 men.

When Peter and John were arrested by the priests, the Sadducees, and the captain of the temple, they proclaimed Christ to be the Cornerstone of the true temple in the heavenly places, and that fellowship in His name was the only means of salvation. Peter declared, concerning Christ, 'This is the stone which was rejected by your builders, which has become the chief cornerstone. Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.' Act 4:11-12.

The council commanded them not to preach in the name of Jesus, but Peter and John said, 'We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.' Act 4:20. The church kept growing and people started gathering from all the surrounding cities. We read, 'And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all *with one accord in Solomon's Porch*.' Act 5:12.

When the high priest had all of the apostles arrested and placed in the common prison, the angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out. Act 5:19. Significantly, the angel commanded the apostles to 'Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all *the words of this life*.' Act 5:20.

The next day, the officers found the prison shut securely, the guards standing outside the doors, but no-one inside! After reporting back to the council, someone else came and told the council that the apostles were back in the temple. And they were teaching the people! When they were brought before the council again, Peter and the other apostles declared to the religious leaders, 'We ought to obey God rather than men.' Act 5:29.

Scripture concluded this account by saying, 'And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.' Act 5:42. The word of the cross as the word of life, proclaimed by the apostles in Solomon's Porch, was the foundation of the *agape* fellowship of the early church from house to house. In the same way, the word of faith, proclaimed by Ezra in the open square that belonged to the temple, was the foundation of the restoration of the households of the city of Jerusalem in his day.

## Rebuilding the walls

The return of Ezra in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes (in approx. 457BC) led to the restoration of the street of Jerusalem. The return of Nehemiah in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes (in approx. 444BC) led to the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.

The account of Nehemiah began when he heard the report that the remnant in Jerusalem were suffering great distress and reproach, and that the wall of Jerusalem was broken down, and its gates were burned with fire. After hearing these words, he wept and mourned for days. Nehemiah prayed with the same repentance and faith as Daniel and Ezra prayed.

He prayed, 'Let Your ear now be attentive and *Your eyes open* to hear the prayer of Your servant which I am praying before You now, day and night, on behalf of the sons of Israel Your servants, confessing the sins of the sons of Israel which we have sinned against You; I and my father's house have sinned.' Neh 1:6.

Furthermore, Nehemiah prayed, 'Please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.' Neh 1:11.

Nehemiah was the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes. After the king granted him permission to return to Jerusalem, he went on a mission, at night, to inspect the walls. The people then rebuilt the walls in the face of great opposition.

The recurring theme through the book of Nehemiah is that he did not succumb to the fear of man, because he was a God-fearer. Neh 5:9. Neh 5:15. Having met the eyes of the Lord in the same way as Daniel and Ezra, Nehemiah's fear of God motivated His obedience to God, and his unyielding commitment to his own sanctification and the sanctification of the people, in the face of all warfare and opposition.

Nehemiah said to the leaders and all of the people, in the face of this opposition, 'Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, *great and awesome*, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses.' Neh 4:14.

Commentators have noted that the Hebrew word that is translated 'awesome' in this verse is derived from the Hebrew verb meaning 'to fear'. In this context, the word does not mean 'frightening'. Rather, it suggests the quality that inspires reverence, or godly fear. In some Bible passages, fearing and godly living are so closely related that they are almost synonymous. Deu 7:19. Thus, while ordinary fear paralyses a person, godly fear leads to submission and obedience to God. The person who properly fears God avoids evil and walks in God's ways. Psa 128:1.

In the face of the warfare and opposition, Nehemiah organised half of the people to hold spears, while the other half worked on the wall. Those who worked, carried their load in

one hand and carried a sword in the other. The physical walls of Jerusalem were important because, in that day, they were representative of the people's commitment to their sanctification from the world, as the Lord's people.

In obedience to the word of Nehemiah, the load in one hand represented each man's application to their own work as part of the sanctified community of believers. The sword in the other hand represented their awareness and readiness for their warfare in the world. It is important for the head of every house to understand these two elements. The apostle Paul referred to these two elements that belong to an obedient God-fearer, who is receiving the word of truth and living by the power of God, as *the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left*. 2Co 6:7.

Remarkably, the wall was completed in fifty-two days! Nehemiah rejoiced, 'When all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations surrounding us saw it, they lost their confidence; for they recognised that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.' Neh 6:16. The help of God was the grace of resurrection life for their unique work, which was flowing to the people from the finished offering of Christ.

The people received this grace for their work, and overcame the opposition because of their submission and obedience to God. James summarised this point by saying, 'Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.' Jas 4:7.

### **Nehemiah 8 - faith for the New Covenant**

After the walls were completed, Nehemiah continued the work of restoration alongside Ezra. The book of Nehemiah recorded, 'Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded Israel.' Neh 8:1.

The Scriptures recorded that Ezra, with the help of other men, read from sunrise until midday. We know that this passage of Scripture constituted much more than the ten commandments, and it is unlikely to have been all five books of the Pentateuch. Ezra, most likely, was reading the book of Deuteronomy.

The book of Deuteronomy was the prophetic book of the New Covenant that was given to Moses by the Lord shortly before the people entered the promised land. Significantly, Moses committed the book to the priests and Levites, and told them to keep it in the most holy place of the tabernacle. He instructed them to read it every seven years during the Feast of Tabernacles so that the people learned to fear the Lord.

Moses said, 'Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, *that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God* and carefully observe all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess.' Deu 31:12-13.

Interestingly, Ezra was supported on the platform by thirteen men. Then, there were another thirteen heads of houses, plus the Levites, who stood among the congregation. They helped to explain the meaning of the various passages so that all of the people received understanding.

Significantly, the immediate fruit of the proclamation of this word, and the understanding, was *agape* fellowship. We read, 'And all the people went their way to eat

and drink, to send portions and rejoice greatly, because they understood the words that were declared to them'. Neh 8:12.

## Celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles

The people then celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days. Scripture suggests that this was the first time they had celebrated the feast, in this manner, since the days when Joshua had led the people into the promised land. Neh 8:17. The entire seven days was a time of continual fellowship in the word. Neh 8:18.

Many commentators are perplexed that the people did not appear to celebrate the Day of Atonement. This is not a surprise! There was no ark of the covenant in the most holy place of the rebuilt temple. Ezra had already proclaimed the true fulfilment of the Day of Atonement, by the finished offering of Christ, when he declared to the people that they had 'a Peg in the holy place'. Eze 9:8.

The Feast of Tabernacles, when the people dwelt in booths, was a celebration of the miraculous provision and protection of the Lord for the nation of Israel while they were still on the journey from Egypt to the promised land.

We know that the journey of the nation of Israel in the wilderness, before they possessed the promised land, foreshadows *the entire church age*. It is the time when the Lord is bringing the church out of the world and into '*the wilderness of the peoples*', to enter into judgement with Him face to face and eye to eye. Eze 20:35. This is the period before the time when the Father will take His seat and the time will arrive for the saints to possess the kingdom of God. Dan 7:22.

We know that the Day of Atonement has been fulfilled, and we are celebrating the first phase of the true Feast of Tabernacles now, as we eat and drink the *agape* meal. This is our participation in the finished work of Christ *while we are still on the journey* in this world. In a similar way, the people celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, in faith for the New Covenant.





# Chapter 12

## The seven weeks

In our previous chapter, we considered the restoration of the street and the walls of the city of Jerusalem. The street of the city was the open square in front of the temple that was restored when Ezra returned. The street was restored to be the meeting place between the Lord's messengers and the head of every household.

The walls of the city were rebuilt when Nehemiah returned, about thirteen years after the return of Ezra. The walls were important because they represented the commitment of the people to live as a sanctified and God-fearing community.

The restoration of the street and the walls fulfilled the words of the Lord to Daniel, 'Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; *the street shall be built again, and the wall*, even in troublesome times.' Dan 9:25.

In this chapter, we will turn our attention to the two time periods that are nominated in this same verse. That is, we will consider the significance of the statement, 'There shall be *seven weeks* and *sixty-two weeks*'. Dan 9:25.

### The seven weeks

We know that there are 69 weeks in total (483 years), from the going forth of the command to the coming of the Messiah, which is the baptism of Jesus. However, the prophecy splits the 69 weeks into two time periods, for a reason.

The first seven weeks (49 years) of the Seventy Weeks prophecy was the length of time during which the Lord extended *grace for restoration* to the inhabitants of Jerusalem through the ministry of Ezra, then Nehemiah, then the prophet Malachi. This short period of 49 years should have been a profound period of restoration for Jerusalem and the Jewish nation.

In response to Michael's prayer regarding the conclusion of the seventy years of judgement, the angel Gabriel said to Zechariah, 'Therefore thus says the LORD: "I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy; My house shall be built in it," says the LORD of hosts, "And a surveyor's line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem." Again proclaim, saying, "Thus says the LORD of hosts: My cities shall again spread out through prosperity; The LORD will again comfort Zion, And will again choose Jerusalem".' Zec 1:16-17.

We know that the prophecies of Zechariah are primarily focused on the heavenly Jerusalem, and extend to the regathering of the Jews into the body of Christ in the end of the age. However, in the same way that there was 'a day of small things' in relation to the rebuilding of the physical temple in the days of Zerubbabel, there was also 'a day of small things' in relation to the restoration of the city of Jerusalem in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah.

In fulfilment of the word to Zechariah concerning the city of Jerusalem, Ezra proclaimed at the beginning of this period of restoration, 'And now for a little while grace has been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our bondage.' Ezr 9:8.

The first twenty-five years of this period of restoration are well documented in the book of Ezra and the book of Nehemiah. Ezra restored the street of Jerusalem and began to address the culture of the people's marriages during the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes, in about 457BC. Ezr 7:1,8.

Nehemiah then returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls in the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes, in about 444BC. This was thirteen years after Ezra's return from Babylon. Ezra and Nehemiah then ministered together before the people, as we read in Chapter 8 of the book of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah was the governor in Judah for twelve years before he returned to the king of Persia for a brief period. Neh 13:6. We know that he did return to Jerusalem following this period, but this is where the scriptural account concluded.

The exact date is unknown, but it is widely agreed that Malachi prophesied during the latter part of the fifth century BC. Some scholars have suggested that he prophesied between 420 and 410BC. If this was the case, it means that the prophecy of Malachi was towards the end of the first seven weeks of the Seventy Weeks prophecy. The prophecy of Malachi was *the final call to repentance* that belonged to this period of restoration.

### The prophecy of Malachi

By the time of Malachi, the majority of the people had again turned away from the Lord. The restoration that had been experienced by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, in response to the ministry of Ezra and Nehemiah, was lost. Mal 1-2. In summary, when we read the book of Malachi, it is remarkable to consider how quickly the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah were lost – within twenty years.

Equally, we note the same remarkable falling away in the early church, following the ministry of the apostle Paul in the region of Asia. The word of present truth was quickly replaced by Greek philosophy; and the *agape* meal was replaced by the eucharist. We know that this falling away had begun to happen while the apostle Paul was still alive. He

wrote to Timothy, 'This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me'. 2Ti 1:15.

When Jesus Christ directly admonished the presbytery in Ephesus, towards the end of the first century, He said to them, 'You have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen, repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place.' Rev 2:5.

The book of Malachi identified at least four major areas where the people had fallen away from the Lord. The first was the culture of the Lord's table. The second was the culture of the teaching priests. The third was the culture of marriage. The fourth was the culture of offering. We will briefly consider these four areas in the order in which they are mentioned in the book of Malachi.

### *1. The culture of the Lord's table*

We considered in our last chapter that the fellowship of an *agape* meal, in faith for the New Covenant, was restored by Ezra and Nehemiah. We read in the book of Nehemiah, 'And all the people went their way *to eat and drink*, to send portions and rejoice greatly, because they *understood the words* that were declared to them'. Neh 8:12.

We read in the first chapter of the book of Malachi that the Lord confronted the people because they were profaning the name of the Lord and the fellowship of His table by their words and their conduct. Malachi declared, concerning the name of the Lord, 'But you profane it, in that you say, "The table of the LORD is defiled; and its fruit, its food, is contemptible". You also say, "Oh, what a weariness!" "And you sneer at it", says the LORD of hosts. "And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; thus you bring an offering! Should I accept this from your hand?" says the LORD.' Mal 1:12-13.

The 'food' that the Lord has set on His table is His *word*, which invites us and fully equips us to participate in the fellowship of His table, by offering. In the days of Malachi, the faith of the people towards the Lord's table was expressed by their participation in the continual, or daily, offering. The blind, stolen, lame or sick offerings were representative of their attitude towards the Lord's table. It demonstrated that they despised His table, and that there was 'no fear of God before their eyes'.

We note the important parallel to the nature of our participation in the Lord's table. We cannot ask the Lord and our brethren to embrace our spiritual blindness, the projections that we have created for ourselves to cover the shame of our nakedness, our spiritual lameness, or our spiritual sickness. If we presume to do so, we demonstrate that we despise the word of the Lord and the fellowship of His table.

Further to this, the prophet Malachi warned the people that their 'Yes' needed to be 'Yes', and their 'No' needed to be 'No', in relation to the Lord's table. He warned them that if this was not the case, they would come under judgement. The Lord declared through Malachi, ' "But *cursed be the deceiver* who has in his flock a male, and takes a vow, but sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished – for I am a great King", says the LORD of hosts, "And My name is to be feared among the nations".' Mal 1:14.

In this regard, Malachi was proclaiming the harbinger of the prophecy of Zechariah regarding the flying scroll. Zec 5:1-4. The flying scroll was the curse that belongs to the holy place. We remember that the scroll was 20 cubits by 10 cubits, which were the exact dimensions of the holy place in the tabernacle of Moses. It is this curse that works to

expel every unrepentant thief and perjurer (or deceiver) from the Lord's house. Significantly, the curse works to expel the unrepentant thief or perjurer from the Lord's house by entering into their own house. Zec 5:4.

We know that the judgement of this curse had a specific application in the days of Malachi. However, Zechariah prophesied that this scroll would go out *over the face of the whole earth*, following the offering of Christ, to expel the thief and the perjurer from the sanctuary of the true temple in the heavenly places.

## 2. *The culture of the teaching priests*

Having addressed the corruption of His table, the Lord turned His attention to the corruption of the mandate that belonged to the teaching priests as the Lord's messengers. He said, concerning the priests, 'My covenant was with him, one of life and peace, and I gave them to him *that he might fear Me*; so he feared Me and was reverent before My name.' Mal 2:5.

The literal meaning of this verse is that the Lord first *gives the fear of God*, which is the prerequisite for receiving the covenant of life and peace. As a possessor of this life and peace, the messenger who fears God is then called to become a minister of life and peace by proclaiming the truth and by warning many to turn away from iniquity.

Interestingly, the Lord first established a covenant of peace with the priests after the intervention of Phinehas, when the anger of the Lord burned against the Israelites because of their harlotry with the women of Moab. The Scriptures record that 24 000 people died in a plague until Phinehas intervened to rid the camp of their immorality.

Immediately after this intervention, the Lord said to Moses, 'Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal. Therefore say, "Behold, *I give to him My covenant of peace*; and it shall be to him and his descendants after him *a covenant of an everlasting priesthood*, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel".' Num 25:11-13.

Malachi said, concerning the mandate of a teaching priest, 'The Law of truth was in his mouth, and injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity, and turned many away from iniquity. For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the Law from his mouth; for *he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts*.' Mal 2:6-7.

We know that this mode of a teaching priest, who proclaimed the truth and turned many away from iniquity, was exemplified by the ministry of Ezra. We know that when Ezra read from the prophetic book of Deuteronomy in the open square, he was supported by many of the Levites, who helped the people to understand the application and implications of the word. Neh 8:7-9.

However, by the time of Malachi, the ministry of the teaching priest and the teaching Levites had been completely lost. The Lord continued to say to the priests, through Malachi, 'But you have departed from the way; you have caused many to stumble at the law. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi.' Mal 2:8.

In the same way that the Lord warned the people about the judgement of the curse, because of the corruption of the Lord's table, He also warned the priests about the

judgement of the curse if they failed to faithfully teach the word as those who feared God. Mal 2:2.

History tells us that, over time, the ministry of the teaching priests in the open square of the house of God, and of the teaching Levites in the various synagogues, was completely usurped and replaced by the *religiopolitical sects* of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

### 3. *The culture of the marriages*

As we have been considering, the major outcome of the ministry of Ezra and Nehemiah was the restoration of family culture. This restoration began with the culture of each marriage.

By the time of Malachi, however, the people were again profaning the covenant of marriage by dealing treacherously with their own wives, while still presuming to bring their offerings to the house of the Lord and expecting that the Lord would be pleased with them. The Lord was clear that He would not receive their offerings until they gave attention to their marriage cultures.

The Lord proclaimed His purpose for marriage by saying, 'Did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. "Therefore, take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth".' Mal 2:15.

### 4. *The culture of offering*

The entire economy of tithes and offerings had been restored in the days of Nehemiah. It was restored during his first tenure as governor but, during his visit to Persia, it regressed. However, upon his return from Persia, Nehemiah immediately restored it a second time.

Nehemiah said, 'I also realised that the portions for the Levites had not been given them; for each of the Levites and the singers who did the work had gone back to his field. So I contended with the rulers, and said, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" And I gathered them together and set them in their place. Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain and the new wine and the oil to the storehouse.' Neh 13:10-12.

Again, by the time of Malachi, the people were withholding their tithes and offerings. The Lord rebuked them through the prophet Malachi by saying, 'Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, "In what way have we robbed You?" In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation.' Mal 3:8-9.

## **The response of the people to the ministry of Malachi**

As we have considered, the prophet Malachi was sent by the Lord, towards the close of the seven weeks (49 years), to confront the people regarding all of these issues for the last time before the beginning of the silent years. He warned the people that the day of the Lord was coming, burning like an oven, when the proud and the wicked among them would be burned up like chaff or stubble.

The overwhelming majority of the people did not receive the ministry of Malachi. The book of Malachi itself documented the people's response to the word of the Lord. Rather than turning in response to the word of the Lord, to meet Him eye to eye, they disagreed with the word and continually demanded further explanation. Their responses demonstrated their spiritual blindness and arrogance.

The apostle John referred to this response to the word by saying, 'If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.' 1Jn 1:10.

Having rejected the veracity of the Lord's word, the people embraced another word, or doctrine. We know this, because it produced an alternative conversation among them. They bemoaned the fact that the Lord was not meeting them in the way that they expected. The Lord also addressed the people on this point by saying, 'Your words have been harsh against Me ... yet you say, "What have we spoken against You?" You have said, "It is useless to serve God; what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked as mourners before the LORD of hosts?" ' Mal 3:13-14.

Despite this overwhelming response of unbelief, we know that there was a remnant who responded to the word of Malachi by turning to meet the Lord. The evidence that they had met the Lord eye to eye was that they feared the Lord. The fruit of the fear of the Lord among this small remnant was 'the conversation of faith'.

Malachi proclaimed, 'Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name.' Mal 3:16.

### The sixty-two weeks

The book of Malachi concludes with the prophecy concerning John the Baptist, who would come in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way for Christ. The Lord declared, 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.' Mal 4:5-6.

The intervening period between the ministry of Malachi and the ministry of John the Baptist is often referred to as 'the silent years'. This intervening period, with no prophetic ministry, is identified in the Seventy Weeks prophecy as being 62 weeks, or 434 years.

The lack of prophetic ministry does not mean that there is no prophetic Scripture that is applicable to this period of time. In fact, the 2 300-year prophecy in the book of Daniel contains so much detail concerning this period, which has been accurately fulfilled in history, that it has led many scholars to conclude that this portion of the book of Daniel must have been written after the fact!

The silent years drew to a close when John the Baptist came, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to announce the coming of the Messiah. Significantly, in direct fulfilment of the prophecy of Malachi, John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus Christ to come as 'the Messenger of the Covenant'.

The Lord declared, through Malachi, 'Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even *the Messenger of the Covenant*, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming.' Mal 3:1. This is a significant verse in relation to the Seventy Weeks prophecy, because Jesus Christ is the One who came to confirm the Everlasting Covenant with many for one week. Dan 9:27.

## Chapter 13

# The Messenger of the Covenant

In our last chapter, we considered the two time periods between the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem, and the coming of the Messiah. We particularly focused on the seven weeks, or 49 years. This was a specific season of grace for restoration, which began with the ministry of Ezra, and concluded after the ministry of Malachi.

We concluded our last chapter by referring to the prophecy of Malachi concerning the coming of Christ as *the Messenger of the Covenant*. The Lord declared, 'Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming.' Mal 3:1.

The messenger who came to prepare the way before the coming of Jesus Christ was John the Baptist. Jesus Christ then came as the Messenger of the Covenant. This is an important point regarding the Seventy Weeks prophecy, because Jesus Christ is the Messenger of the Covenant who came to confirm the Everlasting Covenant that God had made with Abraham.

We read in the Seventy Weeks prophecy, 'And He shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.' Dan 9:27.

There has been much confusion among commentators regarding who 'He' is, in this verse. That is, if we connect it to the verse before, does it refer to 'the Messiah who is cut off' or to 'the prince who destroys the sanctuary'? However, as we will consider in this chapter, it clearly refers to Jesus Christ, who is the Messiah. It does not refer to Prince Titus, who destroyed the sanctuary in AD70; nor to the Antichrist in the end of the age.

## A false interpretation

In our present study, we have not tried to identify and comment on the many alternative interpretations of the Seventy Weeks prophecy. However, for the sake of our awareness, it is worth briefly mentioning one view, because of its popularity and its influence upon many people's expectations about the end of the age.

There is an alternative interpretation which suggests that we should count 69 weeks from the return of Nehemiah, to the crucifixion of Christ. This is only possible using a complex conversion from 360 to 365½-day years, and then assuming that Jesus Christ was crucified in AD33. This view then proposes that the whole seventieth week is yet to be fulfilled in the future. It is erroneously proposed that Antichrist will make an agreement with the Jewish nation to rebuild the temple and to recommence animal sacrifice for seven years. After 3½ years, however, he will renege on the proposal; will proclaim himself to be god, in the temple; and will then persecute the Jewish people for the final 3½ years. Underpinning this alternative view is also the false assumption that Jews and Gentiles have different prophetic destinies. Thus, it is often assumed that the church will be 'raptured' before the seventieth week begins.

It is unnecessary to consider all of the problems with this interpretation, directly, but it is worth noting that it is easily refuted by the following major points:

1. The commencement of the Seventy Weeks prophecy was the return of Ezra to restore the street of Jerusalem, thirteen years *before* the return of Nehemiah to rebuild the walls.
2. The seventy weeks comprise regular calendar years and do not require any kind of complex conversion.
3. The coming of the Messiah was fulfilled by the baptism of Jesus; not His crucifixion.
4. It is Jesus Christ who confirms the Everlasting Covenant that God made with Abraham 'with many for one week'. Notably, the Antichrist does not have a covenant to make or to confirm with anyone.

The apostle Paul declared, 'Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to *confirm the promises made to the fathers*, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name". And again he says: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!" ' Rom 15:8-10.

5. It was Jesus Christ who put a stop to sacrifice and offering by fulfilling the Law, abolishing the Old Covenant, and inaugurating the New Covenant. The fact that the Jews sewed up the veil and continued to make animal sacrifice until the temple was destroyed by Titus in AD70 does not change this reality. Every sacrifice that was placed upon the altar after the finished offering of Christ was an abomination to the Lord.
6. Jesus Christ has removed the middle wall of separation and has united both Jews and Gentiles in His body, on the cross. This means that both Jews and Gentiles have *one singular prophetic destiny* in the fellowship of the body of Christ.



7. The period of delay is between the first and second half of the seventieth week; not between the end of the sixty-ninth week and the beginning of the seventieth week. The earthly ministry of Christ was 3½ years, and the book of Revelation is clear that there is only one 3½-year period still to come.

### The first half of the seventieth week

The first half of the seventieth week began with the baptism of Jesus, and concluded with His crucifixion, when He put a stop to all sacrifice and offering under the Law Covenant, in the middle of the week.

We know that one 'week' is 7 years long, so we would expect that the length of time between His baptism and His crucifixion was 3½ years. Even though the Gospels do not specify the exact time frame, they do record enough waypoints to support a 3½-year ministry. The Gospel of John is particularly helpful, because it recorded three specific Passover Feasts, and it refers to another 'feast of the Jews' which was almost certainly another Passover Feast.

As the Messenger of the Covenant and the Word of the Father, Jesus used each of these Passover Feasts to *bear witness* to the coming fulfilment of the Everlasting Covenant that God had made with Abraham.

### John 2 - The first Passover Feast

The *first Passover Feast* was recorded in John Chapter 2. We read, 'Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem'. Joh 2:13.

The first Passover was approximately six months after His baptism. We know that after Jesus was baptised, He was led into the wilderness by the Spirit, where He was tempted for forty days and forty nights. He then began the first phase of His ministry in Galilee. This included calling the disciples, and preaching and teaching in many of the synagogues. It was in the synagogue in his home town of Nazareth that He first proclaimed Himself to be the Messiah.

This first Passover was a significant waypoint in the ministry of Jesus. It was His first trip to the city of Jerusalem after His baptism. He immediately went to the temple. This fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi, 'And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming.' Mal 3:1.

When Jesus visited the temple, He made a whip of cords, and drove out all those who sold oxen and sheep and doves. He overturned the tables and poured out the money that belonged to the money-changers. We read, 'And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up".' Joh 2:16-17.

The wrath of Christ toward those who had defiled the temple revealed His zeal, or jealous love, for the Father's house. If the wrath of Christ was expressed in this way toward those who corrupted the sacrificial system of offering in *the earthly sanctuary*, it is sobering to consider the nature of His wrath upon the violation of the fellowship of the *agape* meal in *the heavenly sanctuary*; that is, in the fellowship of the body of Christ.

We know that the judgement of God and the wrath of the Lamb are not yet being revealed to the world. However, Christ is seated at the right hand of God, and is walking among His lampstand churches through the messengers in His right hand, with eyes like a flame of fire. His eyes reveal His jealous love for the sanctification of the Father's house and for our sanctification as sons of God. Hence, they are also revealing His wrath upon our sin and uncleanness.

Understanding the nature of His wrath, as Christ meets us eye to eye, is an essential foundation to our receiving the fear of the Lord that motivates us to continue to draw near to lay hold of our unique participation in the fellowship of His offering. Even though we have been delivered from the condemnation of the Law, and have been justified by the finished offering of Christ, it is only as we continue to lay hold of our participation in the fellowship of His offering that we are *saved from His wrath*, as we receive His resurrection life, and cease from sin. The apostle Paul declared, 'Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.' Rom 5:9.

### *Destroy this temple*

Immediately after Jesus had cleansed the temple, the Jews asked Him for a sign to substantiate His authority to do such a thing. He replied, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' Joh 2:19. This was the first time that Jesus identified His own physical body to be the true temple as the Father's house. Furthermore, this was the first time that Jesus proclaimed the guarantee of His resurrection. We note that He was doing this as the Messenger of the Covenant who was bearing witness to the coming fulfilment of the Everlasting Covenant that God had made with Abraham.

As an aside, the Jews replied that it had taken *forty-six years* to build the temple. They were referring to the renovation of the entire temple precinct that existed at that time. We know that it took Zerubbabel only about four years to finish the temple itself. It is generally considered that Herod the Great began his massive building project to expand the temple buildings in about 19BC. We note that if the temple precinct had been under construction for forty-six years, it would bring us to about AD28 (remembering that there is no year '0'). This is a helpful confirmation of the Seventy Weeks prophecy, which foretold that Christ would be baptised in the Autumn of AD27. This first Passover would have been in the Spring of AD28.

### *The discussion with Nicodemus*

Significantly, it was during this first Passover in Jerusalem that Nicodemus came to speak with Jesus at night. Jesus proclaimed to Nicodemus the need to be born from above to see the kingdom of God, and the need to be born of water and of the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God. The promise of the Spirit is 'the blessing of Abraham'. We receive the blessing of Abraham as his true descendants when we are born of the Spirit.

Speaking as the Messenger of the Covenant who had come to proclaim the word of the Everlasting Covenant as the testimony of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Jesus said to Nicodemus, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness.' Joh 3:11.

## **John 5 – The second Passover Feast**

The *second Passover Feast* was most likely recorded in John Chapter 5. We read, 'After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem'. Joh 5:1.

We note that Jesus went up to Jerusalem at this time, in the same way that He travelled to Jerusalem for the first Passover. If we consider the language only, it is possible that this refers to the Feast of Tabernacles, although there is nothing to suggest that it was anything other than the second Passover. *The Pulpit Commentary* says, concerning this verse, that ‘the feast of the Jews could hardly be anything other than the second Passover’.

It is unlikely that Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, until the final year of His ministry when He went up secretly, and then stood up to proclaim the promise of the Holy Spirit to all who come to Him and believe. Joh 7:2,8-10. Joh 7:37-39.

It is noteworthy that Jesus did not ever go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Day of Atonement. We know that there was no ark of the covenant in the most holy place of the rebuilt temple after the exile in Babylon. We also know that the sacrificial practice of the Day of Atonement was not recommenced during the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, because Ezra looked forward to the finished offering of Christ and understood that He was their Peg in the holy place.

The religious practices associated with the Day of Atonement must have recommenced sometime after the prophet Malachi, during the silent years. However, by this time, it was nothing more than a meaningless ritual carried out by a corrupt priesthood. It had no capacity to cleanse the people or the sanctuary. Jesus did not recognise its validity, and declined to accompany His family when they went up to celebrate this religious event. In contrast to this, however, He did recognise the validity of the Passover meals. As we are considering, He used these great gatherings in Jerusalem to bear witness to the fulfilment of the Everlasting Covenant.

Significantly, the primary focus of the witness of Jesus during the first Passover meal was *the new birth*. This was the focus of His discussion with Nicodemus. His primary focus during the second Passover meal was *the resurrection of the dead* at the end of the age.

For example, Jesus said to the Jews about the new birth, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.’ Joh 5:25. He continued to speak about the resurrection at the end of the age by saying, ‘Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.’ Joh 5:28-29.

In this discussion, Jesus clearly explained that the Father had given Him the authority to give eternal life and to execute judgement, as the Son of Man. His judgement is righteous, because He does not seek His own will; rather, He seeks only the will of the Father.

### *The fourfold witness*

Furthermore, speaking as the Messenger of the Covenant, Jesus was clear that the confirmation of the Covenant was not an expression of *His own witness, alone*. He explained that His witness was also verified by:

1. The witness of John the Baptist
2. The witness of the works that He had been given to do by the Father
3. The witness of the Father who sent Him

4. The witness of the Scriptures. When Jesus referred to *the writings of Moses* in this interaction, He was particularly referring to the book of Deuteronomy, which is the prophetic book of the New Covenant.

## John 6 – The third Passover Feast

The *third Passover Feast* was recorded in John Chapter 6. We read, 'Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near'. Joh 6:4. Jesus did not go to Jerusalem for this Passover. He stayed in Galilee. After feeding the 5 000 people by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus began to proclaim the nature of our participation in the true Passover as being an *agape* meal.

Jesus proclaimed that we 'eat His flesh' by receiving His word, turning to see Him, and then coming to Him to abide in the fellowship of His body. Joh 6:35,56. We 'drink His blood' by receiving and believing the word that joins us to the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, so that we receive His resurrection life. Joh 6:35,54. We minister *His resurrection life* to one another in the fellowship of the body of Christ.

The primary focus of the witness of Jesus during the first Passover meal was *new birth*. His primary focus during the second Passover meal was *the resurrection of the dead at the end of the age*. His primary focus during the third Passover was *the fellowship of the agape meal*, which is our provision for our entire journey, or pilgrimage, from new birth as sons of God, to the day of resurrection.

Comparing and contrasting His flesh and blood with the food and drink that sustained the children of Israel on their pilgrimage from Egypt to the promised land, Jesus said, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.' Joh 6:53-54.

We know that many of the believers who had previously followed Jesus were offended by the way in which, as the Messenger of the Covenant, He proclaimed the necessity to participate in the fellowship of the *agape* meal to receive the blessing of Abraham.

Jesus asked the twelve disciples, 'Do you also want to go away?' The apostle Peter answered, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Joh 6:68-69.

This was a confession of faith, and demonstrated that Peter was beginning to receive the witness of Christ as the Messenger of the Covenant. This was the beginning of a witness in his heart and mouth.

## The fourth Passover

We are very familiar with the *fourth* Passover Feast, which was recorded from John Chapter 13 onwards. The apostle John devoted a significant portion of his Gospel to the discussion and fellowship that Jesus had with His disciples during this final Passover meal.

During this *agape* meal, Jesus ministered the word and faith of the New Covenant to His disciples. Most significantly, He invited the disciples, and each one of us, to join the fellowship of His body and the fellowship of the New Covenant in His blood.

This *agape* meal was the highpoint of Christ's confirmation of the Everlasting Covenant, before He proceeded to inaugurate the New Covenant by the shedding of His blood on His offering journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross.

## Chapter 14

# By water, blood and the Spirit

In this chapter, we will continue to consider how Jesus Christ came to 'confirm a covenant with many for one week'. Dan 9:27. Jesus Christ is the Messenger of the Covenant. 'The Covenant' refers to the Everlasting Covenant between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, before the foundation of the world, when They agreed together to give us Their life and to include us in Their fellowship as sons of God. It is the Covenant of sonship!

Jesus Christ, as the Messenger of the Covenant, does more than *talk about the Covenant*. Rather:

1. He came as *the embodiment* of the Covenant, as the Word of the Father
2. He came to share *the life* of the Covenant with us by laying down His life for us on His journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. We know that the life of the Everlasting Covenant is in His blood.
3. Furthermore, He came to give us *the promise* of the Covenant by giving us the Holy Spirit. We receive the blessing of Abraham when we are born of the Spirit as sons of God.

### Jesus Christ came by water

Jesus Christ came as the Messenger of the Covenant to confirm the Covenant of sonship 'with many for one week'. The apostle John explained the way in which He came to do this by saying, 'This is He who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.' 1Jn 5:6.

Some commentators have suggested that the water refers to Christ's baptism and that the blood refers to Christ's offering. The blood of Christ was certainly shed on His offering journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. However, it is important that we recognise that the water refers to far more than the water of the Jordan River. The water

is the word of the Father. When Christ was baptised to fulfil all righteousness, He was anointed with the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh, by the Holy Spirit, for His entire earthly ministry as the Messenger of the Covenant – that is, as the Word of the Father.

As the Messenger of the Covenant, He revealed the name of the Father by proclaiming the Father's word and by fulfilling the works that the Father had given Him to do. As we considered in our last chapter, John recorded the focus of Christ's ministry at the time of each Passover Feast.

During the time of *the first Passover Feast* in Jerusalem (John 3), Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about 'new birth'. He proclaimed that we must be born from above to see the kingdom, and be born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of heaven.

During the time of *the second Passover Feast* in Jerusalem (John 5), Jesus proclaimed that He had been given the sole authority by the Father, as the Son of Man, to raise the dead to immortality or to eternal judgement, at the end of the age.

During the time of *the third Passover Feast* (John 6), Jesus did not go up to Jerusalem, but He continued His ministry as the Messenger of the Covenant by explaining the nature of our participation in the true Passover as *an agape meal*.

The apostle John devoted a significant portion of his Gospel to the discussion and fellowship that Jesus had with His disciples during the final Passover meal.

During this *agape* meal, Jesus ministered the word and faith of the New Covenant to His disciples. He invited the disciples, and each of us, to join the fellowship of His body and the fellowship of the New Covenant in His blood. He then proceeded to inaugurate the New Covenant by the shedding of His blood on His offering journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross.

The apostle John highlighted this point by saying, 'This is He who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ; *not only by water, but by water and blood*. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.' 1Jn 5:6.

### **Not by water only - by water and blood**

Interestingly, Jesus began to testify that He was coming by water and blood, well before His offering journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. Soon after the third Passover, there was a major transition in the focus of the ministry of Jesus.

The Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke all recorded *three major discussions* that highlight this transition. These discussions were not recorded in the Gospel of John, but it is an easy task to harmonise the timing, because all four Gospels recorded the feeding of the 5 000, which occurred around the time of the third Passover Feast. Hence, we know that these three discussions happened soon after the third Passover; that is, just under twelve months before His crucifixion.

#### ***1. Who do men say that I am?***

Jesus initiated the first discussion when He went into the region of Caesarea and asked the disciples, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' Mat 16:13. Peter answered Him, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Mat 16:16. Jesus responded, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father

who is in heaven.’ Mat 16:17. Jesus told them not to tell anyone that He was the Messiah, because they did not yet understand the nature of His ministry.

## 2. He began to testify about His death

Immediately after Peter’s confession of faith, the Gospels recorded that ‘*from that time*, Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day’. Mat 16:21.

Jesus began to testify that He had not come as the Messenger of the Covenant *by water only*; that is, to reveal the Father by proclaiming His word and performing miracles. He had come to inaugurate the New Covenant by water *and by blood*; that is, by laying down His life so that His blood would be shed on His journey from Gethsemane to the cross.

The disciples believed that Jesus was the Messiah. However, He had not come to be *the conquering Messiah* whom the entire Jewish nation was expecting. Having been anointed for His Melchizedek ministry, Jesus Christ had come to be *the suffering Messiah*. As *the suffering Messiah*, He was fully revealed to be the King of Righteousness on His *descending* journey from Gethsemane to the lowest parts of the earth on the cross; and to be the King of Peace on His *ascending* journey to the Father’s throne.

Peter demonstrated that he did not yet accept this gospel, when he rebuked Jesus. Even though he had received faith from Christ, the power of the other law had not yet been broken in his heart. He was still motivated by his own self-righteousness, under the deception and influence of Satan. We know that the power of his self-righteousness was not broken in his heart until Christ confronted him eye to eye, and heart to heart, in the court of Caiaphas.

## 3. The transfiguration on the mount

Approximately one week after Jesus began to speak to the disciples about His offering journey, He took Peter, James and John up on a high mountain, and He was transfigured before their eyes.

The Gospel of Luke recorded, ‘Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening.’ Luk 9:28-29. This was a pre-cross revelation of the glory of His Melchizedek priesthood.

We read, ‘And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and *spoke of His decease* which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem’. Luk 9:30-31.

Moses and Elijah are the two witnesses of Christ who are presently preserved in heaven by the resurrection power of God, *in their mortality*, awaiting their final ministry during the 3½-year reign of Antichrist at the end of the age.

Luke is the only one who recorded the content of their discussion with Jesus on the mount. Moses and Elijah were bearing witness to the offering journey of Christ from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. This discussion between Moses, Elijah and Jesus gathered up the entire witness of the Law and the prophets, concerning the offering of Christ.

Even though the disciples saw the glory of Christ, they missed this whole discussion. Hence, they still did not understand that the Father was going to glorify Christ as their great High Priest through the seven wounding events that He would suffer from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross.

The account continues, 'Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, that Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" – not knowing what he said.' Luk 9:32-33.

Peter's response demonstrated his lack of understanding concerning the ministry of Christ. The next thing that happened is one of the most profound events that is recorded in the Scriptures!

We read, 'While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" ' Luk 9:34-35. This was the same testimony that the Father proclaimed from heaven when Jesus was baptised. However, significantly, He added the command, 'Hear Him!'

In this way, God the Father directly confirmed the testimony of the prophetic Scriptures, including the testimony of Moses in the book of Deuteronomy, when he said, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.' Deu 18:15. Remarkably, God the Father sovereignly commanded the disciples to listen to the testimony of Christ as the Messenger of the Covenant!

Jesus instructed the disciples to not tell anyone about this vision until after He had physically risen from the dead. Mar 9:9. They needed to be born of the Spirit and joined to the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, by the Spirit, before they could bear witness to the knowledge of the glory of God that shines from His face. 2Co 4:6.

### **The Spirit bears witness - the gift of the Holy Spirit**

Returning to our key verse, the apostle John declared, concerning Christ, 'This is He who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. *And it is the Spirit who bears witness*, because the Spirit is truth.' 1Jn 5:6.

We have considered that when Jesus cried, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?', His physical heart was broken. This was the seventh wounding event that He suffered. Following this final wounding event, He was no longer sustained by biological means as He hung on the cross. Rather, His body was preserved by the power of *exanastasis* until He physically died when He yielded up His Spirit to the Father.

When the soldier pierced the side of Christ with a spear, blood, water and the spirit of grace and supplication flowed from His heart. They flowed from the throne of grace, through His physical body on the cross, as a fountain for sin and uncleanness, and the source of our eternal salvation.

We know that the apostle John was standing at the foot of the cross and was an eyewitness of the blood and water that flowed from the side of Christ. He then went to his house mourning, because of the spirit of grace and supplication that had been poured



out upon him. However, it is important to recognise that John *was not born as a son of God* until the day of Christ's resurrection.

On the evening of the day of resurrection, Jesus Christ stood among the disciples. He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' This was when the disciples were born of the Spirit and received the blessing of Abraham. The Holy Spirit was then bearing witness with their spirit that they were sons of God. Furthermore, they were joined to the fellowship of Christ's body, and to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, by the Spirit.

### The period of delay

The crucifixion of Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of His resurrection, brought the first half of the seventieth week to a close. Significantly, there is then a period of delay between the first half of the seventieth week and the second half of the seventieth week.

In the Seventy Weeks prophecy, this period of delay is called 'an overspreading of abominations'. Dan 9:27. More importantly, this is also a specific season of grace that has been extended to us for the sake of our participation in the finished offering of Christ.

It is not helpful to describe the period of delay as a 'gap', as though He confirmed the Covenant for 3½ years; then He stopped, and there is a gap of time; and then He will pick it up again in the final 3½ years. It is far more helpful to think of it as 'stretching' the seventieth week, through a participation in Christ's offering, so that all the events in the period of delay are included in that week. We could liken this principle to the way in which the Lord caused the sun to stand still in the time of Joshua, so that the day was 'stretched'.

The major implication of viewing the period of delay in this way is that the Lord is still confirming the Covenant of sonship in our day! On the Day of Pentecost, Christ established a messenger administration to reveal Him, and to exemplify His crucifixion as His witnesses to the ends of the earth. It is not until this work is complete that the period of delay will come to an end, and the final half of the seventieth week will commence.

We will consider the period of delay in more detail in later chapters, but one of the major reasons for the delay is to gather both Jews and Gentiles into the body of Christ.

Even though the Seventy Weeks prophecy was firstly addressed to Daniel and his Jewish brethren, the prophecy clearly states that Christ will confirm the covenant *with many*, in the seventieth week. Dan 9:27. 'Many', here, includes all of the spiritual descendants of Abraham. 'The true Israel of God' includes both Jews and Gentiles in the one body of Christ.

We recall that the word of the oath that God proclaimed to Abraham on Mount Moriah was, 'In your Seed [Christ] *all the nations of the earth* shall be blessed'. Gen 22:18. Before the second half of the seventieth week commences in the end of the age, that 'many' will include 'a great multitude which no man can number from all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues'. Rev 7:9.

### The harmony between the first half and the second half of the week

The book of Revelation recorded that there will be a final three and a half-year period that precedes the physical, second coming of Christ and the day of resurrection for all believers. Rev 11:2-3. Rev 12:6,14. Rev 13:5.

The resurrection at the last day is the promise that belongs to all those who have become children of Abraham, in Christ. It is the final inheritance for all who have been born of the Spirit, and who continue to participate in the fellowship of the body of Christ and in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, for the duration of their life.

Significantly, the Holy Spirit is the pledge, or down payment, of our eternal inheritance, because He joins us to the context in which the attainment of our full inheritance is guaranteed by the finished work of Christ. 2Co 1:22. 2Co 5:5. Eph 1:13-14. That is, the Holy Spirit joins us to the fellowship of the body of Christ and to the fellowship of the offering and sufferings of Christ.

In this fellowship, we are receiving the resurrection life of Christ, in our mortality. The apostle Paul called this, '*exanastasis*'. Php 3:11. It is the 'treasure', or inheritance, that we possess in our 'earthen vessels'. 2Co 4:7. The second half of the seventieth week will conclude with the full inheritance of *anastasis*. This is the full manifestation of the resurrection life of God in immortality.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote, 'We also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body'. Rom 8:23.

Likewise, he declared to the Corinthians, 'For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now, He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.' 2Co 5:4-5.

In this regard, we see the simple connection and harmony between the two halves of the seventieth week. The Holy Spirit, who was given to us at the end of the first half of the seventieth week, so that we could be born of the Spirit, is also the guarantee of our full inheritance at the end of the second half of the seventieth week!

## Chapter 15

# An end to sacrifice and offering

In this chapter, we will focus on the point that Jesus Christ brought an end to all sacrifice and offering through His crucifixion, in the middle of the seventieth week.

We read in the Seventy Weeks prophecy, 'And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined. Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; *but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.* And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.' Dan 9:26-27.

It is important to recognise that both verse 26 and verse 27 are summary statements that identify the major waypoints *after the coming of the Messiah*. We need to consider these two verses together, because they are highly integrated. It is not possible to interpret one verse without the other. The essential point of connection between the two verses is that the crucifixion of Christ brought an end to all sacrifice and offering under the Old Covenant.

When we connect these two verses around this central tenet, we are not simply making an isolated exegetical point. The truth that the offering of Christ put an end to all sacrifice and offering under the Old Covenant is foundational to our understanding of the New Covenant. This is one of the central themes of the book of Hebrews.

In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul declared, 'For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "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'.'" Previously saying, "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the Law), then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first [the Law Covenant] that He

may establish the second [the New Covenant]. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.' Heb 10:4-10.

### The veil torn in two

When the soldier pierced the side of Christ, the veil in the physical temple was torn in two. Mar 15:38. This was a remarkable and profound physical sign. It bore witness to the spiritual reality that Christ had opened a new and living way for us to participate in the fellowship of His offering. Heb 10:20. It also bore witness to the reality that the Old Covenant - with its temple, its priesthood, and its regime of offerings and sacrifices - has been abolished by the offering of Christ forever.

Remarkably, history recorded that the Jews sewed up the veil in the temple and continued to make animal sacrifices. Once the offering of Christ was complete, the blood of all animal sacrifice was an abomination to God.

The prophet Isaiah declared, concerning this religious activity, 'He who kills a bull is as if he slays a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, as if he breaks a dog's neck; he who offers a grain offering, as if he offers swine's blood; he who burns incense, as if he blesses an idol. Just as they have chosen their own ways, and *their soul delights in their abominations*, so will I choose their delusions, and bring their fears on them; because, when I called, no one answered, when I spoke they did not hear; but they did evil before My eyes, and chose that in which I do not delight.' Isa 66:3-4.

The abomination of animal sacrifice was one of the major reasons why God delivered the Jewish nation to judgement at the hands of the Romans, in AD70.

One of the arguments against the understanding that Christ put a stop to sacrifice and offering is the fact that animal sacrifice continued after the offering of Christ. However, it is important to remember that the prophecy refers to *the legitimate* sacrifices and offerings of the Law Covenant, which had been legitimate for approximately 1 500 years, in the faith of the offering of Christ.

The Seventy Weeks prophecy does not refer to *the illegitimate* sacrifices and offerings that continued after the death of Christ. The fact that the Jews sewed up the veil in the temple and continued to make animal sacrifices did not undermine or nullify the finished work of Christ. The irrevocable end of sacrifice and offering was the crucifixion of Christ, not the destruction of the temple by Prince Titus.

In the same way, the Seventy Weeks prophecy does not refer to any future reinstatement of animal sacrifice. Any future reinstatement of animal sacrifice would be an abomination to the Lord in the same way that the continuation of animal sacrifice, after the death of Christ, was an abomination that led to the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem.

### The abomination which makes desolate

The continuance of animal sacrifice in the temple was itself an abomination to the Lord. However, 'the abomination which makes desolate *standing in the holy place*', which Jesus spoke about, was far more than this.

Jesus said to the disciples, 'Therefore when you see *the abomination of desolation*, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, *standing in the holy place* (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.' Mat 24:15-16.

'The abomination which makes desolate' spoken of by Daniel is the violation of the fellowship of the Lord's table that causes the messengers of the Lord and His people to be trampled for 2 300 years. However, in this passage, Jesus was also warning the believers in the early church that this abomination would *reach a fullness* in the years ahead, and that they would need to leave Jerusalem before it was conquered by the Romans.

We know that these words of Jesus have another application, in the days ahead of us, when Jerusalem will again be surrounded by armies under the leadership of Gog and Magog. However, in this chapter, we are considering only the relevance of the words of Jesus to the early church.

When considering the abomination in the holy place, it is important to remember that, following the offering of Christ, 'the holy place' does not refer to the physical temple buildings. Jesus had inaugurated the true temple by the sprinkling of His blood throughout His journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. The true temple is the temple of His body.

The disciples became members of Christ's body when they received the Holy Spirit from Him on the day of His resurrection. The anointing of the Most Holy, as the true temple, was then complete when the disciples received the power of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh, through the Holy Spirit, to function as His witnesses to the ends of the earth, and as sons and priests in the true temple.

With this in view, 'the abomination which makes desolate standing in the holy place' refers to *idolatry in the true temple*, not something in the physical temple in Jerusalem.

One of the most significant causes of corruption within the early church in Jerusalem was the influence of the religious zealots who promoted the view that the Jewish followers of Christ still needed to observe the requirements of the Law Covenant.

This abomination in the holy place reached its fullness when the elders of the Jerusalem church imposed the need to observe the rites of purification according to the Law, upon the apostle Paul. In this situation, the apostle Paul was openly 'trampled' as a messenger of Christ.

### **The trampling of the apostle Paul**

We read in the book of Acts, 'And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and *all the elders were present*.' Act 21:17-18. There is no indication that Peter was present. James is mentioned by name, so we know that he was present.

The record continues, 'When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law".' Act 21:19-20.

There was evidently a large number of Jewish believers who were zealous for the Law. Note, this referred to the Jews who had become Christians, not the non-believing Jews. Many of the Jewish Christians were still double-minded. They professed to follow Christ,

but they were still loyal to their Jewish extended families and traditions. Remarkably, the Jewish elders were of the same mind or had succumbed to this congregational pressure. It is quite likely that James himself did not support this view. However, he had been overcome by the power of this collegial presbytery of elders. Luke recorded that it was the elders who spoke to Paul, rather than James himself.

The elders said, concerning the believing Jews, ‘They have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.’ Act 21:21. The apostle Paul did teach that the Law Covenant had been abolished. He preached that both the Jews and the Gentiles had been united in the body of Christ through His offering on the cross. Remarkably, the elders did not even ask Paul whether what they had heard was true. They just assumed that Paul would not undermine the Law Covenant!

In reality, the apostle Paul had received revelation directly from Jesus Christ and had laid the foundation of Christ’s lampstand administration in every place. The Jewish presbytery should have welcomed him, and then invited him to speak to them so that they could receive the word from him. However, rather than inviting him to speak to them, they presumed to instruct him, and they imposed their own religious views upon him.

The elders said to Paul, ‘What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come. Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, *but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the Law*. But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.’ Act 21:22-25.

When we read this statement, we observe that the Jerusalem elders were strongly promoting a gospel that separated the Jews and the Gentiles.

Even though the instruction of the Jerusalem elders was a sinful imposition upon him, the apostle Paul submitted himself to it in the meekness and gentleness of Christ. The Lord had already made it clear to him, by the Holy Spirit, that he would be bound by the Jews in Jerusalem and then delivered into the hands of the Gentiles. Act 20:22-23. Act 21:11-13.

The account continues, ‘Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them. Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him.’ Act 21:26-27.

The group who stirred up the crowd and laid hands upon Paul were not the same as the believing, religious zealots in Jerusalem. They were the non-believing Jews from Asia. This group was part of Paul’s ‘thorn in the flesh’ that buffeted him in every place, as part of his fellowship in the crown of thorns that had been placed upon Christ’s head. The non-believing Jews from Asia stirred up the whole crowd, which included all of the Jewish believers in Jerusalem.

The Jews from Asia cried out, 'Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.' Act 21:28.

This group of zealots accused Paul of defiling the physical sanctuary. In reality, the whole crowd was defiling the heavenly sanctuary by laying their hands upon Paul, who was a messenger of Jesus Christ, and they were 'trampling' him!

The outcome of this event was that 'all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately *the doors were shut*'. Act 21:30. This is a significant statement. Because of this sin against Paul, which was precipitated by the transgression of the elders in Jerusalem, the church lost the use of the temple buildings as their public place of ministry. Furthermore, the city of Jerusalem was delivered to judgement at the hands of the Romans.

Paul was saved by the intervention of the Roman soldiers for the sake of preserving law and order within the city. However, Paul understood that this was for the sake of his ministry to come. As we have considered, the Lord had already made it clear to him that he would be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles.

The arrest of Paul happened around AD60 or perhaps a little earlier. This would have been a major event in the life and ministry of James in the same way that the discussion between Paul and Peter, in the context of an *agape* meal in Antioch, was a major event in the life and ministry of Peter. After this event, it is likely that James set about confronting, with renewed vigour and fervour, the pervasive leaven that was being promoted by the religious zealots within the Jerusalem church. Notably, he did not address his letter to the Jews in Jerusalem. Rather, he wrote to all those who belonged to the true Israel of God, in the body of Christ, who had been scattered among the Gentile nations. Jas 1:1.

### The first letter of Peter

It is unlikely that Peter was present when Paul was arrested in Jerusalem. However, it is likely that he led an exodus of Christians from Jerusalem at some time following these events. By the time that Peter wrote his first letter, he was already living with many other firstfruits Christians in the region of Babylon. We know this because he concluded his first letter by saying, 'She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son.' 1Pe 5:13.

There is no reason to suggest that Peter wrote this letter in Rome and was using 'Babylon' as a code word for Rome. There is no biblical reference nor historical evidence that Peter ever visited Rome. The tradition that Peter was killed and buried in Rome, held among the early church fathers who had already rejected the gospel of sonship and had turned aside to embrace sacramentalism and Greek philosophy, was not established until the end of the second century.

The apostle Peter had heeded the words of Jesus to leave Jerusalem with all of the elect who had received the faith of Jesus Christ, which he described as 'like precious faith'. He encouraged the elect that they had a new covenant, a new temple, a new priesthood, and a new fellowship of offering. Referring to Christ as 'the Cornerstone' of the true temple and the heavenly Jerusalem, the apostle Peter proclaimed that 'coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones,

are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ'. 1Pe 2:4-5.

Peter identified that this was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah concerning Christ. He continued, 'Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief Cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame". Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief Cornerstone", and "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence". They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.' 1Pe 2:6-8.

### The destruction of the temple in AD70

Josephus recorded in great detail the Jewish-Roman war which led to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD70. It began with a Jewish uprising in AD66. The Jews won some of the initial battles. History suggests that it was during AD66 that the remaining Christians heeded the words of Jesus and left Jerusalem.

We recall that Jesus had said, 'When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that *all things which are written may be fulfilled.*' Luk 21:20-22. He was referring to all of the things that had been written in the Seventy Weeks prophecy!

The Romans responded to the Jewish revolt by sending a large army, under the command of Vespasian. When Vespasian became the Roman emperor following the death of Nero in AD69, the command of the army in Judea passed to his son - Prince Titus. In the spring of AD70, Prince Titus allowed many pilgrims to enter Jerusalem for the celebration of the Passover, but he then did not allow them to leave the city. Josephus recorded that the Jewish zealots were crippled by fighting among themselves, and that the whole city was gripped by famine, which he described in graphic detail.

Josephus recorded that when the Romans finally breached the walls of Jerusalem, Titus did not want to destroy the temple, but his soldiers were so overcome with passion in the heat of the battle, that it was completely destroyed along with the city. Remarkably, Josephus estimated that 1.1 million people, or more, were killed in Jerusalem during this siege. It is sobering to consider that the city of Jerusalem, as we know it today, is built on a mass grave site!

The number was so high because of the many pilgrims who had descended on Jerusalem for the Passover Feast. As we have already stated, this continuance of animal sacrifice was an abomination to the Lord, and the destruction of Jerusalem was His divine judgement upon those who had rejected Christ as the Cornerstone of the true temple.

In summary, this judgement fulfilled the words of Jesus concerning the temple buildings, when He said to the disciples, 'Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.' Mat 24:2.

This judgement was the direct fulfilment of the Seventy Weeks prophecy. Gabriel said to Daniel concerning this destruction, 'And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.' Dan 9:26.



## Chapter 16

# Jew and Gentile in one body

In this chapter, we will begin to consider the significance of 'the period of delay' between the first half of the seventieth week and the second half of the seventieth week.

We know that all six outcomes which are nominated in the Seventy Weeks prophecy have been completed by the one offering of Christ. We will begin with an obvious question. If everything had already been finished after sixty-nine and a half weeks, why did there need to be a period of delay before the final half of the seventieth week commenced?

In the same way that the crucifixion of Christ was completely *for our sake*, the period of delay is also *for our sake*. As we have considered in an earlier chapter, God reactivated the present elements of the universe at the ninth hour to give us the opportunity to mourn and repent by looking upon Him whom we have pierced. Zec 12:10. Rev 1:7.

The mercy of God has granted us time to escape His judgement upon the old creation by joining us to the fellowship of Christ's offering as those who belong to the new creation. Referring to the mercy of God, the apostle Peter proclaimed, 'The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.' 2Pe 3:9.

Furthermore, the period of delay is a dispensation, or period, of grace that gives us the opportunity to join the fellowship of Christ's offering, so that everything that He finished *for us* is fulfilled *in us*.

The apostle Paul rejoiced, 'For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law *might be fulfilled in us*, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.' Rom 8:3-4.

On the day of Christ's resurrection, Jesus Christ gave the Holy Spirit to the disciples so that they were born of the Spirit and were joined, by the Spirit, to the fellowship of His body, and to the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

Understanding that we have been granted our unique *participation* in the finished work of Christ is the highpoint of the Seventy Weeks prophecy!

### Confirming the Covenant with many

It is important to recognise that the period of delay *belongs to the seventieth week*, when Jesus Christ is confirming the Covenant of sonship with a great multitude.

As we considered in a previous chapter, it is not helpful to describe the period of delay as a 'gap', as though He confirmed the covenant for 3½ years; then He stopped, and there is a gap; and He will pick it up again in the final 3½ years. It is far more helpful to think of it as 'stretching' the seventieth week, by the Spirit, so that all the events in the period of delay are included in the seventieth week!

The major implication of viewing the period of delay in this way is that the Lord is still confirming the Covenant of sonship in our day. On the day of His resurrection, Christ established a messenger administration to reveal Himself, and to exemplify His crucifixion, as His witnesses to the ends of the earth, once they had received power from on high on the Day of Pentecost. It is not until this work is complete that the period of delay will come to an end, and the final half of the seventieth week will commence.

Significantly, 'many' includes both Jews and Gentiles. Even though the Seventy Weeks prophecy was firstly addressed to Daniel and his Jewish brethren, the prophecy clearly states that Christ will confirm the Covenant *with many* in the seventieth week. Dan 9:27. This 'many' includes all of the spiritual descendants of Abraham. The word of the oath that God proclaimed to Abraham on Mount Moriah was, 'In your Seed [Christ] *all the nations of the earth* shall be blessed.' Gen 22:18.

Our key point in this chapter is that the Lord is using the period of delay to gather a great multitude of sons into the kingdom of God, before the final half of the seventieth week commences.

### Jew and Gentile in one body

The apostle Paul proclaimed that Jesus Christ has reconciled both Jews and Gentiles to the Father, in His physical body, through His offering on the cross.

Addressing the Gentiles in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul explained, 'But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off [the Gentiles] and to those who were near [the Jews]. For through Him we both [Jews and Gentiles] have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you [the Gentiles] are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.' Eph 2:13-19.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul declared, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.' Rom 1:16. Following the resurrection of Christ, the gospel was first proclaimed to the Jewish people by the twelve apostles.

The apostles proclaimed the word to all the people in Jerusalem, including the priests and the religious leaders. Act 4:8-12. We know that many of the Jewish people, including some of the priests, responded to the gospel, and were joined to the fellowship of the early church. Act 6:7.

However, the vast majority of the Jewish nation rejected Jesus Christ as their Messiah. As we considered in our last chapter, they continued to make animal sacrifices, in the tradition of the Old Covenant, until the temple and the city of Jerusalem were both destroyed by Prince Titus in AD70.

Even though Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, he recognised that the gospel first needed to be proclaimed to the Jews. When he entered a new city, he often began his ministry by preaching in the Jewish synagogue.

For example, the book of Acts recorded, concerning Paul's ministry in Pisidian Antioch, 'On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.' Act 13:44. There were some Jews who believed the gospel that was proclaimed by Paul, and turned to Christ. However, most of the Jewish people rejected his word. They were not willing to relinquish their religious heritage for the sake of joining the offering of Christ.

We read, 'But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul. Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I have placed you as a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the end of the earth' ".'  
Act 13:45-47.

## The olive tree

In his letter to the Romans, Paul said, 'For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry.' Rom 11:13. Paul understood that he had been set apart, while he was still in his mother's womb, to preach and reveal Christ among the Gentile nations. Jesus made it clear to Paul, on the road to Damascus, that He was sending him to the Gentiles to open their eyes so that they would turn from darkness to light, and from the dominion of Satan to God. Act 26:17-18.

Paul knew that this was the focus of his ministry, but he also hoped that some of his countrymen would also be converted. He continued, 'If by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what *will* their acceptance *be* but life from the dead?'  
Rom 11:14-15.

Earlier in this letter, Paul testified about the great sorrow and continual grief that was in his heart because of his countrymen who had rejected the gospel. Rom 9:1-3. The Jewish nation was cast away by the crucifixion of Christ but, as Paul explained to the Ephesians, the cross of Christ was also the provision for their reconciliation with the Gentiles, as those who have been brought back from the dead, with Christ, as part of the new creation.

Jesus Christ is the Firstfruits of the new creation as the true Israel of God. He is the Head of His many-membered body. If He is holy, then all those who belong to His body are also

being sanctified, in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, as part of the true Israel of God. Paul proclaimed, 'For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.' Rom 11:16.

The olive tree is symbolic of the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of sonship. We know that the whole nation of Israel functioned as a unified kingdom under the rulership of King David. In the days of Jeremiah the prophet, the Lord said to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, 'The Lord called your name, "A *green olive tree*, beautiful in fruit and form"; with the noise of a great tumult He has kindled fire on it, and its branches are worthless.' Jer 11:16.

The key point is that Jesus Christ is the rich Root of the olive tree, as the Son of David who has ascended and sat down on the throne of the Father. As we read in the book of Revelation, the apostle John heard and recorded the testimony of Jesus as the Root of the olive tree. Jesus said, 'I am the Root and the Descendant of David, the Bright Morning Star.' Rev 22:16. We observe that this is a unique and peculiar kind of root! The Root of the olive tree is in heaven, seated on a throne, not buried in the ground, on earth!

As our great High Priest who is seated in the Father's throne, Jesus Christ is branching out to build the true temple in the heavenly places. He is *branching out* by reaching out His right hand, which holds His messenger administration, into every place. It is through the word of the gospel that is proclaimed by the messengers of Christ that sons of men are born as sons of God and are then equipped, in the fellowship of Christ's offering, to serve as priests in the Father's house. The Father's house is the true temple in heavenly places.

The apostle Paul said to the Gentiles, 'Some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree.' Rom 11:17. In the first case, he was highlighting that the Jewish people, as the natural branches of the olive tree, had been broken off from the kingdom of God because of their unbelief.

The natural branches included the Jews in Jerusalem who sewed up the veil in the temple, and continued to make animal sacrifice, after the offering of Christ. This was an abomination to the Lord. It also included the Jews in the various synagogues who rejected the apostle Paul and his fellow messengers, so that they judged themselves unworthy of the kingdom and eternal life.

It also included the Jews who embraced the gospel, but were unwilling to let go of the practices of the Law Covenant because of their loyalty to their Jewish traditions and the obligations of their extended Jewish families. As we considered in our last chapter, this is what led to the trampling of the apostle Paul in Jerusalem in approximately AD60 and, ultimately, to the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem in AD70.

Furthermore, Paul was also highlighting that many Gentile Christians, as branches from a wild olive tree, had been grafted into the rich Root of the olive tree, through the one offering of Christ, to become partakers of Christ as citizens of the kingdom of God in the heavenly places.

### **The warning to the Gentiles**

Paul rejoiced that so many Gentiles had become citizens of the kingdom of heaven. However, he also warned the Gentile believers by saying, 'Do not boast against the

branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.’ Rom 11:18.

Paul was very clear that the viability of every Gentile congregation was its connection to the messenger administration of Christ in His right hand. This supply of fresh oil, as the word of present truth, was the essential supply and support for every lampstand church.

He continued to address the Gentiles by saying, ‘You will say then, “Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.” Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. *Do not be haughty, but fear.*’ Rom 11:19-20. This is a pivotal passage!

The Jewish branches have been broken off because of unbelief; and the Gentile branches have been grafted into Christ, as the rich Root of the olive tree, by faith. Earlier in the book of Romans, Paul explained that it is by faith that we gain our introduction into the grace of God in which we stand. He was referring to *standing up again* out of death by the resurrection life of God, in the fellowship of Christ’s offering.

Paul was reminding the Gentiles that the faith of Christ that joins us to the fellowship of His offering is the only way that we stand as sons of God. He said, ‘Do not be haughty’, because our salvation is not a legal position that we have attained on the basis of forgiveness alone. Our salvation from sin, and hence our salvation from the wrath of God upon our sin, is completely dependent upon our ongoing participation in the fellowship of Christ’s offering.

When Paul said, ‘Do not be haughty, *but fear*’, he was referring to the fear of the Lord that we receive as we continue to turn in response to the word that is proclaimed to us, to meet Christ eye to eye. The fruit of meeting Christ eye to eye is the fear of the Lord that motivates our ongoing obedience to Him, and our ongoing commitment to our sanctification as sons of God.

We note that Paul was making the same point when he said to the Hebrews, ‘Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.’ Heb 4:1.

Paul continued his warning to the Gentile believers by using the natural branches as an example. He said, ‘For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.’ Rom 11:21.

In the Scriptures, there are many examples of the Lord’s judgement upon the nation of Israel as the natural branches. One of the most prominent and sobering examples is that the Lord delivered the whole nation out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses, and then, when they refused to enter the promised land because of unbelief and disobedience, He swore in His wrath that they would not enter His rest. A whole generation, apart from Joshua and Caleb, then fell in the wilderness under the judgement of God, to be cast into the lake of fire.

We know that Paul wrote his letter to the Romans well before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70. However, as we considered in our last chapter, the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem, when upwards of 1.1 million Jews were killed, is another sobering example of the Lord’s judgement. The Lord judged those who refused to make the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant because of unbelief and disobedience.

It is easy to identify the idolatry in the hearts of the Jewish believers in the early church, which was demonstrated by their zeal for keeping the Law. However, it is vitally important to recognise that, by the time the temple was destroyed in AD70, a different form of idolatry, or abomination, which stands in the holy place, had already begun and was well entrenched within the Gentile church.

The Gentile church and, most notably, the Ephesian elders, had turned their backs on the gospel of sonship that was proclaimed by the apostle Paul, in favour of Greek philosophy. The first evidence that they had exchanged the truth of God for a lie was their willingness to replace the fellowship of the *agape* meal with a sacramental eucharist. For this reason, the period of delay in the Seventy Weeks prophecy is called 'an overspreading of abominations'. It has caused the gospel of sonship to be maligned, and the messengers of Christ to be trampled for almost 2000 years.

The warning to all Gentile believers is clear. If the Lord has judged the natural branches in such a manner, then He will not spare us if we reject the gospel of sonship and refuse to embrace our participation in the fellowship of the *agape* meal at the tree of life.

Hence, the apostle Paul admonished the Gentile believers in every place, and in every generation, by saying, 'Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.' Rom 11:22.

It is important for us to understand the goodness and the severity of God that is revealed by the offering of Christ. As the two thieves who were crucified alongside Christ so clearly demonstrate, there are two sides of the cross - mercy and judgement.

We recognise the importance of continuing to receive, believe, and obey the word of Christ that is proclaimed to us; and the importance of continuing to embrace our unique participation in Christ's offering for the duration of our lives. Jesus said that it is 'he who endures to the end who will be saved'. Mat 24:13.

## Chapter 17

# The ingathering of the Jews and Gentiles

The judgement of 'blindness' has been invoked upon the Jewish nation because of their unbelief. However, Paul proclaimed that God is able to regraft the Jews, as the natural branches, into the olive tree.

Since the time of the apostle Paul, the Lord's focus has been the proclamation of the gospel to all the Gentile nations, through the ministry of lampstand churches. Rev 1. However, there will come a time when a multitude of Jews will turn again to the Lord. 2Co 3:14-16. The veil that has covered their eyes will be removed, and they will return to find their place in the kingdom of God.

The apostle Paul declared, concerning the Jews, 'And they also [the Jews], if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in.' Rom 11:23-25.

### The mystery

When Paul said, 'I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of *this mystery*', he was referring to the mystery of Jews and Gentiles being gathered together in the one body of Christ. Paul was also speaking about this mystery when he said to the Ephesians, 'If indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me *the mystery* (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ).' Eph 3:2-4.

It is possible that Paul was referring to an earlier letter here, but it is more likely that he was referring to the proposition that he had just described (albeit briefly) in the same letter. Paul had already explained to the Ephesians that Christ has destroyed the middle wall of separation and has reconciled both Jews and Gentiles to God in His physical body, through His offering on the cross. Eph 2:11-22.

Paul described 'the mystery' of Jews and Gentiles in one body by saying that 'the Gentiles should be fellow heirs [with the Jews], of the same body [of Christ], and partakers of His promise [to Abraham] in Christ through the gospel'. Eph 3:6.

Importantly, Paul did not use the term 'mystery' to describe Jews and Gentiles being joined in one body because it is something that is 'mysterious'. Rather, whenever the word 'mystery' is used in the Scriptures, it simply means that it is a fundamental truth, or reality, that cannot be understood by natural means. It must be understood by the illumination of the Spirit. It is noteworthy that Paul did not want any believer to be ignorant of the mystery of Jews and Gentiles in one body. If we do not understand this mystery, it invariably leads to the false assumption that the Lord has two separate prophetic destinies for the Jews and the Gentiles.

We know that, since the time of the apostle Paul, the Lord's focus has been the proclamation of the gospel to all the Gentile nations through the ministry of lampstand churches. Rev 1. However, there will come a time when a multitude of Jews will turn again to the Lord. 2Co 3:14-16. The veil that has covered their eyes will be removed, and they will return to find their place, through Christ, in the kingdom of God.

### **Blindness in part**

Paul said that 'blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in'. Rom 11:25. The judgement of blindness was invoked upon the Jewish nation because of their unbelief; that is, because they rejected the word of Christ. We recall that Christ came as the Messenger of the Covenant to bear witness to the Everlasting Covenant by water, blood and the Spirit.

Remarkably, it was Jesus Himself who invoked the judgement of blindness upon the nation of Israel by proclaiming to them the gospel of the kingdom, which is the gospel of sonship, for 3½ years during His earthly ministry. We recall that the earthly ministry of Jesus was the first half of the seventieth week in the Seventy Weeks prophecy.

When Jesus finished the parable of the sower, which we know is the foremost of all the parables, the disciples asked Him why He spoke to the crowd in parables. Jesus replied, 'Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: "Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive".' Mat 13:13-14.

When Jesus Christ preached the word, it was accompanied with prevenient grace that gave every person the opportunity and accountability to either receive His word or to reject it. Those who received His word received the blessing of illumination. For example, Jesus said to the disciples, 'Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear.' Mat 13:16. However, those who hardened their hearts by rejecting His word, drew back to their unbelief; and the judgement of blindness was invoked upon them.



We note that it is not possible to make *a neutral response* to the word of God when it is proclaimed to us. We are either receiving and responding to the word, or we are rejecting it. The idea that we can be ambivalent to the word is itself great deception. The prophet Isaiah declared that the word that is proclaimed to us to give us rest and refreshing when we turn to meet Christ and embrace our unique participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering, *is the same word* that causes us to go backward to be broken, snared and caught, if we do not believe and obey it.

Returning to the subject of 'Jews and Gentiles in one body', we know that there were many Jews in the early church who did turn to the Lord so that the veil of the Old Covenant was removed from their eyes. The apostle Paul is the most obvious example of someone who was formerly a religious zealot, who turned to the Lord. We know that many other Jews did likewise in response to the gospel that Paul proclaimed; for example, Aquila and his wife, Priscilla. However, as we have been considering, the overwhelming majority of the Jews rejected the gospel.

Speaking about the blindness of the natural Israelites from the very beginning of the Law Covenant, Paul said to the Corinthians, 'Their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.' 2Co 3:14-15.

### The fullness of the Gentiles

Paul was clear that this veil will remain on their eyes until the time when the fullness of the Gentiles comes into the kingdom of God. Rom 11:25. In this regard, he used the term 'the fullness of the Gentiles' in a very specific way. He was not simply using a poetic phrase to describe a large number of Gentiles. The term, 'the fullness of the Gentiles', is a direct quote from the prophecy of Jacob, concerning his grandson Ephraim.

We recall that Joseph married an Egyptian woman and then had two sons. The name of the firstborn was Manasseh. The name of Joseph's second son was Ephraim. Significantly, Joseph called his name Ephraim because 'God had caused him to be fruitful in the land of his affliction'. When Jacob was close to dying, Joseph brought his sons to see their grandfather so that he could bless them. Jacob adopted the two boys as though they were his own sons, so that they became numbered among the patriarchs of Israel. Significantly, Jacob then crossed his hands to place his right hand on the head of Ephraim - to give him the blessing of the firstborn.

When Joseph noticed this and began to rectify what he perceived to be a misunderstanding, Jacob said to him, 'I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become *a multitude of nations*.' Gen 48:19. The literal translation of this phrase is 'his seed shall become *the fullness of the nations*'. When Paul used the term 'the fullness of the Gentiles', or nations, he was referring to the fulfilment of this prophecy.

To understand the use of this phrase more fully, it is necessary to briefly comment on the history of the nation of Israel. We know that David reigned as the king over 'the whole house of Israel'. Solomon also reigned over the whole kingdom. However, in the days of David's grandson, Rehoboam, the kingdom was divided, and the ten northern tribes were given to Jeroboam.

The ten northern tribes split from Judah and became known as 'Israel', under the leadership of the tribe of Ephraim. When they split from Judah, Jeroboam made two golden calves and said to the people, 'It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods.' 1Ki 12:28. He made houses on the high places and made priests from among the people who were not from the tribe of Levi. Every sacrifice that was made and all of the incense that was burned on these high places was an abomination to the Lord. This was called 'the sin of the high place'.

The Lord's anger was kindled against Israel and, ultimately, He delivered them into the hands of the Assyrians, who were the second world kingdom. 2Ki 18:11-12. The final conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians happened during the ministry of the prophet Isaiah and the reign of Hezekiah in the southern kingdom of Judah. It was well over 100 years before the conquest of the southern kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians.

When the Assyrians conquered the house of Israel, they completely assimilated them among the nations and replaced them in the land of Samaria with people from many foreign lands. 2Ki 17:24. This was a deliberate strategy employed by the Assyrians to avoid any future uprisings. They scattered the nations that they conquered so that the people lost all sense of 'national identity'.

For this reason, the ten northern tribes (which are sometimes called 'the ten lost tribes of Israel') are no longer a definable or distinguishable people group in the world. Some have tried to link the ten northern tribes with certain modern nations in the hope of transferring the historical promises made to Israel to that modern nation. However, there is no scriptural, historical or anthropological evidence or reason to do this. The ten northern tribes have been scattered among the nations.

The prophet Amos declared, 'Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth; yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob ... for surely I will command, and will sift the house of Israel among all nations, as grain is sifted in a sieve; yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground.' Amo 9:8-9.

The northern tribes will never again be regathered as a definable national grouping of people, but they are regathered as 'the fullness of the Gentiles' in fulfilment of the prophecy to Ephraim. This is an important point, because all the prophecies concerning the restoration of the northern tribes of Israel will be fulfilled in the gathering of the fullness of the Gentiles as part of the true Israel of God, in the time of the end.

The apostle Paul proclaimed, concerning the recovery of the northern tribes of Israel in the fullness of the nations, 'As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people', there they shall be called sons of the living God". Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved. For He will finish the word and cut it short in righteousness, because *the Lord will make a short work* upon the earth".' Rom 9:25-28.

### **In the time of the end**

In the time of the end, the Lord will finish the work of recovering the remnant of Israel by bringing the fullness of the nations into the kingdom of God. The time of the end will commence after the Father has taken His seat as the Ancient of Days, and Jesus Christ

has stood up, with His administration, to open the seven-sealed book which contains the full revelation of the Father's will.

When the first seal is opened, the firstfruits of the true Israel of God will proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to the ends of the earth. The fruit of their ministry will be the ingathering of the fullness of the nations.

Significantly, when the fullness of the nations is coming into the kingdom of God, the Lord will also open a fountain for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that a great multitude of the Jews will turn and look upon Him whom they have pierced. Zec 12:10. Zec 13:1.

This means that the veil that has covered the eyes of many of the Jewish people for 2 000 years will be removed as they meet Christ eye to eye and heart to heart. Remarkably, the prophet Zechariah foretold that *one third of the Jewish people* will come into the kingdom of God. Zec 13:8-9.

Returning to our key verse, the apostle Paul was referring to both the recovery of the remnant of Israel in the fullness of the nations *and* to this mighty revival among the Jewish people when he said, 'For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.' Rom 11:25.

On this basis, he then declared in the very next verse, 'And so *all Israel* will be saved!' Rom 11:26. When he said, 'all Israel will be saved', he was referring to this final gathering of both Jews and Gentiles into the one kingdom of God in the time of the end.



## Chapter 18

# The Father will take His seat

The Scriptures refer to the time when the saints, including both Jews and Gentiles, will receive and possess the kingdom of God as '*the time of the end*'. We may be familiar with the fact that *the opening of the seals* will occur during the time of the end. Dan 12:4,9. However, we are less familiar with *the major waypoint* that must occur before the opening of the seals can take place.

When God the Father, who is called 'the Ancient of Days', places His throne in the middle of the heavenly Jerusalem, it will initiate all the events that belong to the time of the end. In the time of the end, the kingdom of God will be established on the earth above all the kingdoms of the world. A great multitude of sons of God will be brought into this kingdom from every nation, tribe, people and tongue.

As we considered in the previous chapter, this will include the remnant of the ten northern tribes, who will be regathered in 'the fullness of the nations'; and it will also include a great revival among the Jewish people.

The prophet Isaiah declared, concerning the kingdom of God in the time of the end, 'Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains [all of the world kingdoms], and shall be exalted above the hills; *and all nations shall flow to it.*' Isa 2:2.

### When will You restore the kingdom?

Immediately before Jesus' ascension from the Mount of Olives to take His seat at the right hand of the Father, the disciples asked Him about the timing of the restoration of the kingdom of God. We read in the book of Acts, 'Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You *at this time* restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority".' Act 1:6-7.

Jesus declared that the restoration and establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth will be according to the sovereign will and timing of God the Father. Specifically, according to His sovereign timing, He will place His throne in the middle of the heavenly Jerusalem and will spread His tabernacle over all the inhabitants who belong to Mount Zion. This sovereign action by God the Father will initiate all the events that belong to the time of the end.

Jesus explained to the disciples that they did not yet need to know ‘the times and seasons’ concerning the time of the end. However, we know that, many years later, when the apostle John was an elderly man and in exile on the island of Patmos, Christ did reveal when and how the kingdom of God will be established on the earth in the time of the end.

Significantly, it was God the Father who gave this revelation of Jesus Christ and His offering to Jesus Christ to show to His bondslaves. We read in the book of Revelation that it is ‘the revelation of Jesus Christ, *which God gave Him to show His servants* - things which must shortly take place [or will take place quickly]). And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John.’ Rev 1:1.

The revelation of Jesus Christ was ‘signified’ by the angel Gabriel, who is the Lord’s anointed messenger in the angelic administration. The word ‘signified’ denotes a major scriptural principle concerning how the Lord reveals Himself and meets us. It describes *far more than the communication of information*. We know that illumination is more than the communication of information, but the meaning of ‘signified’ is also more than illumination.

When the revelation of Jesus Christ is being ‘signified’ by an anointed messenger with the Spirit of God, everything that is being revealed is *actually happening* in the Spirit. Hence, the person who is receiving the revelation is able to *fully participate*, in the Spirit, in everything that is being revealed to them!

This fellowship in the Spirit transcends time. For example, in the book of Revelation, we note that the apostle John was caught up in the Spirit to behold the events that will happen in the end of the age. He was even able to interface and speak with messengers who will be alive in the time of the end and, therefore, were not yet born, in his day!

The important point, as we approach the book of Revelation, is that the full revelation of the Father’s will for the time of the end, which has already been accomplished by the offering of Christ, has been revealed and signified to the apostle John. Rev 1:2. John wrote down everything that he heard and saw, for our sake.

Having recorded his prophetic vision in the book of Revelation, the apostle John exhorts all believers by saying, ‘Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.’ Rev 1:3.

Even though John has recorded the prophetic vision in the book of Revelation, we need to hear it proclaimed by the messengers of Christ in His right hand. John declared that those who read *and hear* the words of this prophecy are ‘blessed’. This is the same principle as occurs in the rest of the Scriptures. When we hear the Scriptures proclaimed to us by the messengers of Christ, who have the Spirit of God, we are receiving the blessing of illumination.

Furthermore, we are also being invited to receive *the blessing of our unique participation* in the fellowship that is being revealed to us! When the apostle John said, ‘Blessed are

those who keep the things which are written in the book of Revelation', he was referring to those who are participating in the fellowship of the tree of life in the middle of the heavenly Jerusalem.

### Jesus Christ is presently seated

When we consider the revelation of the administration of Jesus Christ, it is important to recognise that Christ Himself is presently seated at the right hand of the Father. There are many Scriptures that highlight this point. The psalmist declared, 'The Lord [the Father] said to my Lord [the Son], "*Sit at My right hand*, till I make Your enemies Your footstool".' Psa 110:1.

The prophet Zechariah said, concerning the Son, 'Yes, He shall build the temple of the Lord. He shall bear the glory, and *shall sit and rule on His throne*. So He shall be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.' Zec 6:13.

The apostle Paul prayed that the eyes of our heart would be enlightened to know 'the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and *seated Him at His right hand* in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come'. Eph 1:19-21.

In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul said, 'Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: we have such a High Priest, *who is seated at the right hand* of the throne of the Majesty [the Father] in the heavens.' Heb 8:1.

When the apostle John heard a voice behind him like the sound of a great trumpet, he turned to see Jesus Christ seated in the middle of seven lampstand churches. From His seated position, He is stretching out His right hand, which holds His messenger administration, to reach every lampstand church. It is through the seven stars in His right hand that He is walking among His lampstand churches. Hence, He identified that He holds seven stars in His right hand *before* saying that He is walking among the seven golden lampstands.

From His seated position at the right hand of the Father, Christ is ministering the seven Spirits of God to lampstand churches, through the seven stars that He holds in His right hand. He is making us to be a kingdom of priests to His God and Father, as part of His lampstand churches which are in the true temple in the heavenly places. The heavenly Jerusalem is in every place because the elect of God are presently dispersed into all the nations of the world.

### Called to be overcomers

Significantly, as those who belong to Christ's lampstand churches, we are called to become overcomers who have learned to walk blamelessly, in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

It is only those who are overcoming, or walking blamelessly, in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, who will be seated with Christ in heavenly places *in readiness* for the time when God the Father takes His seat to initiate the events that belong to the time of the end.

When Jesus admonished the presbytery of each lampstand church, He identified that there are 'seven overcomings' that are necessary for us to be ready for the Father to take His seat, at the beginning of the time of the end. Jesus concluded His admonition to each presbytery with a specific promise 'to him who overcomes'.

What are we called to overcome? It is Satan, and, by implication, *the synagogue of Satan* that has been given access to the heavenly places because of the corruption of the continual offering. As we have been considering in our present season, the continual offering is the fellowship of the *agape* meal in the heavenly Jerusalem.

In Chapter 12 of the book of Revelation, which is a summary chapter, the apostle John heard a loud voice from heaven proclaiming how Satan will be overcome and cast out of heavenly places forever. We read, 'And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death'. Rev 12:11. This is the same way in which believers are called to overcome in every generation of the church.

The blood of the Lamb is sprinkled on our heart as we participate in the seven wounding events that Christ experienced during His journey from Gethsemane to the cross. In the fellowship of these wounding events, the other law is being *circumcised from* our heart, and the love of God is being *poured into* our heart. The love of God is the motivation and capacity for our obedience as a son of God.

The word of our testimony is the word of faith that is proclaimed to us by the presbytery in the right hand of Christ, which is then in our heart and in our mouth. It becomes the expression of our obedience to the word of our sonship in the fellowship of the body of Christ. The word of our testimony is both our conversation and our conduct as a son of God in the fellowship of the *agape* meal.

Laying down our life to the death is our absolute commitment to the lordship of Christ for the entire duration of our earthly pilgrimage. This commitment is demonstrated by our putting aside all survival mechanisms, and by reckoning ourselves to be dead with Christ, so that we are no longer living for ourselves, but for Him who died for us and rose again.

Together, these three elements of overcoming in the fellowship of His offering are called 'the testimony of Jesus'.

The promise to the overcomers is that we will be seated with Christ, on His throne in the temple of God. Jesus summed up and concluded His admonition to all lampstand churches by saying to the Laodiceans, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to *sit with Me on My throne*, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.' Rev 3:20-21.

When the Father places His throne in the middle of the heavenly Jerusalem, Jesus Christ will move to the centre of the Father's throne, and He will bring every overcomer with Him. As a kingdom of priests to our God and Father, we are praying and waiting expectantly for this time when the Father will take His seat. Jesus instructed us to pray, 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' Mat 6:10.



## The Father will take His seat

The apostle John recorded in Chapter 4 of the book of Revelation, 'After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.' Rev 4:1-2.

The throne is the throne of the Father, and the One who has taken His seat on this throne is the Father. We know that Jesus Christ has been seated at the right hand of the Father since His ascension from the Mount of Olives. However, there will be a definitive time when the Father places His throne for judgement in the middle of the heavenly Jerusalem.

In the book of Daniel, the Father is called 'the Ancient of Days'. In the context of Daniel's vision of the kingdoms of the world, he recorded, 'I watched until thrones were put in place, *and the Ancient of Days was seated* [or took His seat]; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire.' Dan 7:9.

Daniel continued to observe that the court was seated. When the Father sits down on His throne, the heavenly Jerusalem will also become a court. The Father will sit as Judge, and His judgements will begin to be revealed in the heavens and on the earth.

Significantly, when the Father takes His seat in the middle of the New Jerusalem, He will shift *the overcoming presbyters* from the Son's throne, to His own throne. John saw twenty-four elders seated on twenty-four thrones around the throne of the Father. He said, 'Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.' Rev 4:4. The twenty-four thrones belong to one, world-wide presbytery, with twenty-four divisions.

Furthermore, the apostle John saw four living creatures *in* the throne of the Father and *around* the throne of the Father. Rev 4:6. 'The first living creature was like a lion; the second living creature was like a calf; the third living creature was like a man; and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.' Rev 4:7. The four living creatures comprise all of the ascension gift overseers whom the Father has given to Christ, to reveal and express the four dimensions of His administration. Eph 4:11-12.

The ascension gift overseers belong to Jesus Christ, as the Lamb. When Jesus Christ stands up as the Lamb and moves into the middle of the Father's throne, the apostolic administration of Christ will also move, with Him, into the middle of the Father's throne. The four living creatures are described as being 'in and around the throne', because the apostolic administration *belongs to the Lamb* in the centre of the Father's throne while, at the same time, it is also *part of the presbytery* with its twenty-four divisions, around the throne.

The initiative of Jesus Christ, who is the Lamb, is expressed through His apostolic administration in the presbytery. Whenever the four living creatures give 'glory and honour and thanks' to the Father who is seated upon His throne, the twenty-four elders also fall down before the Father and worship Him who lives forever and ever. Rev 4:9-10. The elders proclaim to the Father, 'You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.' Rev 4:11.

## The Lamb with the seven-sealed book

Following this vision, the apostle John saw Jesus Christ standing up as the Lamb, in the middle of the Father's throne. John recorded, 'I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.' Rev 5:6.

Once the Father places His seat in the middle of the heavenly Jerusalem, Jesus Christ will stand up from His own throne, and will move, as the Lamb of God, into the middle of the Father's throne. From that time onwards, the throne is called 'the throne of God and of the Lamb'. Rev 22:1,3. After Jesus Christ has moved, as the Lamb of God, to the middle of the Father's throne, the Father will give Him the scroll that has been sealed with the seven seals. Rev 5:7. The seven-sealed scroll is the full revelation of the Father's will that has already been accomplished by the offering of Jesus Christ. Heb 10:5-10.

When the Lamb receives the scroll from the right hand of the Father, He will receive the authority to exercise the Father's dominion; to reveal the Father's glory; and to establish the Father's kingdom over all the kingdoms of the world. The prophet Daniel described *the mandate* that the Father will give to Christ, as the Son of Man, by saying, 'To Him was given dominion, glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.' Dan 7:14.

The scroll is written on both sides, because it is *the full revelation* of both His salvation and His judgement. Rev 5:1. When Jesus Christ begins to open the seals, it will initiate the unfolding judgement of God upon the world, in an irrevocable manner. We observe that when the seals are being opened, the judgement of God will be manifested in the earth in a *quarter measure*. Rev 6:8. When the trumpets are being blown, the judgement of God will be manifested in the earth in a *third measure*. Rev 8:7-12. Rev 9:15. Finally, the seven vials contain *the full measure* of the wrath of God that will be poured out upon Babylon, Antichrist, and the eighth world kingdom. Rev 15:1,7.

After the Lamb has received the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders will bow down before the Lamb and will begin to sing *a new song*. They will sing to the Lamb, 'You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.' Rev 5:9-10. It is significant that they declare, 'And we shall reign on the earth', because this is the time when the administration of the heavenly Jerusalem will be elevated above all the kingdoms of the world. Isa 2:2.

## The sealing of the 144 000

As soon as Jesus Christ stands up as the Lamb of God in the middle of the Father's throne, and the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders begin to sing the new song, the four horsemen will be ready to ride! However, before the beginning of this irrevocable manifestation of God's judgement in all the earth, there will be *a brief pause*. In obedience to the command of Christ, the four living creatures will *hold back the four horsemen* until Christ and His messengers have sealed the 144 000 with the seal of the living God in their foreheads. Rev 7:2-3.

The apostle John recorded that he saw '*four angels* standing at the four corners of the earth, *holding the four winds* of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree'. Rev 7:1. 'The four angels' standing at the four corners of the earth are the four living creatures, which represent the apostolic administration of Christ. Rev 4:6. 'The four winds' are the four horsemen.

We know that this vision reveals the events that will happen in the heavenly places *immediately before the opening of the seals*, because the four living creatures are *holding back the horsemen* before they begin to ride. The horsemen are under the command of the four living creatures, who then have the mandate to call each of the four horsemen to 'come' and ride forth into the earth. Rev 6:1,3,5,7.

The apostle John saw the four angels holding the four winds. He then saw 'another angel ascending from the east, *having the seal of the living God*. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads".' Rev 7:2-3. 'The seal of the living God' is the name of the Father. Rev 14:1.

The apostolic administration and the presbytery with its twenty-four courses, who will be seated around the throne of the Father in the time of the end, will have already received this seal in their foreheads. We know this because Jesus Christ said to the presbytery in Philadelphia, 'He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. *I will write on him the name of My God* [the Father] and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.' Rev 3:12.

However, before the opening of the seals, Jesus Christ will seal a further 144 000 firstfruits believers with the seal of the living God, in their foreheads. In the same way that the seven stars is a symbolic number of presbyteries in the right hand of Christ, we can also consider the sealing of the 144 000 to be a symbolic number of firstfruits believers. When Jesus Christ stands up as the Lamb, on Mount Zion, it refers to *all the elect* who will stand with Him as the firstfruits of the true Israel of God. Rev 4:1.



## Chapter 19

# The first four seals

In this chapter, we will begin to look at the opening of *the first four seals*. This is a necessary part of our ongoing consideration concerning how Jesus Christ will gather both Jews and Gentiles into the kingdom of God during the period of delay in the Seventy Weeks prophecy. We remember that the period of delay belongs to the seventieth week, when Jesus Christ is confirming the Everlasting Covenant with 'many'. 'Many', here, refers to a great multitude.

The key point is that, before the period of delay comes to an end, and the second half of the seventieth week begins, Jesus Christ and the elect will have gathered a great multitude which no man can number, from every nation, tribe, people and tongue.

Even though the messengers of Christ have been sent to proclaim the gospel of sonship into all the earth, throughout the period of delay, the Scriptures explain that it is during *the final period* of the delay that the great harvest will bring many into the kingdom of God. This final period of the delay in the Seventy Weeks prophecy is called 'the time of the end'.

Before we begin to consider the first four seals separately, it is helpful to remember that the first four seals will be opened together, or in very quick succession, so that all of the horsemen are riding at the same time. That is, it is not as though the first seal will be opened, and when the events that belong to the first seal are finished, then the second seal will be opened, and so on. Rather, all the events that belong to the first four seals *will be happening concurrently*.

As we will see, the opening of the first four seals will be a time of great revival and ingathering (the white horse); a time of great warfare (the red horse); a time of economic scarcity and upheaval (the black horse); and a time of pestilence and death (the pale horse).

## The first seal

The apostle John recorded, 'Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see".' Rev 6:1. The first living creature is the face of the lion, which represents those with revelatory grace from Christ as part of the apostolic administration in the midst of the presbytery.

It was the command of the apostolic administration that enabled the apostle John to witness the events that belong to this seal. In the same way, it will be the command of the apostolic administration, in the time of the end, that will invite all men to 'come and see' the fulfilment of the events that belong to each seal, as *participants in the administration of Christ*.

John continued, 'And I looked [in response to the word], and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer [or, 'overcoming and to overcome']. Rev 6:2. Some commentators have erroneously assumed that this is Antichrist. However, we know that it is Jesus Christ.

John later described the rider of the white horse, in relation to the judgement of Antichrist, when he said, 'Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse [this is the same white horse], and He who sat on him was called Faithful and True [this is the same rider], and in righteousness He judges and makes war.' Rev 19:11. We recall that Jesus Christ introduced Himself as 'the Faithful and True Witness' when He addressed the presbytery of the church in Laodicea. Rev 3:14.

We know that the rider of the white horse is Christ Himself. However, He will also be followed by all the witnesses who belong to His administration in the heavenly places. His witnesses are called 'the armies in heaven'. They are clothed in fine linen, white and clean, and will follow Him on white horses. Rev 19:12-14.

### *A crown was given to him*

Significantly, the apostle John saw that a crown will be given to Christ, as the rider of the white horse. Rev 6:2. The crown signifies that the time has come for Christ to receive and possess the kingdom of God for the sake of delivering it to the Father.

In the same way, when Daniel saw 'One like the Son of Man' presented before 'the Ancient of Days', he recorded, 'Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.' Dan 7:14.

This prophetic statement corresponds to 'the stone that has been cut without hands', as described in the vision of King Nebuchadnezzar that is recorded in Daniel Chapter 2. We recall that the king saw the stone hit the feet of the statue during the time of the seventh world kingdom, and then the stone grew into a great mountain that filled the whole earth. The great mountain is the kingdom of God in the time of the end.

### *He had a bow*

In the first three chapters of the book of Revelation, the messengers of Christ are likened to 'seven stars in His right hand'. We know that, in the time of the end, there will be one, world-wide presbytery with twenty-four divisions. The focus of the ministry of the

presbytery will be intercessory prayer and worship. However, the evangelistic ministry of the 144 000 that will proceed from the ground of this fellowship is likened to a bow (with arrows) in the hand of Christ. The 144 000 are the firstfruits of the true Israel of God.

We know that the firstfruits of the true Israel of God will include both Jews and Gentiles, because we read in the book of Zechariah, 'For I have bent Judah, My bow, fitted the bow with Ephraim, and raised up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and made you like the sword of a mighty man'. Zec 9:13. In this passage, Judah is likened to the bow, and Ephraim is likened to the arrows. However, together, it is one messenger initiative to harvest a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people and tongue.

## The second seal

John recorded that, when Christ opened the second seal, he 'heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see". Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.' Rev 6:3-4.

In previous times, we have associated the rider of the red horse, who takes peace from the earth, with the rise of the godless nations that comprise the seventh world kingdom. However, over the last season, we have come to understand that the period of warfare that led to the rise of the seventh world kingdom was completed over seventy-five years ago. That is, the seventh world kingdom is the United Nations that was established in the immediate aftermath of the first and second world wars. Since that time, the United Nations has ruled over the nations of the world through all of its international organisations.

'The red horse' does not refer to a world kingdom. Rather, the Scriptures clearly show that the rider of the red horse is the archangel Michael who, with the angelic administration, will ride in direct support of Christ and His administration.

In relation to all of these points, it is vitally important that we allow the Scriptures to interpret the Scriptures. We do not need to be speculative. We know that the Scriptures are one, cohesive package from the beginning to the end. In the same way that we know that *the rider of the white horse* is Christ because the book of Revelation tells us that it is Christ, we know that *the rider of the red horse* is Michael because, in the book of Zechariah, he is clearly identified as being the rider of the red horse.

The prophet Zechariah said, 'I saw by night, and behold, *a man riding on a red horse*, and it stood among the myrtle trees in the hollow; and behind him were horses: red, sorrel [which is a bright, vivid red], and white. Then I said, "My lord, what are these?" So the angel who talked with me said to me, "I will show you what they are".' Zec 1:8-9.

The angel who was talking to Zechariah was the revelatory, or interpretative, angel. As we considered in our last chapter, we know that the revelatory angel in the angelic administration is the angel Gabriel. When Gabriel answered Zechariah, the angel of the Lord also spoke to Zechariah.

Zechariah said, 'And the man who stood [that is, he was riding the *horse* that stood] among the myrtle trees answered and said, "These are the ones whom the LORD has sent to walk to and fro throughout the earth".' Zec 1:10.

These horsemen all belong to the angelic administration. The next verse identifies that they are all *under the command* of the rider of the red horse. It also identifies that the rider of the red horse is 'the angel of the Lord'.

Zechariah continued, 'So they answered [or reported to] the Angel of the LORD, who stood among the myrtle trees, and said, "We have walked to and fro throughout the earth, and behold, all the earth is resting quietly".' Zec 1:11. We know that this is not Gabriel. It is Michael, who is the commander of the angelic host of heaven.

We recall that Joshua met Michael, as the commander of the Lord's host, with a sword drawn in his hand, as soon as he led the nation of Israel into the promised land. As well, the nation of Israel enjoyed angelic support in conquering and possessing the promised land.

Similarly, the church will also be supported by Michael and the angelic host in receiving and possessing the kingdom of God in the time of the end. This includes removing all the enemies of Christ from the heavenly places. For example, as we overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of our testimony, and by loving not our lives to the death, it will be Michael and his angels who will cast Satan and his angels out of the heavenly places, to the earth.

### *The great sword*

When the second seal is opened, a great sword will be given to Michael and the angelic administration. This does not mean that Michael will initiate, or instigate, the warfare between nations. Rather, he will *remove the sovereign restraints* that have prevented large-scale warfare between nations for the duration of the seventh world kingdom. When this happens, the seventh world kingdom will begin to implode by turning against itself in another world war.

The prophet Isaiah referred to this time by saying, 'In that day the LORD with His severe sword, great and strong, will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan that twisted serpent; and He will slay the reptile [lit. dragon] that is in the sea.' Isa 27:1. 'Leviathan' is another name for Satan. Satan is the dragon that is in the sea of the nations. He is the ruler of the seventh world kingdom. For this reason, the seventh world kingdom is depicted in the book of Revelation as being a great red dragon.

We know that Satan has already been judged as the ruler of this world, and cast out by Christ, when He was lifted up on the cross. As we considered in our last chapter, the opening of the seals will reveal what has already been accomplished by Christ when He sealed up all vision and prophecy through His offering on the cross.

The revelation of this judgement upon Satan and the seventh world kingdom will begin when the second seal is opened and Michael is given 'the great sword', which is the mandate to remove peace from the earth. Significantly, the judgement of the second seal will be accompanied by the judgement that belongs to the third seal and the fourth seal.

### **The third seal**

When Christ opened the third seal, John said, 'I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see". So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart



of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine”.’ Rev 6:5-6.

The statement, ‘a quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius’, signifies that the judgement of the third seal will include rampant inflation and the scarcity of natural resources. In the Scriptures, a denarius is often used as being the equivalent of one day’s wage. The scarcity of resources that belongs to the third seal may be accentuated by other natural disasters at this time.

Significantly, the apostle John also heard the voice from the midst of the four living creatures, saying, ‘And do not harm the oil and the wine.’ Rev 6:6. It is evident that while the world experiences this crisis, there will also be miraculous provision and protection for the Lord’s people, who are receiving the grace of resurrection life in the fellowship of Christ’s offering and sufferings. The fellowship of the *agape* meal will include an economy of offering which will sustain each believing household that belongs to the heavenly Jerusalem in the time of the end.

### The fourth seal

When Jesus Christ opened the fourth seal, John continued, ‘I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come and see”. So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.’ Rev 6:7-8.

It is remarkable that the name of the rider of the pale horse is called ‘Death’, and the rider of the horse that follows right on his heels is called ‘Hell’. Obviously, these two horsemen do not belong to the administration of the church under the command of Christ, nor to the angelic administration under the command of Michael. They are enemies of Christ who will continue to ride until they are thrown into the lake of fire at the end of the millennium.

Significantly, they will be given power over *a fourth of the earth* to kill with sword, with hunger, with death (or pestilence), and by the beasts of the earth. We note that this is a summary statement. As we have already stated, the first four seals will be opened together, or in very quick succession, so that the events of all four seals are happening at the same time.

The cumulative effect of the sword (global conflict) that belongs to the second seal; the famine that belongs to the third seal; and the pestilence and the beasts of the earth that belong to the fourth seal will result in the death of one quarter of the earth’s population.

We know that the world’s population is approaching eight billion people, and is increasing rapidly. It is staggering to consider that the death toll during this period of the seals may be over two billion people. It is even more sobering to consider that those who will die under the judgement of the second, third and fourth seals will go straight into hell. This will be the first manifestation of the judgement of God and of the wrath of the Lamb in the time of the end.

However, it is also exciting to know that when the judgements of God are being revealed in the earth, as the prophet Isaiah declared, ‘the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness’. Isa 26:9. That is, the white horse will be *running concurrently* with the red,

black, and pale horses to harvest 'the great multitude which no man can number', from every nation, tribe, people and tongue.

### Summary of the first four seals

In summary, the opening of the first seal will precipitate *a time of great revival* when Jesus Christ goes forth on the white horse, with the firstfruits of the true Israel of God, to bring a great multitude from every nation into the kingdom of God.

The opening of the second seal will precipitate *a time of great warfare* when Michael goes forth on the red horse, with a great sword in his hand, to take peace from the earth.

The opening of the third seal will precipitate *a time of economic scarcity and famine*. Significantly, there will be miraculous provision and protection for those who belong to the heavenly Jerusalem during this time.

The opening of the fourth seal will precipitate *a time of pestilence and plague*. The Scriptures clearly state that the cumulative effect of the sword and warfare that belongs to the second seal, the famine that belongs to the third seal, and the pestilence that belongs to the fourth seal, will be the death of one quarter of the earth's population.

We do not know exactly how long it will take for the opening of the seals, but we do know that it will be a relatively short time. Referring to the harvest in the end of the age, the apostle Paul declared, 'For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth.' Rom 9:28.

## Chapter 20

# The fifth and sixth seals

In this chapter, we will begin to consider the opening of the fifth seal and the sixth seal. We know that the opening of the seals is an important part of our consideration regarding how the Lord will gather both Jews and Gentiles into the kingdom of God, during the period of delay in the Seventy Weeks prophecy.

The opening of the seals will lead to the salvation of one third of the Jewish nation, who will come into the kingdom of God to join the great multitude from every nation, tribe, people and tongue. As we will consider in this chapter, it is likely that this great multitude from every nation will include as much as one half of the world's population!

### There will be great tribulation

Jesus described the opening of the seals in the time of the end by saying to the disciples, 'For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.' Mat 24:21.

'Tribulation' means 'affliction and pressure'. For those who are in the world, this pressure will be accompanied by increasing anguish, anxiety and fear. When we reflect on the history of the world, we can easily identify many periods of intense pressure. It is remarkable to consider that Jesus said that the time of the end will be *completely unprecedented*. It will be unprecedented in relation to the intensity of the pressure; and it will also be unprecedented in relation to the all-encompassing nature of its impact. That is, it will impact *the whole world*.

Jesus said, 'And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.' Mat 24:22. We do not know the exact length of time from the opening of the first seal, to the sovereign intervention of the Lord in the affairs of men, at the opening of the sixth seal. However, we do know that it will be only a short period of time. The time of the first seal to the sixth seal may only be a few years.

In a similar way, the apostle Paul said, concerning the harvest of the great multitude in the time of the end, 'For He will finish the work and *cut it short* in righteousness, because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth.' Rom 9:28.

Jesus said that the days will be *shortened* because, if they were not cut short, *no flesh would be saved*. Once peace has been taken from the earth, with the opening of the second seal, the world will descend into such a period of open conflict and warfare that, if the Lord does not sovereignly intervene at the opening of the sixth seal, mankind will surely wipe itself out.

Jesus explained that the days will be shortened *for the sake of the elect*. 'The elect' are the sons of God who are walking obediently by the Spirit, in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. 1Pe 1:2. Jesus Christ will shorten the days to preserve the elect so that they can finish the days, and complete the works, that He has authored for each of them during His offering on the cross.

### The opening of the fifth seal

The apostle John recorded, 'When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.' Rev 6:9. These martyrs are a specific group of overcomers. The book of Revelation distinguishes five groups of overcomers. It will be helpful to briefly identify these five distinct groups.

The *first group of overcomers* is the presbyteries of the lampstand churches, who have responded to the admonitions of Christ with repentance and faith, and have learned to walk blamelessly in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings during the church age. When the Father takes His seat, the overcoming presbyters will be seated around the Father's throne in the heavenly Jerusalem.

The *second group of overcomers* is the 144 000 who have also learned to walk blamelessly in the fellowship of Christ's offering, among His lampstand churches. They will be sealed as the firstfruits of the true Israel of God immediately before Christ begins to open the scroll with its seven seals.

The *third group of overcomers* is those who will be killed for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, during the persecution of the church by the nations that belong to *the seventh world kingdom*. The apostle John saw this group of overcomers, along with all the godly martyrs of history, under the altar in the true temple.

The *fourth group of overcomers* is the great multitude who will come into the kingdom of God from every nation, tribe, people and tongue, as the fruit of the evangelistic ministry of the church in the time of the end.

The *fifth group of overcomers* is those who will respond to the final evangelistic ministry of Christ's messengers during the emergence of *the eighth world kingdom*. They will be killed because they will refuse to worship the beast and his image, and they will refuse to receive his mark.

### Two kinds of death

In relation to the martyrs, who belong to the *third group of overcomers* who are seen at the opening of the fifth seal, they have clearly overcome by 'loving not their lives to the death'. They have died with Christ and are ready to receive their eternal reward.

It is important to recognise that the death that is experienced by the overcomers who are seen under the altar at the opening of the fifth seal will be a very *different kind of death* from the death of those who will die under the judgement of the second, third and fourth seals.

In our last chapter, we considered that all those who will die under the judgement of God during the opening of these seals, which is one quarter of the world's population, will drop immediately into hell! We recall that, when the fourth seal was opened, the apostle John saw the rider of the pale horse. The name of this rider was *Death*. Following immediately on his heels was another rider, whose name was *Hell*.

Significantly, those who have learned to walk blamelessly in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, will not die under these judgements. We know that the members of the body of Christ may experience some of the pressure that the judgements of God will bring upon the whole world. However, for those who are joined in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, this pressure will not multiply fear and anxiety. Rather, the fellowship of the word, and the fellowship of offering within the body of Christ, will continue to grow and multiply.

No sons of God will lose their lives because of the judgements of the seals. However, it is apparent that some Christians will lose their lives *because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ*, during this time of persecution upon the church by the seventh world kingdom. Jesus was clear. The church will be hated by all nations.

Specifically, Jesus said to His disciples, concerning this time, 'Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.' Mat 24:9-10.

In the same way that the betrayal by Judas delivered Jesus to the religious leaders, who then delivered Him to be killed by the secular authorities, the same principle of betrayal within the church will precipitate the martyrdom of some Christians under the persecution of the seventh world kingdom. This betrayal among families and brethren within the church will be great wickedness. It will be a further manifestation of 'the abomination which makes desolate standing in the holy place' that causes the trampling of the Lord's messengers and His people.

### *Crying out for judgement*

It is the shedding of the blood of Christ, and the blood of all those who have died with Him in the fellowship of His death, that will invoke the outpouring of the wrath of God upon mankind in the end of the age. When the fifth seal was opened, John heard those who had died with Christ asking when this judgement would be complete.

'And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.' Rev 6:10-11.

We know that this group of overcomers will have already 'washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb', which represents their priestly service in the true temple in the heavenly places. In this regard, their works that have been ordained for them by Christ, for this present age, will be complete. However, John saw that they will receive *new white robes*,

which are their priestly garments for the new heavens and new earth. They will then rest in the hope of the resurrection at the last day.

Specifically, they were told to rest a little while longer until the number of their fellow servants and brethren had been killed, as they were. As we have noted, there will be one final group of martyrs who will be killed during the emergence of the eighth world kingdom, because they will refuse to worship the beast and his image.

### The opening of the sixth seal

When Jesus opened the sixth seal, the apostle John looked and saw ‘a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood’.  
Rev 6:12.

These unique signs, or wonders, in the heavens are the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel. Joel prophesied that the sun would be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord. ‘The day of the Lord’ is a major prophetic theme in the Scriptures. It is *the day of Christ’s offering*. In relation to the time of the end, it is the final revelation of everything that Christ accomplished on the day of His offering, particularly during the three hours when great darkness was over the whole earth.

‘The day of the Lord’ includes the judgement of the kingdoms of this world, the end of the present universe, and the final judgement of Satan and fallen mankind in the lake of fire, forever. For this reason, ‘the day of the Lord’ is also called ‘the day of the Lord’s anger, wrath or vengeance’.

We read in the book of Revelation, concerning the opening of the sixth seal, ‘And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!” ’ Rev 6:13-16.

We observe that the mighty men of the earth will be *afraid of God*. However, this will still be an acute manifestation of the fear of death that holds all men in bondage to Satan. It is not *the fear of the Lord* that we receive, and continue to learn, by meeting Christ eye to eye, and heart to heart, when the word of the cross is proclaimed to us.

When the sixth seal is opened, the mighty men of the earth will say, ‘For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’ Rev 6:17. This is an important question. Who is able to stand when the wrath of the Lamb begins to be revealed against all ungodliness in the world? The apostle John answered this question for us by saying, ‘And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.’ 1Jn 2:28.

### The judgement of Gog, in the land of Israel

The book of Revelation contains *a succinct summary* of the opening of the sixth seal, and it identifies *the major outcome*, which is the revelation of the judgement of God, and the wrath of the Lamb, before the eyes of all mankind. Furthermore, the context, and *much of the detail*, about the Lord’s sovereign intervention in the affairs of men at this time, are contained in the books of Ezekiel and Zechariah.

For example, we find a very detailed account of the judgement of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel Chapters 38 and 39. It explains that the Lord will provoke the king of the north, who is called *Gog*, in the Scriptures, to lead a large and mighty army from many nations down into the land of Israel. This army will surround Jerusalem.

Significantly, the Lord declared through Ezekiel about this time, 'And it will come to pass at the same time, when Gog comes against the land of Israel ... that *My fury will show in My face*. For in My jealousy and in the fire of My wrath I have spoken: "Surely in that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel".' Eze 38:18-19.

The judgement of God upon Gog and his armies will reveal the fury in His face to the kings of the whole world. Through the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord referred to the same great earthquake that is recorded in Chapter 6 of the book of Revelation. The same great earthquake is also recorded in Chapter 14 of the book of Zechariah.

Notably, the prophet Zechariah also recorded the *cause of the earthquake*. He wrote, 'Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley. Half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south.' Zec 14:3-4.

It is the feet of Christ, standing on the Mount of Olives, that will cause the great earthquake. We recall that the Lord split the Red Sea to enable the nation of Israel to be delivered from the hand of the Egyptians. The Egyptians were the first world kingdom. In a similar way, He will split the Mount of Olives to deliver the remnant of Judah from the hand of Gog and from the alliance of nations that belong to the seventh world kingdom. This miraculous intervention will enable those who have turned to Christ in repentance, to flee to safety.

This miraculous deliverance will occur at the same time as the Lord's sovereign judgement upon Gog and his armies. The Lord declared through the prophet Ezekiel, 'I will call for a sword against Gog throughout all My mountains ... every man's sword will be against his brother.' Eze 38:21.

When the Lord said, 'I will call for a sword', it tells us that Michael, who is the rider of the red horse, with the great sword, will be part of this judgement. In the same way that he will take peace from the earth at the opening of the second seal, so that the whole of the seventh world kingdom will turn against itself, this will be the first element of judgement against the large alliance of nations under the leadership of Gog. They will turn against each other.

Furthermore the Lord said, 'And I will bring him to judgement with pestilence [disease] and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.' Eze 38:22. The prophet Zechariah described the nature of this judgement in even more graphic detail by saying, 'And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths.' Zec 14:12.

The description of the judgement in the book of Zechariah makes it highly probable that Gog and his armies will be destroyed on the mountains of Israel in the midst of nuclear warfare. There is no doubt that this will be an unprecedented world event. Ezekiel recorded that, in the aftermath of this conflict, it will take seven months to bury the

bodies, and seven years to destroy all the weapons that had been amassed by these world powers.

Most significantly, the Lord identified that the outcome of this event will be the unmistakable revelation of His judgement in the earth. The Lord has proclaimed, 'Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the LORD.' Eze 38:23.

### The great multitude which no man can number

Notably, we read in the book of Zechariah that the Lord will bring at least *one third of the Jewish nation* into the kingdom of God in the time of the end. The Lord has declared, concerning the Jews, 'I will bring the *one-third through the fire*, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, "This is My people"; and each one will say, "The LORD is my God".' Zec 13:9.

This is a remarkable harvest! However, we would expect that the percentage that will be saved from the remainder of the nations of the world will be even higher than this! The apostle John recorded in the book of Revelation, 'After these things I looked, and behold, *a great multitude which no one could number*, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ' Rev 7:9-10.

In contrast to the kings of the earth, who will recoil in shame and fear from the face of God who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, when the sixth seal is opened, this great multitude will confess that salvation belongs to the Father and to the Lamb. They have this *unshakeable assurance of salvation* because they have received the gospel of sonship, and have embraced their unique participation in the fellowship of the Father and the Son.

Jesus foretold that the word of the cross will bring separation in every extended family. This means that, instead of generation after generation being lost in the world, He will bring fifty percent of the world's population into the kingdom of God. Speaking about a representative family, with children who have come of age so that they are able to make their own accountable response to the gospel, Jesus said, 'For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three.' Luk 12:52.

The expectation that the Lord will harvest fifty percent of the world's population is supported by the example of the two thieves who were crucified with Christ. We know that Christ has tasted death for every person and, therefore, every person who has ever lived has been crucified with Christ. In this respect, the two thieves who were crucified with Christ are representative of the whole of humanity.

Further to this, the two thieves exemplify *the two possible responses* that a person can make to Christ. When the word of the cross is proclaimed to a person, accompanied by a spirit of grace and supplication, they will either turn to meet Christ eye to eye and become a God-fearer, like the believing thief, or they will harden their heart and reject Christ, like the unbelieving thief.



## Chapter 21

# The end of the delay

In our previous chapters, we have been considering the period of delay in the Seventy Weeks prophecy that belongs to the seventieth week. We have highlighted that the final period of this delay, which is called 'the time of the end', is the time when Jesus Christ and the elect will gather a great multitude of sons of God from every nation, tribe, people and tongue.

Our key point in this chapter is that, following this great harvest of sons of God, the period of delay *will come to an end*. The end of the period of delay was recorded in Chapter 10 of the book of Revelation.

The apostle John recorded, 'I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land ... the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven and swore *by Him who lives forever and ever*, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that *there should be delay no longer*.' Rev 10:1-6.

It is likely that this 'mighty', or 'strong', angel is Gabriel. We know that Gabriel is the revelatory angel who was sent by Christ to signify the entire book of Revelation to the apostle John. The 'little book' that was open in the hand of Gabriel revealed that there was *another phase* of the revelation which the apostle John needed to digest and to then record in the book of Revelation, for our sake.

The description of 'Him who lives forever and ever' firstly belongs to God the Father. Referring to the time when the Father will place His throne in the middle of the heavenly Jerusalem, John said, 'Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne [the Father], *who lives forever and ever*, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship *Him who lives forever and ever*, and cast their crowns before the throne.' Rev 4:9-10.

It is significant that Gabriel will lift up his hand and swear an oath by God the Father, as He who lives forever and ever, because the length of the period of delay has been prescribed *by the Father*. It is under His authority. We recall that Jesus said to the disciples, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.' Act 1:7.

## The mystery of God

Gabriel proclaimed to the apostle John that there will be no more delay, 'but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets'. Rev 10:7. 'The mystery of God' is a major prophetic theme in the Scriptures. If it has been declared by the Lord to His servants the prophets, then it is clearly explained in the prophetic Scriptures. It is not 'a new mystery' that no-one will know about until the end of the age.

The apostle Paul identified that there are *two major elements* to the mystery of God that are apprehended by both Jews and Gentiles in the fellowship of Christ's offering. It is important that we understand the mystery of God in relation *to the Father*, and in relation *to the Son*.

Paul testified about his desire for the Colossians by saying 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*.' Col 2:2.

In *relation to the Father*, the mystery of God is the full revelation of the Father's glory in a multitude of sons of God. Earlier in his letter to the Colossians, Paul proclaimed this first element of the mystery as being 'Christ in you, the hope of glory'. Col 1:27. He continued to describe the travelling nature of his ministry by saying, 'We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.' Col 1:28. The predestination for every son of God is to serve the Father as a priest in His temple, which is the body of Christ.

In *relation to the Son*, the mystery of God is the marriage of Christ and the church. In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul used the marriage of Christ and the church as the example in discussing the culture of every Christian marriage. He concluded his admonition by saying, 'This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.' Eph 5:32.

One of the central tenets in our study of the Seventy Weeks prophecy is that the ministry of the true Day of Atonement has already been fulfilled through the seven wounding events that Christ experienced on His journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. In a similar way, we have also come to understand that the marriage of Christ and the church has *already taken place*. We are not still waiting for the marriage of Christ and the church as a future event. The marriage happened *on the day of His crucifixion!*

In the same way that Adam and the woman were married on the day that she was formed to be a comparable helper for him, the marriage of Christ and the church happened on the same day that the Father formed the church from the side of Christ to be His comparable helper.

When Christ's offering was completed on the cross, His physical body fell asleep in death. The bride of Christ was formed from the elements of the water, blood and Spirit that

flowed from the throne of the Father, through His physical body on the cross, when the soldier thrust the spear into His side.

The water, blood and Spirit that gushed from the finished offering of Christ are the sanctifying elements that opened the new and living way for a believer to participate in the fellowship of the body of Christ and, also, *to become part of the bride of Christ*.

Significantly, the first visible manifestation of the bride of Christ was seen on the Day of Pentecost, when the church in Jerusalem was established on the foundation of the twelve apostles. The book of Revelation clearly explains that the twelve apostles are the *foundation* of the New Jerusalem, which is the bride city. This is an amazing point!

When a son of God is baptised into Christ so that they are raised with Him to begin their priestly service in the temple of God in the heavenly places, they also become part of the bride of Christ which is being sanctified by the washing of the water of His word.

The two elements of the mystery of God are our *priesthood to the Father*, and our *participation in the ministry of the bride city*. The symbol that clearly ties these two elements of the mystery of God together is *the white garments*. That is, the white priestly garments are also the white wedding garments. The great multitude who are clothed in white garments, as sons and priests to God the Father, are also dressed in white wedding garments, as part of the bride of Christ.

The apostle John heard the voice of the same great multitude who had washed their priestly robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, saying, 'Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.' Rev 19:7-8.

John continued, 'Then He said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God".' Rev 19:9. Since the Day of Pentecost, the Father has been sending messengers to invite all believers to come and join the fellowship of the *agape* meal, in the heavenly Jerusalem, as our participation in the wedding feast.

### The parable about the wedding feast

Jesus used several parables to highlight the importance of responding to God's invitation to join the fellowship of the *agape* meal in the heavenly Jerusalem as the wedding feast.

The parable of the wedding feast covers the entire period from the earthly ministry of Jesus, all the way to the invitation to join the wedding feast in the wilderness at the end of the age. Jesus likened the kingdom of heaven to a certain king who had arranged a marriage for his son. In this parable, the 'king' is evidently God the Father. The 'son' is Jesus Christ. He is the Bridegroom. We know that 'the bride' is the church. Eph 5:25.

Jesus said that the king sent out his servants to call all those who were invited to the wedding – but *they were not willing to come*. Mat 22:3. This first group of messengers refers to all the prophets of old who were sent by God to the nation of Israel. The last and greatest of all these prophets was John the Baptist. It was John the Baptist who announced that Jesus Christ had come as the Bridegroom. John described himself as 'the friend of the Bridegroom'. Joh 3:29. The nation of Israel did not receive the ministry of John the Baptist and, likewise, they rejected the ministry of Christ Himself. Mat 23:37.

Significantly, following the offering of Christ, the Father sent out *other servants* to the Jewish nation. In contrast to the first group of messengers who invited the Jews to a future wedding feast, the next group of messengers were instructed to tell the people that everything was *now ready*. The king said to this next group of servants, 'Tell those who have been invited, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and *everything is ready; come now* to the wedding feast".' Mat 22:4. The wedding feast was ready, because the offering of Christ was complete.

The second group of servants included the twelve apostles, who were the living foundation of the New Jerusalem. It also included all of the elect, who continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, in fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers. Act 2:42. Many of the Jews did accept the invitation to join the fellowship of the *agape* meal. Act 6:7. However, the response of most of the religious leaders and of the Jewish nation was the same as it had been prior to the offering of Christ. They rejected the invitation to come to the wedding feast.

Specifically, Jesus said that many 'made light' of the invitation. Mat 22:5. This could also be translated that they 'paid no attention to it'. They did not recognise or appreciate the significance of the *agape* meal; nor the imperative for them to accept the invitation. Rather than responding with faith and obedience to the call of God through His messengers, they 'went their ways'. They were preoccupied with their own goals and activities in the world. For example, one went to his own farm and another went to his business.

In addition to those who were ambivalent toward the invitation to the wedding feast, there were religious zealots who treated the servants spitefully, and killed them. We know that Saul, prior to his conversion, was one of those zealots who was 'breathing threats and murder' against the believers in the early church. Act 9:1. Stephen said to the Jews, 'You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers.' Act 7:51-52.

The book of Acts recorded that Stephen was the first martyr who was killed by the Jews following the offering of Christ. In the parable, the king was furious with those who persecuted and killed his messengers. He sent out his armies, destroyed the murderers, and burned their city. Mat 22:7. We note that this was fulfilled in history when the armies of Prince Titus destroyed the city of Jerusalem in AD70. The city was literally burned with fire. The destruction of Jerusalem was the judgement of God upon the Jewish nation.

The king said to the servants who initially had been sent to the Jews, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited *were not worthy*.' Mat 22:8. The king's statement that they 'were not worthy' reminds us of the words of Paul to the Jews in Pisidian Antioch. After the word that he proclaimed in the Jewish synagogue was rejected, he said, 'It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves *unworthy of everlasting life*, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.' Act 13:46.

In the parable, when those who had been invited were found to be not worthy, the king instructed his servants to go into the highways and to invite every person whom they could find, to come to the wedding feast. Mat 22:9. They gathered both the 'bad' and the 'good'. Mat 22:10. Mat 13:48. The result is that the wedding hall was filled with guests. Throughout the entire church age, God the Father has been sending messengers into the

world to invite all men to join the fellowship of the *agape* meal. However, in the time of the end there will be a great harvest. A great multitude which no man can number, from every tribe, nation, people and tongue, will come into the kingdom of God. Rev 7:9.

The great harvest is the highpoint of the parable. However, the parable does not conclude with the wedding hall being filled with guests. When the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man who was not wearing a wedding garment. Mat 22:11. The king said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? The man was speechless.' Mat 22:12. The king then instructed his servants to bind the man hand and foot. He told them to cast the man into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Mat 22:13. We know that Jesus was referring to the eternal torment that will be experienced by all those who are cast into the lake of fire for eternity.

The man who had no wedding garment responded to the invitation to join the wedding feast, but he did not accept or embrace the culture of the *agape* meal. He did not belong to the elect. Mat 22:14. Rather, he was guilty of the sin of presumption as he sat down to eat and drink at the feast 'without fear'. Jud 1:12. The presumption of this man demonstrates that he did not fear God. He did not honour or respect the king. Mal 1:6.

### The wise and foolish virgins

In a different parable, Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven can be likened to five wise and five foolish virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Recalling that the apostle Paul likened the Corinthian church to 'a chaste virgin', we could liken the virgins in this parable to local congregations who are called to be part of the bride of Christ. The foolish virgins took no oil with them. This means that they did not maintain any connection with the apostolic administration of Christ, which proclaims the word of present truth as being the supply of fresh oil.

This is a remarkable indictment upon these congregations. The parable highlights the need for every congregation, and every household within a congregation, to be receiving the word directly from the apostolic administration of Christ. That is, the foolish virgins could not borrow some oil from the wise virgins. They needed a direct relationship with those who supplied the oil.

The parable continues, 'And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; *and the door was shut.*' Mat 25:10. The phrase, 'and the door was shut', signifies the end of the period of delay, and the beginning of *the wedding feast for the church in the wilderness*, during the final half of the seventieth week.

Jesus concluded the parable by saying, 'Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" But he answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you."' Mat 25:11-12.

Using these parables, Jesus emphasised the need for us to respond to God's invitation when He is speaking to us; the need for us to remain connected to the apostolic administration of Christ; and the need for us to be walking blamelessly in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, so that we are clothed in white garments. This means that we will be found worthy to participate in the wedding feast in the end of the age. He warned us that there will come a time when the door to the feast will be shut.

### Rise and measure the altar

After the apostle John heard Gabriel proclaim that 'there should be delay no longer', he recorded, 'Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there".' Rev 11:1. This refers to all of the elect in the church, who are watching and praying with Christ as those who are fully engaged in the ministry of the true altar of incense in the heavenly places.

Importantly, at this time, John was also instructed, 'But *leave out the court which is outside the temple*, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.' Rev 11:2. This instruction signifies that the door to the wedding feast in the heavenly Jerusalem on Mount Zion will be shut.

After the door to the wedding feast is shut in this manner, the bride of Christ will be protected and nourished by Christ in the wilderness for a period of three and a half years. Rev 12:6,14. During this same period, the world will be ruled by the final Antichrist. Rev 11:2. Rev 13:5.

## Chapter 22

# The one who makes desolate

As we begin our final chapter, it will be helpful to refresh ourselves on the four verses in the book of Daniel which comprise the Seventy Weeks prophecy. The angel Gabriel began by saying to Daniel, 'Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.' Dan 9:24.

In earlier chapters, we have considered each of these outcomes in some detail. Our key point has been that all of these outcomes *were accomplished by the crucifixion of Christ*. As our great High Priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of God, Jesus Christ is now ministering to us our participation in His finished work.

The next verse in the prophecy declares, 'Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.' Dan 9:25.

We have considered the command of the God of Israel, the command of Cyrus, the command of Darius, and the command of Artaxerxes *as each being part of one, integrated package*. We recall that it was the command of Artaxerxes, enabling Ezra to return, that was the beginning of the seventy weeks.

The *seven weeks* is the period of 49 years when grace was being shown to the Jewish remnant for the restoration of their culture as the Lord's people. This period began with the return of Ezra, included the ministry of Nehemiah, and concluded with the ministry of Malachi. The *62 weeks* is the period of 434 years when there was no prophetic ministry from the time of Malachi until the coming of John the Baptist, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to announce the coming of the Lord.

We read in the next verse, 'And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the

sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.’ Dan 9:26. When we read that ‘Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself’, it is referring to the crucifixion of Christ. This is the central feature of the Seventy Weeks prophecy.

We know that Jesus Christ abolished the Old Covenant and inaugurated the New Covenant on His offering journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. His one offering brought an end to all of the sacrifices and offerings under the Old Covenant. When the Jews continued to make animal sacrifices, after the offering of Christ was complete, it was an abomination before the Lord. It led to the complete destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem by the Roman army led by Prince Titus in AD70.

The final verse in the Seventy Weeks prophecy reads, ‘And he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.’ Dan 9:27.

Jesus Christ came to confirm the Covenant of sonship with us by water, blood and the Spirit, during the seventieth week. Significantly, there is *a period of delay* between the first half of the seventieth week and the second half of the seventieth week. In our most recent chapters, we have focused on the final period of this delay, which the Scriptures call ‘the time of the end’. This is the time when Jews and Gentiles will be united in the kingdom of God. It is also the time when Jesus Christ will gather a great multitude from every nation. This fulfils the statement that Jesus Christ will confirm the Covenant with ‘many’. ‘Many’ refers to a great multitude from every tribe, nation, people and tongue.

### The little book

In our last chapter, we considered that the apostle John saw the strong and mighty angel coming down from heaven. The angel put his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land. He then lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who is the Father, that there ‘should be delay no longer’. Rev 10:6. As we have considered, this proclamation will bring the period of delay in the Seventy Weeks prophecy to an end.

Significantly, the angel Gabriel also had *a little book* which was open in his hand. As soon as Gabriel had finished proclaiming the end of the delay, Jesus Christ spoke to the apostle John from heaven, and instructed him to go and take the book out of Gabriel’s hand. Gabriel then said to John that it would be sweet in his mouth and bitter in his belly. Once John had eaten it, and it became bitter in his belly, Gabriel said to him, ‘You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.’ Rev 10:11.

The little book contains the events that belong to the second half of the seventieth week. This includes the reign of Antichrist for 3½years, but also the final outpouring of the fullness of the wrath of God upon him and his kingdom, in the hour before the beginning of his reign. That is, the little book will reveal the events that belong to *the final portion* of the Seventy Weeks prophecy; namely, ‘And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.’ Dan 9:27.

### On the wing of abominations

We will now consider the phrase, ‘the wing of abominations’. The word ‘wing’ means ‘edge’ or ‘extremity’. Using the imagery of a pair of wings, the King James Version uses



the phrase, 'the overspreading of abominations'. This imagery is helpful. There is a period of abominations with a beginning and an end. This verse draws our attention to what will happen at the extremity, or the end, or right at the tip of the wing, of this overspreading of abominations.

### *The 2 300-year prophecy*

There are two major applications of this phrase. The first application of the phrase 'the wing of abominations' is that it refers to the end of the 2 300-year prophecy. It was revealed to Daniel that an abomination standing in the holy place will give Satan access to the heavenly places, and will cause Christ's messengers and His people to be trampled on the earth for a period of 2 300 years.

'The abomination which makes desolate standing in the holy place' is *the violation of the fellowship of the Lord's table*. The clearest example of this is when Judas left the *agape* meal to betray Jesus into the hands of the religious leaders, who then delivered Him into the hands of the secular rulers, who crucified Him.

As another example, we remember that, following the crucifixion of Jesus, the veil in the temple was torn in two. However, the religious leaders of the Jews sewed up the veil and continued to make animal sacrifices. This was an abomination to the Lord. However, it was not an abomination *standing in the holy place*, until this doctrine and practice became a faction in the Jerusalem church. Once it was in the church, which was in the heavenly places, it was standing in the holy place. As we have considered, this faction of religious zealots gained such power in the church that the elders of the church imposed the need to 'keep the Law' on the apostle Paul when he came to Jerusalem.

We have also considered that, by the time this specific form of abomination came to an end, when the temple and the city of Jerusalem were destroyed in AD70, another form of religious abomination had already become entrenched *in the Gentile church*. The illumination of the Scriptures by the Spirit had been replaced by Greek philosophy, and the fellowship of the *agape* meal had been replaced by the eucharist.

When Jesus addressed the presbyteries of the lampstand churches in Asia, He identified many doctrines and practices that had already become entrenched within their presbyteries and within their churches. That is, He identified the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, the doctrine of the Jezebel, the doctrine of Balaam, and the doctrine of the Laodiceans. These various doctrines of Satan have continued to perpetuate the trampling of the Lord's messengers and His people, until our present day.

We know that we have been called to overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb, the word of our testimony, and by loving not our lives to the death. The book of Revelation does reveal that the 2 300-year prophecy will come to an end, and that Michael and his angels will cast Satan and his angels out of heaven. Rev 12:7-12.

Satan will be cast out of the sanctuary in the heavenly places at the opening of the sixth seal. Following the opening of the sixth seal, the seven trumpets will announce the sovereign judgement of God upon the administration of Babylon.

### *The administration of Babylon*

The second application of the phrase, 'the wing of abominations', is that it refers to the end of the reign of the administration of Babylon over the nations of the world.

The administration of Babylon was first established by the fathers of the nations, under the leadership of Nimrod, when they began to build the city and the tower of Babel to make a name for themselves and to avoid being scattered throughout the earth. Gen 11:1-9. They did this to replace the administration of Christ over the nations.

Babylon became the administration through which Satan exercises his rulership over the world, in direct opposition to Christ. Luk 4:5-6. In the book of Revelation, the administration of Babylon is depicted as being *a great harlot* who sits upon all seven world kingdoms. Rev 17:1,9-10.

Significantly, as one world kingdom fell, and another rose to take its place, the administration of Babylon continued to rule over the nations of the world. For example, in the time of the Medes and Persians, the administration of Babylon developed to include the rule of the law. Dan 6. It was further developed to incorporate the rulership of human wisdom in the time of the Greeks, and the rulership of state religions in the time of the divided Roman Empire. 1Co 1:20.

As we have considered in previous chapters, we currently live in the time of the seventh world kingdom. The administration of Babylon continues to rule over the nations of the world through various international organisations that belong to, or are aligned with, the United Nations.

Babylon is called 'the mother of harlots' because she has spawned all of the harlot administrations that govern each nation of the world. Rev 17:5. She is also called 'the mother of the abominations of the earth' because she has produced every man-made religion, all of which are abominations to the Lord. Rev 17:5.

The judgement of the seventh world kingdom will begin with the opening of the four seals. During this time, one quarter of the world's population will perish from warfare, famine or pestilence.

The warfare will continue to escalate until the Lord miraculously intervenes in the affairs of men, at the opening of the sixth seal. On the mountains of Israel, He will sovereignly judge all the armies who have joined forces with Gog and Magog. Eze 39:4. The description of this judgement in the books of Ezekiel and Zechariah makes it very likely that this judgement will be in the midst of nuclear warfare.

In the aftermath of this judgement, as the prophet Ezekiel explained, it will take seven months to bury all the dead bodies, and seven years to burn the weapons. Eze 39:9,12.

In the same way that the United Nations was established by the nations of the world in the aftermath of the Second World War, there is little doubt that there will be a renewed resolve for peace and prosperity in the aftermath of the judgement of Gog and Magog.

However, the administration of Babylon will not have the opportunity to regroup, in order to sit upon another world kingdom. The Lord will announce the final judgement of Babylon when the seven trumpets are blown by the seven angels in the heavenly places. Rev 8:6.

Notably, when the second trumpet is blown, a great mountain burning with fire will be thrown into the sea. Rev 8:8. This will be the fulfilment of the prophecy of Jeremiah concerning the final judgement of Babylon.

The Lord has declared to Babylon, through Jeremiah, 'Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, who destroys all the earth ... and I will stretch out My hand against you, roll you down from the rocks, and make you a burnt mountain. They shall not take from you a stone for a corner nor a stone for a foundation, but you shall be desolate forever.' Jer 51:25-26.

### The one who makes desolate

During the period of the blowing of the trumpets, the administration of Babylon will fall, and the final Antichrist, who will lead the eighth world kingdom, will begin to emerge from the sea of the nations. The Seventy Weeks prophecy refers to the Antichrist as 'the one who makes desolate'. Dan 9:27. 'The one who makes desolate' could also be called 'the desolator'.

The apostle John recorded, concerning the emergence of the eighth world kingdom, 'Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.' Rev 13:1.

In contrast to the seventh world kingdom, when the ten kings are subservient to the seven administrative headquarters that belong to Babylon, this group of kings will rule and reign with Antichrist for a short period of time. Rev 12:3. The book of Revelation describes the short period of their rulership with Antichrist as being 'one hour'. Rev 17:12.

John continued, 'Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.' Rev 13:2. We note that the eighth world kingdom is *like a leopard*. This means that it will be like the Greek Empire, which is prophetically likened to a leopard in the book of Daniel. Dan 7:6.

Furthermore, the eighth world kingdom will have *feet like a bear*. This means that it will have a similar administrative structure to that of the Persian Empire, to rule over all the regions of the world. Dan 7:5. Finally, it will have a *mouth like a lion*. This means that Antichrist will claim the same absolute rulership that King Nebuchadnezzar was given over the kingdom of Babylon. Dan 7:4.

The final Antichrist will be a unique ruler! He is described as a 'little horn', in Chapter 7 of the book of Daniel. Dan 7:8,24-25. However, he will not be like the various 'little horns' who have risen to prominence because they were empowered by Satan from the heavenly places. Dan 8:9-10. The Antichrist will not be empowered from the heavenly places because of the transgression which causes abomination.

The final Antichrist will be demonically empowered from the bottomless pit. Rev 11:7. Rev 17:8. Having been cast out of heaven and flung to the earth, Satan will also give him his power, his throne and great authority. Rev 13:2.

John said, 'And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So they worshipped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was *given authority to continue for forty-two months*.' Rev 13:3-5.

In the lead-up to this time, the world will experience a unique transition of power. When we consider the history of the kingdoms of the world, we observe that each kingdom was conquered and replaced by a new world kingdom; and yet the administration of Babylon continued to reign from one kingdom to the next. In contrast to this, the Antichrist will *revive* the seventh world kingdom, and he will *replace* the administration of Babylon with a completely new administration *in his own image*. Rev 13. He will rule with the ten kings for one hour, and then rule by himself for forty-two months, which is 3½ years.

### The consummation

The sole reign of Antichrist will last for 3½ years, which coincides with the final half of the seventieth week in the Seventy Weeks prophecy. However, remarkably, the fullness of the wrath of God will be poured out upon him and his kingdom in the hour that immediately precedes the beginning of his reign!

This means that, as soon as the reign of Antichrist has begun, his entire kingdom will have already been judged and will be going to perdition. Rev 17:11. The apostle John recorded, 'Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them *the wrath of God is complete*.' Rev 15:1.

When John saw the seventh angel pouring out the final bowl, he heard a loud voice coming from the throne in the temple of heaven. The loud voice proclaimed, 'It is done!' Rev 16:17. This is the consummation! We read in the Seventy Weeks prophecy that the consummation will be poured out upon the desolate. The consummation is much more than the completion of the seventy weeks. It means complete and utter destruction!

The vials that contain the fullness of the wrath of God will be poured out upon the Antichrist, his throne, and upon all those who have received the mark of his name and worship his image.

We know that the church, which is the bride of Christ, will be miraculously protected and nourished by the Lord in the wilderness during the reign of Antichrist. While the church celebrates the wedding feast in the wilderness, the only remaining witness on the earth will be the ministry of Moses and Elijah, who will be supported by the 144 000, in the city of Jerusalem. Mat 17:3. Rev 11:3-6.

Moses and Elijah will be clothed in sackcloth as they prophesy concerning the judgement of God upon the world. Rev 11:3. As Moses and Elijah prophesy concerning the judgement of God upon the eighth world kingdom, the 144 000 will support their ministry by playing on spiritual harps. They will bear witness to the judgement of God upon the world by singing the song of Moses and the song of Lamb. Rev 15:2-3.

# THE SEVENTY WEEKS PROPHECY DANIEL 9:24-27

