

THE WAY TO HUMAN FREEDOM

Study 6

THE STORY (2): JESUS—THE FATHER’S WAY OF BRINGING HUMANITY INTO FREEDOM

With the process of God’s grand redemptive plan worked out thus far, the way is now open for us to behold the One to whom all things have been pointing: THE LIBERATING SON OF GOD!!!

What we are to learn about Him will show that He was, indeed, the ‘Holy One’ among us. We will see that there never has been nor ever will be another like Him: the Father’s Divine, ‘One and Only Son’.

From here onwards in our Story there is *revelation* that directly meets the *deepest need* of a restlessly, struggling humanity. What is made known in this study—together with those that follow—truly is, what every human heart has been created to respond to!

We may, indeed, have a keen sense of anticipation of what is ahead. But before we start there are some foundations that need to be laid.

In Study 5, it was needful to begin the Story of Redemption by laying down some ‘doctrinal’ foundations. These included the nature of the *Creation Covenant* and God’s ongoing covenantal purpose; together with the *three covenant gifts* that He established at the beginning for the blessing of humanity.

So now also, as we begin this second part of the Divine Narrative of Redemption, there is the need to establish some *more* doctrinal foundations. Central to these, will be an appreciation of the amazing nature of the Son, and how He has eternally related to God the Father and the Holy Spirit. And this will introduce us to the doctrine of, but more than that, the *wonderful reality* of ‘the Trinity’.

In Studies 1 & 5 we began with an unfolding of the nature of the Father. Here, we will begin with proclamation of the nature of the *Son*.

His nature:

(as 2nd Divine Person of the Blesséd Triune Community of Love)

- Son & Word [of the Initiator-Father]

Firstly, the Scriptures tell us that He is, by nature, ‘the Eternal Son’.

John 1:14

[He is] the One and Only Son.

Hebrews 7:3

[The Son of God] ... without beginning of days or end of life.

John 8:58

[He said,] “Before Abraham was born, I AM.”

John 5:26

As the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself.

Yes, the Son, together with the Father, is ‘eternally Self-existent’.

Acts 3:15

[He is] the Author of Life.

As the Son He is also the very *Word* of the Father. From eternity He has always been the dynamic expression of His Father’s heart, mind and will—in every way, His Perfect Likeness!

John 1:1, 4

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was [face to face] with God, and the Word was God ... In Him was life.

As Son and Word He has always been in intimate communion with the Father. As the Word, the life that was in Him was THE LIFE OF HIS ETERNAL SONSHIP!!!

The title, *the ‘word’* in the Koine Greek language of the New Testament is ‘logos’. This was a well-known word from Greek philosophy which spoke of the ‘dynamic universal-functional-principle’ which is at the heart of all things. But when applied to Jesus in the New Testament, there is a very significant *addition* to the understanding of it: the fact of ‘relational-reality’!!

And so the New Testament meaning of the term ‘logos’ when speaking of ‘the Son’, is declaring that He is: the ‘Dynamic Universal-Functional-Principle and *Relational-Reality*’ at the heart of all things’!!! AS THE SON / LOGOS, HE IS THE ONE WHOSE, DYNAMIC ETERNAL SONSHIP IS AT THE HEART OF THE ENTIRE CREATION!! The significance of this will become more and more clear as we continue (not only here in this study, but also in others to come).

- **Creator** [as Mediator of the Creation]

In Study 1 we saw that the whole creation came into to being through the word of God. Now, we learn that it was the Son Himself—the very, Dynamic-Word of the Father—who in fact spoke it all into existence!

John 1:2–3

He [as the Word] was [face to face] with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made.

Hebrews 1:8, 10–12

About the Son [it is said] ... “In the beginning, Lord, You laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But You remain the same, and Your years will never end.”

This Scripture that was taken from Psalm 102:25–27 in the Old Testament, was written originally about the LORD but is now applied directly to the Son.

Hebrews 1:2

In these last days [God] has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed Heir of all things, and through whom [indeed] He made the universe.

Colossians 1:16b

All things have been created through Him and for Him.

As Son and Word, He has always been the grand and primary Object of His Father’s purpose. And so all things were created not only *through* Him, but also *for* Him! He always has been, and is today, the ‘Heir of all things’. The Father’s plan to create was a total act of love, centred wholly in the Son—who was to both speak it all into existence and inherit it forever!

Colossians 1:17

He [as the Son] is before all things, and in Him all things [consist].

In His Sonship, He is the very Essence of all things!

Hebrews 1:3

[The Son is today] sustaining all things by His powerful word [/ proclamation].

From the Beginning to the End He, Himself, in every way, is the Mediator of the entire creation!

- **Servant** [as Son] & **King** [as Mediator of the kingdom]

As the Son, He has always joyously served His Father’s purpose. This has been His eternal delight! And in doing so He has been the *One through* whom the Father has delighted to manifest His great kingdom of love. As the Mediator of the creation He is also the Mediator of His Father’s kingdom.¹

Colossians 1:16

In Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities.

The significance of all things being created ‘in Him’ will be seen shortly. Just now we may understand that every heavenly or earthly throne, power, rule or authority has been created to exist within the realm of the Son’s kingship—as He mediates His Father’s grand intention!

Hebrews 1:8

About the Son He says "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the sceptre of Your kingdom."

Here, the Son is called ‘God’. The Scripture quoted is Psalm 45:6, which referred originally to the king of Israel. In the Old Testament the Hebrew word for God, ‘*elohim*’ could also mean ‘ruler’, and in Psalm 45 it did initially refer to the king as God’s representative ruler of His people. In any nation in those days it was customary for a king to be referred to as the son of his god. And so in keeping with this understanding, Psalm 2:7 tells us that the LORD said to His ‘anointed one’—the king of Israel—“You are My son, today I have become your Father.”²

But if those who were reading the New Testament book of Hebrews thought that Jesus was merely ‘just another king under the authority his God’, they would be in for huge shock! For He in His humanity as the Christ / the Messiah / the Anointed One, is declared to be also the Creator and the Sustainer of all things. In Hebrews 1 He is, clearly, both the *human* Representative Ruler of the LORD, and *GOD—THE DIVINE SON-KING!*

When the New Testament writers proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, they also revealed that He was—as a Person—One who was much more than had been expected! Again and again, they used passages from the Old Testament that

¹ As mentioned in Study 5, the appearances of the unique ‘Angel of the LORD’ in the Old Testament are such that we may assume them to be manifestations of the Eternal Son appearing in angelic or human form—mediating His Father’s word and action. We saw that when Samson’s father Manoah asked the Angel of the LORD what His name was, he received this reply: “Why do you ask My name? It is beyond understanding [—it is wonderful].” (Judges 13:17–18).

² Clearly, the evil one considered it to be something of a, masterstroke, to have established this kind of relational language between human kings and their gods. He, ‘the god of this world’ was, by both his deception and self-appointment, the father of every king—and through them exercised a perverse authority over every nation! And tragically, as we saw in Study 5, this was precisely the case in regard to so many of the kings of Israel and Judah in the time of the ‘divided kingdom’. They were idolatrous servants of the evil one, even though they spoke of serving the LORD.

referred to the LORD and applied them directly to the Son. It was Jesus, Himself, who taught them these things.³

an unsearchably great reality: the Divine Triune Community of Love

The massively significant and beautiful doctrine of ‘the Trinity’ is an unsearchably great *mystery*. It is part of the ‘mystery of Christ’ that the New Testament often speaks of.

Biblically, a mystery is something that has been hidden, but is now made known to those who have received revelation of it. The mystery of Christ is something that was long hidden from our understanding (during the Old Testament phase of God’s redemptive plan), but has now been made known with the visible coming of the Son among us and the work He has accomplished.

What has been revealed of this awesome reality is truly wonderful. But like all elements of the mystery of Christ, its *ultimate revelation* will not be received until the great Climax to come. Eternity will, no doubt, make delightfully clear to God’s people the whole nature of this mystery, which is now beyond our capacity to fully grasp with our minds.

Right now, however—although unable to fully explain the Trinity and the Son’s place within it—we *are* able to know all that is needful to *live in* the wonder of it. Actually, our capacity to understand this matter has more to do with *relational* knowledge than *mental*. And really, that’s not only the way it is now, but how it will also be in eternity.

And so, with the Trinity—as with all elements of the mystery of Christ—we are not dealing with a mental *puzzle* to be *solved*, but rather, a joyous *reality* to *live in* by faith. We can never fully grasp the unsearchable greatness of God with our mind, but we can definitely know the joy of responding to Him in worship!⁴

what may be mentally understood about the nature of the Trinity

Before the coming of the Son among us, the existence of the Triune Community of God was never imagined by His people. God was revealed simply as one Person, the LORD. But with the revelation of Christ’s unique Sonship, and His teaching about the Personality of the Holy Spirit,⁵ the reality of God as Triune was stunningly set before us. The doctrine of the Trinity is, then, a result of that revelation.

The diagram below presents in a simple way what we *may* mentally grasp, even now, of this revealed mystery of Christ in regard to His place within the Divine Triune Community of Love.

³ Throughout the New Testament we can never separate Jesus’ humanity as the Messiah from His Divine, Eternal Sonship.

⁴ The term ‘Trinity’ is not in the Bible. But as will be seen as we continue, it is one that was very naturally formed to describe clear biblical revelation of the *divine nature* of the three Persons—who are, *distinctively different*, yet, *absolutely one*, in *intimate communion and vocational action of love*.

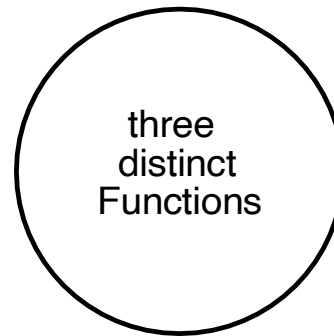
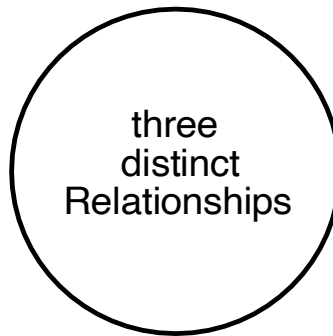
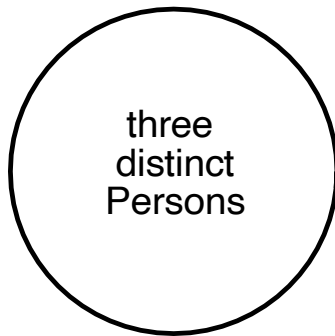
⁵ The Spirit is clearly made known as a Person, not only in the teaching of Jesus, but also generally in the Scriptures. We have already seen—and will continue to see—that He has *personal* intelligence, feeling and will, and relates *personally* to God’s people as He guides, commands, teaches, instructs and comes to their aid. In John 14:17 He is spoken of as One who may be ‘known’.

within the One, wholly unified, God, there is:

One Divine Being

One Divine Love

One Divine Action



all things are:

From the Father	(His Will)	He is the INITIATOR
Through the Son	(His Word)	He is the MEDIATOR
By the Spirit	(His Work)	He is the FACILITATOR

We will now spell out some of these things. It’s not very complicated, but if you can’t grasp it all just now, relax: the rest of the study won’t be hard to understand.

**although wholly one in *Being* with the Father,
the Son is distinct as a *Person***

As the Father’s ‘One and Only Son’ He has been from all eternity *generated* from the Being of His Father.

John 1:18

[The Son is the Only Begotten], who is Himself God.

Begotten means ‘generated from’ or ‘fathered’. The divine Being of the Father is the *fountain* of the divine Being of the Son.

Although entirely one in Being with the Father, He is, as Son, *distinct* from Him by nature. The Son has from eternity wholly participated in the One divine Being of the Father, but is Himself, a distinct *Person*.

The Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Father. The Spirit—who is wholly one in Being with the Father and the Son—is also, as a Person, distinct from them both.

**within the one Being of God, there is One divine *love*
—flowing among the three Persons**

All of the divine perfections seen in Study 1 have to do with God’s love. They are all part of His eternally dynamic ‘*Being of love*’. That is, HIS ETERNALLY-DYNAMIC RELATIONAL BEING.

‘The God Who Is’ is, at core, *gloriously relational!* That’s why human beings—as His image—are also at core, deeply relational. Without this created need for meaningful relationship fulfilled we are soon in dark despair.

God is love. He was never ‘the solitary God’ in need of a creation in order to have others to relate to. He has, in fact, always enjoyed just the opposite to such a ‘lonely

state’. It was out of the blessed *fullness* of His own eternally dynamic, ‘relational Being of love’ that He created!

The Father has eternally, joyously and purposefully been in *intimate relationship* with the Son and the Spirit. Each of the three Persons have always loved, served, honoured, freely and abundantly given to and gratefully received from one another.

What is more, THE ETERNAL *COMMUNION* THEY HAVE ENJOYED HAS BEEN, BY NATURE, *COVENANTAL*—A BLESSÉD *DIVINE, RELATIONAL BOND*. That’s why various expressions of covenant are so basic to human experience—and why enjoyment of the *covenant of God* is absolutely essential to a true and full humanity!

**flowing out of the one divine Being of love in God,
there is one divine *action* of love—expressed in
the exercise of three distinct, vocational *functions***

The diagram above has shown that all things are FROM the Father—the *Initiator*—THROUGH the Son—the *Mediator*—and BY the Spirit—the *Facilitator*. The *will* of the Father is ever accomplished through the *word* of the Son and by the *work* of the Spirit.

As said already, the Son—eternally generated from the Being of the Father—has always been the *Word* of His Father: utterly one with Him in heart, mind and will.

In Study 7 we will see that the Spirit is *the Spirit of the Father and the Son*. He ever delights to respond to the Father’s will, as expressed in the Son’s word.

As with the Son, the divine Being of the Father is the *fountain* of the divine Being of the Spirit. He, from eternity, has *proceeded* from the Father, as the Personal Outgoing of His presence and power.

In a functional way the Spirit also proceeds from the Son—always delighted to work out the Father’s will according to the Son’s word.

1 Corinthians 8:6

There is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came ... and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came.

The creation has come *from* the Father and *through* the Son—who has now taken to Himself our humanity as the Lord Jesus Christ.

Genesis 1:2–3

The Spirit of God was [moving as a mighty wind across] the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

In this Scripture we have a prime illustration of the vocational function of the Triune Community. There is the Spirit moving mightily over the waters that covered the earth during the first day of creation. Then the Father’s *intention* to create light was expressed through the *utterance* of the Son—and light flashed into existence by the Spirit’s *power!*

Whether in creation, providence or redemption, the vocational action of God is accomplished through the will of the Father, the word of the Son and the work of the Spirit—each of the three Persons being gloriously *free* and *full* in their *functional life of love* together!

**There is only one God, whose oneness is eternally
expressed in a covenant union of love**

As Study 1 showed, the Bible rejects ‘poly-theism’: the idea of there being a *pantheon* of many gods. What it clearly declares is a rich ‘mono-theism’: the reality of

one true God, apart from whom there is no other. The oneness of God is indispensable to a truly biblical understanding of Him.

Deuteronomy 6:4

The LORD our God [is one LORD].

There are not three Persons who are *three gods*: the Father, the Son and the Spirit. That is called ‘tri-theism’. It describes a ‘triad’—like the Hindu Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva—not a trinity.

Nor is there *one Person* who manifests Himself in three different ways or *modes*—at one time as Father, another as Son and another as Spirit. That’s called ‘modalism’.

Modalism is often illustrated by saying that a man may be a husband, a father and a baker: one person operating in three modes. All such illustrations from the creation misrepresent the true nature of the Trinity. They can appear to be helpful, but actually distort what the Scriptures teach.

As has been said, there are in fact three distinct Persons within one divine Being. The one *Being* of God must not be divided into three, as in tri-theism. Nor must the three *Persons* be merged into one, as in modalism.⁶

The Scriptures proclaim that the one God of heaven and earth ‘is love’. As mentioned above, within His one divine Being He knows THE BLESSÉDNESS OF AN ETERNAL COVENANT UNION OF LOVE. And it is out of this that He has structured a world—and particularly a humanity—that has *relationships* as central to its created nature.

The One True God has within Himself A RICHLY DYNAMIC RELATIONAL LIFE!!!

Genesis 1:26

God said, "Let Us make human beings in Our image."

Here we are given a hint right from the start, of purposeful, communal relationship within our Maker.

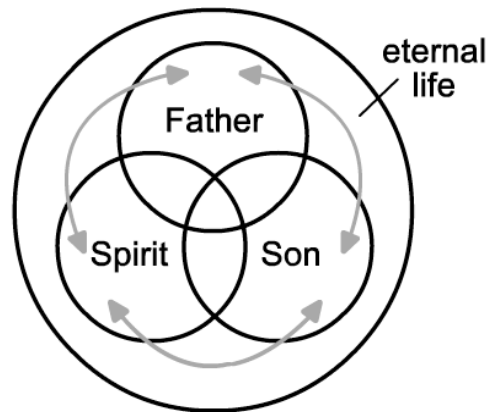
the divine Triune Community is alive with the unsearchably great perfections of God!

The perfections described in Study 1 in regard to the Father are also glorious manifestations of the nature of the Trinity.

A one sentence summary of Study 1: The Triune God is eternally the relationally dynamic, entirely free, totally integrated, faithful, good, morally pure, merciful and gracious, purpose-filled, all-powerful, boundlessly joyous, wholly serene and everywhere dynamically present, Triune Community of Love!

⁶ Many who love God, sincerely worshipping Him and calling upon in prayer, would affirm that they believe in the Trinity. And yet they are actually often quite ‘modalistic’ in the way they express what is in their heart. For example, a prayer such as: “Father, thank You for dying on the cross” is very much a form of modalistic prayer. Desiring to give expression to the oneness of the Being of God, a ‘modalist’ falls into the trap of merging the three Persons into one—or, at least, creating confusion in regard to them. Sadly though, with this kind of approach the *wonder* of both the relational intimacy and the distinct vocational functions of the Triune Community is lost.

the relationship between the Father, Son and Spirit is, itself, eternal life



The diagram shows how the Father loves the Son and the Spirit, how the Son loves the Father and the Spirit and how the Spirit loves the Father and the Son.

In their eternal, covenant union of love, the Father, Son and Spirit have always enjoyed together a common *eternal life*. This is not just an eternal *existence*. Eternal life is an endless participation in the intimacy, communion and action of the Glorious, Divine Covenant-Community of Love!

John 5:20

The Father loves the Son.

John 14:31

—*the Son's declaration*

"I love the Father."

John 1:18

No one has ever seen God, but the One and Only Son, who is Himself God and is [in intimate relationship with] the Father, has made Him known.

John 5:20

The Father loves the Son and shows Him all He does.

1 Corinthians 2:10

The Spirit searches ... the deep things of God.

Romans 8:2 [NASB]

[He is] the Spirit of life.

Galatians 5:22

The fruit of the Spirit is love.

This flow of love between the three Persons of the Triune Community is what 'eternal life' is all about.

1 John 1:2

We proclaim to you the eternal life, which was [face to face] with the Father and has appeared to us.

John 17:3, 5, 21

[Jesus prayed], "This is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God. ... Father, glorify Me [with You], with the glory [I was having at your side] before the world began. ... Father ... You are in Me and I am in You."

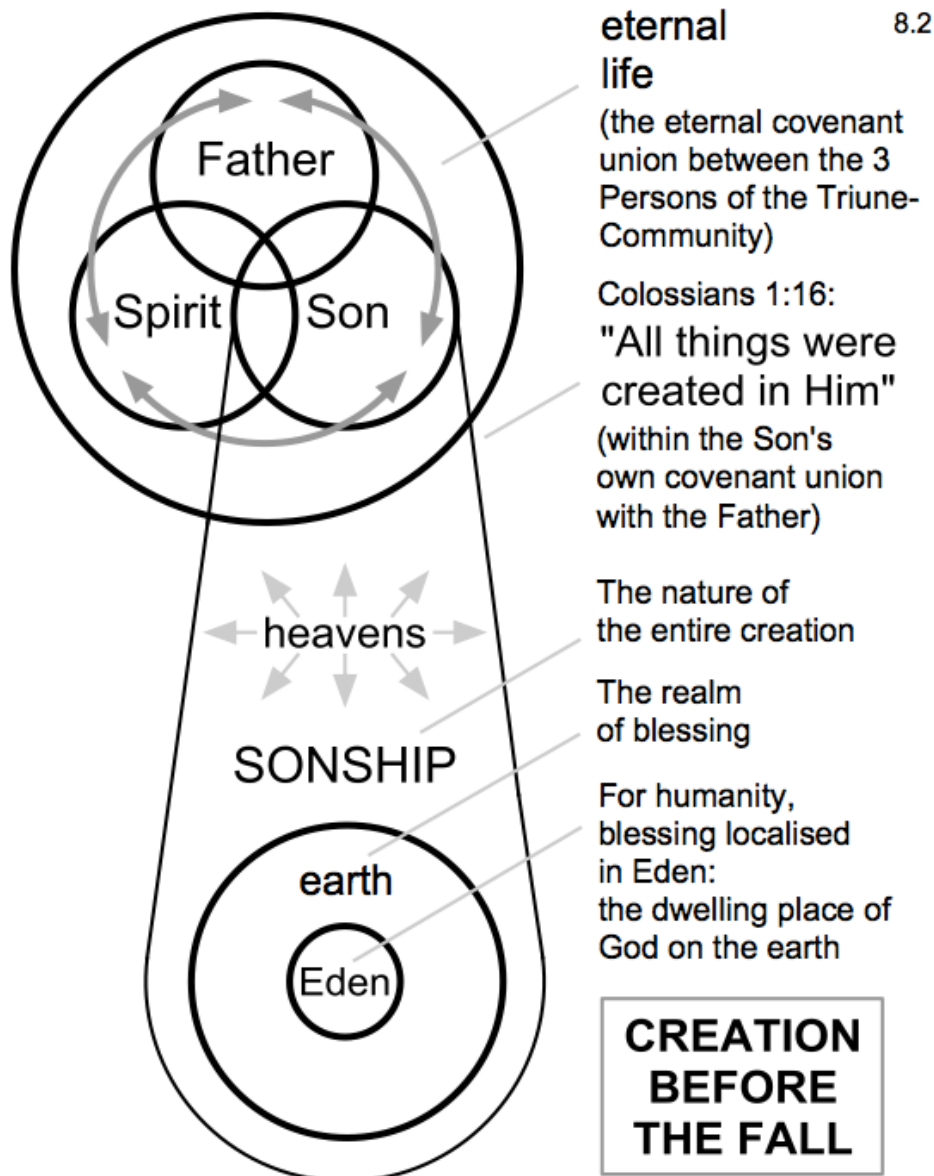
The sheer blessedness of the relationships within the Triune Community of Love is what every person has been created to know and enjoy. The purpose of God's redemptive work in Christ is to enable us to *participate* in this—increasingly now, and totally in eternity!

It goes without saying, then, that the central purpose of the ‘The Way To Human Freedom’ Series, is about nothing less than our coming to enjoy this eternal life of God—in all of the rich dimensions of both its relational intimacy and vocational partnership!

**the heart of the creation covenant
 —all things created ‘in the Son’**

We have already seen that the creation was brought into being ‘through’ the Son as its Mediator and ‘for’ Him as its Heir. Now, however, we are going to grasp a further reality—one which is truly amazing and that gives wisdom to understand the very nature of the entire creation. In Colossians 1:16 we are told that, “In Him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth.” **EVERYTHING WAS CREATED IN THE SON!!!**

The next diagram illustrates this stunning fact. It shows that all of creation has been encapsulated within the Son’s own eternal covenant union with His Father! Here, we see the blessed situation of ‘creation before the Fall’.



There is *nothing* in the whole of the heavens or the earth that is not totally enclosed—and dynamically embraced—within this glorious, divine and eternal bond of love. The Father loves every part of the creation in the same way as He does the One who is His eternal Treasure—the Son Himself. It was the Father’s intention that every element of the ‘non-human creation’ should form an environment in which His image—humankind—would enjoy the blessedness of the Son.

In this, then, we may understand the most significant thing that can ever be known regarding the creation: it is all with a view to a manifestation of the glory of Son’s relationship to His Father. IT IS A *PARTICIPATION IN THE ETERNAL SONSHIP* THAT IS AT THE VERY HEART OF THE NATURE OF THE CREATION!!!

According to the Father’s purpose, the earth was always to be the place where He personally dwelt with His image. HUMAN KIND WAS TO SHARE IN THE RELATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL LIFE OF THE SON WITHIN THE TRIUNE COMMUNITY: a *regal humanity* reflecting the glory the Eternal-Son-King, and in that, the glory of His Father. THE PURPOSE OF OUR PRESENT STUDY IS TO TELL THE EXTRAORDINARY STORY OF HOW—IN THE MIDST OF OUR HUMAN FALLEN-NESS—THIS HAS ALL BEEN MADE POSSIBLE!!!

before the Fall the earth was the realm of blessing

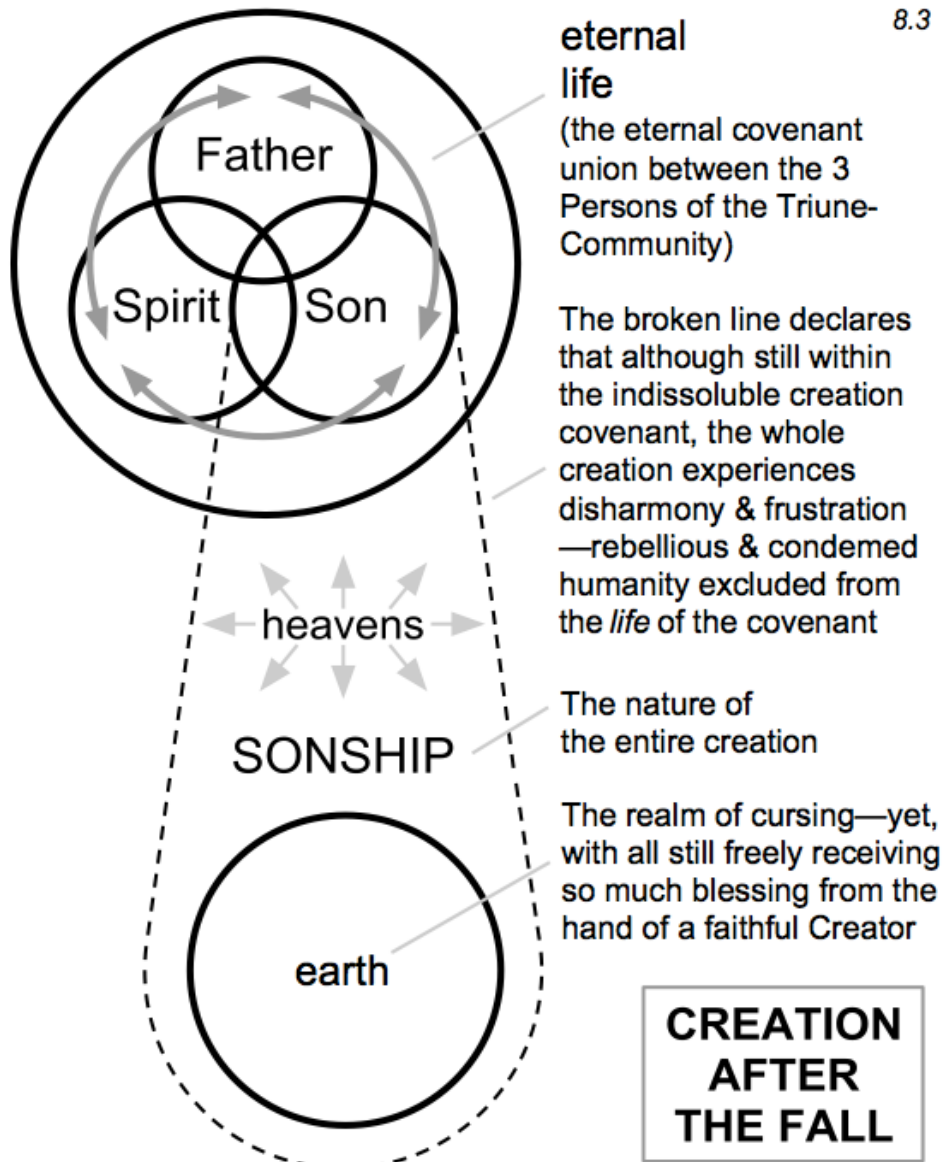
We saw in Study 5 that Eden was the holy sanctuary—the *place* where God dwelt with His cherished humanity. The first couple had no sense of guilt, condemnation or shame, joyously living by their Maker’s word and wisdom.

Although the whole earth was the realm of blessing for the non-human creation, for humanity this was localized within the garden sanctuary. That was with a view, of course, to their being fruitful and multiplying and progressively filling the whole earth. As Study 5 showed, there was to be a naturally, ever-expanding Eden, until the earth was filled with the glory of God—through the worship, relational life and vocational activity of His dearly loved and constantly blessed image!

the continuing reality of the creation covenant after the Fall

With the tragic event of human rebellion at the beginning—and its ugly continuance throughout history—things have become very different in God’s world. What didn’t change, of course, was the glorious reality of the creation covenant—which will *never* be dissolved!

But although our Creator’s bond of love with His creation wonderfully remained, the *blessédness* of it was no longer experienced by humankind. Still enclosed within the Son’s own covenant union with the Father and the Spirit, those who continue in rebellion are now, rightly condemned—living under the wrath of God and *excluded* from enjoyment of the *life* of that blessed covenantal bond. In the diagram below this is indicated by a broken line.



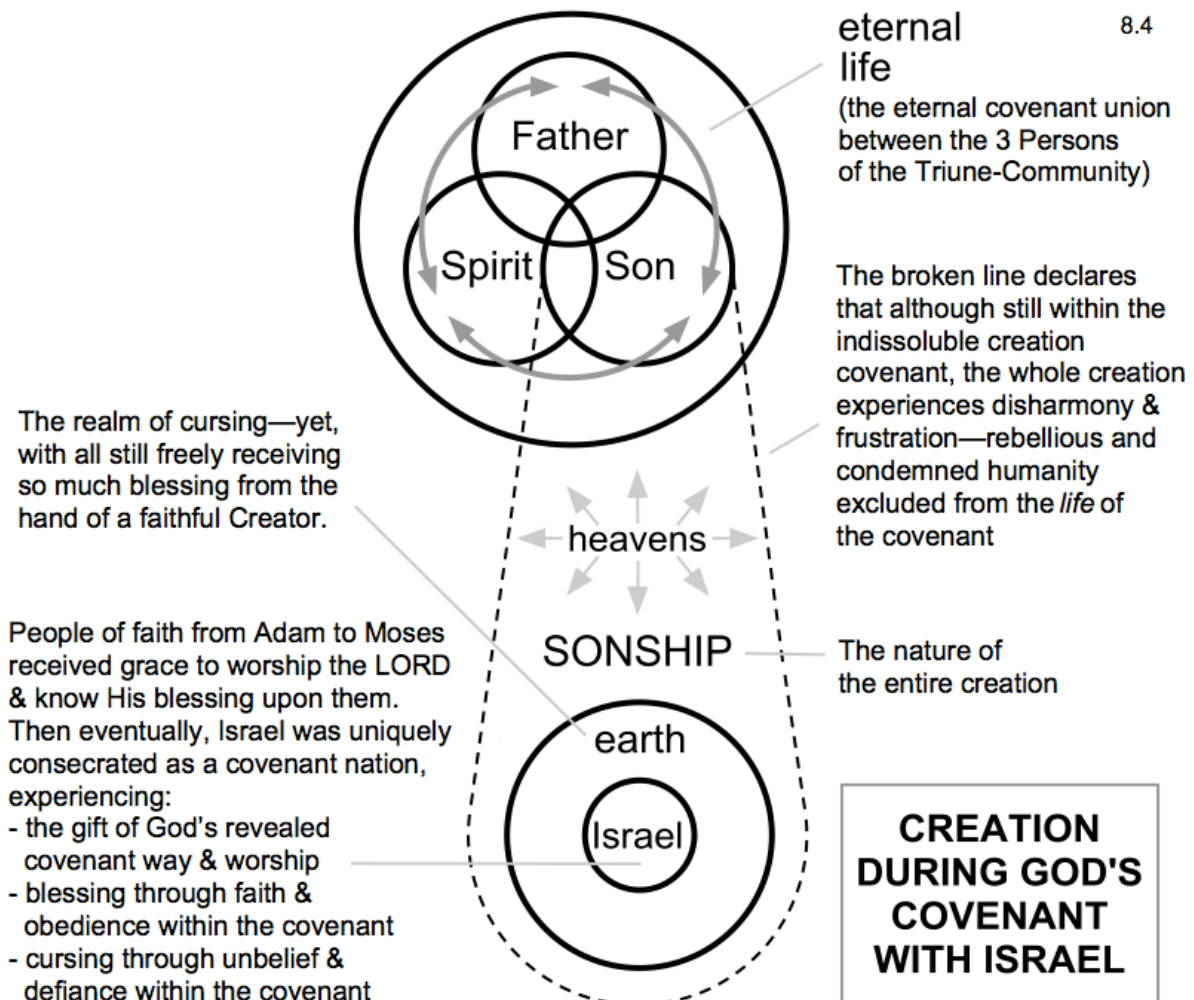
To not be in the enjoyment of the Son’s covenant union with His Father is, actually, to be out of harmony with the nature of the creation itself. Living in the Creator’s world but against the way it was structured to function, rebellious humanity is *justly* given up to disharmony and frustration.

Together with humankind, the whole of creation—although faithfully sustained by its Creator—experiences the *curse* that came as a result of Adam’s sin. Even the ‘good creation’ has been subjected to disharmony and frustration (Romans 8:20).

The earth is now no longer a realm of undiminished *blessing* but one of relentless *cursing*. As seen in Study 5, frustration and futility is built into every situation of fallen-human endeavour. Excluded from the garden sanctuary, renegade human beings find that there is no realm of truly life-giving blessing for them to live in. In the midst of their endless, restless struggle, however, they *do still freely receive* enormously rich blessing from the hand of the Faithful One—even though they refuse to honour Him, or give Him thanks (Romans 1:21).

the continuing reality of the creation covenant within Israel

As the grand Story of Redemption has revealed in our account of it so far, the Faithful Creator did not leave rebellious humanity without hope of restoration. He in fact, progressively made provision for enjoyment of the blessedness His image was made for.



From Adam to Noah, through to Abraham and then to Moses, people of faith received grace to know God’s hand of blessing upon them. Then, after the mighty liberating action of the Exodus, Israel was awesomely consecrated as the people of God at Mount Sinai. Through their covenant mediator Moses, they received the gift of God’s ‘revealed way’ in the covenant law and His gift of ‘true worship’ centred within that ‘holy place’: the tabernacle. And with this they received the promise of blessing if they lived in faith and obedience, and the promise of cursing if they lived in unbelief and defiance.

All who were outside the covenant community of Israel—the nations—remained within the embrace of the creation covenant. But they were excluded from the abundant blessing of its life—knowing, in general, only the cursing that comes from refusing the face of their Maker.

At Mount Sinai Israel was set apart as a ‘royal priesthood’ and a ‘holy nation’—the LORD’S own people. As a royal priesthood they were to worship and serve Him as

children of the Sovereign King (Deuteronomy 14:1). As a holy nation they were to be different from all others in their worship and way of living (Exodus 19:5–6). Together—as His treasured possession—He called them His son (Exodus 4:22–23). In this they were to enjoy as a nation a measure of relational intimacy and vocational partnership with Him—as through them He continued to work out His awesome ‘grace plan’ for His world!

And so we now come to the body of our present study: ‘Jesus—the Father’s Way of Making Humanity Free’. Here the ongoing Story of Redemption will continue to its *glorious consummation*—when our Maker’s great covenant of love with all creation will be, forever, *fully enjoyed* by His redeemed people from among every nation!

HIS WORK OF REDEMPTION

**** Christ—New Adam-Israel-Temple—establishing the new covenant & bringing blessing to all nations***

As was said in the Key Concept section of Study 5, Christ did not come ‘out of nowhere’. He was prophetically foreshadowed and spoken of throughout the Old Testament. In particular, there were many prophecies of the blessing He would bring to the nations in fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham. As we saw from Isaiah at the end of that study:

Isaiah 42:6–7

I will ... make [My Servant] to be a covenant for the people and a light for the [nations], to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

During the years between Judah’s return from exile and Christ’s coming, God’s people knew little of the blessing they’d been promised. Although back in the land, with the temple rebuilt—and eventually magnificently restored by King Herod—they, nevertheless, endured years of darkness, during which the dawning of a new day was longed for.

We saw in Isaiah chapter 42 that the Servant-Messiah was, Himself, prophesied to be the promised ‘new covenant’ (Jeremiah 31:31). In Him the covenant made with Abraham would be completely fulfilled. Both Israel and the nations would be brought from darkness to light—liberated together into enjoyment of a glorious covenant union with God!

Isaiah 49:6

It is too small a thing for you to be My Servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the [nations], that you may bring My salvation to the ends of the earth.

The prophet Haggai spoke of Him in this way:

Haggai 2:7

The Desired [One] of all nations will come.

We will begin to speak of Christ as the New Adam, the New Israel and the New Temple shortly, and then progressively develop these themes throughout other studies. As such, He will be seen to truly be the Desired One of the nations—the glorious Hope of humankind!

the Father’s place-centred, holy purpose in His work of redemption, accomplished through:

- His ‘Enfleshment’⁷ among us as the Beloved

(as the Son, now to be fully divine & fully human—forever)

‘THE WORD BECAME FLESH’!!!

In coming to this first element of the Son’s redemptive action, we may wonder why His being conceived in the womb is spoken of as *His* work? The fact is that as *the Mediator of the creation* He would surely have been involved in His being ‘en-fleshed’ among us. The One who in the beginning spoke according to the Father’s will saying, “Let there be light”, no doubt said at this time, “Let the Father’s will continue, every moment, to be done on earth as it is in heaven, as I Myself now become a human being!” To that word, the Holy Spirit would have responded—and He would have immediately been conceived!

What an incredible event! No longer was the Eternal Son, as the uncreated One, face to face with the Father and in intimate fellowship with the Spirit. He was *upon the earth*, beginning to develop as a human embryo. The *Creator-Son* would now also, Himself, be a *creature* forever!⁸

But He was, and is today, no ordinary creature. Within His Being as ‘En-fleshed Son’, He has both a 100% divine nature and a 100% human nature. As the Person of the Son, His Being is now, forever, fully divine and fully human. He has come among us as both our God and fellow-creature!

Here, then, is *another* puzzling aspect of the mystery of Christ that is now being unveiled. We have seen that as the distinct, Divine Person of the Son, He has complete oneness of Being with both the Father and the Spirit—a reality that is beyond our mental capacity to grasp. But now again we are faced with the same kind of mental limitation. How could one Person have both a fully divine nature and a fully human nature? Our response should once more be to not try and ‘work it out in our brain’ but to, in a spirit of worship, embrace the wonder of what is revealed!

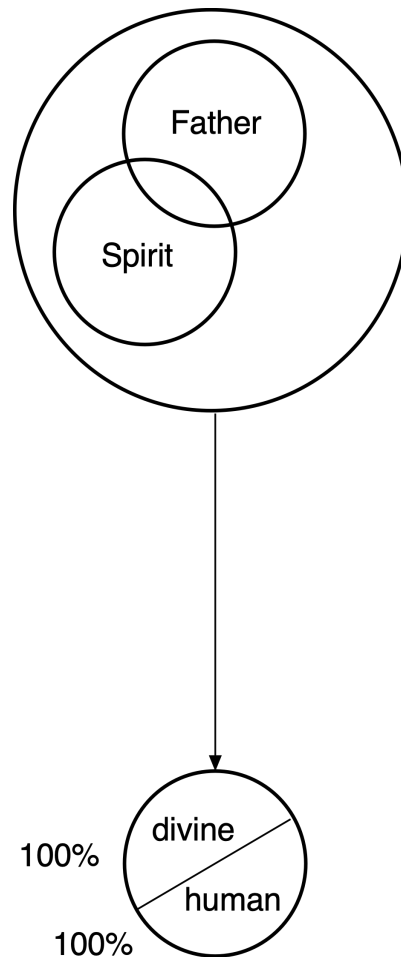
Yes, we may simply receive this amazing revelation and *rejoice* that THE EN-FLESHED, DIVINE REDEEMER-SON, *DELIGHTS*, TO BE ABLE TO FOREVER CALL THE FATHER HIS GOD—SO THAT IN HIS ONENESS WITH *US* WE MAY BE FOREVER ONE WITH *HIM* IN THE BLESSÉDNESS OF HIS ETERNAL SONSHIP!!!

Although for some of us, at this point, such a statement may not have a lot of personal impact, the present study and those to come will continue to unfold its wonders—as the details of the Father’s glorious, redemptive purpose and action are proclaimed and applied.

The following diagram is an attempt to show in some way the staggering reality of what took place at the moment of the Messiah’s conception.

⁷ This is also referred to as His ‘Incarnation’.

⁸ All of His life among us, from the His earliest awareness of His Father’s presence, the affirmation, “Let the Father’s will continue, every moment, to be done on earth as it is in heaven” would have risen up from within the depths of His holy Being! A prayer, we will see, He desired that all who came to participate in His Sonship would themselves incessantly pray.



The centuries had passed, and now the LORD’S amazing promises were ready to be fulfilled.

Galatians 4:4

When the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law.

Isaiah 9:6–7

To us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty [Ruler and Representative of] God, Everlasting Father [—the Shepherd-King—and] Prince of Peace.

John 1:14

The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.

THE CHRIST HAD FINALLY ARRIVED. THE ETERNAL SON-KING EN-FLESHED AMONG US HAD EMBRACED OUR HUMANITY FOREVER!!!

His Conception by the Holy Spirit

In the grand outworking of God’s covenant purpose we saw the miraculous conception of Isaac. Now, when the Eternal Son is en-fleshed we are clearly faced with another miraculous event, but this one is of a far greater magnitude. Here there is no sexual union of two people, yet they have a son. The divine / human Messiah is conceived by a sovereign act of the Holy Spirit in the womb of a young Jewish *virgin* named Mary.

Luke 1:31–35

[The angel Gabriel said to Mary], “You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; His kingdom will never end.”

"How will this be?" Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God.”

There is good reason for such a radically miraculous birth as this. The Christ had to have *continuity* with all that had gone before. (He was to be a descendent of David, as prophesied—and both Mary and her husband to be, Joseph, were of Davidic descent). But there also had to be *discontinuity*.

We will see that Jesus, the Messiah, had not come to *renovate* an old sinful humanity but to—in Himself—create a *new humanity!* When conceived in Mary’s womb by the Holy Spirit He was just as Adam had been—A NEW CREATION!!!

2 Corinthians 5:17

[In Christ] the new creation has come!

What a wondrous thing had happened in the womb of Mary!

Of course, Joseph also needed to be included in the angelic communication that was happening.

Matthew 1:20–23

An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus [which means ‘He will save’], because He will save His people from their sins.”

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel (which means “God is with us”).

His Birth

In order to take part in a census being conducted by the Romans (commanded by the Emperor, Caesar Augustus) Joseph and Mary travelled to Bethlehem, ‘the town of David’—which, as well as being where Joseph was born, was also, in fact, the Messiah’s prophesied place of birth.

Micah 5:2, 4

Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for Me One who will be Ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times. ... He will stand and shepherd His flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God. ... His greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.

And so it was there that Jesus was born. Because of the number of people returning to Bethlehem for the census, there was no guest room available and He was laid in a feed box in an animal enclosure.

Through a remarkable angelic visitation, socially despised shepherds—whose work also kept them from the worship at Jerusalem—were sent to Bethlehem to see the

Holy Child. And they immediately became joyous witnesses of the Messiah’s coming. God’s favour rested even on the least in Israel (Luke 2:8–20)!

Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day as a covenant child and later was taken to Jerusalem to be consecrated as a firstborn son. There, in the temple courts, His parents had an amazing encounter with an old man named Simeon.

Luke 2:25–35

[Simeon] was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. Moved by the Spirit he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for Him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took Him in his arms and praised God, saying, “Sovereign Lord, as You have promised, You may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the [nations] and the glory of Your people Israel.”

The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about Him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, His mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

It would soon become apparent who were the true offspring of Abraham in Israel and who were the ‘offspring of the serpent’!

Before returning to Nazareth they went back to Bethlehem. Then some astrologers from the east were led there to worship the One who would be ‘the king of the Jews’ (Matthew 2:1–12). The nations were even now worshipping the En-fleshed Son!

Herod—the king of Judea at that time—heard of their quest to find this infant-king and set out himself to find and kill Him. But foiled in his plan, he—in demonically inspired fury—had every boy two years old and under killed (Matthew 2:7–18).

Revelation 12:4

The dragon [that is, Satan] stood in front of the woman [symbolically, the nation Israel] who was about to give birth, so that it might devour the Child the moment He was born.

As we’ve seen, Satan had been behind all of the rebellion, idolatry and injustice within Israel during the Old Testament period. Now we will continue to see his activity and that of the spiritual powers he commands as the Story of Redemption unfolds. Throughout the life and ministry of Jesus there will be ongoing, furious demonic engagement, climaxed in the horrendous events of the Cross.

Joseph was warned in a dream to take the Child to Egypt and stayed there until Herod had died. Then he was told to return to Nazareth where Jesus was to be raised (Matthew 2:19–23). The ‘Offspring of the woman’—the serpent’s ‘Crusher’ (Genesis 3:15)—was preserved for His great redemptive vocation!

Because our Story is concerned only with the History of Redemption, details of Jesus’ life up until thirty years of age are not given to us. We are told only that at twelve—when regarded as a ‘young man in Israel’—he was ‘filled with wisdom’, delighted in His Father’s presence when visiting the temple in Jerusalem and was growing into personal maturity as the Truly Human One (Luke 2:40–52).

the new Adam, Israel and Temple

Adam, we have seen, was the first head and representative of the human race. When the Son came among us He was THE NEW ADAM.

We saw in Study 5 how others, like Noah and Abraham—whom the LORD used to bring a ‘new beginning’ into humankind’s fallen situation—were a kind of ‘new Adam’. In this they were foreshadowing the One who would be, Himself, humanity’s ultimate new beginning. He was *the* New Adam, the New Head and Representative of the Race!

He was also THE NEW ISRAEL—the One who, Himself, represented the covenant people of God. All of Israel was embodied in Him. This will become increasingly clear as we continue.

Not only did He embody the people of God but He was also the One who fulfilled what the tabernacle and temple had foreshadowed. He, Himself, was THE NEW TEMPLE, the SANCTUARY, the PLACE where God was, specially, present in the midst of His people. Again, this will be understood more fully later.

the Father’s place-centred, holy purpose in His work of redemption, accomplished through:

- His baptism at the River Jordan—a trumpet sound

(consecration: rightly *affirming* obedience as Son-Servant, *identifying* as Lamb & *anointed* as Priest, Prophet & King; affirmation: the Father declaring His pleasure in the Son)

Now we come to the inauguration of Jesus’ public work as Redeemer at 30 years of age (Luke 3:23). But before the account of His baptism is told we must first introduce another key character in our Story: one who was prophesied beforehand (Isaiah 40:3–5; Malachi 4:5–6).

John the Baptist—the ‘forerunner’

John the Baptist was a cousin of Jesus, born six months before Him (Luke 1:26). Like Isaac and others, his birth to aging, childless parents was also miraculous.

His father Zechariah was a priest, who one day—while serving within the sanctuary at Jerusalem—was suddenly startled by the appearance of the angel Gabriel (who later appeared to Mary). Gabriel announced that Zechariah’s prayers for Israel’s redemption would be answered in the birth of a son:

Luke 1:13–17

[The angel said to Zechariah], “Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you are to call him John [which means ‘the LORD is gracious’] ... Many will rejoice because of his birth ... and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

We are told that John ‘grew and became strong in spirit’, and that he lived in the wilderness until the time came for him to appear publicly to Israel. Then the Lord spoke to him and sent him out.

Luke 3:2–6

The word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And the whole human race will see God's salvation.' "

It had been more than four hundred years since Israel had had a prophet stand in their midst and speak directly to them from God. And so the people, understandably, flocked to the Jordan to hear what John had to say. Like the prophets before him, he commanded Israel back to the righteousness to which they had been called at Mount Sinai. As Gabriel had said previously, John truly was a man who had the fiery spirit of Elijah!

Luke 3:7–9

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

Israel had to know that just as the LORD had judged His people for their unrighteousness in the past, the same thing was about to happen if they did not respond truly to the great moment that had arrived.

Mark 1:5, 7–8

The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River ... And this was his message: "After me will come One more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

John announced that what had only been available on occasions to *the prophets* in the past, would soon be abundantly and permanently given to *all* of God’s people by the One who was about to appear. He would baptize with the *Holy Spirit*.

The Old Testament prophets had promised that when the kingdom of God was revealed to Israel, two wonderful gifts would be given: the forgiveness of sins and the Spirit. No wonder news of John’s ministry brought such great crowds. The atmosphere must have been *alive* with anticipation—with all daring to believe in their hearts that the kingdom of God may soon appear!

Jesus baptized

John had performed his role well. Now it was time for Jesus to join Israel at the River Jordan.

Matthew 3:13–15

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to Me?"

Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

What Jesus was about to do was to act righteously on behalf of all Israel—as the One who was, Himself, the embodiment of the nation.

affirming His obedience as Son and Servant of the LORD

In going down into the waters of the Jordan Jesus was doing what was *right* for a true king of Israel. He was saying as the nation’s Representative, “I will obey all the will of God.”

Malachi 4:4

Remember the law of My servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at [Mount Sinai] for all Israel.

Hebrews 10:5, 7

When Christ came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You prepared for Me" ... Then I said, "Here I am—it is written about Me in the scroll—I have come to do Your will, O My God."

Psalms 40:8

I [delight] to do Your will, O My God; Your law is within My heart.

Here, in His baptism, Jesus was repeating what Israel had said at the foot of Mount Sinai all those years ago, when the LORD confirmed His covenant with them: “We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey” (Exodus 24:7).

identifying as Lamb

Not only was Jesus affirming obedience on Israel’s behalf, He was also *identifying* with them in their great need for repentance and forgiveness of sins—which is what John’s baptism signified.

As the Holy and Righteous One—sinless from the womb—He did not require a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. In undergoing it, then, He was making Himself to be one with those who *did* have that need. He was, in fact, *consecrating* Himself to the dark hour that was before Him—when He would stand under the judgment of God in their place and bear their sins!

But this identification was not only with Israel; it was with *the entire human race* that Israel represented as God’s representative people among the nations (see Exodus 19:5–6); and whom Jesus represented as the New Adam.

John the Baptist understood this and declared it to his disciples at the Jordan:

John 1:29

John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Isaiah 53:12

[He] was numbered with the transgressors.

When an Israelite offered a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins in the temple, he would take the sacrificial animal and identify with it by laying his hands upon its head before he slaughtered it (Leviticus 4:29–31).

Can we allow a picture to be formed in our minds? See Jesus at His baptism with the hands of the whole human race laid upon His head—numbered with the transgressors and set apart as the Lamb of God to bear the sins of the world!

anointed as King

Having confirmed His obedience and identified with sinners, He was then anointed as the Christ—the Messiah, the promised King of Israel. But His anointing was not with oil as was usual at a coronation. He was anointed with the Holy Spirit!

Luke 3:21–22

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as He was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are My Son, whom I love; with You I am well pleased.”

What great hope this divine/human Representative of His people and the nations gives. After thirty years of life in this world, He hears His Father say from heaven, “SON, I LOVE YOU, AND YOU BRING ME ABSOLUTE PLEASURE IN EVERY WAY!!!”

How good it must have been for Him to hear that! And how marvellous for us to hear it! HERE IS ONE WHO CAN DO FOR US WHAT WE COULD NEVER DO FOR OURSELVES!!!

But there is something else to be noted about this anointing. It came upon Him ‘as He was praying’. To understand the significance of His prayer we need only go to Psalm 2, that prophetic coronation psalm which foreshadowed this very event:

Psalm 2:6–8

[The LORD says:] “I have installed My king” ... He said to Me “You are My Son ... Ask of Me, and I will make the nations Your inheritance, the ends of the earth Your possession.”

Jesus, the Son-King at His Coronation, was *rightly* asking to be given the nations as His inheritance and to receive the ends of the earth as His possession! And in anointing Him with the Holy Spirit the Father was saying, “Yes! This is why You have come—and I GIVE YOU ALL THE POWER AND AUTHORITY YOU WILL NEED TO ACCOMPLISH THE TASK!!!”

Isaiah 42:1

Here is My Servant, whom I uphold, My chosen One in whom I delight; I will put My Spirit on Him and He will bring justice to the nations.

Of course, in being consecrated and anointed as King, Jesus was also being set apart and equipped for His work as Priest and Prophet. As Priest, He would lead His international people in worship of the Father and pray for them—and, Himself, become the *Sacrifice for sin* that He would offer to the Father on their behalf. And as Prophet, He would incisively teach them and call them to obedience. Yes, there at the Jordan He truly was anointed as PRIEST, PROPHET AND KING for the supreme fulfillment of all that these three offices represent.

And so, the scene is set for the King to begin to reveal His Father’s kingdom in the midst of Israel—and, ultimately, among all the nations of the world. But there was one more extremely significant event that was to happen first.

the Father’s place-centred, holy purpose in His work of redemption, accomplished through:

- His Temptation in the desert

(confrontation: the Anointed One’s moral authority tested)

As the Representative of both Israel and all of humanity Jesus needed to be tested, just as Adam was in the beginning. Then, we saw Adam’s dreadful moral collapse and its horrendous consequences. And now with Jesus being anointed for His task the question was, “Does this One—the New Adam—have the *moral authority* to

continue to choose obedience to God’s word, even in the face of powerfully subtle temptation to do otherwise?”

Israel had also been tested in a similar way in the wilderness.

Deuteronomy 8:2

[Moses said,] “Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep His commands.”

At that time Israel failed this test. How will their Representative fare now?

So, after the Baptism, the Spirit immediately ‘drove Him out into the desert’ (Mark 1:12), where for forty days He ate nothing, was led about by the Spirit and was unrelentingly tempted by Satan (Luke 4:1–2). Yes, that old enemy of humankind, the devil, was delighted to spring into action as his prey was set before Him.

In the garden paradise in Eden—the place of wholehearted worship and intimate vocational fellowship with God—the evil one had exerted all of his hateful subtlety to overcome the loyalty of Adam. Here, in approaching the New Adam in an untamed, desert wasteland—a picture of the desperate barrenness he had brought to human experience—Satan was engaged in the same treacherous quest. For him to succeed to the slightest degree on this occasion would result in humanity losing all hope forever!

His goal over those forty days was to find an *opportunity* by which He could cause Jesus—for one moment—to grasp after something apart from the will of His Father. In this he would destroy the life-long purity of the Son’s worship and disqualify Him for His task.

After forty days of unsuccessful temptation, the evil one marshalled his resources for one final assault upon his now physically weakened and emotionally vulnerable prey.

Of course, it is not surprising that Satan’s approach was, in principle, precisely the same as in the garden. He attempted to arouse ‘the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life’ (1 John 2:16).

the first temptation

In the Garden of Eden, the fruit of the forbidden tree was seen as being ‘good for food’ (Genesis 3:6). The first of these final temptations was also along this same line (‘the lust of the flesh’).

Luke 4:2–3

[Jesus] ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them He was hungry. The devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”

The stones there on the desert floor looked just like the small, tasty loaves of bread that He had not enjoyed for so long. He was being tempted to find emotional satisfaction through the *stimulation of sensory experience*.

Satan was saying, “I saw Your big day at the Jordan. What a glad occasion it was! I heard the Father’s words then. He said, ‘You are My Son, whom I love’. Well, if You *are* the Son of God—the King of Israel—then *act* like it! Do You *feel* like the Grand, Beloved Messiah, denying Yourself the good things of the creation? You brought it all into being at the beginning, didn’t You? So then, Son of God, command this stone to become bread and enjoy its pleasures!”

Luke 4:4

Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘People do not live on bread alone, [but on every word that comes from the mouth of God]’ (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4).

His reply—as with each of His answers on this occasion—was a quotation from the early chapters of Deuteronomy, where Moses was recounting Israel’s testing in the wilderness.

Here He declared with Moses that a person’s life is not to be found in the creation alone but in feeding upon the life-giving word of God—and responding wholeheartedly to it in whatever situation they are placed. Jesus knew from thirty years of blessed experience, that there was no stimulation of the soul’s senses better than that!

the second temptation

The second observation about the tree in Eden was that its fruit was ‘pleasing to the eye’. Satan seeing that his first line of approach had failed, changed strategy. It was time now to introduce an alluring *vision* into the situation (‘the lust of the eyes’).

He said, in effect: “Sure, I know that physical, sensory pleasures are by no means the central issue. You are certainly right about that. But there is an extremely important matter arising from Your time at the Jordan that I feel I should mention. Then, I not only heard the Father’s *words* but also Your *prayer*. You asked for the nations as Your inheritance and the ends of the earth as Your possession. Let’s talk about this.”

Luke 4:5–7

The devil led Him up to a high place and showed Him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to Him, “I will give You all their authority and splendour, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if You worship me, it will all be Yours.”

He was saying, “You have asked for the kingdoms of the world. And rightly so! You are the Heir of all things. But, as You know, these are currently under my dominion—relinquished to me by Adam. And, of course, this is why You have come: to wrest them from me. I can see now that the outcome is quite inevitable. So let’s be civil about this. There they all are. I am very proud of how I’ve constructed them over the millenniums. But I will freely relinquish them into your hands—with no further unpleasantness—if You will simply *acknowledge my worthiness* as their maker. Just one moment of *worshipful recognition* is all I ask—and I will immediately yield to You all that is before Your eyes. This is the answer to your prayer! How kind of the Father to provide You with a no pain, no struggle option.”

Jesus was being tempted with the prospect of *magnificent possession*—to ‘see it and have it’. But He knew that this was an empty promise, and that behind Satan’s offer was simply his age-old quest to be worshipped by humankind in the place of God. So He again quoted from Deuteronomy (6:13).

Luke 4:8

Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.’”

As the Son, He had not come to ‘do a deal’ with the ‘god of this world’ (2 Corinthians 4:4) but to *defeat* him. He would worship and serve His Father every moment—and would, ultimately, possess the kingdoms of this world on *that* basis. And in this, their

citizens would be *delivered* from the one who held them in a dreadful bondage to sin and death.

the third temptation

The third conclusion made about the fruit of the tree in the Garden of Eden was that it was ‘desirable for gaining wisdom’ (the pride of life). This had to do with that fallen-human quest for *elevated, personal status* in the eyes of others!

Focusing now on the fact that Jesus was about to actively commence His role as Messiah, Satan changes to one of His favourite strategies: he himself quotes from the Bible!

Luke 4:9–13

The devil led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If You are the Son of God,” he said, “throw Yourself down from here. For it is written: ‘He will command His angels concerning You to guard You carefully; they will lift You up in their hands, so that You will not strike your foot against a stone.’ ”

This temptation did, in fact, represent an expectation that had falsely arisen among the people over the years. On the basis of Psalm 91 they had come to believe that when the Messiah appeared, they would be able to recognize him when he acted in this spectacular way.

The devil was saying, “If you *are* the Son of God, the Messiah, *prove* it to the people. *Do* what they are expecting of You. Then they will exalt You in the way that You are worthy of as their King!”

But Jesus knew that this was not the wisdom that is from above, which produces ‘deeds done in humility’ (James 3:13). And He knew that the faith He was being tempted to exert was not true faith at all. Authentic faith is always exercised in obedience to the will of God, not for self-exaltation. So He quoted once more from Deuteronomy (6:16).

Luke 4:12

Jesus answered, “It says: ‘Do not put the Lord Your God to the test.’ ”

Through His Baptism He had already established His personal agenda as Messiah: “I have come to do Your will, O My God” (Hebrews 5:7). Any other motivation for action would make Him to be no better than faithless, disobedient Israel—whose hearts were ‘always going astray’ (Hebrews 3:10) and who put God to the test for forty years in the desert.

He was not about to ‘grieve the Holy Spirit’ by going for a cheap snatch at exaltation in the eyes of the people. He would, rightly, be exalted—but it would be at the time and by the hand of His Father.

the test is over

So the devil had done all he could to deceive the Holy One. This temptation scene was not some kind of charade, but—as indicated earlier—*an authentic event of testing* in the face of physical weakness and emotional vulnerability. But it hadn’t come close to succeeding.

Where Israel had failed dreadfully, their Representative—the New Israel and New Adam—had wonderfully triumphed. He had received *testimony* from the Father at the Jordan, then was *tested* by the devil in the desert—and had *proved* His Father’s word

to be right. He truly *was* the Beloved, Well Pleasing Son of God and *did* have the *moral authority* to fulfill His Messianic calling!

Luke 4:13

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left Him until an opportune time.

The days of satanic and demonic harassment were certainly not over for Jesus. The evil one—beaten now—withdraw only with a view to taking every other opportunity that arose.

the Father’s place-centred, holy purpose in His work of redemption, accomplished through:

- His Ministry—the life & light of divine righteousness

(free-spirited, pure-hearted & dynamic priestly, prophetic & kingly living: the way [aroma], words [wisdom] & works [signs] of the kingdom; His Father’s image & glory revealed on earth)

Now we are to see the glorious Being and action of the En-fleshed Son as He—moment by moment throughout the ‘promised land’—does the will of His Father, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

John 1:14

The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

This verse can be translated, ‘and *tabernacled* [or *tented*] among us’. That is to say, in His bodily presence on the earth, the tabernacle—that ‘mobile dwelling place of the Holy One’—was in our midst. In His body dwelt all the glory of His Eternal Sonship: the revelation of the very glory of His Father, who was indeed, intimately and dynamically present to Him every moment! He Himself, truly was the New Temple: the fulfillment of everything that the mobile tabernacle and fixed temple had foreshadowed. He was all that was symbolically present within the sanctuary of the temple—being Himself the Bread (John 6:33–35), the Light (John 8:12) and, as will be seen shortly, the Altar of Incense.

John 1:4

In Him was life, and that life was the light of all people.

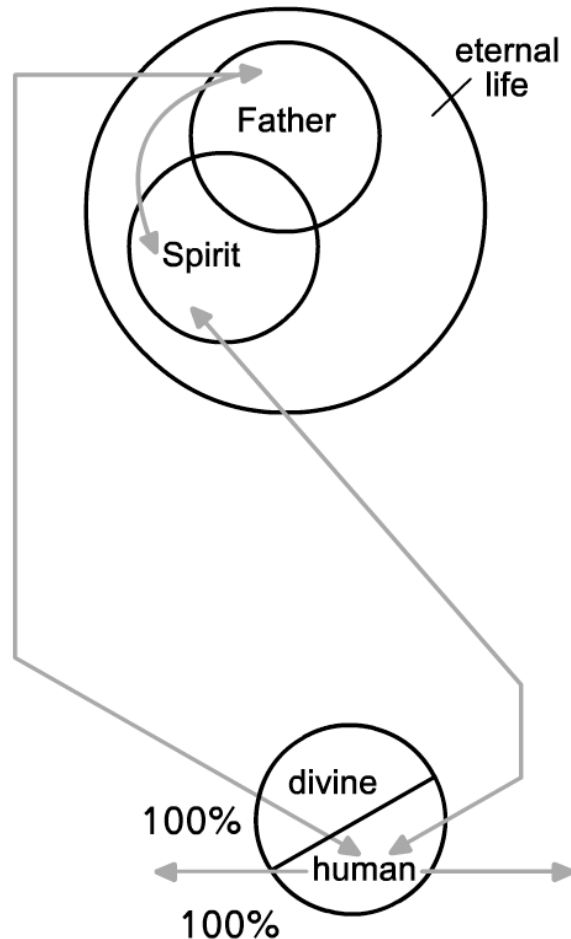
Yes, the life of His Eternal Sonship was now being revealed among us. Fleshed out in our midst was the *intimate covenant union with the Father and the Spirit* that *humankind* was created to enjoy forever! The revelation of His life among us was, in fact, ‘the light of all people’. In Him bodily, we saw, in truth, what each of us is created for and what is central to the nature of the entire creation: the revelation of the glory of His Divine Sonship within our humanity!

Here, in Christ, we behold the One who is the True Image of God: who, by the Dear Spirit, loved the Father with all of His Being and His neighbour as Himself. The ‘Eternal Life’ of the Triune Community was now being enjoyed on the earth by the New Adam!

At last, there was—in the midst of fallen human history—One who perfectly fulfills ‘the high human calling’. His delight was always in His Father, and the Father’s relational glory was reflected every moment through Him.

In this section, then—through the revelation of His peerless humanity—we are about to witness the *way* [*& aroma*], the *words* [*& wisdom*] and the *works* [*& signs*] of God’s wonderful kingdom of love!

The diagram below represents something of the life of His Divine, Eternal Sonship—so gloriously expressed on the earth, as He lived in constant communion with the Father and the Spirit.



the awesome revelation begins

After the temptation (when John the Baptist had been put in prison) Jesus returned ‘in the power of the Spirit’ to Galilee (Luke 4:14). Galilee was some distance to the north of Jerusalem and—at the crossroad of trade and travel in the Middle East—was considered by those from Judea to be contaminated by the nations. And that’s where the Father chose the Holy and Righteous One to be raised and begin His ministry! In this a prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled:

Matthew 4:16

Galilee of the Gentiles—the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

It was in His hometown of Nazareth that He publicly announced the grand mandate He had received.

Luke 4:16–21

He went to Nazareth, where He had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day He went into the synagogue, as was His custom. And He stood up to read.

The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. Unrolling it, He found the place where it is written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.”

Then He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on Him, and He began by saying to them. “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

And so His ministry among us began in the power of the Spirit.

Mark 1:14–15

Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the [gospel] of God. “The time has come,” He said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the [gospel⁹].”

Later, Jesus went through the whole land of Israel proclaiming the kingdom of God and revealing the Father’s goodness, mercy and grace to the people: His unfailing covenant love and faithfulness.

Many followed Jesus as His disciples. Then the time came when He chose twelve of these to be His apostles (Mark 3:13–14). We will hear much more of them as our Story continues.

And now we are to begin to see an outworking of His *consecration* at the River Jordan: what was, indeed, the glorious nature of His anointing as Priest, Prophet and King during the period of His public Ministry.

His priestly heart in His Father’s presence & purpose of love

(an inner spring of adoring communion & full personal offering—with all holy affections, earnest petition & yearning intercession):
the *way* & *aroma* of the kingdom revealed among us

We’ve seen that a priest is a worshipper of God. For a true human being worship is, in fact, their whole way of life. This was certainly how it was for Jesus. He understood that His body was, every moment and in all that it expressed, a ‘living sacrifice’ (Romans 12:2) offered up in His Father’s presence: a ‘fragrant offering’ (Philippians 4:18). He truly was Himself the Altar of Incense.

His every delight, desire, thought, word and act brought such pleasure to His Father. Every expression of His humanity was true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and worthy of praise (Philippians 4:8). His life constantly bore the beautiful fruit of love, joy, peace, [longsuffering], kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23). In this, ALL THE MOMENTS OF HIS DAYS WERE AN OPEN MANIFESTATION OF THE WAY AND THE AROMA OF THE KINGDOM!!!

Those five elements in brackets in the heading above, are richly significant for our understanding of the nature of Jesus’ ‘priestly heart in His Father’s presence and purpose of love’: **adoring communion** and **full personal offering**—with **all holy affections, earnest petition** and **yearning intercession**. These were the primary relational realities of His life in our midst, out of which all other priestly offering

⁹ The term *gospel* in those days was commonly known to be the ‘good news’ of the king.

flowed—and, indeed, out of which His other prophetic and kingly ministry also constantly arose.

adoring communion & full personal offering

Within His priestly heart there was, above all else, a deep and incessant spring of delight in His Father’s presence and purpose of love.

Luke 10:21

Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was Your good pleasure.”

Each day of His life was lived in a ‘spirit of prayer’: an ever-ascending attitude of prayerfulness. But it is consistently recorded that He pursued special times of intimacy, alone, with the supreme Object of His joy. We are told that He ‘often withdrew to lonely places and prayed’—even when needy people were seeking Him (Luke 5:16). Sometimes He spent a whole night in prayer (Luke 6:12). He often rose to pray early in the morning while it was still dark (Mark 1:35) or at daybreak (Luke 4:32).

Once after praying with His disciples, all they could say was, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). HOW UTTERLY DESIROUS THE INTIMACY OF HIS COMMUNION WITH THE FATHER MUST HAVE BEEN TO THEM!!!

Jesus loved all people but not all loved Him. And even those who did love Him, rarely at that time, understood Him. But He always had unbounded joy and delight in the presence of His Father.

Matthew 11:27

[He said], “No-one knows the Son except the Father, and no-one knows the Father except the Son.”

The intimacy of this union of bonded-love, amidst the thrilling inner-stirrings of the Spirit, was the great and personally sustaining principle of His humanity!

Within Jesus’ adoring communion with His Father there was a most lovely humility and restful simplicity. He knew what it meant to be the True Son and delighted to live every moment at His Father’s initiative, never seeking to do anything apart from Him.

John 5:19–20

[He said], “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by Himself; He can do only what He sees His Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all He does.”

And what pleasure He had in commanding His hearers to participate with Him in the blessedness He knew under ‘the yoke of His Sonship’. He said them:

Matthew 11:28–30

“Come to Me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Although relentlessly engaged in pursuing His Father’s will—with all kinds of complexities arising—His life was one of absolute simplicity and perfect peace (relentless engagement but without a restless spirit). What a fragrant, pleasure giving offering such a life must have been to the Father!

His adoring communion with His Father led always to an unwavering, holy resolve to fulfill all that was in the Father’s purpose.

John 6:38

[He said], “I have come down from heaven not to do My will but to do the will of Him who sent Me.”

Hebrews 10:7-10

When Christ came into the world, he said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You prepared for Me’ ... Then I said, “Here I am—it is written about Me in the scroll—I have come to do Your will My God.”

Yes, the hours and days of His en-fleshed life among us were nothing less than a full offering of Himself within His Father’s presence and purpose of love. And such *full personal offering* did indeed, by very nature, have its origin in an abiding spirit of worship.

all holy affections

Study 2 spoke of ‘holy affections’ that are at the heart of any fulfillment of ‘the high human calling’. For Jesus, that primary holy affection of having ‘great delight’ in His Father (expressed in adoring communion) was as we’ve seen, an integral part of the personal atmosphere of His days. But within His innermost being, He also had a full measure of every other holy affection—each, in their time, being part of His perpetual priestly offering.

strong & jealous passion for His Father’s pleasure, glory, honour & praise

Throughout His ministry He could, as the Son, testify to what always stirred within His heart above all else:

John 5:30

I seek not to please Myself but Him who sent Me.

In teaching His disciples the most basic elements of prayer, the priority of His own days was very clear. He said,

Matthew 6:9

This then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name’.

Many other instances of such holy desire for His Father’s pleasure, glory, honour and praise will be seen as we proceed through this study and others to come. Often this was expressed in holy grief and anger—in the face of fallen-human refusal to respond truly to the One whose name is worthy of supreme honour! He was, in fact, sometimes *fierce* in His holy grief as He witnessed proud, fallen-human defiance. On such occasions it was important for Him to speak very strongly to some who, with God-given influence over others, were boldly dishonouring the Name and way of His Father.

Mark 3:5

He looked around at them in anger, ... deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts.

yearning desire for all to know the blessedness of being the image of God

Jesus’ longing for every person to know the sheer happiness of a free-spirited and full-hearted humanity, drew from His deepest parts passionate declarations like the following:

John 6:35

“I am the Bread of life. Whoever comes to Me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty.”

John 4:14

“Those who drink the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of living water [leaping up] to eternal life.”

John 7:37–38

Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”

warm-hearted fondness & tender-hearted compassion

Relational fondness and compassion were superb manifestations of His priestly heart in His Father’s presence and purpose of love: exquisite manifestations of His peerless humanity.

The *warm-hearted fondness* we are speaking of here was beautifully expressed when Jesus was approached by a rich young ruler: one whose own capacity for true worship was stifled by an inordinate desire for material possession—and who was about to receive a firm word from the One He sought. Yet we are told that, “Jesus looked at him and loved him” (Mark 10:21).

Together with this outgoing, warm-hearted fondness was a thoroughly clear-spirited and *tender-hearted compassion*. Throughout the days of His ministry we witness His deep sensitivity to all forms of human suffering. Even those who had failed greatly in their moral, social and religious responsibilities were objects of His tender concern. He was rightly called ‘the Friend of Sinners’ (Matthew 9:9–13). He was not ‘soft’. But His responses to the ‘fallen-human struggle’ were a perfect revelation of *divine mercy and compassion*.

Luke 7:13

When [He saw a weeping widow who was about to bury her dead son] His heart [was wrenched, and before raising the lad up] He said [with great pathos], “Don’t cry.”

John 11:33, 35

When [He saw a dead man’s sister] weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled ... [and] wept.

Yet, it is important to add here that Jesus’ warm-hearted fondness and tender-hearted compassion, were never merely expressions of *sentimentalism* within sympathetic environments. On the contrary, even in the midst of culpable evil perpetrated against Himself, there was always within Him the presence of ‘*a meek and gentle spirit*’ (2 Corinthians 10:1). He showed that meekness is not weakness, and manifested within such situations *great personal strength* in His Father’s love and purpose. His relationships were not complicated by loveless reaction within Himself.

1 Peter 2:23

When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly.

Yes, in Him there was neither mere sentimentalism, nor the loveless, self-asserting, self-saving and weak-willed retaliation of an anxiously, insecure ‘power-person’.

Always, an appropriate expression of the holy affections we’ve been speaking of prevailed, regardless of the nature of His circumstances.

earnest petition & yearning intercession

Flowing out of that full measure of holy affections within Him, there was also this fourth expression of His priestly heart in His Father’s presence and purpose of love: a fully assured engagement in earnest petition for particular personal, relational and vocational needs, together with, a deep and yearning spirit of intercession (prayer on behalf of others).

Being the fruit of intimate communion with His Father and full-hearted given-ness to His will, He knew that His every earnest petition and intercessory cry always brought the answer He sought. So He could say with delighted assurance:

John 11:41

“Father ... You always hear Me.”

His clear-spirited prayers had nothing in them of panic, but were offered up in a strong tide of complete personal assurance and divine love. Yes, and each one flowing out of that holy passion which was ever within His priestly heart: to *gloriously redeem* the humanity He had become en-fleshed amongst!

On the night before that redemption was accomplished, His intercessory spirit was revealed when He said to His disciple Simon Peter:

Luke 22:31–32

“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you Simon, that your faith may not fail.”

And in praying for all who were gathered with Him He said:

John 17:1, 6, 11, 24

“Father ... I have revealed You to those You gave Me out of the world. ... My prayer is ... that You protect them from the evil one. ... Father, I want those You have given Me to be with Me where I am, and to see My glory.”

It will become evident as our series progresses, that the elements of this particular prayer are, in fact, at the heart of all authentic, intercessory passion.

From this section then, to do with His priestly heart, we see rich manifestations of those ‘incessant holy, inner-stirrings’ that clearly brought unbounded pleasure and delight to His Father—AND THEY ARE, INDEED, TO THIS DAY, THE VERY WAY AND AROMA OF THE KINGDOM!!!

His prophetic mind ***in His Father’s presence & purpose of love*** (communion-born thinking & incessant holy perception—with life-giving, verbal communication & arresting proclamation): the *words & wisdom* of the kingdom revealed among us

Jesus’ priestly manifestation of the *way* and *aroma* of the kingdom was accompanied by revelation among us of the kingdom’s *words* and *wisdom*: the product of His *prophetic mind*.

The Messiah was to be the great Prophet that Israel had been expecting.

Acts 3:22–23

Moses said, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything He tells you. Anyone who does not listen to Him will be completely cut off from their people.”

Hebrews 1:1–2

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son.

communion-born thinking

Day after day on the earth the En-fleshed, Eternal Son spoke out of the intimacy He enjoyed with His Father in heaven.

John 3:31

The One who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The One who comes from heaven is above all. He testifies to what He has seen and heard.

John 7:15–16

[They] asked, “How did this man get such learning without having studied?” Jesus answered, “My teaching is not My own. It comes from Him who sent Me.”

John 8:28, 38

[He said], “I do nothing on My own but speak just what the Father has taught Me. ... I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence.”

Jesus lived, always, both in His Father’s *presence* and the glorious reality of His Father’s *purpose of love*. His prophetic mind was ever the product of these two adoringly embraced, primary realities!

incessant holy perception

The fruit of His communion-born thinking was, very naturally, a *holy perception* through which He was always able to discern the mind and will of His Father.

Isaiah foretold something of this perception that would characterize the Christ’s prophetic ministry:

Isaiah 11:2–3

The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord—and He will delight in the fear of the Lord.

In the synagogue at Nazareth Jesus declared that what was portrayed in Isaiah 61 was fulfilled in Himself—just as He understood all that had been spoken of Him throughout all the Old Testament Scriptures (Luke 24:27, 45).

During the hours and days of His Ministry that same perceptiveness gave Him a *mental clarity* in regard to current situations. On each occasion there was direct, Spirit-given wisdom from above, enabling Him to perceive with perfection both the word that needed to be heard and the action He needed to take. Again, all this was inseparably linked to the priestly intimacy that was, for Him, always the central thing.

Mark 1:35–38

—*alone with His Father, the next step being made clear*

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for Him, and when they found Him they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for You!” Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so that I can preach there also. That is why I have come.”

Yes, His was, indeed, a holy perception flowing from communion with His Father, which enabled an incessant, sharply prophetic mental clarity.

life-giving verbal communication

The holy perception that was the fruit of His communion-born thinking—sustained within Him by the Spirit—enabled an entire life of moment by moment, life-giving verbal communication’. His words only ever expressed the *life-giving truth* of ‘the way things really are’.

Mark 13:31

[He said] “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.”

As we saw in Study 2, the high human calling requires that our every word express the truth of who God is (a right theology), who we are as His image (a right anthropology) and the nature of the world around us (a right cosmology).

This was absolutely so with Jesus. The essence of these three areas and the various out-workings of them that were needful for His hearers, were life-givingly communicated—and none of this would ever be contradicted by any other utterance He made at any time!

John 6:63

[He said to them], “The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.”

Luke 4:22

All spoke well of Him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from His lips.

How wonderfully He expressed the humanity we are all called to, by only ever speaking authentically in His Father’s Name!

arresting proclamation

Such authentic verbal communication, naturally, found expression in *proclamation* that could be nothing less than *personally arresting* for those who heard it.

Mark 1:22

The people were amazed at His teaching because He taught them as one who had authority.

Although people crowded to hear Him, He insisted that they not merely be interested, or even, fascinated listeners, but to actually *hear* what He was saying; that is, that they be ‘*authentic* listeners’ who hear and respond!

Luke 14:25, 35

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them He said: ...
“Those who have ears to hear, let them hear.”

Self-righteous listeners were not attracted by the words of Jesus, but on the other hand, those who felt they had no hope of acceptance by God could not get enough of what they heard.

Luke 15:1

The tax collectors and sinners were all [habitually] gathering round to hear Him.

The arresting and penetrating expressions of His prophetic mind in His Father’s glorious purpose of love were, of course, always out of those deep stirrings of His priestly heart of love.

John 7:46

[The people declared], “No-one ever spoke the way this man does.”

Mark 6:34

—*speaking in the love of His Father*

When Jesus ... saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So He began teaching them many things.

Matthew 12:17, 19–21

—*not a dread to the tender-hearted hearer*

[Jesus fulfilled] what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: ... “He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will not snuff out, till He leads justice to victory. In His name the nations will put their hope.”

Although often boldly lifting up His voice in proclamation He was never a ‘quarrelsome protester’. Nor did He ever speak in a way that would crush the spirit of a tenderhearted seeker. As mentioned earlier, meekness and gentleness were strongly dominant features of His life and ministry. And what appeared to be His ‘hard sayings’ were spoken without harshness of spirit. They were, in fact, open doors into the blessedness He had come to bring.

IN ALL OF THIS, HIS PROCLAMATION AMONG US TRULY WAS NOTHING LESS THAN *ARRESTING!!!* The hearts of many were irresistibly melted in the hearing of such life-giving utterance. Others were astonished, marvelling at what they heard. Still others were personally disturbed and convicted. Some were angry, even furious. And some quickly pulled down the shutters of their mind to block out what was confronting them—scoffing as they walked off. But all, who were exposed to the dynamic revelation that flowed from His priestly heart and prophetic mind, were *strongly impacted* by the arresting and penetrating nature of what they heard!

Alive with the great, eternal realities of the kingdom Jesus constantly taught those who were before Him. When He spoke, the elements of His Sonship we have been referring to were palpably present. All who heard Him were witnesses to ‘His prophetic mind in His Father’s presence and glorious purpose of love’.

the Sermon on the Mount

The new covenant required a new statement of the law, which would fill out the Father’s purpose for Israel and the nations. Just as the word of the Mosaic covenant had come to Israel on Mount Sinai, now the law, or way, of the *new covenant* came to them in what is called ‘The Sermon on the Mount’ (in Matthew 5–7).

Matthew 5:1–2

When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to Him and He began to teach them.

Through this beautiful and powerful body of teaching, Jesus penetrated to the heart of what life was to be in God’s great kingdom of love. It was truly a revelation of His, own, Sonship: the righteousness to which we have all been called. As we will see further on in the series, the Beatitudes, which the Sermon on the Mount begins with, are a particularly lovely and powerful expression of the Sonship that the image of God in a fallen world is called to express—and of the promise of blessedness it brings!

As the En-fleshed Son and Word of the Father spoke on the mountain—out of His priestly heart of love—the people must have known that a new day was dawning in Israel. They had never heard such teaching before. Nor had they heard things spoken so tenderly—yet with great authority and power (Matthew 7:28–29).

the Scribes & Pharisees

Throughout the accounts of Jesus’ teaching ministry we often find the presence of these two groups: the Scribes and the Pharisees.

During the Inter-testamental Period spoken of earlier, a way of teaching and applying ‘the law of Moses’ had been developed. At first this was done in order to arrest spiritual decline among the people. But unfortunately, what was seemingly begun with good intentions eventually became a very rigid, legal and vigorously imposed system: spelling out masses of intricate details that Moses never spoke of (in an attempt to put ‘a fence around the law’ to guard it and keep it from being violated).

The Scribes—or ‘the teachers of the law’—were those who instructed the people in these things. Along with the Scribes were the Pharisees: a group of zealous men who committed themselves to keeping every detail of the endless regulations that had been formed. The Scribes, themselves, were also Pharisees.

Jesus often spoke very strongly against these two groups, because they were usually proud, harsh and uncaring in their dealings with the people. Above all, they were mostly self-righteous and hypocritical, loving to give public display of their outward, religious observances. In The Sermon on the Mount and at other times Jesus condemned the foolishness of their practices. Their willful rejection of the truth had to be exposed.

Matthew 15:12-14

[On one occasion] the disciples came to [Jesus] and asked, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?”

He replied, “Every plant that My heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.”

The disciples needed to learn that the truth would often bring a *reaction*, and this showed that such people should not be followed.

His use of parables in teaching

Jesus very often spoke in parables: various stories and illustrations often centred upon everyday situations of life. These were not just ‘to make things simple’. The parables were very powerful proclamations of the kingdom and had a life-changing impact upon all who had ‘ears to hear’. But for those whose hearts were hard, the truth contained in the parables would be *shut off* from them (Matthew 13:10–17).

Even Jesus’ chosen band of disciples often didn’t understand what these parables meant. But when alone with them later He would explain their meaning (Mark 4:34).

Of course, much more will be revealed of the teaching of Jesus as we move through the series—with much *holy perception* to be given by the Spirit of God as we have ears to hear! But for now, it is surely clear that throughout the three years of His ministry, the proclamation that flowed from *the Son’s prophetic mind in His Father’s presence and purpose of love*, truly was, AN OPEN REVELATION OF THE WORDS AND WISDOM OF THE KINGDOM!!!

His kingly action
in His Father’s presence & purpose of love
(joyous future expectation & present authority & power—with
undeniable dominion & ‘triune, holy vocation’ made visible):
the *works & signs* of the kingdom revealed among us

Throughout the time of His Ministry, together with His dynamic priestly manifestation of the *way* and *aroma* of the kingdom and prophetic revelation of its *words* and *wisdom*, the En-fleshed Son in His *dynamic, kingly action of love* also performed miraculous *works* and *signs* of the kingdom.

We’ve seen that Jesus’ *priestly heart* was continually enlarged in His Father’s ‘*presence and purpose of love*’. The incomparable reality of these two supreme delights always *set before* Him, was indispensable to His manifestation of the *way* and *aroma* of the kingdom.

The same was so in regard to the *prophetic mind* of Jesus. His revelation of the *words* and *wisdom* of the kingdom was the fruit of His *communion-born thinking* and *holy perception*—that came from preoccupation with His Father’s ‘*presence and purpose of love*’, in all of its wondrous dimensions.

And so it was also the case in regard to His *kingly actions*. His manifestation of the *works* and *signs* of the kingdom were always accomplished within the exercise of a *joyous future expectation*: a sharp, abiding focus upon His Father’s ‘*presence*’ and the wonders of His awesome, ‘*ultimate purpose*’!

Joyous, future expectation & present authority & power

As we progress through this study and others, there will be many examples of *the glorious future outcome* that always powerfully stirred in the heart of the En-fleshed One among us.

This was no less the case when He stood in the River Jordan being baptized. There we saw earlier that He was praying, and this, in fulfillment of the LORD’S command in Psalm 2:8: “Ask Me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.” And it was then, as He prayed, that the Spirit descended upon Him anointing Him as Priest, Prophet and King.

It was clearly with *joyous future expectation* that Jesus went into the river that day; and with the received anointing resting upon Him He proceeded from that place with nothing less than divine *authority and power* (Luke 4:14) in the glorious presence and purpose of His Father! And from then on throughout every day of His ministry, He was able to *exalt* in the fact that the One who had authored both creation and redemption, also had absolute ‘*author-ity*’ to bring both of these to their final, glorious goal through Him and in Him!

undeniable dominion & triune, holy vocation made visible

During Jesus’ ministry among us we did, indeed, see within His peerless humanity an *undeniable dominion* over every created thing, and over all that contested His Father’s purpose within His world. Such grand dominion was always something that the image of God was intended to express (Genesis 1:26–28)—an authority and dignity that David gave rich witness to:

Psalm 8:4–6

What are mere mortals that You are mindful of them, human beings that You care for them? You have made them a little lower than the heavenly beings

and crowned them with glory and honour. You made them rulers over the works of Your hands; You put everything under their feet.

In Hebrews 2:7–9 we are told that Jesus was the magnificent fulfillment of this high calling. It is also stated there that He was, in fact, ‘crowned with glory and honour [for the suffering of death], so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone’. The One who was to bear the sins of a fallen humanity, lived among us crowned with the glory and honour that had been so substantially and tragically forfeited in Adam. The bearing of our sins—and the restoration of all things to the Father’s way—had to be by One who had lost nothing of the human glory we were created for!

His Father delighted to say of Him, “You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness” (Hebrews 1:9). All who had watched Him closely day and night could find no sin in Him (John 8:46). Of Him it could be boldly declared: “[He] has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

It will be seen as we proceed that Jesus did, indeed, display an *undeniable dominion* not only over the creation, but also over every element of the ‘dominion of darkness’ that operates always to diminish the glory of humanity. In His kingly action there truly was the unquestionable presence of a *divinely endowed authority*—enabling a dominion that had glorious redemptive dimensions, which only the En-fleshed Son could express in this fallen world.

He, Himself, was ‘the image of the invisible God’ (Colossians 1:15). And as will be seen, HE WAS, AS THE ENFLESHED SON AMONG US, MAKING *VISIBLE* THE GLORY OF *TRIUNE HOLY VOCATION*: BY THE SPIRIT, POWERFULLY MEDIATING HIS FATHER’S PURPOSE OF LOVE THROUGH HIS KINGLY ACTION!!!

the ‘works’ and ‘signs’ of the kingdom revealed

The undeniable dominion of Jesus was clearly manifested in the many and various ‘mighty works’ He performed. However, it must be understood that these were not merely amazing feats meant to impress the crowds—although they certainly were impressed! All of His mighty works were His *kingly action* in His Father’s *presence and purpose of love*—manifestations of the goodness, mercy and grace of God. And each one was, above all, a powerful ‘*sign* of the kingdom’.

Markers that we see in everyday life (such as street signs) give us some idea of what is being spoken of here. Those signs that are set up all around us *point to*, or *announce the nearness of*, some reality. The signs themselves, however, are *not* that reality.

The same is true of the signs of Jesus. Although in their various forms they brought present revelation of the goodness, mercy and grace of God, their purpose was, above all, to direct our attention to an ultimate reality to come. They all pointed to and announced the nearness of THE GREAT *CLIMAX OF ALL THINGS*—when the kingdom of God would be made known and enjoyed in all its glorious perfection, forever! They were, then, a *foreshadowing* of the *Consummation* to come at the close of history (to be spoken of in the final section of this study).

revelation of the En-fleshed One’s identity as the Messiah / King

The signs of Jesus certainly were a foreshadowing of the great Consummation to come. But we may say further still that they also had another more immediate purpose. They pointed to the reality of Jesus’ *identity* as the Messiah, the Son-King

of His Father’s kingdom—having total authority and power over the realm and reign of the evil one!

Many came to Jesus with unbelieving hearts, merely seeking after miraculous displays of power. Even the disciples often didn’t ‘read the signs’ as they ought. But in the midst of such lack of insight, the disciple Peter had his eyes opened.

Matthew 16:13–17

[Jesus] asked His disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” He asked, “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by My Father in heaven.”

The apostle John tells us that the reason the signs of Jesus have been recorded is to bring this very revelation to all who read of them.

John 20:31

[These signs are written] that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.

The signs Jesus performed declared that He was the King among us—and that IN HIS PRESENCE, THE REALITY OF THE FUTURE KINGDOM OF GOD WAS DYNAMICALLY PRESENT, RIGHT THERE AND THEN!!!

Each sign was a declaration of His *absolute, present authority over all things* as the En-fleshed and Anointed Son-King. And each one *pointed forward* to the Day when what they illustrated would be wholly fulfilled forever, in the *new creation*.

We’ll now briefly summarize the nature of five signs given through the works of Jesus among us.

1) the sign of authority over *sin*

The En-fleshed Son stood among us as One who had authority to do what could *only* be done by God Himself. He forgave sin.

He had this authority because He knew that He had come to conquer the evil one, who had locked humanity into its torturous guilt, condemnation and shame. He would ‘destroy the devil’s work’ (1 John 3:8) by Himself bearing the awful and rightful judgment of God upon the human race. His bold declarations of forgiveness were made on the basis of this great victory of divine love soon to be accomplished.

A miracle is something that is normally, by nature, a human impossibility. No human being could ever take away another person’s offense before God. And so each declaration of forgiveness by Jesus was truly a greatly miraculous event!

On one occasion, to affirm His authority to forgive, He healed a paralyzed man.

Luke 5:20–26

[Jesus said] “Friend, your sins are forgiven.” The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So He said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up and take your mat and go home.” Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were all filled with awe.

Such awesome acts of forgiveness pointed forward to the fact that in the ‘age to come’ there would be no more condemnation. *Then, the King will have even eliminated the presence of sin itself!*

2) the sign of authority over sickness & other physical dysfunction

The One who in the beginning commanded into being our ‘fearfully and wonderfully made’ bodies, will also in the coming eternal kingdom *totally eliminate physical disease, disability and deformity forever!*

Declaring this, He healed the sick wherever He went.

Matthew 9:35

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.

Matthew 15:30–31

Great crowds came to Him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at His feet; and He healed them. The people were amazed when they heard the mute speaking, saw the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

3) the sign of authority over the dark powers

When Jesus began to go through the land that Israel had been given, He was confronted by the presence of dark spiritual powers—stirred up to frantic action by His ‘Incarnation’.

So, just as Joshua had long ago, by the command and authority of God, conquered the demonically inspired, idolatrous nations that dwelt in Canaan, Jesus now cast out demonic powers active there, which were hatefully gripping so many. In this way He was symbolically once again cleansing and sanctifying the land as a place of true worship.

But, of course, with His every conquering command, He was declaring that the time would come when there would be no demonic presence among God’s people, anywhere. *Dark spiritual powers would have no place in the coming new creation!*

Luke 4:33–36

In [a] synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an [unclean] spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice. “Ha! What do You want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!”

“Be quiet!” Jesus said sternly. “Come out of him!” Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him. All the people were amazed and said to each other, “What is this teaching? With authority and power He gives orders to [unclean] spirits and they come out!”

Mark 3:11

Whenever [unclean] spirits saw Him, they fell down before Him and cried out, “You are the Son of God.”

Matthew 8:29

“What do you want with us, Son of God?” [the demons] shouted. “Have You come here to torture us before the appointed time?”

Luke 11:20

[Jesus said], “If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

Again, as the One who called into being the entire creation, He could command whatever was contrary to its way to be gone!

4) the sign of authority over *death*

We saw in Study 5 that death was an ugly intrusion into God’s good creation as a result of rebellion and sin. But our Maker’s purpose was never to allow such a dark and demeaning thing to *always* be part of humanity’s experience. His plan was to *ultimately abolish it forever!*

When the One who had ‘life in Himself’ was among us, He was eager to declare this great mercy and grace that His Father had planned—and He did it many times with a simple command that raised the dead!

One such occasion—alluded to earlier—was when a man named Lazarus had died. He and his two sisters Mary and Martha were friends of Jesus, and the Lord was sent for with news of Lazarus’ serious illness. But in His love for them He did not go straight away to heal him, delaying his journey until death had come.

John 11:25, 32–34

[When He arrived Jesus proclaimed to Martha], “I am the Resurrection and the Life. Those who believe in Me will live, even though they die.” ... When [Martha’s sister] Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw Him, she fell at His feet and said, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.

These last words can be translated, ‘He trembled with indignation’. To see those created as the image of God grovelling despairingly in the face of death, powerfully moved Him. With deep compassion He then wept for His friends in their sorrow, and going to the tomb where Lazarus had been laid, asked for the stone to be taken away. Martha, naturally wanting to be spared further pain, protested that her brother had already been dead for four days and that the odor would be awful. But they yielded to His request.

John 11:43–44

Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go!”

Death could not resist the word of the One who reigned in His Father’s name, in the life of His own Eternal Sonship!

5) the signs of authority over *the creation*

It’s no surprise that He who spoke the creation into being in the beginning, also exercised among us complete authority over all physical things.

In a furious life-threatening storm He commanded the wind and the waves to be still, and they immediately were (Matthew 8:23–27). Then on one squally night He actually walked on water in order to reach his disciples—and as soon as He was in the boat with them the wind immediately died down (Matthew 14:22–27).

At a wedding—so as to spare parental, social embarrassment when refreshments had run out—He turned water into wine (John 2:2–11). And similarly, out in a solitary

place, He fed over five thousand hungry people by multiplying five loaves and two fish (Matthew 14:13–21).

Of great significance to His disciple Peter was the time when He initiated a miraculous catch of fish. Peter, a proud and self-confident fisherman, suddenly knew he was in the presence of the Holy One and ‘fell at Jesus’ knees in the boat, saying, “Depart from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” ’ (Luke 5:1–11).

These various manifestations of the Lord’s authority and power over the creation pointed towards a number of kingdom realities¹⁰. But above all, they foreshadowed the Final Day to come, when He would, with a word of command, dissolve the present heavens and earth—and make it all new!

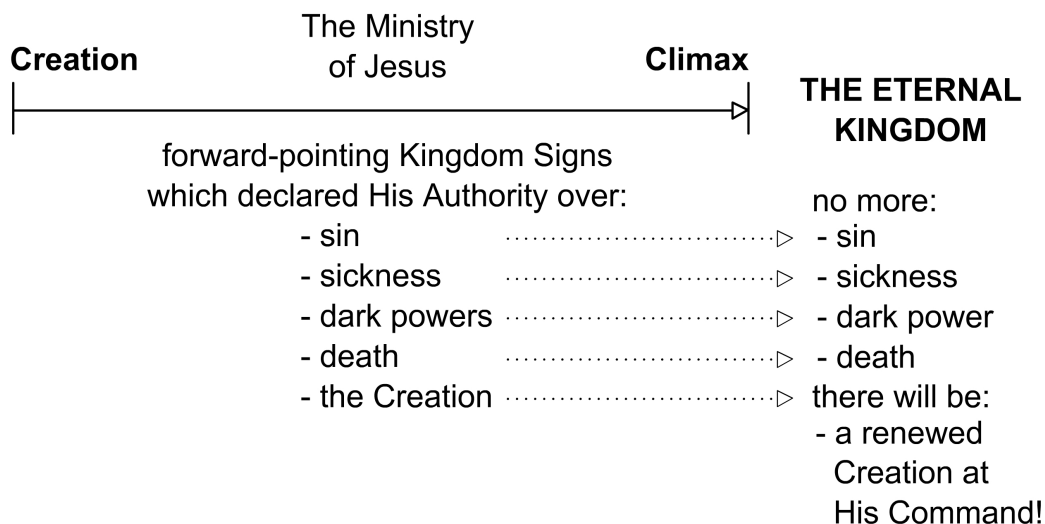
the New Adam’s delight

What an amazing record we have of purposeful, miraculous action throughout Jesus’ ministry. Through it all, He was directing our sight towards the great, eternal kingdom of God.

This glorious, final outcome will be the fulfillment of that wonderful kingdom of love that was present at the very beginning in Eden’s garden sanctuary. There, the first Adam—before sin’s tragic intrusion—was joyously engaged in grand, kingly activity. Now, the New Adam was, through His own kingly action, setting before us the hope of a new, eternal Eden!

This New Adam—the great Son-King—delighted to proclaim to God’s people the fact that in the end, there will be no more sin, guilt, condemnation or shame; no more sickness; no more rebellion, nor oppression by dark spiritual powers; no more death; and a wholly renewed creation brought into being by His own command!

The following diagram illustrates this hope for us.



all this was revelation of the Day of the LORD ‘Stage 1’

To explain: in the Old Testament, the Final Day was often prophesied and referred to as ‘the Day of the LORD’. That is, the day when the LORD Himself would bring final judgment upon all evil and fully reveal His glorious purpose for His people. In the last

¹⁰ For example, when He fed the 5,000 He was declaring that He, Himself, was ‘the Bread of Life’ come down from heaven (John 6:33–35)—the One who alone can satisfy the hunger of the human soul, and nourish within us in a true and full humanity.

section of this study, it will be seen how those prophecies will be totally fulfilled at the close of history.

However, the people of God in the Old Testament period expected that the Day of the LORD would be completely fulfilled when the Messiah first appeared. They didn’t understand that it would, in fact, take place in two stages: firstly, in His En-fleshment and Ministry among us, and secondly, at the great Climax to come.

When John the Baptist—the last of the Old Testament prophets—announced Jesus as the Messiah, he himself expected to immediately see the entire fulfillment of these prophecies. But after some time of languishing in prison at the hand of Herod the Tetrarch, John became confused about what appeared to be a lack of great, final action! So he sent messengers to Jesus to ask about this.

Luke 7:21–22

At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sickness and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. So He replied to the messengers, “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard. The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.”

John would recognize that these things were all manifestations of the coming kingdom prophesied by Isaiah (35:5; 61:1).

So it was in this awesome revelation of the En-fleshed Son among us that the *first part* of that ‘great and glorious Day’ was being fulfilled—as a foreshadowing of the Consummation to come. In this record, with Jesus’ breathtaking ministry operating before our eyes, we are seeing the eternal age beginning to break in! From this time on, history has entered into its ‘last days’.

As Study 6 progresses, much more will be seen of this first stage of the LORD’S mighty Final Action.

His was clearly, a life which revealed the kingdom & the glory of His Father

To hear Jesus speak and see Him act was a magnificent manifestation of His Father’s glory. The Father could always say, “Look! There is My perfect image and likeness!”

John 14:9

[Jesus said], "Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father."

What a revelation we have of His en-fleshed Sonship in our midst:

- **His *priestly heart* in His Father’s presence & purpose of love**
(an inner spring of adoring communion & full personal offering—with all holy affections, earnest petition & yearning intercession):
the *way* & *aroma* of the kingdom revealed among us;
- **His *prophetic mind* in His Father’s presence & purpose of love**
(communion-born thinking & incessant holy perception—with life-giving verbal communication & arresting proclamation):
the *words* & *wisdom* of the kingdom revealed among us;
- **His *kingly action* in His Father’s presence & purpose of love**
(joyous future expectation & present authority and power—with undeniable dominion & triune, holy vocation made visible):
the *works* & *signs* of the kingdom revealed among us.

Well, there we have it—the way, words and works of the En-fleshed Son: His priestly aroma, prophetic wisdom and kingly signs (with each of these different elements, in fact, being a constant, pleasure-giving, priestly offering to the One in whom, and for whom, He lived).

This One who was among us—Himself, the Holy Sanctuary—was, indeed, a perpetual source of the ‘outshining perfection’ of the Father’s ‘words and ways’ (the seven-branch candlestand) and the ‘sustaining provision’ of the Father’s words and ways (the table of shewbread).

YES, THE PRIESTLY ATMOSPHERE OF HIS DAYS, THE PROPHETIC VOICE WITH WHICH HE SPOKE AND THE KINGLY ACTS HE PERFORMED, TRULY WERE, AN OPEN REVELATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD—HIS FATHER’S IMAGE & GLORY REVEALED ON EARTH!!!

Jesus sends His disciples out to speak & act in His authority

The twelve whom Jesus had called to be apostles were also to be involved in the proclamation of the kingdom. So He gave them authority to speak and act in His name and sent them out.

At this time they were not to go to the Gentiles (the nations / non-Jewish people), or the Samaritans (those who once belonged to the northern kingdom of Israel, but were now a mixed race with illegitimate worship). They were to go to ‘the lost sheep of Israel’: the Jews—the people of Judah).

Matthew 10:7–10, 14–15

[He said to them], “As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, or extra shirt, or sandals or a staff, for workers are worthy of their keep ... If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.”

Later, He also appointed a larger group of 72 disciples and sent *them* out with authority to speak and act in His name. They were to go ahead of Him in pairs to every town and place that He was to enter.

Luke 10:2–3, 9, 16–21

He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves ...

“Heal the sick ... and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you.’ ... Whoever listens to you listens to Me; whoever rejects you rejects Me; but whoever rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me.”

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name.”

He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority ... to overcome all the power of the enemy. ... However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, “I praise You Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was Your good pleasure.”

What a delight it was for Jesus in His Father’s presence to see His disciples beginning to proclaim the kingdom. Simple, unlearned people—yet with His own authority and empowered to speak and act in His name!

Luke 10:23–24

Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, “Blesséd are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”

A marvellous new phase of God’s grand redemptive plan was being worked out. With the presence of the Messiah now among them, things that so many of God’s Old Covenant people had longed for were beginning to come into being!

the ‘Transfiguration’—a supreme sign of the kingdom

As the time was coming near for Jesus to move towards Jerusalem—where He would, in His Father’s love, achieve His great victory on our behalf—He took three of His disciples, Peter, James and John up onto a mountain to pray.¹¹

About eight days before this He had told His disciples that some of them would not ‘taste death’ before they had seen the kingdom of God. Now, in a very real way, this was about to happen (Luke 9:27–28).

Luke 9:29–31

As [Jesus] was praying, the appearance of His face changed, and His clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendour, talking with Jesus. They spoke about His [exodus], which He was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.

Appearing with Jesus were Moses and Elijah, the two great prophetic figures of the Old Testament. Moses, who mediated the covenant at Mount Sinai, and Elijah, who called Israel back to covenant faithfulness on Mount Carmel. There they were, in ‘glorious splendour’. Jesus’ three apostles were being given a foretaste of the glory of the coming kingdom!

the great Exodus

This was not only a revelation of the ultimate kingdom to come. Moses and Elijah were speaking with Jesus about the *exodus* He would soon accomplish.

And what an Exodus that was to be!

Fifteen hundred years before, Moses had led Israel out of their dreadful suffering under Pharaoh in Egypt. The endless years of oppressive slavery suffered there, were a picture of the awful struggle that all of humankind has experienced under its Pharaoh, Satan, since the Fall. *Deliverance was impossible!*

But we will remember from Study 5 that the LORD—in His great mercy and grace—acted faithfully on His people’s behalf by performing mighty signs in the land of their

¹¹ We may have noticed that throughout our Story very significant revelation occurred upon mountains. Being in an elevated place gave people a sense of nearness to God, and so He often used such imagery when making His presence known. It is of interest to note that Eden—that supremely significant place of divine presence—was, in fact, an elevated situation from which a mighty river system flowed (Genesis 2:10–14).

oppression. Then, when the time came for God’s judgment upon the idolatrous worship of Egypt—which Israel had also, by then, embraced (Joshua 24:14)—He provided a sacrificial lamb to be slain on behalf of each Israelite household. The blood of this lamb was then applied to the entrance of each house, so that the judgment that came would ‘pass over’ that place.

It was after they had eaten the meat of the sacrificial lamb together—the Passover meal—that, the terrible judgment of the LORD did, in fact, pass over them. Israel was spared the devastation it deserved and was delivered from their dark slavery in Egypt. This great exodus—‘a coming out’—had been at the heart of their understanding of God’s mercy and grace ever since.

But now a *greater* exodus was to be accomplished: the one which Israel’s had foreshadowed. It was the *Exodus of Jesus* that He would fulfill in Jerusalem. There He—as the New Israel and New Adam—would, in our place and for our sake, enter into the blackest darkness and most horrendous suffering ever experienced by any ‘child of Adam’. He was to know what it is to dwell in the ‘land of bondage’ and to bear the judgment that should fall on all who embrace its corrupt and vile worship. He would become both the ‘Tragic Representative of the Race’ and its ‘Judgment Bearing Passover Lamb’!

Peter, overawed by what he saw, began to babble on about keeping Moses and Elijah there on the mountain—imagining that they, together with Jesus, could do great things! But he was quickly silenced.

Luke 9:34–36

While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud saying, “This is My Son whom I have chosen; listen to Him.” When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone.

As on Mount Sinai, the cloud of God’s presence appeared and He spoke from it. At Jesus’ baptism, the Father had audibly affirmed Him as His Beloved Son with whom He was so pleased. But this time the voice was for the benefit of His disciples.

Moses and Elijah had magnificently played their own roles within the Old Covenant Story, but were to have no part in the great liberation about to take place. Peter, James and John were to listen to the Father’s Chosen One. Both Moses’ and Elijah’s work was done. An entirely new era had dawned.

In this awesome encounter, the disciples had certainly seen something of the glory of the ultimate kingdom to come. But what they were eventually to understand was that the events soon to take place would be even more glorious. In the Son-King’s redeeming love manifested at Jerusalem, the glory of the kingdom of God would, actually, be revealed as never before! However, at the time this would not be obvious at all. It would take the amazing events that followed to bring such revelation to the human heart.

the faith of certain non-Jews—the first-fruits of a great Harvest among the nations

Although this was not the time for the kingdom to be proclaimed to those who were Gentiles or Samaritans, the Holy Spirit was still at work among them—just as He was in the Old Testament period (e.g. Ruth 1:16; 4:13, 21–22; Luke 4:25–27). Throughout His ministry, Jesus was delighted to see those who did not belong to the people of Israel responding to the revelation of God’s grace.

Some of these were ‘God-fearers’—those who weren’t Jews but knew the LORD to be the One True God. A Roman centurion was among them. He came to Jesus with great humility and sharply expectant faith, seeking the healing of his much-loved servant. Jesus was astonished by what He heard!

Matthew 8:10–13

He said to those following Him, “I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! It will be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that very hour.

Here we have the introduction of a theme that will, unfortunately, continue. The Gentile nations would often be more desirous of God’s grace than the privileged nation of Israel!

On another occasion Jesus actually *went* into Syria—clearly led by the Spirit. There a Canaanite woman came to Him in great distress because her daughter was suffering terribly from demon possession. She cried out to Him for mercy, calling Him ‘Lord, Son of David’—a Canaanite who knew that He was the promised Messiah!

The disciples were annoyed with her and urged Jesus to send her away. But He didn’t. Instead, He incited her to faith:

Matthew 15:22–28

He [said to her], “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.” The woman came and knelt before Him. “Lord, help me!” she said. He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.”

“Yes, Lord,” she said, “but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” Then Jesus answered, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

This woman knew that Jews referred to the Gentiles as ‘dogs’. So Jesus used this harsh term to draw out the intensity of her faith. And she responded beautifully!

Some Samaritans were also responsive.

Once, against all custom, Jesus chose to go through Samaria on His way back to Galilee. Being thirsty He stopped at a well in Sychar. Here He met a morally failed and socially despised woman. With supernatural insight He told her of her sordid history; but then He spoke to her of the worship she could know that would satisfy her deep, personal thirst forever. She would need only to ask Him for *living water* and it would be like a *spring* within her—leaping up to eternal life! (John 4:7–13).

Because of her passionate testimony many other Samaritans in the town sought after Jesus and came to faith.

John 4:42

They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world.”

Another time, while travelling along the border of Samaria, Jesus healed ten men of leprosy. One of them was a Samaritan—and he was the only one to come back and thank him!

Luke 17:17–18

Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” Then He said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

How He must have delighted in these first-fruits of a great international harvest to come!

the unbelief of many in Israel

Tragically, the old hardness of heart and unbelief expressed over the centuries was still all too common among the LORD’S covenant people.

Early in His Ministry, even in His hometown of Nazareth He was amazed at the people’s lack of faith. Only a few of the sick could be healed there (Mark 6:5–6).

No matter how many miraculous signs He performed, the people, in general, were unbelieving. They were, in fact, being given up to their hardness. He said:

John 12:40

They could not believe, because, as Isaiah says: “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts.”

Even when many claimed to believe because of His signs Jesus didn’t entrust Himself to them, ‘for He knew all people’. Enthusiasm didn’t necessarily mean genuine faith (John 2:23–25; Luke 8:13).

Jesus strongly denounced the cities where most of His miracles had been performed because there was little of true repentance. He told them that on the Day of Judgment it would be more bearable for many godless Gentile cities than for them. So great was the privilege they had spurned (Matthew 11:20–24).

Too many were merely mindless ‘sign-seekers’, who were at core ‘truth avoiders’. Jesus said that Gentiles who responded to the LORD’S word in Old Testament times would stand up and condemn such people on the Day of Judgment (Matthew 12:38–42).

Those like the Pharisees and Sadducees¹² who demanded to see signs as proof of Jesus’ authority—rather than receive His word—were declared by Him to be ‘a wicked and adulterous generation’. They could read signs in the sky of approaching weather, but refused to recognize things about Him that were just as obvious (Matthew 16:1–4).

the tragedy of Israel’s rebellion —& the judgment they faced

Jesus told a parable to show the future state of Israel if it persisted in its way. It would be like a person delivered from an unclean spirit. But then—as a house swept clean and put in order—it would be *reoccupied* by that spirit, and with it, seven others that are more wicked! He was saying that if the people of Israel continued as they were, they would in the end, be far worse off than those who had never known God’s grace (Matthew 12:43–45)!

¹² The Sadducees were a party made up mostly of those from powerful priestly families. They were proud and argumentative, treating their own people with disdain. Giving real authority only to the Pentateuch (the first five books of the OT), they refused to believe in an after-life, resurrection at the end of the age, divine rewards and retributions, angels and demons.

He also compared Israel to a fig tree that bore no fruit; it was given one more year to be dug around and fertilized. If no fruit were borne the next year, it would be cut down! The nation was urgently in need of repentance if it was to avoid devastating judgment (Luke 13:1–9).

After a confrontation with Israel’s leaders, Jesus then went on to tell the people yet another solemn parable. He said that they were like the tenants of a vineyard whose owner kept sending servants to gain the fruit that was rightfully his. After each servant was treated violently and sent away empty handed, the owner then sent his dearly loved son and heir, hoping they would respect *him*. But they threw him out and killed him, thinking that if the heir were eliminated they would have the vineyard to themselves. But “No,” Jesus said. “The owner will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others” (Luke 20:1–19).

For centuries, the people of Israel had mistreated God’s servants, the prophets, in order to be able to live as they pleased apart from the word of God. Now the Father had sent His Son—and they were poised to do the unthinkable! The consequences for them would be severe.

Sorrowful over Jerusalem, Jesus expressed the cry of His heart for this city:

Luke 13:34–35

[He lamented] “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Look, your house is left to you desolate.”

As well as judgment at the end of history, Israel would also go through a terrible experience of desolation as a nation.

Later after arriving in Jerusalem, Jesus’ disciples were admiring the magnificence of the temple. He told them that the time would come when it would all be utterly destroyed (Luke 21:5–6).

The Old Testament prophets had spoken of horrendous judgment that would fall upon Jerusalem because of its wickedness. This had never yet happened to the degree that they had described. But some day it would. Jesus mercifully instructed His disciples to flee to the mountains as soon as they saw armies beginning to surround the city (Luke 21:20–24)¹³.

hearts exposed

Old Simeon had told Jesus’ mother Mary that her son was destined to ‘cause the falling and rising of many in Israel’. Through Him ‘the thoughts of many hearts would be revealed’ (Luke 2:33–35). How true this was. Jesus’ priestly way, prophetic word and kingly signs exposed what was within the people. Depending upon their response to Him, each one would know either covenant blessing or cursing.

Some responded to his ministry among them with joyous and humble acceptance; many with shallow, short-lived enthusiasm; others—as mentioned earlier—with proud indifference or hostility; and still others with an escalating, deadly bitterness!

¹³ This dreadful judgment actually took place in AD 70 at the hand of the Roman general Titus—after Israel had, by and large, continued to refuse the incredible mercy and grace that had been provided for them, in the One they had shockingly spurned.

Luke 11:53–54

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose Him fiercely and to besiege Him with questions, waiting to catch Him in something He might say.

Before long, being children of ‘their father the devil’ and having ‘no room’ in their hearts for His word, they plotted to kill Him (John 8:37, 44; Matthew 12:14).

the Father’s place-centred, holy purpose in His work of redemption, accomplished through:

- His Death on the Cross—a terrible ‘propitiation’

(the Son as Lamb-Priest-King-Prophet: bearing sin, offering Himself, proclaiming & conquering; the Father reconciling)

Now we come to that Central Act of God’s redemptive work on our behalf through His Son. In it we see His grace being worked out in a way that is beyond human imagination. It will involve an awful, yet glorious, ‘propitiation’—the meaning of which will be made clear as we proceed.

Down through the centuries the Father had been relentlessly pursuing His great purpose of love, bringing it to the terrible point of crisis before us in this section. In the context of Israel’s violent rejection of their Messiah, the Father would now lay upon Him—the New Adam—the judgment and condemnation of the whole world! In this Act we will see the supreme manifestation of that *divine love* which our whole being yearns to know: the liberating and life-giving love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

This, our Creator and Redeemer has done in spite of our great unworthiness—and the naturally proud and hostile resistance within us to the idea of needing anything *like* it! We truly are about to see how His grace has awesomely prevailed on our behalf.

Jesus speaks of His coming Death & Resurrection

We saw earlier how Peter had received revelation from the Father that Jesus was, indeed, the Messiah. That was a decisive moment for the apostolic band. From then on, they needed to understand the true nature of His messianic mission. But it was not something they were able to grasp.

Matthew 16:21–23

From that time on Jesus began to explain to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to You!”

Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but human concerns.”

Jesus’ statement of the nature of His mission didn’t fit with Peter’s idea of it at all! Having just received divine revelation as to Jesus’ *identity*, he was immediately influenced by Satan to block the revelation of His true *vocation*!

Satan wasn’t opposed to Jesus’ death—for he, himself, would incite it. In His blindness, he clearly didn’t understand its significance. But—as death’s ‘author’—what *was*, from his perspective, to be vigorously resisted was any idea of Jesus’ *resurrection* from the dead! So he stirred up Peter’s opposition to God’s purpose.

After the Transfiguration and with the thought of His great Exodus now before Him, Jesus again spoke of His Death and Resurrection, filling the disciples with grief (Matthew 17:22–23). Then as they later approached Jerusalem, He spoke of these things again. But we are told that the disciples ‘did not understand any of it. Its meaning was hidden from them’ (Luke 18:31–34). The time for revelation was not yet.

He knew that His Exodus at Jerusalem would set in motion a great *purifying action* among the nations—and His whole Being was pressed to accomplish it. He said:

Luke 12:49–50

“I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and how [constrained] I am until it is completed!”

His triumphal entry into Jerusalem as King

Finally, His journey to Jerusalem—begun after the Transfiguration (see Luke 9:51)—brought Him to the point where He was about to enter the city. Then mounted on an un-ridden donkey the great Son-King rode into His capital. At this time many were in Jerusalem for the Passover Festival.

He came not on a war-horse but a donkey. That was the way a king entered a city when coming in peace. He was certainly to be engaged in an awesome battle, but victory would come through love, not the sword.

This climactic event had been foretold by the prophet Zechariah:

Zechariah 9:9–10

See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. ... He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend ... to the ends of the earth.

The large crowd of disciples who had travelled with Jesus, were then joined by others from the city—many of whom had heard of the miraculous raising of Lazarus (John 12:17–18). As He went along people spread their cloaks on the road. And they walked before and behind Him, waving palm branches and shouting, “Hosanna!” which means “He saves!” They didn’t understand the actual nature of His salvation at this time. But they knew He was their long-promised Messiah!

Luke 19:36–40

When He came near the place where the road goes down from the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke Your disciples!”

“I tell you,” He replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

Then Jesus came to the place where the whole city below was before His eyes, and He was consumed with an enormous grief. What grace had been revealed within its walls over the centuries! If only this had been embraced as generously as it had been given.

Luke 19:41–44

As He approached Jerusalem and saw the city, He wept over it [with racking sobs] and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”

cleansing the temple —the King’s zeal for His Father’s house!

The first thing Jesus did on entering the city was to go straight to the temple—the place of true worship where God had promised to be specially-present to His people. But what He saw, stirred within Him a holy, jealous anger.

Mark 11:15–17

Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as He taught them, He said, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers’.”

Within the temple there was ‘the court of the Gentiles’ where people from the nations could come and seek God. But this whole area had been turned into a market place in which various kinds of unjust money-making practices were carried on. The nations were being cut off from their only hope of true worship—because of greed!

John 2:18–22

The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can You show us to prove Your authority to do all this?”

Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and are You going to raise it in three days?” But the temple He had spoken of was His body.

The One who had just cleansed the temple courts of injustice and self-interest was Himself the New Temple. Through His own body—the dwelling place of the glory of God—He would soon accomplish a greater cleansing. This holy purging would enable people from every nation to participate in His own eternal covenant union with His Father—and know the blessedness of His own worship!

In all this, His words and actions were, of course, infuriating to the authorities.

Mark 11:18

The chief priests and the teachers of the law ... began looking for a way to kill Him, for they feared Him, because the whole crowd was amazed at His teaching.

Luke 20:20

Keeping a close watch on Him, they sent spies, who pretended to be honest. They hoped to catch Jesus in something He said so that they might hand Him over to the power and authority of the governor.

However, over the next days Jesus continued to transform the whole atmosphere of the temple courts: making them a place where all could come and know the abundance of God’s grace!

Matthew 21:14

The blind and the lame came to Him at the temple, and He healed them.

Luke 21:37–38

Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening He went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives, and all the people came early in the morning to hear Him at the temple.

after hearing of some Greek 'seekers'

Some Greek God-fearers, who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, approached the disciple Philip and said to him, “Sir, we would like to see Jesus.” When Jesus was told this His heart was powerfully stirred, and He spoke immediately of what He’d come to do.

John 12:23–24

[He said,] “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.”

The hour had arrived for the great Representative of the whole race to be glorified. This would happen as He went down into the place of death on behalf of us all. For the En-fleshed, Divine-Son-King to descend into death’s darkness for the sake of His dear humanity, was the ultimate manifestation of His kingly glory! And in this way the glory of His Sonship would, then, be *reproduced* in many others—among all the nations!

John 12: 27–28

[He said], “Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason that I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name!”

Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” ... Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not Mine.”

He alone knew what this ‘hour’ would involve—and the powerful impression of it in His spirit troubled Him deeply. But in it all it was the glory of His Father’s name that was supreme in His affections!

Once again at a critical point in Jesus’ life He had received an audible affirmation from His Father. And, just as at the Transfiguration, it was for the benefit of His disciples.

John 12: 30–33

[Then He said], “Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself.” He said this to show the kind of death He was going to die.

What was about to happen in Jerusalem—the place of abounding grace—would bring the judgment of God upon the whole corrupt system of this world, and would deliver the nations from their dark ruler’s oppressive domination. The kind of death He was to die would involve His being lifted up from the earth—and the glorious revelation of this that went out to the nations would draw them to Him!

eating the Passover—the ‘Last Supper’

As already indicated, during Jesus’ week in Jerusalem He would go out each night to sleep on the Mount of Olives, re-entering the city each morning.

When He had entered the city as King, He sent His disciples on ahead to make preparation—arranging the donkey. Now, on the day of the Passover Feast, He was to make another *entrance* for which preparations would also be made: the arrangement of a room and all that was needed to partake of the Passover meal. That day, unlike the first entrance, His entering the city would not be a grand, public one as King. This time it would be a quiet, secret entry as Lamb—or, should we say, the Lamb-King.

Little did the disciples realize that as they prepared to eat the Passover lamb together, the One who led them in the meal was, Himself, the fulfillment of it!

But before this day another ‘preparation’ had also been made. Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, had gone to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. They were of course, delighted, and promised to give him much money. From then on Judas was watching for an opportunity to hand Him over (Mark 14:10–11).

And so we come to the meal, which for fifteen hundred years had foreshadowed the great Exodus about to be accomplished. This was a night Jesus had for so long wanted to spend with His disciples.

Luke 22:14–15

When the hour came, Jesus and His apostles reclined at the table. And He said to them, “I have [passionately] desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.”

Matthew 26:21–24

While they were eating, He said, “I tell you the truth, one of you will betray Me.”

They were very sad and began to say to Him one after another, “Surely You don’t mean me, Lord?”

Jesus replied, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with Me will betray Me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about Him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.”

John 13:26–27, 30

[He continued], “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it into the dish.” Then, dipping the piece of bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon.

As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. “What you are about to do, do quickly,” Jesus told him.

... As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.

As the darkness of night fell in Egypt during that first Passover meal, none of God’s covenant people were to venture out into it. To do so would be to step outside of the grace provided. But this is precisely what the shadowy figure of Judas did.

Luke 22:19

[During the meal, Jesus] took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”

Matthew 26:27–28

Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is My blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

AT LAST, THE *NEW COVENANT* IS ABOUT TO BE ESTABLISHED!!!

When Israel was set apart as God’s covenant people at Mount Sinai, it was as cleansing blood was sprinkled on them by Moses, the mediator of the covenant. In the same way, now, all who came to trust in the cleansing of the blood of Christ—the Mediator of the new covenant (Hebrews 9:15)—would be immediately *consecrated* as God’s new covenant people—*freely* brought into the blessedness of the Son’s own eternal, covenant union with His Father!

the way of the King & His kingdom

During the meal Jesus performed what may be called His final sign—and possibly the most important one His apostles would ever witness. It may not appear to be a *miraculous* sign like His others, but it pointed towards something that was, in fact, nothing less than miraculous.

It was enacted as the Holy Spirit assured Him that the Father ‘had put all things under His power’. In a moment He saw the whole sweep of His life. He had come *from* the Father and was now going *to* Him. Everything in between had been a participation in the *life* of His Father’s wonderful kingdom of love. Those who were to follow in His steps needed to understand the nature of this life if they were to truly represent Him—and truly live!

Many times He had tried to communicate this reality to them, but they had never understood it. Even now—as the Spirit witnessed within Him—they were caught up in a dispute around the table as to which of them was to be considered the greatest! The old idolatrous drive for *self-elevation* was tragically ever-present among them. For these fallen ‘sons of Adam’ to live as Jesus had lived every moment of His life, would require a *miracle* of the greatest magnitude!

Silently He rose from the table, removed His outer garment and wrapped a servant’s towel around His waist. Then, pouring water into a basin, He began to perform the most demeaning task possible for a servant in an Eastern culture. One by one, He washed the disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel.

When his turn came Peter protested violently. Didn’t the Lord know that He was putting Himself on a low level? This could not be! But Jesus told him that unless he knew what it meant to have the King become *nothing* for his sake, he could never truly participate in His life.

Luke 22:25–27

[He] said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as One who serves.”

John 13:12–17

When He had finished washing their feet, He put on His clothes and returned to His place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” He asked them. “You call Me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord’, and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash

one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, servants are not greater than their masters, nor are messengers greater than those who sent them. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Because of the events of this night—and the weeks that would follow—what they had just witnessed would be fulfilled in them—beautiful, miraculous fruit of the *new covenant* which would flow out of the freedom of spirit and fullness of worship they would soon come to know!

the Spirit of the King —who was to come in His name

In that upper room, under the shadow of what was soon to take place on this Passover night, Jesus continued to speak to His disciples around the table. He went on to tell them many things that would be greatly significant for them from that time on (John 14–16).

But throughout all this teaching there was one theme repeated again and again, which was of critical importance for their future as His servants. If these—and all who came after them—were to be able to participate in the life of the kingdom, they would need to live by the One whom their Master, Himself, had lived by: the Holy Spirit.

Jesus called the Spirit whom the Father would send upon them ‘the Counselor’, ‘the Comforter’, ‘the Advocate’ and ‘the Spirit of Truth’. This One would be sent in His name to always be with them and to act for their sake on His behalf. By the Spirit’s indwelling, Jesus would teach them all they would need to know and also remind them of everything He had said to them.

This was particularly important for them in the fulfillment of their coming vocation as apostles. They needed to be enlightened and enabled to pass on to all the generations to come what had happened over these past three years—and how it all fulfilled what the Old Testament Scriptures had said. And they were to establish a body of teaching and instruction—called ‘the faith’—that would provide a foundation for personal faith and practical living within the kingdom of God, until the Final Day.

The Spirit would also enable them to live in complete union with Jesus—like a branch lives in a vine and shares in its very life. They would be enabled to participate in the Son’s own joy in His Father’s presence, and to freely lay down their lives in love for others (15:1–17). And in the midst of all kinds of trouble they would have His own peace within them (14:27).

They would also be empowered by the Spirit in their task of proclaiming the gospel to the nations—in a way that would bring to people a deep conviction of their need for God’s grace (16:8–9).

In all of this, the Holy Spirit would glorify the Son: taking all that was His and bringing it to them.

Then, as mentioned earlier, He lifted up His heart in prayer to the Father on their behalf as their great Representative Priest/Worshipper and Intercessor—in yearning love, asking the Father to keep them from the evil one and bring them to know the blessedness of His own life of worship, forever (John 17).

Finally—as we also saw previously—Peter was told that Satan had demanded to sift him and the others as wheat. But Jesus assured Peter that He had already prayed for him, and his faith would not fail.

Peter, though, was sure that such a prayer was needless, for he was ready to go with his Master ‘to prison and to death’! But Jesus gently told him that before he had heard a rooster crow in the morning, he would have *three times* denied the One he served (Luke 22:31–34).

Tenderly preparing His little flock for what was about to happen, He told them that the Scripture, “He was numbered with the transgressors” was now about to be fulfilled in Him (Luke 22:37). After this, they sang a hymn, and their last meal together was concluded.

In the light of all these things, it was then time for them go out into the darkness of that night. Unlike Judas, they would go with the One who was, Himself, the New Covenant.

It was, however, to be a night like no other—when the security and rest they had known in their Master’s presence would soon flee from their senses. It would, indeed, be the darkest night of their lives.

Gethsemane—'the beginning of sorrows'

As usual, Jesus returned with His disciples to the Mount of Olives and arrived at the Garden of Gethsemane. Asking the rest to sit and wait while He went to pray, He took Peter, James and John with Him into the garden.

It was then that there fell upon Him a devastating foretaste of the nature of His coming suffering: what is called ‘the beginning of sorrows’. At His Baptism, He—as the New Adam and the Lamb of God—had *identified Himself* with Israel and the nations they represented, in their need for repentance and the forgiveness of sins. Now, here, it was the Spirit who *identified Him* with the ‘wretched humanity’ He had come to save: a foretaste of the horrendous identification into which He would soon be brought.

This was—like the earlier time in the wilderness—a *test*. Knowing in His depths something of the terrible sorrows to come, would He *continue on* and so, offer Himself as an ‘unblemished Sacrifice’ for the sins of the world? Though not the barren wilderness, this garden became an awful battleground.

Satan, seizing the opportunity, clearly summoned dark spiritual powers in order to *undo* the Father’s Pleasing One during His time of overwhelming crisis. As would be even more the case later—during the ‘great Propitiation’—these powers assembled like wild animals to tear at their prey.

Mark 14:33–36

He took Peter, James and John along with Him, and He began to be deeply distressed and troubled. “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” He said to them. “Stay here and keep watch.”

Going a little further, He fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from Him. “Abba, Father,” He said, “everything is possible for You. Take this cup from Me. Yet not what I will, but what You will.”

He actually felt He *was dying* there in the garden because of the greatness of this sorrow that had come upon Him—and so it seems that in His perplexity He was fervently asking to be spared to do what He’d come to accomplish later on the Cross. This may well be what the writer to the Hebrews was referring to when he said:

Hebrews 5:7

“During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.”

Or it may have been that He was simply so horrified at the foretaste of what was coming that His whole Being began to dissolve at the prospect of it.

Either way, His will was still only to do the will of His Father. And it would continue to be that way throughout the events of this night and the next day.

Mark 14:37–39

Then He returned to His disciples and found them sleeping. “Simon,” He said to Peter, “are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing but the body is weak.”

Once more He went away and prayed the same thing.

Luke 22:43–44

—strengthened and kept from death in the garden

An angel from heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him. And being in anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

Mark 14:40

When He came back, He again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to Him.

Luke 22:45

[Then] when He rose from prayer [a third time] and went back to the disciples, He found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow.

What they had been witnessing from a distance was more than they, themselves, could bear. Peter, who had claimed he would follow His Master through anything, could not begin to face what he was hearing that night.

Matthew 26:45–46

[He said to them] “Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes My betrayer.”

the betrayal & arrest

While Jesus was saying these words a crowd came up, and there was Judas, leading them.

Luke 22:47–53

[Judas] approached Jesus to kiss Him, but Jesus asked Him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”

When Jesus’ followers saw what was going to happen, they said, “Lord, should we strike with swords?” And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear.

But Jesus answered. “No more of this!” And He touched the man's ear and healed him.

Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders who had come for Him, “Am I leading a rebellion that you come with swords and clubs? Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on Me. But this is your hour—when darkness reigns.”

This was ‘their hour’. Darkness was about to be *given* its full reign—and how terrible that dominion would be. But every moment of it was to take place under the sovereign rule and action of the great Redeemer-Father, Creator and King.

the trial

They then seized Jesus and led him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled in the courtyard of his house.

Peter followed at a distance into the courtyard and sat round a fire with some others, watching all that was going on there. It wasn’t long before a servant girl—looking closely at him in the firelight—said, “This man was with him.” But Peter immediately denied that he knew Jesus. And over the next hour or so this happened twice more.

As Peter gave his final impassioned denial, a rooster crowed—and Jesus turned and looked straight at him across the courtyard. Remembering what had been said earlier that night, Peter—shattered—‘went outside and wept bitterly’ (Luke 22:54–62). The self-confident Peter—who at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry had been humbled and convicted of his sinfulness after a miraculous catch of fish—was now a man who knew, even more, his great need of mercy and grace. While ‘eating the bread and drinking the cup’ in the future how often He would remember this night.

Matthew 26:59–60, 63–68

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put Him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward ...

The high priest said to Him, “I charge You under oath by the Living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God.”

“You have said so,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?”

“He is worthy of death,” they answered. Then they spat in His face and struck Him with their fists. Others slapped Him and said, “Prophecy to us, Christ. Who hit You?”

At last they could lay their hands on Him—the Image of His Father—and vent their fury!

Mark 15:1

Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, reached a decision. They bound Jesus, led Him away and turned Him over to Pilate.

Actually, the Sanhedrin (the Jewish Council) violated many of their own laws in order to condemn Jesus—so that they could quickly hand Him over to Pilate, the Roman Governor, to be sentenced to death.

Mark 15:6–20

Now it was the custom at the Feast to release a prisoner whom the people requested. A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder during the uprising. The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do what he usually did.

“Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” asked Pilate, knowing that it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to

him. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.

“What shall I do, then, with the One you call the King of the Jews?” Pilate asked them.

“Crucify Him!” they shouted.

“Why? What crime has He committed?” asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify Him!”

Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed Him over to be crucified. The soldiers led Jesus away ... They put a purple robe on Him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on Him. And they began to call out to Him, “Hail, king of the Jews!” Again and again they struck Him on the head with a staff and spat on Him. Falling on their knees they paid homage to Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple robe and put His own clothes on Him. Then they led Him out to crucify Him.

Jesus was ‘led out’ of the city by the command of those who ‘guarded’ the sanctuary. Hebrews 13:12 tells us that He ‘suffered outside the city gate’. Like the first Adam, He was *evicted* from the sanctuary. There would, in fact, be nothing of the joys of Eden in what He was soon to know on our behalf.

John 19:17

Carrying His own cross, He went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).

Just as Isaac carried the wood for the sacrifice on his back as he ascended the mountain at Moriah, so Jesus carried His cross on His back as He made His way to the hill of Calvary. And, like Abraham, it was the Father who ‘carried the fire and the knife’. From His very own hand the most untellable judgment ever known would fall upon ‘His One and Only Son, whom He loved’.

Jesus was very weak from Gethsemane, followed by the brutal flogging He’d undergone. So after a time they seized a man named Simon, from Cyrene, who was on his way in from a night in the country; and they put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus (Luke 23:26).

Cyrene was a port in North Africa and Simon was a Gentile God-fearer who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival. He was ‘on his way in’ but was forced to carry the cross of the One who was being ‘led out’ to bear the sins of Israel and the nations of the world.

Luke 23:27–30

—warning of the awful judgment that would soon fall upon hard-hearted, rebellious Jerusalem (in 70 CE)

A large number of people followed Him, including women who mourned and wailed for Him. Jesus turned and said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blesséd are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then they will say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills ‘Cover us!’ ”

wholly identified, making propitiation & conquering—the Father reconciling

And so the hour finally arrived for the central Event of fallen human history.

Luke 23:33

When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified Him.

Mark 15:25–32

It was nine in the morning when they crucified Him ... They crucified two rebels with Him, one on His right and one on His left. Those who passed by hurled insults at Him, shaking their heads and saying, “So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save Yourself!”

In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked Him among themselves. “He saved others,” they said, “but He can’t save Himself! Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.” Those crucified with Him also heaped insults on Him.

Throughout the time of His ordeal the Saviour made seven utterances. Together these reveal to us something of the nature of the great redemptive mystery that was enacted that day. They are often referred to as ‘the seven words of the Cross’ and are a powerful, prophetic proclamation of the One who was, and is and is to come the Word of God Himself.

Let’s proceed through these priceless utterances, then, in reverent anticipation of the redeeming love they reveal.

first word

Luke 23:34

Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

If anyone could have rightly called down condemnation upon His assailants it was the Holy and Righteous One. If He had, all human hope would have been forever lost. But His only thought was for their forgiveness.

They surely knew what they were doing—but then again, they didn’t. They had no real understanding of whom they were crucifying.

Here He was not their Judge but their Liberator.

When a rose is crushed, its fragrance is smelt. When the Eternal Son was violated, the enemy’s forgiveness was His only desire.

In the Redeemer’s first word, the heart of His Father was being poured out. Through it we hear in clearest tones the nature of divine compassion in the face of human wickedness—intent on accomplishing all that is needful to deliver offenders from divine wrath that is entirely deserved.

second word

Luke 23:39–43

One of the criminals who hung there [continued to hurl] insults at Him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save Yourself and us!”

But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in paradise.”

This condemned thief had at first joined the other in heaping insults upon Jesus. But then he heard that ‘first word’ and saw the love of the One who could only be the Christ. Repentance and faith were born within him, and he received a place in the heavenly Eden! Right from the outset grace flowed freely from the Cross.

third word

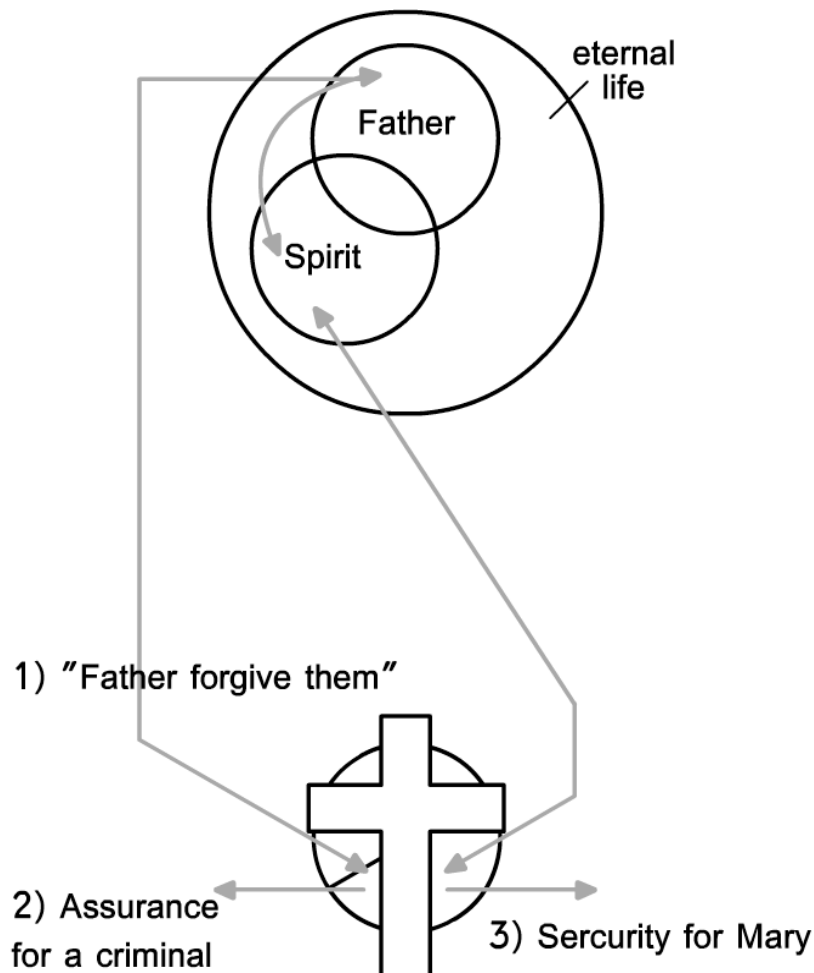
John 19:25–27

Near the cross of Jesus stood His mother, His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw His mother there, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to her, “Woman, here is your son,” and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, the disciple took her into his home.

In this tender utterance, Jesus was fulfilling to the very end the command to ‘honour father and mother’. Unable to provide for the future of Mary—we assume, His now widowed mother—He makes provision for her within the family of John.

Looking down and seeing His mother, Jesus saw the reality of what old Simeon had told her when He was dedicated as a baby in the temple: ‘a sword would pierce her soul’.

As well as making provision for her welfare, He also knew she needed to know that He was no longer her son, but her Saviour: one in whom she could always rejoice. So He announced the formation of a new familial relationship.



the Act of Propitiation

As we move towards Jesus’ fourth word, we come face to face with the horrendous nature of what He endured up there.

What made His suffering so horrible was not merely the shocking physical pain of crucifixion (the most excruciating way for a person of that day to die). His suffering involved much more than that.

Previously we saw that in the garden of Gethsemane Jesus endured a *sorrow* that took Him ‘to the point of death’—without any physical pain at all! The terrors of the Cross had to do supremely with this kind of *spiritual* suffering—involving an terrible act of propitiation.

Romans 3:25

God presented Him as a [propitiation].

Propitiation speaks of a *decisive* action of the Redeemer-Father by which He *deals with sin* in a way that satisfies His demand for justice. The action consisted in the Father turning aside—averting—His *wrath* from those who were rightly under it. The propitiation He accomplished through His Son that day was the, most costly, act that has ever, taken place.

1 John 4:10

This is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be [the propitiation] for our sins.

three hours of darkness

God provided a graphic, visual setting for what He was about to do. We are told that from midday until 3:00 pm *darkness* came over the whole land (Matthew 27:45). It was during those three hours that the terrible work of propitiation was consummated.

Behind the curtain in the Most Holy Place of the temple—where on the Day of Atonement the high priest offered the yearly sacrifice for Israel’s sins—there was no light whatsoever. To enter, the high priest slowly wove his way through the layers of the 9 inch (23 cm) thick curtain. Then, in total darkness, the atoning blood was sprinkled seven times on the Ark of the Covenant. This annual atonement was made for the year’s sins in an atmosphere of intense awe.

During those dark hours that descended upon the land, Jesus was bearing not merely the sins of Israel for one year but the sins of the *entire world* for all of history!

1 John 2:2

He is the [propitiation] for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

We will remember that in Israel’s exodus it was also in the blackness of midnight that judgment fell upon the land of Egypt—with each family in Israel being spared through the blood of a lamb. This was another situation of intense awe.

When Jesus hung on the Cross as our Atoning Sacrifice and our Judgment-bearing Passover Lamb, the descent of darkness was, indeed, a powerful sign.

It will continue to be seen as we proceed, that things already learnt from Studies 1–6 are most important for an understanding of Jesus’ propitiating death.

there, in our place

Just as at Jesus’ Baptism there was *identification* with us in our fallen humanity, with a view to Him taking our place under the judgment of God, so now that act of consecration is being consummated.

Isaiah 53:4

Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows.

Isaiah 53:12

He poured out His life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors.

1 Peter 2:24

He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree.

the Serpentine One

We have seen that since Adam’s sin in the beginning, humanity, of itself, has had within it a hostile thrust towards the True and Living God—and that this shows us to be tragically aligned with ‘that ancient serpent the devil’. Ours is very much a *serpentine* humanity!

During Israel’s wandering in the wilderness the LORD judged their rebellion by causing them to be bitten by deadly serpents (Numbers 21:4–9). This was a sign of their being given up to the evil one, whom it seemed they preferred to serve. But Moses was commanded to raise a bronze serpent on a pole, so that all who looked to it—recognizing the source of their trouble—could be saved from death. Here was a foreshadowing of God’s salvation through His Son, for a ‘perishing race’.

John 3:14, 16

Just as Moses lifted up the [serpent] in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up ... For God so loved the world that He gave His One and Only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

On the cross, He, Himself, *became* our serpentine humanity.

the Accursed One

From the moment of the Fall the experience of *human accursedness* has been tragically known by our race.

In God’s covenant relationship with His people Israel, their choice was always between either faith and obedience or unbelief and rebellion. This would bring either blessing or cursing. Through covenant faithfulness they would know God’s own rest. But through willful covenant violation they would incur His wrath.

Sadly, Israel so greatly privileged, experienced too much of what it was to be ‘children of Adam: an accursed humanity’.

When Jesus ‘bore our sins’, He—the New Adam and New Israel—*became us* in our *accursedness*. On the cross, He, Himself, became the Accursed One of all history, the *embodiment* of all moral offense—of every foul desire, thought, word and act.

Galatians 3:13

Christ redeemed us ... by becoming a curse for us.

the Defiled Temple

We have seen that Jesus was the New Temple. His own body was the dwelling place of the glory of God: the abode of true worship. We saw also that when He came into Jerusalem He was *grieved* by the corruption He witnessed within the temple’s outer court.

Israel itself lived in dread of an event called the ‘Abomination of Desolation’, when Gentile armies might come again and defile the temple.

But on the Cross the One who was made a propitiation for us *became* the Defiled Temple—Himself, the Abomination of Desolation!

a terrible identification

During those three dark hours that day, He was, somehow, *totally identified* with us in our sin.

2 Corinthians 5:21

God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us.

By the Spirit, the Father laid upon the Son the vile, universal corruption of a fallen humanity in Adam. And the Son freely and totally yielded Himself to its wretchedness. He became *us!*

In holy wrath, the Father *abandoned Him up* to the terrors of demonic accusation. With a frantic and hateful fury Satan’s vast assembly of spiritual powers ruthlessly and relentlessly assailed Him. And—as History’s Accursed One—every heinous charge made was *absolutely* true of Him. His spirit could only cry, “Yes, yes, it was *Me!!!*”

What He had begun to experience in the garden of Gethsemane now came as an unrelenting flood. He truly became ‘the Man of Sorrows’. Within His previously pure and untroubled conscience He now knew the indescribable, moral pain of fallen-human shame. With the whole of His Being He confessed Himself to be the Guilty One—damned and condemned forever!

In the awful silence of those hours, He embraced in His depths all that any failed human being could ever know under the wrath of God. From the absolute blessedness of eternal, intimate covenant union with His Father—to this.

Of course the nature of His sufferings during that time are far beyond description. We know only that they were for us.

fourth word

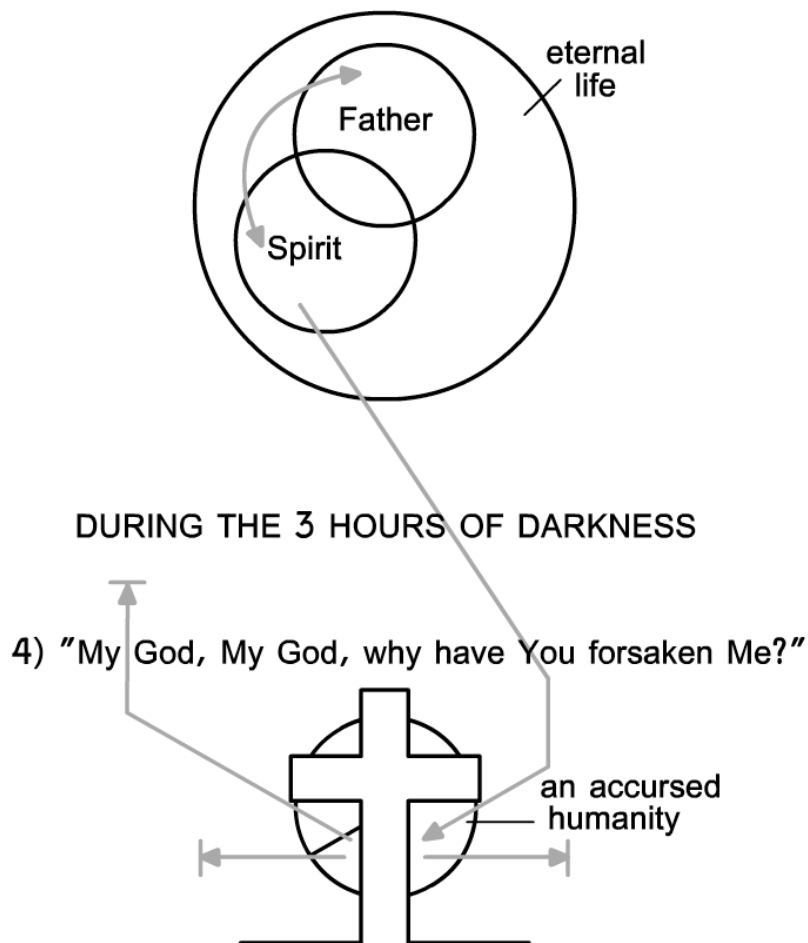
Matthew 27:46

About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani?"—which means, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’

This cry broke the silence of those three hours—revealing what had been taking place within them.

The Beloved Son no longer had any sweet enjoyment of His Father’s presence—no intimate communion; no smile upon Him. Only utter abandonment and dereliction.

He was *cut off* from God and humanity—alone in the anguished cries of His heart and mind.



the cries of His mind as foreshadowed in Psalm 22 and Lamentations

Psalm 22:1

—no salvation for the Accursed One

“Why are You so far from saving Me, so far from the words of My groaning?”

Psalm 22:6

—a human zero

“I am a worm and not a human being, scorned by everyone and despised by the people.”

Psalm 22:12–14

—encompassed by myriads of demonic powers, accusing, taunting, condemning, devastating

“Many bulls surround Me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle Me. Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against Me. I am poured out like water ... My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within Me.”

Lamentations 1:12–13

—an indelible mental impression

Is any suffering like My suffering that was inflicted on Me, that the LORD brought on Me on the day of His fierce anger? From on high He sent fire, sent it down into My bones.

Here is the ultimate revelation of the glory of the Father, Son and Spirit.

We see the untellable suffering of divine anguish. The Father’s, as He pours out His wrath upon the Son—*giving Him up to a total identification* with the vile corruption of

human fallen-ness; the Spirit’s, as He facilitates this terrible descent; and the Son’s, as He bears it all—utterly abandoned, derelict, and without hope.

THIS IS THE LOVE OF GOD FOR A HUMANITY THAT REFUSES TO HONOUR HIM!!!

the ultimate Priestly Offering

Hebrews 9:14

[Christ] through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God.

By the Spirit, the Son in His hours of dereliction still wanted only two things: the face and pleasure of His Father and the salvation of those whose sins had been laid upon Him. In this, He had—through it all—offered Himself as an unblemished Sacrifice.

Although the Son had no assurance of His Father’s pleasure as He was abandoned up for our sins, the Father, Himself, from His own tortured heart could *cry out* to the Spirit and myriads of aghast, holy angels: “LOOK, THIS IS MY SON—THE GLORIOUS IMAGE OF MY LOVE!!!

when all was accomplished

fifth word

The time came—at last—when the judgment had passed.

John 19:28–29

Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge on it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips.

Psalms 22:15

—*a physical effect of crucifixion*

My mouth is dried up like [sun-baked clay], and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.

Jeremiah 17:5–6

—*the utter personal barrenness and dryness He had known as the Accursed One during those three dark hours*

Cursed are those ... whose hearts turn away from the LORD ... They will dwell in the parched places of the desert.

sixth word

John 19:30

When He had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.”

This sixth word was a *prophetic proclamation* of the victory of our great Conquering King!

In His being offered as an unblemished Sacrifice to the Father, the Cross was the *altar* of the Lamb. Yet it was at the same time the *throne* of the En-fleshed Divine-Son-King! FROM HIS CROSS HE WAS *REIGNING IN LOVE OVER ALL THE POWER OF EVIL—AND CONQUERING IT!!!*

And so *now* there is no longer one dark place in the whole world where this ‘sixth word’ cannot be proclaimed with the authority of the King Himself. Let every man, woman, boy and girl hear Him say: “IT IS FINISHED!!!”

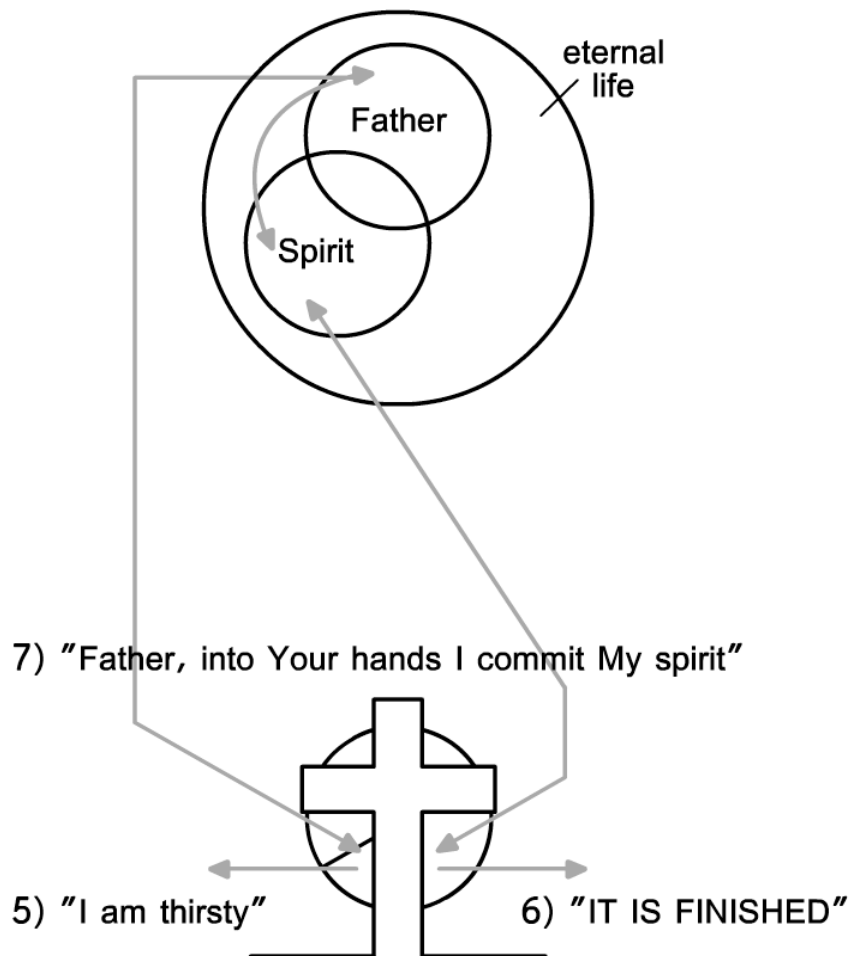
seventh word

Luke 23:46

Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” When He had said this, He breathed His last.

How regal was this shout of assurance from the lips of the *utterly expended* Son. He ‘called out with a loud voice’ because He wanted everyone to hear!

Jesus knew that He had done His Father’s will. Death held no dread for Him. Having been delivered up to our sins and having triumphed in love over the power of evil, He could now with *glorious simplicity* commit His spirit into the Father’s hands—and breathe out His final breath. And so may *all* who embrace the reality of His victory!



Matthew 27:51a

—when He’d spoken His final word

At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

Because sin’s judgment had been accomplished there was no longer any need for a dark place of propitiation in the Jerusalem temple!

Matthew 27:51b–52

The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.

These raisings were a sign that Jesus’ sin-bearing death was, itself, the death of death—prefiguring the greatest kingdom-sign of history that was soon to take place.

sinners with a Saviour

How awful if the Son had come among us merely as a moral teacher: an impeccable personal example of humanity. We’d have been shown up for what we are and left condemned. The wonderful thing is that although all judgment had been entrusted to Him (John 5:22–23), this was not the reason for His coming. He came in the love of His Father to *save sinners!*

John 3:17

God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.

Romans 5:6

When we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

Romans 5:8

God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Isaiah 53:5–6

He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

1 Peter 3:18

Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God.

His righteousness was not *held up against us* to condemn us. Rather it was *worked out on our behalf* to save us. In His Father’s yearning love for the whole world the Righteous One stood in the place of the unrighteous.

the symbolism of the cutting of the covenant with Abraham fulfilled

We saw in Study 5 the dramatic way in which the LORD portrayed His cutting of the covenant that would, ultimately, fulfill everything He had promised to Abraham: all the nations of the earth being blessed.

It was explained that in the days of Abraham with the making of such covenants, both parties would walk between severed animal carcasses, indicating that if either of them broke the arrangement the same fate would be theirs. On this occasion, however, it was not God and Abraham who passed between the carcasses but only God—His fiery presence symbolized by a smoking firepot with a blazing torch (Genesis 15:17). It was the LORD alone who guaranteed the promise of a great deliverance and inheritance for Abraham’s descendants. Abraham was merely an awestruck spectator!

Today, we ourselves, may look on that occasion with an awe-filled and *love-struck* wonderment—able to understand now that the symbolism of the smoking firepot with the blazing torch was, actually, a portrayal of the Father and the Son. The Father as the Smoking Firepot, and with Him, the Son as the Blazing Torch from out of the Firepot, taking our place as covenant-partner in the ‘cutting’ of the new covenant. And in this, knowing that on the Cross, it was He—as the New Representative Head of our humanity—who was incurring the unutterably-terrible consequence of our heinous, fallen-human covenant violation!

sin dealt with, once & for all—& the wrath of God averted for all who believe

Jesus was the Servant—the Branch / Shoot / Sprout from David’s line—whose decisive work fulfilled completely the Old Testament sacrificial system.

Zechariah 3:8–9

[The angel of the LORD said,] “Listen, High Priest Joshua, you and your associates ... who are symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring My Servant the Branch ... ” says the LORD Almighty, “and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day.”¹⁴

Hebrews 9:26

He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Hebrews 1:3c

[He] provided purification for our sins.

1 John 3:5

He appeared so that He might take away our sins.

Hebrews 2:17

He had to be made like His brothers and sisters in every way, in order that He might ... become [a propitiation] for the sins of the people.

His amazing Incarnation enabled Him to deal with the sin of every person, by being SET FORTH AS A *PROPIATION*—TO FOREVER TURN ASIDE AND AVERT THE WRATH AND CONDEMNATION OF GOD, THAT RESTS UPON ALL WHO LIVE AGAINST HIM!!!

a great reconciliation

The need of every person is to be restored to a free and full friendship with God. Through this work of the Cross, the Father removed *every offense* that would keep us in hostility and unease towards Him, under His wrath.

2 Corinthians 5:19

God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them.

Our Maker would have been just if He’d left His wrath-deserving rebels in their endless, restless struggle. But He didn’t count our sins against us, leaving us to ourselves. He *acted* to restore and reconcile.

In Christ—the New Adam and the Sin-bearing Lamb of God—the whole world *has been reconciled* to the Father! And now, all who are united with Jesus—through their inclusion, by faith, in the new covenant—may *participate* in that reconciliation!

Every person in every nation may now be at peace with God, through faith in His grace.

Colossians 1:19–20

For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in [Christ], and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the Cross.

¹⁴ The name Jesus is the same as the name Joshua. ‘Jesus’ being a Greek transliteration of the Aramic word ‘Yeshua’ (a shortened form of the Hebrew ‘Yehoshua’). Jesus was, indeed, to fulfill all that the High Priest Joshua and his associates symbolized.

On the Cross Jesus overcame the curse of sin not only for humanity, but also for all of creation! As the New Adam He was, and is, the Head and Representative of *every created thing*.

What was accomplished during those three dark hours was of cosmic significance. That is, *the whole of the creation* (the cosmos) was *reconciled* to God—*ready* for the great Day of its total liberation, harmonization and renewal!

The hope of every created thing is to be found in Christ—Himself the New Creation.

the great & decisive victory over Satan & the demonic powers he commands

We have seen that the En-fleshed Divine-Son was among us in ‘meekness and gentleness’. But He also was with us as the great Warrior-King—to bring to nothing the false kingdom of the evil one and his cruel oppression.

1 John 3:8

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.

Hebrews 2:14

Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might break the power of him who holds the [might] of death—that is, the devil.

Satan’s ability to hold humankind under the mighty impact of death—through sin’s condemnation—has been forever broken.

During His ministry Jesus eagerly anticipated the coming demise of Satan’s oppressive dominion:

Mark 3:27

[He said], “No one can enter a strong man’s house without first [binding him]. Then he can plunder the strong man’s house.”

Through His propitiating death, Christ has overcome and bound Satan, the ‘strong man’. Those held captive for so long by this dark oppressor may now become the liberated and treasured children of God!

Colossians 2:15

Having disarmed the powers and authorities, [God] made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the Cross.

Through the Cross the Father, indeed, triumphed mightily over ‘the dominion of darkness’. By that redeeming Act He (for all who would believe) disarmed the devil and those spiritual powers the evil one commands. He has taken out of their hands the only weapon by which humanity can be held in bondage—by dealing *totally* with the guilt and condemnation of sin!

everything was according to the Father’s purpose & the word of His prophets

The Cross was the indispensable means by which God would fulfill His eternal purpose of love. The wholly-identified-propitiating-death of the Son was announced through His prophets and foreshadowed in Israel’s worship.

It is this that was then proclaimed by His apostles.

Revelation 13:8

[He is] the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.

1 Peter 1:19–20

[Christ was] a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these days for your sake.

Acts 2:23

[Peter said to the Jews:] “This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge.”

Acts 3:18

God fulfilled what He had foretold through all the prophets, saying that His Messiah would suffer.

the Slain Lamb is taken to His place of burial

It was Joseph of Arimathea, a ‘secret disciple’ of Jesus (John 19:38–39), and a Pharisee named Nicodemus—who was also a member of the council that had tried Him—who received permission to remove His body. They took it to a garden tomb that had never been used and wrapped it in strips of linen (Luke 23:50–53).

Jesus had once told Nicodemus that he could never see the kingdom of God unless he had been born again by the Spirit of God (John 3:1–15). Nicodemus hadn’t then understood what Jesus meant. But it seems that the Spirit was now stirring in his heart.

Luke 23:55–56

The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how His body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes.

old covenant images fulfilled

And so, with that awesome Act of the En-fleshed Son’s propitiating death having been proclaimed, we do, indeed, now see that He was not only the fulfillment of the ‘bread’, the ‘light’ and ‘the altar of incense’ present in the Jerusalem temple. He was also the *Lamb* that fulfilled the old covenant sacrificial system. And a little further on in our Story, it will be seen that He is, Himself, the *High Priest*, who mediates all the ministry of a new, Holy Spirit formed temple, that is to be manifested among all the nations of the earth!

the Father’s place-centred, holy purpose in His work of redemption, accomplished through:

- His Resurrection—the triumph of mercy & grace (victory declared bodily: sin, death & the devil defeated)

As far as the disciples were concerned the event of the Cross was the end of all they had earnestly anticipated. Their hopes were shattered.

The Blesséd One who was, Himself, the Hope of the world, having descended into the accursédness of our fallen humanity was now lying cold and lifeless in a tomb. He who was the Head of a whole *new* humanity and the embodiment of a glorious future for the race—was He merely to take His place among the dead?

NO!!! The eternal purpose of the Father through His En-fleshed Son was about to be inaugurated by the power of the Holy Spirit. In one breathtaking moment something happened that was to forever change the shape of human history. A new, blazing eternal hope for the whole of humankind was brought to birth!

Luke 24:1–6

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered they did not find the body of the

Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in white clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He has risen!”

Those who had come with spices to mask the stench that was soon to fill the tomb heard the stunning angelic proclamation: “The living One has no place among the dead!”

This was the first of countless such announcements to be made among the nations of the world! The disciples themselves, however, were soon to do more than hear testimony to this earthshaking reality. They were to *see* the Risen One Himself with their own eyes.

John 20:19

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.”

After all He had just achieved on their behalf what a completely appropriate greeting this was! But peace was, certainly, not what they first felt.

Luke 24:37–43

They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your minds? Look at My hands and My feet. It is I Myself! Touch Me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”

When He had said this, He showed them His hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, He asked them. “Do you have anything here to eat?” They gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and He took it and ate it in their presence.

It was true! HE WAS ALIVE!!!

Acts 3:15

[They] killed the Author of life, but God raised Him from the dead.

Revelation 1:18

[Jesus said,] “I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever.”

What happened that day was not just another resuscitation, like Lazarus and others whom He Himself had raised, only to die again. THIS WAS THE END OF DEATH ITSELF AND THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ETERNAL DAY—NOW PRESENT IN THE INCORRUPTIBLE HUMANITY OF THE EN-FLESHED SON!!!

the dawning of the new covenant

In His Resurrection the reality of the promised *new covenant* was manifested: the dawning of a new era of *intimate fellowship with God* that had now been wholly accomplished through the Cross.

Hebrews 13:20

The God of peace ... through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus.

The redeeming blood required to establish the new covenant had, indeed, been shed. Our fallen, evil humanity had been judged, condemned and put to death in the Son-Lamb-King. And now the Father had joyously raised Him from the grave to, *in Him*, usher in a new and glorious eternal age of human blessedness!

Luke 24:44–47

[Jesus] said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about Me in the law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

Yes, the new covenant had, at last, been established, and, as the Old Testament Scriptures had foreshadowed, the Messiah had been raised from the dead. And now, the forgiveness that releases a person into the blessedness of the Son’s own eternal, covenant union with the Father, will soon be proclaimed among the nations!

the joy of the Resurrection

Death had been defeated; it had not just been cheated of a victory but destroyed. Life had triumphed over the great enemy of humankind. History could now never be the same: a whole new dynamic had entered into the human scene!

In the light of such accomplishment, Jesus must surely have had enormous happiness in appearing to His disciples. How much pleasure He would have known in seeing their joy and amazement at His triumph over death. And, besides that, what huge delight He must have had in anticipating all they would now come to discover regarding the future He had gained for them.

Isaiah 53:11

After He has suffered, He will see the light of life and be satisfied.

What had appeared to be a tragic end there in Jerusalem was, in fact, a glorious new beginning. We can really only *attempt* to imagine the joyous satisfaction that flooded the Risen One’s holy Being, as He made this bodily proclamation of His Father’s mercy to a fallen humanity!

He not only appeared to the disciples on that *third day* but also continued to come to them for the next forty days, speaking about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). This was the same period of time that the LORD spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai when the covenant with Israel was being established.

What a rich and joyous forty days those must have been for them all. And how many things must now have begun to *make sense*, as the Crucified and Resurrected One further opened up the wonders of His Father’s purpose.

witnesses of the Resurrection

All who were with Him over that time were to become verbal witnesses of what they had seen and heard. Peter later spoke of this:

Acts 10:39–43

“We are witnesses of everything He did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed Him by hanging Him on a tree, but God raised Him from the dead on the third day and caused Him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead.”

The apostle Paul—whom we will see having an encounter with the risen Jesus at a later time—also was a witness to the resurrection. He wrote:

1 Corinthians 15:3–8

“What I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all He appeared to me also.”

It was so important that this great turning point in the history of humankind should be initially testified to by divinely appointed eye-witnesses.¹⁵

the Father’s glory made known

In the Resurrection, the glory of God’s Fatherhood was magnificently revealed:

Romans 6:4

Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father.

To raise Jesus from the dead was such a *natural* thing for the Father to do. It was a manifestation of the very nature of His Fatherhood and of His holy, vocational partnership with His En-fleshed Eternal Son. What glorious plans He had for Him—and for all who would be made one with Him!

Acts 2:35

[It was prophesied], “You will not let Your Holy One see decay.”

Acts 2:24

God raised Him from the dead, freeing him from the [escalating indignities] of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Him.

Because He was the Holy and Righteous One His body did not give way to corruption. Death could not hold Him under its power. And so the Father did what was always in His heart to do: He *raised Him up* to be the Head of an *eternal humanity*—which would forever be His own gloriously loved and dearly treasured Family!

the Resurrection as a mighty declaration

Jesus’ resurrection from the dead declared that the sin He had embraced on the Cross was no more!

Apart from the Resurrection there is no hope for sinners. For without it we have no assurance that our sins have been dealt with.

1 Corinthians 15:17, 20

If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins ... But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.

In the Resurrection the Father made a *bodily proclamation* of the victory of the Cross! Jesus—the New Adam—had conquered death, and this meant He had conquered sin! And because He had conquered both sin and death, it was clear that He had also conquered the author of them both: the devil.

All who are united with the Risen Son are no longer part of the ‘old humanity’ in Adam, subject to the evil one. That humanity has been put to death in Him. They are

¹⁵ A later supplementary study at the end of the series will speak of the indisputably, historical reality of the Resurrection—showing the inadequacy of various arguments that are brought against it.

now part of the ‘new humanity’ in this One, who is Himself the New Creation! They have been ransomed and redeemed from their ‘old adamic bondage’ to that cruel master, Satan—into the life and blessedness of their new Master, the Conquering Son-Lamb-King! In future studies we will see the massive significance of this reality.

What a mighty declaration the Resurrection was. There is a new, eternal day of *freedom* for all who flee to the risen Saviour!

Now we will see that this great victory was declared in another equally dramatic way.

the Father’s place-centred, holy purpose in His work of redemption, accomplished through:

- His Ascension & Enthronement as Lord & Christ

(a *new, glorious humanity* at the Father’s right hand; in His eternal Sonship reigning supremely as Priest-Prophet-King to mightily fulfill His Father’s holy purpose within every nation)

When Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to Mary Magdalene outside the tomb, it was plain to see what was foremost in His mind:

John 20:17

[He said] “Go ... to My brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.’ ”

Although He delighted to stay with His disciples for forty days, His heart was set on enjoying what His Baptism had foreshadowed: His heavenly Coronation as Lord and King. Through this He would reign over all things on behalf of His people—and so fulfill His Father’s purpose for the rest of history!

But before this great goal was reached, He made a grand proclamation of His kingship and of His Father’s redemptive purpose for the nations:

Matthew 28:18–20

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore [going], make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Here Jesus was declaring that He had been given supreme authority, both in the heavenly and the earthly realms; that is, in both the unseen, spiritual realm and the seen, earthly realm. His disciples could be *certain* that He had gained absolute authority over every spiritual power that has ever perversely dominated the human scene!

Mark 16:15–16

He said to them, “[Going] into all the world, preach the gospel to all creation.”

He was to reign with His Father, with a view to the blessing of His presence and His kingdom being enjoyed over the whole earth!

His proclamation having been made, He then departed from them—in spectacular style:

Luke 24:50–51

When He had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He left them and was taken up into heaven.

The One *from* heaven who had become the New Man on the earth, was now to become the New Man *in* heaven on behalf of all humanity!

In blessing them He was doing what had been done for Adam and Eve in the beginning: He was equipping them to fulfill their vocation as His servants and covenant partners. And soon He would pour out from heaven the spiritual capacity they required to fulfill the blessing they’d received!

Acts 1:9

He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight.

The cloud that encompassed Him was the same one that had appeared at the Transfiguration, which had also settled on Mount Sinai, which filled the tabernacle and later the temple at Jerusalem, and had then led Israel on their journey to the promised land. It was the cloud of the glorious presence of God.

The En-fleshed Eternal Son was about to receive what He had prayed for during the Last Supper:

John 17:5

“And now Father, glorify Me in Your presence with the glory [which I was having at Your side] before the world began.”

And so, He arrived at His goal:

1 Peter 1:21

[God] raised Him from the dead and glorified Him.

HIS IS NOW A GLORIFIED HUMANITY!!!

1 Timothy 3:16

He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, ... was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.

enthroned as Lord & Christ at the Father’s right hand

In Jesus’ ascended glory, the Coronation powerfully enacted at His Baptism was now brought to its goal. He was established as King over all things at the right hand of His Father: the *place* of supreme authority.

Hebrews 12:2

For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Declaring His sovereign lordship over all things, Jesus said:

Revelation 1:17

“I am the First and the Last.”

And it was also declared of Him:

Hebrews 1:9

You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore [En-fleshed, Divine-Son-King], Your God, has set You above your companions by anointing You with the oil of joy.

Philippians 2:8–11

Being found in appearance as a human being, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God raised Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and

under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Ephesians 4:10

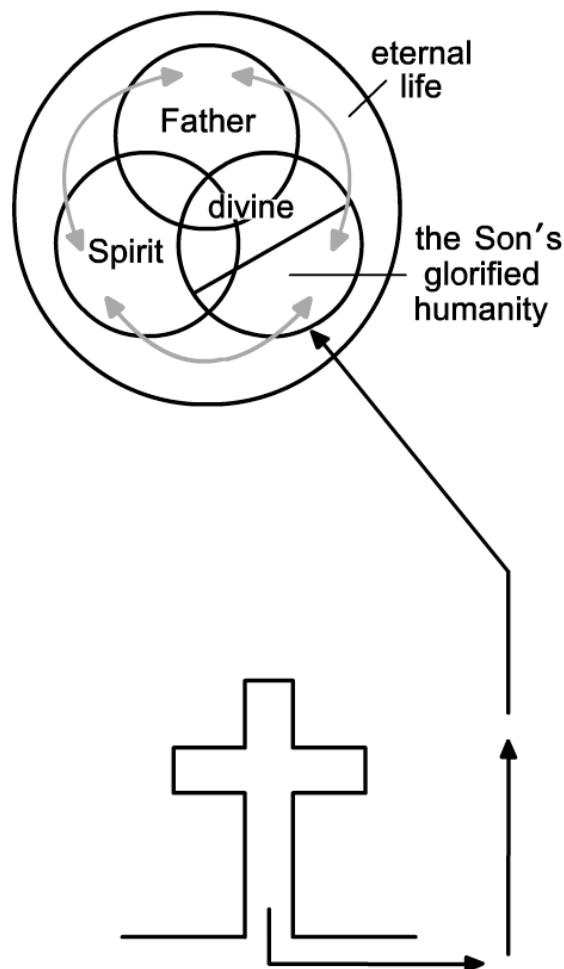
He who descended is the very One who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill [all things].

1 Peter 3:22

[He] has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to Him.

Ephesians 1:20–22

[The Father] raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be Head over everything [for the sake of those who are His].



As the diagram above shows: at the right hand of God there is a *glorified human being*—100% divine and 100% human—exalted *bodily* as the Supreme Lord and King over all creation! Having borne and cleansed the corruption of our fallen and accursed humanity in Adam, putting it to death in Himself, HE HAS NOW, FOR OUR SAKE, JOYOUSLY TAKEN HIS GLORIFIED HUMANITY INTO THE DIVINE, TRIUNE COMMUNITY LOVE, FOREVER!!!

Hebrews 1:3

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His Being, sustaining all things by His powerful word. After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

When He sat down—exalted as the Glorified Liberator-King of all creation in the presence of countless thousands of heavenly creatures—what must He have said? Surely it was something like this: ‘FATHER, LOOK AT WHAT YOUR ETERNAL PURPOSE OF LOVE HAS ACCOMPLISHED!!!’

the Great Priest-King

As the glorified Lord and King He is also the great High Priest of His people.

We saw in Study 5 how Abraham honoured the mysterious priest-king Melchizedek, who foreshadowed the Person of the Lord Jesus: ‘without beginning of days or end of life’ (Hebrews 7:3).

Psalm 110:4

You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

This is what the LORD said of David, whose throne Jesus was to inherit eternally (2 Samuel 7:16). Such a priestly reign would only be wholly fulfilled in Him, the Risen, Ascended and Glorified Son-Priest-King!

Also in Study 5 we saw the *temporary* priesthood of Aaron and his descendents: a priesthood that had always pointed forward to this greater, eternal one to come.

Hebrews 4:14

We have a great high priest who has ascended into [the heavens], Jesus the Son of God.

Hebrews 9:24

He entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence.

The humanity that Satan sought to demean and destroy is now reigning at the right hand of God! There, Jesus is the Representative Priest/Worshipper and Intercessor of His redeemed people.

1 John 2:1

We have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the Righteous One.

As the Advocate of His people, Jesus is the Righteous One whom the Father has *delighted* to set before Him to speak on their behalf. He is also the Sacrificed-Lamb, whom the Father *loves* to recognize as the perfect Offering for human sin.

Jesus is not an advocate who has to try and *convince* the Father of something regarding us. The Father, Himself, has *appointed* the Son to be our Intercessor! The Father, Son and Spirit are one together in holy desire—yearning for all who are redeemed to fully come into their inheritance.

The Son’s interceding is never an attempt to persuade a ‘reluctant Father’. It is always the very thing that is in His Father’s heart! As the Word, the Son has always been utterly one with His Father, in heart, mind and will. Yes, He is *with* His Father as Priest-King *for* us.

Just as the Son was the Mediator of the creation and has always been the Mediator of the kingdom, so also it was the Father’s will that the Glorified, En-fleshed Son—as Mediator of the new covenant—be *the Mediator of His people’s glorification* as the children of God.

Human beings glorified? YES!!! We will see in Studies 7 and 8 how IT IS THE FATHER’S PURPOSE FOR ALL THE REDEEMED TO FINALLY *PARTICIPATE* IN THE GLORIFIED HUMANITY OF THE SON!!! And that’s why He appointed Jesus as their High Priest—to continue to act on their behalf to bring them to their goal!

Being at the Father’s right hand, He never ceases to *intercede* and *intervene on behalf of* those whom His Father has given Him. And the Father delights to respond—sending the Spirit to work it all out!

Of course, the primary need of the redeemed is to realize what has happened to their sins. And so, Jesus is all of the time seeking to keep them *alive* in their assurance of the victory of the Cross. This is a major part of His intercessory intervention on their behalf: maintaining an assurance that is constantly contested by dark spiritual powers.

Romans 8:33–34

Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? ... Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

We saw briefly during the account of the Last Supper how Jesus lifted up His heart to the Father on behalf of His disciples (John 17). At that time as their Representative Priest/Worshipper and Intercessor, He expressed His deep yearning for them to be kept from the evil one, and to know the blessedness of His own life of worship as the Son.

Together with His people’s need to be assured of the victory of the Cross, it is these two things He prayed for during the Last Supper that are at the heart of all His priestly intercessions: *protection* from the evil one and *participation* in the life and joy of His own covenant union with the Father. This is the *salvation* He has come to bring His redeemed people into—increasingly now, and totally in eternity!

Hebrews 7:25

He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them.

Romans 8:34–39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

He is the Mighty, Priest-King over all. Yes, the yearning intercession of His priestly heart in His Father’s presence and purpose of love is, indeed, MIGHTY in its effects!

**the Great Prophet-King mightily fulfilling
His Father’s purpose among the nations—on the
basis of His awesomely accomplished redemption**

He is reigning over all things not only as the Great Priest-King but also, as the Great Prophet-King—the En-fleshed Word of God—with a view to the Consummation of His Father’s glorious purpose of love!

It is, of course, only by the mighty victory of the Cross, Resurrection and Ascension that all things are moving towards this great Climax to come. Every future proclamation and action of the kingdom of God will be an outworking of that victory.

Revelation 5:5

The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed.

Revelation 5:9

[Lamb of God] You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because You were slain, and with Your blood You purchased for God members of every tribe and language and people and nation.

The triumphant Lion of Judah is also the Lamb of God, who by His supreme Act is the One who alone has authority to open the scroll of history—and to proclaim and accomplish His Father’s purpose among the nations. All of history is in His hands!

The Old Testament prophets Daniel and Isaiah had declared these things long before the Ascension:

Daniel 7:14

[This One] was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshipped Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Isaiah 16:5

In [unfailing covenant love] a throne will be established; in faithfulness a Man will sit on it—One from the house of David—One who in judging seeks justice and speeds the cause of righteousness.

Isaiah 53:10

The will of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

The Father’s purpose will flourish and thrive through this One who has overcome!

Hebrews 1:13

[God said to the Son], “Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”

As the Lamb of God and the Lion of Judah, He has authority to overcome all that opposes His Father’s will by His mighty proclamations and actions!

1 Corinthians 15:25

He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

Psalms 2—the great messianic Psalm mentioned in relation to Jesus’ Baptism—will go on being fulfilled until history is complete:

Psalms 2:1–12

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against His Anointed One. “Let us break their chains,” they say, “and throw off their fetters.”

The One enthroned in heaven laughs; and the LORD scoffs at them. Then He rebukes them in His anger and terrifies them in His wrath, saying, “I have installed My King on Zion, My holy hill.”

I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, “You are My Son; today I have become Your Father. Ask of Me and I will give You the nations as Your inheritance, the ends of the earth as Your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter; You will dash them to pieces like pottery.”

Therefore you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear and [rejoice] with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for His wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in Him.

Isaiah 52:15

He will [startle] many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of Him. For what they were not told they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.

The Book of Revelation uses powerful Hebrew imagery to describe Jesus’ mighty reign as Prophet and King:

Revelation 19:11–16

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice He judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on His head are many crowns. He has a name written on Him that no one knows [as their own] but Himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and His name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following Him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. “He will rule them with an iron scepter.” He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On His robe and on His thigh He has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

What awesome action is going on! EVERY ENEMY OF THE FATHER’S GLORIOUS PURPOSE WILL, FINALLY, BE OVERCOME BY THE *UTTERANCE AND ACTION* OF THE GREAT PROPHET-KING. YES, JESUS IS LORD OF BOTH HEAVEN AND EARTH—REIGNING IN LOVE AS THE MIGHTY MEDIATOR OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD!!!

Now it’s time for us to see the fulfillment of that *promise* Jesus spoke of during the Last Supper.

the Father’s place-centred, holy purpose in His work of redemption, accomplished through:

- His Outpouring of the Spirit in His Name

(ongoing dynamic, priestly, prophetic & kingly living through His people among the nations—opposed but unhindered)

Throughout our Story we have been hearing of the freedom and fullness for which humankind was created. We have seen that our high human calling involves both *relational intimacy* with God and *vocational partnership* with Him.

We have witnessed this calling being perfectly fulfilled in the En-fleshed Son among us. And we’ve just seen that—having accomplished our redemption in His Death and Resurrection—He reigns at the Father’s right hand in His glorified humanity, has been appointed as Priest-King on behalf of His people and operates as the Mighty Lord of History.

Everything then, is ready for this next phase of God’s grand redemptive process—the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the redeemed! They would now (by the Spirit) be empowered to *stand against* the evil one and *dynamically participate* in the life of the Son’s own eternal covenant union with His Father.

the indispensable gift

Before Jesus ascended, He told His disciples that they were not to leave Jerusalem until they had been ‘clothed with power from on high’ (Luke 24:49). It was to be at Jerusalem—the city in which the Messianic promises were centred—that the Spirit

would be given. So they had to remain there until His outpouring. Any attempted action on their part without this endowment would render their efforts futile.

Acts 1:4–5

[Before His Ascension, Jesus commanded them], “Wait for the gift My Father promised, which you have heard Me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

John the Baptist had spoken of Jesus as the Lamb of God and the One who would ‘baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire’ (Luke 3:16). Jesus had fulfilled the first of these announcements and was soon to fulfill the second. What a great moment this would be!

a grand agenda

The prophets had always linked the coming of the Spirit with the coming of the kingdom of God. So when they heard Jesus’ promise, the disciples’ thoughts naturally went in this direction.

Acts 1:6–8

When they met together, they asked Him, “Lord, are You at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

The disciples had expected that with the Messiah’s coming the nations would be conquered and would honour and worship the LORD. Under the Messiah’s rule Israel’s centuries of oppression by foreign powers would, at last, be over. That’s one of the reasons why they were devastated after the events of the Cross. They said, “We had hoped that He was the One who was going to redeem Israel” (Luke 24:21).

The Day of God’s ultimate kingdom would surely arrive. But the timing of this was not to be the disciples’ concern. Certainly, any ideas of political liberation had to be put out of their minds. There was a great *spiritual* freedom into which they were about to enter. In this they would experience a rich foretaste of the joys of the future kingdom—and proclaim it among the nations in the name of their King!

They were to be the Messiah’s *international witnesses*, beginning from Jerusalem and then moving out to ‘the ends of the earth’. Through Israel’s Spirit-empowered proclamation, all nations would be conquered by *the love of the Father—under the liberating lordship of the Son!*

What Jesus had delighted to see tiny indications of during His ministry—among a handful of Gentiles—was now to become the entire agenda of His people. All nations would come to know the grace of God and be liberated into the worship for which they had been created!

And—like their Lord before them—the disciples would soon receive power for their magnificent task.

the 120 waiting—the twelve among them

During the days after Jesus’ Ascension there were one hundred and twenty disciples who were waiting expectantly for the Spirit’s promised coming. Not a large group, by any means. But, as had so often been the case, God was preparing a small ‘remnant’ of His people for the beginning of a new phase in His redemptive work.

Acts 1:14

They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers.

Judas, after his treachery, had committed suicide. So now a new twelfth member of the apostolic band had to be appointed. There would not always need to be twelve. But on the day that the Spirit came, the apostles’ symbolic representation of the twelve tribes of Israel had to be maintained. The gift of the Spirit was to be for the whole people of God! So Matthias—present from Jesus’ baptism by John and a witness of His resurrection—was chosen by lot to replace Judas (Acts 1:12–26).

the Day of Pentecost

Pentecost was one of the festivals of Israel during which they would celebrate God’s goodness towards them in the harvest. According to the LORD’S command through Moses, this took place fifty days after the Passover Festival—representing the time between the Passover in Egypt and God’s appearing to Israel on Mount Sinai. We will soon see the significance of the feast of Pentecost on this date.

When the Day of Pentecost arrived—ten days after the Ascension—‘the disciples were all together in one place’. Then the Father’s promise was fulfilled.

Acts 2:2–5

Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and rested on each one of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

At the creation of the world, the Spirit ‘was moving like a mighty wind over the waters’. Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light! And now, as the *new creation* was about to dawn in the experience of these disciples—and light was to fill their minds—the Spirit came again as a mighty wind. The power of heaven was coming upon them!

There was also the appearance of a *fire* burning above them that separated into tongues, resting upon each one. This was to be a purifying *fiery* baptism—one that would set their hearts aflame with the wonders of all that had been accomplished in Christ!

The Spirit of God then *filled* them all, and they spoke in languages they’d not previously known. And before they knew it they were in the streets, joyously *shouting out* the words they were given—from hearts that must have felt like they would burst!

This was greatly significant, because there were people from no less than fifteen different, ethnic groups in Jerusalem at the time. These were either Jews who—through the ‘Dispersion’¹⁶—lived outside of Israel, or converts to Judaism from among the nations, who had all come to participate in the festival. They couldn’t believe their ears!

Acts 2:11

[They said], “We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!”

¹⁶ The ‘Dispersion’ refers to the scattering of Jewish people throughout the non-Jewish world after the Babylonian destruction of the temple at Jerusalem in 587 BC.

Although these were not idolaters from among the nations, they *were*, nevertheless, *representatives* of the nations that had been created at Babel and given up to idolatry.

But how different was *this* day when God ‘came down’ among them. Here there was no confusion and frustrated communication, as at Babel. God was speaking directly and powerfully to the hearts of these people, who represented their various ethnic groups.

The disciples were so animated with joy that some onlookers thought they must be full of wine!

Peter’s message

Peter stood up and explained to the huge crowd that had gathered that what was happening had nothing to do with wine. This was what the prophet Joel had spoken about:

Acts 2:17–21

“In the last days, God says, I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.

Even on My servants, both men and women, I will pour out My Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke.

The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

What a day this was! The Spirit’s coming upon God’s people would cause such powerful ongoing effects that they could be described only by the use of Hebrew imagery (apocalyptic language), such as ‘wonders in the heaven’, ‘signs on the earth’, ‘blood and fire and billows of smoke’, ‘the sun turned to darkness and the moon to blood’.¹⁷ This is how things will be for the rest of history until the Day of the LORD—cataclysmic action among the nations!

We saw that Jesus had said, “I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled” (Luke 12:49). That fire had now fallen from heaven and would continue to blaze in every situation where the gospel is proclaimed in the power of the Spirit.

Everywhere the Spirit-given word goes, there will be all kinds of upheavals: relational, social, political, circumstantial, mental and emotional. Such will be the effects of God’s kingdom beginning to be made known among the nations—as the grace of God confronts human pride and often provokes its hostility. And yet, in the midst of the incredible drama of it all, there was to be that glorious outcome: “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” The Saviour’s victory will be theirs to enjoy forever!

This description of the Spirit’s coming brings to mind something of the awesome manifestations of God’s glory on Mount Sinai, when the LORD made His covenant with Israel through Moses.

¹⁷ Apocalyptic language is non-literal imagery that brings a powerful ‘picture-type’ revelation of some actual reality.

Exodus 19:16–18

There was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. ... Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke in a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently.”

At that time *revelation* of God’s covenant love came down from heaven to the people of God. In this way, Sinai was a foreshadowing of Pentecost. At Pentecost the Spirit came down from heaven with *revelation* of the glory of the New Covenant in Christ. And it took place with awesome effects that would continue—one way or another—wherever the word was proclaimed in His power.

Now Peter confronted the people with their heinous sin as a nation in crucifying their Messiah. Quoting from the Old Testament, he proclaimed to them the events of the Resurrection and the Ascension with great authority.

Acts 2:36–40

[He said], “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

With many other words he warned them; and he [solemnly testified to] them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”

Those who accepted His message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

What a great *harvest* there was on this Day of Pentecost!

After Israel’s dreadful sin of idolatry with the golden calf at Mount Sinai, three thousand were *slain* in one day by the Levites. But today, Peter—speaking in the name of the Great Priest, Prophet and King—saw the same number *saved from their sins* and filled with the joy of *true* worship!

the life of the kingdom in this new community

The work of the Spirit in the lives of these newly redeemed people was deep and transforming. They couldn’t hear enough of *the word* from the apostles and enjoyed intimate *fellowship* together in what the Spirit was making known to them. He was leading both the apostles and the people ‘into all the truth’. Things they had never understood were now blazing realities in their hearts and minds. They celebrated the *Lord’s Supper* within the setting of a ‘love-feast’ and took every opportunity to pray together (Acts 2:42).

The apostles were enabled to perform many wonders and signs, filling the whole community with awe (Acts 2:43). They were experiencing ‘the powers of the age to come’ (Hebrews 6:5) as the Spirit brought revelation of the King’s mighty presence among them!

And they all lived in a spirit of *generosity* towards one another. Having everything in common, they spontaneously sold property and possessions to provide for those in need among them (Acts 2:44). This may have had to do with so many being pilgrims from other lands, who were staying on to gain as much as possible from the apostles’

teaching before returning home. Those who gave, no longer felt that circumstantial security was to be found in things but rather in a good Father’s faithfulness.

Daily they met in the temple courts—continuing the new atmosphere of grace that had come into that place, when Jesus had cleansed it of injustice and taught the people each day. They all ate together in their homes with ‘glad and sincere hearts’, unable to keep themselves from praising God for all He had done. The people of Jerusalem couldn’t help but have high regard for this community of grace, one that lived in joyous humility together. And ‘the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved’ (Acts 2:46–47).

As these new believers shared their common life in Christ they were, together, *the new sanctuary*—the special dwelling place of God’s presence. THE LIFE OF EDEN HAD COME TO JERUSALEM!!!

the kingdom contested

This manifestation of the life of the kingdom, however, would not go uncontested; it was attacked in four ways.

1) the evil one struck—bringing persecution

Satan and his dark spiritual army had been observing all that had happened, and, predictably, were soon involved in stirring up *hostility* against the Lord’s servants. It was hoped that this would dampen their enthusiasm for proclamation of the word of God and unsettle them as a believing community.

One day as Peter and John were entering the temple, Peter healed a man who had been lame from birth (Acts 3). Understandably the man became extremely excited and caused quite a stir ‘walking and jumping and praising God’ in the temple courts!

A crowd quickly gathered and Peter boldly proclaimed Christ to them. Quoting the Old Testament Scriptures, He called them to *repentance* for their rejection of their Messiah. He told them that they could have their sins ‘wiped out’ and receive ‘times of refreshing from the Lord’—as they waited for Him to finally fulfill all that had been promised. This Risen One was the great, long-expected Prophet whose word they must respond to. He was the One through whom the covenant with Abraham would be fulfilled. Through Him, they, and all the nations of the earth, would be blessed.

The authorities—including the captain of the temple guard—were disturbed by Peter’s preaching and had them both put in jail.

Because of Adam’s failure to ‘guard the sanctuary’ in the beginning, Israel rightly appointed those who were to keep corruption from intruding into the temple. The tragedy was that they had sought to evict Jesus, and now His disciples, from its courts. However, with those who came to faith that day, the number of believers in Jerusalem increased to about five thousand.

The next day when Peter and John were taken before the authorities, Peter, filled with the Spirit, courageously called them also to repentance for their rejection of the Messiah. With great authority he declared that Jesus was the only One who could save them from their sins.

With this, Israel’s leaders threatened them and commanded them not to speak or teach any more in Jesus’ name.

Acts 4:19–20

But Peter and John replied, “Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you or to Him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

When they reported this to the believing community, they all raised their voices together in worship and fervent prayer.

Acts 4:29–31

[They concluded by praying], “Now Lord, consider their threats and enable Your servants to speak Your word with great boldness [by stretching out] Your hand to heal and [performing] signs and wonders through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.”

After they had prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

The place was ‘shaken’. It was just like being at Mount Sinai!

Later, Peter and the other apostles were put in jail. But during the night they were, released by an angel who told them to go into the temple courts and tell the people ‘all the words of this life’. The Lord was spurring them on to assert His authority over those who were forbidding them to speak in His name. So, at daybreak they were again proclaiming the word in the temple and were once more called before the authorities. They were flogged, ordered not to speak in Jesus’ name and released (Acts 5:17–40).

Acts 5:41–42

The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

After this attempt to unsettle and discourage them, the first thing we are told about the believing community is that they continued to claim nothing as their own and cared for the needy among them. The apostles kept on testifying to the Resurrection with *great power*; and *great grace* was upon them all! (Acts 4:32–35).

Satan had attacked, tempting Christ’s people to shrink back from suffering. But their great High Priest was interceding, the Spirit was at work—and they continued to speak of what their hearts were full of!

2) the evil one struck—bringing deceit

Here we have another attempt to destroy the work of grace in God’s world. As we’ve seen, the life that the believing community knew together in God’s presence was wonderful—like Eden. So it wasn’t long before that ‘old serpent’ craftily intruded.

This time it was a subtle attempt to bring corruption into what was a fragrant offering of worship to God: the selling of property to meet the needs of others. How Satan would delight to vandalize such a beautiful expression of the life of the kingdom.

The evil one put it into the heart of a couple named Ananias and Saphira to sell a piece of property, but to secretly hold back some of the proceeds for themselves.

However, the Spirit revealed this to Peter and he confronted Ananias. He told him that no one was under obligation to give all the gains of a sale, but that they had lied to the Holy Spirit, destroying the community’s fellowship through deception. At this, Ananias fell down dead, was carried out and buried!

Later his wife Saphira came in and was asked if the amount given was the full proceeds of their sale. She continued the lie and was also struck dead, carried out and buried with her husband!

‘Great fear seized the whole church¹⁸ and all who heard about these events’ (Acts 5:11).

Those who brought corruption into the sanctuary were *evicted*. Satan had intruded, but the Lord Himself had guarded the place of His special presence.

This had been a temptation for the couple to elevate their personal status within the community through hypocrisy, and they gave way. But others now wouldn’t. The Great King-Priest had intervened on behalf of His people, precisely according to their need.

3) the evil one struck—bringing complaint

Here, Satan attempted to pervert the lovely work of daily food distribution among the widows within the believing community. The Jewish widows from a Greek background felt that they were being overlooked and that favour was given to those from within the land of Israel. So they were stirred up to complain of injustice: “Why should they have more than us?” Whether this was a valid criticism or not is unknown. But the situation was serious—with all the marks of dark mischief upon it.

Not only was their fellowship in Christ under attack, but the apostles themselves were being *enticed* to spend their energies in dealing with disputes and administering procedural solutions—rather than ministering the word to the Lord’s people. What better way for the devil to break down the defense of the sanctuary than leaving it unguarded by the truth!

Through this situation the apostles would also be distracted from their calling to proclaim the gospel to the people of Jerusalem. Both ways, the evil one would triumph.

But again the Spirit of God was at work and gave wisdom to the apostles:

Acts 6:2–4

So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”

What excellent understanding they were given! Not only would the apostle’s ministry be preserved, but also the delicate situation at hand would have the attention of those who were ‘full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom’.

The battle was certainly on, but the Lord’s Spirit-filled servants prevailed.

4) the evil one struck—bringing death

So far there had been *trouble* by the hand of the devil. But now there would be *tragedy*—or, at least, what appeared to be that.

This would be the greatest test the believing community would face. It was almost a repeat version of what had happened to their Saviour only months before in this same city. The similarities will be evident.

¹⁸ This is the first time the word ‘church’ has been used in our series. The word refers to ‘the purposefully gathered people of God’. Much more will be said of this in Study 17, that deals with the dynamic reality of a truly redeemed community of God’s people in Christ.

Stephen was one of the seven Spirit-filled men chosen to serve the widows. He was also ‘a man full of God’s grace and power’, ‘performing great wonders and signs among the people’ (Acts 6:8).

Opposition arose again. Certain Jews began to argue with Stephen but ‘could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke’ (Acts 6:10). And so they produced *false charges* and presented him before the Jewish council, the Sanhedrin.

As accusations were brought against him, the members of the Council ‘looked intently at Stephen, and saw that his face was like the face of an angel’ (Acts 6:15).

When the high priest asked if the charges were true, he didn’t defend himself but rather recounted the story of God’s faithful dealings with Israel over the centuries (beginning with Abraham) and Israel’s unfaithfulness towards Him, right up to the present day. Then having shown that worship cannot be confined to outward temple ceremonies, he brought his detailed story to an end with a stinging rebuke:

Acts 7:51–53

[He said], “You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered Him—you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.”

The members of the council ‘were furious and gnashed their teeth at him’. This was the same kind of demonically incited fury they spewed out towards Jesus at His trial.

Acts 7:55–56

But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look,” he said, “I see heaven opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

That Great High Priest was on His feet! How He loved Stephen’s bold warrior-spirit—jealous for the honour of God. He had given His servant this vision of Himself for a reason: He would not deliver Stephen *from* suffering but would deliver him *in* it—and reveal His glory to all who were watching!

Acts 7:57–58

[The Council members] covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him.

They *evicted* Stephen from the holy city, just like His Master. And then he was enabled to die as His Lord had done:

Acts 7:59

While they were stoning Him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep.

There was one, in particular, who was watching that day: a brilliant, high-ranking young Pharisee named Saul. He had approved of Stephen’s murder. But Stephen’s Master would someday soon be his as well—and Stephen’s suffering for the kingdom of God would also become part of his own way of life.

the Jerusalem Scattering

Well, Satan had struck again. But, as always, he found himself serving the purpose of the King he loathed. It all did *seem*, of course, to be a triumph for the ravager of God’s people:

Acts 8:1

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.

The apostles had gone from house to house ‘teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah’. But now *Saul* was doing ‘house calls’ to destroy the Messiah’s people!

To see the situation truly, though, we must return to those final words of Jesus before He ascended:

Acts 1:8

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

The agenda of both Jesus and His people was still in place. Now was the King’s appointed time for all of *Judea* and *Samaria* to receive the witness of His great victory and coming kingdom!

The believing community was certainly ravaged and uprooted that day, but not silenced.

Acts 8:4

Those who were scattered preached the word wherever they went.

Acts 11:19

Those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word.

The word for ‘spreading’ in this verse could be translated ‘gossiped’. These were not necessarily ‘gifted preachers’, but they were certainly those whose mouths were full of ‘the words of life’. Gospel gossipers!

Again, how different was this scattering to the one at Babel! There was no confusion here. And these men and women were certainly not given up to false worship. They were full of the joy of their King! They had been scattered; but had also been *sent*—their hearts burning with the word they’d received from the apostles.

Jesus had taught His disciples that suffering and death would be part of the life they would know together as they pressed towards the Final Day (Luke 21:12–19). The believing community had tasted the bitterness of both now, yet had witnessed the glory of God in it all. Throughout this present age these things would be part of the ‘life of the kingdom’. There would be the delights of Eden; but these always in the midst of a *relentless battle* against the world, the flesh and the devil.

the gospel goes to Samaria

Another of the seven men appointed to care for the widows was Philip (not the apostle). He went to a city in Samaria and proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah. As

crowds of people heard what Philip said and saw the mighty signs he performed, great joy came to the city.

For a long time the people there had been strongly influenced by a sorcerer named Simon. They called him ‘the Great Power of God’. But hearing the good news of Jesus and the kingdom they believed and were baptized (Acts 8:12). Even Simon himself, believed and was baptized.

It would have been difficult for Jews to accept that the Samaritans had embraced the gospel, because they had despised them for so long as religious outcasts. So in order to have the Samaritans’ faith clearly affirmed by the apostles, the Lord withheld His gift of the Spirit from them until Peter and John came from Jerusalem and laid their hands on them.

When Simon saw the Spirit imparted through the apostles’ hands, he immediately had visions of becoming a ‘Christian power-man!’ But Peter rebuked him severely.

As Peter and John returned to Jerusalem they enjoyed proclaiming the gospel in many Samaritan villages!

the Spirit brings salvation to an African

An angel appeared to Philip and directed him to travel along a desert road. So he did and on the way met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important government official in his country. He was also a God-fearer who was returning from a time of worship in Jerusalem and was intently reading the Old Testament Scriptures as he went.

The Spirit told Philip to run up alongside the man’s chariot, and as he did he heard the Ethiopian reading from the Old Testament Scriptures, specifically Isaiah chapter 53. When Philip asked him if he understood what it meant, the man said he didn’t but was very keen to find out. So Philip explained how the passage described the sufferings of the Messiah as He bore the sins of the world. From this he proclaimed the good news of Jesus’ reign as Lord over all things and what it means for those who believe (Acts 8:28–35).

After the Ethiopian had heard the gospel he saw a body of water and declared that there was surely nothing that could prevent him—an African—from being baptized!

Then as soon as they came up out of the water, the Spirit suddenly snatched Philip away. The eunuch never saw him again, but went on his way rejoicing. His heart had been filled with the joy of the King!

Saul subdued—and sent to the nations by his Messiah

‘Meanwhile Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples’ (Acts 9:1). He had arranged to receive letters from the high priest, authorizing him to go into synagogues in Damascus and arrest any Jews who belonged to ‘the Way’. How he must have hated that name!

But before he reached Damascus the ‘seizer’ was seized!

Acts 9:3–6

Suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?”

“Who are You Lord?” Saul asked.

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” He replied. “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

His proud and defiant fury was dissolved at the word of the King!

When Saul rose from the ground he was unable to see. The brilliant Pharisee was blinded—a sign of the darkness in which he had been living.

Instead of storming into Damascus on his horse, he was led in by the hand of one of his companions. For three days he neither ate nor drank. The vision of an uncreated light brighter than the sun and a voice he could not resist, had overcome his whole being.

In the meantime, the Lord Jesus had appeared in a vision to a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. He was told that Saul was praying and had received a vision of a man named Ananias who would come to restore his sight.

Ananias was horrified; and he reminded the Lord of Saul’s brutal record.

Acts 9:15

But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is My chosen instrument to proclaim My name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for My name.”

So Ananias went. He told Saul that he was now to be healed and filled with the Holy Spirit. And as he prayed, a powerful sign took place. Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he was able to see—a sign that all his years of blindness were now over!

Acts 22:14

Then [Ananias] said, “The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from His mouth. You will be His witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on His name.”

From this moment on Saul was a joy-filled and fearless herald of the grace He had received. When he and his friends were accused of having *an insane zeal*, he could only say, “The love of Christ constrains us” (2 Corinthians 5:13–14). Like Peter and John, he could not help speaking of what he had seen and heard!

At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. And within days the Jews were out to kill him (Acts 9:20, 23).

So Saul was now no longer the persecutor of Christians. He was instead an apostle of Christ.

His commission was clear:

Acts 26:16–18

[Jesus said to him], “I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of Me. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them, to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”

Both Jews and Gentiles could enjoy the forgiveness of their sins and be *set apart* as joyous worshippers of their Maker! Having received these very things, Saul would now gladly proclaim them among the nations for the rest of his days.

Peter too, has his eyes opened

Traveling throughout Judea, Peter continued to proclaim Jesus and the kingdom of God. In one area a man was healed and two whole towns turned to the Lord (Acts 9:32–35). Then, in Joppa, he was even enabled to raise from the dead a dearly loved

believer named Dorcas—and, again, many came to faith (Acts 9:36–42). He was having a wonderful time seeing the people of Israel come to acknowledge their Messiah.

But it was while Peter was at Joppa, that he received a vision that would revolutionize his view of the nations around him.

Acts 10:11–15

He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.”

“Surely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.”

The voice came to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”

This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

Whatever the message was here, Peter was slow to grasp it! He could only see that the Lord was commanding him to do what he could never do as a faithful Jew: eat something that would make him ceremonially unclean.

But while Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, three men arrived from Caesarea looking for him. They’d been sent to him from a man named Cornelius, a centurion in the Roman Army. He had received a vision of an angel, telling him to send these men to Peter so they could bring him back with them to Caesarea.

Acts 10:19–20

[The Spirit said], “Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.”

Peter welcomed the men, who said that Cornelius was a God-fearing man and respected by all the Jewish people. They explained how an angel had told Cornelius to have Peter brought to his house so he could hear what the apostle had to say.

At that point Peter understood what the vision meant, and—against all Jewish custom—invited these Gentile men into the house as his guests. He no longer believed that eating with them would defile him.

The next day, with the three men and six fellow-believers, Peter set out for Caesarea. On arriving there, he found that Cornelius had brought together a large gathering of relatives and friends to hear him. Cornelius recounted the angelic vision he’d received and how he had responded to it immediately.

Acts 10:33

[Then he said], “Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.”

Peter began by saying how he now realized that God does not show favouritism but accepts all who seek Him truly. He then gave them a brief statement of the gospel. But when he said, “Everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins,” he was suddenly cut short.

Acts 10:44–48

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

Then Peter said, “Surely no one can stand in their way of being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

In spite of everything he had seen Jesus do and heard Him say, Peter had still not understood that the good news of the Messiah was for all people, regardless of race. But now—like Saul—his eyes had been opened!

When the apostles and others in Jerusalem heard that Peter had gone into the house of an uncircumcised person and eaten with him, some were not happy at all. But when he explained the whole story, they could only praise God for what had happened.

Acts 11:18

[They said], “So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life.”

God’s grace among the Gentiles in Antioch

We saw that those who had been scattered after Stephen’s death ‘spread the word’ wherever they went. At first this was only to Jews. But then some from Cyprus and Cyrene went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks as well. This was the beginning of a new era of proclamation among the nations!

Acts 11:21–24

The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

News of this reached the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Barnabas could see that this was an ideal situation for *Saul* to work in, so he found him and brought him back there.

Acts 11:26

For a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

the Spirit speaks—Barnabas & Saul (Paul) set apart & sent out

One day, when Barnabas and Saul were together with other teachers and prophets from the church in Antioch, a very significant event took place.

Acts 13:2–3

While they were worshipping and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

Led by the Spirit, they travelled throughout areas of Asia Minor preaching the gospel. Saul then began to be known more by the Greek version of his name, Paul. Their approach was usually to go to a synagogue and speak first of all to the Jews and God-fearing Gentiles there.

Many Jews and Gentiles came to faith, but other Jews reacted angrily and opposed them. In Pisidian Antioch Paul and Barnabas responded boldly to their rejection, saying:

Acts 13:46

“We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us:

“I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring My salvation to the ends of the earth.”

When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honoured the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

Everywhere they went there was blessing, but usually trouble as well. On one occasion Paul was stoned by the Jews and left for dead (Acts 14:19). Yet the Lord consistently confirmed the message of His grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders (Acts 14:3).

Before returning to Antioch in Syria they travelled back through the places where they had been.

Acts 14:22–23

[They strengthened the disciples], encouraging them to remain true to the faith. “We must go through [much affliction] to enter the kingdom of God,” they said. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

Arriving back in Antioch, they ‘gathered the church together and reported all that God had done’ and spoke of how ‘He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles’ (Acts 14:27).

the Jerusalem Council

Some Jews from Judea came to Antioch and began telling the Gentile believers that they must be circumcised if they were to be saved. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed with some others to go to Jerusalem and speak to the apostles and elders there (Acts 15).

Peter spoke passionately of his experience with Cornelius to prove that salvation is wholly by grace. And James (not the apostle, but Jesus’ brother), the leading elder in Jerusalem, finally gave his judgment that things should not be made difficult for the Gentiles who were turning to God. In mixed congregations, the Gentile believers were to be sensitive to some aspects of Jewish culture but not obliged to be circumcised.

And so, a potential cause of tragic division among the Lord’s international community of grace was overcome.

Here, the implications of the curtain in the temple being torn apart from top to bottom when Jesus died were now being worked out. Through the Death, Resurrection and Ascension of the Son-Lamb-King—and His Outpouring of the Spirit—the whole of the *ceremonial law* of the Old Testament had been fulfilled. Now it was the *moral law*—summarized in the ‘Ten Words’—that, alone, was binding.

Writing later to a group of Jewish and Gentile believers, Paul declared the amazing reality of this new era of grace for them both. To the Gentiles he said:

Ephesians 2:11–22

“Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” ... — remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For He, Himself, is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in His flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in Himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the Cross, by which He put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of His household.”

In a later study more will be said of the unity of Jew and Gentile within ‘the redeemed community’. It will be seen, too, how all who are united with Christ through faith are, together, His body on the earth—one body, with one Head, the Lord Jesus Christ who reigns over all things for their sake!

It will also be seen that although the Jewish people by no means embraced their Messiah as the LORD’S chosen nation should have, this would not always be so. The Scriptures seem to indicate that when the Spirit of God has brought the liberating gospel of Christ to all nations, there will be a mighty ingathering of the people of Israel—as, finally convicted and convinced, they joyously receive their Messiah and His glorious salvation through repentance and faith (Romans 11:25–32; Hosea 3:5)!

Paul’s second major journey

Sometime later Paul went out from Antioch again—this time with Silas—to see how the believers in Asia Minor (Turkey) were doing. As a result of their teaching and encouragement, the churches ‘were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers’ (Acts 16:5). In Lystra, a young disciple named Timothy joined the team. Two letters written to him by Paul a number of years later became part of the New Testament Scriptures.

From there they tried to go east into the province of Asia (Eastern Turkey), but the Holy Spirit prevented them. Then they attempted to go up north to Bithynia, but the ‘Spirit of Jesus’ wouldn’t let them go there either. So they went east again to the coastal city of Troas. They were ‘on the move’—and the Spirit was relentlessly leading them!

It was in Troas that Paul was given a vision of a Macedonian man standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16:9). Paul needed no further encouragement and got ready at once to sail over to the European continent.

Throughout Macedonia they experienced great blessing. Many ‘turned to God from idols’ (1 Thessalonians 1:9), and churches were founded in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. They also experienced the usual opposition, once being severely flogged and jailed. But in it all they knew the Lord’s own joy—and He worked mightily, making known His grace (Acts 16:22–36).

Going down to Athens, Paul was ‘provoked in his spirit’ when he saw the city ‘full of idols’. He proclaimed the gospel to a group of philosophers and called them to repentance. And, while some ridiculed, a number believed (Acts 17:16–34).

From Athens they went to Corinth. The Jews there rejected the word, although the synagogue leader and his entire household came to faith. Many Corinthians who heard the word believed and were baptized.

But it seems that after all his suffering Paul was beginning to feel uneasy in Corinth because of the abusiveness of some of the people there. So:

Acts 18:9–11

One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid, keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.” So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.

Then, before returning to his base in Antioch, he went to Jerusalem to greet the church there.

Paul’s third major journey

After spending some time in Antioch, he set off once again to strengthen the disciples in the area of Asia Minor. And after this, being led to do what the Spirit prevented him from doing previously, he went east into Asia and arrived at Ephesus.

There he came across twelve disciples of John the Baptist, who knew nothing of the Holy Spirit. Paul preached the gospel to them and baptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they received the Holy Spirit—speaking with tongues and prophesying.

In Ephesus Paul proclaimed the kingdom of God in the synagogue for three months, but when opposed, took those who had come to faith and held daily discussions—for the next two years—in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. So the word of the Lord came to Jews and Greeks all throughout Asia!

Again, there were many signs and wonders. And on one occasion—following a savage assault by dark powers that only served to confirm the authority of Christ—a number of those who had believed, publicly burned their books on sorcery. And the ‘word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power’ (Acts 19:13–20).

In Ephesus stood the great temple of Dianna, also called Artemis, her Roman name. When those who made silver shrines of the god Artemis saw that people were turning from idolatry and putting their business at risk, they stirred up a riot against Paul. After this had died down he knew he should go to Jerusalem—and on the way go back to Macedonia and Greece to encourage the Lord’s people.

Then heading for Jerusalem he called into Troas, where he’d received the ‘Macedonian call’. There, he spoke to the believers in an upstairs room till midnight, raised a young man from the dead who had fallen from an upstairs window and then continued to speak until daylight!

Concerned for the elders at Ephesus, he arranged to meet with them one last time at Miletus, a little further south. He poured out his heart to these men, declaring that he had not hesitated to proclaim to them ‘the whole counsel of God’. As shepherds they were to diligently *keep watch* over themselves and all the flock; and to be always *on guard* against the intrusion of false teaching into the believing community—the place of God’s special presence (Ephesians 2:22).

Acts 20:31–32

[He said], “Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.”

“Now I commit you to God and to the word of His grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are [set apart to worship and serve Him].”

And so, ‘compelled by the Spirit’ (v. 22) he moved on towards Jerusalem. And although warned on the way that he would be imprisoned there, he refused to resist the Spirit’s leading.

from Jerusalem to Rome

The warnings Paul had received proved to be right. After having been arrested and imprisoned—and appearing before the Jewish Sanhedrin, two governors and a king—he was, a year later, finally taken to Rome under Roman guard, where the Book of Acts concludes with him living under house arrest for two years. Here he welcomed all who came to see him. We are told:

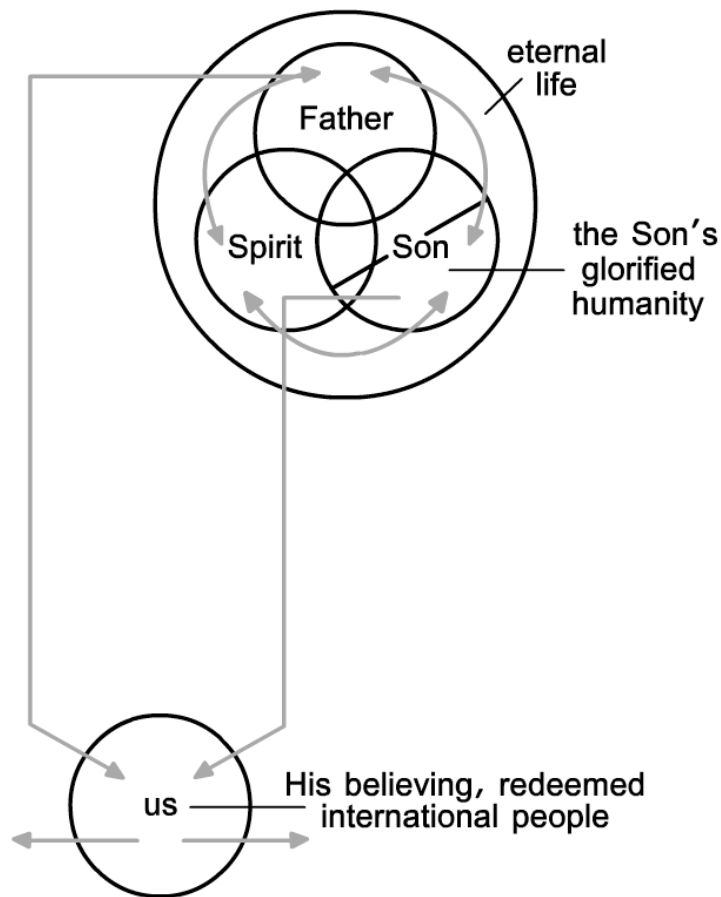
Acts 28:31

He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus—with all boldness and [unhindered]!

Yes, in this record of the Acts of the Apostles—or, maybe, better named ‘the Acts of the Poured Out Spirit’—the very last word of the last verse is “UNHINDERED”!!!

the ongoing mighty days of the Spirit

The following diagram illustrates how the Spirit is poured out in the Son’s name upon all who believe. In this, they—the redeemed, international people of God—are brought into the relational life and vocational action of their glorified Lord!



Having moved through the general narrative of the Book of Acts, we have, indeed, witnessed something of Christ’s ongoing priestly, prophetic and kingly action through His people among the nations—opposed but unhindered. This ongoing action has always been at the heart of the Father’s purpose for history. By it He is beginning to reveal His glory in all the earth!

Pentecost was the *public consecration and anointing* of the 120 people in that upper room—plus the 3,000 who were baptized that day—for the fulfillment of their priestly, prophetic and kingly vocation in Christ.

They were endowed to participate in Jesus’ ongoing *priestly* vocation: a life of worship in the offering up to the Father, in His name, of all that was placed in their hearts and minds, formed on their lips and expressed in their actions.

They were endowed to participate in His ongoing *prophetic* vocation: to speak His very word in the midst of His people and to all others.

And they were endowed with the capacity to participate in His ongoing *kingly* vocation: to exercise, in His name, a dominion over the world, the flesh and the devil.

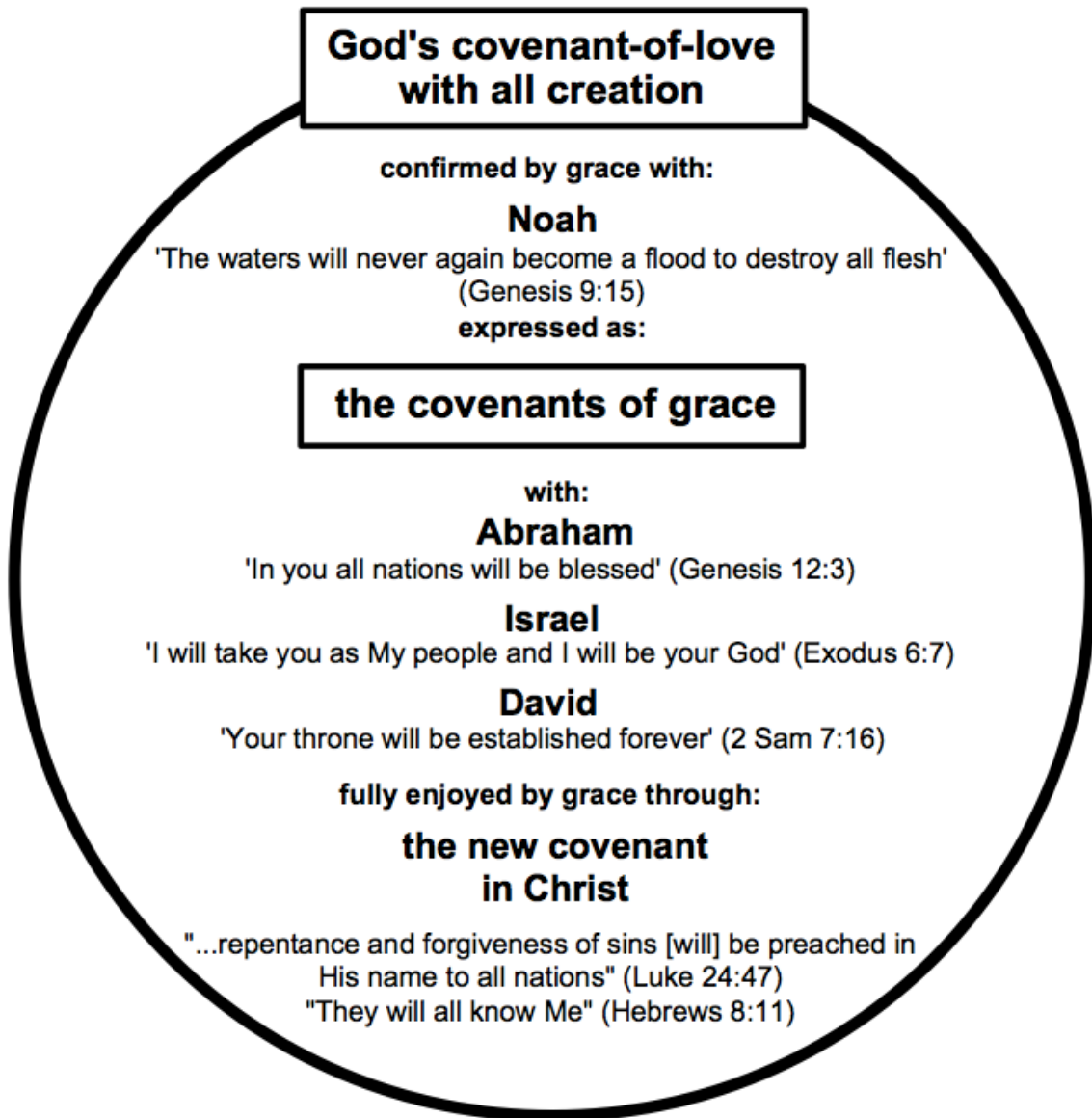
And, of course, this same consecration and anointing is for *every* person who believes, in every generation. **WHAT AN ENORMOUSLY DYNAMIC EVENT PENTECOST WAS—AND IS FOR US TODAY!!!**

Mention was made earlier of the fact that from the time of Jesus’ manifestation of the kingdom among us, history has entered into its ‘Last Days’, leading up to the Final Day to come. The Outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost was something of a ‘formal inauguration’ of this great era of redemptive action among the nations. What days those first ones were! They were—and still are to be *now*—**THE MIGHTY DAYS OF THE SPIRIT!!!**

the continuing reality of the creation covenant among those who have been united with Christ

Having come to this point in the grand Story of Redemption, we may now see how it all relates to the *creation covenant*. With the *new covenant in Christ* now established, the ‘all-encompassing creation covenant’ is ready to be brought to its ultimate fulfillment. The Study 5 diagram below shows the journey we have taken throughout our Story, as the various ‘sub-covenants’ within the creation covenant have performed their function.

5.1



In Study 8 we will see that all who have trusted in Christ’s redemptive work have been, forever, united with Him. They are no longer ‘in Adam’ but ‘in Christ’. In that study, diagrams will helpfully illustrate the nature of this amazing union—and the implications of it for all will be seen to be incredibly wonderful!

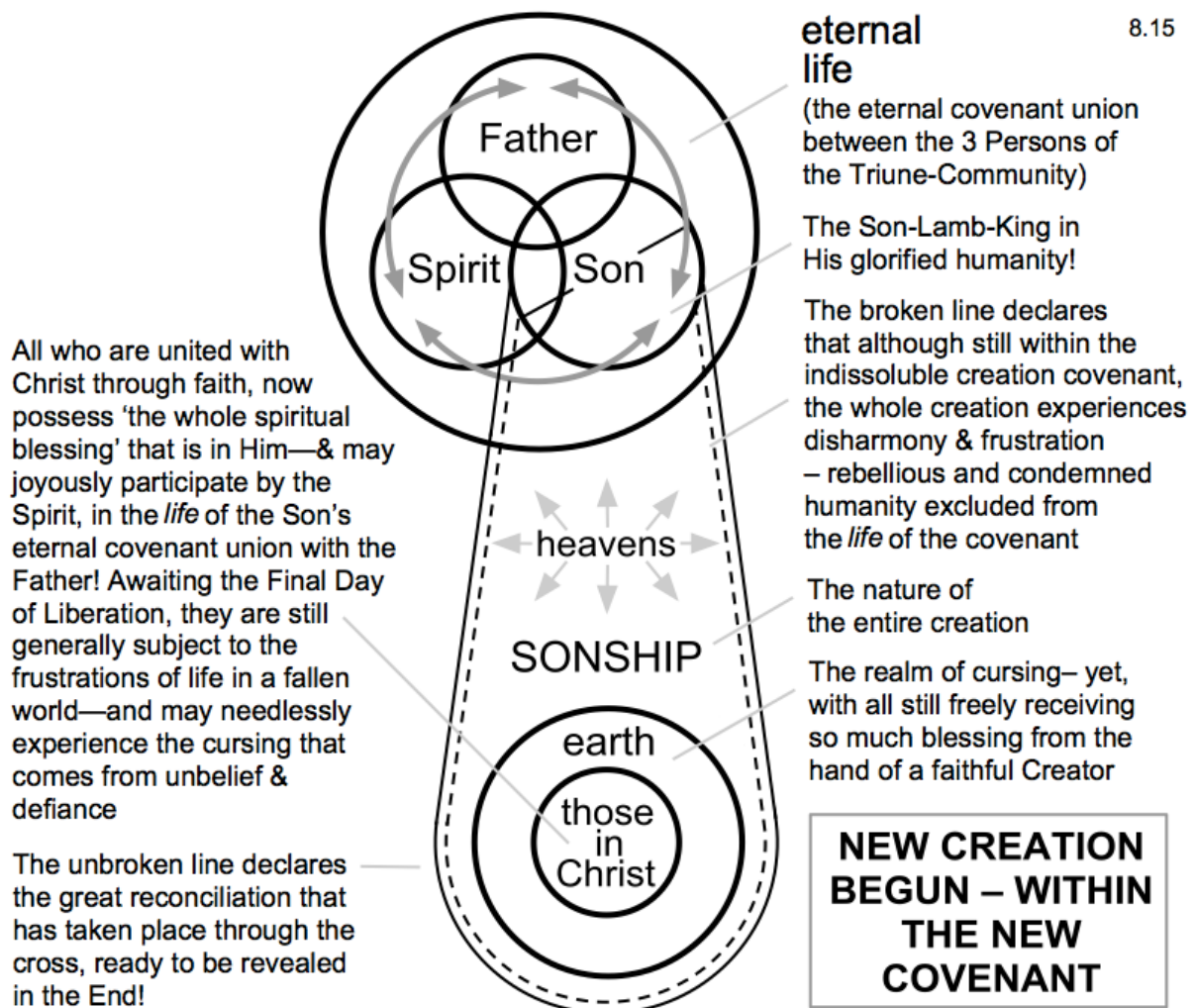
In the section of this study, entitled ‘His Wholly Identified & Propitiating Death’, we saw that through the work of the Cross an enormous change has taken place in God’s relationship to the whole creation. Through Christ, the Father has reconciled to Himself everything in heaven and on earth. What was accomplished during those three dark hours of the Cross was, indeed, of cosmic significance. That is, *the whole*

of the creation (the cosmos) was *reconciled* to God—*set up* for the great Day of its total liberation, harmonization and renewal!

In Christ—the Sin-bearing New Adam—the whole world *has been reconciled* to the Father (2 Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 1:19–20)! All who are united with Jesus—and so included in the new covenant—may *participate* in that reconciliation. Every person, in every nation, may be at peace with God through union with Christ, by faith.

Now the hope of the *whole creation*—awaiting its final liberation and renewal—is found in the One who has been made to be the ‘Head’ over it all, reigning at His Father’s right hand in His glorified humanity. Yes, there is hope *in Him* who is, Himself, the *New Creation!*

In the diagram 8.15 below, we see that the *broken line* indicating exclusion from the *life* of the creation covenant is enclosed within the *unbroken line* present in our first diagram (8.2)—where it signified a total enjoyment of the covenant by all. This unbroken line *now* illustrates what we’ve just been speaking of: the Father’s great redemptive accomplishment in and through the Son, in which He entirely reconciled all things in heaven and on earth to Himself—ready for their *complete manifestation* on the Final Day of Liberation and Renewal!



Those who have been united with Christ through faith—from among all nations—have now been given *direct participation* in the life and blessedness of His eternal covenant union with the Father. They have been blessed with ‘the whole spiritual blessing’ that is in Christ at the Father’s right hand (Ephesians 1:3). In the midst of

the onslaughts of the world, the flesh and the devil, they may nevertheless live in the light of all that the unbroken line signifies. By the Spirit, this is theirs to increasingly enjoy until the Final Day, when participation in its blessedness will be perfected forever! As mentioned above, in Study 8 the wonders of both this present and future union with Christ will be thrillingly explored.

Until the great Day of Liberation to come, the earth itself will by and large continue to be *the realm of cursing*—albeit in the midst of the ongoing goodness, mercy and ‘common grace’ of the Faithful One to all people.¹⁹ Those on the earth who are outside of ‘the new covenant community in Christ’ will rightly remain under the wrath of God, *excluded* from the life of the creation covenant and its lavishly abundant ‘spiritual blessing’.

Although those in Christ are the constant possessors of their Redeemer’s entire blessing, they are nevertheless still generally subject to the disharmony and frustration that affects all people in a fallen world. They are also, of course, subject to the cursing that comes from choosing unbelief and disobedience—unnecessarily experiencing the impact of the ‘broken line’.

Having then caught up with how our present situation relates to the creation covenant, let us now press on in our Story to that great *climax* of all history—when the grand Narrative of Redemption will be fully told and its glorious purpose totally revealed!

the Father’s place-centred, holy purpose in His work of redemption, accomplished through:

- His Final Appearing—& Consummation of all things
(ultimate victory, judgment, liberation, renewal etc.—the Son joyously handing the fulfilled kingdom over to His Father)

So here we are, at last, about to tell of the all-conclusive *climax* of human history: that great moment we’ve been anticipating all the way through the series. Everything Jesus said and did was with a view to this.

We’ve seen that when He rose from the dead, it was the Ascension that was on His mind. But this was only so, with a view to the Final Day to come—when all He has accomplished in His kingship will be revealed and enjoyed forever by His people!

The two angels who spoke to the disciples at the Ascension were keen to communicate this:

Acts 1:9–11

He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as He was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “You Galileans,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven.”

Peter—with James and John—having seen something of the glory of the future kingdom during the Transfiguration, determinedly formed this reality in the minds of the Lord’s people. For him, Jesus’ coming again in power and great glory was as

¹⁹ ‘Common grace’ is the Creator’s free and lavish blessing of sinners, apart from the ‘redemptive grace’ of salvation from sin.

certain as what they had seen with their eyes and heard with their ears on the mountain.

2 Peter 1:16–18

We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

The system of the world—set up against the kingdom of God—will never encourage us to see all things moving towards this great Goal of history. All hope is directed towards what we can accomplish ourselves, apart from our Maker. Fallen-humankind is proudly determined to achieve its own ‘grand aspirations’. And, of course, those who are set on getting what they want in life in this way, will say all they can to make the Day Jesus promised sound foolish. Peter went on to declare to those he was caring for:

2 Peter 3:3–4, 8–9

“You must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ He promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation. . . .”

But do not forget this one thing, [dearly loved] friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness.”

When the Father’s sovereign purpose for the nations of the world is complete, THERE IS NOTHING MORE CERTAIN THAN THAT THE DAY OF THE LORD WILL FINALLY COME!!!

As Jesus walked among us, His heart and mind were always set on this *glorious Goal of all things*. And it’s the same for all who—by the Spirit—have been caught up with Him in the great Story He is now fulfilling as the King of the nations!

the state of things before the Lord's Appearing

Before the Lord Jesus appears, there are certain things that will be happening in the world. In it all, His people need to exercise discernment.

Matthew 24:4–8

[Jesus said]: “Watch out that no-one deceives you. For many will come in My name claiming, ‘I am the Messiah’, and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth-pains.”

Matthew 24:10–14

At that time many will turn away from the faith and betray each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness the love of most will grow cold, but whoever stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Jesus used apocalyptic language (the eye-opening images referred to earlier) to communicate a state of great turbulence before His glorious Return.

Luke 21:25–28

There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. People will faint

with terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.

During these ‘last days’ in which we are living—from Pentecost to Jesus’ Appearing—there will be strong and escalating opposition to the purpose of God. Dark spiritual forces will be behind all kinds of developments that are exalted as supposed solutions to human need—even ones that sound extremely enlightened.

All this will, in the very end, be climaxed in one figure in particular. He will be ‘the man of lawlessness’, or a particular manifestation of ‘the anti-Christ’. This one will embody the hopes and aspirations of all who are set *against* God and His way—and will claim to be the answer to the fallen-human dilemma. In his opposition to Christ and the Father’s purpose, all that he is, says and does will be initiated and sustained by Satan.

2 Thessalonians 2:1–10

[The Day of the Lord] will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God ... [The Holy Spirit] is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the [One] who now holds it back will continue to do so till [He] is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of His mouth and destroy by the splendor of His coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing.

This man of lawlessness will claim to be the only hope for the world and will set himself up as one to be worshipped, even by the people of God.

However, he will only come when it is God’s time. Satan—in his endless, terrorist activity within the Creator’s world—is never allowed to just ‘run loose’. He can only ever go as far as the Spirit of God allows him, according to the Father’s wise purpose.

1 John 2:18, 22

As you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come ... Who is the liar? It is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is the antichrist—denying the Father and the Son.

1 John 4:3

Every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the anti-Christ, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

There will be—and in fact are today—many who are not the anti-Christ but who are driven by the same inner disposition. It is surely a wise thing not to try to identify these others as being *the* anti-Christ himself.

1 Timothy 4:1

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

Before the end there will be a great number of deceptive influences in the world—with some who have claimed to know the Lord turning aside to what is demonic.

Although Christ’s servants will recognize various signs of His Coming, it will, nevertheless, be a terrible surprise for most people.

Matthew 24:37–39, 42

[Jesus said], “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the Flood people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.”

the spiritual state of the wicked between their death and Jesus’ Appearing

The evil one has always been very keen to distract the nations from the truth of what immediately awaits them when they die, using every deceptive power at his disposal to accomplish this. But Jesus in His graphic parable in Luke 16:19–31 brings some sharp clarity to the matter.

Although in the parable He used particular imagery that His hearers could relate to, He was, nevertheless, at least indicating His belief in an impending after-death reality: one that required the sober contemplation of those whose lives were lived for passion rather than in obedience to God’s word.

The parable contrasts the ‘after-death states’ of a godless rich man and a poor but godly beggar named Lazarus, whom the rich man had neglected to care for. When the rich man died and was buried, he found himself in ‘Hades’—a word that means ‘grave’ and traditionally referred to ‘the shadowy realm of departed spirits’. The man described it as “this place of torment”; and longing for some relief from his anguish, declared, “I am in agony in this fire.”

What is clearly portrayed is a situation that is to be dreaded and avoided at all costs: a spiritual after-death state in which a truth-refusing person awaits the impending judgment of their Maker. Cut off from any form of personal wrath-aversion, they have the damning sense of a whole lifetime of human failure constantly before them—bringing a fierce and burning dread of the ‘Great Accounting’ to come.

In the parable, the godless rich man pleads with Abraham whose covenant he had wrongly assumed would secure him in his godlessness. He asked for Lazarus to be sent to his family to warn them of the horrible reality that awaited them. He was sure that this would cause them to change their mind and their ways. But Abraham told him that they already had the word of God. If that wasn’t heard and responded to, no amount of dramatic revelation would convince them, ‘even if someone rises from the dead’!

By contrast the state of godly Lazarus was one of ‘comfort’. Study 8 will speak of the blessed ‘intermediate state’ of those who have received the gift of ‘salvation in Christ’.

the final judgment of the wicked

In Study 4 we saw that the Final Day of Judgment is an awful reality that always looms on the horizon of fallen-human history; and that it is totally *right* and *proper* for such a Day to ultimately come for moral creatures made in the image of God. For although all other creatures have their particular glory as the handiwork of God, it is only human beings who will have the dignity of standing before the throne of their

Creator—to give an account of their lives. But what is the highest expression of their human dignity is for the unrepentant, their greatest terror.

a final Day of Accounting

The inevitable dawning of this Day is never far from the surface of fallen human consciousness, regardless of how much it is suppressed or denied. As said in Study 4, even the fear of circumstances in life is very much related to the fear of judgment after death. There is always the nagging sense of an ultimate accountability—with the accompanying feelings of *uneasiness* and *vulnerability*, *dread* and *doom* that this brings. The fear of judgment is behind much of the fear of both life and death.

Hebrews 9:27

People are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.

We may know that as surely as death will come to each of us, so will the final Day of Accounting. The word of God declares that there is no endless cycle of birth, death and rebirth. All created in the image of God have been given the *noble responsibility* of investing their one awesomely significant lifetime for all eternity.

Romans 2:5

[There will be] the Day of God's wrath, when His righteous judgment will be revealed.

On that Day every faulty, moral-self-assessment will give way to the infallible judgment of the Holy One. Not one unredeemed person will escape the full impact of His judgment upon their culpable human failure.

Acts 17:31

He has set a Day when He will judge the world with justice by the Man He has appointed.

At last, every act that has violated the way of a good Creator will receive its just judgment. The One who is the Saving Lamb is now also the Righteous Judge, ready for His task of finally settling the most crucial matter of history: *the establishment of justice in God's world!* Not one moment will be unaccounted for.

John 5:22–23

The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father.

John 5:28–29

A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear His voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.

Each person who has died—whether their disintegrated elements are in the dust of the earth or at the bottom of the ocean—will hear the voice of the Son commanding them to “Rise up” with their body again united with their spirit, to stand before the judgment of their Lord. All will then receive the Judge’s verdict while bearing an entire physical humanity: that form in which they were to have truly expressed the image of God.²⁰

Psalms 96:13

He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His truth.

²⁰ The Son will, of course, clearly have had restored to Him the divine powers of omniscience: that total knowledge of all people and all things.

Every person from among every nation will be faced with the reality of what their Maker created them to be: the very image and likeness of God, expressing the truth of the Eternal Sonship! Ongoing suppression of that truth will then be impossible.

Romans 2:16

... [there will be] the Day when God judges [the secret thoughts of all].

Matthew 12:36

[Jesus said], “I tell you that people will have to give account on the Day of Judgment for every careless word they have spoken.”

Every violation of any one of the Ten Commandments in desire, thought, word or deed will finally be ‘uncovered and laid bare’. Indeed, the entire life of each person will be seen in the light of ‘the high human calling’ of Study 2: the good, creational law of the Holy One.

the basis of condemnation

As was said in Study 4, those who feel that their own moral performance will be sufficient to avoid condemnation, will find themselves in a desperate state before their Judge on that Day.

Only a prior faith in the grace of God and given-ness to His way will secure anyone’s eternal destiny.

John 3:18

[Jesus said,] whoever does not believe stands condemned.

2 Thessalonians 1:8

[God] will punish those who do not know [Him] and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

To ‘obey the gospel’ is to ‘repent and believe’ (Mark 1:15); that is, to decisively acknowledge our personal failure in the face of our ‘high human calling’ and to trust in what the gospel declares—seizing upon it as the only hope of salvation.

2 Thessalonians 2:12

All will be condemned who have not believed in the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

As seen in Study 3, *unbelief* is always present in the context of pursuing *false and idolatrous delight*: what is diametrically opposed to the way of God.

We’ll see in the next couple of studies that eternal salvation can never be gained by ‘works’. It can only be *freely received* by grace. But it will also be seen that the saving grace of God does produce the *fruit of salvation* in a person’s life—and this means that there will be a ‘given-ness to His way’. A person saved through faith in Christ may certainly ‘stumble and fall’, but at core they will love God, hate what grieves Him and delight to do His will (Psalm 40:8).

Jesus made it clear that all kinds of impressive ‘Christian activity’—such as adherence to ‘Christian ideas’ or learning of Christian language and culture—will not guarantee eternal life. He said:

Matthew 7:19, 21–23

“Every tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire ...”

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that Day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy in Your name and in Your name drive out demons and in Your name perform many miracles?” Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers!’”

There will be those on the final day who have spoken and acted ‘in the name of Jesus’ but have in reality been servants of the devil. The evil one delights to counterfeit the words and works of God; but his servants never produce the fruit that comes from a life truly lived in Jesus’ Name: the kind of fruit we’ll be speaking of in the studies that are to come.

Romans 2:8–9

For those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil.

Revelation 20:8

The cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

Revelation 20:12, 15

I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books ... All those whose names were not found written in the book of life were thrown into the lake of fire.

Through such graphic symbolic language, we are told that every person who has ever lived will be judged according to what they have done. But only believers, whose names are written by grace into ‘the book of life’, will be saved from a tragic eternal future.

Terms such as ‘the fiery lake of burning sulphur’ and ‘the lake of fire’ are examples of Hebrew imagery often used when the Bible speaks of eternal punishment, following the Day of Judgment. Although such imagery is not literal, it does nevertheless communicate a sobering, eternal reality.

John 8:24

[Jesus said], “If you do not believe ... you will die in your sins.”

Yes, only faith in God’s grace and a given-ness to His way will suffice to avoid future condemnation.

the terror of that Day

To face this final judgment apart from the grace of God would be the ultimate personal tragedy.

Revelation 1:7

Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of Him.

Revelation 6:16–17

—the response of those who refuse the way of God, in the face of divine wrath preceding the Final Judgment

They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great Day of Their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?”

This ‘great Day of Their wrath’ was one that *had* to ultimately arrive—and would, indeed, be terrifying! The Scriptures rightly speak of ‘the [fierceness and] fury of the wrath of God Almighty’ in the face of ugly, self-exalting human rebellion against His glorious purpose of love (Revelation 19:15).

Romans 9:28

The Lord will carry out His sentence on earth with speed and finality.

John 3:36

Whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.

There is life only in the Son. In Study 4 we saw that those who refuse him are *given up* to a life of *endless, restless struggle*. But, tragically, for all who enter eternity still in rebellion and unbelief this experience will be greatly magnified—because then ‘strategies of aversion’ from its impact will be impossible. All will forever be abandoned to the horrible reality of their personal human disgrace.

Daniel 12:2

Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake ... to shame and everlasting contempt.

All who have not received the grace of God will rise and stand bodily before the Judge to receive *full revelation* of their condemnation. As was said in Study 4, each one will then see, totally, the vileness of their heart and the enormity of their offense against the Holy One. There will be no more self-deceit or proud pretence of righteousness. They will feel themselves to be the most loathsome of all creatures.

Such tortuous, mental anguish will immediately come to each one who stands condemned before the throne of judgment. The devastating impact of it all will fall upon them in the presence of the glorified Son-Lamb-King—who will, in Divine Love, be the Wrathful Judge, vindicating the honour of His Father’s name. And in each case, God-honouring angels looking on will acknowledge the absolute righteousness and justice of what is taking place.

Revelation 14:10

[All who have embraced the ways of the godless ‘system of this world’] will drink the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of His wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.

Ezekiel 8:18

—an old covenant declaration of judgment when the time of mercy had passed

[The LORD says,] “I will not look on them with pity or spare them.”

At the time of their exile there was no mercy for the old covenant people of God—although later they would be mercifully restored. But on that awful, ultimate Day of Judgment to come, there will forever be *no mercy* for the wicked—who have refused to ‘seek Him and reach out for Him and ... *find Him*’ (Acts 17:27).

In the midst of their misery—like the self-preoccupied rich man who found himself in Hades awaiting the Final Judgment (Luke 16)—they will remain stubbornly defiant, with the way of God continuing to have no appeal to them. Though not wanting to be in this state, they—longing for relief and craving solutions—will, nevertheless, have no true desire for their Maker.

judgment according to light received

The judgment incurred will, in fact, be in proportion to the light that each one has been given during their lifetime. Jesus told a parable about His Coming at the end of history that illustrates this, saying in conclusion:

Luke 12:47–48

The servant who knows the master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who

does not know and does things worthy of punishment will be beaten with few blows.

Both Jesus and the apostle Peter declared that those who have willfully opposed clear revelation and have then deceived others will face a much more severe judgment:

Luke 20:47

“These men will be punished most severely.”

2 Peter 2:17

“Blackest darkness is reserved for them.”

There will be no human anguish in eternity that will have any element of unfairness about it. The misery experienced by those who have died outside of Christ, will only be in proportion to the raw-guilt of their now wholly exposed human failure. Any level of torment they know will be inflicted only by their own fully sensitized conscience.

the ‘second death’

Death has long been the dark foe of fallen-humankind. But the most fearful reality of all is what the Scripture calls the ‘second death’ (Revelation 21:8): the dreaded moment of being consigned to an *existence* that knows nothing of the Eternal Life of the Son, forever. Jesus often spoke of this awful outcome:

Matthew 25:41

[The Son of Man will say,] “Depart from Me you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Matthew 25:46

They will go away to eternal punishment.

Luke 12:4–5

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear. Fear Him who after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell.

‘Hell’ is a translation of the Hebrew word ‘ghenna’. This was the name given to a rubbish dump outside of Jerusalem where there was perpetual burning and smoldering (and where centuries before horrific judgment had come upon perverse acts of idolatry). As Jesus passed by this wretched place, He clearly saw in it a true picture of the eternal wasted-ness that rebel human beings would ultimately experience. He didn’t hesitate to use the imagery of such a ghastly location to portray the destiny of all who deface and vandalize the image of God. And He gravely declared that it was He who had authority to consign a person to such a future.

Matthew 13:41–42

[Jesus said], “The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will weed out of His kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Here we have yet another shocking image of the eternal fate of the finally unrepentant: a blazing furnace that doesn’t consume the human spirit but brings it into a state of endless, bitter remorse. ‘Gnashing of teeth’ in the Scriptures always indicates a state of inner torment and rage.

2 Thessalonians 1:9

They will be punished with everlasting [ruin] and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His [transforming] might.

All who have refused to seek the ‘Living and True God’, receive His grace and do His will, shall have no part in the glorious eternal future of His people (to be described at the conclusion of this study and, particularly, in Study 8). They will be forever *shut out* and *excluded* from the blessedness they may have known.

In the final part of this study we will hear of the *renewal* of the entire creation. This will be the wonderful, eternal home of the family of God. But the godless will have no part in it. Entering a ‘second death’ they will hopelessly continue to exist, bereft of the human glory they were created for. Along with Satan and the myriads of spirit-beings that have served him (Revelation 20:10) they will be unable to ever again pervert the way of God within His creation!

Revelation 14:11

The smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night.

Mark 9:48

[Jesus said], “[In hell] their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.”

The squirming, nagging and gnawing action of the conscience—with the burning shame it brings—is so often suffered even now by all who experience unrelieved guilt. But then, when devised ‘wrath-aversion mechanisms’ are no longer possible, this will be a *relentless experience* entirely in proportion to the exposed guilt of a lifetime—without remedy.

There are those who say, “Hell is what you have here on earth.” And there is a truth in this. Just as the children of God enjoy, even now, the first fruits of eternal life by the Holy Spirit, so also, the godless—in their various states of un-averted despair—taste the first fruits of that eternal, totally un-averted condition of the finally unrepentant.

It may be said that hell is, in fact, *eternal human immaturity*: the ultimate experience of fallen-human guilt, shame, lostness and emptiness. A sober reality indeed! The salvation we have spoken of, then, is from much more than mere present, personal unhappiness. It has very much to do with our union with “Jesus, who delivers us from the coming wrath” (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

All this, casts a solemn shadow over the life of the unrighteous. Peter put it this way:

2 Peter 2:3

Their condemnation has been hanging over them.

The heartfelt lament of Moses as he considered the mindless rebellion of his people, is relevant to what is being spoken of here:

Deuteronomy 32:28–29

They are ... without sense, there is no discernment in them. If only they were wise and would understand this and discern what their end will be!

The dark and dreadful eternal future that is the final state of the wicked, truly is, most fittingly called the *second death*. Those who remain in defiant rejection of their Creator—refusing to diligently seek and decisively embrace the mercy and grace He holds out to them in this life—do have much more to fear than dying physically.

can all this *really* be the final state of those who die outside of Christ?

For many the doctrine of eternal punishment is utterly intolerable. It does, indeed, present a horrible prospect for those who ‘remain in their sins’. But Jesus, the Redeemer, spoke more about it than anyone else—never with apology and always with great gravity and urgency.

As horrible as such a future is, it must be seen in its true light. It is part of the establishment of *justice* in God’s creation. To quote Study 1 once again: “If He did not pursue the revelation of His glory in all the earth, nor finally judge those who despise it, *that would be great unrighteousness!*”

Every human being has been magnificently created in the likeness of God. Even in their fallen-ness the wicked still possess much that is *grand* and *lovely*. But the truth is that this *ugly fact* remains: they have *despised* their Creator’s glory and attempted to establish their *own* apart from Him. IN REFUSING TO WORSHIP AND SERVE OUR MAKER, WE HAVE CHOSEN TO WORSHIP AND SERVE OURSELVES AND ALMOST ANYTHING ELSE. THIS IS INEXPRESSIBLE EVIL!!!

It cannot be denied that the awful, eternal terrors described above are just and right. As we’ve seen, they are in direct proportion to the magnitude of each person’s shameful and despicable offense against the Holy One—who every moment *loves* them and gives them ‘life and breath and everything else’.

For anyone to call into question the fairness of an *eternal exclusion* of the unrighteous from the new creation to come, in fact, reveals much more about their own moral deficiency than their Maker’s. It, actually, shows a culpable failure to understand the heinous dimensions of their own sinfulness. Any accusation of unrighteousness on God’s part in this matter arises from huge self-deception— together with a hateful, guilt-charged inner-hostility towards Him.

Study 3 showed that fallen human beings have resisted the Holy Spirit’s revelation of *the Living and True God*, and have demanded that He should *leave them alone* to pursue their own way—even a way that is highly religious or ‘morally devout’. And so, in the End, He will do just that: leave them alone. ‘Hell’ will be no more, or less, than this.

the ultimate personal crisis

On the Day of Judgment—in spite of mental mechanisms that have been utilized for dealing with the past—all that a person has been determined to forget will be terrifyingly remembered. Not only individual instances, but massive patterns of behaviour that grew out of seeds of evil in the heart, which produced their ugly fruits again and again and again. Each one will know that their Creator has always loved them and desired the best for them, but that they have refused Him, as He really is. In an instant, they will realize that what they’ve always demanded (a life without Him) will be granted, forever.

an attempt to ‘soften the blow’

Some have tried to lessen the impact of this doctrine by insisting that the punishment of the finally unrepentant is not eternal at all. They assert that those who have remained in rebellion to the end will merely be *annihilated*: destroyed into an eternal non-existence.

However, as we’ve seen, the biblical images of eternal punishment don’t at all portray banishment into eternal oblivion and nothingness.²¹ And they certainly don’t allow for a situation where the most *culpably* wicked receive the same punishment as those who are less guilty. An instant obliteration for all would bring no true justice. A

²¹ The group of words used to describe the eternal ‘destruction’ of the wicked, actually speak of ruin and wastedness rather than annihilation.

‘blackest darkness’ will, indeed, be reserved for those guilty of the most culpable human evil.

The very nature of humanity created in the image of the *Eternal God* implies that all will be given eternal existence. That some in that image are to receive *eternal blessedness* means that others who persist in *perversely* bearing that same image—defiantly refusing to seek their Maker’s word and way—will, tragically, know *eternal accursedness*.

one last word

We must not be so foolish as to show contempt for the ways of our good and righteous Father-Creator-King. Fallen-human creatures are, indeed, in no fit moral state to sit in judgment upon the Holy One. We have no real capacity to determine, of ourselves, what is good and evil in such matters as these. Surely *the wisdom of divine love* is to be embraced with a lovingly responsive, creaturely humility—rather than it being proudly and foolishly challenged.

To humbly receive revelation of the Father’s wise purpose is the only path of true understanding. This requires that we be free from a hostile spirit towards Him—or from a human-centred drive to make His ways (and ourselves) more ‘acceptable’ in the eyes of others.

Those who have a joyous spirit of humility before the Awesome God of Creation, and know the absolute wonder of His redeeming grace towards us in His Son, will, soberly receive His revealed wisdom. In a spirit of deep, reverent regard, we may wholeheartedly concur with the angels who, witnessing a particularly fierce outpouring of His wrath, declared:

Revelation 16:5

“You are just in these judgments, You who are and who were, the Holy One.

Of course it goes without saying, that those who have truly come to know the mercy and grace of God in Christ, could *never* be *unmoved* and *passive* in the light of what faces the eternally lost. Fully aware of the pervasive sinfulness of their own hearts, they—with yearning desire—long for all others to be assured, with them, of the One ‘who delivers ... from the coming wrath’.

As we’ve been seeing, no one has spoken more about hell than Jesus did. But He, of course, always spoke out of the fullness of His Father’s wise and holy love. So how very important it is for this reality to never be communicated apart from that same love of Christ stirring in a speaker’s heart. And this, surely, with a holy seriousness and an almost melting tenderness, gentleness and meekness: speaking not as judges, but as servants of the Saviour who came not to condemn, but to welcome and receive.

Yes, the eternal punishment of the wicked is, indeed, an alarming and sobering doctrine. But it must be said that there *always has been and always will be great mercy and grace* for the ‘poor in spirit’: those who make no proud claim to self-attained, personal righteousness. **THERE IS NO ETERNAL CONDEMNATION, FOR THOSE WHO CRY OUT TO THE HOLY ONE TO DO FOR THEM WHAT ONLY HE CAN DO—FREELY SAVE THEM FROM THEIR SINS!!!**

the final salvation & redemption of God’s people

Although the Day of the Lord will be terrible for so many, it will also be *unimaginably glorious* for the people of grace. They are not the ‘superior ones’ of history. But they will certainly be the *supremely glad and grateful!*

All will know that the final state of the wicked is just and right—what they, themselves, should have incurred. They will be spared any debilitating grief over condemned loved ones: the kind of self-absorbed grief that results in a *bitter questioning* of the ways of God.

The absolutely contemptuous nature of humanity’s rebellion against its Creator and His way, will be horrifyingly understood—and the justice of His awful decree regarding the wicked totally affirmed. In this, REVELATION OF HIS MERCY AND GRACE TOWARDS THEM (THE REDEEMED) WILL BE AWESOMELY MAGNIFIED—ENLARGING EVERY HEART IN *SWEET, ADORING WORSHIP* OF HIM FOREVER!!!

Soon in the series amazing things of the final salvation and redemption of Christ’s people will be celebrated in much detail. However, there are some wonderful things that need to be mentioned just now, as we conclude our account of the great Story of Redemption.

For the redeemed in Christ, His Appearing at the ‘end of the age’ will be all they have ever longed for.

Titus 2:13

We [eagerly] wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 1:10

[He will come] to be glorified in His holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

When He appears, His ‘holy people’ will at last behold His *glorified humanity*. In this, in an instant, they will perceive all that they have been *set apart* to forever enjoy—and they will marvel at the sight!

2 Timothy 2:10

[They will] obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

The salvation that Jesus has accomplished for believers will be fully grasped. They will be eternally liberated into the holy happiness of His own perfect righteousness—with its glorious participation in His relational intimacy and vocational partnership with His Father!

Matthew 13:43

The righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

As the En-fleshed Eternal Son, Jesus’ focus was always upon the Father’s kingdom. And His longing was always to finally bring His people with Him into all of its pleasures: to share with them the sheer blessedness of His own eternal covenant-union with His Father. And the awesome thing is that all who inherit this will *shine like the sun with Him!*

In that later study mentioned above, when the nature of participation in the Son’s glorified humanity will be opened up more fully, one thing will become very clear: THE PROSPECT OF *BEING WITH HIM IN HIS ENJOYMENT OF HIS FATHER’S PRESENCE AND PURPOSE*, IS AT THE HEART OF TRUE, ETERNAL HOPE!!!

Revelation 7:9-10

I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no-one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language ... and they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

An uncountable number from among every nation will celebrate this salvation together!

Revelation 7:16–17

Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst ... For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their Shepherd; He will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Isaiah 25:8

The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; He will remove the disgrace of His people from all the earth.

Christ’s people may suffer much in this life as they pursue the Holy One’s purpose of love in a fallen world. But the Final Day will bring the comfort, the joy and the honour that belongs to His faithful servants—the redeemed children of God!

the ultimate promised rest

All of their days the redeemed have, indeed, battled against the system of this world, the passions of the flesh and the wily deceits and vicious onslaughts of the devil and his legions. But this will certainly come to an end. The One who has created all things to share in His peace will bring complete rest to His people. The great victory of the Cross will be endlessly manifested among them!

And so the apostle Paul is able to declare:

Romans 16:20

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

Although there has always been a present rest for God’s people—under the good yoke of the Son—there has also been an Ultimate Day of rest to come.

For the finally unrepentant ‘there will be no rest day or night’. But for the redeemed, what has been long promised will, at last, be theirs. They will enter wholly into the *rest* of their Creator!

Revelation 14:13

Then I heard a voice from heaven say, “Write: Blesséd are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “they will rest from their labour, for their deeds will follow them.”

Hebrews 4:4, 9–10

On the seventh day God rested from all His work ... There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for those who enter God’s rest also rest from their own work, just as God did from His.

Yes, for Christ’s people there will be a great ‘eternal Sabbath’ in which they will know *the perfect rest and peace* of their Triune-Maker!

the final reconciliation & renewal of all things

Before everything is finally brought into the *reconciliation* and *renewal* that was accomplished in the Cross, Resurrection, Ascension and Outpouring of the Spirit, all of the fruits of the Fall must be dissolved.

the devil’s dominion will be over, & death & decay will be no more

Satan and his demon powers, together with death and decay, will have no place in God’s creation!

Revelation 20:10

The devil, who deceived [the nations], was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur ... [to] be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Revelation 20:11–15

Then death and [the grave] were thrown into the lake of fire.

The symbolism used of the devil’s fate is used also of death and the grave. These other two great tormenters will themselves be cast into the place of judgment and exclusion. Like the devil, they will never again intrude into redeemed human experience!

Revelation 21:4

There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

the old groaning creation will be no more

That God’s good creation has been ‘subjected to frustration’ is a present reality.

Romans 8:21

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

However, at the Lord’s Appearing, all this frustration and futility will *be no more!*

2 Peter 3:10, 12

The Day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be [dissolved] by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare ... That Day will bring about the [dissolving] of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.

Hebrews 1:8, 10–12

About the Son [God] says ... “You will roll up [the earth and the heavens] like a robe, like a garment they will be changed.

THINGS ARE GOING TO BE VERY DIFFERENT IN GODS WORLD!!!

the whole creation will be renewed

Studies 5 and 6 have dealt with the theme of redemption. But we must understand what is at the heart of it. The central thing in redemption’s unfolding Story is not sin—or even grace—but *creation*. Yes. A creation ultimately *filled with the glory of God*, without any element of evil’s intrusion, is what the great Story is all about!

We have seen that all of the covenants of grace flow out of *the covenant of creation*. The *new covenant* set in place through the Cross, Resurrection, Ascension and Outpouring of the Spirit, will bring the glorious *creation covenant* to its fulfillment: A GLORIFIED HUMANITY, SHARING WITH THE SON IN THE COVENANT-FELLOWSHIP OF THE TRIUNE COMMUNITY, WITHIN AN ENTIRELY RENEWED HEAVENS AND EARTH—IN WHICH THERE IS ONLY RIGHTEOUSNESS!!!

Redemption is *from* sin, and *by* grace—but it is *for* the fulfillment of the creation covenant.

2 Peter 3:13

In keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

In the later study referred to, we will see just how the redeemed will physically participate in this renewed creation—with gloriously immortal, resurrected bodies!

Isaiah 65:17

[This is what the Sovereign LORD says], “Behold, I will create a new heavens and a new earth.”

Revelation 21:1

I saw a new heavens and earth, for the first heaven and earth had passed away. ... He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!”

Romans 8:22

The creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom [of the glory] of the children of God.

That is, the whole creation will, ultimately, be as free as glorified humanity: free to fulfill its Creator’s purpose! Everything that was declared ‘very good’ at the Creation will be able to function accordingly, forever!

all things renewed, reconciled, re-unified & re-harmonized in Christ

There will be no frustration, hostility, alienation or dis-integration *anywhere* in the creation!

Colossians 1:19–20

For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in [Christ], and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross.

As we saw earlier, by the Cross Jesus overcame the curse of sin not only for humanity but also for all of creation. From the moment of His great statement of redemptive accomplishment—‘It is finished’—the whole of creation was set up to move towards the Day of its total liberation, harmonization and renewal. Indeed, in Him—as Head of the creation—it is already so. It will just take the Final Day to bring a universal manifestation of that glorious reality!

Ephesians 1:9–10

[God] made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to [in Him, and under His Headship, unify all things in heaven and earth].

UNDER THE UNIFYING HEADSHIP OF THE SON, THE FATHER WILL ULTIMATELY ESTABLISH HIS REIGN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, PEACE AND JOY THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE CREATION!!!

Even now, the creation itself is called to rejoice in the coming Day—when the Creator-King will bring under judgment every disintegrating and disharmonizing thing in His world, and set everything right forever!

1 Chronicles 16:33

Let the trees of the forest sing, let them sing for joy before the LORD, for He comes to judge the earth.

the Conquering King’s final redemptive task

The work of redemption was completed at the Cross. But it will not be wholly *worked out* until the Son hands the *consummated kingdom* over to the Father.

1 Corinthians 15:24–26, 28

Then the end will come, when [the Lord Jesus] hands over the kingdom to God the Father after He has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For

He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death ... When He has done this, then the Son Himself will be made subject to Him who put everything under Him, so that God [the Father] may be all in all.

This will be the Son’s crowning glory on the Final Day! He will cry out with the purest, sweetest and most exalted joy, “FATHER, HERE IS YOUR GREAT KINGDOM!!!”

the Father will reign over a creation that is wholly sanctified

The entire creation will have become the sanctuary of God—THE HOLY PLACE—where He is *wonderfully present*, reigning as King—and His glory is fully revealed!

Revelation 21:3–4

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with human beings, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.”

Revelation 22:1–2

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ... [On] each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

This symbolic language declares that the Father-King and the Redeeming-Son, will supply an ‘*edenized* creation’ with pure, life-giving abundance—that will heal the nations once and for all. What incredible hope there is for the redeemed among the nations of the world!

Habakkuk 2:14

The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

In the new ‘Global Eden’ there will not be one part of the earth where the redeemed people of God will not witness, enjoy—and themselves express—His glory!

Zechariah 14:9

The LORD will be King over the whole earth.

the Son and His bride will serve the Father forever

Throughout the whole of the redemptive Story, God the Father has been moving towards the Day when He would see the Son with a glorious, holy bride—upon whom He has bestowed all the treasures of His eternal Sonship!

In Study 5 it was mentioned that what was foreshadowed in the very beginning, in the union of Adam and Eve, was in fact, the key to understanding the whole meaning of history. And now we are at last able to describe something of it!

Ephesians 5:31–32

“A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

Ephesians 5:25–27

Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing of water with the word, and to present her to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any such thing.

Revelation 19:6–9

Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: “Hallelujah! For the Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given to her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the [Lord’s holy people].)

Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’ ”

Matthew 22:2

[Jesus said], “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for His son.”

Luke 13:29

[He said], “People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.”

The redeemed from among all the nations will be the Son-Lamb-King’s bride—the one whom He has loved, and for whom He has given himself up. And, together, they will enjoy the great Wedding Feast that celebrates their eternal union with Him!

Revelation 22:12, 17

[Jesus said], “Behold, I am coming soon!” ...

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!”

Song of Songs 2:16

—*the eternal utterance of Christ’s bride!*

My Beloved is mine and I am His.

In the end it will be just as it was in the beginning: the man and his bride in the Father’s presence. There will be the New Adam as Head of His glorious wife—who will be with Him in the blessedness of His joyous, eternal covenant union with the Father and the Spirit: the Husband and His bride, *reigning together* in their Father’s kingdom!

Revelation 22:4–5

[The Father’s worshippers and servants] will see His face ... And they will reign for ever and ever.

the holy city/bride

To speak of a city/bride may seem a little confusing, but it’s not really. We need only understand that the holy city and the bride of the Son are the same thing: *the sanctified dwelling place of God*.

Revelation 21:2, 9, 26–27

I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband ... One of the seven angels ... said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel ... The glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

What a glorious city/bride this will be!

Hebrews 11:10

[Abraham] was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

Hebrews 11:13, 16

All these people were still living in faith when they died. They did not receive things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth ... Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

Abraham—together with all those in the past who did not embrace the world’s system—*longed* for this city. They looked forward to a future where God would dwell with them and they with him. And that longing was to be fulfilled gloriously through a total union with the Son-Lamb-King in the new creation!

In this, the situation at Babel will be reversed. Instead of a false unity destroyed and the people scattered, all the redeemed among the nations will be *gathered as one* into the holy city that will come down from heaven and fill the, then, *sanctified* new earth. And—in the Son—they will enjoy the intimate worship and common life they were made for—as part of the glorious new creation, forever!

All this will be the true ‘BEGIN AGAIN CITY’ that Cain was so foolishly trying to create in Genesis 4:17—just as a fallen, God-refusing humanity has been relentlessly attempting to do ever since.

a particular word of encouragement

With what has been proclaimed above, then, all that remains for us to do now is to view the final creation covenant diagram. But before this there is one other significant proclamation to be made.

We have seen that the Father’s purpose is to ultimately head up and unify all things in heaven and on earth in Christ (Ephesians 1:9–10). And we’ve seen also that the Son, will, in the end—through His mighty reign and rule as Lord of all things—have finally destroyed all dominion, authority and power and put every enemy under His feet (1 Corinthians 15:24–26).

Such proclamation not only assures the people of God of all that will finally be theirs to enjoy in the new heavens and earth; it also brings into their present lives a steadfast confidence that the creation is in the Son’s hands in every moment and situation of history, as He works out His Father’s purpose.

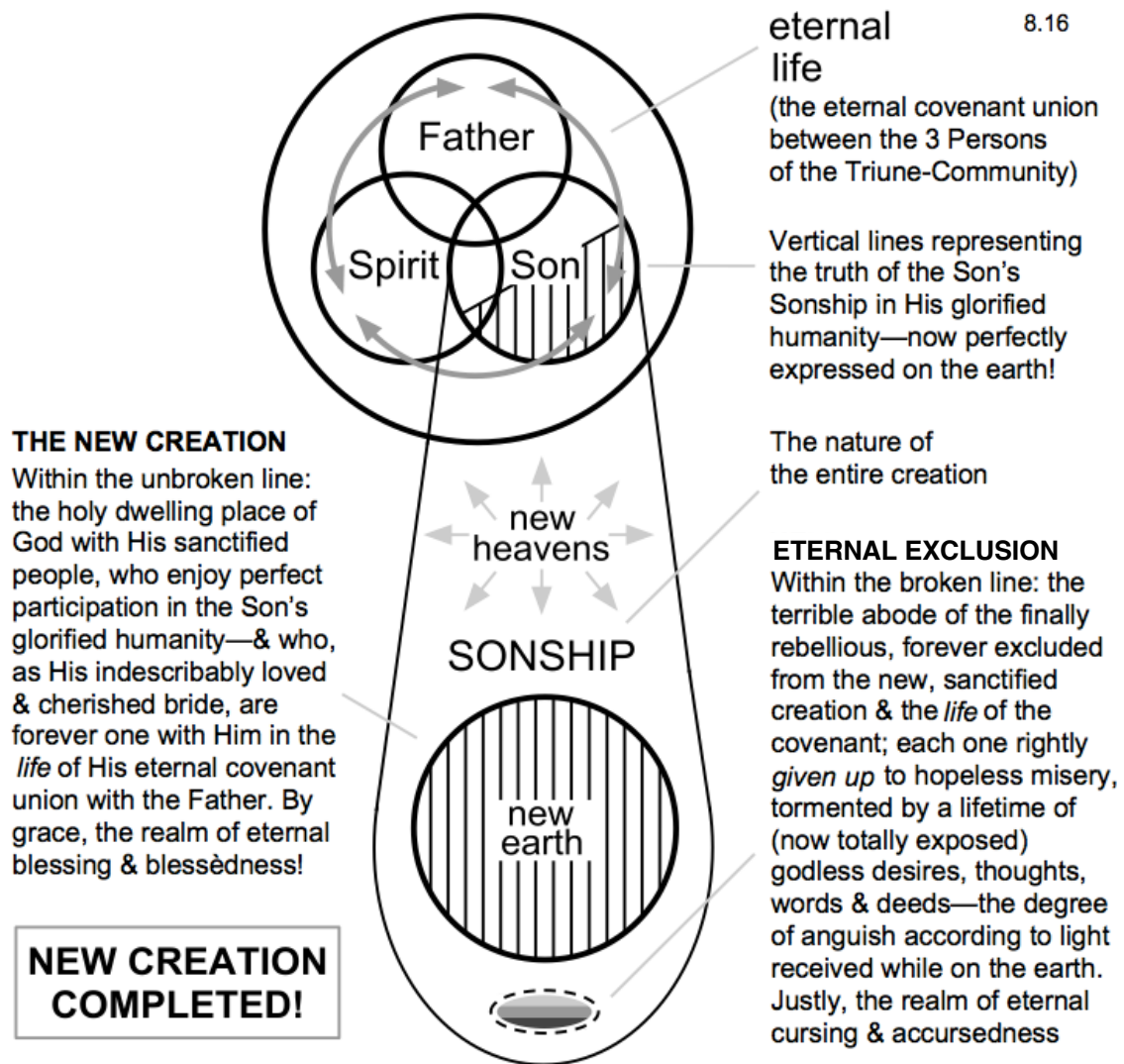
It must be said, then, that although the world we live in remains under the curse that came upon it after the Fall, this, by no means, need determine the atmosphere of anyone’s day. Through assurance of their reigning Lord, every redeemed person can be delivered from all kinds of fears and dreads that arise within life’s circumstances. They may know that their wellbeing is neither dependent upon nor under threat by various forces that are in operation, and impacting them one way or another. As other studies will show, in the midst of their struggles and sufferings in this fallen world, there is that thrilling reality of which they may be always assured: that THEIR GREAT AND GLORIOUS INTERCEDING PRIEST AND MIGHTY, CONQUERING KING IS ALWAYS PREVAILING ON THEIR BEHALF!!!

the creation covenant come to its goal

Having looked at the final reconciliation and renewal of all things in Christ, we are left without, any doubt, that the creation will most certainly be brought to the goal that is

set before it. It is, indeed, impossible that the Creator will fail to bring about His glorious purpose for a creation that He has—from the beginning—embraced within His own bonded union of love with the Son and the Spirit!

And so we are ready now to view our final creation covenant diagram.



In the light of what we have seen in this last section, the text of the diagram is quite self-explanatory.

After the Lord’s Appearing at the great climax of history, the judgment of the wicked will have taken place. This will leave all who have remained in rebellion against their Creator eternally excluded from the renewed creation and the life of the covenant. Whereas, on the other hand, those united with Christ come to inherit the blessedness of the life of the covenant within a gloriously renewed creation. And in this they will be forever one with the Son as His bride—inheritors with Him of all that is His as the Father’s eternally Treasured One. And as Study 8 will declare, they will be total participants in the glory of the Son’s intimate communion with His Father, with all of its magnificent, vocational dimensions. This will be the fulfilment of the new covenant in Christ, bringing the creation covenant, at last, to its goal!

In it all, the redeemed will enjoy what has been the Father’s purpose from before the world was made: the absolute blessedness of being forever in the Son as His holy *people*, in the holy *place* He has provided, in His holy *presence*, to fulfill the holy

purpose for which He has created them—able to bring Him holy *pleasure* in all that, together, they are and do!

SO ENDS THE GREAT STORY OF REDEMPTION!!!

CONCLUSION

What a Story has been told then, in these last two studies. From the establishment of a superb creation within the covenant love of God, to the Fall and its tragic consequences, and then the revelation of a faithful Creator’s ongoing covenantal action. And this, followed by the breathtaking appearance of the En-fleshed Eternal Son and the incredible fruits of His redemptive work—and *then*, ultimately, the glorious eternal consummation of it all at the close of history!

Now that the basic Story of Redemption has been told, we are ready to have unfolded to us more of the amazing realities that are contained within it. The implications of these for our human freedom and fullness and the wholeness of life this brings—in both time and eternity—will be enormous!

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