

THE
seventy
weeks
PROPHECY

UNDERSTANDING OUR PARTICIPATION
IN THE FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST

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WITH PETER HAY AND DAVID BAKER

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Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
The two goats of the one sin offering	4
The ministry of Melchizedek	5
SECTION 1	
The six outcomes	11
To finish the transgression	11
To make an end of sin	14
To make atonement for iniquity	15
To bring in everlasting righteousness	17
To seal up vision and prophecy	19
To anoint the Most Holy	21
SECTION 2	
The command to restore	25
To restore and rebuild Jerusalem	29
The peg in the holy place	30
The spirit of grace and supplication	32
The seven weeks and sixty-two weeks	33
SECTION 3	
The coming of the Messiah	35
An end to sacrifice and offering	38
The first and second half of the seventieth week	42
The confirmation of the covenant	44
SECTION 4	
The delay and the consummation	49
Jew and Gentile in one body	50
No more delay	52
The one who makes desolate	56
CHART	
The Seventy Weeks Prophecy	62

Introduction

The Scriptures record that the prophet Daniel studied the writings of Jeremiah. He understood that seventy years had been determined for the desolation of Jerusalem and, hence, the Jewish exile in Babylon was coming to an end. Dan 9:2. In response to this illumination, Daniel began to pray and fast before the Lord. Dan 9:3. His prayer was the expression of his own repentance and a prayer of intercession on behalf of the Jewish nation. Dan 9:4-14. He prayed that the Lord would cause His face to shine upon the city of Jerusalem and on the Jewish people who were called by His name. Daniel prayed that the Lord would not delay for His own sake. Dan 9:15-19.

While Daniel prayed, the angel Gabriel appeared to him, and said, 'O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. At the beginning of your supplication the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision.' Dan 9:22-23. In response to Daniel's prayer, Gabriel then told him, 'Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.' Dan 9:24.

Using this verse as a beginning point, the revelation to Daniel regarding the restoration of his people and the holy city is often called 'the seventy weeks prophecy'. It is one of the most important prophecies in the Scripture. The seventy weeks prophecy clearly substantiates that Jesus is the Christ. However, more significantly, it reveals all that was accomplished by Christ when He was lifted up on the cross and was cursed *for our sake*. The central feature of the seventy weeks prophecy is the statement that the 'Messiah shall be cut off, *but not for Himself*'. Dan 9:26. Jesus Christ was 'cut off' when He was crucified.

The two goats of the one sin offering

Jesus Christ was cut off, but not for Himself, when He became the sin offering. As John the Baptist proclaimed concerning Christ, He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Joh 1:29. Importantly, there are *two aspects* of the one Lamb. The two aspects of the one Lamb are illustrated by *the two goats* which comprised *the one sin offering* for the people on the Day of Atonement each year. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest presented two goats before the Lord at the doorway of the tabernacle. Lev 16:7. Having cast lots over the two goats, one was designated as *the Lord's goat* and the other was designated as *the scapegoat*. Lev 16:8.

The high priest sprinkled the blood of the Lord's goat seven times on the mercy seat. It was also sprinkled before the mercy seat in the most holy place, sprinkled in the holy place, and sprinkled on the horns of the altar. In this way, the blood of the Lord's goat made atonement for the people and cleansed the earthly sanctuary. Lev 16:15-20. Following this, the high priest laid his hands upon the scapegoat and confessed over it all of the *iniquities* of the children of Israel, all their *transgressions*, and all their *sins*. Lev 16:21. The scapegoat was then sent away into an uninhabited land and was released in the wilderness. Lev 16:22.

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

In relation to the seventy weeks prophecy, the *first key point* is that Christ finished the transgression, made an end of sin, and made atonement for iniquity as the scapegoat.

The *second key point* is that Christ brought in everlasting righteousness, sealed up all vision and prophecy, and anointed the most holy as the Lord's goat. Each wounding event that He experienced, from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross, caused His blood to be shed. His blood was sprinkled seven times upon His physical body as the Mercy Seat of the true tabernacle. Rom 3:25. The resurrection life of God that was in His blood brought Him back from the death of our sin as the Firstborn from the dead. Col 1:18.

It has been suggested that only *one of the six elements* was completed by the offering of Christ on the cross. It is recognised that Jesus Christ made reconciliation for iniquity through the shedding of His blood, but the remaining five elements have often been assigned to the future. That is, it has been highlighted that we are still waiting for Christ to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. The fulfilment of these promises has often been assigned to the physical second coming of Christ and the commencement of the millennial rest for the people of God. In more recent times, the fulfilment of these promises has also been assigned to a future fulfilment of the Day of Atonement.

It is important to recognise that all six elements were *fully completed* by Jesus Christ through His one offering, which was 'once for all'. Heb 10:10. Christ has fulfilled all aspects of the Day of Atonement. This is a significant point. We are not still waiting for the fulfilment of the Day of Atonement in the time of the end. As our great High Priest, He is continually ministering to us our participation in His finished offering. The apostle Paul declared that 'He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified' in the fellowship of His offering. Heb 10:14. The significant implication of this is that Christ has granted us our participation in His finished work so that we witness the fulfilment of all these promises in us! Heb 13:20-21.

The ministry of Melchizedek

We have a participation in the finished work of Christ because He is our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Heb 7. Let us consider this further.

THE SEVENTY WEEKS PROPHECY

In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul explained that when Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross, He *descended* into the lower parts of the earth and *ascended* far above all the heavens. Eph 4:8-10. His *descending* journey began in the garden of Gethsemane when the Father joined the whole of humanity to Him so that His physical body became *the body of sin*. Rom 6:6. From the garden of Gethsemane to the cross, Christ then suffered at the hands of wicked men and under the assault of the spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places. Act 2:23. Referring to the hour of His offering, Jesus said to those who came to arrest Him at the gate of Gethsemane, 'When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is *your hour*, and the *power of darkness*.' Luk 22:53. Significantly, as Christ *descended* by suffering at the hands of wicked men and the spiritual host of wickedness, He disarmed and conquered all of His enemies. Php 2:8-11.

By midday on the day of His crucifixion, Christ had descended to the depths of the fallen human condition for the sake of our redemption. He then took the entire old creation, including the whole of fallen humanity, out into the darkness of eternal exclusion from God. During the three hours of great darkness on the cross, He suffered the fullness of the eternal judgement of God upon our iniquity and sin. Luk 23:44. Psa 18:4-5. The apostle Paul called this 'the lowest parts of the earth'. Eph 4:9. It was even lower than the lake of fire. The reproach that the Father laid upon the Son took Him to the end of, and then beyond, the eternal dimension of the lake of fire. He exhausted its judgement by the power of Eternal Spirit, and brought our judgement to an end, or to a finish. Act 2:23-28.

Descending to the lowest part of the earth to suffer the eternal judgement of God was *the first dimension* of how Christ filled all things' in His physical body as the Son of Man. The *second dimension* of how Christ filled all things as the Son of Man was by His ascending far above the heavens.

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

our sin. Heb 13:20. From the garden of Gethsemane to the cross, He learned our obedience, and fulfilled our righteousness as sons of God. Heb 5:8. He ascended far above all principalities and powers when He entered the presence of God for us. Heb 4:4. Heb 9:24.

When Jesus Christ proclaimed, 'It is finished!', on the cross, He had *filled all things* as the Son of Man. Joh 19:28-30. He had suffered our eternal judgement as sons of perdition and had fulfilled our righteousness as sons of God. Having *filled all things* as the Son of Man, Christ proclaimed to the apostle John, 'I AM the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.' Rev 1:8. Jesus Christ, as I AM, emptied and humbled Himself to become the end of the old creation and the beginning of the new creation for our sake. He accomplished this work in complete obedience to the Father. This is the first dimension of 'I AM' that we see when we behold Christ lifted up on the cross. During His earthly ministry, Jesus proclaimed, 'When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I AM, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.' Joh 8:28.

When we behold Jesus Christ lifted up as I AM, we see that He is the Beginning and the End. However, we see also, by illumination, that He is more than the Beginning and the End. The Father has glorified Jesus Christ as our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Heb 7:21. The order of Melchizedek is the power of *an endless life*. Heb 7:16. The ministry of Christ as Melchizedek *goes beyond filling all things* as the Son of Man. After Jesus introduced Himself to the apostle John as the Beginning and the End, He immediately continued to proclaim that He is I AM as 'Him who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty'. Rev 1:8. After John turned to see Christ, He restated this revelation, by saying, 'Do not be afraid, I AM the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I AM alive forevermore. Amen.' Rev 1:17-18.

This is a remarkable statement! When Jesus said, 'I am He who lives', He was proclaiming Himself to be I AM. This is the most fundamental revelation of His identity. Exo 3:14. He is before all things. Col 1:17. I AM is not bound by space, time or eternity. Time has a beginning and an end. Eternity has a beginning, but no end. I AM has no beginning or end. The apostle Paul said that Melchizedek was 'without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.' Heb 7:3. Even though I AM is outside of time and eternity, He meets us *in time* for the

sake of establishing the ground of fellowship with us. For example, I AM met Abraham, as Melchizedek, when he returned from the battle of the kings, for the sake of blessing him in the context of an *agape* meal. Gen 14:17-20.

At the appointed time, I AM was born in the lineage of Abraham as the Son of Man. He partook of our flesh and blood for the purpose of joining us in our death so that we can be included in His death. Heb 2:14. As the Son of Man, He humbled and emptied Himself to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Php 2:8. As we have considered, it was through the death of the cross that He became the end of the old creation and the beginning of the new creation. Jesus was referring to this element of His ministry, when He said, 'I am He who lives and *was dead*.' Rev 1:18. This can equally be translated, 'I am the Living One; and I *became dead*'. Rev 1:17. This verse refers to Christ's identification with *our death*, from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. It also refers to *His death*, which has become the source of our eternal salvation. Php 3:10-11. Heb 5:9.

The physical death of Christ was a pure and undefiled offering as He committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father. Luk 23:46. Heb 9:14. He was received by the Father into His bosom and was seated upon His throne. This was the conclusion of His offering journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the Father's house. Christ was enthroned with the Father while His body still hung on the cross. He was revealed to be the King who was high and lifted up upon the Father's throne. Psa 89:27. He took His seat upon the throne of grace. Heb 4:14-16. The blood, water and Spirit that flowed from His heart, when the soldier pierced His heart with the spear, came from the throne of grace. Joh 19:34-37. Zec 12:10. This was a fountain for the cleansing of our sin and uncleanness as we participate in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Zec 13:1. However, more than this, it was a fountain of everlasting life! Psa 36:9. Rev 21:6.

When the apostle John was shown the administration of the new heavens and the new earth, he saw the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb. Rev 22:1. This was the same everlasting fountain of life that flowed from the heart of Christ while He still hung on the cross. We know that when the side of Christ was pierced, the new and living way was opened for our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Heb 10:19-22. In this fellowship, the other law is being circumcised from our heart, and we are receiving the power of His resurrection life in our mortal body. At the

conclusion of our natural lifetime, our fellowship in the sufferings of Christ, as a circumcising operation in our hearts, will come to an end. Rev 21:4. However, our fellowship in the offering of Christ will never come to an end.

We are being conformed to Christ's death during our lifetime so that our participation in the fellowship of His offering will continue forever. The offering of Christ is the source of our eternal salvation. Our participation in the offering of Christ will continue for eternity because Jesus Christ has been glorified as our great High Priest forever. We read in the book of Hebrews concerning Christ, 'Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him *the source of eternal salvation*, being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.' Heb 5:10. The key point is that He is the source of our eternal salvation *because* He is our great High Priest who forever lives to minister to us our participation in His finished offering.

The apostle Paul proclaimed that Jesus 'is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He *always lives* to make intercession for them'. Heb 7:25. As our great High Priest who forever lives to make intercession for us, Jesus Christ declared to the apostle John, 'Behold, I AM alive *forevermore*.' Rev 1:18. Jesus commanded John to 'behold', because we need to see, by illumination, that He is our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. He is I AM. His priesthood transcends all time and eternity so that He forever lives to include us in the fellowship of His 'once for all' offering. Heb 10:14. The offering of Christ happened in time, but it is efficacious for eternity because of the priesthood of Christ. Our eternal participation in the offering of Christ means that the righteousness of God will increase forever and ever in the new heavens and new earth. 2Pe 3:13. Isa 9:7.

Section I

The six outcomes

The angel Gabriel proclaimed to Daniel, ‘Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.’ Dan 9:24. In this section, we will consider how these six outcomes were all achieved by the one offering of Christ.

To finish the transgression

The first outcome of the crucifixion of Christ was ‘to finish the transgression’. Dan 9:24. In the broadest sense, a transgression may be any violation of the Law of God. However, the seventy weeks prophecy refers to *a specific transgression*. In the 2300-year prophecy, it is called ‘the transgression of desolation’. Dan 8:10-14. This can also be translated as ‘the transgression *that causes desolation*’. It is a desolating transgression because it causes the Lord’s messengers, and His people, to be trampled for a period of 2300 years.

The transgression of desolation is the corruption of *the continual offering*, and the resulting violation of fellowship among God’s people. In the Old Covenant, the people were required to offer a lamb, with its

accompanying meal offering and drink offering, every morning and evening. Num 28:1-8. This was the daily, or continual, offering. It foreshadowed the offering of Christ, who is the Lamb of God. In the New Covenant, Christ has granted us a continual participation in His one offering. In the fellowship of His offering, we are being changed to become the bread of the meal offering and the wine of the drink offering, for one another. 1Co 10:16-17. Php 2:17. The communion, in the context of an *agape* meal, is the new daily, or continual, offering. Act 2:46.

When a remnant of the Jewish exiles returned from Babylon, the continual offering was restored under the leadership of men such as Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah. However, by the time of the prophet Malachi, the continual offering had become corrupted. Malachi rebuked the priests for receiving from the people, and then offering on the altar, sacrifices that were blind, lame and sick. Mal 1:8. The lame sacrifices were representative of the people's attitude toward the Lord and His table. This demonstrated that they despised the fellowship of Yahweh's name. They did not honour God as their Father, nor revere the Son as their Lord and Master. Mal 1:6. The Lord confronted the people by saying, 'You offer defiled food on My altar, but say, "In what way have we defiled You?" By saying, "The table of the Lord is contemptible".' Mal 1:7.

The Lord continued by asking whether there were any priests who were willing to guard the sanctification of the altar by shutting the doors of the temple. Mal 1:10. The Lord asked this question because He had given to the priests the mandate to guard the sanctification of the altar and, hence, the fellowship of the Lord's table. Zec 3:7. However, it is apparent that none of the priests were willing to stand in the breach to protect the fellowship of the Lord's table. They continued to facilitate, and to promote, the transgression of desolation. It was *this transgression* that enabled Satan to regain access into the heavenly places.

In the years that followed, during the reign of the Greek Empire, Satan empowered a series of 'little horns' who persecuted and trampled the Lord's messengers and His people. A 'little horn' is simply a secular ruler who is empowered by Satan from heavenly places. As we have considered, this persecution and trampling will continue for a period of 2300 years. It began during the Seleucid Empire; it continued during the Roman Empire; and it will continue until the sovereign judgement of God upon the armies of Gog and Magog at the opening of the sixth seal. Rev 6:12-17. Eze 38-39.

To understand how the transgression that causes desolation leads to the trampling of the Lord's messengers and His people, we need to consider the example of Christ Himself. We note that Satan gained access to the first communion meal by advantage, because Judas had rejected the words of Christ concerning participation in His offering, and had embraced another doctrine. Joh 13:10-11. The alternative doctrine was the lie of Satan. Having been deceived by Satan, Judas clung to Christ in hypocrisy, for a season, and then betrayed Him into the hands of the Jewish religious leaders. Dan 11:34. This act of betrayal was the final manifestation of the transgression which makes desolate. Luk 22:21-22.

The Jewish religious leaders delivered Jesus to the Roman secular authorities because they were envious of Him. Mar 15:10. In the days of Jesus, the 'little horn' who ruled over the Roman Empire was the Caesar. Pontius Pilate was the governor in the region of Judea. He was the representative of the little horn in relation to Christ. In this way, Christ suffered and was crucified at the hands of the little horn. However, Jesus explained to Pilate that this trampling was possible only because of the transgression of desolation. He said, 'You could have no power at all against Me *unless it had been given you from above*. Therefore, the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.' Joh 19:11.

When Jesus Christ was flung onto His back and nailed to the cross, it was the full expression of trampling at the hands of wicked men. This was the point when Jesus Christ, as the embodiment of grace and truth, was 'flung to the ground'. Joh 1:14. Dan 8:12. Significantly, as He was nailed to the cross, Christ joined the plight of every fallen messenger *and* joined every fallen messenger to Himself. The trampling that every messenger may experience, during the entire 2300-year period, is now their fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings.

We can see how the betrayal of Judas and the envy of the Jewish religious leaders caused Jesus to be crucified by the Roman authorities. However, the crucifixion was more than an example of how the transgression causes trampling. The crucifixion of Jesus *finished the transgression!* This is the most important point. Jesus not only joined those who are being trampled; He also fully identified Himself with the transgressors who cause the trampling! Isa 53:12. He became the embodiment of the transgression and was then *curled and cut off* when He was lifted up on the cross. In so doing, He *finished the transgression* in His own physical body.

Jesus explained to the disciples how He would finish the transgression by saying, "This which is written must still be accomplished in Me: "And He was numbered with the transgressors." *For the things concerning Me have an end.*' Luk 22:37. Finishing the transgression in His own physical body was the first element of Christ's offering as the scapegoat.

To make an end of sin

The second outcome of the crucifixion of Christ was 'to make an end of sin'. Dan 9:24. This was the second element of Christ's offering as the scapegoat. In the same way that Christ finished the transgression by being numbered with the transgressors, He made an end of sin by becoming the embodiment of sin. In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul said that the Father 'made Him who knew no sin *to be sin for us*, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him'. 2Co 5:21. Christ made an end of sin by becoming the body of sin and by then progressively dying the death of our sin from Gethsemane to the cross. Rom 6:6-10. That is, as Christ died, sin died!

Jesus Christ became the body of sin in the garden of Gethsemane when the Father made every person who has ever lived, or will live, to be a member of His body. We know that Jesus did not sin; nor did He have another law in His heart. However, He became the embodiment of sin when the Father joined every sinner to Him. It is important to recognise that when we were joined to Christ, this included the principle, or law, of sin which controls and enslaves us in our fallen condition. Eph 2:1-3. The law of sin is the spirit of Satan. The law of sin compels every person to preserve their own life and, consequently, to violate the Royal Law of God and to come under its judgement.

It is remarkable to consider that when Christ was lifted up on the cross as the body of sin, He was also the embodiment of the spirit of Satan. Jesus referred to this element of His offering when He said, 'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.' Joh 3:14-15. We know that Satan is 'the serpent of old'. When Jesus was lifted up as the serpent on the pole, Satan was also lifted up to be cast out and judged in the lake of fire, forever. Speaking about His crucifixion, Jesus said, '*Now is the judgement of this world, now the ruler of this world [Satan] will be cast out.*' Joh 12:31.

At the beginning of His ministry, John the Baptist proclaimed, 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' Joh 1:29. This

describes the ministry of Christ as the scapegoat of the sin offering. Christ took away the sin of the world by fully identifying with the sin of the world as the body of sin, and then by taking the world, with its sin, out into the eternal judgement of God. It is only the new creation that comes back with Him from this judgement, by the power of the resurrection life of God that is in His blood. When we join the fellowship of Christ's offering, we are delivered from the dominion and power of the law of sin, and we are being redeemed from the death of our sin by the power of His resurrection life. Equally, if a person is not willing to join the fellowship of Christ's offering, it is His offering that assigns them to judgement in the lake of fire, forever.

The judgement of God upon sin is not yet being revealed in the world. However, when the Lamb who *takes away the sin of the world* stands up at the beginning of the time of the end, the judgement of God and the wrath of the Lamb will begin to be revealed. Rev 5:6. The book of Revelation records that when the Lamb opens the sixth seal, the great and mighty men in the world will hide themselves and cry out to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?' Rev 6:16-17. 'The day of His wrath' is also called 'the great and terrible day of the Lord'. Joe 2:11. It is the day of the revelation of His judgement.

To make atonement for iniquity

The third outcome of the crucifixion of Christ was 'to make reconciliation for iniquity'. Dan 9:24. This is more accurately translated as 'atonement for iniquity'. Iniquity is the fruit of the other law that has been fathered by Satan in the heart of every fallen human being. Joh 8:44. In the same way that Christ finished the transgression by being numbered among the transgressors, and was made an end of sin by becoming the body of sin, He made atonement for iniquity by bearing our iniquity into the sea of God's forgetfulness. The prophet Isaiah declared, 'All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.' Isa 53:6.

To understand how Christ made atonement for iniquity, we need to consider the reproach that was laid upon Christ from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. Our iniquity, which is the fruit of the other law in our heart, is also a reproach upon the Father. When Adam and Eve turned aside to the fatherhood of Satan by listening to his word, they spurned the love of God and rejected His fatherhood toward them. This

rejection was the beginning of mankind's reproach upon the Father. Every thought, motivation and behaviour that is an expression of the other law in our heart is a reproach upon the Father. Jer 17:9.

Significantly, the Father has laid all of this reproach upon Christ. Speaking prophetically on behalf of Christ, the psalmist declared, 'The reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on Me.' Psa 69:9. There is a specific element of reproach in relation to each wounding event. However, the sum of all reproach was laid upon Christ, by the Father, when He was nailed to the cross. He was crucified outside the camp. Heb 13:12. The key point to understand is that the Father laid all of this reproach upon Christ in order to break the power of the other law within our hearts!

The Father was able to lay all of our reproach upon Christ because He had offered Himself to be obedient to the Father's will. Luk 22:42. The Father made Christ to be our sin offering. As the scapegoat, Christ bore our transgression, sin and iniquity in His physical body. Lev 16:21. By midday on the day of His crucifixion, the redemptive work of Christ was complete. Luk 23:43. However, this was not the end of His offering. The end of His obedience was not in His own hands. It was in the hands of the Father. During the following three hours of darkness, Christ endured the eternal judgement of God in the sea of His forgetfulness.

At the conclusion of this three-hour period, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' Mat 27:46. This was not a cry of insubordination to the Father. It was the cry of Christ's broken heart, when the Father laid upon Him *the final reproach* of eternal separation from Himself. The psalmist prophetically declared, concerning this event, 'Reproach has broken My heart, and I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.' Psa 69:20. When reproach broke His heart, Christ was completely alone. The psalmist likened the reproach of God to floodwaters that had come up to the neck of Christ and then overflowed Him. Psa 69:1-3.

However, this cry was also the confession of Christ's faith. As soon as the heart of Christ was broken, God immediately drew near to Him to draw Him out of the waters. God is near to those who have a broken heart. Psa 34:18. The broken heart of Christ was the full revelation of obedience and righteousness, and the full revelation of transgression, sin and iniquity that is eternally separate from God. It was the breakpoint where mercy and judgement met in the physical body of Christ on the cross,

and where mercy triumphed over judgement. When the heart of Christ was broken, the power of the other law in the hearts of men was broken, and Satan was cast out and judged forever.

Once His heart had been broken, Jesus declared, 'It is finished!' This was the finish of His offering. The power of the other law and sin had been broken. A spirit of grace and supplication was now able to flow from His wounded heart to open the eyes of men. The blood and water, and the spirit of grace and supplication that flowed from the heart of Christ when the soldier pierced His side with a spear, *was the fruit of His broken heart*. Zec 12:10-11. It enabled the great multitude, who had been reviling and abusing Him, to look upon Him whom they had pierced and to begin to mourn for Him as their Firstborn King whom they had crucified.

It was the other law that motivated the people to revile and abuse Christ. However, when the heart of Christ was broken, the power of the other law was broken within their hearts so that they could see, and could begin to mourn, when the blood and water flowed from His side. They began to mourn as those who were *broken-hearted*. The spirit of grace and supplication that flowed from Christ's heart joined them to the fellowship of His broken heart. This was *their access* to the sacrifice of Christ, and was the means by which God drew near to each of them for salvation. As those who were broken-hearted, they began to repent as they beat their breasts and returned to their homes. Luk 23:48.

It is possible for the power of the other law to be broken only when we join the fellowship of Christ's broken heart. For this reason, the Father gives us a share, or a participation, in the reproach that was laid upon Christ. He does this to break the power of the other law within us and to deliver us, by illumination, from the power of our own darkness. This is the wisdom and power of God that has been fully revealed by the cross. 1Co 1:23-24.

To bring in everlasting righteousness

The fourth outcome of the crucifixion of Christ was 'to bring in everlasting righteousness'. Dan 9:24. The first three outcomes - finishing the transgression, making an end of sin, and making atonement for iniquity - were the result of Christ's offering as the scapegoat. The next three outcomes - bringing in everlasting righteousness, sealing up vision and prophecy, and anointing the Most Holy - were the result of Christ's offering as the Lord's goat. As the scapegoat, Christ removed everything that belongs to the old creation. As the Lord's goat, Christ came back

from the death of our sin, by the power of the resurrection life of God that is in His blood, as the New Creation.

We have considered how Christ experienced our death by being fully identified with our transgression, our sin, and the judgement of God upon our iniquity. However, having fully identified our fallen condition and death, He also learned the obedience of our sonship. Paul said, concerning Christ, 'Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.' Heb 5:8. When Paul spoke of 'the things which He suffered', he was referring to the wounding events that Christ experienced from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. Jesus did not need to suffer or to learn obedience for His own sake. He suffered for our sake, and it was *our obedience* that He learned!

Jesus learned our obedience and completed the works that the Father has prepared for us to do as sons of God. This is a most remarkable truth. The prophet Isaiah rejoiced in this reality when he declared, 'Lord, You will establish peace for us, since You have also performed for us all our works.' Isa 26:12. Having completed the works of our sonship, Jesus Christ has fulfilled our righteousness. In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul explained that the resurrection of Christ is the evidence, or the guarantee, that His offering was the complete fulfilment of the righteous works of our sonship. Paul declared, concerning Christ's offering, 'He was delivered up because of our offences, and was raised *because of our justification.*' Rom 4:25.

Referring to Christ and His offering, Paul continued by saying, 'Through whom [Christ] we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' Rom 5:2. The faith of the Son of God that we receive when the word of the cross is proclaimed to us grants us access into the grace of God. The grace of God is the resurrection power of God that enables us to stand up as a new creation in Christ. In the fellowship of Christ's offering, the righteousness of God, which Christ has already accomplished for us, is progressively revealed in us. It is revealed in us *from faith to faith* as we continue to receive the word of faith and to embrace our participation in Christ's offering. Rom 1:16-17.

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

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

To seal up vision and prophecy

The fifth outcome of the crucifixion of Christ is 'sealing up vision and prophecy'. Dan 9:24. We need to consider two major applications of this statement. The first element is that the offering of Christ was the complete fulfilment of all of the Law, the Prophets, and the Messianic Psalms. Jesus explained to His disciples on the day of His resurrection, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that *all things must be fulfilled* which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.' Luk 24:44.

The offering of Christ was the fulfilment of the Father's will. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to the Father, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.' Luk 22:42. Quoting the prophetic words of the psalmist, Paul expanded the scriptural record of this prayer. Jesus said, 'Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, "Behold, I have come - *in the volume of the book* it is written of Me - to do Your will, O God".' Heb 10:5-7. Psa 40:6-8.

'The volume of the book' contains the fullness of the Father's will for all of time and eternity. The one offering of Christ is the full revelation of both everlasting salvation and everlasting judgement. Speaking about His offering on the cross, Jesus said, '*Now* is the judgement of this world; *now* the ruler of this world will be cast out.' Joh 12:31. The ruler of this world is Satan. Joh 14:30. Joh 16:11. The eternal judgement of God upon sin, Satan and the world, was fully accomplished between midday and 3pm on the day of Christ's crucifixion. Jesus endured the eternal judgement of God, in His physical body, while He hung on the cross. He was delivered from this judgement because of His obedience to the Father.

Satan was cast out of heaven and was confined to the lake of fire forever by the offering of Christ during those three hours on the cross. However, we will not see the fulfilment of this judgement upon Satan until the blowing of the seventh trumpet in the end of the age. Rev 12:7-9. Even though the full wrath and judgement of God has been finished in the

offering of Christ, the present heavens and earth have been preserved by the word of the Lord. 2Pe 3:7. They have been preserved for the sake of our inclusion and participation in that which Christ has already finished on the cross.

In relation to the present universe, in those same three hours, Jesus took the whole of the first creation out into the sea of God's forgetfulness and brought forth the new creation. Darkness covered the whole earth, because the natural creation had been struck at its source of light. This was the end of the first creation. The prophet Amos spoke of this judgement by saying, ' "And it shall come to pass in that day", says the Lord God, "that I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight; I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist, and baldness on every head; I will make it like mourning for an only son, and its end like a bitter day".' Amo 8:9-10.

In the same way that Satan has already been cast from heaven, the old creation has already been abolished by the offering of Christ. The only reason that God reactivated the present elements of the universe at the ninth hour was to give mankind an opportunity to mourn and repent by looking upon Him whom they had pierced. Zec 12:10. Rev 1:7. The mercy of God has granted us time to escape His judgement upon the old creation by joining the fellowship of Christ's offering as sons of God who belong to the new creation. 2Pe 3:9.

This brings us to the second application of 'sealing up vision and prophecy'. The offering of Christ has shut up, or sealed, the present heavens and earth to a fixed eschatology and specific endpoint. This endpoint was irrevocably fixed when Christ proclaimed, 'It is finished!', on the cross. We read in the book of Revelation concerning this endpoint, 'Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.' Rev 20:11.

The complete eschatology of the Father's will, which has been accomplished in the one offering of Christ, is contained in the scroll with its seven seals. Having seen the administration of the throne in the heavenly places, the apostle John recorded, 'And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals'. Rev 5:1. The scroll is written on both sides because it is the full revelation of both the salvation and the judgement

of God. It has been sealed, with seven seals, by the offering of Christ. Let us say again: the offering of Christ has sealed up all vision and prophecy.

Jesus Christ, as the Lamb of God, is the only One who is worthy to loose the seven seals, and to open this scroll, because He is the One who sealed it by His offering. The opening of the seven-sealed scroll, in the time of the end, will reveal to the world what has already been accomplished by the offering of Christ. Significantly, Jesus Christ will not proclaim His own worthiness to open the scroll. Nor will He take His own initiative to reveal the fulfilment of His own offering to the world. The authority to open the scroll will be given to Him by the Father, according to the timing that has already been fixed by the Father's will. His worthiness to open the scroll will be proclaimed by the apostolic administration and the twenty-four courses of elders who are around the throne. Rev 5:8-9.

To anoint the Most Holy

The sixth outcome that is nominated in the seventy weeks prophecy is 'anointing the Most Holy'. Using the tabernacle of Moses as a prophetic timepiece, it has been suggested by some commentators that 'anointing the Most Holy' refers to the millennial rest that follows the physical second coming of Christ. However, like the other outcomes of the crucifixion of Christ, it is important to recognise that the anointing of the Most Holy has already been accomplished by the offering of Christ. It was the fruit of the finished work of Christ, when He sat down at the right hand of the Father, and then gave to us the Holy Spirit. 'The anointing of the Most Holy' was completed on the Day of Pentecost.

We know that Jesus was anointed with the sevenfold Spirit of God, by the Holy Spirit, when He was baptised. Mat 3:16. The literal meaning of 'the Christ' is 'the Anointed One'. Significantly, John the Baptist declared, concerning Jesus, 'I indeed baptise you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. *He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.*' Luk 3:16. From the very beginning of His earthly ministry, it was clear that Jesus had come to give to us the Holy Spirit at the conclusion of His ministry. Specifically, He gave the Holy Spirit to us at the conclusion of His offering journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross, for the sake of *our participation in His finished work*.

Importantly, the Holy Spirit was not given to the nation of Israel under the Old Covenant to help them to keep the Law. The Holy Spirit has not been given to us to empower our carnality. Rather, the Holy Spirit resists

and frustrates our efforts to serve God and to obey His word in the strength of our own flesh. Gal 5:16-17. The Holy Spirit, only, enables our participation in the fellowship of the New Covenant. For this reason, the Holy Spirit could not be given until the New Covenant was inaugurated by the blood of Christ. The New Covenant was established, and Christ was glorified as our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, through the seven wounding events that He experienced from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross.

During His ministry, Jesus said, 'He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' Joh 7:38. The apostle John then noted, concerning those words of Jesus, 'This He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus *was not yet glorified*'. Joh 7:39. Once Christ had been glorified as our great High Priest, He immediately gave the Holy Spirit to us for the sake of our participation in His body and in His offering. With this goal in view, Jesus proclaimed to His disciples during the first communion service, 'I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.' Joh 16:7.

The apostle John described the Holy Spirit as '*the anointing of the Holy One*' because He is the anointing that was given to us by Christ at the conclusion of His offering. 1Jn 2:20. John explained that the Holy Spirit teaches us to abide in the fellowship of the body of Christ and in the fellowship of His offering. 1Jn 2:27. This brings us to the meaning of 'the most holy'. Under the Old Covenant, the term 'most holy' or, literally, 'holy, holy' was used to describe the inner room of the sanctuary which contained the ark of the covenant. Exo 26:33-34. The phrase 'holy, holy' was also used to describe the grain offering, the sin offering and the trespass offering. Lev 2:3. Lev 6:17,25. Lev 7:1. In the New Covenant, 'the Most Holy' is the body of Christ and the offering of Christ.

In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul noted that the tabernacle of old was inaugurated by the sprinkling of blood. Heb 9:21-22. The body of Christ, as the true temple, was inaugurated when the blood of Christ was sprinkled seven times upon His physical body during His offering journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. The physical body of Christ was both the Altar and the Mercy Seat of the true temple. The seventh sprinkling of blood occurred when the soldier pierced the side of Christ with a spear. This was the completion of the ministry of the true Day of Atonement. The seven-times sprinkling of Christ's blood revealed that Christ had been set forth as the Mercy Seat, for our sake. Rom 3:25.

Significantly, when the seven-times sprinkling of the blood of Christ upon His physical body was complete, the veil that separated the holy place from the most holy place in the physical temple was torn in two.

Mat 27:51. The Scriptures recorded that it was torn in two, from the top to the bottom. This signified that the temple, the priesthood, and all of the sacrifices and offerings that belonged to the Old Covenant had been abolished. More importantly, it signified that the way into the holiest place of the true temple was now open. The Holy Spirit Himself bears witness to this reality. Paul wrote, 'The Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing'. Heb 9:8.

The seventh wound of Christ opened *the new and living way* for our inclusion in the fellowship of the body of Christ and in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Heb 10:19-22. The body of Christ and the offering of Christ were both sanctified as 'Most Holy' or 'Holy, Holy' by the seven-times sprinkling of His blood. However, it is the Holy Spirit who anoints the Most Holy *by sanctifying our participation* in the many-membered body of Christ and the offering of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the essence of the New Covenant because He enables our participation in the New Covenant. The New Covenant is fellowship in the body and blood of Christ. 1Co 10:16.

The apostle Paul proclaimed that the Holy Spirit has been given to us as the pledge of our eternal inheritance because He enables our participation in the New Covenant. 2Co 1:22. 2Co 5:5. Eph 1:13-14. The Holy Spirit has been given to us to be the expression of our name, in firstfruits measure, as members of the body of Christ and as sons of God. Our work, both as members of Christ and as sons of God, is *a priestly work*. We are equipped by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, and are then anointed by the Holy Spirit to serve the Living God as His priests. Heb 9:14. We recall that the priests of old were designated as 'holy to the Lord' and ordained for their ministry by the application of both blood and oil. Lev 8:30. In the same way, it is the blood of Christ and the anointing of the Holy Spirit that enable us to be ministers of the New Covenant. 2Co 3:5-6.

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

THE SEVENTY WEEKS PROPHECY

and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit'. Eph 2:20-22.

Section 2

The command to restore

In our previous section, we considered the six outcomes of the one offering of Christ. We will now turn our attention to the timing of the seventy weeks prophecy. The beginning of the seventy weeks was marked by the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. The angel Gabriel proclaimed to Daniel, 'Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.' Dan 9:25.

There has been much debate regarding which command should be used to identify the beginning of the seventy weeks, because the Scripture records four different commands. It is important to recognise that all four of these commands are part of one, integrated package. The book of Ezra nominated *all four commands* in relation to rebuilding the temple and city of Jerusalem. We read, 'So the elders of the Jews built, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they built and finished, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the command of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.' Ezr 6:14.

We note that there are four commands identified in this verse.

1. The commandment of the God of Israel
2. The command of Cyrus
3. The command of Darius
4. The command of Artaxerxes

The commandment of the God of Israel is the first and foremost of these commands. It was issued by God in direct response to the prayer of Daniel. Gabriel said to Daniel, 'At the beginning of your supplications *the command went out*, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision.' Dan 9:23. The commandment of the God of Israel ordained the seventy weeks to achieve all of the outcomes that are nominated in the prophecy. Furthermore, the commandment of the God of Israel ordained the timing of the commands of the three Persian kings, which led to the commencement of the seventy weeks.

The command of Cyrus brought the Jewish exile in Babylon to an end. It enabled a remnant of the Jews to return to their homeland under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua. Many years prior to the Jewish exile, the prophet Isaiah declared that it would be Cyrus who would issue the first decree in response to the word of the Lord. Isa 44:28. In fulfilment of this prophecy, we read in the book of Ezra, 'Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And *He has commanded me to build Him* a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah".' Ezz 1:1-2.

Cyrus recognised that his command was in response to the command of the Lord God of heaven. Specifically, his written decree gave the Jewish remnant the mandate to rebuild the temple as the house of God in Jerusalem. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua, the people rebuilt the altar and laid the foundation of the temple. Ezz 3:8-13. However, they then encountered severe opposition from the ungodly inhabitants of the land, and the work ceased. Ezz 4:1-5,24. It did not recommence until the Lord sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to

encourage and strengthen the people to finish building the temple. Ezz 5:1. Hag 1:8.

When the people recommenced the building work in response to the prophecy of Zechariah and Haggai, the secular governor of the region sent a letter to King Darius. Ezz 5:6-17. In response to this letter, Darius searched the Persian archives and found the original decree of King Cyrus. He then issued his own decree which gave the Jewish remnant the undisputed authority to finish building the temple. Ezz 6:1-12. King Darius did not reference the commandment of the God of Israel in the same way as King Cyrus. However, the command of Darius was also consistent with the timing that had been established by the commandment of the God of Israel, because it was precipitated by the prophecies of both Haggai and Zechariah.

The book of Ezra recorded that, following the rebuilding of the temple, the Jewish remnant continued to experience significant opposition. When Darius was replaced by Ahasuerus, the enemies in the land wrote another accusation to the king, against the Jews. Ezz 4:6. It is generally considered that this is the same Ahasuerus who married Queen Esther. Est 2:16-18. When Ahasuerus was replaced by Artaxerxes, the enemies of the Jews again appealed to the Persian king to stop the people from rebuilding the city of Jerusalem and its walls. Ezz 4:7-16. They told the king that if he allowed the city of Jerusalem to be rebuilt, he would have no further dominion in the region. Motivated by anxiety and fear, Artaxerxes commanded all work to cease. Ezz 4:17-24.

The initial decree of Artaxerxes, in the early period of his reign, was certainly not consistent with the commandment of the God of Israel. However, in the seventh year of his reign, he was approached by Ezra the priest. The Scripture records that 'Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel'. Ezz 7:10. Furthermore, the hand of the Lord his God was upon him! Ezz 7:6,28. Ezra approached the king according to the sovereign timing of the Lord. Artaxerxes responded by issuing the most extensive of all the commands of the Persian kings. He decreed, '*Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven*, let it be diligently done for the house of God of heaven. For why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?' Ezz 7:23.

Rather than being fearful that the Jews would rebel against him, Artaxerxes gave Ezra the mandate to establish an autonomous administration in the city of Jerusalem. He said, 'And you, Ezra, according

to your God-given wisdom, set magistrates and judges who may judge all the people who are in the region beyond the river, all such as know the laws of your God; and teach those who do not know them.' Ezr 7:25. In contrast to the hasty decree proclaimed earlier in his reign, this command by Artaxerxes was consistent with the timing that had been ordained by the commandment of the God of Israel in response to Daniel's prayer. The command of Artaxerxes built upon the command of Cyrus and the command of Darius. However, it significantly expanded the scope of the mandate, beyond the temple, to include the restoration of the administration and the culture of the city of Jerusalem.

The command of Cyrus and the command of Darius were both foundational to the seventy weeks prophecy. However, it was the command of Artaxerxes, according to the sovereign timing of the Lord, which marked the specific commencement of the prophetic weeks. We do not draw this conclusion by considering the content of his decree alone. The significant point is that the decree of Artaxerxes was precipitated by the provocation of the hand of the Lord upon Ezra, and it enabled him to return to Jerusalem. Ezr 7:6. It was primarily the prophetic insight of Ezra, and the nature of his ministry among the Jews, that clearly established this as the beginning of the restoration of the holy city and, hence, the beginning of the seventy weeks. We will consider the ministry of Ezra in further detail.

Before we continue, we will make a brief comment on dates. According to the secular records of the kings of Persia, the command of Cyrus was issued in approximately 538BC. The command of Darius was issued in approximately 520BC. The command of Artaxerxes, in the seventh year of his reign, was issued in approximately 457BC. This is certainly significant in relation to the seventy weeks prophecy. The prophecy states that there will be 69 weeks in total between the command to restore Jerusalem and the coming of the Messiah.

We know that the seventy weeks prophecy refers to 'weeks of years'. This is consistent with the prophetic 'day for a year' principle that is regularly used in the Scriptures. Gen 29:27. Num 14:34. Lev 25:8. Eze 4:4-6. Isa 34:8. This principle is consistently used in the book of Daniel. Dan 4:25. Dan 7:25. Dan 8:14. Dan 12:7. With this principle in view, 69 weeks is 483 years. If we count 483 years from approximately 457BC, it brings us to approximately 27AD (remembering that there is no year 0, so we count directly from 1BC to 1AD). In direct fulfilment of the seventy weeks prophecy, it brings us to the time when Jesus was baptised, and

anointed with the sevenfold Spirit of God by the Holy Spirit. He then began His earthly ministry as the Christ, or the Messiah.

The return of Ezra to Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes was the beginning of the seventy weeks prophecy. The return of Nehemiah, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, was a further development. Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem in approximately 444BC, with letters from the king, to repair the walls and gates of Jerusalem. Neh 2:1-8. The repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was an integral part of the first phase of the seventy weeks prophecy, but it was not the beginning of the restorative work. Gabriel explained to Daniel, concerning Jerusalem, 'The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.' Dan 9:25. The walls of the city of Jerusalem were certainly completed in the days of Nehemiah, in the face of significant opposition. Neh 6:15-16.

To restore and rebuild Jerusalem

The beginning of the seventy weeks prophecy was the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. We note that the priority was the cultural restoration of the inhabitants of the city, before the building of its administration and infrastructure. It would be a mistake to consider the first phase of the seventy weeks prophecy only from the perspective of the buildings or infrastructure of the city of Jerusalem. A city is first, and foremost, the dwelling place of a multitude of households. The primary emphasis of the restoration of Jerusalem was the sanctification of each household. The sanctification of each household began with the sanctification of each marriage.

It is important to remember that Daniel received the seventy weeks prophecy in response to his prayer. In his prayer of repentance and faith, Daniel prayed that the Lord would cause His face to shine on the desolate sanctuary. Significantly, he also prayed that the Lord would cause His face to shine on the city which is called by His name. He prayed, 'O my God, incline Your ear and hear, open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for *Your city and Your people are called by Your name.*' Dan 9:18-19.

Daniel prayed that the Lord would cause His face to shine, by opening His eyes on the city and His people. We know that the people returned to the land at the conclusion of their exile in Babylon. Through the prophecy of

Zechariah, we know also that the Lord significantly upgraded the mandate of the priests in the heavenly places of the true tabernacle. Zec 3:7. However, in relation to the restoration of the city of Jerusalem, we must ask the question: when did the Lord confront the people with eyes like a flame of fire to address the culture of their households? It was clearly in the days of Ezra!

When Ezra returned to Jerusalem, the leaders came to him and said, 'The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands ... for they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, so that the holy seed is mixed with the peoples of those lands. Indeed, the hand of the leaders and rulers has been foremost in this trespass.' Ezz 9:1-2. Ezra immediately tore his garment and his robe. Everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel assembled to him. At the time of the evening sacrifice, Ezra fell on his knees, spread out his hands to the Lord and began to pray. He recognised that even though the people had returned from their exile in Babylon, they were *still captives* because they were not yet holy and set apart to the Lord. Ezz 9:4.

Ezra prayed with the same unction of repentance and faith that had rested upon the prophet Daniel. He confessed that he was too ashamed and humiliated to lift up his face to the Lord. He recognised that the people had been in bondage from the days of their fathers to this present day. However, in a spirit of faith, he also proclaimed, 'And now for a little while grace has been shown from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our bondage. For we were slaves. Yet our God did not forsake us in our bondage; but He extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem.' Ezz 9:8-9.

The peg in the holy place

The prophetic declaration of Ezra that the Lord had given the people 'a peg in His holy place' is particularly significant in relation to the seventy weeks prophecy. The word 'peg' may also be translated as 'nail'. At first glance, this appears to be an unusual statement. However, when we connect this prophetic statement to the book of Hebrews, its meaning and significance become clear. The 'peg', or the 'nail', is something that is firm, secure, sure and steadfast. In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul proclaimed that we flee for refuge 'to lay hold of the hope set before

us. This hope we have as *an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil*, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.' Heb 6:18-20.

Most commentators assume that the peg in the holy place refers to something in the time of Ezra. It is suggested that the peg in the holy place may be the priesthood or even the temple buildings. However, the priesthood was not secure in the days of Ezra. Also, a significant number of the priests were guilty of marrying pagan wives. They had no capacity to restore the people in this matter. Rather, the peg in the holy place is Jesus Christ, who has entered behind the veil as our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Prior to the return of Ezra, the prophet Zechariah also declared that Christ is 'the peg'. He prophesied, concerning the tribe of Judah, that 'from him comes the cornerstone, from him the tent peg'. Zec 10:4.

The prophet Isaiah also identified Christ as being the peg. Isaiah prophesied, concerning Eliakim, as a type of Christ, 'The key of the house of David I will lay on His shoulder; so He shall open, and no-one shall shut; and He shall shut, and no-one shall open.' Isa 22:22. We know that this refers to Christ. Jesus addressed the presbytery in Philadelphia as the One 'who has the key of David'. Rev 3:7. Isaiah then continued, 'I will fasten Him *as a peg in a secure place*, and He will become a glorious throne to His Father's house.' Isa 22:23. This describes the finished work of Christ. As our great High Priest and our King, He has taken His seat on the throne of the Father and on the throne of David.

Significantly, Isaiah also spoke of the offering journey of Christ by saying, 'In that day ... the peg that is fastened in the secure place will be removed and be cut down and fall, and the burden that was on it will be cut off; for the Lord has spoken.' Isa 22:25. This refers to the day of Christ's offering journey from Gethsemane to the cross. As the scapegoat, Christ was incrementally cursed and cut off from the land of the living. Isa 53:8. He bore our transgressions, sin and iniquity in His physical body so that, as He was cut off, this burden was also cut off and assigned to the sea of God's forgetfulness for the sake of those who join the fellowship of His offering. As we have considered, the central tenet of the seventy weeks prophecy is that Christ was 'cut off, but not for Himself'. Dan 9:26.

Christ was incrementally cut off through the wounding events that He suffered from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. However, as His

blood was sprinkled upon His physical body, the resurrection life of God was also bringing Him back from the death of our sin. Heb 13:20. His blood was sprinkled seven times upon His physical body as the Mercy Seat of the true tabernacle. Rom 3:25. This was the complete fulfilment of the Day of Atonement. Having accomplished this work, Jesus Christ was fully glorified as our great High Priest, and sat down at the right hand of the Father. Heb 8:1-2. As our great High Priest, He is now ministering the grace of His resurrection life to us, in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, from this finished position.

The spirit of grace and supplication

Ezra looked forward to the finished offering of Christ as 'the peg in the holy place'. He understood that a spirit of grace and supplication flowed from the face of the Lord to the people in their bondage. The spirit of grace and supplication that Ezra received from the face of the Lord then flowed to the people through the prayer and supplication of Ezra, who was the Lord's messenger. The Scriptures record, 'Now while Ezra was praying, and while he was confessing, weeping, and bowing down before the house of God, a very large assembly of men, women, and children gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept bitterly'. Ezr 10:1.

The spirit of grace and supplication enabled the people to turn to the Lord so that the veil that covered their eyes was removed. 2Co 3:16. As the veil was removed, they were able to look into the face of the Lord and to receive illumination from His eyes concerning their sin and their sanctification as the Lord's people. 2Co 3:18. Like Ezra, they began to see that the Lord had given them a peg in the holy place; therefore, they could flee for refuge to lay hold of a hope that is sure and steadfast. One of the men, as the head of his household, articulated this faith before Ezra when he said, 'We have trespassed against our God, and have dwelt with foreign women from the peoples of the land. Yet now *there is hope in Israel* in spite of this.' Ezr 10:2.

As the people turned in repentance and faith, they received grace for restoration and recovery in their households. Ezra summarised this process by saying, 'And now for a little while grace has been shown from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape.' Ezr 9:8. In the context of this passage, Ezra was not simply referring to escaping from captivity in Babylon. Even though the people had returned from Babylon, they were still in captivity, because they were entangled, through marriage, with all of the pagan inhabitants of the land. They needed to turn in repentance to be delivered from this entanglement, so that the judgement of God

upon them regarding this specific matter could be commuted to chastening. 1Co 11:32.

In addressing this matter, Ezra issued a proclamation throughout the whole region of Judah and Jerusalem that every man needed to assemble in Jerusalem within three days. Ezzr 10:8. If anyone refused to assemble in this manner, their property was to be confiscated, and they would be separated from the assembly of the people. The Scripture recorded that, when the men assembled in Jerusalem, 'All the people sat *in the open square* of the house of God, trembling because of this matter and because of heavy rain'. Ezzr 10:9. This is an interesting statement. We read in the seventy weeks prophecy that the restoration of Jerusalem would include its 'street'. This can also be translated as 'open square'. The meeting of the people with Ezra in the open square initiated a process of recovery for each household.

The seven weeks and sixty-two weeks

The seventy weeks prophecy declared that there would be sixty-nine weeks, or 483 years, from the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem to the coming of the Messiah. However, the prophecy divides the sixty-nine weeks into seven weeks, or forty-nine years, and sixty-two weeks, which is 434 years. What is the significance of these two time periods? It is likely that the forty-nine years was the length of time for which the Lord extended grace to the inhabitants of Jerusalem through the ministries of Ezra, then Nehemiah and, finally, the prophet Malachi. Ezra referred to this period of time as 'a little while'. He said, 'And now for a little while grace has been shown from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape.' Ezzr 9:8. This short period of forty-nine years should have been a profound period of restoration for the entire Jewish nation.

In terms of the events that transpired during this time, we know that Ezra ministered for a period of thirteen years before the return of Nehemiah. When Nehemiah returned, he rebuilt the walls and continued the restoration of the city of Jerusalem in fellowship with Ezra. Neh 8:1-8. It was during the time of Nehemiah that the city was populated with one tenth, or a tithe, of all the people. Neh 11:1. Nehemiah was the governor in Judah for twelve years before he returned to the king of Persia for a brief period. Neh 13:6. We know that he did return to Jerusalem, but that is where the scriptural account concludes. In this regard, the first twenty-five years of the seventy weeks prophecy is well documented in the book of Ezra and the book of Nehemiah.

THE SEVENTY WEEKS PROPHECY

The exact date of the book of Malachi is unknown. However, it is likely that Malachi prophesied a little over 400 years before the birth of Christ. If this is the case, then it places the ministry of Malachi around the end of the first seven weeks, or forty-nine-year, period. By the time of Malachi, the people had again turned away from the Lord. The restoration that had been experienced by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, in response to the ministry of Ezra and Nehemiah, had been lost. Mal 1-2. The ministry of Malachi was the final word from the Lord, and was the last opportunity for repentance, before the ministry of John the Baptist. Mal 4:5-6. Luk 1:17. The intervening period between the ministry of Malachi and the ministry of John the Baptist is often referred to as 'the silent years'. This intervening period, with no prophetic ministry, is identified in the seventy weeks prophecy as being sixty-two weeks, or 434 years.

Section 3

The coming of the Messiah

The silent years drew to a close when John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah to announce the coming of the Messiah. He was sent to prepare the hearts of the Jewish people to receive their Messiah by calling them to repentance. John the Baptist proclaimed, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!' Mat 3:2. The people who received his word were baptised with water. It was a baptism of repentance. John prepared the people to meet Christ. As they responded to his word by turning from the mode of the Old Covenant, the veil that covered their eyes was removed. 2Co 3:16. The highpoint of the ministry of John the Baptist was when he proclaimed, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' Joh 1:29.

When we consider the ministry of John the Baptist, we can appreciate why he did not immediately see the need for Jesus to be baptised. When Jesus first came to him, John said, 'I need to be baptised by You, and are You coming to me?' Mat 3:14. Jesus had no need to be baptised for repentance. Rather, His baptism was necessary to *fulfil all righteousness*. Mat 3:15. Scripture records, 'When He had been baptised, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting

upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased".' Mat 3:16-17.

In fulfilment of the seventy weeks prophecy, the baptism of Jesus was the coming of the Messiah to the nation of Israel. The Messiah is 'the anointed One'. Jesus was revealed as the Messiah when He was anointed with the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh by the Holy Spirit. This was the fulfilment of all righteousness, because Jesus was anointed for His Melchizedek ministry as the Son of Man. Jesus Christ is Melchizedek as both King and Priest. When we consider the ministry of the Son of Man, it is important that we understand the nature of His priesthood. He is our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. It is also important that we understand the *two dimensions of His kingship* as Messiah the Prince. Dan 9:25. In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul explained that the name 'Melchizedek' means *king of righteousness* and *king of peace*. Heb 7:2.

When Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist to fulfil all righteousness, He was first revealed to be the King of righteousness. Mat 3:15. He was revealed to be the King of righteousness because He had emptied Himself to be fully obedient to the Father's will. He had emptied Himself to become the Father's Slave. It was His obedience that revealed His righteousness. Php 2:6-8. This is an important point. Immediately following His baptism, the Spirit led Him into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan for a period of forty days. Luk 4:1. Satan tempted Him to exercise the authority of His own name as the Son of God. Significantly, Jesus overcame him by the confession of His obedience to the Father. Luk 4:1-13.

As the Slave of the Father, Jesus clearly proclaimed to the Jews that He had been anointed by the Spirit of God. In the early part of His ministry, He stood up in the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth and declared, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.' Luk 4:18-19. The miracles that Jesus performed, in obedience to the Father's will, all bore witness to the truth that He had come as the King of righteousness.

Despite all of the signs and miracles that Jesus performed, He was rejected by the Jews because He was not the conquering Messiah whom they had expected. The Jews expected the conquering Messiah to deliver

them from Gentile dominion and to reinstate natural Israel as the head of the nations. With this goal in view, some of the Jews who witnessed the miracles of Jesus tried to take Him by force to make Him their king. Joh 6:15. However, Jesus had not come to establish an earthly kingdom. He had come to establish a heavenly kingdom. Joh 18:36. The kingdom of heaven is the kingdom that belongs to God the Father. The citizens of the kingdom of God are those who have been born as sons of God.

Towards the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus explained to His disciples that He had also come to be the suffering Messiah. We read in the Gospel of Matthew, 'From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day'. Mat 6:21. The prophet Isaiah referred to Christ as the suffering Messiah when he said, 'He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with [our] grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely, He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.' Isa 53:3-4.

As the suffering Messiah, Jesus Christ was revealed to be both the King of righteousness and the King of peace. He was revealed to be the King of righteousness on His *descending journey* from the garden of Gethsemane to the lowest parts of the earth, on the cross. At the same time, He was revealed to be the King of peace on His *ascending journey* from the garden of Gethsemane to the Father's house. Referring to the two dimensions of Christ's kingship, Paul wrote to the Ephesians, 'Now this, "He ascended" - what does it mean but that He first descended into the lowest parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things'. Eph 4:9-10.

The apostle Paul described the *descending journey* of Christ in his letter to the Philippians. Christ emptied Himself to become the Father's Slave and then He humbled Himself to be obedient 'to the point of death, even the death of the cross'. Php 2:8. In obedience to the Father, He submitted Himself to be abused by the religious leaders of the Jewish nation, the secular rulers of the world, and the fallen principalities and powers. As these leaders and rulers abused Christ, their authority was removed from them. They were disempowered and destroyed by Christ as the conquering Slave. This is a remarkable point. Christ did not conquer His enemies by overpowering them. He conquered all His enemies by suffering at their hands.

As Christ humbled Himself to be abused by His enemies, in obedience to the Father, the Father exalted Him with the name that is above every name. Php 2:9. Paul declared that every knee will bow before Him and every tongue will confess that He is Lord. Php 2:10-11. The Father has given Christ the authority to judge the world as the Son of Man. Joh 5:27. The apostle Paul boldly preached to the Athenians that God 'commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness *by the Man whom He has ordained*. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead'. Act 17:30-31. Jesus Christ will judge the world as the conquering Slave who has been revealed by the Father to be the King of righteousness.

Significantly, we have been given the opportunity to be delivered from the judgement of the world, because Christ was also revealed to be the King of Peace on His *ascending journey* from the garden of Gethsemane to the Father's house. As the King of Peace, Jesus Christ has reconciled us to God, enabling the Father to *birth us as His sons* and include us in His eternal kingdom. Joh 14:6. Jesus spoke as the King of Peace when He said to His disciples, 'Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.' Joh 14:1-3.

An end to sacrifice and offering

When we read the seventy weeks prophecy, which is recorded in Daniel chapter nine, we observe that verse 25 identifies the timing and the major waypoints *before the coming of the Messiah* to the nation of Israel. Dan 9:25. As we have considered, the coming of the Messiah was fulfilled by the baptism of Jesus. Verse 26 and verse 27 are both summary statements that identify the major waypoints *after the coming of the Messiah*. Dan 9:26-27. It is important that we consider these two verses together because they are highly integrated. It is not possible to interpret one verse without the other. The essential point of connection between the two verses is that the crucifixion of Christ brought an end to all sacrifice and offering under the Old Covenant.

When we read in verse 26 that the 'Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself', it refers to the crucifixion of Christ. Dan 9:26. Equally, when we read in verse 27 that 'in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering', it refers to the crucifixion of Christ. Dan 9:27. As

we have stated previously, the crucifixion of Christ is the central tenet of the seventy weeks prophecy. We cannot overstate how important it is to recognise the significance of 'Jesus Christ and Him crucified' in relation to how we interpret the seventy weeks prophecy. 1Co 2:2. When we connect verse 26 and verse 27 around this central tenet, we are not simply making an isolated exegetical point. The truth that the offering of Christ put an end to all sacrifice and offering under the Old Covenant is foundational to our understanding of the New Covenant.

We read in the book of Hebrews, 'It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. Therefore, when He [Christ] came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body you have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure ... behold, I have come - in the volume of the book it is written of Me - to do Your will, O God".' Heb 10:4-7. Paul continued to identify the focus of the will of God by saying, 'He takes away the first that He may establish the second. *By that will* we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all ... for by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.' Heb 10:9-10,14.

The will of God was fully revealed and accomplished by the one offering of Christ. The offering of Christ abolished the Old Covenant and inaugurated the New Covenant. The New Covenant is our participation in His offering. As we have already considered, when the soldier pierced the side of Christ, the veil in the physical temple was torn in two. Mar 15:38. This was a remarkable and profound physical sign. It bore witness to the spiritual reality that Christ had opened a new and living way for us to participate in the fellowship of His offering. Heb 10:20. It also bore witness to the reality that the Old Covenant - with its temple, its priesthood, and its regime of offerings and sacrifices - has been abolished by the offering of Christ forever.

Remarkably, history records that the Jews sewed up the veil in the temple and continued to make animal sacrifices. Once the offering of Christ was complete, the blood of all animal sacrifice was an abomination to God. The prophet Isaiah declared, concerning this religious activity, 'He who kills a bull is as if he slays a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, as if he breaks a dog's neck; he who offers a grain offering, as if he offers swine's blood; he who burns incense, as if he blesses an idol. Just as they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations, so will I choose their delusions, and bring their fears on them; because, when I called, no one answered, when I spoke they did not hear; but they

did evil before My eyes, and chose that in which I do not delight.’
Isa 66:3-4.

The abomination of animal sacrifice was one of the major reasons why God delivered the Jewish nation to judgement at the hands of the Romans in AD70. At that time, the city of Jerusalem and the temple buildings were destroyed by the Roman army which was led by Prince Titus. This judgement was specifically identified in the seventy weeks prophecy. We read, ‘And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood’. Dan 9:26. In the week of His crucifixion, Jesus also explained to His disciples that the temple buildings would be destroyed. He said, concerning the temple buildings, ‘Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’ Mat 24:2.

We know that there were approximately forty years between the crucifixion of Jesus and the destruction of the temple. If the abomination of animal sacrifice continued immediately after the crucifixion of Christ, why did the Lord wait approximately forty years before allowing the city of Jerusalem and the temple to be destroyed? The Lord preserved the temple buildings and the city of Jerusalem for the sake of the public and house to house fellowship of the early church. Act 2:42-47. He gave the temple buildings to the apostles to be the context for their public ministry. They proclaimed the word of life and performed many miracles in Solomon’s Portico. This portico was a vast colonnade on the eastern side of the temple. Interestingly, it was almost certainly built in the same location as ‘the open square’ where Ezra had proclaimed the word to the people in his day. Ezz 10:9. Neh 8:1.

We read in the book of Acts, ‘And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all in one accord in Solomon’s Porch’. Act 5:12. The great multitude of people who gathered to hear the apostles preach in the temple caused the high priest and the religious leaders to be filled with indignation. They laid hold of the apostles and put them in the common prison. However, an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and then commanded them to ‘Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life’. Act 5:20. The priests and the religious leaders had no spiritual authority to hinder the public and house to house ministry of the apostles. The Scriptures record that ‘daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ’. Act 5:42.

The temple and the city of Jerusalem had been reserved for judgement since the crucifixion of Christ. However, it was preserved for as long as the church in Jerusalem maintained a genuine public and house to house fellowship. One of the biggest threats to this fellowship was the pervasive influence of the Jewish converts who were still zealous for the Law. By the time that the apostle Paul returned from his third missionary journey, the Jewish zealots had become a powerful faction within the Jerusalem church. Act 21:20. In response to this congregational pressure, the apostle James and the elders of the church in Jerusalem compelled Paul to purify himself in the temple to demonstrate that he was still committed to keeping the Law. Act 21:21-26.

Even though it was a sinful imposition upon him, the apostle Paul submitted himself to this instruction in the meekness and gentleness of Christ. The Lord had already made it clear to him that chains and imprisonment awaited him in Jerusalem. Act 20:22-23. Act 21:11-13. Before he had completed the seven days of purification, the Jews from Asia saw him in the temple. Act 21:27. They seized him and dragged him out of the temple with the intention of killing him. He was saved by the intervention of the Roman soldiers for the sake of preserving law and order within the city. Significantly, the Scripture records that when Paul was dragged out of the temple by the angry mob, the doors of the temple were closed. Act 21:30. Because of this sin against Paul, which was precipitated by the transgression of James and the elders in Jerusalem, the church lost the use of the temple buildings as their public place of ministry. Approximately 10 years after this abuse of the apostle Paul, the city of Jerusalem was conquered by Prince Titus, and the temple was destroyed in AD70.

To summarise, by His 'once for all' offering, Jesus put an end to *the previously legitimate* sacrifices and offerings according to the Law Covenant. It is important to remember that the offerings and sacrifices under the Law Covenant had been legitimate for approximately 1 500 years. They were to be offered in faith for the offering of Christ which had been promised, and guaranteed by the word of the oath, to Abraham. However, the Father was not pleased with the offerings and sacrifices under the Law Covenant, because they had no capacity to remove the other law from the hearts of the people. Heb 10:8. In contrast to these sacrifices, the Father was well pleased with the offering of Christ. The offering of Christ was the full revelation of the Father's will. By His one offering, He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified in Him. Heb 10:14.

Restating the implication for our interpretation of the seventy weeks prophecy, when it refers to putting a stop to sacrifice and offering, it is referring to *the legitimate* sacrifices and offerings of the Law Covenant. Dan 9:27. It does not refer to *the illegitimate* sacrifices and offerings that continued after the death of Christ. The fact that the Jews sewed up the veil in the temple and continued to make animal sacrifices did not undermine or nullify the finished work of Christ.

As we have considered, all animal sacrifice after the finished offering of Christ was an abomination to the Lord. The irrevocable end of sacrifice and offering was the crucifixion of Christ, not the destruction of the temple by Prince Titus. In the same way, the seventy weeks prophecy does not refer to there being any future reinstatement of animal sacrifice. Any future reinstatement of animal sacrifice would be an abomination to the Lord in the same way that the continuation of animal sacrifice, after the death of Christ, was an abomination that led to the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem.

The first and second half of the seventieth week

The first half of the seventieth week began with the baptism of Jesus and concluded with His crucifixion, when He put a stop to all sacrifice and offering under the Law Covenant, in the middle of the week. From the perspective of the seventy weeks prophecy, we expect that the length of time between His baptism and His crucifixion was three and a half years. Even though the Gospels do not specify the exact timeframe, they do record enough waypoints to support a three and a half year ministry. The Gospel of John is particularly helpful because it records three specific Passover feasts, and refers to another 'feast of the Jews' which was most likely also a Passover feast.

The *first Passover feast* was recorded in John Chapter 2. John noted, 'Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem'. Joh 2:13. This first Passover was a significant waypoint in the ministry of Jesus. When He arrived in Jerusalem, He drove out the moneychangers, who had turned the temple into a place of business. Joh 2:14-22. When the Jews asked Him for a sign to substantiate His authority to do such a thing, He replied, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' Joh 2:19. This was the first statement that Jesus made regarding the temple of His body. It is worth noting that the discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus regarding new birth as sons of God also occurred during this first Passover feast in Jerusalem. Joh 3:1-21.

The *second Passover feast* is most likely recorded in John Chapter 5. John wrote, 'After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem'. Joh 5:1. We note that Jesus went up to Jerusalem in the same way that He went up to Jerusalem for the first Passover. If we consider the language only, it is possible that this refers to the Feast of Tabernacles, although there is nothing to suggest that it was anything other than the second Passover. It is unlikely that Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles until the final year of His ministry, when He went up to proclaim the promise of the Holy Spirit to all who come to Him and believe. Joh 7:2,8. Joh 7:37-39. The *second Passover*, in John Chapter 5, was significant because, after healing the lame man on the Sabbath, Jesus clearly declared that He had been given the authority, by the Father, to raise the dead and to judge the world. Joh 5:19-29.

The *third Passover feast* was recorded in John Chapter 6. Jesus did not go to Jerusalem for this Passover. However, at the time when Jesus fed the five thousand people in Galilee, the apostle John recorded, 'Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near'. Joh 6:4. This Passover was particularly significant in the ministry of Jesus because, at this time, He explained the nature of our participation in the true Passover as an *agape* meal. Jesus proclaimed that we 'eat His flesh' by receiving His word, turning to see Him, and then coming to Him to abide in the fellowship of His body. Joh 6:35,56. We 'drink His blood' by receiving and believing the word that joins us to the fellowship of His offering and sufferings so that we receive His resurrection life. Joh 6:35,54. It is His resurrection life that we minister to one another in the fellowship of the body of Christ.

The *fourth* Passover feast was recorded from John Chapter 13 onwards. The apostle John devoted a significant portion of his Gospel to the discussion and fellowship that Jesus had with His disciples during this final Passover meal. During this *agape* meal, Jesus ministered the word and faith of the New Covenant to His disciples. Most significantly, He invited the disciples, and each one of us, to join the fellowship of His body and the fellowship of the New Covenant in His blood. Immediately following this *agape* meal, Jesus offered Himself to the Father to be sacrificed as our Passover Lamb, in His journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. He offered Himself to the Father as the true Passover Lamb for the sake of our inclusion in the fellowship of His offering.

The crucifixion of Christ brought the first half of the seventieth week to a close. This brings us to an obvious question. When is the second half of the seventieth week? We find the answer to this question in the book of

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

Rev 12:6,14. Rev 13:5. It is important to remember that the resurrection at the last day is the promise that belongs to all those who have become children of Abraham, in Christ. It is the final inheritance for all who continue to participate in the fellowship of the body of Christ and in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. Jesus proclaimed, 'Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and *I will raise him up at the last day.*' Joh 6:54.

As we have considered, the first half of the seventieth week concluded with the giving of the Holy Spirit as the firstfruits of our eternal inheritance. The Holy Spirit is the pledge, or down payment, of our eternal inheritance because He joins us to the context in which the attainment of our full inheritance is guaranteed by the finished work of Christ. 2Co 1:22. 2Co 5:5. Eph 1:13-14. That is, the Holy Spirit joins us to the fellowship of the body of Christ and the fellowship of the offering and sufferings of Christ. In this fellowship, we are receiving the resurrection life of Christ in mortality. The apostle Paul called this '*ex-anastasis*'. Php 3:11. It is the treasure, or inheritance, that we possess in our earthen vessels. 2Co 4:7. The second half of the seventieth week will conclude with the full inheritance of '*anastasis*'. This is the full manifestation of the resurrection life of God in immortality.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote, 'We also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body'. Rom 8:23. Likewise, he declared to the Corinthians, 'For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now, He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.' 2Co 5:4-5. We see the simple connection and harmony between the two halves of the seventieth week. The Holy Spirit, who was given to us at the end of the first half of the seventieth week as the firstfruits of our inheritance, is also the guarantee of our full inheritance at the end of the second half of the seventieth week!

The confirmation of the covenant

The angel Gabriel proclaimed to Daniel concerning the seventieth week, 'He shall *confirm a covenant* with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.' Dan 9:27.

There has been much confusion among commentators regarding who 'He' is in this verse. However, it clearly refers to Jesus Christ, who is the Messiah. It cannot refer to Prince Titus or the antichrist in the end of the age. As we have stated, it was Jesus Christ who put a stop to sacrifice and offering by fulfilling the Law and abolishing the Law Covenant. Even more significantly, it was Jesus Christ who confirmed the Everlasting Covenant that God had made with Abraham.

We know that the Everlasting Covenant was made by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit before the creation of the heavens and the earth. It is the covenant of sonship. The Everlasting Covenant contains the name and the works that have been predestined for every son of God. When Yahweh the Son was begotten *by the word of the Father* to become the Son of God, He became the full substance of the Everlasting Covenant. He became the full revelation of the Father as His Seed. As the Seed of God, the name and life of every predestined son of God was in Him. Significantly, the Son of God was also appointed *by the word of the oath* to be our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Heb 5:5-6. The order of Melchizedek is the power of an endless life. Heb 7:16.

We read in the book of Hebrews, 'For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you" ... thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, *confirmed it by an oath*, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.' Heb 6:13-14,17-20.

The two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, are His *word* and His *oath*. Jesus Christ was appointed *by the word of the oath* to be our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. The word of the oath is the confirmation of the covenant, because the Father's will, which is to bring many sons to glory, is fulfilled through the priestly ministry of Christ. The hope of our sonship is sure and steadfast because Jesus Christ, as our great High Priest, has fully identified with our death while, at the same time, He has entered the Presence of God for us. Having perfected our sonship and taken His seat at the right hand of the Father, He now priests to us our participation in His finished offering. His priestly ministry is the guarantee that the word of the Father will be

fulfilled in us as we continue to embrace our participation in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

During His interaction with Abraham on the top of Mount Moriah, God the Father swore by Himself that Jesus Christ would be our great High Priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek. Prior to this interaction, Abraham had already believed that Jesus Christ would be born in his lineage as his Seed. However, it was the word of the oath that confirmed the immutability of God's purpose and guaranteed that all the nations of the earth would be blessed in Christ. The Father confirmed the Everlasting Covenant to Abraham by saying, 'Blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.' Gen 22:17-18.

At the appointed time, Jesus Christ was born in the lineage of Abraham as the Son of Man. His birth as the Son of Man was *by the word of God*. Then, when He was approximately 30 years of age, He was baptised with the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh for His Melchizedek ministry as both King and Priest. We know that He was anointed as both King of righteousness and King of peace. However, according to *the word of the oath*, Jesus was also appointed to be our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. He was *appointed* when He was *anointed*! This occurred at the beginning of His earthly ministry. He was then *glorified* as our great High Priest on His journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross.

Once Jesus Christ had been glorified as our great High Priest, He gave us the Holy Spirit, who joins us to the fellowship of the body of Christ and the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. As we have previously considered, the gift of the Holy Spirit was 'the anointing of the Most Holy'. The gift of the Spirit was also the fulfilment of 'the blessing of Abraham'. In his letter to the Galatians, the apostle Paul proclaimed that 'Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), that the *blessing of Abraham* might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive *the promise of the Spirit* through faith.' Gal 3:13-14.

It is important to recognise that the confirmation of the covenant by Christ, as our great High Priest, was for the sake of both the Jews and Gentiles. The word of the oath that God proclaimed to Abraham on Mount Moriah was, 'In your Seed [Christ] *all the nations of the earth* shall

be blessed'. Gen 22:18. Even though the seventy weeks prophecy was firstly addressed to Daniel and his Jewish brethren, the prophecy clearly states that Christ will confirm the covenant *with many* in the seventieth week. Dan 9:27. 'Many' in that verse refers to all of the spiritual descendants of Abraham. It includes both Jew and Gentile. Before the second half of the seventieth week commences in the end of the age, the 'many' will include 'a great multitude which no man can number from all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues'. Rev 7:9.

Section 4

The delay and the consummation

In this section, we will begin by asking the important question: Why is there *a period of delay* between the first half of the seventieth week and the second half of the seventieth week? We know that all six outcomes that were nominated in the seventy weeks prophecy have been completed by the one offering of Christ. Christ has finished the transgression, made an end of sin, made atonement for iniquity, brought in everlasting righteousness, sealed up vision and prophecy, and anointed the Most Holy. Dan 9:24. If everything has already been finished after sixty-nine and a half weeks, why does there need to be a period of delay before the final half of the seventieth week commences?

In the same way that the crucifixion of Christ was completely *for our sake*, the period of delay is also *for our sake*. As we have considered in an earlier section, God reactivated the present elements of the universe at the ninth hour to give us the opportunity to mourn and repent by looking upon Him whom we have pierced. Zec 12:10. Rev 1:7. The mercy of God has granted us time to escape His judgement upon the old creation by joining us to the fellowship of Christ's offering as those who belong to the new creation. Referring to the mercy of God, the apostle Peter

proclaimed, 'The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.' 2Pe 3:9.

Furthermore, the period of delay is a dispensation of grace that gives us the opportunity to join the fellowship of Christ's offering, so that everything that He finished *for us* is fulfilled *in us*. The apostle Paul rejoiced, 'For what the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the Law might be *fulfilled in us* who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.' Rom 8:3-4. At the conclusion of His offering, Jesus Christ gave us the Holy Spirit to join us to the fellowship of His offering. Understanding that we have been granted participation in the finished work of Christ is the highpoint of the seventy weeks prophecy!

Jew and Gentile in one body

It is important to recognise that the invitation to join the fellowship of Christ's offering and, hence, to receive all of the promises in the seventy weeks prophecy, has been extended to all the Gentile nations. Speaking about the Jews and Gentiles, Paul said that Christ 'is our peace, who has made both one, and broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off [the Gentiles] and to those who were near [the Jews]. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.' Eph 2:14-18.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul declared, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.' Rom 1:16. Following the resurrection of Christ, the gospel was first proclaimed to the Jewish people by the twelve apostles. The apostles proclaimed the word to all of the people in Jerusalem, including the priests and the religious leaders. Act 4:8-12. We know that many of the Jewish people, including some of the priests, responded to the gospel and were joined to the fellowship of the early church. Act 6:7. However, the vast majority of the Jewish nation rejected Jesus Christ as their Messiah. They continued to make animal

sacrifices, in the tradition of the Old Covenant, until the temple and the city of Jerusalem were both destroyed by Prince Titus in AD70.

Even though Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, he recognised that the gospel first needed to be proclaimed to the Jews. When he entered a new city, he often began his ministry by preaching in the Jewish synagogue. There were some Jews who believed the gospel that was proclaimed by Paul, and turned to Christ. However, most of the Jewish people rejected his word. They were not willing to relinquish their religious heritage for the sake of joining the offering of Christ. For example, we read, concerning the Jews in Pisidian Antioch that when they 'saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul'. Act 13:45. Paul and Barnabas responded by saying to the Jews, 'It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.' Act 13:46.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul rejoiced that he had been sent as an apostle to the Gentiles. He said, 'Inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry.' Rom 11:13. However, he also testified about the great sorrow and continual grief that was in his heart because of his countrymen who had rejected the gospel. Rom 9:1-3. Paul likened the Jewish nation to *the natural branches* that have been broken off the olive tree because of unbelief. In the Scriptures, the olive tree is symbolic of the kingdom of God. As the Son of David, who has been raised from the dead and is seated upon the Father's throne, Jesus Christ is 'the rich root of the olive tree'. Rev 5:5. Rev 22:16. Rom 11:17. Paul likened the Gentiles to *wild branches* that have been grafted into the olive tree, contrary to nature, through the offering of Christ.

Significantly, Paul proclaimed that God is able to regraft the Jews, as the natural branches, into the olive tree. Rom 11:23-24. He said to the Romans, 'I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.' Rom 11:25. The judgement of blindness has been invoked upon the Jewish nation because of their unbelief. Since the time of the apostle Paul, the Lord's focus has been the proclamation of the gospel to all the Gentile nations through the ministry of lampstand churches. Rev 1. However, there will come a time when a multitude of Jews will turn again to the Lord. 2Co 3:14-16. The veil that has covered their eyes will be removed, and they will return to find their place in the kingdom of God.

Jesus likened the beginning of the revival among the Jewish nation to a fig tree putting forth its green leaves. He said to the disciples, 'Now learn this parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.' Mat 24:32. The initiative to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom in all the world, which will commence when the first seal is opened, will include messengers from the Jewish nation and from all the Gentile nations. Rev 6:1-2. We know this because the rider of the white horse will possess the bow of Judah and the arrows of Ephraim. Zec 9:13. Rev 6:2. When Jesus spoke of knowing that 'summer is near', he was referring to the period of great tribulation that will follow the period of great revival in the world.

When the second seal is opened, the Lord will take peace from the earth. Rev 6:3-4. There will be a season of great conflict and distress in the world, from the opening of the second seal until the opening of the sixth seal. Mat 24:21-22. This will also be a time of great persecution for the church, because it will be hated by all nations. Mat 24:9. Further to this, it will be a specific time of trouble for the Jewish nation. The prophetic Scriptures refer to this period as 'the time of Jacob's trouble'. Jer 30:7. During this period, the Lord will continue to open a fountain for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that each individual and family can turn and look upon Him whom they have pierced. Zec 12:10. Zec 13:1. The prophet Zechariah foretold that one third of the Jewish nation will come into the kingdom of God. Zec 13:8-9.

The important point in relation to the seventy weeks prophecy is that, before the end of the delay in the seventieth week, the kingdom of God will include a great multitude from every nation. Dan 9:27. This will include the Jewish nation. The kingdom of God will include both Jew and Gentile in the one body of Christ. As we have considered, the Lord promised Abraham that in his Seed, Christ, *all the nations of the earth* will be blessed. Gen 22:18. Gal 3:8. The spiritual descendants of Abraham will be as innumerable as the stars in the heavens. Gen 15:5. In fulfilment of this promise to Abraham, the apostle John saw a great multitude which no-one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, clothed in white robes and standing before the throne of God and the Lamb. Rev 7:9.

No more delay

Revelation Chapter 10 records the end of the period of delay. The apostle John saw a mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. Rev 10:1. We will suggest that this 'mighty', or 'strong', angel is Michael.

Jud 1:9. He is also the 'strong angel' who will stand up at the beginning of the time of the end to proclaim with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?' Rev 5:2. Dan 12:1. Michael is one of the chief angels in the angelic administration. He carries the authority of the Lord's name within the scope of the mandate that he has received from the Lord. In Revelation Chapter 10, we read that Michael's 'face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire'. Rev 10:1. We know that these two attributes belong to Jesus Christ. Rev 1:13-16.

The apostle John recorded that Michael set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land. Rev 10:2. He then 'raised up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it'. Rev 10:6. He was swearing by Jesus Christ, who is seated at the right hand of the Father as our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Rev 4:9-10. Rev 5:13-14. We recall that Jesus introduced Himself to the apostle John by saying, 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, *I am alive forevermore*. Amen.' Rev 1:17-18.

Specifically, Michael lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by Melchizedek that 'there should be *delay no longer*, but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets'. Rev 10:6-7. This is a significant statement in relation to the seventy weeks prophecy. It announces the end of *the period of delay* between the first half of the seventieth week and the second half of the seventieth week. As we have considered, the reason for the period of delay is to gather both Jew and Gentile into the body of Christ as living and active participants in the finished offering of Christ. The important point to note is that the period of delay cannot come to an end until the mystery of God is finished.

'The mystery of God' is a major prophetic theme in the Scriptures. Michael explained to John that this mystery has been declared by the Lord 'to His servants the prophets'. Rev 10:7. The apostle Paul identified that there are *two major elements* to the mystery of God that are apprehended by both Jews and Gentiles in the fellowship of Christ's offering. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul testified regarding his desire that 'their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ'.

Col 2:2. It is important for us to understand the mystery of God in relation *to the Father* and in relation *to the Son*.

In relation to the Father, the mystery of God is the full revelation of the Father's glory in a multitude of sons of God. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul proclaimed this first element of the mystery as being 'Christ in you, the hope of glory'. Col 1:27. He continued to describe his ministry, saying, 'We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.' Col 1:28. In the time of the end, every son of God who has continued to walk blamelessly in the fellowship of Christ's offering will receive the seal of the living God in their forehead. Rev 7:2. Jud 1:24. The seal of the living God is the name of the Father. Significantly, those who receive the seal of the living God in their forehead will be protected from the judgement of God upon Babylon and the eighth world kingdom. Rev 9:4.

In relation to the Son, the mystery of God is the marriage of Christ and the church. In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul wrote, 'Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish ... this is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church'. Eph 5:25-27,32. The church, which is the body of Christ, is currently betrothed to Christ as a chaste virgin. 2Co 11:2. In the time of the end, the church will be presented to Christ to become His wife for the new heavens and new earth. Rev 21:9.

In the book of Revelation, the great multitude, who are clothed in white garments as sons and priests to God the Father, are also dressed in white wedding garments in readiness for the marriage of Christ and the church. Rev 7:13-14. The white, priestly garments that belong to those who are blameless in the fellowship of Christ's offering are also the white wedding garments. One of the twenty-four elders explained to the apostle John, concerning the great multitude in white robes, 'For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they will serve Him day and night in His temple [as priests to the Father]; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them [as the bride of Christ]'. Rev 7:15. The spreading of the tabernacle refers to the covering that a man extends over a woman when he takes her to be his wife. Rut 3:9.

Later in the book of Revelation, the apostle John recorded that he heard the voice of this great multitude proclaiming, 'Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.' Rev 19:7. The angel who was talking to John then instructed him to write, 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' Rev 19:9. When the sixth seal is opened, a great multitude will be revealed as those who are dressed in readiness for the marriage of Christ and the church. The invitation to believers to come to the wedding feast, dressed in white garments, will continue during the blowing of the trumpets. However, in the days that immediately precede the blowing of the seventh trumpet, this invitation will come to an end.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus illustrated this point in the parable of the wedding feast and in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. Mat 22:1-14. Mat 25:1-13. He emphasised the need to respond to God's invitation in a prompt fashion, so that we are ready for the wedding feast. He warned us that there will come a time when the door to the feast will be shut. For example, concerning the five foolish virgins, Jesus said, 'And while they went to buy [oil], the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding, and *the door was shut*. 'Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, "Lord, lord, open to us!" But he answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you".' Mat 25:10-12.

After the apostle John heard Michael proclaim that 'there should be delay no longer', he was given a reed like a measuring rod and was instructed to 'rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there'. Rev 11:1. This refers to all of the believers in the church who are watching and praying with Christ as those who are fully engaged in the ministry of the true altar of incense in the heavenly places. Significantly, at this time, John was also instructed to 'leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.' Rev 11:2. After the door to the wedding feast in the heavenly places has been shut, the bride of Christ will be protected and nourished by Christ in the wilderness for a period of three and a half years. Rev 12:6,14. During this same period, the world will be ruled by the final antichrist. Rev 11:2. Rev 13:5.

It was revealed to the prophet Daniel that the reign of antichrist will be three and a half years. Dan 7:25. Dan 12:7. However, even though he was the one who received the seventy weeks prophecy, the detail of the second half of the seventieth week was not revealed to him. Dan 12:8. It

was the apostle John who received the mandate to prophesy regarding the reign of antichrist and the final judgement of God upon the world. This prophetic mandate was contained in the 'little book' that was in the hand of Michael when he swore by Christ, as Melchizedek, that there would be no more delay. Rev 10:2,6. Christ Himself instructed John to take the little book from the hand of Michael. Rev 10:8. When he did so, Michael told him that it would be sweet in his mouth and bitter in his belly. Rev 10:9-10. Referring to the kingdom of antichrist, he said to John, 'You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.' Rev 10:11.

The one who makes desolate

The seventy weeks prophecy refers to the antichrist as 'the one who makes desolate'. Dan 9:27. 'The one who makes desolate' could also be called 'the desolator'. Before we consider the antichrist as the final desolator, we will briefly identify the scriptural principle of a desolator. A desolator is the ruler of a world kingdom, who is an instrument of judgement in the Lord's hand. Isa 10:5. When the Israelites rejected the Lord and turned aside to idolatry, the Lord sent His prophets to call them to repentance. However, if they refused to heed the warning of the prophets, the Lord ultimately called for a desolator as a judgement upon His people.

For example, the prophet Isaiah foretold that the Lord would 'whistle' for the king of Assyria as an instrument of judgement upon the ten northern tribes of Israel. Isa 7:7-18. In the days of Hezekiah, the southern tribes of Judah were miraculously delivered from the judgement of the Assyrians. 2Ki 19:32-36. However, they were later conquered by the Babylonians. Dan 1:1-2. In the same way that the king of Assyria was the desolator in relation to the northern tribes of Israel, the king of Babylon was the desolator in relation to the southern tribes of Judah.

As the Lord's people submitted themselves to the judgement of the desolator, the persecution that they experienced became a measured chastening upon them for the sake of their recovery. Isa 10:20-22. At the time same time, the desolator filled up the cup of their own judgement. When the season of chastening upon the remnant of the Lord's people was complete, the Lord judged the desolator. Isa 10:12. The judgement of the desolator was often at the hand of the ruler of the next world kingdom. For example, the judgement of the Babylonians was at the hand of the Medes and Persians. Dan 5. The judgement of the Medes and

Persians was at the hand of the Greeks. The judgement of the Greeks was at the hand of the Romans.

Significantly, as one world kingdom fell, and another rose to take its place, the administration of Babylon continued to rule over the nations of the world. In the book of Revelation, the administration of Babylon is depicted as *a great harlot* who sits upon all seven world kingdoms.

Rev 17:1,9-10. Babylon was first established by the fathers of the nations when they began to build the city and the tower of Babel to make a name for themselves and to avoid being scattered throughout the earth.

Gen 11:1-9. They did this to replace the administration of Christ over the nations. Babylon became the administration through which Satan exercises his rulership over the world in direct opposition to Christ.

Luk 4:5-6.

Babylon is called 'the mother of harlots' because she has spawned all of the harlot administrations that govern each nation of the world. Rev 17:5. She is also called 'the mother of the abominations of the earth' because she has produced every man-made religion, all of which are abominations to the Lord. Rev 17:5. In direct contrast to the fellowship of offering that exists in the kingdom of God, the administration of Babylon generates an abundance of wealth *by trading*. Eze 28:5. In this regard, we are reminded that Satan was corrupted by the abundance of his trade. Eze 28:16. In the time of the Medes and Persians, the administration of Babylon developed to include the rule of the law. Dan 6. It was further developed to incorporate the rulership of human wisdom in the time of the Greeks, and the rulership of state religions in the time of the divided Roman empire. 1Co 1:20.

We currently live in the time of the seventh world kingdom. The administration of Babylon continues to rule over the nations of the world through various international organisations that belong to, or are aligned with, the United Nations. The judgement of the seventh world kingdom will begin when the Lamb of God opens the second seal in the time of the end. As we have already considered, the opening of the second seal will initiate a period of unprecedented conflict between the nations of the world. The apostle John recorded in the book of Revelation, 'When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see". Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.' Rev 6:3-4.

THE SEVENTY WEEKS PROPHECY

The prophetic Scriptures tell us that, during this period of intense conflict, Gog and Magog will rise to preeminence among the nations of the world. Dan 11:40-45. Eze 38. Under the leadership of Gog and Magog, the church will be hated of all nations. Mat 24:9. When the apostle John witnessed the opening of the fifth seal, he saw the souls of many believers who will die in the Lord during this time of great persecution upon the church. Rev 6:9-11. We do not know how long this period of conflict in the world and persecution against the church will last. However, we do know that the Lord has promised to cut it short for the sake of His elect. Mat 24:21-22. Jesus Christ will intervene in the affairs of men and will sovereignly judge all the armies who have joined forces with Gog and Magog on the mountains of Israel. Eze 39:4.

The prophets Ezekiel and Zechariah both described this sovereign judgement of God upon the leaders of the seventh world kingdom. Eze 38:18-23. Eze 39:1-24. Zec 14:1-15. In the aftermath of this judgement, as the prophet Ezekiel explained, it will take seven months to bury all the dead bodies and seven years to burn the weapons. Eze 39:9,12. In the same way that the United Nations was established by the nations of the world in the aftermath of the Second World War, there is little doubt that there will be a renewed resolve for peace and prosperity in the aftermath of the judgement of Gog and Magog. However, the administration of Babylon will not have the opportunity to regroup in order to sit upon another world kingdom. The Lord will pronounce the final judgement upon Babylon when the seven trumpets are blown by His messengers in the heavenly places. Rev 8:6.

The seven trumpets announce the sovereign judgement of God upon the administration of Babylon. Specifically, when the second trumpet is blown, a great mountain burning with fire will be thrown into the sea. Rev 8:8. This will be the fulfilment of the prophecy of Jeremiah concerning the final judgement of Babylon. The Lord has declared to Babylon, through Jeremiah, 'Behold I am against you, O destroying mountain, who destroys all the earth ... I will stretch out My hand against you, roll you down from the rocks, and *make you a burnt mountain*. They shall not take from you a stone for a corner nor a stone for a foundation, but *you shall be desolate forever* ... set up a banner in the land, *blow the trumpet* among the nations! Prepare the nations against her, call the kingdoms together against her.' Jer 51:25-27.

This brings us to the consideration of the final antichrist, who is referred to in the seventy weeks prophecy as 'the one who makes desolate'. Dan 9:27. The Lord will use the antichrist as the instrument in His hand

to execute the final judgement upon Babylon, so that she is left desolate forever. At this time, the world will experience a unique transition of power. This is an important point. When we consider the history of the kingdoms of the world, we observe that each kingdom was conquered and replaced by a new world kingdom, and yet the administration of Babylon continued to reign from one kingdom to the next. In contrast to this, the antichrist will *revive* the seventh world kingdom and he will *replace* the administration of Babylon with a completely new administration in his own image. Rev 13.

Interestingly, the revived seventh world kingdom, which is an eighth world kingdom, will not have the same characteristics as the seventh – even though it is ‘of the seventh’. Rev 17:11. We read in the book of Revelation that the beast will be like a leopard. Rev 13:2. This means that it will be like the Greek empire, which is prophetically likened to a leopard in the book of Daniel. Dan 7:6. It will have ‘feet like a bear’, which means that it will have a similar administrative structure to the Persian empire, to rule over all the regions of the world. Dan 7:5. Finally, the beast will have ‘the mouth of a lion’, which means that the antichrist will claim the same absolute rulership that king Nebuchadnezzar was given over the kingdom of Babylon. Dan 7:4.

The final antichrist will be a unique ruler! He is described as a ‘little horn’ in Chapter 7 of the book of Daniel. Dan 7:8,24-25. However, he will not be like the various ‘little horns’ who have risen to prominence because they were empowered by Satan from the heavenly places. Dan 8:9-10. The antichrist will not be empowered from the heavenly places because of the transgression which causes abomination. The final antichrist will be demonically empowered from the bottomless pit. Rev 11:7. Rev 17:8. Having been cast out of heaven and flung to the earth, Satan will also give him his power, his throne, and great authority. Rev 13:2. The whole world will marvel and proclaim, ‘Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?’ Rev 13:3-4.

The prophet Daniel’s description of the rise of the antichrist gives us further insight as to why the whole world will marvel and proclaim that no-one is able to make war with him. Daniel said, ‘I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.’ Dan 7:8. Daniel was considering the ten horns that are ten kings who belong to the seventh world kingdom. Dan 7:24. In the process of rising to power, antichrist will replace three of these kings.

The replacement of these three kings, presumably with antichrist's own loyal followers, will be part of the redistribution of power in the world after the judgement of Gog and Magog.

In contrast to the seventh world kingdom, when the ten kings are subservient to the seven administrative headquarters that belong to Babylon, this group of kings will rule and reign with antichrist for a short period of time. Rev 12:3. The book of Revelation describes the short period of their rulership with antichrist as being 'one hour'. Rev 17:12. It is during this *one hour* that Babylon will be made desolate by antichrist and the ten kings. One of the messengers with the seven vials explained to the apostle John, 'The ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot [Babylon], make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to fulfil His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, *until the words of God are fulfilled.*' Rev 17:16-17.

Furthermore, it is during this same *one hour* that the vials, which contain the fullness of the wrath of God, will be poured out. The apostle John recorded, 'Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them *the wrath of God is complete*'. Rev 15:1. When John saw the seventh angel pouring out the final bowl, he heard a loud voice coming from the throne in the temple of heaven. The loud voice proclaimed, 'It is done!' Rev 16:17. This is the consummation! We read in the seventy weeks prophecy that the consummation will be poured out upon the desolate. The consummation is much more than the completion of the seventy weeks. It means complete and utter destruction.

The vials that contain the fullness of the wrath of God will be poured out upon the antichrist, his throne, and all those who have received the mark of his name, and worship his image. It is remarkable to consider that the vials will be poured out upon the antichrist in *the first hour* of his reign. This means that, as soon as the reign of antichrist begins, his entire kingdom will already be going to perdition. Rev 17:11. As we have considered, the total length of the reign of antichrist will be three and a half years. We read, concerning the antichrist, 'He was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given *authority to continue for forty-two months*. Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.' Rev 13:5-6.

We know that the church, which includes both Jew and Gentile, will be miraculously protected and nourished by the Lord in the wilderness during the reign of antichrist. While the church celebrates the wedding feast, the only remaining witness on the earth will be the ministry of Moses and Elijah. Mat 17:3. Rev 11:5-6. These two witnesses will be clothed in sackcloth as they prophesy concerning the judgement of God upon the world. Rev 11:3. In the book of Revelation, Moses and Elijah are called 'the two olive trees' and 'the two lampstands' who stand before the God of the earth. Rev 11:4. This means that, to the world, they will be the representatives of both God's kingdom and the church.

The ministry of Moses and Elijah will be supported by 144 000 messengers who will be redeemed from among men as firstfruits to God. Rev 14:4. They will be the firstfruits of the great multitude from every nation, tribe, people and tongue. The 144 000 messengers will be sealed for their unique ministry in relation to the eighth world kingdom when the sixth seal is opened. Rev 7:3-4. They will receive the seal of the living God in their foreheads. Rev 14:1. As Moses and Elijah prophesy concerning the judgement of God upon the eighth world kingdom, the 144 000 will support their ministry by playing on spiritual harps. They will bear witness to the judgement of God upon the world by singing the song of Moses and the song of Lamb. Rev 15:2-3.

THE SEVENTY WEEKS PROPHECY DANIEL 9:24-27



