

What is Man?

SONS OF MEN BECOMING SONS OF GOD

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Chapter I

The nature and destiny of man

King David, as he reflected upon the revelation of the name of the Lord in the earth, asked Yahweh, 'What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honour.'
Psa 8:4-5.

In the first instance, David's query, 'What is man?' indicated his consideration of the subsidiary questions, 'Who am I?'; 'Where do I come from?'; and 'What is my purpose in life?'. David recognised that the answers to these questions belonged to the Lord's thoughts regarding mankind. Furthermore, he understood that Yahweh's thoughts regarding the origin, constitution and destiny of man revealed the reason why, and the means by which, He visits us.

Notably, this was the very psalm that the apostle Paul quoted to explain the purpose for Christ's offering as *the Son of Man*. Heb 2:5-8. In other words, the ministry and offering of the Son of Man revealed the answer to David's query regarding the elements of man's nature and God's thoughts towards us. When He came into the world, the Son of Man established the pathway of salvation through which the sons of men could be born as sons of God. As the Son of Man, Jesus established the pathway of

salvation through which the sons of men could be born from above and glorified as sons of God, in Him.

The gospel of God

The gospel of God is the message through which the covenant life and fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is extended to us as an Everlasting Covenant. This is Their desire for the sons and daughters of men to be born of Their divine life and joined to Their own fellowship, forever.

When a person receives the gospel of God, proclaimed to them from the fellowship of a presbytery, they are caused to behold this stunning expression of God's love towards mankind. The apostle John, writing as part of an *aggelos* presbytery, directed his readers to this great truth, saying, 'Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children [sons] of God!' 1Jn 3:1.

A son of God is not a person who merely believes in God. Rather, it describes a son or daughter of man who has been born again of the life of God and abides in the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit with their brethren in Christ. They have a share in the divine nature, *now*. 2Pe 1:4. Again, we note the words of John, who said, 'Beloved, *now we are children of God*; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' 1Jn 3:2.

Evidently, eternal life is not a future reward that belongs to those who live a 'good' life prior to their death. Nor is it the future possession of those who are sovereignly predestined to eternal salvation, as some theological traditions have asserted. Through His parables, Jesus was quite clear that the glory of one's eternal citizenship in the age to come depends upon the extent to which the life of God, which they receive through new birth, is multiplied by offering *in this age*. Mat 25:14-30.

The first man

In the unfolding of Their covenant plan, Yahweh *Elohim* formed man from the dust of the earth and breathed into him the breath of lives, causing him to become a living soul. Gen 2:7. The apostle Paul defined this as 'the first man', saying, 'And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being."' 1Co 15:45.

The first man was created by Yahweh *Elohim* with a body, soul and spirit, and in the image and likeness of God. Gen 2:7. Although man was given possession of his identity, his name as a son of God had been written in Christ, the Father's Seed, before the creation of the heavens and the earth. In the fullness of time, every identity that was conceived through procreation was to be born again as a son of God by receiving Christ into their heart and then coming into Christ.

It is notable that, at the conclusion of each day of creation, *Elohim* was satisfied with what He had made; He 'saw that it was *good*'. However, at the end of the sixth day, having created the first man, the Scriptures recorded that 'God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was *very good*'. Gen 1:31. Evidently, the flesh of mankind is cherished by Yahweh *Elohim*. Indeed, the preferred title of Christ, who is Yahweh Son in identity, is 'the Son of Man'. Joh 6:62.

Our destiny is not the destruction of the flesh, but that we, the sons and daughters of men, are born of the divine nature and established in the fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim*, forever. We observe the fulfilment of this Everlasting Covenant desire of God in the final statements of the Scriptures. The apostle John, seeing the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, heard a loud voice from heaven, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.' Rev 21:3.

The old man

Adam and Eve, and the sons and daughters who would come from them, fell when they rejected the covenant destiny that God had chosen for them. Adam and Eve disobeyed Yahweh *Elohim*, choosing to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in an endeavour to become the origin of their own expression and destiny. Through Adam's transgression, death spread to all men. Rom 5:12.

After Adam ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the eyes of both Adam and his wife were opened and they knew that they were naked. Gen 3:7. Their 'nakedness' was not just the absence of clothing. It meant that they had lost the mandate for life and expression which they could only know in fellowship with Yahweh at the tree of life. They had rejected Yahweh *Elohim* and His predestination for their lives when they chose to become the origin of their own life and expression.

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The action of sewing fig leaves together as garments to cover their nakedness represented an attempt to 'tailor' a name, or expression, for themselves. Gen 3:7. Their 'clothing' was a projection of their self-defined image, which was sourced in what they viewed as being good or evil for themselves. Significantly, clothing themselves in this manner revealed their idolatry. We note, in this regard, that idolatry is a projection of what a person desires to become, and of the lifestyle to which they aspire, based on their knowledge of good and evil. The actions that a person takes to achieve or substantiate their projection is sorcery. This propensity was fathered in mankind through Satan's own idolatry and sorcery.

The desire for life and expression according to one's knowledge of good and evil became another law within the hearts of fallen mankind. Living according to this law brought them into bondage to the law of sin and death. Rom 7:23. The other law, and the law of sin, became the controlling elements of the identity of the first man, bringing him under the dominion of Satan. Paul identified the first man, controlled by sin and the other law, as '*the old man*'. Rom 6:6. He explained that the old man 'grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts', which are the motivations of the other law within a person. Eph 4:22.

The body of sin and the body of death

Now living by the controlling principles of the other law and the law of sin, the old man is deluded and self-centred. 2Co 5:15. His heart is deceitfully wicked, and he is controlled by sin. Jer 17:9. Rom 7:23. Rom 6:12.

Paul described the body of an old man who is controlled by sin as 'the body of sin'. Rom 6:6. The body of sin is not just the physical body of a person who is dead in trespasses and sins. It refers to their whole person - body, soul and spirit. It is described as the body of sin because everything that they perceive, think, and do, falls short of the glory of their predestined sonship, being motivated by the self-centred desires of the other law within them.

Living in this state, the old man remains cut off from the life of God. The Scriptures define the mortal body of the old man who lives in this fallen condition as '*the body of death*'. Rom 7:24. It is a body of death because their mortal body is dying under the judgement of God on account of their sin.

Recovery through the word of faith

Even though Adam and Eve were now 'old man', they responded to the Lord God when He addressed them, saying, 'Where are you?' Gen 3:9. Hearing their response, the Lord God recovered Adam and Eve to fellowship with Himself, by sacrificing an animal. Gen 3:21. Through this sacrifice, the efficacy of the offering of the Lamb 'slain from the foundation of the world' was extended towards them. Rev 13:8. 1Pe 1:19-20. Adam and Eve were redeemed by the shedding of blood, and the fig leaves, representing the projections that they manufactured to cover the shame of their nakedness, were replaced with garments which the Lord fashioned for them. By this means, they were being made adequate for their participation in His will for their lives.

The Lord then sent Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden to fulfil the works that He had defined for them. The Lord placed two cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, as well as a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life. Gen 3:23-24. The gate of Eden, at the feet of the cherubim, was now the context for Adam's fellowship with Yahweh. His connection to the Lord was by offering, which he understood involved the sacrifice of a lamb.

The Lord spoke to Adam from the tree of life through the cherubim. As Adam presented himself to hear and receive the word of the Lord through His angels, he maintained his connection to the headship of Christ. Through this word, Adam obtained faith for life, which he demonstrated by his obedience to the word of the Lord and by his daily offering at the gate of Eden. As he applied himself to the works that belonged to his obedience, the thorns, representing the curse on mankind because of sin, were for his sake. Gen 3:17. Through his participation in this package of offering and sufferings, Adam was overcoming Satan and being restored to God's purpose and plan for his life. Luk 3:38.

The natural man

Adam, and all those who were born after him who demonstrated the same faith for offering and obedience, were identified by Moses as the sons of God. He distinguished them from the sons and daughters of men. Gen 6:2.

The sons and daughters of men had rejected the opportunity for recovery to fellowship with Yahweh at the gate of Eden. The apostle Paul said that they had suppressed the truth in unrighteousness. Rom 1:18. This was a

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deliberate choice, for the Scriptures teach us that what may be known of God was manifest in them and God had shown it to them. Rom 1:19. Paul further explained, 'For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, *but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*' Rom 1:20-21.

Elsewhere, Paul described every person in this condition as '*the natural man*'. He wrote, 'But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' 1Co 2:14. The natural man is unable to receive the things of the Spirit of God, which the heavens themselves declare, because they are futile in their thoughts and their foolish hearts are darkened. Psalms 19:1-4.

Those who are 'natural man' have been given over to uncleanness. They not only live according to their own law, in the lusts of their heart, but God has given them up to vile passions and to a debased mind, so that they live *instinctively*, like brute beasts. They do those things which are not fitting; 'being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful'. Rom 1:29-31.

Of course, we recall that, following the Fall, the sons and daughters of men became increasingly wicked. Yahweh saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The Lord repented that He made man, saying, 'I will destroy man whom I created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.' Gen 6:7. Furthermore, *Elohim* said to Noah, who had found grace in the eyes of the Lord, 'The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.' Gen 6:13.

Having proclaimed the 'end of all flesh', the Lord's initiative was now *only* toward the children of Noah who, in the course of history, would become sons of God. Natural man was condemned and destroyed in the flood waters of God's judgement.

The spiritual man

In contrast to the natural man, the spiritual man is able to receive and know the things of God, because they have been born of the Spirit through faith. Gal 3:14. As the apostle Paul explained, 'Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, *that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.*' 1Co 2:12.

The spiritual man is born of the Spirit, yet they still have another law within their heart. Nevertheless, they are not in bondage to the law of sin, because they are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. They accept that the other law within them is a weakness, and they submit themselves to the help of the Holy Spirit who enables them and leads them in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Rom 8:26. In this fellowship, they are progressively obtaining deliverance from the other law, and obtaining healing from the effects of sin upon them. Moreover, they are obtaining and multiplying the life of God as they grow up in their sonship.

Describing the orientation to life of the spiritual man, Paul wrote, 'For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, *[set their minds on] the things of the Spirit.* For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.' Rom 8:5-6.

Having been born to see the kingdom of God, we are able to set our mind on the things of the Spirit. We recognise that the things of the Spirit are not spiritual concepts or the good works informed by our knowledge of good and evil. The things of the Spirit are the works of repentance and faith that belong to our daily fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. This is the reality of life 'above the angels' which belongs to those who have been raised to sit where Christ is, on His throne, having received the glory that He had before the beginning of creation. Of course, this is what Paul said to the Colossians, writing, 'If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. *Set your mind on things above*, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.' Col 3:1-4.

The key point to recognise is that a person who has been born of God has a *choice* as to how they set their mind and walk each day. While it is true

that no good thing can be achieved through the fallen desires of our heart, we have been born again with the divine nature, and have been raised into the offering fellowship of Yahweh through baptism into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Even when we know the conviction of sin, we are equally convicted by the Holy Spirit of righteousness and judgement in the context of this fellowship. Choosing to set our minds in this way, we acknowledge that the things which we experience are working together for the good of God's purposes being fulfilled in our life.

The carnal man

The carnal man is a person who has been born of God, but who sets their mind on the flesh. That is, they *choose* to pursue life through the works of the flesh, having begun in the Spirit. Paul noted that a person who sets his mind in this way has become bewitched by Satan and has returned to the weak and beggarly way of life that belongs to the spirit of the world. Gal 3:1-4. Gal 4:9.

The culture of the spirit of the world, under the *stoicheion*, is the same culture as Satan's; it is trading. Trading is the means by which Satan and all of his children – fallen mankind – seek for life through the pursuit of the self-defined image that they have for themselves. This is the form of conduct of those who are carnal.

A carnal Christian is disconnected from the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, seeking life another way. The first implication of this orientation to life is that they are unable to mature, or bear fruit, as a son of God. Paul highlighted this point in his definition of carnality, writing, 'And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal.' 1Co 3:1-3. We see that a carnal Christian remains as a babe in Christ. They are spiritually immature, even though they may appear sophisticated, or may even have followed a Christian doctrine for many years.

Trading will be the way of life that belongs to a carnal Christian. As Paul noted, writing, 'For where there are envy [through comparison], strife [contentions that establish and assert a hierarchy], and divisions [relational partiality] among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men [those under the *stoicheion*]? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?' 1Co 3:3-4.

Because the carnal Christian sets their mind on the things of the flesh, they are unable to discern, or sanctify themselves to, their participation in the fellowship of Christ's body. The evidence that their mind is set on the flesh is that they become weak in faith, sin sick, and some even fall asleep in relation to their sonship as a citizen of the kingdom of God. 1Co 11:29-30. If a person continues choosing to set their minds in this way, they will lose their sonship. Rom 8:6.

The new man

In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul contrasted the 'old man' with 'the new man', writing, 'But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.' Eph 4:20-24.

The beginning point for understanding the old man (so that we can put him off) and the new man (so that we can put him on), *is to learn Christ*. We learn Christ by hearing Him as we receive the word of His messengers, and by taking His yoke upon us to journey with Him in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. Joh 13:20. Mat 11:29. The reason why this is the beginning point for consideration of these two 'men', is because, through Christ's offering on the cross, the corporate old man of fallen humanity was destroyed. At the same time, He perfected forever those who would receive His salvation and become new creation sons of God in Him. 2Co 5:17,21. Heb 10:14.

In the book, *The Gospel of God*, we highlighted that the cross was the manifestation, in time, of the offering of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, *before*. This was the offering through which Their own covenant life and fellowship was extended to us as an Everlasting Covenant. How do we know this to be the case? Speaking of His offering on the cross, Jesus said, 'When you lift up the Son of Man [on the cross], then you will know that I AM, and I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.' Joh 8:28. On the cross, Jesus was revealed as 'I AM' - Him 'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty [*El Shaddai*]'. Rev 1:8. This is how He could be the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world on the cross, and, at the same time, be the Lamb slain *before* the foundation of the world. Act 2:23. Rev 13:8.

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The point to note is that God's covenant purpose for sons of God was completely finished *before* the foundation of the world. Heb 4:3. This is when the new creation was established! What was finished in the offering of Yahweh, *before*, was manifest in time on the cross through the offering of the Son of Man. Through His offering journey, He established a pathway of sanctification through which sons of men could be born from above and brought to glory as sons of God according to their predestination in Yahweh, *before*. They would be revealed as part of the corporate new man, Christ.

The offering before

We recall that within Their own covenant fellowship, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit agreed together to create and bring to glory a multitude of sons of God who are born of Their life and joined to Their own covenant fellowship, declaring, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.' Gen 1:26. This would be something *altogether new in the Godhead*.

To achieve Their covenant purpose, each Person of the Godhead laid down Their life, by name, to reveal the others. The fruit of this offering was that Yahweh Son was begotten as the Son of the Father, by the capacity of Yahweh Holy Spirit, when the Father said, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.' Heb 1:5.

Christ, as the Son of God, was now the Seed of the Father, and the Word of God. All the names of the sons of God, of which the Father is the source, were now in the Son. Furthermore, all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him. The apostle Paul drew attention to this outcome of Their offering, *before*, writing, 'For it pleased the Father that in Him [the Son] all the fullness should dwell'. Col 1:19.

Christ's own name as Yahweh Son was hidden in God, and He was now proceeding as a new creation, from the bosom of the Father. He was a new creation. Significantly, because our names as sons of God were in Him, we were hidden within Him in God. Col 3:3. We see that the corporate new man was manifest even before the beginning of the creation of the heavens and the earth. This is where our predestination as sons of God was revealed. Rom 8:29.

This offering, *before*, manifested *the order of Melchizedek*. The Father was established as the source of the word through which Their Covenant would come to pass; the Son was brought forth as the Word through

which the knowledge of God would be revealed; and the Holy Spirit was established as the Helper, enabling offering through Eternal Spirit, and sanctifying the unfolding of Their finished offering in space and time. This order of offering is the means by which the life and fellowship of Their own Covenant is extended and multiplied to us as an Everlasting Covenant.

Concerning the order of Melchizedek, Paul, quoting King David, wrote, 'Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, today I have begotten You." As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever according to [or after] the order of Melchizedek".' Heb 5:5-6. We see that, having been begotten by the Father, the Son proceeded from the fellowship of Yahweh *according to* the order of Melchizedek. Psa 110:4. This was in obedience to the Father. As the Word, He was the Messenger of Their Covenant, which They were making with us as an Everlasting Covenant. Joh 1:1. Mal 3:1. This Word is ministered through an administration of four faces - that of a lion, an ox, an eagle, and a man.

The word of the covenant ministered after the order of Melchizedek

Although the corporate new man had already been established in the Son of God, it could not be *revealed* until it became flesh and the sons of men were born of God and brought to glory through fellowship in His offering. Accordingly, the first creative initiative of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, through the order of Melchizedek, was the creation of the 'first man', which we described earlier.

Through this creative action, the Son laid down to Adam all of the identities who were named as sons of God in Himself. However, the Son did not give Himself to Adam as the Seed of the Father. This was to be a later step in the unfolding of God's Everlasting Covenant purpose so that the sons of men could be born as sons of God. The important point to note is that this creative initiative was expressly ministered through the order of Melchizedek, which belongs to the Everlasting Covenant. It was not simply a step in the revelation of God's glory through the creation of the heavens and the earth. Gen 9:13.

The priestly offering initiative of the Son, revealing the word of the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, was then expressed towards Adam and Eve as they had fellowship with Yahweh at the tree of life, every day. Following the fall of mankind, the Lord established offering at the gate of Eden as the context for Adam's recovery to God's

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plan for him and his children as sons of men. By receiving the word of the Lord, from the tree of life, ministered through the angels at the gate of Eden, Adam obtained faith for life which he demonstrated by offering and through his obedience.

This ministry continued until Noah, who was divinely warned of God's impending judgement upon natural man. Being moved with godly fear, he prepared an ark for the saving of his household. Through the flood, God ended His relationship with natural man. His focus was now only on the sons of God. For this reason, Paul said that, through faith, Noah became an heir of the righteousness (sonship) which is according to faith. Heb 11:7. He became the second Adam.

The faith that the Word ministered to Adam and Noah, was made full and complete in Abraham. Melchizedek met with Abraham, blessing him as possessor of heaven and earth, and establishing the Covenant of sonship with him as an adoption. Gen 14:18-20. Gen 15:1-21. According to the word, ministered through the order of Melchizedek, Abraham became the father of a new humanity when the Son gave Himself to Abraham to become Abraham's son, after the flesh. Gen 15:1. This covenant was established in the flesh of Abraham, through circumcision, as an Everlasting Covenant, and was then ratified by oath when Abraham offered up his son, Isaac, on Mount Moriah. Gen 17:1-16. Gen 22:16-18.

The next key ministry of the Son, through the order of Melchizedek, was to King David. Yahweh made a covenant with David, saying, 'When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men.' 2Sa 7:12-14. With this covenant, the Lord promised that the Son of God would come in the flesh as the Son of David.

Revealing his illumination concerning the ministry of his future Son, David declared, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool." The Lord shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies! Your people shall be volunteers in the day of Your power; in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, You have the dew of Your youth. The Lord has sworn and will not relent, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek".' Psa 110:1-4.

We know, of course, that David failed spectacularly in the matter of Uriah the Hittite and Bathsheba. Speaking of this incident, and David's recovery, Paul wrote, 'David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin".' Rom 4:6-8.

David should have been stoned for his adultery and murder, forfeiting his eternal sonship. However, David found forgiveness and obtained the promise of eternal life as he was joined, figuratively, to the death of Christ through the word of the Lord. 2Sa 12:7-13. The Lord described this recovery, which all sons and daughters of men must find, as 'the sure mercies of David'. Significantly, He identified these sure mercies as an aspect of His Everlasting Covenant. Through the prophet Isaiah, He said, 'Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an *everlasting covenant* with you - the sure mercies of David.' Isa 55:3. The sure mercies of David is the promise of resurrection from the death of sin, to sonship, for those who obtain forgiveness through repentance, and join the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

The Son of God came in the likeness of men as the Seed of Abraham and the Son of David, when He was born of Mary. He was Yahweh Son in identity, but not in the expression of glory. His intrinsic glory as Yahweh Son had been entrusted to the Father, when He emptied Himself, *before*. However, He was the Son of God/Son of Man, and was revealing the glory of the Father. We note, in this regard, the words of the angel Gabriel, who said to Mary, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born *will be called the Son of God*.' Luk 1:35. Jesus proceeded to minister on earth as the Son of God, and as the Son of Abraham and David, after the flesh.

The offering of the Son of Man, first

Paul emphasised that when the Son of God was begotten as the Son of Man, He was, in all things, *made like us*, and was in all points *tempted as we are*, yet without sin. Heb 2:17-18. Heb 4:15. Furthermore, in order to bring many sons to glory, the Son, whom Paul identified as the Captain or Author (NT:747 - *archegos*) of salvation, was made perfect through suffering. Heb 2:10. Of course, Jesus was sinless, so what did Paul mean by this?

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Through His offering, Christ established the pathway of sanctification involving seven descending and ascending, or glorifying, steps. That is, He established the process through which we could be reconciled to God; delivered from our sin and other law; and brought to glory as sons of God. Importantly, He said to His disciples, 'Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward.' Joh 13:36. Jesus would complete this journey, which He described as a baptism, *first*; they would then follow Him afterward. Mar 10:38. This journey was the revelation of the offering of Yahweh, *before*.

In the garden of Gethsemane, Christ was made sin when the Father made every son and daughter of man to be a member of His corporate body. By this means, Christ's body became the body of sin, and He was manifest as the corporate old man. Through the seven wounding events that Christ endured as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary, He was first *descending* as He tasted the sufferings of death that belonged to the judgement upon every man because of sin. Heb 2:9. However, this was a circumcision upon Him by which the old man, who lives by these principles, was removed from Him and destroyed in the sea of God's forgetfulness.

At the same time, in each wounding event, Christ was *ascending*, or being progressively glorified *in the flesh*, as a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. That is, through the things which He suffered He was being crowned with glory and honour, and learning the obedience that belonged to the glorified new creation sons of God. Specifically, He learnt, as a Son of Man, the knowledge necessary to be an adequate, faithful and compassionate High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. This knowledge now belongs to the fellowship of His offering, *before*.

At the conclusion of the seven glorifying aspects of His offering journey, the Son was received into the hands of the Father. After three days and nights, Christ was begotten from the dead when He entered His physical body, which had been made immortal through His offering journey. When He was begotten from the dead, *we were all begotten from the dead with Him*. The Son of Man then appeared before the Father as the firstfruits of the new creation, guaranteeing the 'harvest' of a great multitude of sons who would be brought to glory by joining the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

You will follow after

On the evening of His resurrection, the Son of God appeared to His disciples in the upper room. He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' Joh 20:22. By this means, they were born again as sons of God. Significantly, through new birth, they were joined to His baptism, which is the offering *before*. They began to be glorified through the pathway of salvation that He had pioneered for them, *before*.

From the Mount of Olives, Jesus ascended into heaven to sit on His throne, where He was *before*. Joh 6:62. Joh 17:5. Act 1:9-10. He was now glorified as Yahweh Son, Son of God, and Son of Man. It is important to recognise that, although Christ's followers were able to be born of the Father during Christ's forty-day ministry, they were not able to meet their name and function as the son whom they had been predestined to be, until Christ ascended into heaven and was seated on the throne, where He was *before*. This is because Yahweh Son's intrinsic glory is His expression of all sonship. We are only able to meet our name and expression as a son of God when we behold it by looking, as in a mirror, into the face of the Lord. It is in this fellowship that we are changing from glory to glory. 2Co 3:18.

Behold, new creation

It is a new creation son of God who dies with Christ in baptism. By baptism, we are connected to Christ's offering death through which our new creation sonship was established and finished. In the same way that the Son emptied Himself to reveal the Father in this offering, we are committed to revealing the Son *as a member of His body*. Eph 2:14-18. 1Co 12:12-26. This was Paul's point when he wrote, 'If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.' Col 3:1-4.

Concerning the new creation, Paul declared, 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.' 2Co 5:17. Old things are passing away because we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's circumcision. However, this is not our primary focus as we fellowship in the sufferings of Christ. Rather, through sufferings, we are being made adequate by Christ for our service as a part of a kingdom of priests according to the order

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of Melchizedek. He is teaching us what He learnt as He was glorified through the things which He suffered. This is what it means to be brought to glory as a son of God.

When we are baptised into Christ, we are joined to the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. In this fellowship, we are being brought to glory according to our predestination, *before*. Baptism is the point where we choose what the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have chosen and predestined for us in Their Covenant fellowship, *before*.

Chapter 2

Born to see and enter the kingdom of God

The new birth

In His discussion with Nicodemus, Jesus emphasised that a person must be born again to inherit eternal life as a citizen of the kingdom of God. He said to Nicodemus, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Joh 3:3. He then further stated, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.' Joh 3:5. In other words, a person can only become the new creation son of God that they were predestined to be, if they are born again.

From these definitive statements of Christ, we can identify three key aspects of the new birth which are necessary for entering the kingdom of God, as sons of God, in this age. A person must be born to *see* the kingdom of God (1), and they must be born of water and the Spirit to *enter* the kingdom (2) and to *possess* the kingdom (3).

Jesus further detailed these three aspects of the new birth in His parable of the sower and the seed. He likened being born to see the kingdom to

the germination of the seed of the Father within the heart of the hearer. The germination of the seed is indicated by joy, as the hearer obtains understanding, or illumination, concerning the promise of sonship. A person is born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God when they negotiate the issues of stony ground and thorny ground by receiving and embracing their participation in Christ's offering and sufferings. Good ground refers to a person who has entered the kingdom of heaven. As they walk blamelessly before the Lord, they are able to grow up, as a son of God, into the fullness of the stature of Christ.

Born to see the kingdom

A person who has been born to see the kingdom of God *sees their calling* as a son of God. 1Co 1:26. 1Jn 3:1. This requires illumination by the Spirit. The gospel of sonship, which is the word of promise that was preached beforehand to Abraham, is proclaimed to us. Gal 3:8. It comes calling us by name, making known to us the blessing of our predestination as a son of God. This is an expression of God's lovingkindness towards us. Jer 31:3.

A spirit of grace and supplication accompanies this word, delivering the natural man, whose heart and mind is otherwise darkened, from any influence that would inhibit their capacity for *illumination*. Making this point, the Lord said, 'I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; *then* they will look on Me whom they pierced.' Zec 12:10.

When we are truly illuminated to our calling as a son of God, we are provoked to fear the Lord. Like Jacob, we awake from the figurative 'sleep' that describes the spiritual condition of those who live according to the basic principles of the flesh. In this regard, we recall the account of Jacob's vision of the house of God. 'Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." And he was *afraid* and said, "How *awesome* [fear-provoking] is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" ' Gen 28:16-17.

We fear the Lord because the illumination that we are receiving through the word of promise is from the fiery eyes of Christ. We see in His eyes the judgement and wrath of God upon our iniquity and sin, and confess that we are not His people, even though we were predestined to sonship. Moreover, we acknowledge our complete inability to obtain the sonship that is being revealed to us. Accordingly, we confess, as Jacob did, that

we are not worthy of God's mercy, nor of our sonship which is being illuminated to us. Gen 32:10. This confession reveals that we have become bankrupt in spirit. Mat 5:3.

In the place where it is apparent that we are not God's people, because of our other law within us and our bondage to the law of sin and death, we are called the sons of God. Rom 9:26. Hos 1:10. We confess, like the penitent thief who was crucified with Christ on the day that He died, that we are rightly under judgement because of our sin. Luk 23:41. Yet, we *see* that He has tasted the sufferings of death that belong to our judgement and has finished the works of obedience that belong to our sonship. Heb 2:9. Isa 26:12. We are seeing the offering of the Lamb, *before*, through which our names were recorded in the Lamb's book of life!

With this in mind, it is apparent that the words of the penitent thief are the confession of one who has been born to see the kingdom. He said to his associate, who was also dying with Christ, 'Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.' Luk 23:40-41. Having been illuminated to this reality, the thief, having become poor in spirit, spoke by the faith that he received as Christ's blood was speaking to him. He said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.' Luk 23:42. Wonderfully, Jesus said to this man, '*Today* you will be with Me in Paradise [raised and seated with Me, where I was before].' Luk 23:43.

The need to be born again to see the kingdom of God is particularly pertinent to children born into covenant homes. On account of the faith of a believing parent, they are born of God and endowed with the divine nature in the womb. 1Co 7:14. However, unless they are personally born to see their calling as a son in the fellowship of Yahweh, and learn the fear of the Lord, they will grow up in the covenant house and become children of wrath, like Esau.

Christian parents can obtain grace for the care of their children, as they submit to the lordship of Christ and meet one another at the tree of life. 1Pe 3:7. This grace enables them to train their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Eph 6:4. Through this instruction, their children have the opportunity to learn the fear of the Lord and to see their place in the Father's house.

Abram was born to see

Being born to see the kingdom is so much more than an awareness of God, or even an awareness of belonging to God. A person who is born to see the kingdom is enabled by the Son, through the Holy Spirit, to see their name and predestination as a son of God in the discussion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, before the world began.

Demonstrating this aspect of salvation, Abram was, figuratively, 'born to see' when the Word of Yahweh, who is the Son of God, came to him in a vision, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield [of faith], your exceedingly great reward.' Gen 15:1. The Lord was making known to Abram the 'exceedingly great and precious promises' through which he, and his descendants, would become partakers of the divine nature. 2Pe 1:4.

Accordingly, Christ, the Word, said to Abram, '*Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them. So shall your descendants be.*' Gen 15:5. Abram was enabled to look into heavenly places, *before*, when the Father, Son and Holy Spirit declared, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.' Gen 1:26. This declaration was not simply a statement of intent. It encompassed the discussion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit concerning the sonship name of every person who would ever live. This discussion *preceded* the offering of Yahweh through which Their covenant life was shared as an Everlasting Covenant. The names that were declared in the counsel of Their will, *before*, are the stars of the heavens that Abram saw.

Having received Christ into his life, Abram was able to see the covenant discussion of Yahweh *Elohim, before*, and he believed *in Yahweh!* Gen 15:6. He did not just believe that Yahweh existed. Rather, he believed that he belonged in the fellowship of Yahweh, where his name was known. Furthermore, Abram believed to become the father of a new humanity, through Christ, who had given Himself to become Abram's Son, after the flesh. Because Abram believed this, God reckoned him to be righteous, meaning that Abram was identified as a son of God. Gen 15:6. He had been born to see the kingdom.

Remaining on wayside ground

A hearer remains wayside ground when the word of promise, which calls their name, fails to take root in their heart. They are not born to see the kingdom. Describing this outcome of the gospel, Jesus said, 'When

anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not *understand* it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.' Mat 13:19.

Understanding does not refer to a person's comprehension of theological concepts. It means that a person has received illumination concerning their calling as a son of God. A person without understanding remains in darkness because they are unwilling to turn to the Lord when the word is preached to them. They choose the sight of their own eyes, and the understanding of their own heart, informed by a theological proposition, rather than the illumination that comes from the eyes of Christ as the word is preached to them.

Instead of learning the fear of the Lord as they allow His eyes to search their heart and mind, their responses to the word, and to the circumstances of their life, indicate that they remain in bondage to Satan through the fear of death. We note that Jesus said to the Jews, 'Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.' Joh 8:43-44.

The life of a wayside Christian will be quite religious as they endeavour to find security and justification through loyalty to the traditions and doctrines established by messengers who belong to the synagogue of Satan. This is a key implication of Jesus' statement, 'Then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.' Luk 8:12.

The Pharisee and the tax collector

To distinguish between those who were born to see the kingdom and those who remained as wayside ground, Jesus contrasted the prayers of a Pharisee and a tax collector. This parable is recorded in the Gospel of Luke.

The Pharisee trusted in himself and in the efficacy of his works. This was reflected in the content of his prayer in the temple. His prayer was not in response to the illumination of the word. Rather, he justified himself through his observance of the religious customs of the Jews, and by comparing himself with others, praying, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men - extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' Luk 18:11-12. It is quite possible that this Pharisee had been defrauded

by the tax collector. Yet, in his self-righteousness, he had no capacity to forgive, meaning that he found no forgiveness himself. Mat 6:15.

Jesus noted that ‘the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” ’ Luk 18:13. Jesus said of this man, ‘I tell you, this man went down to his house justified.’ Luk 18:14. The tax collector had been illuminated by the word that proclaimed his calling as a son of God. We know this because his request for mercy revealed that he understood that he was under the judgement of God because of his sin, having fallen short of his name and works as a son of God. His response demonstrated that he had ‘woken up’ to this reality, and feared God. The implication of his *justification* was that he was able to walk in obedience to the word of his sonship.

Significantly, in the next chapter of his Gospel, Luke recounted the experience of Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector. Zacchaeus was a man of small stature who climbed a tree in order to *see* Jesus. As Jesus came by, He looked up and saw Zacchaeus, and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.’ Luk 19:5. In this interaction, we note that Christ met Zacchaeus eye to eye as He spoke to him. Christ’s command was the word of promise proclaiming Zacchaeus’ calling as a son of God. This is apparent because, at the conclusion of their interaction, the Lord said to Zacchaeus, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is *a son of Abraham.*’ Luk 19:9.

As the Lord spoke to him, Zacchaeus maintained the Lord’s gaze. Through this encounter, Zacchaeus was, evidently, illuminated to his sin and to God’s judgement upon him. In the fear of the Lord, Zacchaeus’ cry for mercy was manifest in the confession of his sin and in the works that belonged to his repentance. Demonstrating faith, he said to Jesus, ‘Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.’ Luk 19:8. These were the first works of faith that belonged to Zacchaeus’ calling as an adopted son of God, in Abraham. His illumination, joy, and works of repentance, revealed that he had, by faith, been born to see the kingdom.

Born of water and the Spirit to enter and possess the kingdom

A person is born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God when they are baptised into Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit. Importantly, baptism is not a sacrament. It is a response of faith to the

command to walk blamelessly in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. That is, having been born to see their calling as a son of God in Yahweh, *before*, a believer will desire to be established in this offering fellowship where they are able, by the Holy Spirit, to fulfil the works of sonship prepared for them by the Father, in the Son.

The example of Abraham and Sarah

Abraham and Sarah were, figuratively, born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God when the Lord revealed Himself to Abraham as *El Shaddai*, saying to him, 'Walk before Me and be blameless'. Gen 17:1. As we have considered in the book, *The Gospel of God*, the Almighty God said to Abraham, 'As for Me, behold, *My Covenant* is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations.' Gen 17:4. By this word, which is the gospel of God, Abram received a new name and was connected to the works that belonged to his sonship. Gen 17:5-6. These were the name and works which were foreknown in the counsel of Their Covenant, even before the Everlasting Covenant was inaugurated.

Yahweh *Elohim*, as *El Shaddai*, then made His Covenant an Everlasting Covenant with Abraham, saying, 'And I will establish *My Covenant* between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an *Everlasting Covenant*, to be God to you and your descendants after you.' Gen 17:7. Their Covenant was signified in Abraham's flesh by circumcision. Gen 17:10-11. By receiving circumcision, typifying baptism into Christ, Abraham was connected to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. This was the offering of Yahweh, *before*, through which Their Covenant purpose was accomplished. The dying and living of Jesus was now in the flesh of Abraham and Sarah as they walked blamelessly in an *attitude of circumcision*. 2Co 4:10. Walking in this manner was the ongoing implication of having entered the kingdom of God.

The apostle Paul testified that he always carried about in his body the dying and the living of the Lord Jesus Christ, that the life of Jesus would be manifest in his mortal body. 2Co 4:10. This was true for Abraham and Sarah. Having been, figuratively, born of the Spirit (indicated by their new names), they *then* joined the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings through circumcision, signifying baptism into Christ. Resurrection life was ministered by God to their mortal bodies. Rom 8:11. Their bodies, having been as good as dead, were made alive, and they were able to bring forth the promised son, Isaac, whom Paul described as having been born 'according to the Spirit'. Rom 4:19. Gal 4:29.

The new man dies with Christ

Although Christ, the Seed of the new creation, has come into the heart of the believer through new birth, they must come into Christ in order to *live* as a new creation son of God. 2Co 5:17. Jesus was clear that unless a new born son of God was baptised into the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, they would die again. Mat 10:38-39.

Addressing this implication of baptism, Paul said, 'For you died, and your life [*zoe*] is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life [*zoe*] appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.' Col 3:3-4. As we considered in Chapter 1, Paul meant that the believer's *new creation identity* died when they were baptised into Christ. Their *zoe* life from the Father, which belongs to their name as a son of God, is hidden with Christ in God. As they continue to live as a member of Christ's body, they will progressively obtain the sonship that He finished for them through His offering, and they will appear with Him in glory at His second coming. 1Jn 3:2.

Christ's descending and ascending offering journey

Through baptism into Christ, we are immersed into the fellowship of His *descending* and *ascending* offering journey, which is the offering, *before*, through which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit established Their own Covenant as an Everlasting Covenant with us. In Chapter 1, we noted that Christ's descending journey was the aspect of the cross through which the corporate body of the sin of humanity was circumcised from Him, being judged and destroyed in the lowest parts of the earth. His ascending journey was the means by which we were begotten from the dead with Him as sons of God, all the works of our sonship were finished, and we were established in fellowship with Yahweh *Elohim*.

A son of God who has truly been illuminated to see the kingdom of God, recognises their need for deliverance from the other law that was fathered in them through the deceit of Satan. The other law within us, which brings us into bondage to the law of sin and death, is excised from our heart through fellowship in the circumcision of Christ. Col 2:11. In this fellowship, the fruit of the fatherhood of Satan is destroyed in us so that we can receive regeneration, and so that the Seed of the Father, who is Christ, is able to take root and dwell in our heart. Eph 3:16-18.

Having become bankrupt in spirit as one who is born to see that we belong to the kingdom of God, we recognise that the things which we

suffer are, in the first instance, the judgement of God that is directed towards us because of our iniquity. However, as we judge ourselves rightly in this regard, and embrace our sufferings as a fellowship in Christ's sufferings, our sufferings are commuted from a judgement to a chastisement. As Paul explained, 'For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.' 1Co 11:31-32.

The fellowship of Christ's sufferings is the context in which we cease from sin and are delivered to the obedience that belongs to our sanctification as a son of God. Directing our attention to this truth, the apostle Peter wrote, 'Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God'. 1Pe 4:1-2.

In the cross, which is the offering *before*, through which the Covenant of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was established as an Everlasting Covenant, the Son emptied Himself, by Eternal Spirit, to reveal the Father as His only begotten Son. He laid aside His own glory as God the Son, and was brought forth as the Son of God when the Father said, 'Today I have begotten You'. Heb 1:5. The names of all the sons of the Father, discussed in Their own Covenant, were now in the Son who had become the Seed of the Father. Paul explained that being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Significantly, Paul then said, '*Therefore* God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name', revealing *the destination of the ascending and glorifying* aspect of His offering journey. Php 2:5-9.

The apostle Paul exhorted us to have the same mind as Christ did when He made this offering, *before*. We set our mind this way when we have been born to see our citizenship in this fellowship of offering. Remember that it is the sonship life of a believer that is hidden with Christ in God through baptism. We are assured of salvation because Christ has already perfected and fulfilled our sonship through His offering on the cross. Heb 10:14. Once we have been illuminated to this great truth, we resign from our preoccupation with the expression of our own sonship. Instead, we concern ourselves with revealing Christ through offering. Practically, this means laying down our life to reveal our brethren in the body of Christ.

In fellowship with Christ, our sufferings are not only for the purpose of our deliverance from sin and the other law. *More so*, they are the means by which we are being brought to glory as sons of God as we learn, and are made adequate for, our service as kings and priests to our God and Father. Rev 1:6. In this regard, we recognise that Christ learnt this priestly work through the things which He suffered. Through suffering, being without sin, Christ learnt the knowledge necessary to be an adequate, faithful and compassionate High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Much of the suffering that we endure with Him is to obtain the same priestly capacity.

In this fellowship, the resurrection life of God in Christ's blood regenerates our spirit and is multiplied to become our life as sons of God. Consequently, we are able to obey from the heart the doctrine to which we were delivered. Rom 6:17-18. This doctrine is the word that comes proclaiming our calling as sons of God. Having become slaves of righteousness, we are able to bear the fruit of sanctification, meaning that we are maturing as sons of God. The outcome of this process, which continues for the rest of our mortal lives, is eternal life. Rom 6:22-23. This is the implication of baptism.

This point is a further development of our understanding of regeneration. We note that regeneration is happening concomitantly with the establishment and maturation of the divine nature within us. This is only possible as we are joined to the process through which the fruit of Satan's fatherhood is removed from us, and the life of God in Christ's blood is multiplied to us. The fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings is the context for this process.

Falling away

In the negative, the need to join the sufferings of Christ, in order to be delivered from the kingdom of darkness and enter the kingdom of heaven, is an *offence* to those who fail to progress from stony ground. Because they are not delivered from the fallen desires that Satan fathered in them, and they are not receiving regeneration, nor is the divine life of the Father in Christ's blood being multiplied to them to become their life. Consequently, they fall away and become like wayside ground believers. Their love grows cold because they quench the Holy Spirit who has dedicated Himself to their sonship, rejecting the need for their fellowship in the circumcision of Christ through which they can be delivered from their lawlessness. Mat 24:10-12.

The gospel traditions of the Pentecostal movement have their roots in the Reformation, which was founded in reaction to Catholicism. The Pentecostal gospels are based upon a belief in the wholly vicarious implications of Christ's offering on the cross. They assert that when a hearer acknowledges their sin and accepts Christ's saving work on their behalf, they receive the Holy Spirit who empowers them to live an 'overcoming life', and enables them to prosper in their endeavours.

On account of their theological position, many Pentecostal leaders and followers would 'protest' the notion of participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ, viewing it as Catholic in nature. Believing that a successful Christian life is one in which the 'evil' of suffering and pain is overcome by faith and by the power of the Spirit, they confuse fellowship in the sufferings of Christ with Catholic traditions, such as penance and self-flagellation.

Interestingly, many Pentecostal church leaders are presently lamenting the absence of power over sin and suffering in the lives of their congregants. They note that the differences between their followers and people in the world is almost imperceptible. However, instead of considering the fallibility of their gospel, many have proposed that their hearers simply need more power from the Spirit to live blessed lives.

Our choice each day

A person who has been raised to sit with Christ in heavenly places continues steadfastly in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Nothing can separate us from this fellowship of love. The apostle Paul was very strong on this point, declaring, 'I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Rom 8:38-39.

Because of love, Yahweh *Elohim* extended Their own Covenant to us as an Everlasting Covenant. To be joined to this love is to be established in Their fellowship, *before!* Significantly, we touch the depths and the heights of the love of God as we set our minds on our participation in this fellowship. That is, the depths that we touch as our sin is brought to our attention is not our exclusion from the love and fellowship of God. Rather, it is the point at which we obtain mercy, as we acknowledge that these attitudes and behaviours have no place in the fellowship of Yahweh and that we are under judgement because of them. Yet, having been born

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to see the kingdom, we see that Jesus has tasted the sufferings of death that belong to our judgement. We turn, and receive our sufferings as a chastening to bring us to maturity as a son of God.

Furthermore, we recognise the heights of sonship in Christ. We gladly embrace our fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings, being regenerated as a son of man, and growing with the divine nature as a son of God. We are learning the works of obedience that belong to our worship of the Father as kings and priests according to the order of Melchizedek.

Chapter 3

Our participation in worship

Worship is fundamental to the life and expression that belongs to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, *before*. As sons of God, we have been called to worship in this very fellowship. Jesus made this point in His response to the devil, who was promoting an alternative culture of worship based on a hierarchy. The Son of Man said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! For it is written, "You shall *worship* the Lord your God [Yahweh *Elohim*], and Him only you shall *serve*." ' Mat 4:10.

We participate in worship by giving reverent honour, or worth, to another. This honour does not refer to platitudes that are directed towards those whom we deem to be our superiors. As we have just noted, this is how Satan views worship. True worship means revealing the sanctification of another through the works that belong to our obedient service as sons of God in the body of Christ. Emphasising this point, the apostle Paul exhorted us, writing, 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy [sanctified], acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service [of worship].' Rom 12:1-2.

Offering, which is essential to the service of worship in the fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim*, involves laying our life down to reveal the name and

sanctification of another. To do this, we must know our own name as a son of God, and we must know the name of another. Each Person in the Godhead has a unique name. Accordingly, there is a unique expression of worship that we are to have towards the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and towards our brethren in the body of Christ.

The worship of the Father

The offering of Christ on the cross in obedience to the command of the Father, revealed the worship of the Father and the Son, which was enabled by Eternal Spirit, from the Holy Spirit. Their offering was typified in the offering of Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah. We recall that Abraham, symbolising the Father, said to his servants, 'The lad [Isaac, symbolising Christ] and I will go yonder and *worship*, and we will come back to you.' Gen 22:5.

Testifying of His participation in this expression of worship, Jesus declared to the Father, '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.

Accomplishing the will of the Father, by the capacity of the Spirit, is the way in which the Son worships the Father. The Father's will was accomplished through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all. Through this offering, according to the will of the Father, we have been sanctified, meaning that the substance of our name as a son of God has been realised in Christ. We obtain our sanctification as a son of God as we are joined to, and participate in, His offering and sufferings.

Significantly, through our participation in Christ's offering and sufferings, He makes us kings and priests to His God and Father. Rev 1:5-6. Through the priestly work of offering, according to our sanctification as a son of God, in the fellowship of Christ's offering, we are worshipping the Father by fulfilling His will.

Making offering in this manner is how we worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Speaking to the woman at the well, Jesus explained that this is the only way that we can worship the Father. He said, 'But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will *worship the Father in spirit and truth*; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.' Joh 4:23-24.

By the Holy Spirit, who enables our fellowship in the offering of Christ, we serve and reveal the Father by doing the works that belong to our name as a son of God. That is, we are obedient to the word of truth from the Father, as we are led in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings by the Spirit of truth.

The worship of the Son

God the Father raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in heavenly places. Eph 1:20. He gave to the Son the name above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Php 2:9-11. Furthermore, the Father set the Son as the Head of His corporate body, which was created through His offering on the cross. Eph 1:22-23. Col 1:18. Eph 2:14-18.

We worship the Son by revealing Him as members of His body. This expression of the worship of the Son was foreshadowed just prior to Christ's ascension to the right hand of the Father. Matthew concluded his Gospel with this account, writing, 'Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. When they saw Him, *they worshipped Him*; but some doubted. And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen." ' Mat 28:16-20.

We worship the Son by revealing Him in the world as part of His church and as members of His corporate body. Jesus explained that baptism with the Holy Spirit enables this expression. Specifically, He said to His disciples, 'But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be *witnesses to Me* [that is, reveal Me] in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.' Act 1:8.

The worship of the Holy Spirit

Jesus honoured the Holy Spirit by explaining to His disciples that it was to their *advantage* that He return to the Father, saying, 'For if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to

you.' Joh 16:7. In other words, it was better for them to receive the Holy Spirit than for Christ to remain with them physically. This is because it is only through the Holy Spirit that we can be born again and joined to the fellowship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of sanctification and of truth, who enables the fellowship of worship in Yahweh. 1Pe 1:2. Joh 16:13. Php 2:1. He is the One who gives us the life of God, and who joins us to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings through which we are being sanctified to our name and works as sons of the Father. He has devoted Himself to our sanctification as sons of God, leading us in the truth of our name as a son of God, and resisting us when we endeavour to walk after the flesh. Joh 16:13. Rom 8:7.

Once a believer has been born of God, their body becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit. 1Co 6:19. They are a vessel for His expression. We worship the Holy Spirit with reverent honour by walking after the Spirit in the way that He is leading, rather than by walking according to the flesh. This worship is evident through our speech and conduct, particularly in the *agape* meal. Accordingly, Paul wrote, 'Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.' 1Co 6:19-20.

Fellowship is the capacity and initiative of the Holy Spirit. When we have become a temple of the Holy Spirit, He makes our whole being - body, soul and spirit - a temple of God, through Eternal Spirit. 1Co 3:16. This means that our whole being becomes a temple for the *agape* expression and fellowship of Yahweh Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He brings this fellowship to us. The evidence that we have received this fellowship is our desire for fellowship with one another, in one Spirit. This is a fundamental implication of the love of God poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit. Rom 5:5.

Evidently, worship of the Father and the Son, in Spirit and in truth, is essential to our worship of the Holy Spirit. We can only participate in this fellowship as we respond with repentance and faith to the conviction of the Holy Spirit when the word of God is proclaimed to us from the fellowship of a presbytery. Joh 16:8. 1Jn 1:1-3. The way we relate with one another in the fellowship of the presbytery, which is the fellowship of the church, demonstrates the extent to which we have received, and been joined to, the fellowship of the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit.

The grief of the Godhead

The fall of mankind from fellowship with Yahweh *Elohim* caused unimaginable grief to each Person of the Godhead. The grief of each Person reflected Their particular offering towards Their shared covenant initiative. The Father was grieved because He had lost all of His sons. The Son was grieved because His brethren were scattered, and He was left alone. The Holy Spirit was grieved because mankind had chosen a lie over the truth, and there were no longer any vessels for the expression and multiplication of the one life and Spirit of Yahweh.

Having fallen from fellowship with Yahweh *Elohim*, mankind was subject to a sorrow leading to death. 2Co 7:10. This sorrow has specific dimensions that reflect man's departure from relationship with the Father, with the Son, and with the Holy Spirit. Through the ministry of the word of the cross, we are joined to the grief that is specific to each Person of the Godhead. Our fellowship in these aspects of grief are, collectively, the expression of godly sorrow which leads to repentance and faith towards God. This faith is necessary for our participation in the culture of worship that belongs to the Godhead.

The grief of the Father

By eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve rejected their predestination as sons of God, choosing instead to become the origin of their own life and expression. The whole of humanity was lost to God, having rejected His fatherhood and having departed from His house. The Father voiced His deep grief and yearning for His children as He called to Adam, saying, 'Where are you?.' Gen 3:9.

Our rejection of God's fatherhood was a reproach against the Father. For the sake of our salvation, our reproaches against the Father were all laid on Christ. Consequently, He was fully acquainted with the grief that our reproaches had caused the Father. Psa 69:9. As He was separated from the Father, going to the lowest parts of the earth *with us*, He cried, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?.' Mat 27:46. This was Christ's expression of the grief experienced by the Father, as the reproaches against the Father were fully laid upon Him.

Prophetically speaking of the Son's grief caused by the separation of humanity from the Father, the psalmist declared, 'Reproach [against the Father, which has been laid on Me] has *broken My heart*, and I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; and for

comforters, but I found none.' Psa 69:20. When the heart of Christ was broken by the grief of the Father, His physical heart was also broken; it stopped beating because it had ruptured. The breaking of Christ's heart, by the sorrow of God, was the seventh wounding event that He experienced as He journeyed from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross.

The sorrow caused by the curse of death

When Adam and Eve rejected the fatherhood of God, they were alienated from the source of life that preserved them in their mortality, and they were now blind to their predestination which defined their purpose. Moreover, they were ensnared in disorder, which King Solomon described as 'time and chance'.

Mankind's attempts to minimise chance cannot preserve them from the evil day when the vagaries of time and chance overtake them. In this regard, their plight is no different from that of the animals as they fight for survival and strive for the limited resource of life in a vain attempt to prolong their life. Solomon noted this implication of the Fall, declaring, 'The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill; but *time and chance happen to them all*. For man also does not know his time: like fish taken in a cruel net, like birds caught in a snare, so the sons of men are snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them.' Ecc 9:11-12.

Consequently, Solomon described life under the sun, disconnected from the fatherhood of God, as 'vanity' and the cause of great distress. He asked the question, 'For what has man for all his labour, and for the striving of his heart with which he has toiled under the sun? For all his days are sorrowful, and his work burdensome; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity.' Ecc 2:22-23. Fallen man's end is death. The sorrow, caused by the pain and oppression in the course of his mortal life, is the harbinger of the eternal torment that awaits him in death because of his sin. This sorrow belongs to the spirit of the world. 2Co 7:10.

Mourning with godly sorrow

When the word of the cross is proclaimed to us, a spirit of grace and supplication, which accompanies this word, enables us to turn, and to look upon Christ whom we have pierced through our sin and rebellion.

Zec 12:10. As we look upon Christ, we meet Him eye to eye and heart to heart. Our heart is broken as we are joined to His broken heart. Our heart is broken because we are illuminated to the grief of the Father that was caused by our reproaches, which were laid upon Christ.

As our heart is broken, we cease from the sorrow that belongs to the spirit of the world, and we begin to mourn with godly sorrow. This sorrow is the evidence that we have been joined to the broken heart of Christ. Godly sorrow leads to repentance, through which we turn from our own way and lay hold of the faith of the Son of God, ministered to us through the gospel of God. 2Co 7:10-11. The evidence of our faith is obedience to the word of the Father, proclaimed by His messengers. Rom 1:5. Our obedience is demonstrated as we journey on the pathway of salvation that Christ pioneered for us through His offering and sufferings.

The grief of the Son

At the last supper, Christ prophesied concerning His offering journey, saying, 'All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: "*I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered*".' Mat 26:31. The disciple, Peter, did not believe this word, trusting instead in the integrity of his own heart and in his capacity for righteousness. He said to the Lord, 'Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.' Mat 26:33. However, Jesus further prophesied that Peter would deny Him three times, to which Peter replied, 'Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!' Mat 26:35.

Then, on the Mount of Olives, Jesus said to His disciples, 'Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, *that you will be scattered*, each to his own, and *will leave Me alone*. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.' Joh 16:32. The grief of the Son on account of the scattering of the sheep was manifest as He entered the garden of Gethsemane. Matthew recorded that, having directed His disciples to sit while He prayed, Jesus 'took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He *began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed*. Then He said to them, "*My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death*. Stay here and watch with Me." ' Mat 26:37-38.

Jesus was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed saying, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.' Luk 22:41-42.

Christ understood that by drinking the cup that the Father was giving to Him, the whole of mankind would be joined to His body. By drinking this cup, Jesus, by the grace of God, began to '*taste*' the suffering of death for *everyone*. Heb 2:9.

The cup that the Father gave to Jesus to drink was a communion in the curse that had been brought upon mankind because of Adam's disobedience. It was the cup of wrath that Yahweh *Elohim* had *already* made every person on earth to drink as a judgement because of their sin. Note the word of the Lord to the prophet Jeremiah, 'Take this wine cup of fury from My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send you, to drink it. *And they will drink* and stagger and go mad *because of the sword* that I will send among them.' Jer 25:15-16. When Christ drank the cup, according to the will of the Father, every person who had already drunk this cup was joined to Him. They were made members of His corporate body, of which He was the Head. They were all now dying with Him. 2Co 5:14.

Having prayed, 'Not My will but Yours be done', an angel appeared to Jesus from heaven, strengthening Him with Eternal Spirit, from the Holy Spirit, to offer Himself by drinking the cup that the Father was giving to Him. 'And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.' Luk 22:44.

We know that after He prayed this prayer, revealing the first shedding of blood, Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss. A great multitude with swords and clubs, coming from the chief priests, scribes and elders, laid their hands on Him and took Him. Mar 14:43,46. These hands were being laid upon the great Shepherd of the sheep. Mark recorded in his Gospel that, seeing this, all of the disciples 'forsook Him and fled'. The disciples, representing us all, were scattered, and Jesus was left alone.

Sleeping for sorrow

Prior to His betrayal by Judas into the hands of the Jewish Council, Jesus arose from His prayer and came to the disciples. Significantly, Luke recorded that Jesus 'found them *sleeping from sorrow*'. Luk 22:45. Finding them in this state, Jesus said to them, 'Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.' Luk 22:46. The disciples were susceptible to temptation from Satan because they were observing Christ according to the flesh, and not by the Spirit. This propensity was exemplified by Peter's belief in his own integrity and righteousness.

Jesus, observing their state, said to them, 'The spirit indeed is willing, *but the flesh is weak.*' Mat 26:41.

The weakness that results from living according to the flesh is not the weakness of Christ, which is demonstrated through offering. The weakness of the flesh belongs to life under the *stoicheion*. Paul drew our attention to this reality, writing, 'But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the *weak and beggarly* elements [lit: *stoicheion*], to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years [believing that righteousness can be achieved through the observance of the law or some other form of sacramental practice].' Gal 4:9-10.

The fallen grief, or distress, associated with the weakness of the flesh was exemplified by Peter, who followed Christ from a distance as He was led to the house of Caiaphas. As Peter's integrity and self-righteousness failed with each denial of Jesus, he progressively became agitated and distressed. Matthew recounted, 'Then he began to *curse* [call down curses] and *swear* [oaths], saying, "I do not know the Man!" Immediately a rooster crowed.' Mat 26:74.

Recovery to the sheepfold

As Jesus was being bruised for Peter's iniquity in the court of Caiaphas, and Peter denied Him a third time, the Lord 'turned and looked at Peter' with eyes like a flame of fire. Luk 22:61. In that moment, Peter remembered the words of Jesus who had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.' Peter went out and *wept bitterly*. Mat 26:75. This weeping was no longer the fleshly distress of Peter's failing righteousness. It was the fruit of illumination as he saw that Christ had been struck on account of his iniquitous belief in his 'own good'. Through this interaction, Peter became poor in spirit as he saw his sin against the Father *and* acknowledged his inability to journey with Christ.

Later, Christ met Peter on the shore of Galilee to regather him into His sheepfold. As Peter attested to his inability to '*agape*', Jesus spoke to him of the works that belonged to his sanctification within the sheepfold. He said to Peter, 'Feed My lambs'; 'Tend My sheep'; and 'Feed My sheep'. Joh 21:15-17. Furthermore, the Lord said to him, 'When you were younger [carnal and immature], you girded yourself and walked where you wished [according to your own sight and understanding]; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.' Joh 21:18.

With this statement, Jesus defined the way of life that belonged to the sheep of His sheepfold. They are sons of God who are led by the Spirit in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Explaining this point, John wrote, 'This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God.' Joh 21:19. As a son of God is led by the Spirit in the fellowship of Christ's death and resurrection, Christ is publicly portrayed as crucified to those with whom they interact, and the Father is glorified. Peter's sanctification was to be a shepherd among the sheep, serving by example. 1Pe 5:1-4. In other words, every person who is recovered to Christ's sheepfold is to be led in the same way as Peter.

The grief of the Holy Spirit

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

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

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

Distress caused by enmity with the Spirit

In the first instance, worldly sorrow in response to the initiative of the Holy Spirit is evidenced by a person's impassioned resistance to the conviction that He brings. Joh 16:8. Stephen noted this response in his hearers as he proclaimed to them the gospel of God. He said, 'You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always *resist the Holy Spirit*; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.' Act 7:51-53.

Hearing this message, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed their teeth at Stephen, revealing their fallen angst. Driven by these emotions, they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears. They ran at the messenger with one accord, casting him out of the city and stoning him.

A person who has been born of God, baptised into Christ, and filled with the Holy Spirit, will experience distress when they choose to walk after the flesh. Their distress, or grief, is caused by the Holy Spirit who is at enmity with the flesh. Highlighting this reality, Paul wrote, 'For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish'. Gal 5:17. Evidently, the distress that a person experiences is caused by the Holy Spirit who frustrates their fleshly endeavours.

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

Dedicated to destruction

If a believer sets themselves against the Spirit by walking after the flesh, they begin to '*quench*' the Holy Spirit. 1Th 5:19. If they fail to repent of their carnality, even presuming to use the power of the Holy Spirit to achieve their self-centred projections, they revile, or show contempt for,

the Holy Spirit. In doing so, they *blaspheme His name*. This rebellious idolatry is not tolerated by the Father or the Son. Jesus Himself said, 'Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.' Mat 12:31-32.

Because a believer blasphemes the Spirit, who has devoted Himself to their blessing as a son of God, they are *devoted to destruction* by God the Father. Summarising this principle, the prophet Isaiah declared, 'I will mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has bestowed on them according to His mercies, according to the multitude of His loving kindnesses. For He said, "Surely they are My people, children who will not lie." So He became their Saviour. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old. *But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; so He turned Himself against them as an enemy, and He fought against them.*' Isa 63:7-10.

It is confronting to realise that God makes enemies of those who rebel against the Holy Spirit. He becomes set on, or dedicated to, their destruction. The Hebrew word for one's dedication to destruction as a cursed thing is '*cherem*'. For example, the Lord said to the children of Israel that idols were cursed things and that they were to be utterly destroyed. He warned them that if they did not destroy idols from their midst, those who touched them, or even touched materials associated with them, were themselves dedicated by God to destruction. He said, 'Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction [*cherem*] like it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it is an accursed thing [*cherem*].' Deu 7:26.

As we considered earlier, the Holy Spirit brings to our person the fellowship of God, making us a temple of God. 1Co 3:16. This is a feature of His dedication to our blessing as a son of God. Eph 1:13. Rom 8:16. However, if we sin against the Holy Spirit and defile the temple of our body, the Scripture is clear, *God will destroy us*. 1Co 3:17. If we find no place of repentance, we will become *cherem* - an accursed thing.

Describing the defilement of our bodies resulting in this destruction, Paul was clear, writing, 'Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit

the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.' 1Co 6:9-10. Although there is a season of grace, when the Holy Spirit resists our flesh in the hope that we will turn again to walk after the Spirit, there is no halfway ground between blessing and cursing. Once God has taken away His Holy Spirit from us, we are dedicated to destruction.

Paul highlighted that the principle of *cherem*, which was outlined in the Old Testament, applied even more definitively in the New Covenant of the Spirit. He noted that they were all baptised, and ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink that we do, for they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them, who was Christ. However, because of unbelief and disobedience, God was not well pleased with them, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. 1Co 10:1-5. The wilderness symbolised the eternal judgement of God in the place of His forgetfulness.

Importantly, Paul said that these things are our example, to the intent that we should not lust after the things for which they lusted, and were destroyed. Outlining these accursed practices, Paul wrote, 'And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, *and were destroyed by the destroyer*. 1Co 10:7-11. Paul concluded this specific exhortation with the warning, 'Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.' 1Co 10:12.

Concerning this judgement, the apostle Paul warned that if we sin wilfully after we have received a knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. In other words, Christ's offering no longer avails for our salvation. It only defines our condemnation as one dedicated to destruction. Paul described this dedication as 'a certain fearful expectation of judgement, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries'. Heb 10:27. He noted that, under the Old Covenant, anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. With this in mind, he asked, 'Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the

covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?’ Heb 10:29.

Returning to the principle of *cherem* described in the book of Deuteronomy, we note an important and sobering principle. If God has dedicated a person to destruction because of their idolatry, we must not embrace them, or pray for them, in some deluded initiative of love, lest, by taking hold of them in this way, we are devoted by God to destruction *with them*. Instead, we are to pray according to the Spirit for our loved ones who are pursuing the flesh, warning them of the judgement to come, and beseeching them to fear God. Luk 23:40. We will only be able to save some if we fear the Lord ourselves, and hate even their garments which are defiled by the flesh. Jud 1:23.

Embracing truth in the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings

King David demonstrated the godly sorrow that belongs to a person who is turning from the desires of the flesh to walk again according to the Spirit. In his repentance, he prayed, ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and *do not take Your Holy Spirit from me*. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and *uphold me by Your generous Spirit*. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You.’ Psa 51:10-13.

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