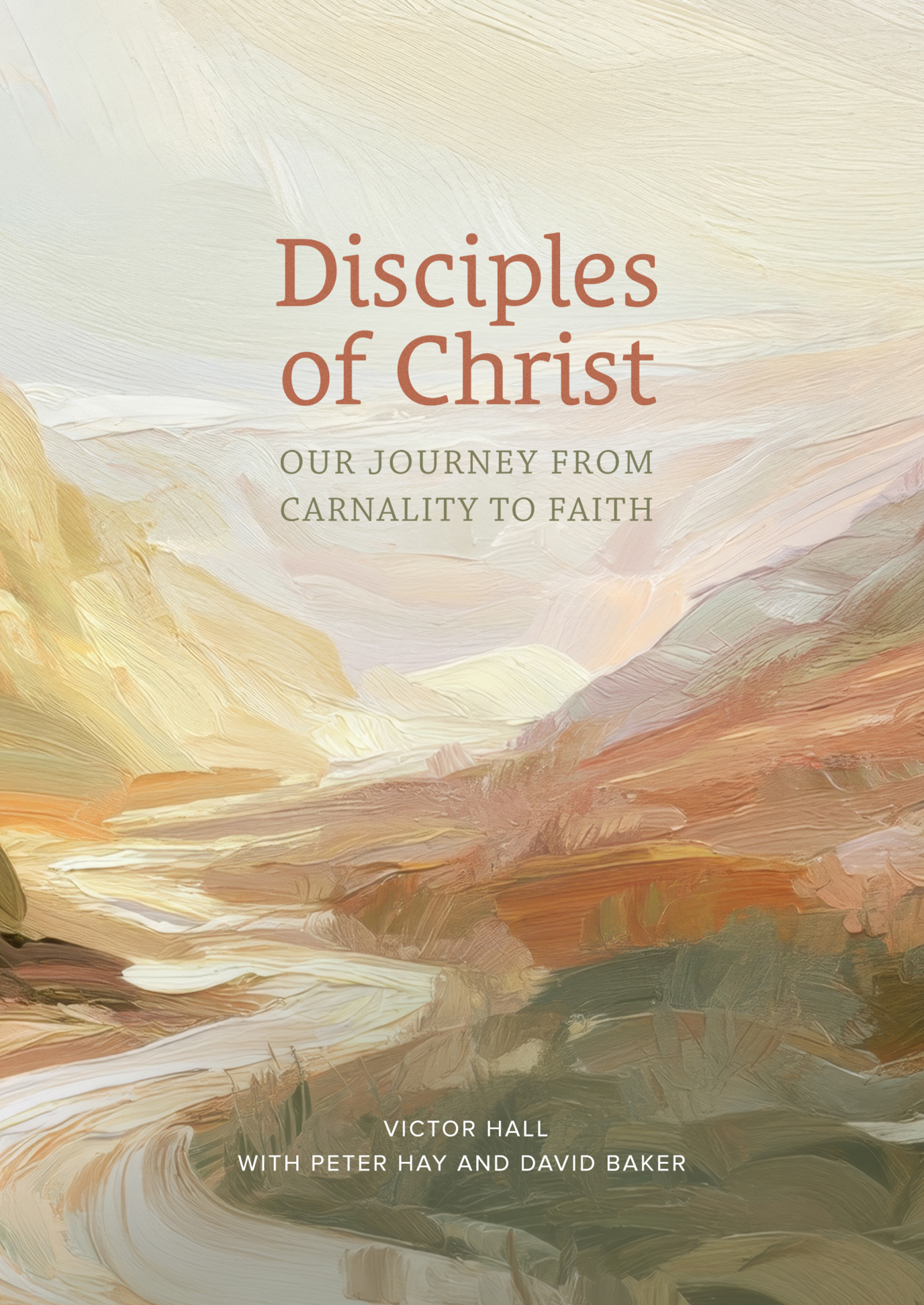

Disciples
of Christ
OUR JOURNEY FROM
CARNALITY TO FAITH
VICTOR HALL
WITH PETER HAY AND DAVID BAKER

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

Our journey from carnality to faith

Victor Hall
with Peter Hay and David Baker

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Preface

The apostle Paul exhorted Timothy, at the end of his first pastoral letter, by saying, 'But you, O man of God, flee these things [that belong to the world] and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.' 1Ti 6:11. The six elements that Paul listed in this verse are then summed up in the seventh – eternal life. Paul continued by saying, 'Fight the good fight of faith, *lay hold on eternal life*, to which you were called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.' 1Ti 6:12. We know that Jesus Christ has laid hold of us through the steps of new birth so that God abides in us. As sons of God, we then need to lay hold of eternal life by becoming disciples of Christ who abide in God.

The apostle Paul described the pathway of his discipleship by saying, 'Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.' Php 3:12. When we are born of the Spirit as a son of God, we become a partaker of the divine nature. 2Pe 1:4. We enter the kingdom of God, which is the fellowship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Joh 3:5. The faith of the Son of God, working by the love of God that we have received through new birth, then compels us *to be baptised* into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As we are taught to abide in Their fellowship,

we grow in our knowledge of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is eternal life. 1Jn 5:20. Jud 1:21.

In this last season, the Lord has significantly upgraded our understanding of baptism and discipleship. We recall that Jesus said to the disciples, prior to His ascension from the Mount of Olives, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and *make disciples* of all nations, *baptising them* in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, *teaching them* to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Mat 28:18-20. The mandate that belongs to the messengers of Christ in every generation, all the way to the end of the age, is to make disciples by teaching sons of God what it means to abide in the fellowship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We have considered the *purpose of discipleship* in many of our recent writings, including a helpful summary in Section 5 of the book called, *The Pilgrimage of the More Excellent Way.* In as much as it is important to understand the purpose of discipleship in the New Covenant, it is also necessary for us to consider *the spiritual mode of discipleship* that must be employed by a presbytery in the right hand of Christ. There have been many carnal modes of discipleship that have been promoted and propagated by various leaders during the church age. The apostle Paul warned the Ephesian presbytery about alternative discipleship models, when he said to them, 'From among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.' Act 20:30.

Carnal modes of discipleship

Even though the apostle Paul was personally involved in the discipleship of many believers, he did not promote *a personal mentor* to *personal disciple model*. Rather, he taught that believers are discipled by Christ through the word of present truth that is proclaimed by a presbytery in the right hand of Christ. Making this distinction, Paul wrote to the Corinthians, 'For when one says, "I am of Paul", and another, "I am of Apollos", are you not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers [belonging to a presbytery] through whom you believed [when the word was preached to you], as the Lord [Christ] gave [faith] to each one?' 1Co 3:4-5.

Paul further developed the distinction between a carnal mode of discipleship and a spiritual mode of discipleship in his letter to the Romans. Speaking to every believer to whom the word of faith is

preached, he said, 'Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down) or "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).' Rom 10:6-7. Paul was describing the carnal desire in a person's heart that causes them to look for a spiritual intermediary, rather than being accountable for their own response to the word of faith that has been preached to them by the messengers of Christ.

We know that Jesus Christ is presently seated at the right hand of God in heaven. He continues to speak from heaven as the Scriptures are proclaimed to us, by the Holy Spirit, through the messengers in His right hand, as a word of present truth. Jesus concluded His exhortation to all His lampstand churches by saying, 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches'. Rev 2:7. A believer who wants someone to ascend into heaven, to bring Christ down, does not recognise that the word of present truth that is proclaimed to the church *is the bread from heaven* and the only provision that they need to live as a son of God. They want someone to bring them another word, or to script for them, because they think that this is necessary for them to live a successful life in this world.

Furthermore, Jesus Christ has already descended into the abyss on His offering journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. He has tasted our death and taken the body of sin, in Himself, out into the sea of God's forgetfulness. At the same time, the resurrection life of God in His blood brought Him back from the death of our sin. Remarkably, while He was still in the lowest parts of the earth, the capacity of Eternal Spirit enabled Him to learn our obedience and fulfil the works of our sonship as the Author and Finisher of our faith. A believer who wants someone to descend into the abyss, to bring Christ up from the dead, does not recognise that Christ has already pioneered the pathway of their salvation. They do not accept that they only receive the resurrection life of Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. They want someone to define another pathway for them that they think will help them minimise their suffering in this world.

When a leader is willing to be drawn into this carnal mode of discipleship, often in the name of pastoral care, it establishes a trading relationship between the leader and the person. The person derives the benefit of transferring their accountability to the leader in the hope of achieving a good outcome; while, at the same time, the leader derives the benefit of feeling appreciated because people want to listen to them and

seek them out for advice on many facets of life. Some leaders may even promote this form of discipleship because they derive identity verification from the fact that people become dependent upon them. This profile is particularly common for the solo pastor, and his wife, of an independent local congregation.

The word of faith is near you

In contrast, the apostle Paul promoted the discipleship model where the word of faith is preached, by a presbytery in the right hand of Christ, directly to every household that belongs to a lampstand church. Paul declared, '*The word is near you*, in your mouth and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach).' Rom 10:8. The word that is translated 'near' in this verse means that it is 'at hand' – both 'in place' and 'in time'. If we belong to a lampstand church, with a presbytery that is proclaiming a word of present truth, we do not need to go searching for the word. Rather, we need to pay attention to the word that is already near to us. Paul wrote to the Hebrews, 'For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it'. Heb 2:1.

Paying attention to the word of present truth is the first dimension of discipleship for every believer. It is the Holy Spirit who opens a disciple's ear so that they can hear what He is saying to the churches. The word that is preached to the church *is multiplied* to become the word to every individual – to every man, woman, and child – by the Holy Spirit, who brings illumination and conviction to the spirit of each person. When a person turns in response to the word of Christ, and the conviction of the Holy Spirit, they are enabled by the Holy Spirit *to meet Christ* and to see the truth in the face of Christ. They can see the self-centred motivations in their heart, while, at the same time, they can also see the truth of their sanctification as a son of God.

The word of faith is in your mouth

The demeanour of a disciple who is meeting Christ face to face, by the Holy Spirit, will be poor in spirit. Furthermore, the evidence that a disciple is *seeing the truth* in the face of Christ will be their willingness and eagerness to *confess the truth.* This brings us to the second dimension of discipleship. The apostle Paul said that the word of faith that is preached to us will then be *in our mouth.* It will be in our mouth

as a good confession, which is the confession of what is true. 1Ti 6:13. Joh 18:37. A good confession is the fruit of meeting Christ; not the outcome of self-analysis. It is an expression of faith; not the expression of self-righteous condemnation. When we are making a good confession, we are confessing Christ before men because we understand that He has pioneered the pathway of our repentance and faith-obedience as a son of God.

It is important to appreciate that a good confession is the foundation for fellowship in every relational context that belongs to the kingdom of God. In the first case, a good confession in response to the word of Christ, and the conviction of the Holy Spirit, is the foundation for fellowship between a husband and wife in one Spirit. Equally, a good confession is the foundation for fellowship in a household. As parents bear witness to their own repentance and faith, in response to the word of present truth, they are exemplifying the culture of discipleship for their children, and fostering the context in which they can train their children in the same culture of faith and godliness.

In this regard, the nature of the conversation in a house is the first evidence that the members of that household are committed to becoming disciples of Christ. A worthy house will appreciate that the word of present truth, that proceeds from the right hand of Christ, is the expression of *His discipleship initiative* toward their household. For this reason, a worthy house will be committed to an ongoing discussion and fellowship in the word of present truth that begins with a good confession. Of course, a good confession also becomes the foundation for fellowship in an extended family and the fellowship from house to house in the church. It is also the foundation for fellowship between disciples and their leaders, in the place where they live, as those who are 'taught the word' learn to 'share all good things' with those who proclaim the word to them. Gal 6:6.

The word of faith is in your heart

The third dimension of discipleship is that the word of faith that is preached to us is *in our heart*. Rom 10:8. Our willingness to embrace our daily participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ demonstrates that we believe that God has raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Rom 10:9-10. The faith of the Son of God, that we receive as we continue to hear the word of God, compels us to walk on the pathway that Christ has pioneered for us each day. As we follow the leadership of the

Holy Spirit on this pathway, the resurrection life of Christ enables us to do the works of sonship that Christ has already accomplished for us. The works of our sonship reveal the righteousness of God in our life.

A disciple who is walking with Christ each day, on the pathway that He has pioneered for them, will be progressively *learning their obedience* as a son of God, and they will be progressively *obtaining a testimony* of resurrection life. A testimony of resurrection life is the expression of the tongue of a disciple. The Lord Jesus declared, through the prophet Isaiah, on behalf of every disciple, 'The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples, that I should know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.' Isa 50:4. A believer who has been given the tongue of a disciple is able to minister rest and refreshing to a brother or sister who may have become weary in relation to their own pilgrimage as a disciple of Christ.

The apostle John's summary

In his first epistle, the apostle John identified the *same three dimensions* that belong to the process of discipleship. John explained that, 'If we walk in the light as He [God] is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.' 1Jn 1:7. The light of the glory of God, that shines from the face of Jesus Christ in His spiritual body, is ministered to us when the word of life is proclaimed to us, by the Holy Spirit, through the messengers of Christ in His right hand. Prior to writing this letter, we know that the apostle John saw how the light of the seven Spirits of God shines from the face of Christ through the seven stars in His right hand, which are the presbyteries of lampstand churches. Rev 1:12-16.

Speaking as part of a presbytery, John wrote, concerning the light that shines from the face of Christ, 'That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ'. 1Jn 1:3. When the word of present truth is proclaimed to us, it is an invitation to join the fellowship of Yahweh. It is the Holy Spirit who enables the light of the word to shine into the depths of our heart, by illuminating our spirit, so that we can respond by making a good confession. As we have already considered, our good confession is the foundation for our fellowship with one another – including our spouse, our family, our extended family, other households in the church, and our leaders.

In relation to the third dimension of discipleship, the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin as we follow Christ on the pathway that He has pioneered for us. The blood of Christ is operative in our lives as we embrace our participation in the seven wounding events that Christ experienced from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. It is our participation in the circumcision of Christ that is removing the other law from our heart, so that we are being delivered from our self-centredness that leads us into bondage to the law of sin. Furthermore, the resurrection life of God in the blood of Christ is cleansing us from sin, which is missing the mark, because it is equipping us to do the works of our sonship that Christ has already learned for us.

The pathway of our discipleship continues for the entire duration of our earthly pilgrimage as sons of God. As we follow Christ on the pathway that He has pioneered for us, we are being delivered *from carnality* and we are being delivered *to faith.* Specifically, we are learning to live by the faith of the Son of God, who is the Author and Finisher of our faith in the New Covenant! As sons of God, who are walking as disciples of Christ, we are apprehending the same testimony as the apostle Paul, who declared, 'I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by *the faith of the Son of God* who loved me and gave Himself for me.' Gal 2:20.

Chapter 1

The seven signs in the Gospel of John

The Gospel of John

The apostle John testified that, while he was praying in the Spirit, he heard behind him a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet. Having turned to see the voice, John saw Jesus Christ seated at the right hand of God in the middle of His lampstand churches. Rev 1:12-16. The impact of this vision caused John to fall at the feet of Christ like a dead man. Jesus Christ reached out His right hand and imparted His faith to him, saying, 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. Rev 1:17.

Jesus Christ then gave John the mandate to write his gospel account, his pastoral letters, and the book of Revelation. He commanded him to 'write the things which you have seen [the Gospel of John], and the things which are [the pastoral letters of John], and the things which will take place after this [the book of Revelation].' Rev 1:19. Notably, in obedience to Christ, John wrote the book of Revelation first and sent it to the seven churches. Rev 1:11. In the light of the full revelation of Christ, He then wrote his Gospel account and his pastoral letters.

It is important for us to appreciate the priority of the Gospel of John. In terms of constructing a harmony of the gospels, we need to consider the other gospel accounts in relation to the framework that is given to us by John. The synoptic gospels do not nominate all the Passover feasts during Christ's ministry. The Gospel of John nominates four Passover feasts during His earthly ministry, so we know that His earthly ministry was 3 ½ years long. This is consistent with the seventy weeks prophecy in the book of Daniel. Dan 9:27.

The apostle John wrote his Gospel to bear witness to the miraculous signs that Jesus accomplished during His ministry. Of course, John did not record all the miracles of Jesus. He explained the purpose of the book by saying, 'And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these [seven signs] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.' Joh 20:30-31.

John recorded seven occasions when Jesus proclaimed Himself to be 'I AM'. Joh 6:35. Joh 8:12. Joh 10:7,11. Joh 11:25. Joh 14:6. Joh 15:1. Jesus also performed *seven specific signs,* which have been recorded by John, that verified the truth of what He was saying about Himself, His Father, and His kingdom. The purpose of each sign was a confirmation of His message. Heb 2:4. Each sign revealed and magnified a significant aspect of His identity as the Christ. They collectively demonstrated the glory of His sonship as the Lord in every situation that He encountered.

There are seven signs in the Gospel of John. Each sign revealed a particular dimension of the one sign that Christ has given to all men – the sign of the prophet Jonah. The sign of the prophet Jonah is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Speaking to the scribes and Pharisees who demanded a sign from Him, Jesus said, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.' Mat 12:39-40.

Where was Jesus from?

After Jesus stood up on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles and proclaimed that the Holy Spirit would enable rivers of living water to flow from the heart of sons of God, it prompted an argument about who He was. We read in the Gospel of John, 'Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the Prophet".

Others said, “This is the Christ”. But some said, “Will the Christ come out of Galilee?” Has not the Scripture said that Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was”?’ Joh 7:40-42.

The people could not understand that Jesus was always three things – He was the Son of God from above; He was the Son of David from Bethlehem; and He was the Prophet from Nazareth.

When Yahweh the Son emptied Himself to the Father before the foundation of the world, He was begotten as the Son of God by the word of the Father and the sanctifying capacity of the Holy Spirit. The Father declared, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You.’ Heb 1:5. The Son placed His throne on the top of spiritual Mount Zion and then He created the angelic host of heaven and the physical universe. Gen 1:1. The prophets of old saw and described the administration that belongs to the throne of the Son of God. Eze 1:4-28.

At the appointed time, the Son of God further emptied Himself to be born as the Son of Man from the womb of the virgin Mary. John the Baptist proclaimed, ‘He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all … The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.’ Joh 3:31,35-36.

In terms of substantiating that He was the Son of God who had come down from heaven, Jesus did not need John’s testimony. Jesus Himself proclaimed that He was the Son of God who had come from above. Jesus said, ‘I have a greater witness than John’s; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish – the very works that I do – bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me.’ Joh 5:36-37.

As the Son of Man, Jesus was born in the lineage of Abraham and King David. As the Son of Abraham, He is the Seed in whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed. Gen 22:18. As the Son of David, He is the Christ who will inherit the throne of David and rule over all the nations of the earth in the time of the end. Luk 1:32. Jesus was born in Bethlehem as the Son of David. Immediately prior to the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary travelled from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be registered in the census because Joseph was of the house and lineage of David.

Bethlehem was called the 'city of David' because it was the place where he was born and then anointed by Samuel to be king over Israel. 1Sam 16:1,13. The Jews knew that the Messiah would also come from Bethlehem. When King Herod asked the chief priests and scribes where the Messiah would be born, they immediately replied, 'In Bethlehem of Judea'. Mat 2:5. They then quoted the prophet Micah, 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel'. Mat 2:6. Mic 5:2.

When we consider the time of the year that the angel of the Lord spoke to Zechariah about the pregnancy of Elizabeth, we know that John the Baptist would have been born in Spring at the time of the Passover. Jesus was born six months later in the seventh month of the Jewish year. It is likely that he was born in a 'Sukkah' on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles. The apostle John declared, 'The Word became flesh and dwelt [lit. tabernacled] among us'. Joh 1:14. The fact that the shepherds were still out in the fields looking after their flocks when Jesus was born, also supports the point that He was born in Autumn, rather than in Winter. Luk 2:8-20.

If Jesus was born on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, He would have been circumcised on the last day (the 8th day) of the great feast. He was then dedicated at the temple in Jerusalem forty days after His birth. Luk 2:22. Following His dedication, Joseph and Mary returned to Nazareth where Jesus grew up. The fact that this was His hometown is significant because Jesus was also the Prophet who came from Nazareth. He came to reveal the sign of the prophet Jonah. The Scriptures record that Jonah came from a small town, very close to Nazareth, in the region of Galilee. 2Ki 14:25. As the Prophet from Nazareth, Jesus came to reveal the threefold witness of death, burial, and resurrection to an unbelieving generation.

The beginning of Jesus ministry

John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the nation of Israel for the coming of Jesus. He preached the need for repentance. His ministry fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah regarding the voice of one crying in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord. Joh 1:23. The work of John the Baptist to prepare the way of Christ included baptising Him in the river Jordan. Jesus was baptised when He was thirty years old at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles. Luk 3:23.

The baptism of Jesus initiated His earthly ministry before all men. Jesus testified that His baptism was necessary 'to fulfil all righteousness'. Mat 3:15.

When Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove. Luk 3:22. Joh 1:32. The Father anointed Jesus with the power of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh, through the Holy Spirit, which enabled His kingly and priestly work as the Lamb of God. The work of the Father and the Holy Spirit, in a fellowship with John the Baptist, was to commission Jesus for His work as the Christ in the flesh. The ministry of Jesus progressively fulfilled all righteousness as He completed the work that the Father had given Him to do.

The Holy Spirit strengthened Christ with the power of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh to fulfil the Father's work. The Holy Spirit opened the ear of Christ each morning so that He could receive the Father's word as a Disciple. He also led Christ and gave Him direction on behalf of the Father in relation to the works of His obedience for each day. Notably, as soon as Jesus had been baptised and anointed for His ministry by God, the Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Luk 4:1.

In the wilderness, Jesus overcame Satan and the three temptations that have been common to man since the fall of Adam in the beginning. In so doing, Jesus demonstrated that He was the last Adam with the authority to reclaim the kingdom of God for mankind. Rom 5:14. 1Co 15:45. Christ was revealed as the Lord in the flesh with authority and power to rule over the angelic realm, including the angels who were in rebellion against Him. Speaking as the Lord of the angelic hosts, Jesus said to Satan, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.' Luk 4:8. Having overcome Satan, Jesus returned from the wilderness to destroy the works of the devil and to take away the sin of the world.

While Jesus was in the wilderness, John continued to baptise in the river Jordan. The Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' Joh 1:19. When John said that he was not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet, they wanted to know why he was baptising and making disciples. John replied, 'I baptise with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.' Joh 1:27. Evidently, this discussion coincided with the return of Jesus from the wilderness.

The ministry of John the Baptist was a crossover to the ministry of Jesus. Having come to know that Jesus was the Christ, John knew that his disciples needed to become the disciples of Jesus. The day after the discussion with the priests and Levites, John the Baptist saw Jesus walking toward him and said to the entire crowd, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' This is He of whom I said, "After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me." I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptising with water.' Joh 1:29-31.

We note that this public declaration by John the Baptist was approximately six weeks after Jesus was baptised. It was after Jesus had returned from the wilderness where He had spent forty days overcoming Satan. In the wilderness, Satan had repeatedly attempted to provoke Christ to reveal Himself by exercising His own initiative as the Son of God. Luk 4:3,9. Notably, when Jesus returned from the wilderness, it was John the Baptist who announced that Jesus was the Son of God. John declared, 'I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.' Joh 1:34.

The first disciples

The day after John the Baptist proclaimed Jesus to be the Lamb of God, the Christ, who is both King and Priest, and the Son of God, he was standing with two of his disciples when he saw Jesus walking at a distance. John said to his two disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God!". Joh 1:36. John the Baptist was compelling them to follow Jesus and to become His disciples. The two disciples were Andrew and John. They obeyed the word of John the Baptist and began to follow Jesus.

Jesus immediately identified that the two men were seekers, asking them, 'What do you seek?' Joh 1:38. They inferred that Christ had become their Teacher when they called Him 'Rabbi' and asked Him where He was staying. Jesus received them as His disciples and invited them to stay with Him. Joh 1:39. Andrew and John were the first to seek the kingdom of God as followers of Christ. In this regard, they chose to, 'seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness'.

The brother of Andrew was Simon Peter. It was Andrew who first announced to Simon that they had found the Messiah and then brought him to meet Jesus. This happened while Jesus was still in Judea. Jesus immediately spoke to him about his name which was prophetic of his calling. He said, 'You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas.' Joh 1:42. The name 'Cephas' is also translated 'Peter'.

It means ‘a stone’. Peter was called to become part of the living foundation of the church. Mat 16:18.

Jesus then decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and called him to follow as a disciple. Joh 1:43. Philip was from Bethsaida, which was also the hometown of Andrew and Peter. Having met Jesus, Philip then went and called Nathanael saying, ‘We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’ Joh 1:45. He was particularly referring to the words of Moses regarding the coming of the Prophet. We are reminded that Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.’ Deu 18:15.

Nathanael immediately raised the issue of Jesus coming from Nazareth. He said, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Joh 1:46. He did not say this because he had some form of prejudice against the town of Nazareth or the region of Galilee. Nathanael was well acquainted with the history of the prophets and the nation of Israel. He was asking, ‘what good came from Jonah’s ministry?’

In answering this question, we note that the ministry of Jonah caused a whole city to find repentance from their sin so that they were saved from the fire of God’s eternal judgement. Without the ministry of Jonah, the inhabitants of Ninevah would have perished like Sodom and Gomorrah. However, we also note that it was only about fifty years after the ministry of Jonah that the Assyrian empire conquered the northern tribes of Israel and scattered them among the nations.

Philip responded to Nathanael’s query by saying ‘Come and see.’ Joh 1:46. He invited him to come to Christ to receive illumination from Him regarding the nature of His ministry. In the same way that Jesus called Peter by name during their first meeting, Jesus spoke to Nathanael according to his predestination to become part of the true Israel of God. Joh 1:47. When Jesus spoke to him, Nathanael immediately saw that he was known by Christ. He also came to see that Jesus was the Son of God and the King of Israel. Joh 1:49. With this illumination, Nathanael began to receive the answer to his question – ‘can anything good come out of Nazareth’?

Jesus continued to answer his question by saying, ‘You will see greater things than these … Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’ Joh 1:50-51. Jesus was referring to the same revelation that

He had previously given to Jacob at Bethel. Gen 28:10-22. The physical body of Jesus was the true Bethel – it was the house of God. Furthermore, Jesus was the Prophet from Nazareth who had come to reveal the sign of Jonah to the world through His own death, burial, and resurrection.

The outcome of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ was a new temple that included both Jew and Gentile in His corporate body. The new house of God was raised up on the day of Christ's resurrection and then it was anointed with the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh, through the Holy Spirit, on the Day of Pentecost. In this regard, Jesus declared to Nathanael that he would witness the fulfilment of the prophetic vision that his forefather Jacob had received.

Biblical commentators generally agree that Nathanael's last name was 'Bartholomew'. John referred to him by his first name in his Gospel. The synoptic gospels refer to him by his last name where he is listed among the twelve disciples.

Notably, when Nathanael was born again as a son of God on the day of Christ's resurrection, along with the other disciples, he became part of Christ's corporate body. He became part of the new house of God. On the day of Pentecost, Nathanael also became part of the messenger administration that belongs to the new house of God. He was among the disciples who received power from on high, through the Holy Spirit, to be the witnesses of Christ by manifesting the sign of Jonah to the ends of the earth.

The first sign – turning water into wine

The word of faith to Nathanael was part of the ministry of Christ's word that was the prelude to the first sign that Jesus performed at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. It was probably the wedding of someone who belonged to the extended family of Jesus. However, the first sign was not for the sake of His immediate or extended family. The first sign was for the sake of His disciples. It is interesting to note that the first miracle was performed in the hometown of Nathanael who had become a disciple of Jesus.

During the wedding in Cana, Jesus was informed by His mother that they had run out of wine. It is likely that Mary approached Jesus because she was concerned about the success of the family wedding. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.' Joh 2:4. He was referring to the hour of His offering

journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. The response of Jesus to Mary indicated that He would not meet her for the sake of her own salvation until He personally revealed the sign of the prophet Jonah.

We know that Mary did meet Christ in relation to the sign of the prophet Jonah while He hung on the cross. The word that Jesus ministered to her from the cross pierced her heart and enabled her to look upon Him whom she had pierced. Joh 19:25-27. We recall that Simeon had prophesied to Mary regarding Christ, while He was still a baby, 'Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel and *for a sign* which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.' Luk 2:34-35. The prophecy of Simeon was fulfilled through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ which manifested the sign of the prophet Jonah.

During the wedding, Jesus instructed the servants to fill six waterpots with water. He then asked the servants to draw out some of the water, which He had turned into wine, and to take it to the master of the feast. The master of the feast was astonished when he tasted the wine. He called the bridegroom and declared, 'You have kept the good wine until now!' Joh 2:10. The apostle John recorded, 'This *beginning of signs* Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him'. Joh 2:11. In contrast to the family of Jesus who did not believe, turning water into wine did minister faith to the disciples.

The first miracle of Jesus draws our attention to 'the fruit of the vine'. At the end of His ministry, Jesus said to His disciples, 'I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.' Joh 15:5. Jesus became the true Vine on His offering journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. He is now the immortal Head of His corporate body. We are the mortal members of His immortal body as branches in the vine. We now drink the fruit of the vine with Christ in the kingdom of God because His resurrection life enables us to do the works of our sonship that He has already accomplished for us on His offering journey. Mat 26:29. Mar 14:25. Luk 22:18.

After the first sign in Cana, Jesus travelled with His family and His disciples to spend time in Capernaum. He then travelled to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover and visited the temple that had been refurbished and extended by Herod the Great. He proclaimed Himself to be the new temple to the Jews when He, as their King, cleared the temple of the

traders who bought and sold in it and profited from the resources of religion.

The Jews said to Him, 'What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?' Joh 2:18. When challenged regarding the authority that He used to confront religious sins in such a powerful manner, Jesus proclaimed to the Jews that His body was the new temple of God that would replace the temple built by Herod. Speaking about His own physical body, Jesus said, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' Joh 2:19. He was referring to the fulfilment of the sign of the prophet Jonah.

The second sign – healing the nobleman's son

Prior to the second sign, Jesus travelled through Samaria and spoke to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. Joh 4:4-26. Notably, Jesus did not give the woman a sign. Rather, He spoke to her about her five failed marriages and offered to give her 'living water'. We have considered the significance of the living water and the implications of this interaction in relation to marriage in other writings. Jesus also proclaimed to the woman that He was the Christ. Hearing the words of Christ caused the woman to leave her waterpot and then hurry back to the city of Sychar to compel the men to come and see Christ. Joh 4:28-29.

The Samaritans who received the testimony of the woman did come out to meet Jesus. Having heard His word, they then urged Him to stay with them. Notably, the Samaritans believed because of the word of Jesus, not because of a sign. When Jesus stayed in the Samaritan village for two days, John records, 'And many more believed *because of His own word*'. Joh 4:41. The Samaritans said to the woman, 'Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him [and received His word] and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.' Joh 4:42.

It is likely that this revival among the Samaritans happened around the time of the Feast of Pentecost. While He was still at the well, Jesus said to His disciples, 'Do not say, "There are still four months and then comes the harvest"? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!' Joh 4:35. The Feast of Pentecost was in the third month of the Jewish year which was about four months before the Feast of Tabernacles in the seventh month of the year.

It is significant that Jesus took this evangelistic initiative toward the mixed race of the Samaritans at the time of Pentecost. Since the

fulfilment of the Feast of Pentecost in the church age, the Lord has had an initiative toward the Gentiles in lampstand churches, even though the great harvest from every tribe, nation, people, and tongue will not happen until the fulfilment of the Feast of Tabernacles in the time of the end.

When Jesus returned to Galilee, He came again to Cana where He had previously turned the water into wine. Jesus also performed *His second sign* in Cana. The second sign of Jesus was the healing of the nobleman's son. The nobleman was from Capernaum which was a royal city of Herod. When the nobleman heard that Jesus had come to Galilee, he went to Him and implored Him to come to Capernaum to heal his son because he was at the point of death. Jesus said to the man, 'Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.' Joh 4:48.

When the man insisted that Jesus come to heal his son, Jesus said to him, 'Go your way; your son lives.' Significantly, the man *believed the word* that Jesus had spoken to him. He obeyed the word and went his way. Joh 4:50. While the man was on his way back to Capernaum, his servants met him to tell him that his son was alive. After the nobleman asked his servants what time his son had become well, he knew that he had been healed at the exact time that Jesus said to him, 'Your son lives.' This second sign demonstrated the power of Christ's word to heal.

The second sign caused the nobleman and his entire household to believe in Christ. The nobleman was a royal official in the court of Herod Antipas who was the ruler in the region of Galilee. John does not tell us the nobleman's name, but when we read the Gospel of Luke, it is likely that his name was Chuza and he served as Herod's steward. Luke tells us that the name of Chuza's wife was Joanna and she became one of the women who provided for Jesus during His ministry. Luk 8:3.

The initiative of Jesus toward the Samaritans and then the nobleman's family from Capernaum verified that He was the Good Shepherd who had come to call all men – both Jew and Gentile. Capernaum was in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali which the prophet Isaiah called 'Galilee of the Gentiles'. Mat 4:15. A large population of Gentiles lived in the Galilean region. Later in His ministry, Jesus said, 'I am the Good Shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.' Joh 10:14. Jesus referred to His sheep from among the Gentiles when He said to the Jews, 'And other [Gentile] sheep I have which are not of this [Jewish] fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one Shepherd.' Joh 10:16.

Jesus proclaimed Himself to be the Jubilee

After He healed the nobleman's son, Jesus continued a season of ministry in the region of Galilee. He did not travel to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles that year. Rather, in his hometown of Nazareth, Jesus stood up in the synagogue on the Sabbath day to read from the Scriptures. Luk 4:16-21. He read from Isaiah Chapter 61 and then told those in the synagogue that the Scripture had been fulfilled in their hearing. Isa 61:1-2. Luk 4:21. In this manner, Jesus defined His ministry as Messianic. He also announced the fulfilment of the Jubilee year.

The ministry of Jesus as the Messiah must be understood from the perspective that He brings liberty. Isa 58:6. 2Co 3:17. Joh 8:36. The introduction of the Messianic age is called, 'the year of the Lord's favour'. The year of the Lord's favour proclaims liberty and freedom from oppression. For the nation of Israel, the Jubilee year was announced on the Day of Atonement with the sound of a trumpet. Lev 25:9. It announced the restoration of every family to the inheritance that they had been given in the promised land.

The acceptable year of the Lord describes the fulfilment of all three feasts of Israel with the accompanying seven 'high day' sabbaths. Jesus announced the year of Jubilee in the synagogue in Nazareth. He then revealed the Jubilee during His earthly ministry, and then became the Jubilee for all men through His death, burial, and resurrection. The offering of Christ has established 'the acceptable year of the Lord' for the entire church age. The acceptable year of the Lord includes the fulfilment of the true Feast of Passover, the true Feast of Pentecost, and the true Feast of Tabernacles in the end of the age when a great multitude will come into the kingdom of God from every tribe, nation, people, and tongue. Zec 14:16.

Recognising that He had been sent to proclaim liberty to all men, Jesus refused to be possessed by those in His hometown who wanted Him to perform the same miracles that He had done in Capernaum. He said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country.' Luk 4:24. In this regard, He appeared to put strangers first which offended those in His hometown. The people in Nazareth had a possessive-love approach toward Him and it produced a violent reaction in them when He did not meet their expectations. Luk 4:28. His openness to publicans and sinners also caused rising opposition.

The third sign – healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda

Jesus performed the third sign when He returned to Jerusalem to celebrate the second Feast of Passover during His earthly ministry. The third sign was the healing of the man by the pool of Bethesda. This pool was located by the Sheep Gate. The Sheep Gate was the entrance in the north-eastern wall of Jerusalem which was primarily used to bring sheep and lambs into the city for temple sacrifices. The third sign that Jesus performed demonstrated that He was the true door of the sheep. Jesus said, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.' Joh 10:7.

There were many sick people who gathered at the pool of Bethesda in the hope that they would be miraculously healed when an angel periodically stirred up the water. Jesus picked one man out of the crowd who had been sick with an infirmity for thirty-eight years. He first asked him whether he wanted to be made well. Jesus then said to him, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk.' Joh 5:8. Immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. Again, this miracle demonstrated the power of Christ's word to heal the sick.

This was a remarkable miracle. However, the most notable point regarding this miracle is that it happened on the Sabbath. When the Jews saw the man who had been cured, they said to him, 'It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed.' Joh 5:10. The man told them that he had been commanded by the Man who had healed him to pick up his bed and walk. He did not yet know that it was Jesus. Later, Jesus found the man in the temple. He said to him, 'See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.' Joh 5:14. Evidently, this particular sickness had been the result of the man's sin.

The third sign of Jesus demonstrated that He was the Lord of the Sabbath. The Jews persecuted Jesus and sought to kill Him because He had done this miracle on the Sabbath. 'Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working".' Joh 5:17. When they heard this, the Jews became even more intent on killing Him because He called God 'His Father', thereby making Himself equal with God. Joh 5:18. Significantly, Jesus had been sent to redefine the meaning of the Sabbath by doing the works that God had sent Him to do.

Jesus had been sent by the Father to be the Saviour of the world. His work was to recover men to faith and to save them from their sins. His work was accompanied by attesting signs and miracles which included healing men from their unbelief and sin sickness. In this regard, Jesus

had been sent to recover mankind to the Sabbath rest of God. Christ was the Door for men to enter rest. Jesus said, 'Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.' Mat 11:28-29.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus performed many miracles on the Sabbath day which delivered rest to those who had been healed. The people who were healed entered Christ's rest when they obeyed the word that He spoke to them in conjunction with their healing. The miracles also brought Him into conflict with the rulers of the Jews. They did not recognise Him to be the Lord of the Sabbath. They were not willing to receive Him as the One who was bringing the true rest of God as the restorative work of the Father to those who were healed. The Sabbath of God is the substance of resurrection life.

The fourth sign – feeding the five thousand

The fourth sign that Jesus performed was the feeding of the five thousand. Joh 6. This miracle happened in Galilee around the time of the Passover. Jesus did not travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the third Passover during His earthly ministry. Jesus fed the five thousand men, plus their families, with five loaves and two fish that had been offered to Him by a young boy. Notably, when the people witnessed this sign they declared, 'This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.' Joh 6:14. Jesus departed from them because He perceived that they were planning to take Him by force to make Him their king. Joh 6:15.

Jesus went to the mountain by Himself to pray. In the meantime, the disciples got into the boat and began to sail across the Sea of Galilee toward Capernaum. A great wind caused the sea to become very rough. While the disciples were rowing the boat, and struggling against the wind, they saw Jesus walking on the sea toward the boat. As soon as the disciples had received Jesus into the boat, it was translated to the land on the other side of the sea. Some commentators identify the miracle of Jesus walking on the water as another sign. Joh 6:16-21. However, it was still part of the same event when Jesus fed the five thousand on one side of the sea and then proclaimed Himself to be the Bread of Life on the other side of the sea.

The crowd followed Jesus to the other side of the sea because He had satisfied their natural hunger. They did not follow Him because they had received His word or saw the sign and believed. Jesus said to them,

'Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.' Joh 6:27. Jesus declared that the work of God is to believe the One who has been sent by God. However, the Jews wanted a sign because they could not receive Him as their Messenger or hear His word. They said to Him, 'What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You?' Joh 6:30.

The Jews were looking for a sign as a replacement for hearing and understanding His word as the source of faith. They wanted a kingdom that operated by miracles, not a kingdom that functioned under the authority of the word! The signs that Jesus performed were meant to support His word and verify His message. However, the Jews kept looking for signs because they would not believe His word. Jesus refused to give the crowd another sign. Rather, He proclaimed Himself to be the true Bread from heaven, the Bread of God, and the Bread of life. Jesus said, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.' Joh 6:35.

Jesus summarised His message to the crowd by saying, 'It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you who do not believe.' Joh 6:63-64. The words of Jesus caused many of His disciples to stumble into offence so that they withdrew and ceased to follow Him. When Jesus asked the twelve disciples whether they also wanted to withdraw, Peter said, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Joh 6:68-69.

The fifth sign – healing the blind man

The fifth sign that Jesus performed was the healing of the blind man. Joh 9:1-41. This miracle happened in Jerusalem at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles. Unlike the sickness of the man who was healed by Jesus at the pool of Bethesda, the blind man's condition was not the consequence of his sin. Jesus said concerning the blind man, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.' Joh 9:3. The healing of the blind man verified the words of Jesus, 'As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.' Joh 9:5.

As the Light of the world, Jesus gave both physical sight and spiritual sight to the man who had been born blind. First, as the Creator who formed Adam from the dust of the ground in the beginning, Jesus spat

on the ground to make clay from the dirt. He formed two new eyeballs for the blind man and placed them into his eye sockets. Jesus then commanded the man to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. When the man obeyed the word of Jesus, he received his physical sight. Joh 9:6-7.

Once the man had received his physical sight, he boldly declared his testimony to the rulers of the synagogue. This caused him to be cast out of the synagogue. When Jesus heard that he had been cast out, He went and found him. He asked the man, 'Do you believe in the Son of God?' Joh 9:35. The man responded, 'Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?' Joh 9:36. This was the confession of a man who was poor in spirit. He humbly confessed his spiritual blindness and entreated Jesus to open his spiritual eyes. The man's spiritual eyes were opened as soon as Jesus said to him, 'You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.' Joh 9:37. The man immediately declared, 'Lord I believe' and began to worship Jesus. Joh 9:38.

It is notable that Jesus proclaimed Himself to be the Light of the world and healed the blind man during the Feast of Tabernacles. Interestingly, during the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles in the time of Jesus, four massive lampstands were erected in the court of women in the temple precinct. Each lampstand was 70 feet tall (over 21 metres) and had four bowls for the oil. The wicks were made from the old clothing of the priests. The priests used long ladders to light the lampstands each evening so that they would burn all night. It has been suggested that the light from the four lampstands was so bright that it lit up every courtyard in Jerusalem.

The sixth sign – raising Lazarus from the dead

We recall that Jesus performed His first sign at *a wedding* in Cana. He performed the sixth sign at *a funeral* in Bethany. The sixth sign that Jesus performed was raising Lazarus from the dead. Joh 11:1-44. The house of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus was a worthy house. They had willingly received Christ and His ministry toward them as a household. However, they still needed to be delivered from their carnal expectations and to become a household that believed in the power of resurrection life.

Martha and Mary were both upset with Jesus because He did not come quickly to Bethany to prevent Lazarus from dying. Martha said to Him, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.' Joh 11:21. Martha believed that her brother would be raised again to immortality in

the resurrection at the last day. However, she did not believe that Jesus would raise Lazarus from the dead to mortality as the sign to verify His statement, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.' Joh 11:25.

Likewise, Mary said to Jesus, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.' Joh 11:32. When Jesus saw her weeping, and all the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned deeply in His spirit with anger and fiery indignation. Joh 11:33. He became greatly troubled. His tears were the expression of His mourning because of their unbelief. When Martha withstood Jesus at the tomb because she was worried about the stench of the dead body, He rebuked her by saying, 'Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?' Joh 11:40.

Jesus commanded Lazarus to come forth from the tomb. Joh 11:43. He then asked the bystanders to remove all the wrappings from his body so that he could walk freely. This sign caused many of the Jews to believe in Him. It also caused the chief priests and the Pharisees to convene a meeting of the Sanhedrin so that they could plot how they were going to put Jesus to death. Joh 11:47-53. The resurrection of Lazarus happened sometime after the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem. It may have been a few months before the final Passover when Jesus was crucified.

The seventh sign is the fulfilment of the word

The final summary of the book of John is at the end of Chapter 12. Jesus said, 'He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him – the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.' Joh 12:44-48.

The *seventh sign* is the fulfilment of the prophetic word of Jesus. He explained this to the disciples during the last supper. John identified that the last supper was before the Feast of Passover. Joh 13:1. When Judas departed from the last supper, the other disciples assumed that he was going to buy the things that they needed to celebrate the Feast of Passover. Joh 13:29. Jesus and the disciples still ate a lamb during the last supper. However, after the supper, Jesus made it clear that He was the Passover Lamb.

There are several examples that belong the seventh sign which is the fulfilment of the prophetic word. The first example is when Jesus foretold the betrayal of Judas. Jesus said, 'I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, "He who eats bread with Me has lifted up His heel against Me". Now I tell you before it comes, that *when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He*.' Joh 13:18-19.

In a similar manner, Jesus foretold the denial of Peter. He said to him, 'Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.' Joh 13:38. The fulfilment of this word was also a sign to Peter. When the rooster crowed and Jesus turned to look at him, Peter immediately remembered the word that Jesus had spoken to him. Luk 22:61.

Jesus told the disciples about His offering journey and His resurrection *beforehand* so that it also became part of the seventh sign, which is the fulfilment of His word. He said to the disciples, 'You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it comes, that *when it does come to pass, you may believe*.' Joh 14:28-29.

The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ was the sign that verified the words of Jesus, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.' Joh 14:6. Jesus pioneered the way of salvation to the Father's house for every person through the seven wounding events that He experienced on His journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. When Christ was lifted up on the cross, He was revealed to be 'I Am'. Joh 8:28. He was the embodiment of *the Scriptures of Truth* that have been forever settled in the heavens as the full revelation of the covenant purpose of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Dan 10:21. Gal 3:8. Christ revealed the word of truth for every son of God by fulfilling the works of their sonship – for this lifetime and for the age to come.

On the day of His resurrection, Jesus Christ was the first Man in the image and likeness of God. He was also the first Seed in the Sheaf of firstfruits. From the day of Christ's resurrection, it was now possible for sons of men to be born of the incorruptible seed of the divine nature as sons of God. 1Pe 1:23. Joh 20:22. The resurrection of Christ was the final component of the seventh sign. The seventh sign was the fulfilment of the prophetic word of Jesus regarding the sign of the prophet Jonah.

As we have considered, Jesus declared during His ministry, 'For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.' Mat 12:40. This prophetic word of Jesus was fulfilled by His death, burial, and resurrection.

The Holy Spirit and understanding

Following the last supper, Jesus said to the disciples, 'These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father.' Joh 16:25. Even though the disciples believed that Jesus was speaking plainly, they still could not understand the words of Jesus until He had risen from the dead and they had received the Holy Spirit and had been born as sons of God.

It was necessary for the Holy Spirit to come before the disciples could receive understanding. The Holy Spirit brought to their remembrance the words that Jesus had spoken to them. To illustrate this point, John wrote concerning the declaration of Jesus that He would raise up the true temple of God in three days, 'When He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said'. Joh 2:22.

In this regard, we note that there is a distinction between seeing signs and believing, and then hearing the word and receiving understanding by the Holy Spirit. When the disciples saw the signs that Jesus did during His earthly ministry, it did cause them to believe. However, they did not have the capacity for spiritual understanding until they had received the person of the Holy Spirit on the day of Christ's resurrection. The final component of the seventh sign, which is the resurrection of Jesus, is when He fully integrated the word, faith, and understanding.

Chapter 2

Established in the love and worship of our Creator

Made one as Yahweh is one

The hope of the gospel is to reveal the glory of God as sons who are born of the divine nature and participants in the fellowship of Yahweh. Rom 5:2. Col 1:27. To receive and become the glory of God, we must first be joined to the fellowship of Yahweh. Once joined to this fellowship, we are able to be joined to others as members of the body of Christ, joined to our spouse in our marriage, and joined in our families; *we can truly be made one*. Joh 17:21.

For this to happen, the Father gives us to Christ, and then Christ joins us to the fellowship that He has with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus, speaking to the Father, said, 'I do not pray for the world but for those whom *You have given Me*, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them.' Joh 17:9-10. Jesus then prayed, 'Holy Father, keep *through Your name* those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are'. Joh 17:11.

While He was in the world, Jesus kept His disciples together in the Father's name. Joh 17:12. He did this as their Shepherd, intervening in

their disputes and resolving their differences. However, Jesus also prayed for everyone who would later become His disciples through the ministry of His apostles in the New Covenant. With this in view, He asked the Father to join us to the fellowship of Yahweh so that we would be made one in the same way that the Father and Jesus, as the Son of Man, were one. Specifically, He said, 'I do not pray for these alone [His disciples], but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.' Joh 17:20-21.

We see that the Father and Son were one because the Father was in the Son and the Son was in the Father. Jesus prayed that He and the Father might come and dwell in our hearts through faith. Eph 3:17. Once the Father and Son dwell in us, we are able to live by Their life. Their glory is then given to us by Christ, enabling us to be one with each other as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one. Notably, the apostle Paul testified of this oneness in the body of Christ, saying to the Corinthian believers, 'I have said before that *you are in our hearts*, to die together and to live together'. 2Co 7:3.

The ministry of eternal life

It was on the Mount of Olives, just prior to the commencement of His offering journey from Gethsemane to Calvary, that Jesus prayed for us to be made one as Yahweh is one. The apostle John recounted this prayer to explain the means by which men and women can come to know God and receive eternal life. This process was initiated when the Father sent the Son into the world to be the Messenger and Shepherd of those whom the Father would give to Him.

During His three-and-a-half-year ministry, Jesus proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom to a people who were still under the Old Covenant. The message that He delivered to them in this setting detailed the nature of *eternal life*. He declared that eternal life is to know the Father and to know Jesus Christ. Joh 17:3. In His prayer on the Mount of Olives, Jesus revealed three aspects of His ministry that delivered a hearer to eternal life. Christ had given to His disciples the name of the Father, the word of the Father and the glory of God. The name gave to them the love of the Father. The word gave to them their sanctification which was necessary for their expression of love and word in the unity of fellowship. From this fellowship, they were able to reveal the glory that Christ had given to them.

Significantly, the implications of this message would only be made substantial in them as an enduring possession through the New Covenant of the Spirit. 2Co 3:6. This New Covenant would be proclaimed, and could be received, following Christ's resurrection and manifestation as the first Man who had been brought to glory in the image and likeness of God.

The name of the Father

As we noted above, to know the Father and Jesus Christ, and thereby obtain eternal life, Jesus first manifested the Father's name to His disciples. Testifying of this work, He said to the Father, 'I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.' Joh 17:6.

Jesus manifested the name of the Father to His disciples by making known to each man that God was their Father. He did this through His message, and by demonstrating to them the nature of His relationship with the Father as the Son of Man. Significantly, He revealed to His disciples that the name of the Father was the place of His abode, and He invited them to abide in this name with Him. Jesus declared the name of the Father to the disciples so that the love with which the Father loved Him would be in them. Joh 17:26.

The word of the Father

The second aspect of Christ's initiative to give eternal life to His disciples was to give to them the word of the Father. In this regard, Jesus prayed, 'I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.' Joh 17:8. Jesus gave the words of the Father to His disciples for the purpose of their sanctification, praying, 'Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.' Joh 17:17. Their sanctification was necessary for their unique expression of the love and word of God.

The glory of God

Christ gave to His disciples the glory that He had received from the Father. This was the third aspect of His initiative to give eternal life to the disciples. To this end, Christ prayed, 'And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and *that the world may*

know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.' Joh 17:22-23.

The glory that the Father had given to Christ was manifest through the many miracles that Jesus performed during His earthly ministry. For example, Matthew recorded that after Jesus healed a paralytic, the multitudes 'marvelled and *glorified God*, who had given such power to men'. Mat 9:8. Jesus gave this glory to the 'twelve' when He sent them to the lost sheep of the house of Israel to preach that the kingdom of God was at hand. Mat 10:6-7. For this work, He had given to the disciples power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. Through this ministry, they were manifesting the glory of God.

The call of the disciples

We observe these three initiatives of Christ in the progressive calling of His disciples. Consider, for example, the apostle John's calling. John the Baptist sent John and Andrew to Jesus to become His disciples. Hearing John the Baptist's identification of Jesus as the Lamb of God, the two men followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw the two men following Him, He asked them, 'What do you seek?' John replied, addressing Jesus as Rabbi, or Teacher, asking, 'Where are You staying?' Joh 1:38. John and Andrew were asking where Jesus *abided* and Jesus responded by inviting them to '*come and see'*. Joh 1:39. They came and saw, dwelt with Him, and were joined to His fellowship with the Father. That is, they were established in the *name of the Father*, and were introduced to the love of the Father and of the Son.

For John and Andrew, the journey of receiving eternal life had begun. They had come to see, and began to understand, the love that God had for them. 1Jn 4:16. John particularly referred to this love. This was one of the major points of focus in his Gospel. In this regard, John did not refer to himself by his own name, but rather called himself '*the disciple whom Jesus loved'*. Joh 13:23. Joh 21:7. Furthermore, John lent on the bosom of Jesus at the last Passover. This was typical of the relationship that Jesus had with John for the extent of His earthly ministry.

We can further highlight the call of the other apostles, whom John referred to by name in his Gospel. In the same manner as John, Peter was directed to Jesus by someone else. In this instance, his brother, Andrew, found Peter and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah'. Joh 1:41. Peter was invited to *come and see* where Jesus abided – that is,

he was being introduced to the name of the Father. John recounted that when Jesus first called Peter, He looked at him and said, ' "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone).' Joh 1:42. Through this interaction, Jesus gave to Peter the *word of his name from the Father*. Peter was to minister according to this name, which was made substantial in him when he later became a temple of the Holy Spirit and was born again as a son of God following the resurrection of Jesus. Joh 20:19-23.

Similarly, John recounted the call of Nathanael, who was also known as Batholomew. Again, Nathanael heard about Jesus from a witness – Philip – who said to him, 'We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.' Joh 1:45. In response to Nathanael's retort, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip simply said, 'Come and see'. Joh 1:46.

When Jesus saw Nathanael, He addressed him according to the word of his name from the Father. He said to Nathanael, 'Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!' Joh 1:47. Nathanael asked Jesus how He knew him, to which Jesus responded, saying, '*Before* Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you'. Joh 1:48. Having received the word of his name from Christ, which had been declared by the Father *before* the creation of the heavens and the earth, Nathanael confessed, 'Rabbi [Teacher], You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' Joh 1:49.

The disciples *received the glory of God* once they were commissioned by Christ as apostles, being sent out to preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Three phases of calling

These accounts of Jesus' interactions with John, Peter and Nathanael, reveal three phases of calling through the ministry of Christ. *The first phase* of calling involved a meeting. Essential to this encounter was Christ looking at the man who had heard and received a report concerning the Messiah and had come to see Him. As the inquirer came to see Christ, and He looked at them, He proclaimed to them the name of the Father. In this regard, He invited them to witness His relationship with the Father, in the Father's name, and to be established themselves in this name.

The second phase was the call to follow Christ. This happened for Peter on the shore of Lake Galilee, when Jesus was walking by. Seeing the

two brothers – Peter and Andrew – 'He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will *make* you fishers of men". They immediately left their nets and followed Him.' Mat 4:18-20. By receiving the word of the Father from Christ, they were instructed in the culture that belonged to the kingdom of God. This is the implication of following Christ.

The third phase was manifest when Jesus called the disciples to be apostles. The word 'apostle' means 'one sent forth'. Matthew recorded that Jesus called His twelve disciples to Himself, giving them 'power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease'. Mat 10:1. He then sent them out to the lost sheep of Israel to find worthy houses of peace. Mat 10:5-15. Jesus reaffirmed this call upon the twelve following the feeding of the 5 000, saying to them, 'Did I not *choose* you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?' Joh 6:70.

In relation to this third phase of calling, Jesus gave the glory that He had received from the Father to the disciples. This glory was necessary for the work that He was sending them to do as apostles. This glory was further manifested on the Day of Pentecost when the apostles became the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem, the city of God in which we now dwell. Notably, Luke recorded in the book of Acts that on this day, the people who heard the apostles and their brethren speaking in tongues said, 'We hear them speaking in our own tongues the *wonderful works of God'*. Act 2:11. That is, they were revealing the glory of God through the proclamation of the gospel.

Love for the Creator

A person who has received the name of the Father, the word of the Father, and the glory of the Father, has eternal life. Through the ministry of the Spirit, they have been born of this life. The evidence of new birth and establishment in the fellowship of Yahweh is the expression of the love of God, which Jesus nominated as 'greater love'. He said, 'Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.' Joh 15:13-14.

In his Gospel, the apostle John testified of this love. As we noted earlier, John identified himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved, and testified that he lent on Jesus' bosom at the last Passover. Joh 13:23. John's affection for Jesus was an expression of 'greater love'. Joh 15:13. Like the love between David and Jonathan, it was 'above the love of women'. Of course, this was not romantic love, but rather a mature worship expression. *It was an expression of John's worship for his Creator.*

John introduced his Gospel by identifying Christ as the Creator, writing, 'All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made'. Joh 1:3. The apostle Paul further identified Jesus as our Creator, saying, 'For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.' Col 1:16.

When mankind ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in an endeavour to become the source of their own life and destiny, they had exchanged the truth of God for a lie and began to worship and serve the creature (that is, mankind), rather than the Creator. Rom 1:24-25. However, when a person hears the gospel of God and lays hold of faith, they are delivered from the idolatry that engenders the worship of the creature. They begin to appreciate God's love for them, and they are illuminated to His purpose for their life.

As sons of God who can testify of this deliverance, we are able to receive and participate in 'greater love'. The Holy Spirit joins us to the fellowship of Yahweh's worship and sanctification. He does this so that we can express this worship, figuratively leaning upon Christ's bosom, and washing His feet in thankfulness for the offering that He has accomplished for us. Note, that we do not wash Christ's feet because they are soiled; it is an expression of worship and thankfulness toward Him. Of course, our feet need to be washed by one another because they are sullied. This being true, it also important to recognise that washing one another's feet equally involves the affirmation of the sanctification of each other.

By the offering of Christ, we were established as part of the New Creation, having been, 'created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them'. Eph 2:10. Participation in these works is the implication of being crucified with Christ. Professing to die with Christ, we are able to testify that we, nevertheless, live by the faith of the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us. Gal 2:20. The works that we do in this fellowship are an expression of *grace*. Gal 2:21. This is love communicated.

True love *first* pertains to our recovery as sons of God to the fellowship of Yahweh. Our priority is the worship of the Lord, our Creator and Saviour, *in word and deed*. The love of God poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit compels us to cease from judging ourselves, and others, through our futile thoughts and darkened hearts. Rom 1:21. Instead, we

judge thus: 'that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again'. 2Co 5:14-15. The evidence of being established in this love is the *worship* of Christ – both the Person *and* His corporate body – and our participation in the *fellowship* of Yahweh.

If we are not established in this greatest love, other forms of love, reflecting the worship of the creation, will impact upon our participation in the fellowship of the body of Christ. For example, following the commencement of His ministry, the filial expectations and obligations of Jesus' mother and brothers became apparent. On one occasion, while Jesus was ministering to the multitudes, they came and stood outside, expecting Him to come to them. Looking around at those who were receiving and delighting in His message, His response was, 'Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.' Mat 12:49-50. Thankfully, Mary and Jesus' brothers did receive and respond to the word of the cross, through which they found deliverance from their self-centred expectations and were established in the love of God. Joh 19:26. Act 1:14.

It is notable that John was the *cousin* of Jesus. In contrast to the early expectations of Jesus' mother and brothers, John's love for Christ was not merely familial in nature, nor was it impeded by the potential presumptions and obligations associated with kinship. He properly honoured Christ, while engaging with Him according to his own emerging sanctification.

The body, church and bride

Our love for the Creator is the evidence that God abides in us and that we are continuing to abide in God. 1Jn 4:15-16. This love will be evident in the way that we function and relate with others in the body of Christ. The ongoing ministry of the proceeding word of God, by Christ's ascension-gift messengers, causes the growth of the body of Christ as the members of the body edify one another in love. Eph 4:11-16.

Paul's use of the term 'body of Christ' was not primarily a reference to the wider born-again Christian community. He used the term 'body' to refer to sons of God who were placed 'particularly' together by the Father under the headship of Christ. Col 1:18. For example, having elsewhere established that the Father had given the Son to be the Head of the body, Paul wrote, 'But now God [the Father] has set the members, *each one of them*, in the body *just as He pleased*. And if they were all one member,

where would the body be?' 1Co 12:18-19. Eph 1:22. He further explained, 'Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually [or, in particular]'. 1Co 12:27. The most foundational condition of being a member of the body of Christ is to be baptised by one Spirit into the body. 1Co 12:12-13. This is only possible if a person has first been born of God.

Having established that the Father places each individual in the body as He pleases, Paul then explained, 'God has appointed these *in the church*: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.' 1Co 12:28. Paul was describing a messenger administration, whose work was to proclaim the word of God. This word, which is Spirit and life, enables each son of God's expression as a member of the body.

In this passage, we also note that Paul used the terms 'body' and 'church' interchangeably. Significantly, the word 'church' means 'called out'. Those who belong to the church are those who have received the name of the Father, the word of their sanctification, and are expressing the glory of God by the capacity of the Spirit. These are worthy houses who are growing to firstfruits because they are drinking of, and living by, the water of the word proclaimed by a messenger administration.

Paul also referred to the church as the wife, or bride, of Christ, saying, '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.' Eph 5:25-27. The bride is composed of believers belonging to what the prophet Isaiah described as, 'the unclean daughters of Zion', who are receiving the cleansing and purifying initiative of Christ through the ministry of His word by the Spirit. Isa 4:4-5.

The apostle John used the term 'elect lady' to describe this same company of believers who were evidently *answering and choosing* the call upon their lives, and houses, through the ministry of the name of the Father, the word of the Father and the glory of the Father. An elect lady is a local network of worthy houses who are growing to become firstfruits houses. The ground of fellowship upon which they are established is extended to them through the word proclaimed from Christ through a messenger administration, called a presbytery. 1Jn 1:1-3.

God knows those who are His

It is certainly true that there are many sons of God in other churches. However, the reality of our connection with these people is not particularly helped through the perspective of a global body. This is because connection on this basis denies the necessity for a messenger word as the foundation of our fellowship as believers. It potentially draws our attention away from the relational context in which the Father has established us, and has called us to lay our lives down for others.

In reality, the broader church is quite mixed. It was described by the prophet Isaiah as the 'unclean daughters of Zion'. The prevailing expression that belongs to this mixture in the church is the expectation, 'We will eat our own food [our own word and understanding] and wear our own apparel [our own religious expression]; only let us be called by your name, to take away our reproach.' Isa 4:1 This mixture became apparent very early in the history of the church. In fact, even before the end of his ministry, the apostle Paul lamented, 'This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me'. 2Ti 1:15.

Rather than judging who did, or did not, belong to the body of Christ, the church, Paul said, 'Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His", and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity". ' 2Ti 2:19. The foundation of God is Christ and the twelve apostles. A person is built on this foundation if they have been sealed with the Holy Spirit, born of the divine nature, and are obedient to the word of present truth proclaimed by the Holy Spirit through Christ's messengers. 1Pe 2:7-8. The Lord knows these believers. Evidently, they are departing from lawlessness because they are being established in obedience.

Paul then explained that our focus as believers is to embrace the process of cleansing that comes through the proceeding word of the Lord in order to be established in God's house. To this end, he wrote, 'But in a great house [the broader church] there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honour and some for dishonour. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.' 2Ti 2:20-21. We all begin as vessels of dishonour. However, the promise to every believer is that if we will avail ourselves of the process of cleansing that Christ ministers as He comes among His people, we will be established as vessels of honour, sanctified and useful for the Master.

Chapter 3

Living by the faith of the Son of God

Faith and the New Covenant

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ on the cross was the end of the Old Covenant and the beginning of the New Covenant. Prior to His offering on the cross, which brought the Old Covenant to an end, Jesus ministered on the earth for 3 ½ years. He ministered to people who were still living under the Old Covenant. During His Old Covenant ministry, many people were physically healed and miraculously delivered from demonic power because of *their faith in Christ.*

There are many examples of physical healing and deliverance from demonic power that are recorded in the Gospels because of the person's faith. For example, when the woman reached out to touch the hem of His garment, Jesus said to her, 'Daughter, *your faith has made you well.* Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.' Mar 5:34. Likewise, when blind Bartimaeus cried out for mercy and then asked to regain his sight, Jesus said to him, 'Go your way, *your faith has made you well.*' Mar 10:52.

Notably, the faith that enabled their healing still belonged to the dispensation of the Old Covenant. It was the same kind of faith that was demonstrated by all of the heroes of faith. For them, faith was the substance of a hope that they had not yet received. Heb 11:1. In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul concluded his description of the heroes of faith by saying, 'And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.' Heb 11:39-40.

The promise of adoption and new birth as sons of God belongs to the New Covenant. When the Holy Spirit enables the incorruptible seed of the life of Christ to germinate in our spirit, we are born again as a new creation. At this point, we have received a completely new kind of life. It is the life of the Son of God! And, significantly, we have also received *a completely new kind of faith*. It is the faith of the Son of God. Referring to this new faith, Paul said, 'Before faith came, we were kept under guard by the Law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.' Gal 3:23.

Having described the heroes of faith, Paul continued by saying that we now look to Jesus who has given us this new faith. He declared that we are 'looking unto Jesus, *the author and finisher of faith*, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God'. Heb 12:2. In this regard, there is an important distinction between *faith in Christ* which belongs to the Old Covenant, and the *faith of Christ* which belongs to the New Covenant.

Speaking about the new faith that belongs to the New Covenant, the apostle Paul testified, 'I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by *the faith of the Son of God,* who loved me, and gave Himself for me.' Gal 2:20. We have not fully appreciated the implications of this verse. Even though we have recognised that faith comes from Christ, and does not originate in us, we have still been confused regarding the difference in the nature of faith in the Old and New Covenants.

In the New Covenant, we live by Christ's life, and by the faith that He has authored for us on His offering journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. We live by the faith of the Son of God as we continue to receive 'the word of faith', for faith comes only by hearing, and hearing by the word of God that is preached to us. Rom 10:17. Faith is both God's initiative toward us and our response to Him, which operates through love. Rom 5:5. As God initiates toward us, we are dignified with choice.

Moreover, we are enabled to respond to God and then to fellowship with Him, and with those who are, likewise, born of His life.

The faith of the Son of God compels us to present ourselves for fellowship with one another, and to embrace our unique participation in Christ's offering and sufferings. We are connected to the power of the *exanastasis* life of God in the fellowship of Christ's offering, through the intercessions of the Holy Spirit. The Lord has given us a more excellent way of living, in the New Covenant. In the fellowship of Christ's offering, the grace of His resurrection life is given to us by the Holy Spirit, enabling us to do the works of our sonship that Christ has already accomplished for us.

The resurrection life that we receive as we are joined by the capacity of Eternal Spirit from the Holy Spirit to the fellowship of Christ's offering is the evidence of God the Father's faith for us. By faith, He committed us all to the Son so that we might be begotten again from the dead with the Son. Established in Christ, we are sons of the Father and sons of Abraham, for the apostle Paul explained, 'For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus … and if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' Gal 3:26,29.

A carnal and a spiritual response to the word of faith

To obtain and live by the faith of the Son of God, we must continue to hear and receive the word of God that is proclaimed by the Holy Spirit through the ministry of watchmen. As the word of God is proclaimed to us, we hear the information with our physical ears, and it is considered with our mind. If we endeavour to serve the Law of God with our mind, this *carnal* response to the word inevitably results in serving the law of sin with our flesh. Rom 7:25. However, illumination and the conviction of our spirit by the Holy Spirit, leading to *other-centredness*, is the evidence of a *spiritual* response to the word.

We must become other-centred in our response to the word. A self-centred, or carnal, response to the word is the antithesis of an identity-response. Our identity is in our spirit. Our spirit remains in darkness when illumination is hindered by the appraisal of the word through the law of our mind. This happens as we *resist* the conviction of the Holy Spirit. With this carnal orientation to the word, we can only make a deductive response to the gospel with our mind in relation to the information that we obtain through our five senses.

In contrast, when we are making a truly spiritual response to the word of God, we respond without putting confidence in the flesh. Php 3:3. We serve by the Spirit. That is, we *acknowledge* that the will to obey the word is present with us, but how to perform what is good we do not understand. Rom 7:18. This is the demeanour of a person who is poor in spirit and who receives the word with *meekness*. Jas 1:21. Maintaining this demeanour, our response is, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!' Mar 9:24.

The infirmity of the Jew and the Greek

Meekness is foundational to obtaining the faith that comes by hearing the word, because we all have an infirmity that was established in the hearts of mankind as a result of Adam's disobedience. The most basic implication of our human infirmity is that we think that we understand our motivations. This is a presumptuous delusion. When we are in the flesh, these motivations are instinctive and self-preserving. Identifying this principle, Paul wrote, 'For we know that the Law is spiritual, *but I am carnal* [the law of my mind is set on the flesh], sold under sin [because truth has been exchanged for the knowledge of good and evil]. For what I am doing, *I do not understand* [it is instinctive]. For what I will to do, that I do not practise; but what I hate, that I do.' Rom 7:14-15.

Interfacing with the word *only* through our cognition, limits our response to self-centredness. This happens instantly, and without our will. A person who relates to the word only with this orientation will endeavour to verify reality in one of two ways. The Jews seek verification by means of a sign. The Greeks demand verification through wisdom or reason. However, we have another word that makes a breach upon the heart of a hearer. This is the word of the cross. Paul summarised these orientations to the word of faith, writing, 'For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God'. 1Co 1:22-24.

For the Jew, the sign is the substance of the messenger's position, and establishes their legitimacy. For the Greek, the substance of the messenger's position and the mark of their legitimacy is their knowledge and skills, often verified by some form of qualification or 'ministry track record'. Both the Jew and the Greek remain apart from, and objective to, the word as either a zealot or as a despiser. Engaging with the word in

this manner is self-centred and unbelieving, bringing the hearer into bondage to the law of sin and death.

Receiving and living by faith as a Christian

Faith, at its minimum, is 'the word of faith', for faith only comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God that is preached to us. Rom 10:17. Faith is both God's initiative toward us, and our response to Him. That is, faith is both initiative and response, *operating through love*. Rom 5:5. For a Christian, faith makes the word substantial *in them*. Rom 10:17. It is in their mouth as a *confession*, and in their heart as a *testimony*, so that they are born of the seed that is sown through the proclamation of the word by Christ's messengers.

This was the apostle Paul's point when he wrote, 'But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, " 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the *word of faith* which we preach): that if you *confess* with your mouth the Lord Jesus and *believe* in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.' Rom 10:6-9.

Walking in the steps of the faith of Abraham

The apostle Paul described Abraham as '*the father of all who believe*' and 'the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also *walk in the steps of the faith* which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised'. Rom 4:11-12. The faith that belonged to each step of his pilgrimage was progressively obtained by Abraham. A believer is a person who, likewise, progressively obtains and walks in these steps of faith.

Identifying the first dimension of faith that was demonstrated in the pilgrimage of Abraham, Paul wrote, 'By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.' Heb 11:8. Abraham received this dimension of faith in the call to *depart* from Ur of the Chaldeans, from his family and from his father's house, to enter a land that the Lord would show to him. Gen 12:1.

The Lord promised to bless Abraham, saying to him, 'I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be

a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' Gen 12:2-3. As we will consider in the points below, Abraham obtained this blessing, by signification, on Mount Moriah, marking the final step of his appropriation of the faith of the Son of God.

Paul described the blessing that was promised to Abraham as 'the blessing of Abraham'. It was made available to every person through the cross of Christ. Establishing this point, he wrote, '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* [*those who are uncircumcised*] *in Christ Jesus*, that we might receive *the promise of the Spirit through faith*'. Gal 3:13-14.

Significantly, the apostle John identified the blessing of Abraham as 'the right to become a son of God'; that is, a son of man who is born again of the Spirit. Joh 3:5. He explained, 'But as many as received Him [Jesus, the Son of God], to them He gave *the right to become children of God*, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' Joh 1:12-13. In short, a person who has received the blessing of Abraham has been born of the Spirit. That is, they have received the promise of the Spirit through the faith that Abraham received and demonstrated on Mount Moriah.

The second dimension of faith that the apostle Paul nominated was the faith by which Abraham *dwelt* in the land of promise. This faith was extended to, and demonstrated by, those in his household – Isaac and Jacob – who became heirs of the same promise that God made to Abraham. Detailing this dimension of faith, Paul wrote, 'By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of *the same promise*; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God'. Heb 11:9-10.

Following his defeat of the five kings and his liberation of his nephew, Lot, Abram met Melchizedek, who brought out to him the bread and wine of fellowship. Melchizedek blessed Abram, identifying him as the 'Possessor of heaven and earth'. Gen 14:18-19. It was after these things that 'the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield [of faith], your exceedingly great reward".' Gen 15:1. It is notable that Christ, the Word of the Lord, addressed

Abram's fear by declaring that He was giving Himself to be Abram's faith and exceedingly great reward.

Having been illuminated to see his children as a great multitude who had been brought to glory in the image and likeness of God, being likened to the stars of heaven, Abram believed the word of the Lord. This was accounted to Abram as righteousness. Gen 15:5-6. The Lord then revealed to Abram that he would obtain this inheritance through his fellowship in the cross of Christ. This fellowship was foreshadowed by the offering of a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove and a pigeon. Gen 15:8-17. Abram's connection to this offering marked a new step in his pilgrimage of faith.

Abram received a new name

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him, saying, 'I am Almighty God; *walk before Me and be blameless*. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.' Gen 17:1-2. Then, Yahweh wrote His own name into Abram and Sarai's names so that it would, figuratively, become flesh in them. By this means, Abram's name was changed to 'Abram-Y*ah*' or Abr*ah*am. Likewise, Sarai's name was changed to 'Sarai-Y*ah*' or Sar*ah*. Together, Abraham and Sarah were to walk in the reality, or substance, of these names.

Prior to his name change, Abram's name meant 'exalted father'. His name, Abraham, now meant 'father of many nations'. Prior to her name change, Sarai's name meant 'my princess'. The fullest statement of this name is 'struggling princess, given to strife and contention'. Now, as Sarah, her name meant 'princess, mother of a multitude' or, as Paul nominated, 'the mother of us all'. Gal 4:26. The Lord directed Abraham to circumcise himself and his descendants as the sign of the covenant that He had made with him. Gen 17:10-14. It is important to note that physical circumcision was the *sign of the covenant*; it was not the Everlasting Covenant itself.

When the name of Yahweh was written into Abraham and Sarah, the faith of the Son of God *was now becoming their faith*. By this faith, they believed for, and walked by, the resurrection life of the Son. We know this because Paul wrote, 'By faith Sarah herself also *received strength to conceive seed*, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in

multitude – innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.'
Heb 11:11-12.

Sarah and Abraham were *strengthened* in the same way that Christ, the Son of Man, was strengthened in faith to become our sin offering in the garden of Gethsemane. Luk 22:43. Evidently, they received the faith of the Son. We also must receive this faith by hearing and receiving Christ's word as it is proclaimed to us by His messengers. Rom 10:17. By faith, we can believe to join His offering for us. Christ's offering is our journey of salvation, with its suffering and overcoming capacity, which He accomplished for us as He worked out our salvation for us. When we receive His faith, we are able to walk on this pathway and work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Php 2:12.

The blessing confirmed on Mount Moriah

After Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah 'according to the Spirit', God tested Abraham. Gal 4:29. Gen 22:1. This was the Lord's initiative to prove in Abraham the faith of the Son of God that had become his faith when he received a new name. Notably, the Lord did not come to Abraham saying, 'Do not fear'; He simply addressed Abraham according to his new name. He said, 'Abraham!' Abraham responded, saying, 'Here I am.' Gen 22:1.

Abraham's response, 'Here I am', was his faith confession which belonged to his name, 'Abram-*Yah*'. He was saying to the Lord, 'I am in You and You are in me, and I live by Your faith.' This was the faith that the Lord was endeavouring to prove in Abraham so that Abraham and his household would *inherit* everything that the Lord had already *promised* to him.

God said to Abraham, 'Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.' Gen 22:2. The mountain which God showed Abraham in the land of Moriah was a three-day, three-night journey from where they were residing. This mountain later became known as Mount Calvary. It was the place where Jesus was crucified.

The three-day, three-night journey of Abraham and Isaac was symbolic of Christ's three-day, three-night offering, which Paul called 'the operation of God [the Father]'. Col 2:12. In the course of this 'operation', through His death, burial and resurrection, the Son of Man accomplished our

redemption, our new birth, and our glorification as a son of God. Abraham and Isaac journeyed together in faith for their participation in this operation. We note, in this regard, that Isaac carried the wood for the sacrifice on his back as he and his father ascended Mount Moriah. Gen 22:6. Likewise, Jesus carried the wood of His cross as He, with His Father, journeyed together in faith for Their offering on Mount Calvary. Joh 19:17.

After Abraham had bound his son on the altar, and reached out his hand to pick up the knife, the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven. It was the Son of God who spoke to Abraham through the angel on the top of Moriah. The Son of God spoke on behalf of the Father, because Abraham's offering was to God. He said to Abraham, 'Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for *now I know that you fear God*, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.' Gen 22:12.

Hebrew scholars have recognised the inadequacy of the English word 'know' to convey the meaning of this statement, 'Now I *know* that you fear God'. The closest parallel is the statement that 'Adam *knew* Eve his wife'. Gen 4:1. The word is intended to describe *intimate fellowship* which produces the multiplication of life. The statement, 'Now I know that you fear God', describes an intimate fellowship of faith between the Son of God and Abraham. The faith of the Son of God is the fear of God.

On the top of Mount Moriah, Abraham completed the journey that had delivered him from his own fear, and delivered him to the fear of God. The fear of God is the respect and worship that belongs to the very fellowship of offering in Yahweh. It is the respect that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have toward each Other in Their own fellowship of offering. The end of Abraham's journey of faith was his intimate knowledge of the fear of God, because he had received the faith of the Son of God to participate in the fellowship of Yahweh.

Abraham journeyed to Mount Moriah with Isaac in the faith that God would raise his son from the dead. The offering that God called Abraham to make revealed the faith of the Son of God, and also revealed the faith of God the Father. The faith of the Son and of the Father were manifest in time when Christ, by Eternal Spirit from the Holy Spirit, offered Himself in obedience to the Father while journeying from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. Heb 9:14. The Father made His only Son an offering for sin so that we might become the righteousness of God in

the Son. 2Co 5:21. Abraham and Isaac were invited to participate in this fellowship of faith.

In this fellowship of offering in Yahweh, Abraham offered Isaac and, figuratively, received him back again from the dead. Heb 11:19. This *signified* both the faith of the Father and the faith of the Son. The apostle Paul explained that when Jesus was raised from the dead, He was begotten by God the Father *a second time* when the Father said to Him, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.' Act 13:33. Likewise, when Abraham received Isaac back from the dead, Isaac was, figuratively, begotten a second time.

Isaac, in type, was begotten again from the dead by the faith of God the Father, which Abraham received and demonstrated. In this regard, the two fathers were joined in one faith in the fellowship of Yahweh. This is the faith for many sons of God to be begotten from the dead in Christ, whose own faith to offer Himself was demonstrated by Isaac. The Father and Abraham believed for our sonship to be realised in the resurrection of Christ. As we receive the faith of the Son of God for our fellowship in His offering, we are raised as a son of God and a son of Abraham. Gal 3:29. We are heirs of the glorious promise made to Abraham and to his Seed, Christ. Gal 3:16.

To understand the principle of signification, both of the faith of the Son and of the Father, it is helpful to recognise that the revelation of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God was *signified* by the angel of the Lord to Abraham on Mount Moriah in the same way that the revelation of Jesus Christ was *signified* by the angel of the Lord to the apostle John on the island of Patmos. As the word was signified to him on Mount Moriah, Abraham became a *participant* in the fulfilment of the will of God through the offering of Jesus Christ on Mount Calvary.

After Abraham offered the ram, representing Christ as the trespass offering on the cross, the angel of the Lord called to him a second time out of heaven. Again, it was the Son of God who spoke to Abraham through the angel on behalf of the Father. The counsel of God – which is the word of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit from before the foundation of the world – was confirmed by the immutable oath of God, assuring the fulfilment of the Everlasting Covenant that He had made with Abraham. This was the true circumcision. Abraham's descendants were to circumcise their children in faith for participation in this covenant reality.

What was promised to Abraham when he was earlier directed by the Lord to look toward heaven to see his descendants as numerous as the stars was confirmed by the immutable oath of God proclaimed on Mount Moriah. Gen 15:5. The Lord declared, 'By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son – blessing I will bless you, and multiplying *I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore*; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. *In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice*.' Gen 22:16-18.

Significantly, through this oath, the promise of sonship was made sure to everyone who is the seed of Abraham, because they have obtained the same faith that he received. As Paul declared, 'Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, *so that the promise might be sure to all the seed*, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to *those who are of the faith of Abraham*.' Rom 4:16.

Having been blessed with the life and faith of Christ, it is incumbent upon us to be diligent to make our call and election *sure*. 2Pe 1:10. Heb 3:6. Paul exhorted us to be steadfast in this regard, writing, 'For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast [lit: sure] to the end'. Heb 3:14. This is our response to the word of God's oath which has established the hope of sonship as an anchor of our soul, both sure and steadfast. Heb 6:19.

Faith is the substance of the hope of glory

In the New Covenant, a believer does not merely express faith in Christ, believing that He exists or that He possesses the power to deliver them from distress. This was the nature of faith under the Old Covenant. Rather, they live by the faith of the Son of God because He is their life. As we read earlier, the apostle Paul testified, 'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life [of God] which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.' Gal 2:20.

Living Christ's life by His faith is the realisation of the hope of the gospel. This is because faith is the substance of things hoped for. Heb 11:1. The hope revealed in the New Covenant is 'Christ in you, the hope of glory'. Col 1:27. Through faith, received by hearing the proceeding word of God, we have access to God's grace, or His sevenfold Spirit. We rejoice in the realisation of the hope of the gospel as we show forth the glory of God in

our daily fellowship in Christ's offering and suffering journey. We are enabled for this fellowship by the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord. Rom 5:2. This is how we walk by faith according to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

While the Scriptures direct us in the way that we *should not* speak (i.e. 'Do not say in your heart …'), they also reveal the way that a person *will* speak if they have received the same spirit of faith as Christ and thereby believe. Gal 2:20. 2Co 4:13. In this regard, Paul wrote, 'Let your conduct be without covetousness [proceeding from our infirmity as we assess and compare]; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." *So we may boldly say:* "The LORD [the Spirit] is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" ' Heb 13:5-6.

Delivered from fear through faith, we have boldness to speak and confidence in the day of trial, because we have been established in the fear of the Lord. We have received the word of the Lord who says to the true Israel of God, 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you.' Isa 43:1-2. We recognise that this is the fire in which our faith, which is more precious than gold, is refined and proven in us, just as it was proven in our father, Abraham. 1Pe 1:7.

Inasmuch as faith enables our fellowship with Christ in His offering and sufferings, it is equally revealed through the way in which we converse and conduct ourselves in the fellowship of the presbytery, whose fellowship is with the Father and the Son. 1Jn 1:1-3. Illustrating this fellowship of faith, in the earnest expectation of a New Covenant, the prophet Malachi noted the response of those who received the sharp, polarising word of the Lord. He wrote, 'Then *those who feared the LORD spoke to one another*, and the LORD listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on [lit: are weaved, or interpenetrated, into] His name.' Mal 3:16.

Led by the Spirit as a son of God

The expression of this faith belongs to a son of God who is being *led by the Holy Spirit*. In this regard, receiving the word of Christ's messengers is foundational to being led by the Holy Spirit. Jesus made several statements to this end. For example, He said, 'When He, the Spirit

of truth, has come, He will guide [lead] you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.' Joh 16:13-14. We see that the Spirit leads us by proclaiming to us the word of present truth from the Scriptures. It is both a lamp to our feet and a prophetic light to our path. Psa 119:105. Accordingly, those who are led by the Spirit are heeding the exhortation of Christ, who said to the churches in Asia, 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' Rev 2:7.

Further describing the work of the Spirit, Jesus said, 'But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.' Joh 14:26. Jesus made this statement to His disciples at the end of His 3 ½-year ministry. He was revealing that, when it was needed, the Spirit would bring to their remembrance a point from the word that He had proclaimed during His whole earthly ministry. This is true for every disciple of Christ as they continue to receive the word of Christ in the course of their life. This word, which is progressively received, becomes a treasure of things old and new that the Spirit can bring to their remembrance. Mat 13:52.

In summary, the word is always first proclaimed to the first, or natural, man. It is *heard* by the first man. Paul highlighted that we can *only* hear if the word is preached to us by a messenger who is sent by Christ. Rom 10:14-15. It is then able to dwell in us richly. Col 3:16. The Spirit takes of what is Christ's – that which is proclaimed through messengers – and reveals it to us so that we can believe and obey the word. Our obedience is the evidence that we are being led by the Spirit. Characteristically, a person who is being led by the Spirit is compelled to fellowship in Christ because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of fellowship, and fellowship is the source of illumination. Faith for personal, responsible action springs from this illumination as obedience. It is then expressed in fellowship, for faith works by love. Rom 5:5.

Ministers of faith

At the last Passover, where He initiated the *agape* meal of the New Covenant, Jesus Christ gave to His disciples the name, the word, and the glory of God. The name gives to us the love of the Father. The word gives to us our sanctification, which is necessary for our expression of love and of the word in the unity of fellowship. In this fellowship of offering,

the glory of God is expressed to the world. In Chapter 2, we have further detailed these three aspects that belong to oneness in the Lord. Importantly, these elements give to us the capacity *to establish faith in others* through our testimony. Joh 17:18,20.

As we mature in the faith that belongs to the New Covenant, and walk after the Spirit, we can expect to witness an increase in the ministry and impact of the gifts of the Spirit in and from the church. This is because we have a deepening fellowship in the offering and suffering journey of Christ as we live by the faith of the Son of God and walk after the Spirit. On this journey, Christ overcame sin and death for every person and finished their faith. By the Spirit, through a gift of knowledge or a spirit of discernment, we will express, in its right time and place, the ministry of grace for a matter, including healing, that belongs to Christ's overcoming journey for another. Through the exercise of such gifts, Christ will be glorified.

We can be confident that as we grow in our capacity as ministers of the New Covenant of the Spirit, the ailments of many people in our congregations will be healed, and bondages will be broken as a basic implication of the proceeding word of faith. For example, we can expect that people will find deliverance from oppression and possession by familiar spirits as they obtain the capacity of faith to believe for their recovery to the fellowship and order of headship. Similarly, we can expect that people will find deliverance from the weariness and sicknesses caused by their sin as they obtain faith for their participation in Christ's offering and sufferings and for their obedience as a son of God, in Christ.

Receiving the capacity for sight through faith

We remain subject to our infirmity unless we humble ourselves and receive the capacity for sight from Christ. To receive this sight, we must become bankrupt in spirit. Mat 5:3. A person who is bankrupt in spirit recognises that they are spiritually blind and are in need of illumination and understanding. This was the confession of the man whose natural blindness was healed when Jesus formed new eyeballs for him from the dust of the earth. Joh 9:6-7. We have detailed this encounter in Chapter 1.

While engaging with the word through cognition alone moves information to self-centredness, faith received by hearing the word is always other-centred, *for it is centred in Yahweh Himself*; that is, it is fellowship-centred. This was Paul's point when he wrote, 'And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and

therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.' 2Co 4:13-15. Only those who *trust* in the source of the word and in the means of its ministry through messengers are able to see and to obtain this faith.

Christ's disciples were not established in the fellowship of faith until they were born of the Spirit. This is because the disciples, and all of those who heard Christ, were still under the Old Covenant. They were only able to express the faith that belonged to this covenant. We note, in this regard, that the first dimension of faith, delivered to Abraham through the Word of the Lord, enabled an Old Testament hearer to believe for sonship. It motivated them to make offering as a response of worship in view of obtaining the exceedingly great reward that belonged to God's Everlasting Covenant purpose for them.

This faith belonged to the old marriage covenant between Christ and the children of Israel, which was established on Mount Sinai. Jer 31:32. This faith was demonstrated by those who believed in Christ as He proclaimed the kingdom of God. They were responding to Christ, their Husband according to the Law Covenant. Through this faith, they were healed, for He was the Lord who heals those who heed the voice of the Lord and do what is right in His sight. Exo 15:26.

However, after they were born of God, the Spirit gave to the disciples, and to every person who received the ministry of the New Covenant, the capacity for other-centredness. As temples of the Holy Spirit, who were born of the *zoe* seed of God, they were able to present *themselves* as living sacrifices. Rom 12:1. They could do this by the faith of the Son of God as they lived by His life.

Although the disciples did not understand or see until they were born again, Jesus' interaction with the blind man, who also had not been born of the Spirit, reveals that illumination is possible for those who *acknowledge that they do not see*. It belongs to choice as a son of man. When Jesus made Himself known to the man who had been blind, he confessed 'Lord, I believe', and worshipped Him. While this illumination is essential, it is important to recognise that emotional euphoria concerning the word is, or can be, delusionally self-centred. This is not worship, and can be an indicator of idolatry unless it moves to sanctification.

Deliverance from victimhood through travail

Every day, to varying degrees, we experience difficulties and distresses, some of which are caused by our own carnal expressions. Joh 16:33. Mat 6:34. The personal and relational complexities that arise in these situations are the fruit of self-centredness and sin. These complexities associated with our fallen human infirmity confuse and limit resolution in the matters that we encounter. The Holy Spirit helps our prayers with travail that brings forth the solution that is necessary for every situation. This travail opens the way for a new context of freedom from the confinement that our circumstances and carnal responses have established.

There are no 'victims' in Christ. However, we become victims when we succumb to our infirmity, blaming others for our distress. This produces anger, as an emotion of sin. Self-destruction and self-humiliation proceed from this anger, indicating the dystrophy of identity. To galvanise ourselves and our fractured self-image, we may invest ourselves in more service activities or in other forms of self-centred expression, only to become further incensed when our initiatives go unrecognised and are not honoured by others.

This is a wretched state, and our only deliverance is through Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom 7:24-25. As we receive the word of the cross, with its accompanying chastening, and our understanding is illuminated by the wisdom of God in the fellowship of Christ's trespass offering for us, *we are saved*. This is the travail of the Spirit helping our infirmities. Rom 8:2 This deliverance was exemplified by the repentant thief who suffered and died with Christ. He understood the justice of God and also the mercy of God, and was enabled by the Spirit to pray with understanding.

The travail of the cross does more than just make room for us and our expression as sons of God. It brings us forth into the kingdom of heaven, and joins us to the Father and the authority of His throne. Christ's priesthood teaches us this. We note, then, that the trial of faith is for us 'the *fiery trial'*. 1Pe 4:12-13. Through faith, however, the fire has no effect upon us. If, by the Spirit, we open our ear morning by morning, and join the fellowship of prayer, *we are not consumed*. Isa 50:4-6. Lam 3:22-23. We are strengthened so that we do not fall into temptation and stumble on the pathway that belongs to our predestination as a son of God in Christ.

This principle was detailed by Daniel in his account of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. We recall that when these three men were thrown, bound, into the fiery furnace, which had been heated seven times hotter, Christ was with them. The fire had no power on their bodies; the hair of their head was not singed; nor were their garments affected; and the smell of fire was not on them. Only their bondages had been consumed by the fire.

ABBREVIATED HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS

TO ACCOMPANY CHAPTER ONE - THE SEVEN SIGNS IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

	SIGN	EVENT	WHEN AND WHERE	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
First 6 months		Birth of John the Baptist	Feast of Passover			1:57-80	
		Birth of Jesus	Feast of Tabernacles in Bethlehem (He is the Son of David)			2:1-20	
		Circumcision of Jesus	8 days old			2:21	
		Dedication of Jesus	40 days old at temple in Jerusalem			2:22-39a	
		Flight to Egypt	Egypt	2:13-15			
		Return to Nazareth	Nazareth (He is the Prophet from Nazareth)	2:19-23		2:39b	
		John begins his ministry	Wilderness of Judea	3:1-12	1:2-8	3:1-18	
		Baptism of Jesus	Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus is 30 years old	3:13-17	1:9-11	3:21-23	1:32-34
		Temptation of Jesus	In wilderness for 40 days	4:1-11	1:12-13	4:1-13	
		John explains his ministry	Bethabara, beyond the Jordan				1:19-28
		John proclaims Jesus to be Lamb, Son of God, Christ	The next day				1:29-34
		Initial call of Peter and Andrew	The next day				1:35-42
		Initial call of Philip and Nathanael	The next day				1:43-51
	Sign #1	Jesus changes water into wine	Cana in Galilee				2:1-11
Year 1		Jesus cleanses the temple (1st time)	**1st Passover during Jesus' earthly ministry,** Jesus in Jerusalem				2:13-25
		Jesus meets Samaritan woman at Sychar	Around time of Pentecost (4 months before Tabernacles)				4:1-42
		Beginning of Galilean ministry	Galilee	4:12b	1:14b	4:14-15	4:43-45
	Sign #2	Jesus heals an official's son	Cana in Galilee				4:46-54
		Jesus settles in Capernaum		4:13-17			
		Jesus announces Year of Jubilee	Feast of Tabernacles, in synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth			4:16-30	
		Official call of the 4 fishermen	Sea of Galilee	4:18-22	1:16-20	5:1-11	

CONTINUED

	SIGN	EVENT	WHEN AND WHERE	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Year 2	Sign #3	Jesus heals a paralytic on the sabbath	**2nd Passover during Jesus' earthly ministry,** Jesus in Jerusalem				5:1-47
		Jesus chooses 12 apostles			3:13-19	6:12-16	
		Jesus is rejected in Nazareth again		13:53-58	6:1-6		
		Jesus instructs the 12 apostles		10:1-42	6:7-11	9:1-5	
		Jesus sends the 12 apostles		11:1	6:12-13	9:6	
Year 3	Sign #4	Jesus feeds the 5000	**3rd Passover during Jesus' earthly ministry**, Jesus in Galilee	14:13-21	6:34-44	9:11-17	6:3-15
		Jesus walks on the water	Sea of Galilee	14:25-33	6:48-52		6:19-21
		Jesus proclaims Himself to be Bread of Life	The next day				6:22-71
		Jesus goes to the Feast of Tabernacles	Jerusalem				7:10-13
	Sign #5	Jesus heals the blind man	Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem				9:1-10:21
		Jesus sends the 72 disciples				10:1-24	
		Jesus visits house of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus	Bethany, near Jerusalem			10:38-42	
		Jesus in Jerusalem during Feast of Dedication	Jerusalem				10:22-39
		Jesus goes to Perea					10:40-42
		Jesus hears that Lazarus is sick	Still in Perea				11:1-16

CONTINUED

Year 3 (Cont.)

SIGN	EVENT	WHEN AND WHERE	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Sign #6	Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead	Bethany, near Jerusalem				11:17-53
	Jesus withdraws again	Ephraim				11:54
	Jesus returns to Jerusalem area				19:28	
	Mary anoints the feet of Jesus	6 days before Passover, Martha's house in Bethany				12:1-8
	The triumphal entry on the donkey's colt	Jerusalem	21:1-11	11:1-10	19:29-40	12:12-16
	Jesus curses the fig tree	The next day, on way from Bethany to Jerusalem	21:18-19a	11:12-14		
	Jesus cleanses the temple (2nd time)	Jerusalem	21:12-13	11:15-17	19:45-46	
	The fig tree is dried up	The next day, on way from Bethany to Jerusalem	21:19b-22	11:20-26		
	The seven woes	Jerusalem	23:13-36			
	Lament about Jerusalem		23:37-39		13:34-35	
	Woman anoints the head of Jesus	2 days before Passover, Simon the leper's house in Bethany	26:6-13	14:3-9		
	Last Supper	Upper Room in Jerusalem	26:20-29	14:17-25	22:14-38	13:1-14:31a
	Discussion and prayer on Mount of Olives	Mount of Olives	26:30-35	14:26-31		14:31b-17:26
	Prayer and arrest in Garden of Gethsemane	Garden of Gethsemane	26:36-56	14:32-52	22:40-53	18:1-12
	Trial before Annas and Caiaphas	Jerusalem	26:57-75	14:53-72	22:54-71	18:13-27
	Jesus before Pilate	Jerusalem	27:2,11-14	15:1-5	23:1-5	18:28-38
	Jesus before Herod	Jerusalem			23:6-12	
	Jesus before Pilate again, scourged by soldiers	Jerusalem	27:15-31	15:6-20	23:13-25	18:39-19:15
	Simon of Cyrene	On the way to Golgotha	27:32	15:21	23:26	
	Jesus addresses the weeping women	On the way to Golgotha			23:27-31	
Sign #7	Crucifixion	**4th Passover during Jesus' earthly ministry,** Jesus crucified outside the gate	27:33-56	15:22-41	23:33-49	19:17-37
	Burial	3 days and 3 nights in the tomb to fulfil the sign of the prophet Jonah	27:57-61 12:40	15:42-47	23:50-56	19:38-42
	Day of resurrection	Sunday	28:1-15	16:1-14	24:1-49	20:1-23
	Jesus appears to Thomas	8 days after the resurrection				20:26-29
	Jesus recovers Peter	By the Sea of Galilee				21:1-19
	Great commission	Galilee	28:16-20			
	Ascension	Mount of Olives		16:19	24:50-51	