



REMOVING *the*
VEIL

THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL IN THE COVENANTS

DANIEL E. BERNHARDT

Removing the veil

The Glory of the Gospel in the Covenants

Removing the Veil: The Glory of the Gospel in the Covenants.

Daniel E. Bernhardt, 2022

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Table of Contents

Better Promises.....	6
The Promises of Men.....	6
A Better Ministry.....	8
Two Types of Promises.....	9
The Promises of God.....	11
The Covenant of God with Israel.....	12
The Two Covenants.....	14
Abraham and the promises of God.....	20
The Promises of God to Abraham.....	20
Defining the Promise: the Seed.....	23
Abraham in Egypt.....	23
Defining the Promise: the Seed and the Land.....	24
War and the Explanation of the Promise.....	28
A Miraculous Birth.....	31
Abraham, Justified by Faith and Not by Works.....	34
What Does it Mean to Be Justified?.....	34
Doubts.....	35
An Old Covenant.....	36
Dead Works.....	40
The Covenant of God.....	41
A Sign.....	42
Ready to Begin Receiving the Promise.....	45
The Two Covenants in Abraham.....	49
The Promise Received.....	49
The Test of Faith.....	51
Freedom in Jesus.....	54
Sarah and Hagar.....	58
The Just Shall Live by Faith.....	64
Righteousness.....	64
The Gospel and God's Righteousness.....	65
The Righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.....	65
The Work of God in Human Beings: How and Where?.....	70
From Faith to Faith.....	72
What is faith?.....	73
The Size of Faith.....	76
The Source and Increase of Faith.....	76
The Faith of Jesus.....	79
Jesus the King of Faith.....	79
How is Life Lived through the Faith of Jesus?.....	81
The Word of God and Righteousness.....	85
Israel in Egypt.....	90
What Happened to Israel after going into Egypt?.....	90
The Rise of Moses.....	94
The Purpose of God.....	100
God is a Consuming Fire.....	100
The Longing of God for Israel.....	101
The Name of God.....	105
The Divine Pattern.....	106
Religious Freedom.....	108
The Longing of God for the Pharaoh and the People of Egypt.....	109
The Hardening of the Heart.....	113
The Exodus from Egypt.....	116
A Spiritual Retreat and the Sabbath.....	116

	5
God Repeats His Name and Covenant.....	116
The Hardening of the Heart, the Plagues and Evil Angels.....	119
The Passover.....	124
The Destroyer.....	127
The Exodus.....	129
Bread from Heaven and Water from the Rock.....	134
Crossing the Red Sea.....	134
The Bitter Waters.....	137
Manna from Heaven.....	138
Living Waters.....	143
The Giving the Law of God and its Purpose.....	150
God's Sanctification.....	150
The Giving of the Law.....	152
Considerations regarding the Law.....	155
The Old Covenant, Ratified and Broken.....	162
The Ratification of the First Covenant.....	162
The Sanctuary and the Work of God.....	165
The Golden Calf.....	169
The Possessing of the Land.....	172
What Happened to Israel?.....	178
Today the Promise is Repeated.....	183
The Ministration of Death.....	188
Two Different Ministries.....	188
The Ministration of Death in King David's Life.....	192
Peter's Experience.....	194
The Glory and the Shadows.....	196
Parables.....	202
The Divine Pattern, the Key to the Covenants.....	206
The Genesis of the Old Covenant.....	212
The Fall of Man.....	212
The Sacrifice of the Old Covenant.....	218
The Sacrifice of the New Covenant.....	224
The Two Mirrors.....	229
Under the Law.....	243
Children of Abraham.....	243
The Eternity of the Law.....	248
Under Sin.....	249
The Flesh versus the Spirit.....	251
The Law as Police that Imprisons.....	253
The Law is Essential to Bring us to Christ the Redeemer.....	257
Under Grace and Forgiveness.....	261
Rich Grace.....	262
Jesus and Moses.....	263
From the Beginning.....	265
From the Foundation of the World.....	270
Defining "World".....	270
Defining What was Lost.....	271
God's Salvation in Christ.....	273
The Wisdom of God.....	275
The Sufferings of Christ.....	278
Abiding in Christ.....	283
All Our Works.....	286
Easy and Light.....	287
Looking Unto Jesus.....	291

Better Promises

A ray of sunshine was gleaming through the window, gently shining on dust particles floating in the air. They delicately seemed to play among themselves, even as they revealed the path of light. As I watched, my eyes rested on the open book on the desk. How long had I been there, lost in my gaze? How long had my mind been wandering, without really paying attention to the Bible that happened to be open?

I looked at the time – more than 50 minutes had passed. How many times had I been through this already? I would sit with the same intention – to spend time with God – yet feel trapped by other thoughts, or be captured by other books that seemed to cry out to me from the bookshelf. I was tired of not keeping my promises to God. How could I find peace and rest, and escape from this situation?

The Promises of Men

What does the Bible say about my promises? What does it say about the promises of men?

Deuteronomy 23:²¹ When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee. ²² But **if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee.** ²³ That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; *even* a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth.

This verse was devastating to me. If we make a vow or promise to God, we should hasten to keep it without “slack”, or delay. But it goes on to say, “if you forebear or abstain from vowing, there will be no sin in you.” So there is a better way when it comes to our relationship with God. It is better to not promise God anything, so there is no sin. And if God has placed in our hearts the desire to do something, let us do it without delay, knowing that it is not necessary to promise Him anything, but simply to do what He has placed in our heart. What else do the Scriptures say about this?

Ecclesiastes 5:¹ Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. ² Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter *any* thing before God: for God *is* in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore **let thy words be few.** ³ For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool’s voice *is known* by multitude of words. ⁴ When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for *he hath* no

pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. ⁵**Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay.** ⁶Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it *was* an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?

When we go to God's house, we should go to listen rather than to open our mouths. The sacrifice, offering and gifts of fools is their rash talk. The wisest man in the world says, "Let thy words be few." If we accept that we are prone to foolishness, then we would realize it is better not to make promises.

Numbers 30:³ If a woman also vow a vow unto the LORD, and bind *herself* by a bond, *being* in her father's house in her youth; ⁴And her father hear her vow, and her bond wherewith she hath bound her soul, and her father shall hold his peace at her: then all her vows shall stand, and **every bond wherewith she hath bound her soul shall stand.** ⁵But if her father disallow her in the day that he heareth; not any of her vows, or of her bonds wherewith she hath bound her soul, shall stand: and **the LORD shall forgive her,** because her father disallowed her.

We are so prone to make commitments that are not wise, or are even not ours to make, that in this verse God gives us a way out – a father can overrule the vow. We promise recklessly, or change our minds, or lack forethought of the consequences. Because of this, it is better not to promise. Paul explains our situation:

2 Corinthians 1:¹⁵ And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit; ¹⁶And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea. ¹⁷When I therefore was thus minded, **did I use lightness?** or the things that I purpose, **do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?**

Paul tells the Corinthians his plans and what he intended to do. Paul is conscious of the frailty of human words and opens a parenthesis, saying, "When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness?" He wants to make sure that his planning is not seen as being made impetuously or without due consideration. His planning is not as such, which is of the flesh: "Do I purpose according to the flesh that there should be yea yea, and nay nay?" Here we see the condition of man and in his natural state. Man is changing, ambivalent, and his word is Yes and No. This is why we are called to not make promises to God, to not commit ourselves in haste. Jesus illustrates further in the following parable:

Matthew 21:²⁸ But what think ye? A *certain* man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, 'Son, go work to day in my vineyard.' ²⁹He answered and said, 'I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.' ³⁰And he came

to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, **‘I go, sir: and went not.’** ³¹ ‘Whether of them twain did the will of *his* father?’ They say unto him, ‘The first.’ Jesus saith unto them, ‘Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. ³² For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.’

There are two kinds of men in God’s family, and while one agrees to work in God’s vineyard, his heart is at enmity with God, and in the end he doesn’t go. There’s an initial agreement to the invitation, but later that Yes turns into a No. This class is represented by the leading priests and elders¹: the pharisaic class. The other class of people appear to not accept the word of God. But after considering it, they are moved to repentance and they do God’s will. In them the word is No, then Yes. This class is represented by the publicans and prostitutes.

A Better Ministry

That morning I realized that my words, promises and efforts were clearly insufficient. My first reaction was to think that I hadn’t actually tried hard enough. I hadn’t put in all the attention, dedication and effort that God deserved. But this wasn’t a new feeling. I had already tried before to grab myself by the neck and force myself to study the word of God – and it had not worked.

Right then, I realized that I had never prayed and told God about this problem. I realized that I had a very hard time telling Him what was going on with me, and it seemed like I was deceiving myself, pretending to want to know Him more, when my heart was clearly elsewhere. Why should I hide this from Him? He already knew it. This discovery convinced me that it was better to tell Him in prayer everything that was happening to me, and to ask for help from Christ. How could Christ help me in my promises, and make His promises come true in my life?

Hebrews 8:⁶ But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

The apostle Paul emphasizes in this chapter that we have a high priest in Christ who is more than qualified for this position. He is the high priest and minister of the true tabernacle that the Lord pitched. He is not a minister according to the law of Moses to minister in the earthly sanctuary, but a minister of heavenly things.

¹ Matthew 21:23

On the other hand, there was a ministry of the priests that ministered in what was the example and shadow of heavenly things, according to what was established in the law of Moses. Christ is the mediator of a better covenant, established on better promises. This leaves us to the conclusion that there was another covenant, a worse one, established on promises which were less good. Two covenants – one with better promises, and one with worse. We tend to separate these two into the priesthood in ancient Israel of the Levites, which is somehow worse, and the priesthood of Christ in the Christian era, which is somehow better. But is that the distinction the Bible is making?

Furthermore, this raises many questions about God's promises. Does God make some promises better, and others worse? Could it be that God makes better promises for one group of people, and for another group He makes worse promises? Could it be that God had established a worse covenant with a group of people and a better covenant with another group of people? That doesn't sound right; it couldn't be. In God there are no mistakes. God makes all things very good². In fact, in reference to this very issue, we read:

Deuteronomy 32:⁴ *He is the Rock, his work is perfect: For all his ways are judgment: A God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.* ⁵ *They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: They are a perverse and crooked generation.*

God's work is perfect, all His ways are judgment, there is no iniquity in Him, He is just and right. Furthermore, what do the Scriptures say about God's dealings with different people?

Romans 2:¹¹ For there is no respect of persons with God.

Acts 10:³⁴ Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, 'Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: ³⁵ But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.'

God is no respecter of persons, but He is pleased with all those who fear Him, and works righteousness no matter what nation they're from. How then should we understand that Jesus is the mediator of a better covenant, established on better promises?

Two Types of Promises

Hebrews 8:⁷ For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. ⁸ For finding fault with them, he saith,

² Genesis 1:31

'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:'

We confirm the above: there is a worse covenant, one with blemish, which here is called the first covenant or the old covenant; on the other hand, there is a better covenant, faultless, called the second covenant, or the new covenant. And the verse says that the Lord, finding fault with them, will make a new covenant. The Lord could not make His promise a reality in them. The fault was in them, and it even seems that they were the ones who made faulty promises to God.

Hebrews 8:⁹ Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

The problem is they chose to leave the covenant God made with them, and when they did so they evidently set up another covenant. This worse covenant happened because they did not continue in God's original ideal covenant. This is the idea expressed here: "not according to the covenant that I made... because they continued not in my covenant." They replaced God's covenant with one of their own making, and God condescended to enter into their covenant. This covenant was based on man's terms and according to man's works, so according to its conditions the Lord regarded them not, and allowed them to walk in their own path.

Psalm 81:¹¹ But my people would not hearken to my voice; And Israel would none of me. ¹² So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: And they walked in their own counsels.

But the covenant that they made with God is not the one that God wants to make with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It seems that if Israel had "continued in my [God's] covenant", they would have had a new covenant experience, and been led by Christ.

In sum, Christ was made a minister, a high priest, a mediator of a better covenant. This better covenant is based on better promises, and is identified as the second covenant, or the new covenant. The people that came out of Egypt did not want to continue in the Lord's covenant, but they instead made a worse covenant, one based on worse promises, a covenant where the fault was in the men who were part of this covenant. And since it was based on worse promises, evidently these worse promises were those of men. Could this be so? Or could it be that God would make worse promises with one group of people over another? What do the Scriptures say about the word and the promises of God?

The Promises of God

In the verse that we read from Paul regarding the word of man, we see how it is contrasted with the promises of God:

2 Corinthians 1:15 And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit; 16 And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea. 17 When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay? 18 **But as God is true**, our word toward you was not yea and nay. 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, *even* by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, **but in him was yea**. 20 For **all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen**, unto the glory of God by us.

Since God is true, or faithful, Paul states that His word is not according to the flesh. All the promises of God are in Jesus Yes and Amen. Amen means “so be it”³. If we are in Christ, we are no longer in the flesh, in the Yes and No, but in the Yes and Amen. God’s word is likened to the promises of God. In Christ Jesus are found all of God’s words, and only through Him are they made a reality. God fulfils all His promises in Christ and through Christ. Seeing that the condition of the carnal man is Yes and No, we are urged to:

1 Peter 4:11 If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God; ...

If we speak, let the words spoken be according to the words of God. And how is the word of God? How are God’s promises? They are Yes and Amen – and what else?

Isaiah 55:8 For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, Neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9 For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are my ways higher than your ways, And my thoughts than your thoughts. 10 For as the rain cometh down, And the snow from heaven, And returneth not thither, But watereth the earth, And maketh it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: 11 **So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: It shall not return unto me void, But it shall accomplish that which I please, And it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.**

The thoughts and ways of man are not the thoughts and ways of God. What’s more, they’re as far away from each other as the heavens are from the earth; an enormous difference. The words, the promises of God, do not return empty. The word of God

³ 281. ἀμήν *amēn*, *am-ane’*; of Heb. or. [543]; prop. *firm*, i.e. (fig.) *trustworthy*; adv. *surely* (often as interj. *so be it*):—amen, verily.

will do what He commands, it fulfils the promise and produces fruit. There is a very clear example at the beginning of creation. God said, “Let there be light”, and there was light⁴. This is how it is with every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. He spoke, and it came to be⁵. That’s why the verse says:

Numbers 23:¹⁹ God *is* not a man, that he should lie; Neither the son of man, that he should repent: **Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?**

What God says gets done; what God speaks comes to be. His word is true and sure.

Let us then come back to our text in Hebrews. It says:

Hebrews 8:⁶But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a **better covenant**, which was established upon **better promises**. ⁷For if that **first covenant** had been **faultless**, then should no place have been sought for the **second**. ⁸For **finding fault with them**, he saith, ‘Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: ⁹Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in **my covenant**, and I regarded them not,’ saith the Lord.

The ministry of Jesus is founded upon a better covenant, and the covenant is better because it’s based upon better promises. God is not a respecter of persons, and the word of God is true, it does not return empty, and it fulfils the will of Him who sent it. And “by finding fault with them,” it is clear that He finds fault in those who left Egypt. And that fault was in the promises, because they were worse promises, fleshly promises, blemished promises. They didn’t believe God’s promises to them, and instead they made their own failed promises to God. Therefore, God promises that the time will come when He will establish with the houses of Israel and Judah a new unfaulty covenant, not like the one He made with their forefathers.

The Covenant of God with Israel

If this is so, let us look at the history of Israel in more detail, to confirm what we have just concluded. We should find the promises of God and the promises of men, and be able to see that the promises of men are worse. Let us first read the words and the promises of God with Israel:

⁴ Genesis 1:3

⁵ Psalm 33:9

Exodus 19:³ But Moses went up unto God, for the Lord had called out of the mount unto him, saying, “Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel. ⁴Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I carried you upon eagle’s wings, and have brought you unto me. ⁵Now therefore **if ye will hear my voice indeed, and keep my covenant**, then ye shall be my chief treasure above all people, though all the earth be mine. ⁶**Ye shall be unto me also a kingdom of Priests, and an holy nation.** These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.”
GNV

God emphasizes what He had *already* done for them and how He had brought them unto Himself with the intention of doing *more* for them, in them and with them. He asks them to listen to His voice⁶ and to keep the covenant, the covenant of God. The word “keep” can also be translated as “to guard, to protect, to preserve, to treasure”. This verse together with Exodus 6 is where the conditions of the covenant are stated. God does not expect any response other than Yes and Amen. God longs for it to be a response of faith. For this to be possible, they needed Christ, because in Him is the Yes and Amen.

And where did God’s people have to keep the covenant, God’s words?

Deuteronomy 11:¹⁸ Therefore shall ye lay up these my words **in your heart and in your soul**,

God’s request and plea is that they listen to His voice, His covenant as expressed in His words, and to keep it in their hearts and soul. But even more specifically, what words exactly are the covenant of God?

Exodus 34:²⁸ And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables **the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.**

The covenant of God with His people is the Ten Commandments. The first revelation is that the Ten Commandments are promises of God; they are what He wants to do in His people. God says that if they hearken to His voice, and guard (protect, treasure) His law, they will be holy people. In other words, if you hearken His voice and keep His covenant:

⁶ While the KJV translates it as “obey my voice”, the word translated as “obey” is the following:

8085. שָׁמָעַ **shâma'**, *shaw-mah'*; a prim. root; to *hear* intelligently (often with impl. of attention, obedience, etc.; caus. to *tell*, etc.): ...

1. You shall have no other gods
2. You shall not make unto you any graven image
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain
4. You shall remember the Sabbath Day (JUV)
5. Honor your father and your mother
6. You shall not kill
7. You shall not commit adultery
8. You shall not steal
9. You shall not give false witness
10. You shall not covet

The verbs are in future tense, not in the imperative (command) mood. This makes it clear that these are not orders, but rather, they are promises – they are the work God will do. The only one not in the future tense is the fifth commandment, which coincidentally is the only one with a promise. The covenant of God, the Ten Commandments, are promises; they are what God wants to do in the hearts of His people.

The Two Covenants

However, what was Israel's response? How did they react to the word and the covenant of God?

Exodus 19:⁷ And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. ⁸ And all the people answered together, and said, "**All that the LORD hath spoken we will do.**" And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

God did not ask them to promise anything, yet they promised to hearken and do. We don't know if they promised to be holy. But God had only told them to "hearken and keep" – not to "hearken and promise", nor "hearken and fulfill" or "hearken and do". Instead, they made Him promises that He did not ask for. What was the promise of the people of Israel to God? "All that the Lord has spoken we will do."

Following their human promise, God prepares them to receive the covenant, and in chapter 20 He gives the law, the Ten Commandments. This is the voice of the covenant that they were to hearken attentively to. And what was the reaction of the people to this voice and this covenant?

Exodus 20:¹⁸ And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw *it*, they removed, and stood afar off. ¹⁹ And they said unto Moses, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but **let not God speak with us**, lest we die." ²⁰ And Moses said unto the people, "Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not."

The people asked Moses for God to not speak to them anymore – precisely when God asks them to listen to His voice! But hadn't we read that they had promised God that they would hearken and do?

Deuteronomy 5:²⁷ Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto thee; and **we will hear *it*, and do *it*.**

In barely three days they broke the promise they'd made to God. We see that it's a promise of the flesh: first a Yes, then a No. Then God continues speaking directly with Moses, and He asks the people to hearken to the voice of the Angel that would keep them during the way, and to not be rebellious⁷. Moses then comes to the people of Israel with more words from God, since they did not want to hear Him anymore.

Exodus 24:³ And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, "**All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.**" ⁴ **And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD,** and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. ... ⁷ And he took **the book of the covenant,** and read in the audience of the people: and they said, "**All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient.**" ⁸ And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words."

They were evidently not paying attention to what God was saying, because they only needed to hear the word and keep it and treasure it. However, evidently still with a slave mentality, they promised that they would do all the words of Jehovah. Instead of God doing it, *they would do it*. Since when does the one who receives the promise have to be the one who fulfils it?

They then offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord. Moses reads the book of the covenant, and they again promise that they will do all the things that Jehovah had said, and that they would obey. And on the blood of sacrifices, they establish a covenant with God.

God asks them to hearken to His voice and treasure His words, and in that process, they would be made a holy people. And God gives them His covenant, the promise of the Ten Commandments. However, the people of Israel, instead of listening to the voice of God, ask to not hear it anymore, and they instead promise that *they* will do all the words of the Lord. This is how Israel leaves the covenant of God. They go on to

⁷ Exodus 23:20-21

establish their own righteousness⁸, through the law, (by their works rather than by faith), because they were the ones who were going to fulfil the promises. This is how they enter into a covenant with God, and He condescends to enter into this covenant with them.

Hebrews 8:⁸For finding fault with them, he saith, “Behold, the days come,” saith the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: ⁹**Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers** in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; **because they continued not in my covenant**, and I regarded them not,” saith the Lord.

We see two covenants in this verse. One is the covenant of God, in which the people of Israel did not remain. The other covenant is the covenant that He made with them, by accepting their faulty promises. Then God says, “I will establish... a new covenant, not like the covenant I made with their fathers.” The new covenant that He wants to establish is not the one He made with those He took out of the land of Egypt, because it later says that they did not continue in “my covenant”. The new covenant that He wants to make is still what God refers to as “my covenant” – the original intended covenant in which the Israelites didn’t stay.

The covenant that God ended up making with them He condescended to enter into it because they did not remain in the covenant of God. How did this happen? God’s words and promises are met with unbelief and distrust; and instead the people decide on their own how they will fulfil what *they think* God wants. The condition of this flawed covenant is to obey to live, because “cursed is everyone that continueth not in all the things which are written in the book of the law to do them”⁹. It is a flawed covenant because it depends on man keeping the words and promises of God. It is incredible that they should have promised that! Here we have contrasted the promises: the better promises of God, and the worse promises of man. God wanting to give them His covenant while they, on the other hand, wanting to establish their own righteousness before God.

The old covenant was inevitably doomed because the word and the promise of man is unstable. In the flesh, it is Yes and No. This is manifested in this story almost immediately – the same people who promised to do all the words of God a few days later worshiped a golden calf. What happened to the people of Israel?

Jeremiah 11:⁷For I certainly testified against your fathers, In the day of My bringing them up out of the land of Egypt -- till this day, Rising early and testifying, saying, “**Hearken to My voice,**” ⁸**And they have not hearkened**

⁸ Romans 10:3

⁹ Galatians 3:10

nor inclined their ear, And they walk each in the stubbornness of their evil heart, And I bring on them all the words of this covenant, That I commanded to do, and they did not. YLT

God pleads for them to listen to His voice. But they did not want to listen to the words of God, but rather, they went after other gods – after the imagination of their evil hearts.

This having been the experience of Israel, then, we will come back to Hebrews 8 to focus on the ministry of Christ:

Hebrews 8:10 **“For this is the covenant that I will make** with the house of Israel after those days,” saith the Lord; **“I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts:** and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: ¹¹ And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. ¹² **For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”**

Christ is the high priest, the minister of a better covenant established on better promises, which are of God. The ministry of Christ is not to fulfil the promises of men, but of God. God found fault in Israel, because they hardened their hearts, did not continue in His covenant, and sought to establish their own righteousness. He showed them their first reaction by writing the law on tables of stone, a reflection of the condition of their hearts. God gives them the tables of stone because they did not want to keep His law in their hearts.

Being that the unending calls of God to hearken to His voice fall on deaf ears, the Lord leaves them to their own ways, withdraws from them giving them their will, and promises that He will establish a new covenant, His own covenant, with the houses of Israel and Judah in the future (when they realize that their promises are empty). Thus, the first covenant, the old covenant, the one that God condescends to temporarily enter with them, was made with Israel. The second covenant, based on the promises of God, is also with the houses of Israel and Judah.

What does this new covenant, this covenant of God, consist of? It consists of God placing His law in their minds and hearts. Who makes this promise? God, who is true. Who does it? God, who is the Almighty. God is merciful with their unrighteousness and blots out their sins and iniquities. The blessings of the new covenant, then, consist in basically two things:

1. God provides for His law to be engraved in the hearts and minds of the houses of Israel and Judah, that they may walk in the ways of God and keep His commandments. This act ends up making God their God, that they may know Him, and that they may acknowledge themselves as His people.
2. God shows His mercy by forgiving their sins, iniquities and unrighteousness.

As we can see, the law – the Ten Commandments and their fulfilment – is still the center of both the old and the new covenants. The promise of eternal life is based on the same conditions both in the old as well as the new covenant, and this is perfect obedience. However, in the old covenant it is man who resolves to do, by his own power and in his own flesh, the law and promises of God. On the other hand, in the new covenant, man does not harden his heart when he listens to the voice of God, but permits and allows God to write His law in his mind and heart. Thus in the new covenant it is by grace, and man cannot boast because it is God that works, not man. That is what God wanted to do from the beginning with the people of Israel.

In the old covenant man seeks to work or execute God's righteousness in order to live. This does not make sense, since life always precedes actions. One's works are according to the life that one has. First one has to receive life from God to live and work His righteousness. Man expects to fulfil the commandments of God to receive eternal life without first receiving eternal life in his heart. On the other hand, in the new covenant, which is by faith, God's Word is heard and received, and it works its righteousness in man. He who receives the commandments of God in his heart and keeps them will manifest the righteousness of God.

Old Covenant	New Covenant
A worse covenant	A better covenant
Based on worse promises	Based on better promises
First covenant	Second covenant
Covenant with fault	Covenant without fault
The promises are from man	The promises are from God
The basis of the covenant is the Ten Commandments	The basis of the covenant is the Ten Commandments
Man promises to do the law of God	God puts His law in the heart and mind
Resistance to the voice of God	Hearkens to the voice of God
Commandments in tablets of stone	Commandments in the heart and mind
Hardening heart, heart of stone	Receptive heart, heart of flesh
Man promises in order to live	Man first receives life
Man does the work of God in order to live	By receiving life from God, man keeps the covenant
Man establishes his own righteousness	God works in man by man treasuring God's word
The covenant is with Israel	The covenant is with the house of Israel and the house of Judah

Once again I find myself at my desk with my open Bible. Now things are clearer in my mind: My word is ineffective; it is humanly impossible for me to keep my promises to God. However, I read in the Scriptures that God Himself wants to do the work of

being God in my life. He wants to put His law in my mind and heart. It is not I who has to do this, but that I only have to receive the word, hear it and keep it. Seeing it like this, and noticing all the times in which my heart has not kept His word, I read:

Hebrews 4:7 ... To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Then my prayer is lifted up:

Psalm 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; And renew a right spirit within me.

Abraham and the promises of God

Now that we've seen how worthless our promises to God are, and the experience of the people of Israel when they left Egypt, we can't help but notice that the covenant that God made with Israel is the same one that He made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Exodus 6:³ And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by *the name of God Almighty*, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. ⁴And **I have also established my covenant with them**, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.

The Promises of God to Abraham

It will be helpful to go back in time to the story of Abraham, to know how God gave him His covenant, what this covenant consisted of, and to understand how Abraham lived the words and the promises of God.

Genesis 12:¹ Now the LORD had said unto Abram, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: ²And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: ³And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." ⁴So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram *was* seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

God makes promises to Abraham, and based on these promises, God invites him to leave his land. What did these promises consist of?

- a. Get thee out of thy country, to a land that I will show thee
- b. I will make of thee a great nation
- c. I will bless thee, and make thy name great
- d. Thou shalt be a blessing. I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Their relationship was based on Abraham's faith and trust in the words and the promises of God. This is made evident in Abraham's response:

Hebrews 11:⁸ **By faith Abraham**, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, **obeyed**; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

Abraham by faith received the word and the promise of God. He was promised an inheritance, but when he went out, he didn't know where he was going – he had to hold on and keep the promise by faith. Is this related to the New Covenant and gospel of Jesus Christ?

Galatians 3:⁸ And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, **preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, 'In thee shall all nations be blessed.'** ⁹So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Who foresaw and preached unto Abraham? The Scripture. It's the Scripture that gives Abraham the good news. Christ is the Word of God¹⁰. The Lord preached the gospel to him, telling Abraham that in him all the nations of the earth would be blessed. And how was this blessing received? It was received through faith. Everyone else who believes by faith in the Scripture¹¹ is blessed together with Abraham.

The heirs of the promise are those who are in the faith. But of whom and by whom do we receive the promises?

2 Corinthians 1:¹⁹ For **the Son of God, Jesus Christ**, who was preached among you by us, *even* by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. ²⁰For **all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen**, unto the glory of God by us.

All the promises of God reach us only through Jesus and have their fulfilment in Jesus. It is in Him where the promises are a Yes. It is not possible, then, to declare that some of the promises that God makes to Abraham were temporary and others were eternal. The verse tells us that all the promises of God are Yes in Christ Jesus, so we understand that all the promises that Abraham received were to have an eternal fulfillment.

In light of this, what is the fulfilment of the good news that all the families of the earth would be blessed in Abraham? Peter explains to the listening Jews in the aftermath of the resurrection of Christ:

Acts 3:²⁵ "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, 'And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.'" ²⁶Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."

Peter explains that the Seed in which all the families of the earth would be blessed is the Son of God. The seed of Abraham is Jesus. The blessing, covenant and promise

¹⁰ John 1:1

¹¹ Romans 10:17

consists not just in that God raised His Son from the dead, but that He had sent Him so that everyone would turn from their iniquities. By receiving His Son Jesus, who brings righteousness, all kindreds of the earth are blessed.

1 Corinthians 15:²⁷ For he [the Father] hath **put all things under** his [Christ's] feet. ...

All things were put under the feet of Christ. The Father did and does everything through Christ, particularly what pertains to the great controversy between good and evil.

Colossians 1:¹⁹ For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell; ²⁰ And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, **by him to reconcile all things unto himself**; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven.

It pleased the Father, and it was His will, that Christ should reconcile all things unto Himself and to the Father, both the things on earth and the things in heaven. Where there was no peace, Christ made peace by the blood of His cross.

Ephesians 1:³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **who hath blessed us** with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places in Christ*:
⁴ According as **he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:
⁵ **Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ** to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us **accepted in the beloved**. ⁷ **In whom we have redemption** through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; ⁸ Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; ⁹ Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: ¹⁰ That in the dispensation of the fulness of times **he might gather together in one all things in Christ**, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him:

In these verses we have a multitude of evidence that it is only in Christ that the promises of God are fulfilled. The Father has blessed us in Christ, He has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, He predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, He made us accepted in the Beloved, and it is only in the Beloved that we have redemption. Everything has its fulfilment and reality in Christ, everything gathered in Him, and this was planned and designed before the world itself existed.

Acts 4:¹² **Neither is there salvation in any other**: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

It is only in Jesus Christ, and through Him, in whom we have salvation. Only in the name of the only begotten Son of God can we be saved¹².

Defining the Promise: the Seed

Armed with an arsenal of promises, Abraham left Ur, and after staying in Haran, he went on to the land of Canaan. There, the Lord once again appears to Abraham and further explains His promises to him:

Genesis 12:7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, "**Unto thy seed** will I give this land:" and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

The word "seed" is also translated as "descendants"¹³. Let us define the word "descendant" or "seed":

Galatians 3: ¹⁶Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, 'And to seeds', as of many; but as of one, '**And to thy seed', which is Christ.**

Who was the promise made to? It was made to Abraham and his Seed. What Paul is emphasizing here is that the text does not say "seeds". The promise or covenant was made to the seed or descendant, which is one. And that seed is Christ. The land, then, was promised to Christ, who is the heir of the promises. It is in Christ that Abraham came to be a participant of this promise.

Abraham in Egypt

There was a famine in the land, and Abraham went down to Egypt to live. We read in the record:

Genesis 12:11 And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, "Behold now, I know that thou *art* a fair woman to look upon: ¹²Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, 'This *is* his wife:' and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. ¹³**Say, I pray thee, thou *art* my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live** because of thee."

Here we see how the faith of Abraham in the promises wavers and fails. God had given His word. Wouldn't God therefore endeavor to keep it? Wouldn't God therefore

¹² John 3:18

¹³ TLB

make sure that Abraham would have descendants? Abraham effectively forgets what God had promised, and he places Sarah under big risk just to save his own skin. We see the manifestation, in Abraham's life, of man's carnal tendency to rely on human wisdom and works rather than God. He designs his own plan to be able to live.

We don't know if he really thought this over deeply or not, but if he thought that the Egyptians, knowing that Sarah was his wife, would be tempted to kill him so they could possess her, how much more would they take Sarah if they thought she was just his sister! And that is what happened. The testimony that had been given throughout the land of Canaan when he proclaimed the name of God to his neighbors, in his worship and in the altars that he built, did not get to be a testimony that glorified God in the land of Egypt. However, this imperfect man was the one whom God took and led to the point where he was called a friend of God¹⁴. This gives us comfort and hope in God's power to work in those who listen to Him.

God did not call Abraham because he was good, but rather because God could justify him even though he was sinful. And Abraham believed God, and the good that appeared in his life, just like in our life, is only that which God does for each sinner that receives Him.

When the Pharaoh finally discovered Abraham's deceit, he expelled him from Egypt, and the Biblical narrative tells us that he went up to Negev, and from then to Bethel.

Defining the Promise: the Seed and the Land

Abraham returned where he had lived before. The livestock of Abraham and Lot had increased to the point where the land couldn't support both of them, and there was a quarrel among Lot's and Abraham's shepherds. To maintain peace, they had to separate. And we notice Abraham's offer:

Genesis 13:⁸ And Abram said unto Lot, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we *be* brethren. ⁹**Is not the whole land before thee?** separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if *thou wilt take* the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if *thou depart* to the right hand, then I will go to the left."

We notice how peacefully Abraham offers the whole land to Lot. His generosity is based on the fact that he knew his God and the character of the promises that had been made. Even if Lot chose the best of the land, it wouldn't change Abraham's inheritance in the least bit, because by having Christ, Abraham had everything. We see that in order to solve all conflict there is nothing more effective than the presence of

¹⁴ James 2:23

Christ. In Abraham's conduct we see Christian courtesy. Because Abraham was Lot's uncle, he could have asserted his own dignity and claimed that he had first choice. The promise of the land had even been given to him. Yet Abraham revealed the true Spirit of Christ by manifesting agape¹⁵ that seeks not its own¹⁶.

Now, this exchange between Lot and Abraham did not go unnoticed by the Lord, because we read that later the Lord appears to him:

Genesis 13:¹⁴ And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: ¹⁵**For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.** ¹⁶**And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth:** so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, *then* shall thy seed also be numbered. ¹⁷ Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee."

God gives further detail to the original promise. The Lord invites him to look northward, southward, eastward and westward, and to see all the land. In Genesis 12:7, the promise of the land is for the Seed, but now Abraham is included. And the promise is not only for Abraham and Christ; it is amplified in that the seed would come to be a great multitude¹⁷. Thus the Lord declares specifically that He would make Abraham into a great nation.

How can we understand these texts in which the seed is only Christ, yet is also a great multitude? We find the answer in the following verses:

Galatians 3:²⁷ For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: **for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.** ²⁹ **And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.**

The verse says that if we are Christ's, then we are Abraham's seed or descendants, heirs according to the promise. Not being Christ's excludes us from the lineage of Abraham, and it excludes us from the promises made to Abraham.

¹⁵ God is agape (1 John 4:8), and this love of God reaches its human zenith in laying down one's life for a friend (John 15:13). However, God's love has an even greater manifestation, in that when we were enemies (Romans 5:8-10), God gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16) that we might be reconciled. In this was manifested the love of God (1 John 4:9-10), and in knowing God's agape, we are called to be like our heavenly Father (Matthew 5:44-48; 1 John 4:20-21). Thus, agape is complete self-sacrificing love towards others.

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 13:5

¹⁷ Revelation 7:9; 12:17

The verse also says, “ye are all one in Christ Jesus”. And this, by virtue of what? In that “we have been baptized into Christ” and “put on Christ”. We have received Christ in our heart. His will and mind becomes our will and mind¹⁸. In Christ we are one and we come to be part of the seed. And thus we see how the seed is promised to one; it is to Christ and to those who have put on Christ.

1 Corinthians 12: ¹²For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ. ¹³For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. ... ²⁷**Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.**

Upon receiving the same Spirit, we become members of the same body; we become one in Christ Jesus. This is a direct reference to the communion of the Spirit which we are invited to participate in¹⁹. Jesus, when praying to His Father, says:

John 17:²⁰Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; ²¹**That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us:** that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. ²²**And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:** ²³**I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one;** and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

Christ being in His disciples makes them be one in Him. It's the glory of God that unites them and makes them one. And they don't lose their individuality, but rather, the same Spirit guides them, making them of one purpose, of one mind, and of one heart. This is how the promise that we can be co-heirs with Christ is fulfilled.

There are several other points that we would like to highlight from this verse:

Genesis 13:¹⁴And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, **“Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:** ¹⁵For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. ¹⁶And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, *then* shall thy seed also be numbered. ¹⁷Arise, **walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.”**

Since Abraham had returned from Egypt and was in the land of Canaan, we could believe that the promise to Abraham to receive the land was being fulfilled right there.

¹⁸ Galatians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 2:14-16

¹⁹ 2 Corinthians 13:14

However, Stephen, just before being stoned, and filled with the Holy Spirit, said the following:

Acts 7:² And he said, “Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, ³‘And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.’ ⁴Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. ⁵And **he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when *as yet* he had no child.”**

Abraham did not receive the inheritance of the land on which he was dwelling, not even space on which to place his foot.

Exodus 6:³ And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by *the name of God Almighty*, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. ⁴And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, **wherein they were strangers.**

Abraham dwelt in that land as a pilgrim and stranger – not as an owner. The promise was that the possession of the land would be given to the seed and to Abraham simultaneously, because the text says that “he promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him”. This is in agreement with what we read in Genesis 13, where we read the same thing: “for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed”. Abraham would receive the promise of the inheritance at the same time that Christ receives it – not before that. That’s why Stephen said that Abraham did not receive any of that promise. And one might ask, what was this promise of inheritance about, then? See how Paul himself explains it:

Romans 4:¹³ For **the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed**, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

The promise of inheritance and possession to Abraham and his Seed is the promise of the whole world. It is the coming world, the restored world, the New Earth. Regarding Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and those who followed them, we read:

Hebrews 11:¹³ **These all died in faith, not having received the promises**, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ¹⁴For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. ¹⁵And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. ¹⁶**But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be**

called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. ... ³⁹And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: ⁴⁰God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

None of them received the promise of the inheritance; not one. Not Abraham, nor Isaac, nor Jacob. None of those who followed – be it Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, David, and all those who are included in the Gallery of Faith of Hebrews 11 – received the promise. The promise of God was always the inheritance of a renewed earth, of a country where sin no longer reigns. None in Christ would receive it apart from the others.

Additionally, we see the promise in Gen 13:15 says: “for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed **for ever**”. When God gave Abraham the land, it would be forever. In other words, in the promise of the inheritance of the land is the promise of eternal life. God promises eternal life in a renewed earth to Abraham. And in this chapter of Hebrews, Abraham is presented as another heir through faith, among which is also mentioned Abel, Enoch and Noah. The promised inheritance could be received only through Jesus and upon the resurrection. In this way, the gospel of the good news of salvation, the restoration of the Edenic home, the eradication of evil, the resurrection and eternal life, were preached to Abraham.

In sum, God calls Abraham and says to him: “Go out from the area of influence of Babylon and go to a land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, because the promised Seed, Christ, will come from you. And to that Seed I will give this land, everything you see, the whole land. I will give it to Him renewed. And all those who accept your Seed, Christ, and who put on Christ, will become one with Him, and to both Him and you and to the great multitude that accepts Christ, I will give eternal life and a new earth in which they will dwell forever.” That is what God promised to Abraham. That is how God preached the gospel to Abraham, centered in Christ, and that is how Abraham understood it. Jesus Himself said:

John 8:⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw *it*, and was glad.

War and the Explanation of the Promise

After some time, Lot pitched his tents closer to Sodom. Then there was a war between five kings against four kings. And in that war, Lot and the inhabitants of Sodom, along with everything they had, were taken prisoner. When Abraham heard of this, he supplied the people of his household with arms, and together with other men, Aner, Escol and Mamre, they attacked the invading kings and their armies and overcame

them, and recovered all the people that had been captured and the possessions they had lost. When Abraham was returning:

Genesis 14:¹⁸ And Melchizedek king of Salem **brought forth bread and wine:** and he *was* the priest of the most high God. ¹⁹ And he blessed him, and said, “Blessed *be* Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: ²⁰ And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand.” And he gave him tithes of all.

Melchizedek is the king of Salem, which means he is the king of peace and justice²⁰. And he’s not only a king, but also a priest of the Most High. Thus, Melchizedek is made in the likeness of the Son of God, who is, at the same time, Priest²¹ and King²² of peace and justice. And Melchizedek comes and gives Abraham what Christ gave to His disciples: bread and wine, symbols of the new covenant²³. Melchizedek does a communion service with Abraham; that bread and wine is a symbol of the body and the blood of Christ. We see that Abraham was, in his day, under a higher priesthood, a priesthood in the order of Melchizedek, to whom Abraham gave tithe and by whom he was blessed. Immediately after these things, the Lord appeared to Abraham once more:

Genesis 15:¹ After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, “Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward.”

Jesus, being the Word of the Lord, came unto Abraham in a vision and spoke, and thus we see that Abraham received the spirit of prophecy, which is the testimony of Jesus²⁴. The first thing He says is, “Fear not”, or do not fear. Why does He say this? Because Abraham was afraid. And why was Abraham afraid? Abraham had returned victorious from battle, but his thoughts were probably unsettled. Abraham had been a man of peace and had avoided conflict. Now however, the horrors of war, the killings and the violence lingered with him. Regarding the act of killing, the Scriptures say:

Genesis 4:¹³ And Cain said unto the LORD, ... ¹⁴ ... “and it shall come to pass, *that* every one that findeth me shall slay me.”

Revelation 13:¹⁰ He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: **he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword**. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

²⁰ Hebrews 7:1-2

²¹ Hebrews 7:26-28

²² John 18:33-37

²³ 1 Corinthians 11:23-25

²⁴ Revelation 19:10

When a person kills another, he can't avoid being affected by fear that someone will come and kill him. Abraham was worried about his enemies wanting vengeance against him and his family. Would the peaceful life that he had led thus far be replaced with a tempestuous future? As far as he could see, the promises from God to make of him a great nation had not been fulfilled, and he and his wife were getting too old to produce an heir. After such a big victory, a great darkness came upon him²⁵. It's in this moment of great need that God reveals Himself to him, saying, "Fear not, I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward".

Thus Christ promises Himself as a shield.

Proverbs 30:⁵ Every word of God *is* pure: He *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him.

If any part of the body is not behind the shield, that part will be devoid of protection. Christ Himself promises to stand in the way of the attacks of the enemy. This has been literally demonstrated at Calvary.

Christ also says, "I am your exceeding great reward". Christ, the reward of Abraham?! What a promise! How do the rest of the Scriptures clarify and expand this concept?

Psalm 16:⁵ The LORD *is* the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: Thou maintainest my lot.

Psalm 142:⁵ I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, 'Thou *art* my refuge *And* my portion in the land of the living.'

God is our refuge and portion. Jehovah is our inheritance. In what sense is this so?

Romans 8:¹⁶ The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: ¹⁷ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; ...

We are heirs of God because we are His children, and we become His children because we have been born into a new life by the Spirit. Being accepted in the Beloved²⁶ as co-heirs we receive His divine nature²⁷. Thus, there is now no lament for the human inheritance we could have received; upon the new birth we are made new creatures and children of the Most High.

Within this, we notice the timing of the promises. We have seen that God promises Abraham that He will give him the land. The promise of the land is a future promise.

²⁵ We are reminded of Elijah, another man of God. After having taken up the sword and killing the priests of Baal, he was also overcome by an overwhelming anguish and horror by what had happened, and almost lost his faith and hope.

²⁶ Ephesians 1:6

²⁷ 2 Peter 1:4

However, the words “fear not, I am your shield and your reward” are in the present. It is right at that moment, when God is speaking to Abraham, that Christ is the reward of Abraham. It is today that Jesus is at the door of our hearts, calling²⁸. The promise of the Spirit, the promise that Christ Himself is our reward by His Spirit, is right now, it’s today. That’s why He says, “Today if ye will hear His voice”²⁹. This brings us to the conclusion that the inheritance of His character comes first.

First we receive the earnest or the guarantee of the inheritance, which is the Holy Spirit³⁰. By receiving the Holy Spirit, He writes in our hearts the law of God, and the fruit of the Spirit is made manifest³¹, and thus we receive the inheritance of His character. The land comes after this, second in order. It is the meek that inherit the earth³². Thus, Christ is first and He says, “learn of me for I am meek ...”³³.

1 John 3:9 **Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him:** and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

The Seed of God remains in all those who receive Him, and because Christ does not sin, he who has the Seed remaining in him cannot sin. Thus, we see a source-channel relationship, with the righteousness of God being the invisible source, and the inheritance of the land being the visible manifestation of that righteousness. The reception of the Holy Spirit is the source of all the blessings of the promises of God.

Psalm 37:²⁹ The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.

A Miraculous Birth

How does Abraham respond to Christ comforting him with the words “Fear not, I am your shield and your reward”?

Genesis 15:² And Abram said, “Lord GOD, **what wilt thou give me**, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house *is* this Eliezer of Damascus?”

³ And Abram said, “**Behold, to me thou hast given no seed:** and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.”

Up until now, the words of God to His servant Abraham had been freely accepted. However, now he is tormented in this moment of depression and anguish from the horror of having taken up the sword. This is why he couldn’t accept, with absolute trust, the promise of God like he had done so before. And he asks God, “What will

²⁸ Revelation 3:20

²⁹ Hebrews 3:7, 15; 4:7

³⁰ 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5

³¹ Galatians 5:22-23

³² Matthew 5:5

³³ Matthew 11:29

you give me, seeing I go childless?” Abraham reminds God that He has not given him a son, and that his heir is a slave born in his household. In this statement, Abraham suggests adopting his servant Eliezer as a son and heir. However, he is given the assurance, in the following words, that his own son will be the heir:

Genesis 15:⁴ And, behold, the word of the LORD *came* unto him, saying, “This shall not be thine heir; but **he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels** shall be thine heir.” ⁵ And he brought him forth abroad, and said, “Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.” ⁶ And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Christ repeats the promise, giving Abraham the assurance that a son out of his own bowels would be his seed, and that this seed would be innumerable, like the stars of the heavens. Thus, once more³⁴ Christ confirms that the righteous will inherit the earth. He also confirms that the righteous are counted as descendants³⁵.

In this miraculous birth that God promised to Abraham there was a big spiritual lesson. It was miraculous because Abraham and Sarah were no longer in a physical condition to give birth. This lesson consists in the fact that of ourselves we are unable to do anything good, and specifically, we are unable to give birth to a new man³⁶. Nevertheless, that which is impossible for man is possible for God in every soul that takes hold of Him. It was through faith that the son would come; it is through faith that the spiritual life is begotten³⁷, and it is through faith that the promises and the works of righteousness are given to us.

God takes Abraham outside and shows him the stars, saying, “This is how your descendants will be, innumerable like the stars in the sky”. At that very moment, Abraham believes the Lord. And by believing the Lord, it was counted unto him for righteousness. The root of the word “believe” is the same as for the word “Amen”. Thus, we see that Abraham hears the promise of God and says Yes and Amen. He accepts and believes in the promise of Christ. The fact that Abraham accepted and received Christ is also revealed in the following verse:

1 Corinthians 1:³⁰ ... **Christ Jesus**, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and **righteousness**, and sanctification, and redemption:

Jesus Christ is the righteousness of man, and Abraham, by receiving Christ and His word, was made righteous. Paul says the following:

³⁴ Genesis 13:14-17; Galatians 3:27-29

³⁵ John 8:39

³⁶ John 3:3-16

³⁷ John 3:16-21

Philippians 3:⁸ ..., **that I may win Christ,** ⁹ **And be found in him,** not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, **the righteousness which is of God by faith:**

There is only one righteousness available to man, and this righteousness is not of the law, but through the faith of Christ. It is the righteousness that comes from God by faith in His word. In this way, once again we see the confirmation that the promises of God are in Christ and through Christ. This was the experience of Abraham at this time.

Abraham, Justified by Faith and Not by Works

What Does it Mean to Be Justified?

In the previous section we saw how Abraham was taken through a process of greater faith into greater righteousness. And what did this process consist of? We find the explanation in the following verses:

Romans 4:³For what saith the scripture? **Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.** ⁴Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. ⁵But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

What was it that Abraham believed? He believed the words of God that his sins were forgiven upon his confession. Notice how Paul describes it:

Romans 4:⁶Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom **God imputeth righteousness without works,** ⁷*Saying, 'Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.* ⁸*Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.'*

This is how God attributes righteousness to man without works; by forgiving sins and iniquities. When we see our sins and our condition, and confess them, then He can forgive us³⁸; and when we believe that God forgives us, we begin to be in the condition to believe the rest of His promises. Paul says that this was precisely the blessedness of Abraham:

Romans 4: ⁹*Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that **faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.***

To be forgiven, what did Abraham have to do? He had to do nothing, except confess his sins; in other words, he had to give his sins to the Lord, and the Lord, in exchange, gave Abraham His righteousness. That is the whole transaction. And in the forgiveness of sins, we recognize an element that forms part of the New Covenant³⁹.

³⁸ 1 John 1:9

³⁹ Hebrews 8:8-13

Doubts

Genesis 15:7 And he said unto him, "I *am* the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it." ⁸And he said, Lord GOD, "**whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?**"

Once Abraham received forgiveness, he asked a question which shows us the struggle that he was still going through, despite having just believed the Lord. Oh, Abraham! He believed that he was forgiven, but the weight of his just-forgiven sin stopped him from seeing that the rest of God's promises could be fulfilled.

As I reflect on this, I recognize this in my life as well. I see the sin there has been in my life. Despite knowing God's forgiveness, it is difficult to believe that His good promises can be fulfilled in me. Sin demolishes faith and destroys our trust in the promises of God. That is why Abraham asks, "What evidence is there that I will inherit it?"

It's incredible, isn't it? He had just said Yes and Amen, and now his doubt is verbalized. His question is: How can I see a demonstration of what I will inherit? How will I know that this is so? He was promised descendants, and he believed; he was promised the land, and he doubted. We are reminded of Peter who walked by faith on water, but when he doubted, a few seconds later he sank⁴⁰, and the Lord reproved his little faith. In these examples of our spiritual forefathers we see how "little faith" manifests itself as a Yes to certain promises, and a No to others. Also, "little faith" is manifested as a Yes to certain promises, but when circumstances change, doubts return.

The fact that this is a moment of weakness is further revealed in the same circumstances occurring to a descendant of Abraham's more than two thousand years later: An angel of the Lord came to Zechariah when he was of old age, and promised him a son.

Luke 1:18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, "**Whereby shall I know this?** for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years."

Here we have the exact same question and the exact same response – a request for a sign through the words "whereby shall I know this?" The angel's response to Zechariah reveals the condition of the man who asked for proof:

Luke 1:20 "..., **because thou believest not my words**, which shall be fulfilled in their season."

Zechariah did not believe; he doubted the words of the angel. Coming back to Abraham, when he changed from Yes and Amen to disbelief and doubt in the words

⁴⁰ Matthew 14:28-31

of God, do we not see in him the natural condition of human beings – the ever-wavering Yes and No?

An Old Covenant

With Zechariah, the sign given was that he would be unable to speak. The rebuke is stronger than to Abraham, for Zechariah should have learned from his forefather's experience. With Abraham, God condescends to enter into a covenant after the manner of man. It is because of Abraham's weakness of faith and trust in God that God makes a covenant with him, to reach His wavering child, because to Abraham His word and His promises were not enough. In Abraham's question "Whereby shall I know?", we see him pleading for a visible sign to confirm his faith. God therefore agrees to a covenant with His servant, using the common and typical forms of men to ratify their solemn contracts.

Genesis 15:⁹ And he said unto him, "Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon."¹⁰ And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not.¹¹ And when the **fowls came down upon the carcasses**, Abram drove them away.

God asks him to bring the animals, and Abraham hurries and prepares the elements of the covenant, dividing them into halves, all except the birds. In this way, God enters a covenant of sacrifice with Abraham. In this covenant He was committing His own life to fulfil the promise, because it was customary among men that if one of them broke his part of the agreement, he would submit himself to be cut into pieces. This is confirmed⁴¹ in the following words:

Jeremiah 34:¹⁸ And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, **which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me**, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof,¹⁹ The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf;²⁰ I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life: and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the **fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth.**

⁴¹ Like Israel (Psalm 79:2), at the end of time those who did not treasure the voice of the promises of God are finally given over to their own promises, in Revelation 19:17-18.

The princes, priests and people of Judah and Jerusalem made this covenant with God, walking between the parts of the calf, promising that they would free the slaves in return for some measure of respite from Nebuchadnezzar's aggression. When they broke that covenant, God told them, according to their own understanding, that they would be given up to the end they envisioned of oathbreakers.

God used this ritual knowing its importance to Abraham: the solemnity of this most ancient form of covenant-making will reassure him that God is serious about His promises. This is how God answered the question, "Whereby shall I know?" It is the evidence that God gives to Abraham to encourage his faith, to eventually bring Abraham once again into the New Covenant of trust in His promises. And in that old covenant into which God enters, He now tells him what would happen in the following years:

Genesis 15:¹³ And he said unto Abram, "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land *that is not theirs*, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; ¹⁴ And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. ¹⁵ **And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.** ¹⁶ But in the fourth generation **they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.**" ¹⁷ And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. ¹⁸ **In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: ¹⁹ The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, ²⁰ And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, ²¹ And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."**

The descendants of Abraham would dwell in a foreign land, and they would be oppressed 400 years and taken as slaves. However, God would judge the nation under which they would be submitted, and they would leave it with great riches. God tells him that he will die in peace and in a good old age. Thus, He clears up the doubts and fears that Abraham had been troubled with. He didn't need to be anxious over his future, nor over possible revenge from the nations he had defeated in the war to rescue Lot and the people of Sodom.

In the fourth generation⁴², Abraham's descendants would return to the land where he was at that moment – the land of Canaan – and they could only go when the Amorites'

⁴² The fourth generation is counted from those who entered into "that nation, whom they shall serve", because the text says "they shall come hither again". This is the lineage: Jacob, Levi, Kohath, Amram, Moses (Exodus 6:14, 16, 18, 20). Jacob, Levi and Kohath entered into Egypt (Gen 46:8, 11).

had filled their cup of iniquity. This tells us something about the land and how it can be possessed. The fact that the Amorites would be expelled from the land for their iniquity shows that the possessor of the land would be righteous. The promise to Abraham that He and his descendants would possess the land forever depended on their being righteous.

Isaiah 60:²¹ Thy people also *shall be* all righteous: They shall inherit the land for ever, ...

The righteous inherit the land forever. Who are the righteous? It is those who confess their sins and receive and accept God's forgiveness, believing His promises.

Abraham doubted whether God was capable of giving him the land. We now see that God, in order to reach the wavering faith of Abraham, seems to have reduced the promise, to make it believable to Abraham. The promise was of the whole earth forever, but now we see that the promise to the Seed is that "I have given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates", the land of the Amorites and other nations. And we ask ourselves, how should this verse be interpreted? Because this promise is as true as the previous promises.

Since the promises are always in Christ Jesus Yes and Amen⁴³, and given that the Seed of Abraham is Christ⁴⁴ and those who are in Christ, we see that the land that is promised here is being promised not only to Abraham, but first of all to Christ. The Lord says, "unto thy seed have I given this land" and many take that promise to have been received by Joshua's armies, but this is not so, even though He divided their land to them by lot⁴⁵. We are reminded of this fact by Stephen, and by Paul in his stating that the complete Gallery of Faith in Hebrews 11 "received not the promise" – they are still waiting for it⁴⁶. The Seed, which is Christ, receives the promise first, and then those who are of Christ⁴⁷.

The promise of God is still the same promise – the promise of a new earth given forever to Christ and to those who are of Christ. What, then, is the statement that would make all these verses to be true at the same time, without adding or subtracting, and by allowing Scripture to explain Scripture? Evidently, the promise of that geographical description given by the inhabitants of that time is fulfilled in the following texts:

Thus Kohath becomes the first generation, Amram the second, Moses and Aaron the third one, and the fourth generation, Moses and Aaron's children, "come hither again".

⁴³ 2 Corinthians 1:19-20

⁴⁴ Galatians 3:16

⁴⁵ Acts 13:19

⁴⁶ Hebrews 11:39; Acts 7:4-5

⁴⁷ Daniel 7:13-14, 18, 22, 27

Zachariah 14:³ Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, As when he fought in the day of battle. ⁴ **And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, Which is before Jerusalem on the east,** And the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, *And there shall be a very great valley;* And half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, And half of it toward the south. ... ⁸ And it shall be in that day, *That living waters shall go out from Jerusalem;* Half of them toward the former sea, And half of them toward the hinder sea: In summer and in winter shall it be. ⁹ **And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: In that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.**

Revelation 21:² And I John saw **the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven,** prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*"

For the promise to be more believable to Abraham in his state of doubt, God in His description limits the geographical area to the zone of Canaan. God adjusts His words for Abraham to believe, since the area from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates was part of the whole promised land, and therefore it was included in the promise. Yet, God wants Abraham to realize that this is fulfilled only through Jerusalem coming down from Heaven upon this region. Referring to Abraham's final years (when he dwelt with Isaac and Jacob), this is what Paul describes regarding Abraham's relationship to the promise of the land, and how he overcame his initial doubt:

Hebrews 11:⁸ By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. ⁹ **By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country,** dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: ¹⁰ **For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.**

Why was the land of Canaan a strange country to Abraham if it was promised him? Because he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God, unlike with any other earthly city. Thus, faith considers the current land as a foreign land, and not as part of the fulfilment of the promise, even though this is the land that is promised. It must be renewed first, and until then it is not to be claimed. On the other hand, when faith wavers, man clings to what is earthly and stops considering himself a stranger.

Matthew 24: ³⁵ Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Revelation 21:¹ And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

Dead Works

We come to the next story, with Abraham being in this first covenant, the old covenant / men's covenant condition, in which man himself makes an effort to fulfil the promises of God.

Genesis 16:¹ Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name *was* Hagar. ² And Sarai said unto Abram, "Behold now, **the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her.**" **And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.** ³ And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. ⁴ And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. ⁵ And Sarai said unto Abram, "My wrong *be* upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee." ⁶ But Abram said unto Sarai, "Behold, thy maid *is* in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee." And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face. ⁷ And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. ... ⁹ And the angel of the LORD said unto her, "Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands."

Abraham had previously shown faith in God's promise to give him a biological son⁴⁸ in contrast to his lack of faith in the promise of the land⁴⁹. Now, as time has passed and there is no son, this lack of faith expands to doubt the promise of a son. He and Sarah devise a plan to make the promise happen, and Abraham takes Hagar as a wife and she conceives Ishmael.

Genesis 16:¹⁵ And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael. ¹⁶ And Abram *was* fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.

Since God's promise was to be fulfilled in Sarah through the child of that promise, Isaac, this was undoubtedly one of the greatest mistakes in the life of Abraham.

⁴⁸ Genesis 15:4-6

⁴⁹ Genesis 15:7-8

God promised Abraham an innumerable seed. And when He promised it, it was already humanly impossible for Abraham and Sarah to have a child. Just as with the other promises, Abraham at first believes, but then he wavers, for man in himself has no certain Amen. We note that it is incredible that we would try to fulfill God's promises. Since when is a promise fulfilled by the receiver? Yet this is something that happens to this very day. What's more, the receiver's efforts to fulfil the promises actually makes it so the promiser cannot fulfill them, or at least it becomes difficult for him to. And even when what was promised apparently comes to the receiver, but by his own effort, is the promise fulfilled? Absolutely not. Rather, it is still pending for the one who made the promise. What's more, it stops the receiver of the promise from waiting for the true fulfilment, since he believes he possesses its substance. We thus see that by trying to fulfill God's promises, we are actually working against Him, making it more complicated for His will to be done.

It should already have been evident from the start that the promise would not be through a slave when God made it clear to Abraham that the promise would not be fulfilled through Eliezer. Hagar, being a mistress, would have descendants who were in slavery, not free. If Abraham had only kept the Lord's words in his heart, he would not have hearkened unto Sarah.

The Covenant of God

Abraham now had a son through Hagar, the bondwoman. And many years went by, and I imagine Sarah and him believing that God's promise had been fulfilled, regardless of the difficulties that had arisen in the home with the inclusion of another person in the marital relationship. Thirteen years after Ishmael's birth, and twenty-four years since Abraham had left Ur of the Chaldeans, the Lord once more appears to him:

Genesis 17:¹ And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, "*I am* the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. ²And **I will make my covenant between me and thee**, and will multiply thee exceedingly."

The first thing God does is to identify Himself, saying, "I am the Almighty God". He identifies Himself as the God who can do everything He decides to do; the One who can keep promises that to humans seem impossible. He is powerful enough to give a Seed to Abraham and Sarah.

Then God tells Abraham to walk before Him, that his steps might be in the light of His face. God promises that Abraham's way will be made clear, and that he will be perfect before His presence. "Perfect" has also been translated as "with integrity". God tells Abraham to walk before Him in integrity, with the wholeness of his heart, that there might not be a Yes and No, but rather, a Yes and Amen; that the entirety of his heart

might be devoted, subdued and trusting that the Almighty God is perfectly able to fulfill His promise. The Lord then says that He will do the work of His covenant that He has promised, and with this, He promises to multiply Abraham exceedingly.

Genesis 17:³ And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,
⁴“As for me, behold, **my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.** ⁵Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.”

This is God’s covenant: the promise of an innumerable seed in Christ Jesus. And as proof of that, his name would no longer be Abram, but Abraham.

Abraham means “father of multitudes”, and from now on every time anyone called him with his new name, the memory of God’s promise would come to mind, as well as the eager hope for the fulfillment of that promise.

A Sign

God then gave Abraham a physical reminder that would help him and his descendants believe:

Genesis 17:⁹ And God said unto Abraham, “Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. ¹⁰This *is* my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.”

God tells him that he and his descendants should be circumcised, a sign for future generations, so as not to repeat Abraham’s mistake. Instead of asking, “whereby shall I know?”, they could grasp the promise by faith by beholding this sign. Abraham had shown the longing to work, to do something, so God gave him a sign of the covenant, which will provide objective lessons regarding man’s true condition. It’s interesting that this is said to Abraham before declaring that Sarah will have a child, which will initially be met with skepticism, revealing the condition of man while showing that God knows what men are like.

Now, what is circumcision, and what does it mean?

Romans 4:¹ What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? ²For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God. ³For what saith the scripture? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.’

How was Abraham justified? By believing God. In fact, to clarify it even more, the verse instantly reaffirms it right after:

Romans 4:⁵ But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, **his faith is counted for righteousness.**

It does not say “he who works is justified”, but rather, he who “believes on Him who justifies the ungodly” is justified. In other words, he who realizes that he is ungodly and believes patiently that God is working in him. And Paul asks the following regarding Abraham:

Romans 4:¹⁰ How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. ¹¹ **And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:**

Faith was counted unto him for righteousness, not works. When he received the blessing of forgiveness of sins, he was justified⁵⁰, even when he was still uncircumcised. Abraham received circumcision as a sign, as a seal that in his heart he believed God, and that this was counted for righteousness before Him. In this way, circumcision becomes the sign of the new covenant, the sign or seal of righteousness by faith.

Romans 2:²⁵ For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. ²⁶ Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? ²⁷ And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? ²⁸ **For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: ²⁹ But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter;** whose praise is not of men, but of God.

This righteousness, of which circumcision is a sign, is what is required by the law of God. This means that circumcision in and of itself adds nothing if God’s law is not kept (for living the law is righteousness). In fact, we read in this text that keeping the law is the true circumcision. The Lord does not require an outward show; it requires the truth being engraved inwardly. An outward show without the truth dwelling in the heart is an abomination. But the law can be in the heart only by the power of the Lord through the Spirit. Circumcision, then, is actually the seal or sign of the righteousness of God worked by the Holy Spirit in the heart. That is what Abraham received when he believed the words and the promises of God. In this way we are sealed by the Holy

⁵⁰ Romans 4:6-9

Spirit. This is the earnest or the guarantee of the inheritance⁵¹, because it is the Spirit who brings righteousness by faith, and the land is inherited by those who possess this righteousness. Thus, circumcision was the seal of righteousness by faith received through the Holy Spirit, and at the same time it was a sign of the promised inheritance.

Now, circumcision has always been this. It has always signified righteousness in the heart, and it has had no other meaning when this righteousness has been absent. The text clearly indicates it like this:

Deuteronomy 30:⁵ And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. **6 And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart**, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

Circumcision of the heart is a work of the Lord, and it is necessary for us so we become able to love God with all our heart and all our soul. When we love and trust God fully rather than ourselves, we are able to receive His promise, His word, His commandments. Circumcision is the Holy Spirit being enabled to write the law in our hearts. All this is the work of God⁵². That's why the Scriptures say:

Romans 4:¹¹ And he received the sign of circumcision, ...

He received the circumcision as a reminder that righteousness is only by faith. And he received it as a sign in the flesh.

Ephesians 2:¹¹ ..., who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

Circumcision in the flesh made by hands was only nominal, but it wasn't the true circumcision. Now, why was Abraham given the sign of circumcision when the true circumcision is the one in the heart? It was given to him as a sign, as a reminder of the true circumcision that he was to receive. Every time that Abraham used the toilet, and every time he was intimate with Sarah, he would remember that God's promises and covenant were not by power of human flesh, but by God's power⁵³. Circumcision in the flesh would thus become a channel that would lead Abraham and his descendants to understand true circumcision, which is righteousness by faith.

Like Nicodemus, the Lord reveals to him that he must be born again⁵⁴. Like Peter, Jesus says to him that when he is converted, he should strengthen his brethren⁵⁵. Like

⁵¹ Ephesians 1:14

⁵² John 6:29

⁵³ Zechariah 4:6

⁵⁴ John 3:3

⁵⁵ Luke 22:31-32

Peter and Nicodemus, Abraham was not conscious of his true condition. Just like the people of Israel, to whom God gives the law in tablets of stone in order to reveal the hardness of their hearts and God's intention to write the law in their hearts, God also gives Abraham the circumcision as a revelation of a heart that was still not sensitive enough to the impressions of the Spirit of God for the Lord to be able to write these promises in his heart. This way, circumcision becomes a declaration of the condition of Abraham, and of man, and a sign of what God wants to do in His children.

By affirming this, are we contradicting the words of Paul that circumcision was given to Abraham as a sign of the righteousness by faith he had already received? Not at all. Let us remember that when God promised Abraham seed like the stars, Abraham believed Him, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. As long as Abraham believed God, he would be the possessor of that righteousness of God which is by the faith of Jesus. But as we have seen, Abraham after this doubted God's promises, and this doubt was manifested in the attempt of the flesh to fulfill them. After this, God gave Abraham the sign of circumcision, which pointed both to the righteousness by faith which he once had, and to his current need for it. Abraham needed his faith to be perfected to the point where he could fully trust in the word of God and live only from it. Circumcision was, then, a reminder of a beginning in the Spirit which had been substituted by an attempt to be made perfect in the flesh⁵⁶. Abraham needed to repudiate the flesh and return to the Spirit, believing and depending on the word of God just as it had been given to him. Jesus clarifies that it is His words that are spirit and life⁵⁷.

Later on, circumcision was perverted to the point of giving it the opposite meaning (that being circumcised meant you were made righteous in your flesh). However:

Philippians 3: ³For we are the circumcision, **which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus**, and have no confidence in the flesh.

True circumcision is not the one of the flesh, but the one of the Spirit. Circumcision is the one that worships God in the spirit and rejoices in Christ Jesus.

Ready to Begin Receiving the Promise

Abraham is now in the condition to once again hear God's promise, and that this promise would be fulfilled through Sarah.

Genesis 17:¹⁵ **And** God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall* her name *be*. ¹⁶ **And I will bless her,**

⁵⁶ Galatians 3:3

⁵⁷ John 6:63

and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be *a mother* of nations; kings of people shall be of her.

Just like Abraham's name is changed, so is Sarah's; her name is no longer Sarai. And she is also blessed with the forgiveness of sins, and Abraham's son would be given through her. The Lord needs to repeat it for Abraham to hear and understand it correctly: Sarah will be blessed and will become the mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her. When God made the promise to Abraham for the first time, the promise *included* Sarah. And this is where the man of flesh fails, thinking that the promises are only for him, and not for his life companion. Yet the Scriptures say that they are one⁵⁸, which means that everything that was promised to Abraham was also promised to Sarah.

Genesis 17:¹⁷ Then Abraham fell upon his face, and **laughed**, and said in his heart, 'Shall *a child* be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?'

Abraham thought it was funny; his first natural, carnal reaction was to not believe God's word. However, Abraham would quickly wake to the real dimension of God's promise.

Genesis 17:¹⁸ And Abraham said unto God, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" ¹⁹ And God said, "Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son **indeed**; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and **I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.** ²⁰ And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. ²¹ **But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year."** ²² And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

We see that Abraham's laughter did not last long, because his next comment shows that he now really does believe the Lord. He has overcome his initial doubt, and now he asks about Ishmael, who was after all his son too, and he implores God for him. Here we see the change that has been wrought in the life of Abraham. His first reaction is No, which then changes to Yes. And God repeats His promise: Sarah will bear Abraham's son, and his name shall be Isaac, which means laughter. The promises of the covenant will be confirmed to Isaac and his Seed after him. Christ Jesus would come through the line of Isaac. God does not forget Ishmael, but also blesses him, and makes him a great nation.

⁵⁸ Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4-6

This is how this dialogue with the Lord ends. And that same day, all the males of the house of Abraham are circumcised, working the sign of the covenant, which is relief because of forgiveness, and the declaration, in their own flesh, of the error of trusting in the flesh, which avails nothing.

However, the Lord wasn't finished yet. Abraham had probably told Sarah everything that God had said to him, because you cannot hide the fact that all the males of a household are circumcised in one day⁵⁹. A few days later, the Lord appears to Abraham once more, this time within the context of the visit to Sodom and Gomorrah. And we read the following:

Genesis 18:⁹ And they said unto him, "Where *is* Sarah thy wife?" And he said, "Behold, in the tent."¹⁰ And he said, "I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son." And Sarah heard *it* in the tent door, which *was* behind him.¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah *were* old *and* well stricken in age; *and* it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.¹² **Therefore Sarah laughed within herself**, saying, 'After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?'¹³ And the LORD said unto Abraham, "Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?'¹⁴ **Is any thing too hard for the LORD?** At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son."¹⁵ Then Sarah denied, saying, "I laughed not;" for she was afraid. And he said, "Nay; but thou didst laugh."

It is clear that Abraham and Sarah were life partners, because she had the same natural reaction that her husband did. We observe the divine pattern here. She laughed like Abraham, but then she believed, without needing for God to add anything else. Thus, in Abraham and Sarah we see human nature as explained by Jesus in the parable of the son who first says No, but then he says Yes to the promise. For this is the testimony of the Scriptures:

Hebrews 11:¹¹ **Through faith** also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, **because she judged him faithful who had promised.**

What life experiences! Abraham believed God and some of His promises, but he had a hard time believing others. God, in order to rescue His son Abraham, condescends to enter into a covenant of men with him: the old covenant or the first covenant. Abraham, in an old covenant state, attempts to fulfil God's promise by having a son with Hagar. However, after some time, God again appears to Abraham and gives him His covenant, and seeing that He was going to reveal to Abraham that the promise of the Seed would be through Sarah, showing thus his mistake, He gives him a work that

⁵⁹ Genesis 34:25

he can do: circumcision. Circumcision shows the natural condition of human beings, and is the seal that righteousness is only through faith.

It is the natural condition of men to say Yes, only to stop believing and say No to God's promise. However, after knowing God more, man says No to God's promise, but then corrects it and in Christ Jesus says Yes and Amen to the whole word of God. Thus circumcision, aside from being the seal of righteousness by faith, becomes a reminder of the need to remain in the initial Yes upon receiving Christ in the birth of the Spirit.

The Two Covenants in Abraham

The Promise Received

After the encounter between Abraham, Sarah and God, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. After that, we read:

Genesis 20:¹ And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar. ²And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “*She is my sister:*” ...

Abraham somehow felt it was safer for him if the rulers of that land thought Sarah was his sister, rather than his wife, and so he lied. Oh, Abraham! The Lord once again has to fix his servant’s self-inflicted problems. Aren’t we like Abraham? Don’t we have encounters with the Lord, and then we fall back on our own weaknesses? And don’t we see here the greatness and mercy of God? Abraham believed God, but he **did not fully trust** in God’s protection. Just like Sarah laughed and then lied because of the fear she felt when she was discovered, Abraham lied out of fear of what might happen to him.

All of this points to a lack of trust in the word, protection and care of God. God had said that he would go down to the grave in peace and at an old age, so he shouldn’t have felt threatened. God rescues Abraham from this problem, and eventually Sarah gives birth:

Genesis 21:¹ And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and **the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken.** ²For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. ³And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. ⁴And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. ⁵And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him. ⁶And Sarah said, “God hath made me to laugh, *so that* all that hear will laugh with me.” ⁷And she said, “Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born *him* a son in his old age.”

By faith, Sarah, being sterile, conceived and gave birth. Why? Because despite her laughter, faith triumphed in her, and she believed that He who had promised would be faithful to fulfill it.

A few conclusions are evident. Isaac was the fruit of faith. Isaac is the seed of the promise, the son of the free woman, born of a miracle of God. Ishmael, on the other hand, is the seed of the flesh, the son of bondage, born of human effort. Ishmael is the

product of man's covenant, the old covenant, and Isaac of God's covenant, the new covenant.

The promise that God made to Abraham was that the seed would be as numerous as the sand of the sea and as the stars in the sky. This seed would inherit the earth; it was a spiritual seed, not carnal. In other words, this offspring would have a miraculous birth, such as with Jesus and Isaac. Both births were miraculous, and both came to be through the agency of the Spirit of God⁶⁰. In both, we have a demonstration of God's power to make us children of God and heirs of the promise.

And we continue with the story of Abraham:

Genesis 21:⁸And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the *same* day that Isaac was weaned. ⁹And Sarah saw **the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking.** ¹⁰Wherefore she said unto Abraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, *even* with Isaac." ¹¹And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. ¹²And God said unto Abraham, "Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for **in Isaac shall thy seed be called.**" ¹³And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he *is* thy seed." ¹⁴And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave *it* unto Hagar, putting *it* on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

The son of Hagar, the Egyptian slave, mocked the son of the freewoman, and the counsel was to send the bondwoman and her son away from the home. This seemed terrible to Abraham. However, God supported Sarah's proposal, undoubtedly to teach them and us a lesson. Abraham then said goodbye to Hagar and to his son Ishmael. This did not at all mean that God was abandoning Ishmael, because a few verses later we are told that God was with him. The highlight from this story is that the son of the bondwoman starts to persecute the son of the freewoman, and coexistence in the home becomes difficult, impossible, to the point that the son of the slave is finally expelled. This has implications for the relationship that exists between the two covenants, both in ourselves and also between the two group experiences.

⁶⁰ Galatians 4:29

The Test of Faith

Several years had passed, and Isaac is now a young man. Abraham, after all the experiences mentioned, had seen how God had miraculously led him, protected him and given him a son. However, God makes Abraham go over the same territory again, to ensure that the lesson has been learned, and to thus seal his faith.

Genesis 22:¹And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, "Abraham:" and he said, "Behold, *here I am.*"
²And he said, "**Take now thy son, thine only *son* Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.**"

Isaac had not married yet, and had no children. God's request implied therefore, at first glance, the removal of the hope that all of God's promises would one day be fulfilled. So not only was Abraham's affection for his beloved son tested, but also his faith in God's promise of an eternal inheritance.

This test caused a terrible inner struggle in Abraham. A host of doubts must have come to his mind. He was tempted in everything, tempted to doubt whether it really had been God's voice that had spoken, and even whether the promises he had received many years before were true. However, Abraham triumphed over this test by faith.

Romans 4:²⁰He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; ²¹And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. ²²And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

Hebrews 11:¹⁷**By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac:** and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, ¹⁸Of whom it was said, 'That in Isaac shall thy seed be called.'
¹⁹**Accounting that God was able to raise *him* up, even from the dead;** from whence also he received him in a figure.

From beginning to end, everything was based on whether Abraham believed that God would give life to what was dead. Abraham's faith needed to be affirmed upon the resurrection of the dead. Isaac's birth itself was a bringing forth of life from Abraham and Sarah's flesh, which for all practical purposes, was dead when it came to begetting life. Abraham had doubted God's word whether he could do that, and he had united himself in unequal yoke with Hagar.

Thus, this point was tested once more, and believing that God was able to raise up even the dead, Abraham offered Isaac. Abraham now *did* believe that God was powerfully able to do everything that He had promised, and it is this trust, conviction and faith that was counted unto him for righteousness. How wonderful the faith of Abraham!

The verse mentions Isaac as the only begotten son of Abraham. And this naturally brings to mind that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life⁶¹. In Abraham's offering we have a figure of how the Father gave His only begotten Son, and Abraham understood this. Abraham offered his only begotten son while trusting that he would be raised from the dead, because God was already giving His only begotten Son right there when He said, "I am your shield and your exceeding great reward". And that faith of Abraham, that God could raise up Isaac from the dead, we find manifested in the story:

Genesis 22:⁴ Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. ⁵ And Abraham said unto his young men, "Abide ye here with the ass; and **I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.**"

Abraham knew that he would return with Isaac. That is why he says "I and the lad will go ... and come again to you". Isaac, like Christ, carried the wood for the offering. And like Christ, who voluntarily gave Himself for us, he did not resist, but voluntarily gave himself up. In that way, the sacrifice is not only the Father's, but the Son's as well. In Isaac we have a type of Christ, who was taken like a lamb to the slaughter⁶², and Abraham's statement that God would provide a lamb was a manifestation of that faith.

Genesis 22:¹¹ And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham:" and he said, "Here *am* I." ¹² And he said, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son* from me." ¹³ And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind *him* a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

In this way, God's perfect will was fulfilled. Abraham's faith had been put to the test, and it was found perfect.

Genesis 22:¹⁵ And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, ¹⁶ And said, "**By myself have I sworn**, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son*: ¹⁷ That in blessing **I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;** ¹⁸ And in thy seed

⁶¹ John 3:16

⁶² Isaiah 53:7

shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”

The angel of the Lord spoke with Abraham for a second time, and tells him that God, by Himself, had sworn. We find the meaning of this oath here:

Hebrews 6:¹³ For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could **swear** by no greater, he swore by himself, ¹⁴ Saying, ‘Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.’ ¹⁵ And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. ¹⁶ For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation *is* to them an end of all strife. ¹⁷ Wherein **God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:** ¹⁸ That by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

Why did God make an oath? He did so because He wanted to show something to us. The oath was given for us, the heirs, because regarding Abraham, he already believed in the Lord and had just proven that in the severe test. Abraham already had, or had reached, the promise⁶³. Abraham didn’t need the oath, unlike the time when he asked God for a sign and God entered into an oath of men with him. So this oath – “by Myself I have sworn” – is for us, the heirs, upon whom the ends of the world are come, that we might be convinced that God will do what He has promised, and we may lay hold upon the hope set before us, the same hope that was given to Abraham.

God knows that some of us are timid and lacking in faith. We might see our own weakness, and the multitude of rebellions and failures in life. Maybe some can say, “I am completely alone, and there is nothing in me”, and they might be afraid that God might not accept them. However, for all of us who feel this way, we have Abraham’s story through which God speaks to us:

Isaiah 51:¹ Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: Look unto the rock *whence* ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit *whence* ye are digged. ² **Look unto Abraham your father,** And unto Sarah *that* bare you: **For I called him alone,** and blessed him, and increased him. ³ For the Lord shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; And he will make her wilderness like Eden, And her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

⁶³ Hebrews 6:9-12, 19-20; 10:32-39

Let us look unto Abraham, and how God took him out from among the heathen, out of Babylon's realm, and when he was only one, God blessed him with forgiveness, a promise and a covenant. God wants to do the same thing with us. Let us remember that the oath in which He pledged His life was for us. It was for our comfort, an oath of men, as if He knew that we need the same certainty that Abraham needed in his old covenant. His own honor and life are at stake in the fulfilment of this blessing.

Freedom in Jesus

In addition to Abraham's descendants being as numerous the stars and the sand, the angel of the Lord promised Abraham that his Seed would also possess the gate of his enemies. In Christ all the nations of the earth would be blessed. In what sense would the Seed possess the gate of his enemies? The Seed is Christ and all those who are of Christ, and no one else. Sin came through Satan, who is the adversary⁶⁴, the enemy of the Seed⁶⁵, the antichrist. The promise that the Seed of Abraham would possess the gate of his enemies is a promise of victory over sin through Christ Jesus. We see this is so when Zechariah, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied, saying:

Luke 1:⁶⁸ "Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel; For he hath visited and redeemed his people, ⁶⁹ And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; ⁷⁰ As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, Which have been since the world began: ⁷¹ That we should be saved from our enemies, And from the hand of all that hate us; ⁷² To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers, And to remember his holy covenant; ⁷³ **The oath which he sware to our father Abraham,** ⁷⁴ **That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear,** ⁷⁵ **In holiness and righteousness before him, All the days of our life."**

Through Christ we are delivered out of the hand of our enemies that we may serve our God in holiness and righteousness. This Seed, Christ, would bruise the serpent's head⁶⁶. We see that even now, those of us who have been made part of the seed have battles against the enemy, and we still do not see that we possess the gate of our enemies, but by the grace of God we shall soon see it⁶⁷. The promise encompasses the complete work of the gospel until the final redemption. Jesus Himself explains all this:

⁶⁴ Strong H7854

⁶⁵ Matthew 13:39; 1 Peter 5:8; Ephesians 6:12; John 8:44

⁶⁶ Genesis 3:15

⁶⁷ Romans 16:20

John 8:³¹ Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, **“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; ³² And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”**

Jesus is the Good Shepherd⁶⁸. The call that God makes to His people through the ages is to listen to His voice and to keep His covenant, His words. And Jesus identifies Himself as the One to whom they had to listen, whose words they had to keep and treasure. This leads to knowing the truth, and the truth makes us free. This is how the promise of freedom from enemies is received.

John 8:¹² Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, **“I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”**

By following Jesus and keeping His words, we will have the light of life. Jesus appeals to his hearers to accept Him as the word of God. However, what was their reaction?

John 8:³³ They answered him, “We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, ‘Ye shall be made free?’”

Their answer is that they are already the seed, by being descendants of Abraham by blood. They automatically considered themselves heirs to the promise and thus were free men.

However, when Jesus appeals for them to hear His voice and abide in His words, He was identifying Himself as the promised Seed to Abraham, the Seed in which all the promises are fulfilled: it was He who would set them free. But His hearers had a hard time seeing that: they stated that they had never been in bondage, implying that they did not need to be freed from anything. With this mindset, they had difficulty understanding the words of Jesus, which are like a drawn sword to every yearning for exaltation.

John 8:³⁴ Jesus answered them, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. ³⁵ And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. ³⁶ If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”**

In these words we see that the freedom God wants to give is freedom from sin. Our slavery is to sin. And the calling that Jesus made in the Old Testament to Abraham and to Israel, and which He makes to His hearers in this story, was for them to hear His voice and keep His words, because by doing so, they would be freed from sin. This is the gift of God of His only begotten-Son.

⁶⁸ John 10:1-18

The servant of sin abides in the home for a time, but he does not remain in the home forever. Here Jesus makes a direct reference to Ishmael. On the other hand, the son does abide in the home forever, a direct reference to Isaac. It is Jesus who gives freedom from sin and makes us children in the house of God. And Jesus continues saying:

John 8:³⁷ “I know that ye are Abraham’s seed; **but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.**”

Jesus was aware that they were Abraham’s seed. But, and here is a big contradiction: they attempted to kill Him. Doesn’t this reveal them as slaves of sin? Doesn’t this show them to be those who don’t abide in the home, since they are persecuting the Son of the promise, just like Ishmael did to Isaac? Why did they attempt to kill Jesus? Because they would not hear His voice, nor did His word find room in their hearts. They would decide themselves how to be sons of God, rather than receiving God’s sonship. Thus, the son of the bondwoman persecuted the son of the promise. And this rejection and hardening of heart degenerated into trying to kill Christ.

John 8:³⁸ “I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.” ³⁹ They answered and said unto him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus saith unto them, “**If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham.**”

Jesus interprets the promises made to Abraham. The promise of the inheritance is not for children of the flesh, but for those who follow the path of the faith of Abraham, manifested in his works of righteousness ⁶⁹. By desiring to kill Him, they were revealing that they were actually only children of the flesh, and not of the Spirit, for Abraham would not want to kill Him.

Jesus reveals that they are carnal. Those who don’t follow in the footsteps of Abraham, in conduct and in character, are not sons of Abraham – that is, they are not part of the seed nor heirs of the promise. And what did Abraham do, that those who were talking with Jesus didn’t want to do?

Genesis 26:⁵ because that Abraham **hath hearkened to My voice, and keepeth** My charge, My commands, My statutes, and My laws. YLT

Abraham heard the voice, and kept or treasured God’s charge or covenant. Abraham did exactly what Israel at Mount Sinai was invited to do⁷⁰. Thus the heirs are those who hear the Good Shepherd’s voice and keep or treasure it.

⁶⁹ Hebrews 11:8-19

⁷⁰ Exodus 19:5

John 8:⁴³ “Why do ye not understand my speech? *even* because **ye cannot hear my word**.⁴⁴ Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.⁴⁵ And because **I tell you the truth, ye believe me not**.⁴⁶ Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? ⁴⁷**He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear *them* not, because ye are not of God.**”

Believing that they were doing the work of God, they persecuted Jesus, and as a result they were not God’s, but rather of their father the Devil, by receiving and keeping his lies. Upon hearing the truths that Jesus was telling them, they were incensed by anger and accused Him of having a demon. However, Christ confronted these accusations directly, affirming that the promises of the covenant were not received through Abraham, but through Himself. To Him and through Him all the promises would be received, including eternal life.

John 8:⁵¹ “Verily, verily, I say unto you, **If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.**”⁵² Then said the Jews unto him, “Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, ‘If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.’⁵³ Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: **whom makest thou thyself?**”⁵⁴ Jesus answered, “If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: **it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God:**⁵⁵ Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and **keep his saying.**⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw *it*, and was glad.”⁵⁷ Then said the Jews unto him, “Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?”⁵⁸ Jesus said unto them, “**Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.**”⁵⁹ Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

Jesus’s works had given evidence of a Divine power⁷¹. The Father’s voice had declared that Jesus was His beloved Son⁷². John the Baptist had given testimony of Christ⁷³. The words of Christ Himself gave evidence that He was a divine Teacher. Jesus didn’t want them to misunderstand. He tells them clearly that it was He who made Abraham righteous, and Abraham knew it: “Abraham rejoiced to see my day”, and “before

⁷¹ John 5:36; 14:11

⁷² Matthew 3:17

⁷³ John 1:29-34

Abraham was, I am.” It was by faith in Him, not their bloodline or their own works, that would make them receive the promise.

Paul, who received this teaching from Christ Himself⁷⁴, amplifies it:

Romans 9:¹I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, ²That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. ³For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: ⁴Who are Israelites; to whom *pertaineth* the adoption, and the glory, and **the covenants**, and the giving of the law, and the service of *God*, and the promises; ⁵Whose *are* the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ *came*, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. ⁶Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. **For they *are* not all Israel, which are of Israel:** ⁷**Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.** ⁸**That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.** ⁹For this *is* the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son.

Paul manifests the pain he felt over the condition of Israel according to the flesh. And he recognizes that God’s adoption of sons and daughters, the glory, the two covenants (both the old and the new), the giving of the law, the worship, the promises, the patriarchs, and the Seed itself which is Christ, come through the people of Israel. However, the fact that this is so doesn’t automatically make them heirs of the promises. The children of Abraham are not those of the flesh, but rather those of the promise, because these are counted as descendants. The children of the flesh do not remain in the household. This is exemplified in the story of Ishmael and Isaac.

Sarah and Hagar

We will conclude the analysis of the life of Abraham by considering the following verses:

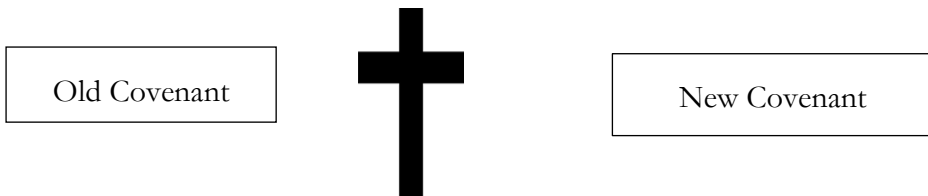
Galatians 4:²²For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. ²³**But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman *was* by promise.** ²⁴Which things are an allegory: **for these are the two covenants;** the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. ²⁵For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. ²⁶But Jerusalem which is above is free,

⁷⁴ 1 Corinthians 1:17; Ephesians 3:8; Galatians 1:11-12

... ²⁸Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. ²⁹**But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him *that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.*** ³⁰Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. ³¹So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

Ishmael was born according to the flesh, and he is a slave because he was born of a servant. The other son, Isaac, was born from Sarah the freewoman; he was born according to the promise, and he is free. This, the verse tells us, is an allegory, an illustration. These two women are the two covenants: Hagar is the old covenant, and Sarah is the new covenant.

Both the old and the new covenant are manifested in the life of one man, Abraham. Usually, when we speak of the two covenants, we envision that the old covenant was in force during the time of the Old Testament, and the new covenant is in force during the time of the New Testament. This is what we have been taught by our forefathers.



The popular view regarding the two covenants, which lacks a Biblical foundation

However, we saw in the first chapter that the people of Israel, upon leaving Egypt, had experienced both covenants. The Lord had called them to accept His covenant, but they entered into another covenant with Him. Now we see that in the life of Abraham both covenants are manifested.

A theology built in which the old covenant is placed before the cross, and the new covenant after the cross, is not according to the Biblical testimony. In actuality, the two covenants are heart experiences that run in parallel from the beginning to the end of history; they are also two experiences that run in parallel throughout our life. And since Abraham is the father of faith⁷⁵, both covenants are manifested in all of us.

⁷⁵ Romans 4:16

Old Covenant

New Covenant



Let us continue analyzing the verse which says that “Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to the Jerusalem which now is”. She, together with her children, “is in bondage”. Why does it say that Hagar is Sinai? Here the parallelism has been established. Just as Abraham took Hagar when trying to fulfill God’s promises, God’s people also established a covenant of men with God, by promising and ratifying it with blood⁷⁶ that they would fulfill all of God’s words. This is the old covenant, the covenant of men. This is human effort trying to fulfill God’s words.

It is called the old covenant, or first covenant, because it is ratified first by man by his offerings, promises or human efforts to fulfil God’s promises. It is also the first to produce fruit, according to the flesh, in other words, Ishmael. The old covenant is the manifestation man’s desire to do, according to his own judgment, the works and promises of God. It is salvation by works.

And thus Israel promised on Mount Sinai to fulfill God’s promises by their own efforts, and it is there where the first fruits were manifested: as Paul calls them, dead works⁷⁷, in other words, obedience to the letter of the law without the Spirit of God. This covenant, says Paul, corresponds to the Jerusalem which now is – the current manmade Jerusalem, not the heavenly Jerusalem. He describes it this way:

Romans 10:1 Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. ²For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but **not according to knowledge.** ³For they **being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness,** have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

The righteousness of God is righteousness by faith. However, Abraham in his experience with Hagar, and Israel on Mount Sinai, and the Jerusalem which now is,

⁷⁶ Exodus 19:7-8; 24:3-8

⁷⁷ Hebrews 6:1

seek to establish their own righteousness by attempting to work and fulfill all the words of God.

Those who are children of Abraham only by the flesh (those who seek to establish their own righteousness by ignoring God's righteousness) cannot be Abraham's spiritual children and heirs to the promise, yet they abide in the household for some time. What for? In order that, while being in the household, they might be born of the Spirit and become children of the promise, that is, that they might be free. This is illustrated in the freedom that was granted to slaves on the seventh year.⁷⁸ Those who, out of love for their master, wished to remain in his household, could only do so if they opened their ear⁷⁹, thus symbolizing that one remains in the household only by hearing and treasuring the word.

However, if they remain in their condition of slaves to sin, they are finally expelled from the household, and they are not counted as descendants. That is why Isaac is presented as the only begotten son of Abraham⁸⁰. When are they expelled? When they persecute those who are children of the promise. It is a natural characteristic of those who live within the first covenant to persecute and harass those who live within the second covenant.

Paul continues in his letter to the Galatians that the Jerusalem which is above, which is the mother of us all, is free. Isaac was born of the Spirit, and he was the true seed. God said that in Isaac shall his Seed⁸¹ be called. Thus, the children of Abraham are those who are born as Isaac was: born of the Spirit. Isaac was born free, but only the children of Abraham (those born of the Spirit) are free; the others are children of the bondwoman.

What does the bondage consist of? It consists of being tied to our own promises which cannot be fulfilled. Slavery means being under sin; it is being in the house of God because we have to. We see in the old covenant the mindset of a slave and servant. The words are received as orders, not as promises. This mindset, natural in those who seek to establish their own righteousness, enslaves them and makes them focus on performance and achievement in God's work. This stops them from entering into a true relationship with their Heavenly Father and their brethren. This is what happened to Israel after so many years of slavery, as well as today with those who are in servanthood.

The slave works for God during the day, and then in the evening at home he has his own rules and tasks. Even more, on the Sabbath day he does what is God's because

⁷⁸ Exodus 21:2

⁷⁹ Exodus 21:6

⁸⁰ Hebrews 11:17

⁸¹ Genesis 26:3-5

God demands it, but as soon as the sun is set, he hurriedly takes advantage of his time, his hours, with the understanding that this space is his own to have fun.

On the other hand, what does freedom consist of? It is the experience of the birth of the Spirit and that the Spirit of God writes His law in our hearts. The son/daughter realizes that their own wisdom will only lead to pain and hardship, like Abraham before them. They believe in God's goodness, and that His will is best for them, and believe that to give over their will to Him is the key to freedom from the sin that is always there to corrupt everything.

This race of free men, which walk through the complexities of life in faith rather than hardening their hearts, who hear and value the voice of the Shepherd and follow Him, become children of the Jerusalem which is above⁸². There is a birth, a weaning, and a growth to the stature of Christ⁸³. They become children of God.

It is called the new covenant or the second covenant because it is the last one, in human eyes, which is ratified by God in the giving of His Son and His death on the cross. It is the second covenant because it is the second one that produces fruit, because Israel was born after the Spirit, after the fruit of the flesh, Ishmael.

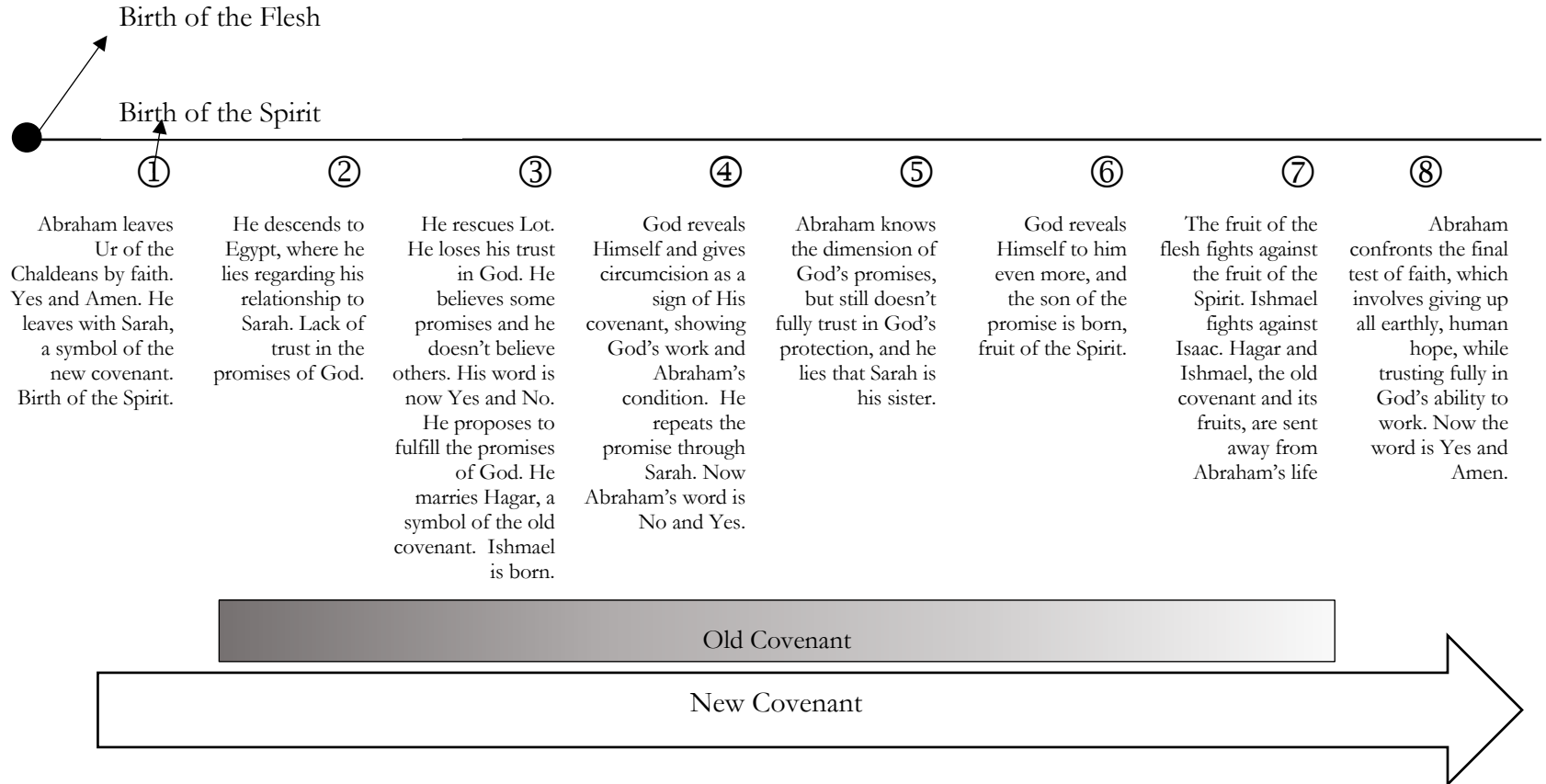
1 Corinthians 15:⁴⁶ Howbeit **that *was* not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.** ⁴⁷ The first man *is* of the earth, earthy: the second man *is* the Lord from heaven. ⁴⁸ As *is* the earthy, such *are* they also that are earthy: and as *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly. ⁴⁹ And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. ⁵⁰ Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

When a man is born, he is born into a carnal state. This is the natural condition of human beings. This is the first man, the man of the earth. However, the promise is made to every human being on this earth, that they might be made in the image of the second man, the heavenly one. This man made in the image of the second man, the heavenly man Jesus, treasures every word of his Father – like the Son of God does.

⁸² Hebrews 12:22-23

⁸³ John 3:3-8; Genesis 21:8; Psalm 131; Hebrews 5:12-14; Ephesians 4:13; Romans 8:28

The Life of Abraham



The Just Shall Live by Faith

Having seen the life of Abraham, let us amplify the implications of him believing God, and being made righteous. He received this righteousness – or it was “counted unto him” – through faith. What does this mean? What righteousness are we talking about? What is righteousness? How does the Bible define righteousness, and how does the Bible define the word “faith”? What faith are we talking about?

Righteousness

The word “righteousness” is defined as equity (of character or act), justification⁸⁴. This in itself doesn’t tell us much, so let us define the term with the Bible. The first thing we notice is that righteousness is God’s:

Matthew 6:³³ But seek ye first the kingdom of God, **and his righteousness**; ...

Romans 3:⁵ But if our unrighteousness commend **the righteousness of God**,

...

How does the Bible define the righteousness of God?

Deuteronomy 6:²⁵ And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.

Psalms 119:¹⁷² My tongue shall speak of thy word: For **all thy commandments are righteousness**.

Isaiah 51:⁷ Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, The **people in whose heart is my law**; ...

The law of God is the righteousness of God. Now, the Ten Commandments, written on stone, are only a declaration in human words of the righteousness of God, and having them in our hearts is knowing the righteousness of God. Yet the 10 Commandments are only a description of how God is, of His character and life. The law is spiritual⁸⁵, and the great principle or spirit that sustains it is agape love⁸⁶.

For example, the commandment “thou shalt not commit adultery”⁸⁷ is spiritual, encompassing not only the act itself, but also the thoughts and the heart of man,

⁸⁴ Strong: 1343. δικαιοσύνη **dikaiōsunē**, *dik-ah-yos-oo'-nay*; from 1342; equity (of character or act); spec. (Chr.) *justification*:—righteousness.

⁸⁵ Romans 7:14

⁸⁶ Romans 13:10

⁸⁷ Romans 13:9

because if he covets in his mind, he has already transgressed the law⁸⁸. But if we wanted to have a more thorough understanding of the spirit of the law, how could we obtain it? What will give us an understanding of the spiritual sense of the commandments? What will show us, fully and perfectly, the life of God?

The Gospel and God's Righteousness

Where is God's righteousness best revealed?

Romans 1:¹⁶For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**: ...¹⁷**For therein is the righteousness of God revealed** from faith to faith: as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'

By seeing and looking at the gospel, the righteousness of God will be revealed. This revelation of the gospel is from faith to faith. But, what is the gospel? We note that the gospel is "of Christ". In that regard, we read:

Romans 1:¹ PAUL, a servant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated unto **the gospel of God**, ²(Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) ³**Concerning his Son** Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

The gospel of God is about His Son Jesus; it's about the life of Jesus. It is the good news of Jesus, His story, who He is, what He did, does and will do for every one of His creatures. And what else is the gospel?

Romans 1:¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for **it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth**; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

The gospel is the power of God to save, to everyone who partakes of it, and we observe its saving power in the life of Jesus⁸⁹ and those who follow Him.

The Righteousness of God in Christ Jesus

Christ also is our righteousness.

1 Corinthians 1:³⁰But of him are ye in **Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us** wisdom, and **righteousness**, and sanctification, and redemption:

⁸⁸ Matthew 5:27-28

⁸⁹ Matthew 1:21

God has given us Christ Jesus, that we might abide in Him. When we allow and accept His word and His Spirit to abide in us, then He can abide in us⁹⁰. He becomes our source of wisdom and righteousness, rather than trying to find it in another source.

2 Corinthians 5:²¹ For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; **that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.**

God's righteousness comes to us through Christ. He, who never knew sin, was made sin for us; on Him were placed the weight of our sins. What for? So that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. We give our sins to Christ, and He gives us the righteousness of God. The cost of our conversion into the character of God is in that Christ is made sin for us. This is the gift of God to us.

Romans 5:¹⁷ For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more **they which receive** abundance of grace and of **the gift of righteousness** shall reign in life **by one, Jesus Christ.**

In connection with the revelation and manifestation of the righteousness of God, we read the following:

Romans 3:²¹ But now the righteousness of God without the law [apart from the law] is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; ²² Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: ²³ For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; ²⁴ Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ²⁵ Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; ²⁶ To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

God's righteousness has been manifested apart from the law. Where? In the very life of Jesus Christ Himself. He embodies the righteousness of God, which is revealed in His life here on earth. And this life is testified by the law and the prophets. Jesus Himself said:

John 5:³⁹ "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and **they are they which testify of me.** ... ⁴⁶ For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for **he wrote of me.**"

The writings of the Old Testament testify that Jesus Christ is the righteousness of God. This righteousness of God does not come through the law, nor through the prophets. It says that apart from the law ("without the law" in Rom 3:21) this

⁹⁰ John 15:1-13

righteousness was manifested. The law is there, but we see that the righteousness of God is being revealed independently in the person of Jesus. There is further testimony:

John 5:³⁶ But I have greater witness than *that* of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, **the same works that I do, bear witness of me**, that the Father hath sent me. ³⁷ **And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me.** Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.

Christ's works bear witness, and even the Father Himself, that Jesus is the revealer of God – being the “express image of God”, He lived on earth the righteous character of His Father. Thus His Father testifies of His Son:

Matthew 17:⁵ While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, **“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.”**

Thus the Father declares who Christ is: the One we ought to hear.

In what other way is the righteousness of God manifested or revealed? In the life of Abraham we saw that it is manifested in the recognition of sinfulness and the belief in forgiveness.

Luke 18:⁹ **And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:** ¹⁰ Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. ¹² I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.” ¹³ And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, **saying, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”** ¹⁴ **I tell you, this man went down to his house justified** *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

The word “merciful” is also translated as “to atone”. Admitting he is a sinner, the publican begs God to atone his condition. In contrast with the pharisee, he is the one who receives righteousness, by being reconciled with God.

The heart of Christ overflowed with the righteousness of God, and He manifested it by declaring the faithfulness and salvation of God⁹¹. The faithfulness of God is revealed in His lovingkindness or mercy.

⁹¹ Psalm 40:10

Psalm 36:⁵ **Thy mercy**, O LORD, *is* in the heavens; *And* thy faithfulness *reacheth* unto the clouds.

Psalm 92:² To shew forth **thy lovingkindness** in the morning, *And* thy faithfulness every night,

This is why John would later say:

1 John 1:⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Because God is faithful and just, He forgives us and cleanses us. If He didn't do this, He would cease to be faithful and just. His righteousness is thus revealed, declared and manifested in the forgiveness of sin and in the cleansing He does of all our unrighteousness. Righteousness is thus manifested in mercy. In addition, we read:

Psalm 89:¹⁴ Justice and judgment *are* the habitation of thy throne: Mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

The Young's Literal Translation would translate this verse as follows:

Psalm 89:¹⁴ Righteousness and judgment [are] the fixed place of Thy throne, Kindness and truth go before Thy face. YLT

The foundation of the throne of God is His righteousness and judgment. While justice/righteousness is manifested in kindness and mercy, judgment is the revelation of truth.

Psalm 96:¹³ Before the LORD: for he cometh, For he cometh to judge the earth: **He shall judge the world with righteousness, And the people with his truth.**

Psalm 119:⁴³ And take not **the word of truth** utterly out of my mouth; **For I have hoped in thy judgments.**

Isaiah 42:³ A bruised reed shall he not break, *And* the smoking flax shall he not quench: He shall bring forth **judgment unto truth.**

God executes His judgments through the revelation of the truth. Christ in His life thus revealed the truth of how His Father is, to undo the works of the devil⁹², who is a liar from the beginning⁹³. In this way, God's salvation is also the giving of truth.

Psalm 25:⁵ **Lead me in thy truth**, and teach me: **For thou art the God of my salvation**; On thee do I wait all the day.

⁹² 1 John 3:8

⁹³ John 8:44

Ephesians 1:¹³In whom ye also *trusted*, after that **ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed**, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

We conclude that God's righteousness is manifested and revealed, made visible, in the mercy and forgiveness of God, and in the truth of God as it is declared in the life of Christ. Paul reaches this conclusion in Romans 3:21-26, which we are considering, when he says that God declares His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God, that He might be just by giving the grace of free redemption that is found in Christ.

We ask ourselves: How is the righteousness of God accessible to human beings? How can we grasp God's righteousness? We can receive it through the faith of Jesus Christ, for all those who believe **in** Him. There is no difference between human beings, because we have all sinned. There is no difference in the way it can be acquired⁹⁴. There is only one way to receive God's righteousness. Whether one has lived before Christ, or after Christ, He is for all those who believe in Him. God has placed Christ as the manifestation of His righteousness, and He is the only means of receiving it⁹⁵. In Christ, then, righteousness can be manifested in the forgiveness of sins. There is no other name given among men, whereby we might be saved⁹⁶.

The life itself, and the character of God, were perfectly and completely revealed in the life of Christ. Jesus Himself said:

John 17:⁴"**I have glorified thee on the earth**: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. ...⁶**I have manifested thy name** unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. ... ⁸**For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; ...**"

Jesus revealed in living form the words and the character of God, in this way being the revelation of the life of the Father, to the point where He could say, "He who has seen me has seen the Father"⁹⁷.

Hebrews 1:⁹**Thou hast loved righteousness**, and hated iniquity; therefore God, *even* thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Christ loved the righteousness of God. He had it treasured in His heart.

⁹⁴ Romans 3:22

⁹⁵ John 14:6

⁹⁶ Acts 4:12

⁹⁷ John 14:9

Psalm 40:⁸ **I delight to do thy will, O my God: Yea, thy law is within my heart.** ⁹ I have preached **righteousness** in the great congregation: Lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest. ¹⁰ **I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart;** I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

The law of God, the righteousness of God, was within Jesus' heart. As a consequence, He preached righteousness in the great congregation. And Jesus Himself declares that He has not concealed⁹⁸ the righteousness of God, because of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks⁹⁹.

He is the manifestation of God's will:

Jeremiah 23:⁵ Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and **shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.** ⁶ In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and **this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

In other words, the heart of Christ overflowed with the righteousness of God, for God's righteousness is greater than the letter of the law, because the law is spiritual¹⁰⁰. It is the life of God, which cannot be contained, and it springs forth as a fountain of living water. It is impossible for Christ to not manifest the good news of the love and forgiveness of God; that is why He cannot conceal it.

The Work of God in Human Beings: How and Where?

God desires to place His own righteousness in man's inward parts.

Psalm 51:⁶ Behold, thou desirest truth **in the inward parts:** ...

Deuteronomy 6:²⁵ And it shall be our righteousness, if we **observe** to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.

The promise of God is that we will have righteousness when we observe to do all the commandments of God. The word "observe" is the same one which we previously saw translated as "keep" or "treasure", referring to hearing the word of God, both to Abraham¹⁰¹ and to Israel¹⁰². This is why He told the people of Israel, on Mount Sinai, in His offer of the new covenant:

⁹⁸ Matthew 5:15

⁹⁹ Matthew 12:34

¹⁰⁰ Romans 7:14

¹⁰¹ Genesis 26:5

Deuteronomy 6:⁶ And these words, which I command thee this day, **shall be in thine heart:**

This is the promise of the new covenant:

Jeremiah 31:³³ But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, **I will put my law in their inward parts, And write it in their hearts;** And will be their God, And they shall be my people.

It is God Himself who puts His law in our mind and writes it in our heart. We, of ourselves, cannot do it. God covers man with His righteousness.

Isaiah 61:¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For **he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness,** As a bridegroom decketh *himself* with ornaments, And as a bride adorneth *herself* with her jewels.

God not only keeps and seals His righteousness in the heart; He also covers man with a robe. He also covers him with a breastplate, which protects him from the darts of the enemy.

Ephesians 6:¹⁴ Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and **having on the breastplate of righteousness;**

And how are we girded? How are we armed with the breastplate?

Romans 8:⁹ But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, **if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.** Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. ¹⁰ And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but **the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.**

God wants to give us His righteousness through His Spirit. If Christ is in us, if the Spirit of Christ dwells in us, then we will have passed from death to life, and our spirit will live because of righteousness. Because the verse continues saying:

Romans 8:¹¹ But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also **quicken** your mortal bodies **by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.**

It is the Spirit of God dwelling in us that brings to our lives the righteousness of God, His life, and this quickens us.

¹⁰² Exodus 19:5

Galatians 5:⁴**Ye are empty of the Christ**, whosoever of you that justify yourselves by the law; ye are fallen from grace. ⁵**For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.** JUB

From Faith to Faith

Having seen these concepts regarding the righteousness of God, let us return to the verse that we have been considering:

Romans 1:¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for **it is the power of God unto salvation** to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For therein is the righteousness of God revealed **from faith to faith**: as it is written, The **just** shall live by faith.

The good news of salvation in Christ Jesus is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes. All men are lost, and are destitute of the glory of God¹⁰³, that is His perfect character. They are estranged from the life of God. The work of the gospel is a personalized and individual work in each human being on this earth in order to place them in harmony with the law of God, or with His righteousness or character. This whole process is a work of faith.

The verse tells us that in the gospel (that is, in Christ), the righteousness of God is revealed from faith. From which faith to which faith?

Romans 3:²²Even the righteousness of God *which is* **by** faith of Jesus Christ **unto** all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

As the Jubilee Bible 2000 puts it:

Romans 3:²² the righteousness, that is, of God **by the faith of Jesus**, the Christ, **for** all and upon all those that believe in him, for there is no difference;

Can you see the **from/by** and the **unto/for**? The righteousness of God was manifested **by** the faith of Jesus, **for** the faith of those who believe **in** Him. The righteousness of God is revealed in Jesus by His faith, for them to believe in Him. In Jesus, we see the life of a man with perfect trust and submission to God our Father.

The verse continues saying¹⁰⁴, “as it is written: the just shall live by faith”. Who is being referred to here? Mainly Jesus, because Jesus is the only one in whom God’s righteousness was fully manifested. This is why He is called the Just¹⁰⁵:

¹⁰³ Romans 3:23

¹⁰⁴ Romans 1:16-17

¹⁰⁵ Acts 3:14; 7:52

Acts 22:¹⁴ And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and **see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.**

We see that the righteousness of God was manifested and revealed by Jesus through His own faith, that we might believe first in Him, and in this way receive His faith. This is why Paul has to clarify when he quotes:

Habakkuk 2:⁴ Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: But the just shall live by **his** faith.

The Just, in other words Jesus, lives by His faith, and we live by the faith of Jesus.

What is faith?

And naturally, we ask ourselves, what is faith? What does it consist of? How do we obtain it?

Matthew 8:⁵ And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, ⁶ And saying, "Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented." ⁷ And Jesus saith unto him, "I will come and heal him." ⁸ The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but **speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.** ⁹ For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this *man*, 'Go,' and he goeth; and to another, 'Come,' and he cometh; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he doeth *it*."

¹⁰ When Jesus heard *it*, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, "**Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.**" ¹¹ And I say unto you, "That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. ¹² But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

¹³ And Jesus said unto the centurion, "Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, *so* be it done unto thee." And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.

Jesus saw great faith in the centurion because it was not necessary to him for Jesus to personally heal his servant, but just to say the word. While the centurion declared himself unworthy, he also understood how authority and command works. He believed that Christ, through His word, had dominion over disease, over health, and over all created things.

This naturally brings us back to the beginning, when God said, “Let there be light; and it was light”¹⁰⁶. As the text says, “For He spoke, and it was done”¹⁰⁷. This is faith: it is believing that God’s word is fulfilled. It is believing in God’s word and promise. It is believing in Jesus. And Jesus, upon hearing such trust in God’s promises, placed the centurion as seated with the patriarchs of faith – with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Why? Because God’s word was enough.

And what was Jesus’ answer? He said, “As thou hast believed, be it done unto thee”. It is interesting that God does according to the measure of faith found in the person: faith enables God to work. We see this in the following verses:

Matthew 9:²⁸ And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, “Believe ye that I am able to do this?” They said unto him, “Yea, Lord.”²⁹ Then touched he their eyes, saying, “**According to your faith be it unto you.**”

Matthew 15:²⁷ And she said, “Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”²⁸ Then Jesus answered and said unto her, “O woman, great is thy faith: **be it unto thee even as thou wilt.**” And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Matthew 13:⁵⁸ And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

All things are possible to him that believes¹⁰⁸. God through Jesus gives every one according to the measure of their faith. God gives us what we believe. Thus, we see that the faith found in us determines the gift of God.

In the story of the centurion we have a first definition of faith. Let’s look at the another verse:

Hebrews 11:¹⁷ By faith Abraham, **when he was tried**, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*,¹⁸ Of whom it was said, ‘That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:’¹⁹ Accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

We notice that in our walk, our faith is tried. In Abraham’s case, when the test came, it was revealed that he believed the promises of God.

James 1:³ Knowing *this*, that **the trying of your faith** worketh patience.

¹⁰⁶ Genesis 1:3

¹⁰⁷ Psalm 33:9

¹⁰⁸ Mark 9:23

We will receive the inheritance through faith and patience¹⁰⁹. The test of faith is what produces patience. This way, the inheritance promised by God is received through faith and the fruit of its trial: patience.

1 Peter 1:7 **That the trial of your faith**, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

Faith after the test becomes more precious than gold refined in fire, and it is found in praise, honor and glory when Christ is manifested.

Let us see one more verse which will help us understand faith:

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Faith is the substance of what is hoped from God and what He promised. Faith is based on a concrete “it is written”, and not on what we imagine. Believing God connects us to Him and is the evidence of what is not seen. It is the knowledge, with certainty and conviction, that God’s word will fulfill what He has said, even though we can’t see it or it’s not apparent, even though it contradicts what our senses are telling us. Paul gives us an example regarding this:

Hebrews 11:8 **By faith Abraham**, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, **not knowing whither he went.**

Abraham didn’t know where he was going, yet he went out in faith. He heard the word of God and, with the power and grace of God, acted upon it. True faith brings in and of itself the work for which it was sent. We read in the Scriptures regarding this:

Galatians 5:6 **For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.**

Faith works by love. Its motivation is agape love. Faith, when received, generates action in the believer by the grace of God. By faith Abraham went out, even though he couldn’t see where he was going to.

Faith, then, is the evidence, the conviction, the certainty, the belief that the words and the promises of God are fulfilled. It is believing that the word of God will do the work which it says it will do, even though it is not apparent to our senses.

¹⁰⁹ Hebrews 6:12

The Size of Faith

Faith comes in different dimensions, sizes or intensities in people.

Romans 12: ³For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, **according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.** ... ⁶Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;*

God has dealt to every man the measure of faith, and we are urged to use and exercise this faith according to the proportion given. When Jesus spoke about the Roman centurion, He said, “Not even in Israel have I found such faith.” Speaking of the Syrophoenician woman, Jesus said to her, “Great is your faith”¹¹⁰. But to the disciples, He says:

Matthew 17:²⁰ He said to them, “Because of **your little faith.** For truly, I say to you, **if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed,** you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.” (ESV)

The disciples had “little faith”, even less than a mustard seed.

2 Corinthians 10: ¹⁵Not boasting of things without *our* measure, *that is,* of other men’s labours; but having hope, **when your faith is increased,** that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,

However, there is hope that faith will grow.

The Source and Increase of Faith

Now, we ask ourselves, where does faith come from? How can we obtain it? And even more importantly, how do we increase it?

Romans 3:²¹ But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; ²²Even the righteousness of God *which is* **by faith of Jesus Christ** unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

Which faith? The faith **of** Jesus Christ. It is not Daniel’s faith; it is the faith of Jesus. That is the faith that grasps the righteousness of God.

Hebrews 12: ²Looking unto Jesus the **author and finisher of *our* faith;**

¹¹⁰ Matthew 15:28

Jesus is the author and finisher, the one who completed or perfected faith. That's why it is the faith **of** Jesus. Faith is purely a product, a development, of Jesus. And how does it come to us?

Ephesians 2:⁸For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God:*

The end goal of faith is our salvation¹¹¹. Faith is not inherent in us, it is a gift of God (thus it is by grace); God gives us the faith of Jesus. And how do we receive it?

Galatians 5:²²But the fruit of the Spirit is ... faith,

Faith is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. When we accept and receive Jesus, we receive the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit of Christ dwells in us, the faith of Christ can find room in our hearts. Jesus said the following:

John 7:³⁸ **He that believeth on me**, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. ³⁹ **(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)**

That's why Jesus said to Paul:

Acts 26:¹⁵ And I said, "Who art thou, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. ¹⁶ But rise, and stand upon thy feet: ... ¹⁸ To open their eyes, and to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, **that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.**"

Christ wants to give us His faith, and through His faith, He wants to give us forgiveness and inheritance. That's how we and Abraham are justified. Jesus, the Seed, believes in God's word that He will receive the promised inheritance, and His faith we receive so that we can also believe that we will receive the inheritance.

Romans 10:¹⁷ So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

It is by hearing the word of God that faith comes. When we receive Christ, we receive His faith by hearing, if we don't reject Him or His word, nor harden our hearts.

Consequently, the just shall live by faith. Christ was made sanctification for us¹¹². Through this process the law of God is written in our hearts. But since the law is spiritual, it is not simply about remembering ten statements, but about putting our lives into harmony with God's life. It is about revealing more and more about out

¹¹¹ 1 Peter 1:9

¹¹² 1 Corinthians 1:30

wickedness and more and more about God's goodness, so that we would receive God's character and life just as it was manifested in the life of Christ. And this is from faith to faith. As it is written:

Romans 1:¹⁷ For therein is the righteousness of God revealed **from faith to faith**: as it is written, 'the just shall live by faith.'

At the beginning of this section, we had applied this verse to Jesus, with the sense that Habakkuk gave it¹¹³ and from where it is quoted. But Paul applies it to man, to you and to me. We receive the revelation of God's righteousness in the person of Jesus and a small measure of faith in order for us to believe and to accept the person of Jesus. We get to know the mercy of God by faith in Jesus. Because we hear His voice, we hear about His love, sympathy and sacrifice, and we want to hear more about Him.

And this revelation is not only from faith in Jesus, but *to* faith – the fullness of the faith of Christ. The good news of the righteousness of God is revealed to us by faith **IN** Jesus, that we might receive the faith **OF** Jesus and thus be justified. We see this clearly in the following verse:

Galatians 2:¹⁶ Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, **even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ**, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Growing from faith **IN** Jesus to the faith **OF** Jesus is the work of sanctification; it is the work that God purposes to do in each human being. This work is about placing the life of each believer into harmony with the character and life of God.

But you and I, do we believe in God's promises? Will He be able to do what He promised in you? This is the question that every believer will be faced with. God longs to work, but He is limited to how much Christ and His faith have been accepted and received. This way, the righteousness of God, by coming into our lives, reveals to us personal situations that are out of harmony with His character and will. We come to a fork on the road. One way is to harden the heart and be content in ourselves. The other is to grasp the promise of God that He will do a work of redemption, accepting the word of Jesus that says, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee"¹¹⁴.

For this faith to increase until we reach the fullness of the faith **OF** Jesus, we need to stop and look attentively at Christ and His faith. What is the faith of Jesus? Can we clearly know and believe what the faith **OF** Jesus consists of?

¹¹³ Habakkuk 2:4

¹¹⁴ Matthew 9:2

The Faith of Jesus

The faith of Jesus is freely offered to us through His Spirit. Jesus said:

Acts 26:¹⁸ ... that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified **by faith that is in me.**

It is through the faith of Jesus Himself that we receive forgiveness and the inheritance. To receive the righteousness and justification of God, we must first receive the forgiveness of sins. Adam was afraid and could not admit his sins, thus he (and the rest of us) had to enter into a process of learning faith in Christ so as to receive the faith of Christ – Christ, whose perfect faith makes Him never afraid of His Father because He has known His goodness from “the days of eternity”¹¹⁵.

Jesus the King of Faith

John 18:³⁷ Pilate therefore said unto him, “Art thou a king then?” Jesus answered, “Thou sayest that I am a king. **To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world,** that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth **heareth my voice.**”

Jesus said: “My kingdom is not of this world, my kingdom is not from here”¹¹⁶. Jesus is King of the kingdom that He proclaimed: the kingdom of heaven¹¹⁷. This kingdom has existed from eternity¹¹⁸. And Jesus tells Pilate the He was born to be King of the kingdom of God, and for this He came to the world.

Hebrews 1:⁵ For unto which of the angels said he at any time, ‘**Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?**’ ...

The Father, after Christ is begotten, says to Him, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee”. What is Jesus’ reaction? The Bible tells us that in Jesus is the Yes and the Amen¹¹⁹. Jesus says Yes and Amen to the word of His Father. The word that declares Him to be a Son, He hears and treasures. He believes His Father that He really is the Son of God. It is right there and then that Jesus authors faith. This is why the Scriptures present the Son of God as the Amen¹²⁰; and from there He became the

¹¹⁵ Micah 5:2

¹¹⁶ John 18:36

¹¹⁷ John 1:49, Matthew 4:17, 23; Mark 1:14, Matthew 6:33

¹¹⁸ Luke 22:27-30; Colossians 1:16; John 3:35; Hebrews 1:2

¹¹⁹ 2 Corinthians 1:20

¹²⁰ Revelation 3:14

Word of God because He is the channel through which God's will flows¹²¹. The Son receives the declaration of His exalted origin and divine nature¹²², and He has always believed His Father – it is Spirit of faith that is imparted to the whole universe, holding all things together in a constant Amen to God the Father¹²³. It is with this faith as the Son of God that He overcame the world¹²⁴.

Jesus, when speaking with Pilate, says, “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world”. When Jesus came to the world, to reclaim the constant Amen to God the Father that had been lost, He was born of the Spirit¹²⁵ as a human being. He grew in harmony, in wisdom, stature and grace with God and man¹²⁶. And He came to the Jordan to be baptized by John the Baptist. When Jesus came out of the baptismal waters, He received the Holy Spirit¹²⁷.

John 3:34 For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for **God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.** ³⁵The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

There is no limit to the Spirit God gives to His Son. And there, when He gives Him His Spirit, He declares His identity to Him. The Father says to Him, “You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”¹²⁸.

Then Jesus is taken to the desert where His faith is put to the test. He has just heard the voice of the Father who told Him: “You are my beloved Son”. Now, the tempter speaks to Him, saying, “if you are the Son of God¹²⁹ ... prove it by performing a miracle”. And He repeats, “if you are the Son of God¹³⁰, prove it by showing that you have faith in the word of God”. However, Jesus did not need to prove anything. He had received the word of His Father which declared His identity and His relationship with Him, and He didn't need anything else.

Thus, Jesus passed the first record we have of the test to his faith. For Jesus, the word of His Father was enough. His constant answer “it is written” is the revelation of the word of God treasured in His heart.

¹²¹ John 1:1; 1 Corinthians 8:6

¹²² John 10:33, 36

¹²³ Isaiah 9:6; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3

¹²⁴ 1 John 5:4

¹²⁵ Luke 1:35

¹²⁶ Luke 2:52

¹²⁷ Matthew 3:16

¹²⁸ Luke 3:22

¹²⁹ Matthew 4:3

¹³⁰ Matthew 4:6

How is Life Lived through the Faith of Jesus?

If Jesus is the Just who lives by faith, we ought to look at His life to see what faith is. What do we discover?

a. Jesus Lives by the Father's Righteousness

John 5:³⁰ "I can of myself do nothing: **as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is righteous**; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." ASV

Jesus does not do His will, but the will of His Father. By doing so the judgment of Christ is righteous, because He is listening to the Father. Thus, what makes a judgment just or not depends on who's will we follow.

Psalm 119:¹⁶⁰ Thy word is true *from* the beginning: And every one of **thy righteous judgments endureth** for ever. ... ¹⁶⁴ Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy **righteous judgments**.

God's judgements are righteous; Christ knew this and set Himself to be a channel for those judgments.

Isaiah 11:¹ And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots: ² And **the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him**, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and might, The spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; ³ And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: And he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, Neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: ⁴ But **with righteousness shall he judge** the poor, And reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, And with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. ⁵ And **righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins**, And faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

Christ received the Spirit of God without measure. Thus, He received the word, the character, the life, the righteousness, the commandments of His Father. He did not resist nor harden His heart. As a result, His judgment is righteous. Christ lives, not to do His own will, but to do the will of the Father. Christ lives by the righteousness of His Father.

b. Jesus Lives to Do the Will of His Father, Not His Own Will:

John 4:³⁴ Jesus saith unto them, "**my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.**"

The food of Jesus – what gives Him strength and energy, the engine of His life – is to do the will of His Father.

John 5:³⁰ “I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because **I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father** which hath sent me.”

Christ gives up His will to His Father’s will. That’s why He says:

John 6:³⁸ “For I came down from heaven, **not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.**”

God so loved the world that He gave His Son to show us a life of a being that never seeks His own will, but the will of His Father. Like He said in the hour of His most terrible trial:

Matthew 26:³⁹ And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: **nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.**” ... ⁴² He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, “O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, **thy will be done.**” ... ⁴⁴ And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, **saying the same words.**

At all times and in all circumstances, Christ sought to do only the will of His Father. In order to do God’s will, Jesus always listens. That is why we see Him spending all night in prayer at times¹³¹:

Isaiah 50:⁴ The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, That I should know how to speak a word in season to *him that* is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, **He wakeneth mine ear to hear** as the learned. ⁵ **The Lord God hath opened mine ear, And I was not rebellious, Neither turned away back.**

Psalms 40:⁶ Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; **Mine ears hast thou opened:** Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. ⁷ Then said I, Lo, I come: In the volume of the book *it is* written of me, ⁸ **I delight to do thy will,** O my God: Yea, thy law *is* within my heart.

Morning by morning, the Father would wake the Son to talk: to comfort Him, encourage Him, prepare Him. This time with His Father was a joy to Jesus, with Jesus fully trusting that what He was told to do was what was best. Thus the judgment of Christ is righteous: He sees the weary, and gives them words and comfort of eternal life. Here is the new covenant experience, the same thing that God has asked of Israel: that they hear His voice and keep His words and treasure them. It is the same thing

¹³¹ Luke 6:12

that God finally said that Abraham did, who heard His voice and kept His precepts, His commandments, statutes and laws¹³². But unlike Abraham and the Israelites, we see that Christ did it perfectly, completely, immaculately, and without sin.

In that sense, Jesus does nothing of Himself:

John 5:¹⁹ Then answered Jesus and said unto them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, **The Son can do nothing of himself**, but what he seeth the Father do: **for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.**"

Nothing that Christ did was of Himself, but He did what He saw the Father do. Everything the Father does, He also does.

John 8:²⁸ Then said Jesus unto them, "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am *he*, and *that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.*"

Let us note carefully what Jesus says. Only when we see Christ lifted up, crucified, will we be in a condition to know and understand this. When we know the cross, which requires self denial¹³³, we will begin to have Christ's experience of having our daily activity guided by God's words.

John 14:³¹ "But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence."

Why does Christ do what the Father commands Him to do? He does it because He loves the Father. It is not a cold, mechanical obedience; it is based on their knowing each other.

John 8:²⁹ "And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; **for I do always those things that please him.**"

There never was a time in which Christ did not do so, where they were estranged or distant from each other.

Philippians 2:⁵ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: ⁷But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: ⁸And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and **became obedient unto death**, even the death of the cross.

The obedience of Christ was such that He was willing to face the deepest humiliation of all: abandoning the form of God and taking the form of a creature, and in this form

¹³² Genesis 26:5

¹³³ Matthew 16:24

of a creature, He became obedient unto the most ignominious death. Even in this, He considers His Father's will best.

Psalm 40:⁸ **I delight to do thy will, O my God: Yea, thy law is within my heart.**

c. Jesus Lives by His Father's words:

Matthew 4:⁴ But he answered and said, "It is written, '**Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.**'"

It is not possible for man to only live by bread. Physical food is not life. There is another element that needs to be added as life to food, which enters the soul regularly and constantly, for it to live. Man will live when he makes his food be every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. That's why Jesus says:

John 12:⁵⁰ And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: ...

Christ knew that the word of God is eternal life.

John 6:⁶⁸ Then Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? **thou hast the words of eternal life.**"

Peter himself recognized that Christ had the words of eternal life from the Father. By receiving the words in the morning, He had them to share during the day with others.

d. Jesus Speaks His Father's words, Not His Own Words:

John 14:¹⁰ "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? **the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.**"

Jesus does not speak words of Himself. He was so connected to His Father that His words were the work of God in Him. And Jesus continues saying:

John 8:³⁸ "**I speak that which I have seen with my Father:** and ye do that which ye have seen with your father."

Jesus speaks of what He has seen and heard with the Father. On the other hand, those who harden their hearts do what they have seen with *their* father. In addition:

John 7:¹⁶ Jesus answered them, and said, "**My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.** ¹⁷If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or *whether* I speak of myself. ¹⁸He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, **and no unrighteousness is in him.**"

Jesus was teaching God's doctrine – it was God teaching through Him. Anyone who wants to do God's will shall know if the teaching is from God or not. He who speaks of his own accord is searching for his own glory and is not true. Here is the pride of life¹³⁴. Rather, he who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true and righteous. The life and Spirit of God does not seek its own; it does not seek its own glory¹³⁵.

John 12:⁴⁹“For **I have not spoken of myself**; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.
⁵⁰ And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even **as the Father said unto me, so I speak.**”

What Jesus spoke wasn't only what the Father said to Him, but *as* the Father said it to Him. The Father also revealed to Him how He should say it: the way, the spirit, the tone, the intonation with which the words were said, were according to how the Father had indicated it to Him.

Christ knows that every word from His Father is eternal life¹³⁶. It is His joy and delight to do His Father's will. Christ was obedient, He received His Father's will and did not resist. He was obedient unto death on the cross. In this way, eternal life is manifested¹³⁷. In the life of Jesus, we see the faith of Jesus, a faith lived by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Thus, the righteousness of God, the very life of God, was revealed to the world, and the Father was glorified.

The Word of God and Righteousness

And the Scripture tells us:

1 John 1:¹ **THAT which was from the beginning**, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of **the Word of life**; ² (For the **life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us**;) ³ That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

What is John's testimony here? Before all creation was brought to existence¹³⁸, from the very beginning, the Word was with God and was God¹³⁹. The Word was divine.

¹³⁴ 1 John 2:16

¹³⁵ 1 Corinthians 13:5

¹³⁶ John 12:50; John 5:24

¹³⁷ 1 John 1:2

¹³⁸ John 1:3

That Word of Eternal life, that life of complete surrender to the Father's agape, was made flesh, and was manifested and shown to the world, and the disciples saw the glory of that life, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, a life full of grace and truth¹⁴⁰.

This life of faith was manifested that we might express our agreement to it and receive that eternal life. The life of Jesus, fully and constantly manifesting the righteousness of God, is the spotless robe woven in the loom of heaven that has no threads of human devising. Christ in His humanity developed a perfect character, and He offers to impart to us this same character. All we might do is stained by sin, because all are gone out of the way, and have become unprofitable to do good¹⁴¹. Jesus came to show us the way of righteousness, and it wasn't through His own innate righteousness. He revealed that this faith has nothing to do with the nature of the being's substance nor at looking inwardly at ourselves, but rather, a relationship based on dependence, trust and faith in Christ, just as He has a relationship based on dependence, trust and faith in His Father.

The relationship that Christ had with the Father is the relationship that we ought to have with Christ. If we submit to Christ, if we allow our heart to be united to His, and for His will to be ours, then we will have the mind of Christ¹⁴², our thoughts will be submitted to Him and we will live His life. Instead of a robe of fig leaves¹⁴³, instead of the deformity and nudity of sin, the Lord will see in us His own robe of the light of His righteousness, which is life lived according to the law of God's agape love. Then we would have fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus¹⁴⁴ by partaking of the divine nature¹⁴⁵ through His Spirit. That we might receive the glorious inheritance: be made children of God in the image of His only begotten Son¹⁴⁶.

These concepts make me consider more carefully what my spiritual journey has been like. In my twenties, I thought that to be made righteous it was enough to be a member of a specific religious group. This consisted in an intellectual assent to what the group said was true. Through my intellectual assent to the truth, I was a participant in the inheritance that group was due to receive. The Lord didn't need to delay Himself anymore, because I had already arrived.

¹³⁹ John 1:1

¹⁴⁰ John 1:14

¹⁴¹ Romans 3:12

¹⁴² 1 Corinthians 2:16

¹⁴³ Genesis 3:7

¹⁴⁴ 1 John 1:3

¹⁴⁵ 2 Peter 1:3-4

¹⁴⁶ Romans 8:29

However, one day the Word of the Lord came to my life. And what did He say? That God's word is truth¹⁴⁷, and that Christ is truth¹⁴⁸. Thus, truth was no longer a group or myself; truth was a Person: Jesus and His word. And not only that: the lack of truth – the lie – was by default in my heart¹⁴⁹. The heart is deceitful above all things¹⁵⁰. Truth is, by definition, outside of myself and my group, and it is in Christ and His word. Why emphasize that truth is a person? Because having intellectual knowledge doesn't guarantee anything, either. It's not enough to have the written word; it's necessary to have bought the oil¹⁵¹.

The demons believe that God is One and they tremble¹⁵², and does this belief do them any good? Of course not! Why not? Because the key is in a personal relationship with the person of Jesus Christ. The fallen angels didn't want to have a relationship with Him, they rejected that eternal life, a life of delighting in the Father through Christ. They rejected and fought against Michael and His angels¹⁵³, they fought against this life of surrendering to the will of the Father and His Son, and instead, they chose to do their own will seeking their own glory. Only then did I begin to be aware that to live by the faith of Jesus we need to first have a personal relationship and connection with God through Christ. Without that, there is no faith, and without faith there is no righteousness; it is a life not according to the will of God.

God is the most loving Father in the world¹⁵⁴, and the agape love that was shown in the giving of Jesus¹⁵⁵ is of no use in my life if it does not receive the response of that of a son¹⁵⁶. How can a relationship of sonship with God be real in my life if I harden my heart and reject His word? If my sonship is to be of faith, then so must the sonship of my Savior be; and if God is to be my Father, then in like manner so must He be Christ's Father¹⁵⁷. **In this sense, the Father-Son link is meaningless if there is no such relationship and communion between them inherent to such bond.** This is how the faith of Jesus, the faith of the only begotten son, accepted by us becomes the key element that allows God's agape love to be poured in our lives and to be returned to Him in praise and joyous service.

¹⁴⁷ Psalm 119:160; John 17:17

¹⁴⁸ John 14:6

¹⁴⁹ Romans 3:10-14

¹⁵⁰ Jeremiah 17:9

¹⁵¹ Matthew 25:1-10

¹⁵² James 2:19

¹⁵³ Revelation 12:7

¹⁵⁴ 1 John 4:7-10

¹⁵⁵ Isaiah 49:15-16

¹⁵⁶ Luke 15:18-24

¹⁵⁷ John 20:17; 31

Living by faith is, then, to have a joyous relationship with God through Jesus. It is not enough to believe that Jesus is real and that the Bible is the word of God. We ought to take hold of Christ as our personal Savior through a personal relationship with Him through faith. And when the relationship with Christ is real, it will become evident in the conversion of a life that reveals Christ in righteous works.

Thus I discovered that believing that I have the truth, or that I am in it, is not righteousness. We have placed doctrinal purity on a pedestal where it does not belong. Righteousness is the relationship we have with Jesus Christ, and what we do when He reveals His word to us. If we receive His word and keep communion with Him, we will invariably reach doctrinal purity, but as a result of not hardening our hearts and treasuring Christ. Only then can doctrinal purity fulfill its role.

What is our reaction when the Word of God speaks to our conscience? Do I hide like Adam and Eve? Do I avoid the word? Do I postpone it for a better time?¹⁵⁸ Or do I embrace it, even though I don't understand it, even though it reproves me? Thus, the relationship I have with Christ, and my reaction to His will, is much more important than doctrinal purity. Do I want to hear His voice? That's why we need to pray to God to "create in me a clean heart"¹⁵⁹.

Truth ought to dwell in the heart; it ought to have its throne in the mind and the affections of our being. And like Pilate we ask ourselves: is Christ king? In our lives, He will either be king or be crucified. We will give Him either the throne or the cross, because every spurious monarchy demands the death of the legitimate king in order to last¹⁶⁰.

It is impossible for man in his own strength to obey God's commandments, impossible by his own power to generate God's righteousness. Yet, we are not to give up: Christ came and showed us that when humanity grasps divinity, it can live the righteousness of God¹⁶¹. To those who believe in His name¹⁶² He gave us the power to be made children of God. His Spirit, declaring its nature, cries out in our hearts, "Abba, Father"¹⁶³. We are gifted the understanding that we are made children of God and all that entails. We are invited into communion with Christ, just like Christ is one with His Father¹⁶⁴. We will know God as a Father, and we will know that He loves us

¹⁵⁸ Matthew 22:2-6

¹⁵⁹ Psalm 51:10

¹⁶⁰ Matthew 2:13

¹⁶¹ Philippians 3:9

¹⁶² John 1:12; 1 John 3:1

¹⁶³ Romans 8:9-10, 14-17; Galatians 4:6

¹⁶⁴ John 17:21-23

like He loves His own Son¹⁶⁵. In this way we will have received the righteousness of God through the faith OF Jesus.

¹⁶⁵ John 17:26

Israel in Egypt

We've clearly seen the two covenants in the life of Abraham. We've seen how he believed in the promises of God, then had doubts and tried to fulfill them by his own means. However, he was taught that it is God who does the works, and that the work of man consists in hearing the voice of God and keeping or treasuring His word. The work of man is to let God do His work – that is, to stop resisting.

The fulfillment of law in our lives is the basis for both the old and the new covenant. However, in the old covenant it is man who purposes to do the promises and the words of God. The old covenant – the promises of man – consists in resisting the voice of God, hardening the heart and setting one's heart to fulfil the words of God by oneself, and to obtain life through this fulfilment¹⁶⁶. In the new covenant, upon hearing the word of God, man does not harden his heart, but believes and allows Him to write His law in his mind and heart. That is what God wanted to do from the beginning with the people of Israel. This is God's covenant.

Let us see what the experience of the people of Israel was, from their time as slaves in the land of Egypt until they enter in Canaan.

1 Corinthians 10:¹¹ Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and **they are written for our admonition**, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

The experience of the Israelites is vital to understand, because it has been written specifically for us, who live in the last days.

What Happened to Israel after going into Egypt?

The Israelites have fallen into slavery, and they were heavily oppressed:

Isaiah 52:³ For thus saith the LORD, "**Ye have sold yourselves for nought; And ye shall be redeemed without money.**" ⁴For thus saith the Lord GOD, "**My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; And the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.**" ⁵Now therefore, **what have I here,**" saith the LORD, "That my people is taken away for nought? They that rule over them make them to howl," saith the LORD; "**And my name continually every day is blasphemed.**" ⁶Therefore **my people shall know my name:** Therefore *they shall know* in that day that I *am* he that doth speak: **behold, it is I."**

¹⁶⁶ Galatians 3:10-12

Firstly, we notice that the slavery of Egypt is the same as spiritual slavery. This is explained a couple of chapters earlier:

Isaiah 50:¹ Thus saith the LORD, “Where *is* the bill of your mother’s divorcement, whom I have put away? Or which of my creditors *is it* to whom I have sold you? Behold, **for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves**, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.”

The people who entered Egypt freely chose to become slaves to sin, and this spiritual slavery was consequently manifested in the physical realm. We see this being confirmed later on, when first the northern kingdom of Israel is taken captive into slavery by Assyria, and then the southern kingdom of Judah is taken by Babylon. What is spiritual precedes what is physical. When the people of Israel were captive in Medo-Persia, God spoke this of the Persian king Cyrus, a figure of Christ:

Isaiah 45:¹³ I have raised him up in righteousness, And I will direct all his ways: He shall build my city, and **he shall let go my captives, Not for price nor reward**, Saith the LORD of hosts.

“Not for price nor reward”: in this way also Christ would free the captives of Egypt: “not for price nor reward”. The people sold themselves for nothing, and would be redeemed without money.

Exodus 1:⁸ Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.

What happened in Egypt? A new king arose who, at least through his actions, did not know Joseph. A new dynasty arose that decided to ignore its commitments with the people of Israel, who were the reason for the prosperity of the Egyptian nation. Isaiah says that the Assyrians captured them for no reason. It is interesting that Assyria is a northern nation¹⁶⁷, but Egypt is the nation that is to the south of Israel. We thus see that it is a Pharaoh of Assyrian origin, who had conquered Egypt and was now sitting on the throne, who was oppressing the people of God. It is probably referring to the Hyksos¹⁶⁸, who first took control of Goshen and the Mediterranean ports, expelling the Israelites from the area they had been given, thus beginning their slavery. As further confirmation, we see that Manetho identifies them as having a name that comes from the region towards Anatolia. Here we have a genesis in the book of Exodus: a seed that would be repeated and expanded in the kingdom of the north and the kingdom of the south oppressing the people of God as stated in Daniel 11.

Isaiah 52:3-6 says it was the Assyrians who put them into captivity. God then asks Himself, “What have I here?” What do I do in this circumstance, in which my people

¹⁶⁷ Zephaniah 2:13

¹⁶⁸ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyksos>

are taken unjustly? Why does the Lord ask Himself that question? Because the Lord, as we will see later, is placed at a crossroads.

Those who lorded over Israel, God's people, make Him howl due to their oppression. And not only that, but they are also causing the Lord's name to be blasphemed continually every day. And what does blaspheming God's name consist of?

Romans 2:²³ Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through **breaking the law** dishonourest thou God? ²⁴ For **the name of God is blasphemed** among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

Blasphemy of God's name does not consist in pronouncing His name wrongly, but in breaking the law of God. God's name is His character, and we see the character of God reflected in His law and in Jesus Christ¹⁶⁹. The people of God had reached a state in which they were constantly breaking the law of God, that is, they were blaspheming His name every day. In this situation, God prepares Himself to free His people. The verse tells us:

Isaiah 52:⁶ Therefore my people shall know my name for this reason in that day: for even I that speak, behold, I shall be present. JUB

God was going to declare His name to them, that they might know His character. God would give them His law. And how would all this happen? Through God's personal presence.

The freedom that Israel have from Egypt is the freedom from sin and slavery, through the revelation of God's kingdom, character and righteousness to them. By giving them His presence He will free them. When we study the Scriptures, we see that Egypt is synonymous to idolatry, to sin, to opposition to Christ¹⁷⁰. Egypt was full of false gods. They had the sun god, called Ra. But the Egyptian people had fallen even lower, to the worship of animals. They worshiped the bull Apis, which is clearly revealed in the story of the golden calf. And among the pantheon of Egyptian gods, we also find the trinity of Isis, Osiris and Horus. Israel was in Egypt, daily immersed in this paganism. And it is evident that Israel was participating in the evil and idolatry that prevailed in Egypt, and they ended up being forced to do so.

When Moses went to the Pharaoh for the first time, he gave this reason why he was being asked to let Israel go:

Exodus 4:²³ And I say unto thee, Let my son go, **that he may serve me ...**

Evidently Israel was not being able to serve the Lord in Egypt.

¹⁶⁹ John 1:18, Matthew 11:27, John 17:4, 6

¹⁷⁰ Revelation 11:8, Judas 5, Acts 7:39

Psalm 105:⁴² For he remembered his holy promise, *And* Abraham his servant.
⁴³ And he brought forth his people with joy, *And* his chosen with gladness:
⁴⁴ And gave them the lands of the heathen: And they inherited the labour of the people; ⁴⁵ **That they might observe his statutes, And keep his laws.**
 Praise ye the LORD.

God had to remove them from Egypt because they couldn't keep His statutes nor obey His laws there. However, the strongest evidence that we have that Israel was wrapped in the idolatry and the sins of Egypt is found in the reproach given to the people for not wanting to forsake these sins.

Ezekiel 20:⁵ And say unto them, "Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when I chose Israel, and lifted up mine hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I lifted up mine hand unto them, saying, 'I *am* the LORD your God;' ⁶ In the day *that* I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which *is* the glory of all lands: ⁷ **Then said I unto them, 'Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I *am* the LORD your God.'** ⁸ **But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt:** then I said, 'I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.'"

We thus discover that the people of God, while in Egypt, needed a religious reformation. God asked them to cast away the abominations, and to forsake the idols of Egypt.

The verse of Isaiah 52 that we quoted previously is talking to people at the of end time, specifically the 144,000, and establishing a parallel with the deliverance of Egypt. Coming out of Egypt is corresponded to coming out of this evil world into a new world without sin. However, before we get into the details of the process of liberation, let's read the following:

Hosea 11:¹ When Israel *was* a child, then I loved him, And **called my son out of Egypt.**

Christ came close to God's people; He visited them to rescue them from idolatry and slavery. He declared this in Isaiah 52 when He said, "I shall be present" (JUB). Christ, in His intention to free them from the slavery of sin, promises His presence to them.

Yet Revelation says that Christ was crucified there in Egypt, just like He would be again in the great city long after the prophet John lived.

Revelation 11:⁸ And their dead bodies *shall lie in the street of the great city*, which spiritually is called Sodom and **Egypt**, where also our Lord was crucified.

And we notice the following: just like Abraham was rescued from Egypt by Christ, also:

- Ancient Israel was freed from Egypt by Christ,
- Christ was taken out of Egypt when He was a child,
- The children of Abraham will by faith also be freed from spiritual Egypt at the end of time.

This is the work of the gospel. The work that Christ did for Israel through Moses was to preach the gospel to the Israelites, given that the freedom that God wanted to give them was, first of all, spiritual. Because Paul describes it this way:

Hebrews 4:² For **unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them:** but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard *it*.

The people of Israel who were in Egypt and were set free received the good news, the gospel. And it was preached so well to them that, if we pay attention, this preaching becomes the standard by which we measure how to preach it. Early Christianity received a revelation of God in the gospel as good as the one that Israel received upon leaving Egypt.

The Rise of Moses

We remember that when the people of Israel were multiplied, the Pharaoh gave a decree that every Hebrew male that was born should be put to death¹⁷¹. But Moses' parents, both from the tribe of Levi, decided to disobey the Pharaoh's order and hid Moses for three months. But since it was becoming harder and harder to keep him hidden, they decided to make a basket out of reeds, and placed him in the river Nile, while his older sister watched him. Pharaoh's daughter came to the Nile with her maids, found the basket, and asked them to bring it to her. When she opened it, she found the baby inside. That's when Moses' sister Miriam intervened and, evidently seeing compassion in the princess, offered to find a caretaker among the Hebrew mothers for the baby. The princess consented to this, and Moses ended up being raised by his own family. Once grown, he was taken to Pharaoh's daughter, who adopted him and named him Moses¹⁷².

¹⁷¹ Exodus 1:15-16

¹⁷² Exodus 2:1-10

Stephen described it like this:

Acts 7:²⁰In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and **nourished up in his father's house three months:** ²¹And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter **took him up, and nourished him for her own son.** ²²And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.

Moses was taught all aspects of Egyptian knowledge. We also read:

Hebrews 11:²³**By faith** Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw *he was* a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. ²⁴**By faith Moses**, when he was come to years, **refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;** ²⁵Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; ²⁶Esteeming **the reproach of Christ** greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

It was an act of faith on the parents' part to hide their son. It was also an act of faith to not be afraid of the king's commandment, because they trusted that God would provide for them. It was also by faith that Moses, being an adult, received the strength to act according to God's will. And what precisely did this consist of?

1. Moses refused the position of an Egyptian prince. All the riches of Egypt were within his reach. Moses had been educated in all the arts of the most advanced civilization of his time; he was a general, whose skills included being an eloquent public speaker, and an ability to accomplish things that awakened admiration among the people of the nation. Moses had a promising future ahead of him in the eyes of the world. All this he chose to set aside. And when the Bible says he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, it tells us that Moses, due to the publicity of his decision, was urged, tempted, invited, and pressured to take all of these worldly temptations. And we can probably imagine all the taunting and insults he received because of his decision. However, Moses left everything to unite his destiny with an enslaved and despised people.

2. By refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he consequently chose to be mistreated with the people of God.

3. By refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he refused to enjoy the temporary pleasures of sin.

4. By choosing to be mistreated with the people of God, he chose the way and the will of God; he chose to follow the way of the Lord rather than enjoy a life of sin.

5. He treasured the word of God, and by joining his interests with the people of God, he appreciated the reproach of Christ and considered it a treasure. And what does the reproach of Christ consist of?

Hebrews 13:¹² Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. ¹³ Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, **bearing his reproach.**

Christ suffered outside, being hung on a cross in Golgotha – the reproach He bore is the cross. In the context of the cross we read:

Romans 15:³ For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, ‘**The reproaches** of them that reproached thee fell on me.’

Christ is reproached for doing God’s will, and so in like manner does Christ bear reproach in all His people who also do God’s will. Those who hate God will find fault with those who do God’s will.

Luke 9:²³ And he said to *them* all, “If any *man* will come after me, **let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily**, and follow me.”

Thus, we see that in the times of Egypt, bearing the cross of denying self¹⁷³ under insult and rebuke already existed. This way, Moses was able to say:

Galatians 2:²⁰ **I am crucified with Christ:** nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Moses followed the example of Christ who, upon the sin of Adam, was willing to give Himself and be counted with fallen mankind. In similar self-denial, Moses followed the word of the Lamb wherever it took him¹⁷⁴. And we are all called to follow this example¹⁷⁵.

6. Why did Moses reject those bright worldly opportunities, and instead accept the cross of Christ? He didn’t sacrifice something in the present simply with the hope of receiving something better in the future. Rather, he received in the present something much better: communion with Jesus Christ. Moses knew Christ well enough to rejoice in being able to endure in Jesus, as seeing Him who is invisible¹⁷⁶, during all the years of pilgrimage.

7. Christ was the leader who led and freed the people of Israel. To be freed from Egypt and receive the inheritance, the promise and the reward, Israel had to obtain it solely through Christ and the reproach of Christ.

¹⁷³ Matthew 16:24

¹⁷⁴ Revelation 15:3

¹⁷⁵ Hebrews 13:13

¹⁷⁶ Hebrews 11:27

Yet though Moses knew the Lord, he still didn't know Him well enough. We see this in the following incident, when Moses was 40 years old and had already placed his destiny together with the people of God:

Acts 7:²³ And when he was full forty years old, **it came into his heart to visit his brethren** the children of Israel. ²⁴ And seeing one of *them* suffer wrong, he defended *him*, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: ²⁵ For **he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.**

²⁶ And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, "Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?"

²⁷ But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? ²⁸ Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday?" ²⁹ Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons.

Moses evidently knew that the time of liberation was near, and he knew and understood that God would free his people through him. Not only that, Moses believed and understood that the people of Israel knew and understood it just like he did.

It is true that the Lord's purpose was to free Israel by the hand of Moses. However, the people of Israel didn't know or understand this. And Moses' attempt to free his people of oppression ended in a resounding failure due to the people's ignorance regarding him as an instrument of God. Also, even though Moses knew he was to be God's instrument, **he did not know how God wanted to deliver Israel, and he supposed that in his own strength, and in the strength of his knowledge and generalship,** he would free the children of Israel. He imposed his own idea of justice in killing the Egyptian. However, the freedom that God intended for His people would be obtained by other means, for this was not according to God's righteousness:

James 1:²⁰ For the wrath of man worketh not the **righteousness of God.**

God's promises are fulfilled by Himself. Moses tried to fulfill the promise of God, in his own strength and through carnal means, ignoring that:

2 Corinthians 10:⁴ (For **the weapons of our warfare are not carnal,** but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

Ephesians 6:¹² For **we wrestle not against flesh and blood,** but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.

Moses couldn't see that the Lord was going to fulfill His promise in a spiritual way rather than a carnal one. God was going to declare His name and righteousness in the liberation of the people of Israel, and this is not at all possible through carnal methods.

Nowadays we also face similar situations of oppression among men. Families are placed in the situation of having to enter into debt, which the Scriptures define as servanthood¹⁷⁷, in order to obtain a lifestyle according to the demands of society, leading both parents to work long hours to sustain this lifestyle. This means little time for spiritual life after the energy-draining week. Thus parents and their children passively take in whatever is in the worldly atmosphere – a place infested with crocodiles, or as the Bible puts it: “Babylon has become...the habitation of devils...and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird”¹⁷⁸. In this sense, there is slavery today just as there was in Egypt. However, both yesterday and today, God's concern over the oppressed has not changed. Because we read:

Proverbs 14:³¹ He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: ...

Psalm 69:³³ For the LORD heareth the poor, ...

Psalm 140:¹² I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted,
And the right of the poor.

Could it be that our temporal servitude has a spiritual correlation, as was the case of Israel in Egypt? God's methods have not changed; He wants to spiritually free us and then we will become materially free. For God, righteousness cannot be imposed by force. To use force in defense is to reject God's defense, and enter the same category as the oppressors. That is why the scripture says:

James 5:⁶ Ye have condemned *and* killed the just; *and* **he doth not resist you.**

We see that it is the just that does not resist. The man God justifies leaves all things in the hands of his Lord. That's why Christ Himself said:

Matthew 5:³⁹ ...That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

The weapons of resistance are spiritual. We are to resist sin, not to use sin to end sin. Those who understand this are called just by God.

So if human ways aren't what deliver the oppressed, what does? It is the good news of Christ: His cross and reproach, His invitation and call to deny ourselves and enter into communion with Him. It is the only remedy that brings true freedom from sin while also bringing physical freedom. This has been revealed individually and collectively

¹⁷⁷ Proverbs 22:7

¹⁷⁸ Revelation 18:2

throughout history, but will be manifested in its most complete sense at the end of time.

In this story we discover that Moses was in the old covenant. Moses was still not prepared for the great task he had before him. Moses then fled and lived as a stranger in the land of Midian, where for 40 years he was a shepherd and he had to let go of what he had learnt as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and learn of God and His character.

Moses had to forget Egypt. All the influences that had surrounded him, his love for his adoptive mother, his own position, the deceit that abounds in the interpersonal relationships within these environments, the religious mysticism, the adulation – all of that had to be forgotten. Only by leaving behind the magnificent buildings and the sumptuous rites of pagan religion, and by living in the wild desert caring for animals, would Moses form new character habits.

In the solitude of the mountains, in the brightness of the starry sky, Moses would be more sensitive to the impressions of the Spirit of God. There the majesty of God would be visible. He would be able to focus his mental efforts on God. Different lessons would be learnt there away from civilization. Through self-denial in the care of the sheep and the harshness of the environment, he would learn to be patient and to calm his passions, so much so that later it would be said of him:

Numbers 12:³ (Now the man Moses *was very meek*, above all the men which *were* upon the face of the earth.)

Most would have considered this 40-year period to be a waste of time, but God didn't see it this way. God saw that it was necessary for all this time to be spent doing the humble work of the shepherd. He needed to develop all the qualities that would allow him to care for the people of Israel, and this work in the desert turned into his ideal school. He needed to learn to be obedient. Only by being in complete harmony with God would he be able to teach the will of God.

The Purpose of God

God is a Consuming Fire

It is Moses the shepherd, now 80 years old and very far from his Egyptian past, who arrives at Mount Horeb (or Sinai) and sees the burning bush.

Exodus 3:² And the **angel of the LORD** appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, **the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.** ³ And Moses said, "I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." ⁴ And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, **God called unto him out of the midst of the bush,** and said, "Moses, Moses." And he said, "Here *am I.*" ⁵ And he said, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest *is holy ground.*" ⁶ Moreover he said, "I *am* the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And **Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.**

This angel of the Lord is the messenger¹⁷⁹ of the Lord¹⁸⁰: Jesus Himself, who is later mentioned repeatedly throughout the book of Exodus. When the Lord saw that Moses went to see what was happening, God called him from the midst of the bush. There was a burning bush, but this bush wasn't consumed. Regarding this, we find:

Hebrews 12:²⁹ For our God *is a consuming fire.*

God is a consuming fire, yet the bush was not consumed. And we read:

Isaiah 33:¹⁴ The sinners in Zion are afraid; Fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. **Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?**

Evidently, God is a fire that consumes sin and the sinner, without consuming what is not, nor does not have, sin. And in this context, Moses was afraid of looking at God. Because he knew that God is:

1 Timothy 6:¹⁶ [One] Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, **nor can see.**

¹⁷⁹ Strong #4397, מַלְאָכִים *mal'âk, mal-awk'*; from an unused root mean. to *despatch* as a deputy; a *messenger*; spec. of God, i.e. an *angel* (also a prophet, priest or teacher):—ambassador, angel, king, messenger.

¹⁸⁰ Malachi 3:1

Moses already knew that the sinner cannot behold God and live¹⁸¹. Thus, he hid or covered his face.

The Longing of God for Israel

God asks Moses to remove his shoes because the place where he is standing is holy ground. Now, there was no particularly special quality in the soil of this place. It was rather the presence of God which made that place holy:

Leviticus 11:⁴⁵ For I *am* the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: **ye shall therefore be holy, for I *am* holy.**

God is holy, and His glory sanctifies.

Exodus 29:⁴³ And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and *the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory.*

God also identifies Himself as He who had made the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is to remind Moses of the heritage of the past and the promises of their future. God comes to repeat the same covenant made with Abraham, but now with the people of Israel in the person of Moses.

Exodus 3:¹⁰ **“Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.”**

¹¹ And Moses said unto God, “Who *am* I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

¹² And he said, “Certainly **I will be with thee**; and this *shall be* a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.”

God purposes to take Israel out of Egypt to deliver them from sin. Remember that living in the land, without victory over sin, was not enough to be considered as receiving the promise, as Stephen stated:

Acts 7:⁴ Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he [God] removed him [Abraham] into this land, wherein ye now dwell. ⁵ And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not *so much as* to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when *as yet* he had no child.”

¹⁸¹ Exodus 33:20

What we are told is that it was promised to Abraham and that it would be given as a possession to him and his seed after him *forever*. Thus, we are told that the fulfillment of the promise required the resurrection of Abraham, and that the giving of the possession would be for both Abraham and his Seed together. And we continue reading:

Acts 7:¹⁷ But **when the time of the promise drew nigh**, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,

The time of the promise drew nigh. When Moses is called to speak with the Pharaoh, the time was nigh for the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham. And what did this promise consist of? We read:

Romans 4:¹³ **For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world**, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

The promise made to Abraham was the promise of the land – “the [whole] world”. God’s promise was the inheritance of the new restored earth, given to Abraham and his Seed together. And Paul explains to us:

Galatians 3:¹⁶ Now **to Abraham and his seed were the promises made**. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, **which is Christ**.

The promise of the inheritance of the land, the restitution of the lost land, had been given to Abraham and to Christ, and to all those who are of Christ. **When God intends to free Israel from Egypt, He had in mind to give them the land as an inheritance, and to give it to them together with Abraham and the Seed, which is Christ and all those who are of Christ**. God purposed in that moment to begin to fulfill the promise made to Abraham.

For this to happen, Abraham would have to be resurrected, and all of the rest of His seed that had died, for them to receive the promise together. God was ready to free Israel and to place them in such an advantageous situation that the Seed, that is, Christ and all those who are of Christ, could be manifested. God’s intention was to bring the good news of the gospel the whole world and complete the work of redemption.

We don’t know how long this would have taken. We have as a reference the story of the twelve disciples who impacted the world in one generation. However, what Stephen is saying is that the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham and his Seed had drawn near in the deliverance brought by Moses’ hand.

Having established this, of which we’ll find additional evidence as we unfold the story, let us go back to Stephen’s speech, because it is necessary to reinforce this concept by emphasizing a particular word. Stephen said:

Acts 7:¹⁷ But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which **God had sworn** to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,

“When the time drew nigh of the promise which God had sworn.” What oath is this referring to?

The time that God made an oath, for our benefit, was after Abraham offered his beloved only begotten son¹⁸². And it is specifically these promises that God was planning in that moment to fulfill to Abraham, Christ and those who are of Christ. Let us read it again:

Genesis 22:¹⁵ And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, ¹⁶ And said, “**By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD**, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: ¹⁷ That **in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed** as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore; and **thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;** ¹⁸ **And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;** because thou hast obeyed my voice.”

The promise that the Seed of Abraham would possess the gate of his enemies is a promise of victory over sin through Jesus Christ. That’s why it says:

Genesis 3:¹⁵ And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; **it shall bruise thy head, ...**

This promise made to Abraham was the same promise made to Adam and Eve. It is the fulfillment of the promise that the enemies of Christ would be made his footstool¹⁸³. We confirm this when Zechariah, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesies:

Luke 1:⁷¹ That we should be saved from our enemies, And from the hand of all that hate us; ⁷² To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers, And to remember his holy covenant; ⁷³ **The oath which he sware to our father Abraham,** ⁷⁴ That he would grant unto us, that we **being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear,** ⁷⁵ **In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.**

Zechariah, referring directly to the oath made to Abraham, confirms to us that God makes us possess the gate of our enemies¹⁸⁴ by freeing us from our sins through Jesus,

¹⁸² Hebrews 11:17

¹⁸³ Hebrews 1:13; 10:13

¹⁸⁴ Romans 16:20

the Lamb of God¹⁸⁵. Through Christ we are delivered to be able to serve our God in holiness and righteousness.

The prophecy is that we might serve our God without fear. This demands a knowledge of God and His love, since only perfect love casts out fear¹⁸⁶. Only Christ¹⁸⁷, the Son of God, fully knows this love and can manifest it to us; thus only He could crush the head of the serpent achieving the following:

Revelation 1:18 *I am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; **and have the keys of hell and of death.**

1 Corinthians 15:26 The **last enemy** that shall be destroyed **is death.**

The promise included the abolition of death. Through the resurrection of the dead, Abraham and all those who are of Christ would be freed from their enemies, remembering that we wrestle not against flesh and blood. Our greatest enemy is Satan, who ruled over us through the power of the fear of death¹⁸⁸.

All this God was ready to carry out in the days of deliverance from Egypt. And it is for this reason that God tells them, through Moses, at the foot of Mount Sinai:

Exodus 19:6 And ye shall be unto me **a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.** These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

The calling of priests is for the entire nation, not only for the tribe of Levi. It is a calling to the ministry of Melchizedek, who was a king and a priest. It is a calling that the people of Israel might hand out bread and wine¹⁸⁹ and might bless all the nations of the earth¹⁹⁰. It is exactly the same calling that Jesus asks of us:

1 Peter 2:9 But ye *are* a chosen generation, a **royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people;** that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

The people of Israel were then called to be a light to the nations of the world. In this global mission of preaching the gospel, the first land where they would dwell as missionaries of the cross would be Canaan, because this is what the Lord says to Moses out of the burning bush:

¹⁸⁵ John 1:29

¹⁸⁶ 1 John 4:8, 9, 16-18

¹⁸⁷ Matthew 11:27

¹⁸⁸ Hebrews 2:14

¹⁸⁹ Genesis 14:18-19; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25

¹⁹⁰ Genesis 12:3

Exodus 3:⁷ And the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; ⁸ And **I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.** ⁹ Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them."

40 years earlier it had not been the time for this to happen. So how would Moses react to God's word?

The Name of God

To all this, Moses asks:

Exodus 3:¹³ And Moses said unto God, "Behold, *when* I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, 'The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you;' and they shall say to me, '**What is his name?**' what shall I say unto them?" ¹⁴ And **God said unto Moses, "I AM THAT I AM:"** and he said, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, '**I AM hath sent me unto you.**'"

The term I AM is filled with meaning. It includes the following: I am who I am, I am He who is, I am He who was, I am He who exists, I am He who will be, I am He who continues, etc. These same references are found in the New Testament when reference is made to the living God¹⁹¹, to the One who has life in Himself¹⁹² and the One who was, and is, and is to come¹⁹³. Thus, we see that God is life; He has given life, continues to give life, and will come to give eternal life. How appropriate is this name when we see everything that God was purposing to do with Israel!

And when God says to Moses, "I am who I am", one might ask: and what is God? We read in the Bible that God is love¹⁹⁴. We also read in the Scriptures that God is Spirit¹⁹⁵. But what else is in God's name?

¹⁹¹ Acts 14:15, 1 Thessalonians 1:9, Matthew 16:16, 1 Timothy 3:15

¹⁹² John 5:26

¹⁹³ Revelation 1:4; 4:8

¹⁹⁴ 1 John 4:8

¹⁹⁵ John 4:24

Romans 2:²³ Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through **breaking the law** dishonourest thou God? ²⁴ For **the name of God is blasphemed** among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

Name is character, and since we are speaking of God, it is the character of God. This character is reflected or manifested in His law. That law of love is a transcript of His character. Thus, the proclamation and manifestation of the name of God is the proclamation and manifestation of God's character. And it is in this sense that Jesus, when praying to the Father, says, "I have manifested thy name"¹⁹⁶. It was Christ who perfectly proclaimed in His life, in every word, every action, every look, every gesture, the loving character – fulfilling perfectly the law – of our heavenly Father. Thus we see the meaning and the message of the name of God that is given to Moses.

Exodus 3:¹⁵ And God said moreover unto Moses, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, 'The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: **this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.**'"

God declares His name to Moses: He explains His qualities, His attributes, and He charges Moses with declaring His name to the children of Israel. In this way begins a process of an increasing revelation of the glorious character of God, first to Moses, then to Israel, then to the Pharaoh and the Egyptians, finding its peak in the revelation to Moses and Israel on Mount Sinai¹⁹⁷.

The Divine Pattern

God sends Moses to speak with the children of Israel, specifically with the elders of the people of Israel, to tell them that God had seen what was happening to them in Egypt, and of the promise He was giving them:

Exodus 3:¹⁷ ... I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt ...

The Lord also tells Moses and the Israelite elders to speak with the king of Egypt.

It's interesting that Moses, who forty years earlier had been willing to go forward with this work, now wasn't so sure. We won't enter into the dialogue and the signs that God gave Him, but we remember that when God gives a promise and makes a request, He enables the recipient of the message also. And God calls Aaron, Moses' brother, to be his speaker. We read the details here:

Exodus 4:¹⁴ And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, "*Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that **he can speak well.***"

¹⁹⁶ John 17:6

¹⁹⁷ Daniel 9:15; Isaiah 63:14

And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. ¹⁵ And **thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do.** ¹⁶ And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, *even* he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God."

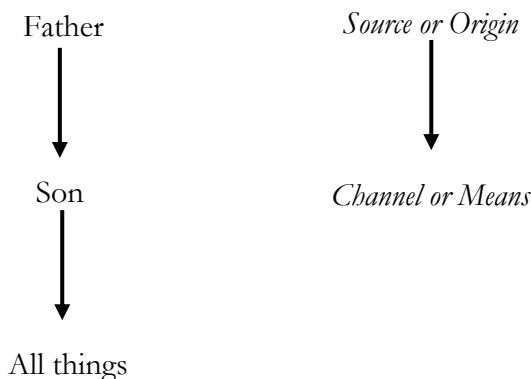
And we also read:

Exodus 7:¹ And the LORD said unto Moses, "See, **I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.** ² Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land."

God, after Moses insisted in his inability, gives him a solution based on the relationship between the Father and the Son.

1 Corinthians 8:⁶ But to us *there is but* one God, the Father, **of whom** are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, **by whom** are all things, and we by him.

The Father is the source, and from Him are all things. Jesus is the channel, the means¹⁹⁸ through which all things have their being and existence¹⁹⁹. The Father does all things through the Son. The Son reveals and makes known the will of the Father, He is the audible expression of the Father's thoughts, and as a result, He is called the Word of God.



God made in them Moses and Aaron a figure of God and Christ, in which Moses is a symbol of God, a true representation (because God cannot lie) of Himself, that is, a being, a person, and Aaron is a symbol of Christ, the audible expression of the

¹⁹⁸ Hebrews 1:2

¹⁹⁹ John 1:2, 3; Colossians 1:17

thoughts and words of Moses. This way, according to the Divine Pattern, Moses becomes the source and Aaron becomes the channel of the message²⁰⁰.

God also promised that He would teach Moses and Aaron what they should say and how they should say it, a promise of the new covenant:

Matthew 10:²⁰ For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

In that way, God enables Moses and Aaron to speak to the elders of Israel, to the people of Israel and to the Pharaoh.

Religious Freedom

And the message to be given to Pharaoh is the following:

Exodus 3:¹⁸ “And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, ‘**The LORD God of the Hebrews hath met with us:** and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.’”

In addition:

Exodus 5:¹ And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, “Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, ‘**Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.**’”

² And Pharaoh said, “Who *is* the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.”

³ And they said, “**The God of the Hebrews hath met with us:** let us go, we pray thee, three days’ journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the LORD our God; **lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.**”

The first thing we notice is that the Lord God says that He has “met with” the Hebrews. This is an interesting expression. The sheep had gotten lost, and the Good Shepherd went out to look for them²⁰¹. He finds them lost and enslaved in their sins and submitted to a cruel servanthood.

The next thing to note is that God tells Moses to ask permission from the Pharaoh. How interesting and marvelous is this! They do not come in by kicking the door open and yelling, “We’re leaving!” Not at all. He also doesn’t take them out secretly. Rather,

²⁰⁰ 1 Corinthians 8:6

²⁰¹ Luke 15:3-7

God, teaching in this way respect for established authority, makes an appeal through Moses that the people might be allowed to leave.

The next thing to highlight from this text is that the first request to Pharaoh is to be allowed to go three days' journey into the desert. What for? To offer sacrifices to God. And this is totally reasonable, since the sacrifices that the people of Israel wanted to offer were an abomination to the Egyptians, so doing it in their presence would have put them in danger of being stoned²⁰². What's more, the request is to be allowed to go three days' journey into the desert to hold a feast. God was planning a spiritual retreat for them. They could not be spiritually ready without first having a spiritual retreat, a feast, a place where they could be away from the typical whirlwind of slavery and daily worries, and could exclusively dedicate themselves to consider the providences, the blessings and the words of God. This request – “Let my people go that they may hold a feast...” – has, from now on, connotations of religious freedom.

The other aspect is that if God could not have communion with His people, then “pestilence and sword will fall over us”, says Moses, in this way including both the Israelite nation and the Egyptians. Egypt had become disconnected from the source of life, the consequence being calamity, but God was offering them a chance to once again come under His protection by blessing the Israelites with religious freedom. This refusal of God would give Satan free rein over the land, leading to pestilence and sword, a foreshadowing for us of predicted end-time events²⁰³.

This was the initial request: that the Pharaoh allow the people to have their feast or their spiritual retreat, and then return so that the blessing received might be as a consequence poured on the Egyptians as well. What was the response?

Exodus 5:2 “...**Who is the LORD**, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? **I know not the LORD**, neither will I let Israel go.”

This refusal, this deliberate lack of knowledge of God, ends up becoming a symbol that is found throughout the rest of humanity's history. We clearly see the seeds of atheism manifested, whose motto is: Who is God? I don't owe Him anything; why should I listen to Him?

The Longing of God for the Pharaoh and the People of Egypt

However, we ask ourselves: What was God's purpose regarding the Pharaoh and the Egyptian nation? Let's remember what Peter said:

²⁰² Exodus 8:26

²⁰³ Revelation 13:14-17; 14:9-11

Acts 10:³⁴ Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: ³⁵ But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”

This is true through all ages, because God changes not²⁰⁴. God is perfectly impartial with every person and group of people. He is pleased with all those who listen to His voice in their conscience. He seeks to bless everyone with His light and deliverance. We remember:

1 Timothy 2:³ For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; ⁴ **Who will have all men to be saved**, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

God desires all men to be saved. God desires all to come to the knowledge of the truth regarding Himself as it is revealed in Christ, and the truth regarding themselves and their condition. We also read:

Ezekiel 33:¹¹ Say unto them, ‘As I live, saith the Lord GOD, **I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked**; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?’

God does not want the death of the wicked. God longs for all to live, and this included Egypt in its sinful state.

Having established this, we remember that the promise had been made to everyone who would be in Christ. Jesus is the only one who can do the true circumcision, the circumcision of the heart.

Galatians 3:²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ **And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.**

It doesn’t matter if you’re Greek, Jewish, Egyptian or Taliban. If we are of Christ, we are His and heirs of the promise made to Abraham. This being so, the promise also included all the Egyptians, specifically those who believed Him. The promise made to Abraham was to be extended to all the nations of the earth, starting with the land of Egypt, to whom the Israelites were to evangelize. The promise did not include those who did not believe in the word of the Lord, no matter if they were Israelites or Egyptians. And as part of His desire for the Egyptian people, God had a specific longing regarding the Pharaoh. Let us read it:

Exodus 9:¹³ And the LORD said unto Moses, “Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, ‘Thus saith the LORD God of

²⁰⁴ James 1:17, Numbers 23:19

the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.' ... ¹⁶ **And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth."**

Why did God raise him up as Pharaoh? Let us remember that it is God who removes kings and sets up kings²⁰⁵. What did God keep Pharaoh in power for? Why did God preserve and protect his life until that moment? God raised him up to show in him His power, that His name might be declared throughout all the earth. And what is the power of God?

1 Corinthians 1:²³ But we preach Christ crucified, ... ²⁴ **Christ the power of God,** and the wisdom of God.

Romans 1:¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God** unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Thus, we see that Christ is the power of God. And this power is found in the gospel, in the good news. It is power to those who believe. The gospel is power unto salvation to every one that believes, no matter where they're from. And God longs to give power to us to have life more abundantly:

Isaiah 40:²⁹ He giveth **power** to the faint; And to *them that have* no might he increaseth strength.

It is God who gives strength, power, and ability. And how does the Lord do it?

Acts 1:⁸ But **ye shall receive power**, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you ...

God gives power through the Holy Spirit. If Pharaoh accepts Christ, then through the Holy Spirit God might give power to his testimony, which would have been unrivalled. God had caused Pharaoh to stand²⁰⁶ to be able to reveal Christ in him. As it is revealed in the Great Commission²⁰⁷, the name that God revealed to Moses, and then showed the people of Israel, and now to Pharaoh, was revealed so that it might be taken to the whole earth.

Luke 24:⁴⁷ And that repentance and remission of sins **should be preached in his name** among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

The same calling that is given to the disciples was extended to the Egyptian people in the message to Pharaoh. God had in Pharaoh the same purpose that He had with

²⁰⁵ Daniel 2:21

²⁰⁶ Exodus 9:16 And yet for this **I have caused thee to stand**, so as to show thee My power, and for the sake of declaring My Name in all the earth (YLT)

²⁰⁷ Matthew 28:19

Cyrus, which was to free His people, and to make known the glory of His name throughout all the earth.

In a hasty reading of the text, some of us might imagine that God had raised up Pharaoh with the specific purpose of pouring His wrath and vengeance on him. But how could this idea honor our God? The evidence that we have been gathering is that God is not a God of vengeance; He is a loving Father who is no respecter of persons. He desired Pharaoh to accept the calling and thus manifest the power of the gospel and be the first fruits of the gentiles. However, Pharaoh rejected this high calling and hardened his heart, just as the Israelites did later in the wilderness.

Although God's plans were delayed by the mistakes of the Pharaoh and the people of Israel, they will finally find their fulfillment, because the promise says:

Matthew 24:¹⁴ And **this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world** for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

Psalms 86:⁹ All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; And shall glorify thy name. ¹⁰For thou *art* great, and doest wondrous things: Thou *art* God alone.

Habakkuk 2:¹⁴ For **the earth shall be filled with the knowledge** of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

Revelation 18:¹ And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and **the earth was lightened with his glory**.

God wants Pharaoh to accept but, knowing his heart, laments because He knows what the result of this appeal will be. We have previously read:

Isaiah 52:⁴ For thus saith the Lord GOD, 'My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; And the Assyrian oppressed them without cause. ⁵Now therefore, **what have I here, saith the LORD, That my people is taken away for nought?** They that rule over them make them to howl, saith the LORD; And my name continually every day *is* blasphemed.'

What is the Lord to do? His name, that is His character and His love, was continually being blasphemed, the wickedness was so great that the land would vomit them up²⁰⁸. Notice how God tells Moses how He saw the situation unfolding:

Exodus 3:¹⁹ And **I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.** ²⁰And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.

²⁰⁸ Leviticus 18:3, 28

And later on, He says:

Exodus 4:21 And the LORD said unto Moses, “When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but **I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.**”

The Hardening of the Heart

God had given Moses wonders to do to convince Pharaoh. However, the Lord said: “I will harden the Pharaoh’s heart”. And how would this happen? To think that God would specifically harden Pharaoh’s heart against his own will, so that he would not be able to repent if he so desired, is to attribute evil to God. To think that God would push a man who would come to Him away, and by this achieve His purposes, is to stain God’s perfect graciousness.

Many of us have had stages in our lives in which we’ve had this idea of God. But it doesn’t match with God’s character²⁰⁹, with the expression of love in giving His Son²¹⁰; it is not in harmony with the testimony and the life lived by Christ here on earth.

How, then, did this process of hardening occur? We all have friends who, because of their different worldview to us, are sensitive to certain topics. Based on previous experience, we know that some subjects will produce an immediate rejection to a continued dialogue.

Should we try to continue to dialogue and attempt to go deeper into this topic? Or should we, for the sake of keeping the relationship, give up the possibility of talking further about the topic? Having lived through this, I’ve learnt that there are specific Biblical topics that in some people are automatically responded to with a hardening of the heart.

It is in this sense that God hardens Pharaoh’s heart. God asks Pharaoh permission for His people to go on a spiritual retreat, that pestilence and plagues might not come over Israelites nor Egyptians. And it is there, before God’s word, that Pharaoh’s heart is hardened. He doesn’t want, in the least bit, to hear about letting his enslaved work force leave for a few days. By no means! Thus Pharaoh hardened his own heart²¹¹ against the word of God.

This experience towards God is not at all unusual to human beings. It can be compared to sunlight hardening clay. Is it really the sunlight, or is it the properties of

²⁰⁹ 1 John 4:8

²¹⁰ Romans 8:32

²¹¹ Exodus 8:32

the clay itself, that cause it to be hardened under the sunlight? Other things aren't hardened by sunlight. Did the sun change when it came to the clay, or did the clay change when it met the sun? Did God change Pharaoh, or did Pharaoh change in the presence of God? This sad experience can be seen throughout the Scriptures:

John 3:¹⁷ For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. ¹⁸ He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not **is condemned already**, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹ And **this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light**, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. ²¹ But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

The light of God's word comes, yet some love darkness, and as a consequence, reject and fight against the Word and crucify it. Others come to the light; they listen to the voice in their conscience and they come to Christ. Elsewhere it says:

Matthew 6:²³ But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. **If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!**

The word of blessing becomes a terrible curse for those who reject it, not because this is God's will, but because the only source of life, truth, light, joy, peace and love is refused. Without this, men are only left with evil, darkness and death.

God reaches out to Pharaoh by asking him to give a little mercy to an enslaved people. And here we find another incredible paradox: that it is the manifestation of God's mercy for His people that hardens Pharaoh's heart. Egypt was thriving among the nations because of Joseph's wise rule. The people of Israel contributed to the prosperity of the nation with their presence and commercial prowess. And on top of that, the economic prosperity of Egypt had been expanded by turning the Hebrews into slaves. But this condition of the Hebrews was causing Pharaoh to lose the blessing he was to receive through them as a consecrated people to the Creator, and thus the request to Pharaoh from God to bring the Hebrews back into connection with Him.

It's true that this word did not seem to suggest prosperity for the king, but God was looking for Pharaoh's agreement. Often the true causes of prosperity and calamity are not clear to men. Might not he have remembered how God use Joseph to get Egypt through hard times in the past? If he had acknowledged Him, wouldn't he have been blessed?

Deuteronomy 28:⁶ Blessed *shalt* thou *be* when thou comest in, and blessed *shalt* thou *be* when thou goest out.

If Joseph's entrance as a slave had resulted in a blessing for Egypt, why wouldn't the going out of Joseph's descendants also result in blessing?

But Pharaoh would not have that blessing. So the following happened to him:

Isaiah 26:¹⁰ Let favour be shewed to the wicked, *yet* will he not learn righteousness: In the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD.

We need not think that Pharaoh was an isolated case in his meeting God's word with a lack of faith and trust and acceptance, for the Israelites who came out of Egypt themselves – the people who were saved with great miracles – also later would do the same as Pharaoh, hardening their hearts, taking offense to God's leading, and finally dying in the wilderness.

The Exodus from Egypt

A Spiritual Retreat and the Sabbath

Moses and Aaron come and share to the Israelites what God has said to them. The people believed the words and worshiped God. Thus, a process of religious reform began in the people of Israel with Moses's coming. This reform would move forward and backward according to how the Israelites' faith responded to the experience they went through.

The Word of God was met with no faith from the Pharaoh. The message given to the Pharaoh brought with it, as a first consequence, a hardening in the oppression towards the people of Israel. We read:

Exodus 5:⁴ And the king of Egypt said unto them, "**Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? get you unto your burdens.**"
⁵ And Pharaoh said, "Behold, the people of the land now *are* many, and **ye make them rest from their burdens.**" ⁶ And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying, ⁷"Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves."

Pharaoh was upset to see Moses telling the people to rest and stop working.. This word "rest" is the root of the word "sabbath". One of the first reforms to prepare the people to leave slavery and enter the promised land was to keep the seventh-day Sabbath holy. Thus, they worshiped God.

Pharaoh's response was to give them more work to make sure that on Sabbath they might also be busy. The Israelites could not do the added work showing that they were already at the limit of their work capacity. Unable to manage the new task, the people began to be beaten. The Israelite officers appealed, but the Pharaoh did not give up his demands, so the officers, turning to Moses and Aaron, said to them:

Exodus 5:²¹ "... The LORD look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us."

God Repeats His Name and Covenant

Moses questions God about this, manifesting doubt and impatience himself. This is how the Lord responds:

Exodus 6:¹ "... Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land."

God starts by asking Moses to see: because the Lord would make Pharaoh drive them out of the land of Egypt himself.

Exodus 6:² And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, "**I am the LORD:** ³And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by *the name of God Almighty*, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. ⁴And **I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.** ⁵And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and **I have remembered my covenant.**"

The Lord declares His name: I Am Who I Am, or Jehovah. And He continues saying, "I am he who appeared unto Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I am the same God Almighty, who lives forever". The deliverance from Egypt that is being attempted is perfectly possible for the Almighty God, though it might seem impossible from a human point of view.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had not known God by the name of Jehovah. Thus we learn that these patriarchs were righteous by faith without the knowledge of the exact phonetic pronunciation of the name of Jehovah. God heard the cry of the children of Israel, and He remembered His covenant with them. He would fulfill the promise of a better country, with a capital city whose streets are golden – if the Israelites would let Him.

And God continues speaking to Moses, and says to him:

Exodus 6:⁵ "And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and **I have remembered my covenant.** ⁶Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I *am* the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: ⁷And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. ⁸And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I *am* the LORD."

"Remembering" doesn't mean that the Lord forgot and now it comes to His mind again. Nothing escapes the Lord's attention, as it is written that even though a worldly mother might forget her children (something incredibly difficult), He will never forget

His people²¹². The word “remember” is used to indicate that the Lord is about to do something. The following is an example of this:

Genesis 8:¹ And **God remembered Noah**, and every living thing, and all the cattle that *was* with him in the ark: **and God made a wind to pass over the earth**, and the waters asswaged;

“Remembered” doesn’t mean that God had forgotten Noah, but that He was about to do what He purposed to do. God remembered His covenant, meaning He was preparing to execute His covenant. The revelation of Jesus Christ, the preaching of the gospel to the whole world, the resurrection of Abraham and of all who are of Christ is announced as happening soon and through Israel. And to that Seed, to Christ, the whole new earth would be given, including the land of Canaan.

What is the Lord going to do? Let us note here the statements and promises of the Lord:

1. I am the Lord
2. I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians
3. I will rid you out of their bondage
4. I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments
5. I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God, and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians
6. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it to you for an heritage
7. I am the Lord

There are seven “I’s”, seven times in which God identifies Himself in the first person, and gives His word and His promise. God would do all these promises. It was not the work of the Israelites to fulfill the promises of God, but to say Yes and Amen.

God says “ye will know that I am the Lord your God”. This is the new covenant promise²¹³ of God. He was going to forgive their sins and iniquities and was going to give them the Holy Spirit who would write the law in their hearts, and by doing this, they would truly know God. And how did the people react?

Exodus 6:⁹And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but **they hearkened not** unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.

The people did not hear God’s message. Because of their time of slavery and lack of knowledge of God, they didn’t believe what God promised to them through Moses.

²¹² Isaiah 49:14-15

²¹³ Hebrews 8:10-11

This is the first sign of a lack of faith in the Israelites. The Lord, knowing their condition, patiently worked in order to place them in more favorable conditions in which they might receive the covenant without obstacles.

The Hardening of the Heart, the Plagues and Evil Angels

Since Pharaoh didn't want to hear the Lord, Moses and Aaron showed him the signs that the Lord had given them. However, the magicians repeated the signs done by Aaron, but it was still clear that in the Lord there was a greater power, since Aaron's rod-turned-to-serpent devoured the others. In spite of this, Pharaoh hardened his heart²¹⁴.

Then we see the first plague, in which the river returns the blood of the children thrown into it. The message to Pharaoh was, "Let my people go... so far you have not wanted to hear me, ... in this you will know that I am the Lord". The magicians also repeated the sign, and the Pharaoh hardened his heart.

After 7 days passed, a message from God came to the Pharaoh, asking him to let the people go, and if he did not let them go, frogs would fill the land²¹⁵. The magicians did so, too, as if they didn't have enough frogs around. However, in this occasion, the Pharaoh acknowledged the Lord in this way:

Exodus 8:8 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, "**Intreat the LORD**, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the LORD."

Pharaoh acknowledged the existence of the Lord and referred to Him by name, and asked for the plague to be removed. He also promised to let the people go. God fulfilled His word, in spite of the fact that, as He had predicted, the Pharaoh hardened his heart.

Exodus 8:15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, **he hardened his heart, and hearkened not** unto them; as the LORD had said.

The text clearly says that it was the Pharaoh who hardened his own heart. Here we have the Pharaoh manifesting the carnal man. In him is manifested the prompt Yes and No. Man's word of promise towards God is unstable, and man is unable to fulfill it.

²¹⁴ Exodus 7:8-13

²¹⁵ Exodus 8:1-15

As a consequence, the plague of lice came²¹⁶, which the magicians could not repeat, and they recognized that this was “the finger of God”.

Exodus 8:¹⁹ Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, “*This is the finger of God: and **Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he hearkened not** unto them;*” as the LORD had said.

The plague of flies²¹⁷ was the next plague. God freed the people of Israel who lived in Goshen from this plague, that this might be a sign that the Lord is God over the earth. This sign was also an object lesson that the Pharaoh, in his decisions, was closing the doors of redemption for the Egyptian people. Israel was spared from all the following plagues in contrast to the first three that fell on everyone, showing that the destinies of the two nations were diverging.

In response to the flies, Pharaoh promised to let the people go with the condition that they not go farther than a three days’ walk into the desert. But again, once the plague stopped Pharaoh changed his mind.

Exodus 8:³² And **Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also**, neither would he let the people go.

Warning after warning was sent and met with heart desensitizing rejection, which led to more disastrous consequences. The livestock²¹⁸ were destroyed and then there was ulcers and boils²¹⁹, to which Pharaoh’s heart hardened even more. The situation was getting serious, and God pleads with Pharaoh:

Exodus 9:¹³ And the LORD said unto Moses, “Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, ‘Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. ¹⁴For **I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people;** that thou mayest know that *there is* none like me in all the earth. ¹⁵For now **I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth.** ¹⁶And in very deed for this *cause* have I raised thee up, for to shew *in* thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. ¹⁷As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go? ¹⁸Behold, to morrow about this time **I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail**, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now. ¹⁹**Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field,**

²¹⁶ Exodus 8:16-19

²¹⁷ Exodus 8:20-32

²¹⁸ Exodus 9:1-7

²¹⁹ Exodus 9:8-12

and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die.”

We see how God changes His use of words as the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart becomes more marked. God tells Pharaoh that He will stretch out His hand and smite the people and Pharaoh’s heart. The truth is that God does not want the death of the wicked. God seeks to give Pharaoh a conviction of sin, since the way he was choosing would only end in death. God asks him, “Do you yet exalt yourself?

God warns that the next calamity is terrible, and tells Pharaoh to tell all the people to come inside, with their livestock, so as not to be killed²²⁰. We see God’s care in wanting to save, even as He must allow the results of wickedness and mercy rejected to play out.

Our tendency as human beings is to think that it was God who personally caused, created and sent the storm of hail to Egypt. Could it be that it was God who sent down hail and at the same time warned of it and told everyone to protect themselves? Could it be that God hurts with one hand and protects with the other? The following verses will explain the dynamics behind these events:

Psalm 78:⁴³ **How he had wrought his signs in Egypt**, and his wonders in the field of Zoan: ⁴⁴ **And had turned their rivers into blood**; And their floods, that they could not drink. ⁴⁵ **He sent divers sorts of flies** among them, which devoured them; **And frogs**, which destroyed them. ⁴⁶ **He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar**, And their labour unto **the locust**. ⁴⁷ **He destroyed their vines with hail**, And their **sycomore trees with frost**. ⁴⁸ **He gave up their cattle also to the hail**, And their **flocks to hot thunderbolts**. ⁴⁹ **He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, Wrath, and indignation, and trouble, By sending evil angels among them.**

In the description of all these plagues, we see that God sent over them the “fierceness of His anger, wrath, indignation and trouble”. It is necessary to highlight that the fierceness of God’s wrath includes “trouble”, meaning anguish. Christ was anguished because He sent over them an army of destroying angels: “evil angels”; these are evidently not angels of God. The word “evil” is the same word used in reference to the tree of good and “evil”. Let us see what “send” means, according to the original language:

Strong: 4917. מִשְׁלַחַת **mishlachath**, *mish-lakh'-ath*; fem. of 4916; a *mission*, i.e. (abstr. and favorable) *release*, or (concr. and unfavorable) an *army*:—discharge, sending.

²²⁰ Exodus 9:13-35

Thus God, in an “abstract and favorable” sense, sends in mission; and it also means, in a “concrete and unfavorable” sense to discharge an army – to set them loose. We thus see that all these plagues, which clearly have a concrete unfavorable connotation, came as a result of God allowing an army of evil destroying angels to act.

In other words, there was an army of destroying angels that was looming over the four ends of the land of Egypt, but the angels of God held back these destructive winds or spirits. The process of the plagues shows that the Pharaoh, by hardening his heart, took away from God His protective hand, indicating to the protective angels to release the army of evil angels to act, and these do the destructive work manifested in the plagues.

God in His mercy warned the Pharaoh and the people of what would happen. And there were some among the Egyptians who listened and saved themselves and their animals by coming inside.

Exodus 9:²⁰ He that feared the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses: ²¹ And **he that regarded not the word of the LORD** left his servants and his cattle in the field.

Destruction then came by a grievous “fire [lightning] mingled with hail”. Destruction fell by the evil angels who now, without God’s restrictions, unleashed a terrible storm over Egypt.

Then Pharaoh acknowledged his own condition and God’s justice. He called Moses and said:

Exodus 9:²⁷ ... **I have sinned this time: the LORD is righteous**, and I and my people *are* wicked.

Pharaoh states that in everything God is righteous, that is, without evil, and that he and his people were wicked, and had chosen the wicked one. The storm was stopped, but sadly, Pharaoh was hardened again and didn’t let the people go like he had promised. Thus, we see that when the heart is trapped by the deception of sin and doesn’t want to hear the voice of God, there is no sign, no plague, no miracle, no resurrection of the dead that might make him believe the word of God²²¹. What makes him beg for God’s protection is the circumstances and the desire to be free of the consequence of his actions; however, as soon as these disappear, the heart is ready to forget Him.

Then a plague of locusts came over Egypt²²². Pharaoh’s servants appealed to him to let the people go, since Egypt was already destroyed. Despite this, only when the plague

²²¹ Luke 16:31

²²² Exodus 10:1-20

of locusts intensified was the Pharaoh finally convinced to give his ever-changing word. And there, Pharaoh acknowledged that he had sinned against God. God removed the plague, but Pharaoh hardened his heart again and still did not let Israel go.

Thus, the next plague fell, the one of darkness²²³, that became a visible expression of the fact that in the land of Egypt, Jesus, who is the light of this world²²⁴, was being expelled. The light that lights every man²²⁵, including also the Pharaoh and every Egyptian, was being turned off. Christ was in great anguish of spirit due to being expelled and crucified in Egypt²²⁶. Yet the Israelites in the land of Goshen who heard Christ had light.

It is during this plague that the Pharaoh warned Moses that the next time he saw Moses he would kill him, thus cutting off the means that God had established to communicate with him. The enemy of souls was demanding that those who were choosing him be handed over²²⁷, and thus we read Moses speak one last time with Pharaoh before leaving:

Exodus 11:1 And the LORD said unto Moses, “Yet will I bring one plague *more* upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let *you* go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether. ²Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow [ask / demand] of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold.” ³And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. ...

The word “borrow” here is incorrect, for they were not going to pay back. They asked/demanded for compensation for their work and for the loss of the Hebrew children that had been killed.

⁴And Moses said, “Thus saith the LORD, **About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt:** ⁵And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that *is* behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts. ⁶And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more.”

God knew that by withdrawing His protection over the firstborn, these would die, and then Pharaoh would let them go. However, it was God who appropriated the action to

²²³ Exodus 10:21-29

²²⁴ John 8:12

²²⁵ John 1:9

²²⁶ Revelation 11:8

²²⁷ Revelation 12:10, Zachariah 3:1

himself, because He set in motion the series of events that would end in their death. That is how “His going out into the midst of Egypt” would cause the death of the firstborn. After Moses communicated this to the Pharaoh, he angrily withdrew from his presence²²⁸.

The Passover

Great events were about to happen in the next few hours and days. The people needed to prepare themselves spiritually for the Passover, the deliverance from slavery. And in this Passover celebration they would be able to manifest their personal faith in Christ as the leader and protector of the people. This manifested faith would protect them from the coming calamity. This would be their last night in Egypt.

Exodus 12:¹ And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, ²“This month *shall be* unto you the beginning of months: it *shall be* the first month of the year to you. ³Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, ‘In the tenth *day* of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of *their* fathers, a lamb for an house: ⁴And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take *it* according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. ⁵Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take *it* out from the sheep, or from the goats:

⁶ And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. ⁷And they shall take of the blood, and strike *it* on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. ⁸And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; *and* with bitter *herbs* they shall eat it. ... ¹¹And thus shall ye eat it; *with* your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: *it is* the LORD’s passover.

¹²For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and **will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast**; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I *am* the LORD. ¹³And **the blood shall be to you for a token** upon the houses where ye *are*: and **when I see the blood, I will pass over you**, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy *you*, when I smite the land of Egypt.’”

²²⁸ Exodus 11:8

Let's note several points from this passage. First, they would take a lamb, without blemish, a male of the first year, a symbol of Christ. It would be taken out by each family on day 10. On day 14 it would be killed in the evening before sunset. They would take its blood and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses in which they would eat it.

Secondly, the blood of the lamb was not going to save them. The blood that was spilt and then put on the doorposts was only a sign. This was explained to them: "the blood shall be to you for a token". The blood was only a sign or a mark of their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior. Because the Scriptures tell us the following:

1 Peter 1:¹⁸ Forasmuch as ye know that **ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;** ¹⁹ But **with the precious blood of Christ**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

1 Corinthians 5:⁷ ... For even **Christ our passover** is sacrificed for us:

Thus we read of Moses, and probably of the people:

Hebrews 11:²⁷ **By faith he forsook Egypt**, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. ²⁸ **Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood**, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

By faith in the invisible, in God the Father²²⁹ who provided propitiation²³⁰ of His Son, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, they celebrated the Passover.

What was the lamb's blood a symbol of?

Leviticus 17:¹¹ For **the life of the flesh is in the blood**: ...

The blood of the lamb is a sign of Christ's immaculate life. It is in His blood, His life, that we have redemption for the forgiveness of sins. The life of Christ cleanses us from all sin²³¹. The life of Christ, as we have seen before, is the righteousness of God. Out of the heart comes the blood, and out of the heart come the issues of life²³². The law of God was engraved in Christ's heart, thus manifesting the perfect righteousness of God. That's why we read:

Psalms 40:⁸ I delight to do thy will, O my God: Yea, **thy law is within my heart.** ⁹ **I have preached righteousness** in the great congregation: Lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest. ¹⁰ **I have not hid thy**

²²⁹ John 1:18, 1 Timothy 1:17; 6:16

²³⁰ Genesis 22:14

²³¹ 1 John 1:7

²³² Proverbs 4:23

righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

Christ delights in doing the will of the Father. This righteousness that loves His Father is the blood that flows from His heart and circulates through His whole body, which is all those that believe on Him.

Deuteronomy 6:⁴Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD: ⁵And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. ⁶And **these words**, which I command thee this day, **shall be in thine heart:** ⁷And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them ... ⁸And thou shalt bind them **for a sign** upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. ⁹And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

Thus, the painting of the blood on the doorposts meant accepting the life of Christ which manifests God's righteousness, which comes by belief in His words. It was also the sign that in that house they ate of the lamb. What did the eating of the lamb mean?

John 6:⁵²The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, "**How can this man give us *his* flesh to eat?**" ⁵³Then Jesus said unto them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. ⁵⁴Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁵⁵For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. ⁵⁶He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. ... ⁶³**It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life."**

By receiving Christ and treasuring His words we receive the Spirit that gives life. Eating the lamb and painting the doorposts is the sign of this.

Thus, we see that the gospel that went to the gentiles 1500 years later was the same one given to the Israelites leaving Egypt, because for both the teacher is Jesus Christ Himself. Being that Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever²³³, He repeats the teaching to us when He says:

Luke 22:¹⁵ "...With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: ¹⁶For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this, and divide *it* among yourselves: ¹⁸For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come."

²³³ Hebrews 13:8

¹⁹ And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake *it*, and gave unto them, saying, "**This is my body which is given for you:** this do in remembrance of me." ²⁰ Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, "**This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.**"

In this way we see the gospel preached in Egypt: freedom from sin for all. The Passover lamb would die, but this wasn't enough. It was necessary to sprinkle the doorposts. In the same way, Christ died for the world, but it is necessary to accept Him and to believe that He died for me personally and individually. And that wasn't enough: the meat had to be eaten; so we also need to comprehend (digest) His word by faith personally as spiritual food. No one else can do this for me.

So we see that the gospel is the same to all, and thus God the Father joins all His people of all ages into one Lord and one faith²³⁴. Christ was present with them as much as He is with us today.

The Destroyer

The Lord "smites" the firstborn of Egypt, but Pharaoh did not die, meaning he was not the first heir to the throne. The first heir was probably Moses.

Exodus 12:²⁹ And it came to pass, that **at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt**, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that *was* in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. ³⁰ And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for *there was* not a house where *there was* not one dead. ³¹ And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, "Rise up, *and* get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said."

We are interested in understanding the development of how this happened. How did God smite all the firstborn?

Exodus 12:¹² For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I *am* the LORD. ¹³ And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye *are*: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and **the plague shall not be upon** you to destroy *you*, when I smite the land of Egypt.

²³⁴ Ephesians 4:5-6

The first thing we notice is that the smiting would come in the form of a plague that would smite to death every firstborn. Then it says:

Exodus 12:²³ For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, **the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.**

Wherever faith in the Lamb was shown, the Lord would not let²³⁵ the destroyer come into the house to smite. As in the other plagues, God stopped protecting; in this case He stopped protecting those who did not have their doorposts painted with the blood of the lamb, and He allowed the destroyer to do his work of destruction.

In the Scriptures, the destroyer is symbolized by a lion who seeks to destroy.

Jeremiah 4:⁷ The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; *and* thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant.

1 Peter 5:⁸ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

This lion is looking for men to devour. It wants to make the land desolate, and the cities without an inhabitant. Of Satan it is said:

Isaiah 14:¹⁷ *That* made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; *That* opened not the house of his prisoners? ... ²⁰ Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, Because thou hast destroyed thy land, *and* slain thy people: ...

Satan is the destroyer of the earth, and he kills all those who choose him, and in their choice, they themselves become destroyers of the earth²³⁶. The Israelites, who rejected God's leading in the wilderness were destroyed by the destroyer.

1 Corinthians 10:¹⁰ Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

The word "destroyer" in this verse means "serpent"²³⁷. So once again we have reference to an animal (in this case a venomous serpent) which immediately takes us back to the story of Eden²³⁸.

²³⁵ Psalm 34:7

²³⁶ Revelation 11:18

²³⁷ Strong G3644. ὀλοθρευτής **ōlōthreūtēs**, *ol-oth-ryoo-tace'*; from 3645; a *ruiner*, i.e. (spec.) a venomous *serpent*:—destroyer.

²³⁸ Genesis 3:1; Revelation 12:9

This history will be repeated in the end times, when once the children of God are sealed with the blood of the Lamb²³⁹, the destroyer, called Abaddon in Hebrew and Apollyon in Greek, will be let loose²⁴⁰, and the four winds will also be released²⁴¹, allowing him to do his work of destruction. However, in the context of the end times, God's people are called to place their trust upon Him, and to ignore the destroyer's work.

Isaiah 51:¹² *I, even I, am he that comforteth you: Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, And of the son of man which shall be made as grass;* ¹³ *And forgettest the LORD thy maker, That hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; And hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, As if he were ready to destroy? And where is the fury of the oppressor?*

The Exodus

After this, the text continues:

Exodus 12:³¹ *And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, “**Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel;** and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said. ³² Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also.” ³³ And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, “We be all dead men.” ³⁴ And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneadingtroughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. ³⁵ And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed [asked] of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: ³⁶ And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent [gave] unto them *such things as they required*. And they spoiled the Egyptians.*

So a great multitude came out of Egypt with the spoils of Egypt. They received the pay they deserved for so many years of slavery. And the text continues telling us:

Exodus 12:⁴⁰ *Now **the sojourning of the children of Israel**, who dwelt in Egypt, **was four hundred and thirty years**. ⁴¹ And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even **the selfsame day** it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD **went out** from the land of Egypt.*

²³⁹ Revelation 9:4

²⁴⁰ Revelation 9:11

²⁴¹ Revelation 7:1-3

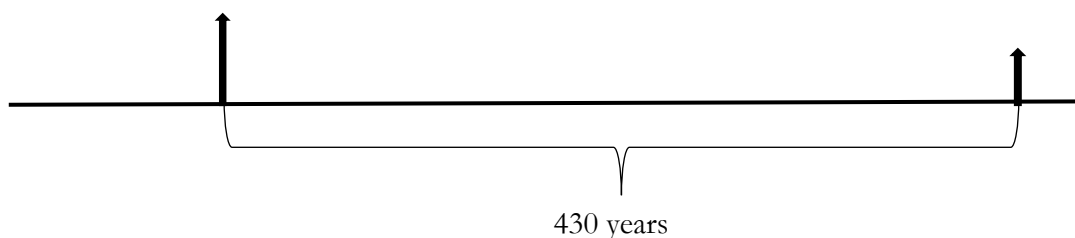
The Israelites left on the fifteenth day of the first month²⁴², the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. That same day, 430 years before, God had given His covenant and promise to Abraham, calling him to go out to a land that he knew not, and he left Haran²⁴³. This was the start of a story of pilgrimage that would finalize with the exodus from Egypt.

Day 15, first month. First day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

God appears to Abraham, gives him His covenant, and calls him to leave Haran.

Day 15, first month. First day of Unleavened Bread.

God frees Israel and they leave the land of Egypt.



This event allows us to put a date on another event in the story of Abraham. God had foretold Abraham that his seed would be oppressed, and after 400 years it would be set free²⁴⁴. When Abraham left Haran, he was 75 years old²⁴⁵. When he was 85 he married Hagar²⁴⁶, and Ishmael was born when he was 86²⁴⁷. Isaac was born when he was 100 years old²⁴⁸. So we know that 25 years passed between the time when Abraham left Haran until Isaac was born. It was Ishmael, the son of the Egyptian bondswoman, who began to oppress Abraham's seed, starting the period of oppression that would last 400 years²⁴⁹. So the time of oppression for Abraham's seed began²⁵⁰ when Isaac was 5 years old, on the fifteenth day of the first month, on the first day of Unleavened Bread, and this oppression would end only exactly 400 years later.

²⁴² Exodus 12:8, 11-12, 14-17, 42

²⁴³ Genesis 12:1-3

²⁴⁴ Genesis 15:13-16

²⁴⁵ Genesis 12:4

²⁴⁶ Genesis 16:3

²⁴⁷ Genesis 17:24-25

²⁴⁸ Genesis 21:5

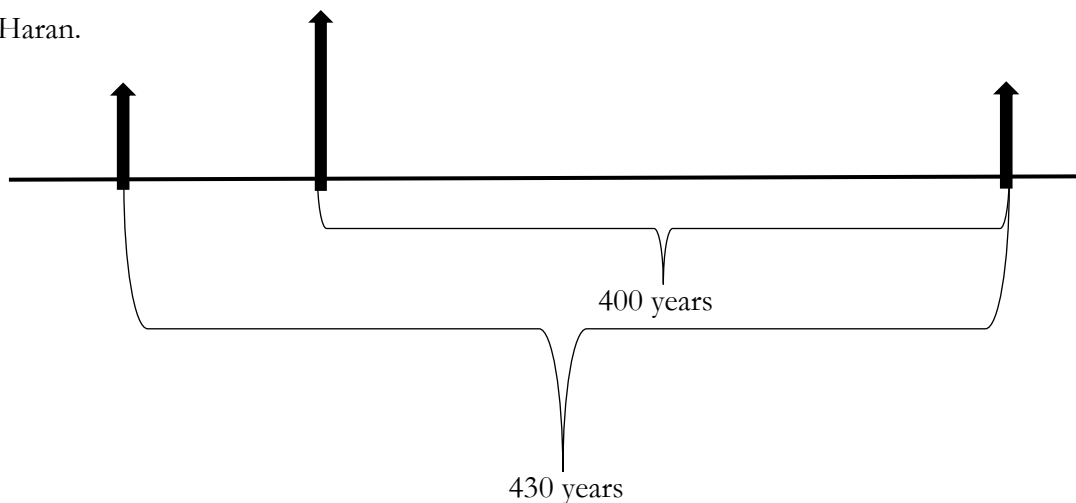
²⁴⁹ Genesis 21:9-10; Galatians 4:29

²⁵⁰ Isaac suffered in the hands of his half-brother Ishmael, and the Philistines (Genesis 26:15, 20-21); Jacob suffered in the hands of his brother Esau and Laban and Joseph was sold as a slave to Egypt.

Day 15, first month.
First day of
Unleavened Bread
God appears to
Abraham, gives him
His covenant and
calls him to leave
Haran.

Day 15, first month. First
day of Unleavened Bread.
Ishmael, son of Hagar the
Egyptian bondwoman,
begins to oppress Isaac.

Day 15, first month.
First day of Unleavened
Bread.
God sets Israel free and
they leave the land and
the oppression of
Egypt.



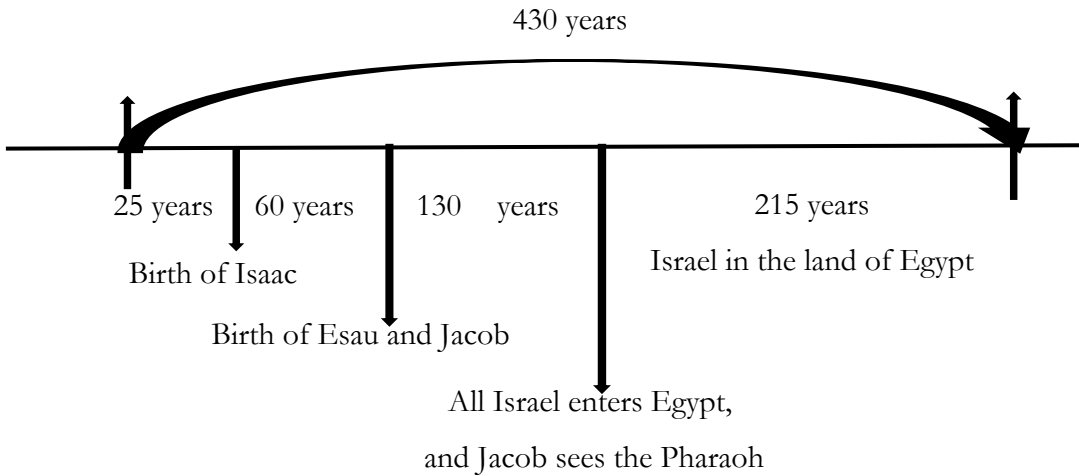
Likewise, this event allows us to figure out other key dates on the pilgrimage of the people of Israel. Isaac had Esau and Jacob when he was 60²⁵¹. Jacob was 130 when he entered Egypt and met with the Pharaoh²⁵².

²⁵¹ Genesis 25:26

²⁵² Genesis 47:9

God appears to Abraham, gives him His covenant, and calls him to leave Haran

God frees Israel and they leave the land and the oppression of Egypt.



Joseph was sold as a slave when he was 17²⁵³. At age 30 he was raised up to be the second in command to Pharaoh²⁵⁴. This means he spent 13 years serving Potiphar, in which at least two years were spent in prison²⁵⁵. The seven years of plenty began as soon as he took up his position, and they were followed by seven years of famine²⁵⁶. It was in the second year of famine when he fetched his father Jacob²⁵⁷. So Joseph was 39 years old when Jacob was presented to the Pharaoh. Since Jacob was 130 years old when this happened, we know that Joseph was born when Jacob was 91 years old. Jacob died at 147²⁵⁸, and Joseph at 110²⁵⁹. And since Moses spoke with the Pharaoh when he was 80 years old²⁶⁰, the time from when Jacob met the Pharaoh until the birth of Moses was around 135 years, and between the death of Joseph and the birth of Moses was 64 years.

²⁵³ Genesis 37:2

²⁵⁴ Genesis 41:46

²⁵⁵ Genesis 41:1

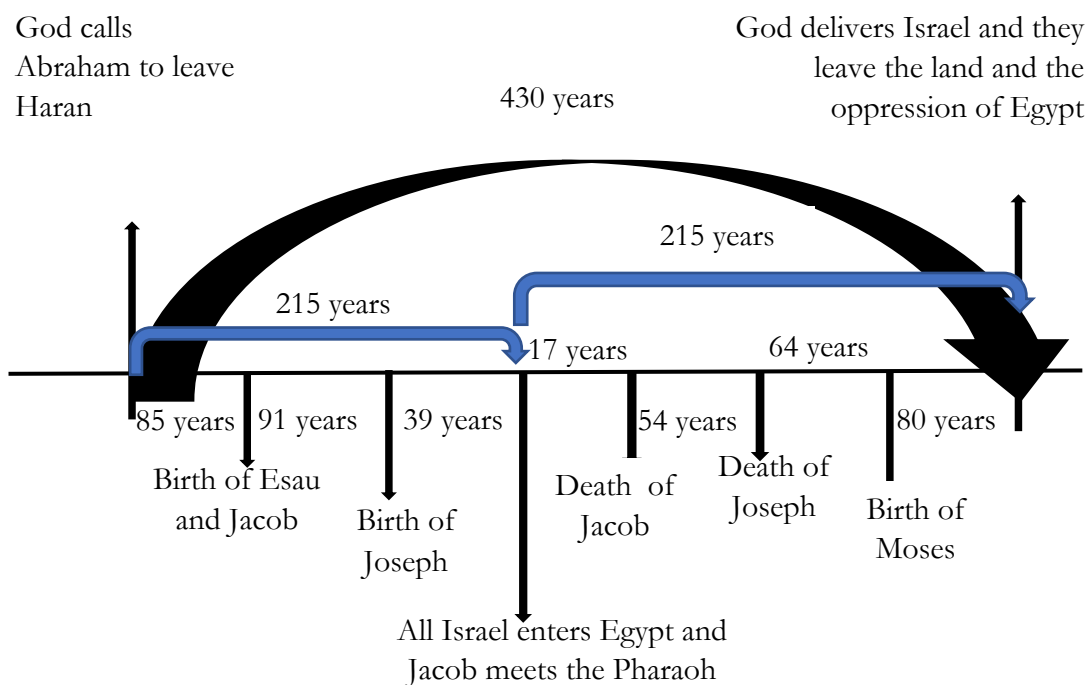
²⁵⁶ Genesis 41:46; 53, 54

²⁵⁷ Genesis 45:6, 9

²⁵⁸ Genesis 47:28

²⁵⁹ Genesis 50:26

²⁶⁰ Exodus 7:7



We see from all these calculations that God wanted the Israelites to have assurance in His word, for God told Abraham what would happen beforehand: the promise would come in 400 years and then they would “come out with great substance”²⁶¹. We are to learn from their experience and have faith that what was done before will be done again. Now we are also strangers in a land that is not ours, and through faith in His Son, God will free us from the slavery of sin and give us the promised land as an inheritance forever.

²⁶¹ Genesis 15:13-14

Bread from Heaven and Water from the Rock

Crossing the Red Sea

After Israel left Egypt:

Exodus 13:¹⁷ And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that **God led them not *through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near***; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: ¹⁸ But God led the people about, *through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: ...*

We see God's tender consideration in not taking them the shortest way, because that would have made them face war, and it would have induced them to return to Egypt. It seems that the shortest and most direct way is not always the best way; here God took them on a longer, rougher way that would end up with Israel seeming to be hopelessly surrounded. We would do well to remember this. The fact that we find ourselves in difficult situations, with no clear way out, is not a sign that God is not guiding us. The people of Israel, to be freed from a traumatic experience, were taken into a situation in which they would be able to see God's power with their own eyes.

Exodus 13:²¹ And **the LORD went** before them by day **in a pillar of a cloud**, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: ²² He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, *from before the people.*

The Lord went before them in a pillar of cloud. The following verse confirms that the Lord Himself was in the cloud:

Exodus 14:²⁴ And it came to pass, that in the morning watch **the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud**, and troubled the host of the Egyptians,

The pillar of cloud protected them from the heat of the day and guided them in their way, and the pillar of fire gave them light and heat at night. The desert is a place of extreme temperatures: scorching during the day and freezing during the night.

1 Corinthians 10:¹ Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that **all our fathers were under the cloud**, and all passed through the sea; ² And **were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud** and in the sea; ³ And did all eat the same spiritual meat; ⁴ And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of **that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.**

The Lord, Christ Himself, guided their steps from the cloud, and this cloud never left the people.

The Egyptians and the Pharaoh, seeing the Israelites take a route that seemingly led to a dead-end, decided to bring them back into slavery, with war chariots and soldiers. And how did the people of Israel perceive this?

Exodus 14:¹⁰ And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and **they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD.** ¹¹ And they said unto Moses, "Because *there were* no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?"

Regardless of all God has done, the Israelites still doubted the Lord's protection. They even questioned His integrity, accusing Him of having taken them to the desert to let them die there. However, God placed Himself with His cloud between them and the Egyptian army, so that they could not contact each other. He opened a path through the Red Sea by sending a strong wind that divided the sea into two, and the Israelites crossed it on dry land, having the waters as walls to the left and to the right.

The Egyptians followed behind them, and when the Israelites had already crossed and the Egyptians were still halfway through, the waters returned, and they all perished. The Egyptian people, having completely rejected God, were without His protection, and finally God, in His attempt to save Israel, respected Egypt's decision and gave them up.

Isaiah 43:³ For I *am* the LORD thy God, The Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: **I gave Egypt for thy ransom,** Ethiopia and Seba for thee.

God says that He gave Egypt for the ransom of Israel, so we naturally ask ourselves, Who did God give Egypt to? Who did God pay for the ransom of Israel? In this sense, it is clarifying to know who was in the waters:

Psalms 74:¹³ Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: **Thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters.** ¹⁴ **Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces,** and gavest him *to be* meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.

Isaiah 26:²¹ For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: The earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain. 27:1 In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, **Even leviathan that crooked serpent; And he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.**

Isaiah 51:⁹ Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; Awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. *Art* thou not it that hath cut Rahab, **and wounded the dragon?** ¹⁰ **Art thou not it which hath dried the**

sea, the waters of the great deep; That hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?

Ezekiel 29:³Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, **the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers**, which hath said, 'My river *is* mine own, and I have made *it* for myself.'

Ezekiel 32:²Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say unto him, 'Thou art like a young lion of the nations, and **thou art as a whale in the seas**: and thou camest forth with thy rivers, and troubledst the waters with thy feet, and fouledst their rivers.'

The one who was in the waters of the sea was the leviathan, the dragon, the monster beast of many heads that lives in many waters which we once again find in Revelation²⁶². This dragon oppressed the people of God through his representative on earth, the Pharaoh, and God even identifies Pharaoh with the dragon in the 4th verse above. This dragon is the accuser of the brethren²⁶³, who claims Egypt as his possession²⁶⁴, to whom God finally hands Egypt over because they have crucified Christ²⁶⁵. Only through Christ can the dragon be overcome²⁶⁶, and by rejecting Him, Christ is unable to help them.

When they crossed the Red Sea, the people of Israel were baptized in the cloud and in the sea. To be baptized is to put on Christ and to be of Christ²⁶⁷; in this way we see that by being baptized in the cloud, they had been baptized of Christ. It was a baptism of faith:

Hebrews 11:²⁹ **By faith** they passed through the Red sea as by dry *land*...

By heading towards the Red Sea as Moses instructed, they showed faith in the word of God, and that is how they were baptized. Since baptism is a symbol of the death of the old man and the birth of a new life based on the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, this deliverance planted the seeds of gratitude and praise together with the seeds of faith. Thus the sum of events until that moment had led to them being able to have faith **in** Christ as their Saviour. The following events would seek to give Israel the faith **of** Jesus as He sought to bless them even more abundantly.

The Biblical record tells us that the sea washed the bodies of the Egyptians onto the shore on the side where the Israelites were, and they were able to see that the Lord was

²⁶² Revelation 13:1, 2

²⁶³ Zechariah 3:1-2; Revelation 12:9-11

²⁶⁴ Luke 22:31; Ezekiel 29:3

²⁶⁵ Revelation 11:8

²⁶⁶ Revelation 12:11

²⁶⁷ Galatians 3:26-27

with them and that Moses was the Lord's servant. The people then sang the Song of Moses and Miriam, which exalts the power and glory of God in the deliverance of His people.

The Bitter Waters

They then left the Red Sea and went towards the wilderness of Sin, going three days through the desert without finding water. They reached Mara, where there was water, but it was bitter. The text tells us:

Exodus 15:²⁴ And **the people murmured** against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"

The people, thirsty, murmured against Moses because they couldn't drink the water. But it was not Moses who was leading the people; it was God Himself who was doing so. Moses cried out to God and He showed him a tree which, once it was cast into the waters, made the water sweet. Right there we read that the people received instructions, statutes and laws. In this incident the Lord tested them to see if they believed that the Lord could be their sustainer. This happens in several incidents later on. God gives the people further understanding and revelations of His glory, and later they are put to the test to see if they have heard the voice of God and kept or treasured His word. The test of faith is described this way:

1 Peter 1:⁶ Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: ⁷ That **the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold** that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

The test consists precisely in the temptation to stop trusting in God's providence. We might feel tempted to criticize the people of Israel in light of their history. However, if we did this, we would be condemning ourselves, because the smallest self-reflection reveals that we are just like them or even worse. We have evidence of God's power, yet even so it is hard for us to surrender totally to God and to trust that He can provide for us. And what is it that the Lord tests, or makes evident when He allows the test? The text says:

Exodus 15:²⁵ And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, *which* when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, ²⁶ And said, "**If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases**

upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I *am* the LORD that healeth thee."

Here we have, once again, the promise that if they would keep diligently hear and treasure His word and law, then the spiritual righteousness would manifest in physical health. The Lord identifies Himself as their Healer, in clear contrast to the Destroyer.

And why did God test them? He knew the condition of their hearts, but they didn't. In the same way, we don't know our own condition, either. This is how God describes it:

Revelation 3:¹⁷ Because thou sayest, 'I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and **knowest not** that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:'

God allows certain tests to happen in our lives to show us what is really in our hearts, and to reveal our lack of trust in His word and in His loving care. Because this is what the testimony says:

Deuteronomy 33:³ Yea, he loved the people; all his saints *are* in thy hand...

God loved His people, and He longed for them to place themselves in His hands and protective care. But their hearts were not in harmony with the Lord. The test helped to manifest the same thing that had been manifested when they murmured at the Red Sea. Evidence was piling up, but they still did not believe that God loved them and took care of them.

Manna from Heaven

From there they went to the waters of Elim, and then from Elim towards the desert of Sin, and on the way, they ran out of food – another test to show them their own hearts. The people not only forgot God's power, but they were also ready to deny any intervention that God might have had in their lives. It had only been around 30 days since they had left Egypt, and all the congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron, accusing them of having taken them out to the desert to kill them with starvation, and they remembered the pots of meat they had in Egypt. There, the Lord said to Moses:

Exodus 16:⁴ Then said the LORD unto Moses, "Behold, **I will rain bread from heaven** for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, **that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.** ⁵ And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare *that* which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily." ... ²¹ And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating; and when the sun waxed hot, it melted. ²² And it came to pass, *that* on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one *man*: and all the rulers of

the congregation came and told Moses. ²³ And he said unto them, “This is *that* which the LORD hath said, ‘Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake *that* which ye will bake *to day*, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. ... ²⁶ **Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath**, in it there shall be none.’”

We learn in this story that the Sabbath is the seventh day after an uninterrupted series of six days. The Lord next tested His people to manifest whether they would walk in His law or not, and it would be made manifest in how they regarded the Sabbath. The people had already been reminded of the Sabbath as soon as Moses had returned to Egypt. If they kept the Sabbath, they would keep His whole law, for it was a continual, cyclical test of whether they heard God’s word and treasured it.

We remember that the covenant that God made with the people of Israel was the same covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Thus, when God purposed to see whether they would walk in His laws, in His covenant, He tested them regarding the Sabbath. Abraham heard the voice of the Lord and kept His law, thus he also guarded and treasured the Sabbath in his heart²⁶⁸.

What is interesting, but should not be surprising in the light of what we have been discussing, is that the Israelites were tested on the Sabbath before the law was declared on Mount Sinai. This shows us that the law of God was clearly known to God’s people, to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his sons. In Egypt there was an apostasy, and through Moses, the law was restored in their minds. That’s why we read God’s rebuke of the fact that not all of them kept the Sabbath in their hearts during the test with the manna:

Exodus 16:²⁸ And the LORD said unto Moses, “**How long** refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?”

God saying “how long” shows us that they’d had the knowledge of God’s laws and commandments for some time. Their not wanting to keep in their hearts the commandments and laws of God showed that they did not believe that it was told them for their good, revealing a mistrust of the Lawgiver.

Now, what was manna and what did it look like? Manna was bread from heaven, corn of heaven, angels’ food, a small, round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground, like coriander seed, white. It tasted like wafers made with honey. If it was left over for the next day, it stank and bred worms, unless it was manna from the sixth day. It appeared after the dew and melted with the sun. It could be cooked and baked²⁶⁹.

²⁶⁸ Genesis 26:5

²⁶⁹ Exodus 16:4, 14, 20-24, 31; Psalm 78:23-25

Was there a purpose to the brief period of hunger that troubled them before the manna was first given?

Deuteronomy 8:³ And he humbled thee, and **suffered thee to hunger**, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; **that he might make thee know** that man doth not live by bread only, **but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.**

The verse is clear, isn't it? God allowed a brief period of hunger for them to realize and know that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. This was clearly taught to them. That word of God that they received:

Hebrews 4:¹² ... *is quick, and powerful, ...*

And this message would keep on being repeated throughout the ages. God tells us, through His prophet:

Isaiah 55:³ Incline your ear, and come unto me: **Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you,** *Even the sure mercies of David.*

The message is: hear and I will forgive your sins and I will give you the Holy Spirit, that you might walk in my ways. Hear and I will write my law in your hearts. God purposed to take charge and make Himself responsible for giving them righteousness and life. That's why it says:

Psalm 81:⁸ Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: **O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me;** ⁹ **There shall no strange god be in thee; Neither shalt thou worship any strange god.** ¹⁰ *I am* the LORD thy God, Which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: **Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.**

This teaching that the Lord gave to the people of Israel was the very first temptation that Jesus suffered when He began His ministry. And it was one of the first lessons of Jesus, when He fed a great multitude²⁷⁰. There, out of five barley loaves and two fishes, He fed five thousand men plus women and children. And where did this bread for such a great multitude come from? There is only one answer: from the hands of Jesus Himself, to the point that they ended up with more food than before. He Himself multiplied it. The people then attempted to make Him king, but Jesus escaped to the other side of the sea, where they found Him. And Jesus repeated the lesson to them.

John 6:²⁷ **Labour** not for the meat which perisheth, but **for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life**, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

²⁷⁰ John 6:1-14

Labor for that meat or food which is eternal. And who gives that food? The Son of Man, Jesus Himself. In other words, Jesus was saying to them:

Isaiah 55:¹ Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, And he that hath no money; Come ye, buy, and eat; Yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ²Wherefore do ye spend money for *that which is not bread*? And your labour for *that which satisfieth not*? **Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good**, And let your soul delight itself in fatness. ³Incline your ear, and come unto me: **Hear, and your soul shall live**; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, *Even the sure mercies of David*.

Why do you spend money on what does not satisfy? The appeal is to work for that which truly nourishes. “Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good” – if we hear God’s voice and keep it, we will eat that which is good. That is how we receive the nourishment which endures unto everlasting life. But since Jesus had told them to “labor”, they imagined they had to do some work. So they asked Jesus:

John 6:²⁸ Then said they unto him, **“What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?”**

What should we do to work the works of God? What is our job?

John 6:²⁹ Jesus answered and said unto them, **“This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”**

Believe; that is the work. Believe in Jesus, and therefore listen to Him. That is all the work that should be done. What we also note is that this, too, is the work of God. It is God who does it. It is God who opens our ear²⁷¹, He opens our mouth. So we see that man ought to not harden his heart, but allow God to work. And despite the great miracle in which Jesus had just fed the 5,000, they asked Him:

John 6:³⁰ ... **“What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?”** ³¹Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

What sign do you show us? This is how they question Jesus, since in their minds the Israelites had a more glorious miracle since it lasted forty years and was heavenly food. How does being fed common bread and fish for one day compare to that? Here Jesus accentuates the same teaching that He had given to the people of Israel when leaving Egypt:

John 6:³² Then Jesus said unto them, **“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true**

²⁷¹ Isaiah 50:5

bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.” ³⁴Then said they unto him, “Lord, evermore give us this bread.” ³⁵And Jesus said unto them, “**I am the bread of life:** he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. ... ⁴⁸I am that bread of life. ⁴⁹Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. ⁵⁰This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. ⁵¹**I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever:** and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

For the benefit of His hearers, Jesus expands what the Israelites had heard regarding the Passover lamb and the manna. The one who gave the manna in the desert was the Father. We know He did this through Jesus²⁷². However, manna was given them that they might learn that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. And the will of God with Israel was and is to give them the true bread from heaven, that bread from heaven that gives life to the world – this true bread is eternal life. And Jesus speaks clearly: “I am the bread of life”, “He that comes to me shall never hunger”, “he that believes in me” (in other words, he that receives and keeps His words) “shall never thirst”.

In human beings there is an unmet need that nothing can satiate except the righteousness of God. And this need is hunger and thirst²⁷³. Only Christ can satisfy this need. This is only done by receiving Him daily through His word. That’s why Jesus, to clarify what He said about Him being the bread of life and that those who ate of Him would have eternal life, says near the end of His speech:

John 6:⁶³“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.”

The words of Christ received in the soul let Christ dwell²⁷⁴ in the heart. This is the teaching that was given to the people of Israel with the giving of the manna. Thus, the people of Israel who received the manna, as well as the five thousand who were fed by Jesus, like us today, have Christ calling at the door of our hearts saying:

Revelation 3:²⁰“... if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

Thus Christ brings the bread of life to the soul, He brings His own divine life, His own Spirit, His own words, His own presence.

²⁷² 1 Corinthians 15:27

²⁷³ Matthew 5:6

²⁷⁴ John 14:23

Living Waters

Having received this lesson, we continue with the story:

Exodus 17:¹ And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and **there was no water** for the people to drink. ²Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, "Give us water that we may drink."

And Moses said unto them, "Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?"

³ And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, "Wherefore *is* this *that* thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, **to kill us** and our children and our cattle with thirst?"

⁴ And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, "What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me."

⁵ And the LORD said unto Moses, "Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. ⁶Behold, **I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it**, that the people may drink."

And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, '**Is the LORD among us, or not?**'

Food is essential for life. However, water is even more essential, because without water, all life on this earth would soon die. And that would have happened with the people of Israel if they had not received water. To them, water was life. And the people murmured against Moses for the lack of water. It's interesting, because it should have been obvious to them by now that when faced with a need, all they needed to do was go to Moses for Him to ask God, and God would give them what they needed. Instead, they kept thinking that God wanted them to die.

The people had already murmured against God in the Red Sea. The murmuring was repeated at the waters of Mara and at the incident that brought them the manna, in which they almost got violent with Moses and attributed him, and as a result they attributed God, with having evil motives. And now this action was repeated when they were faced with the lack of water. Evidently, it is easy for human beings to forget the blessings of God and to doubt His intentions. Hadn't God promised that He would

take them to the promised land? How difficult it is for the word to be heard, when the spokesman is considered under an evil light! Thus, the people themselves were preparing themselves for even greater rejections.

Yet the Lord told Moses to go before the people. And the Lord, who we know is Jesus, told them that He would “stand there upon the rock”²⁷⁵, which must have been large because it was clearly visible to the Israelites. And what Moses had to do was to strike the rock, and waters would come out of it.

The Lord was standing upon the rock that was struck. So even though He would be invisible to the eyes of the people of Israel, He would give them water while standing there. The water would come out of the rock. Many times in the Scriptures our Lord is presented as the rock or stone. Moses himself explained to the people of Israel:

Deuteronomy 32:⁴**He is the Rock**, his work *is* perfect: For all his ways *are* judgment: A God of truth and without iniquity, Just and right *is* he. ... ¹⁸**Of the Rock that begat thee** thou art unmindful, And hast forgotten God that formed thee.

And Jesus repeated this teaching, telling Peter:

Matthew 16:¹⁸ And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and **upon this rock I will build my church**; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

So Christ identifies Himself as the rock from which life flows, and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. And Peter himself confirms this understanding when he tells us:

1 Peter 2:⁴ To whom coming, *as unto a living stone*, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, *and precious* ...

So the rock that the people of Israel saw in the desert was only a symbol, an illustration, of Jesus Christ, who was standing on that same rock, but who could not be seen. The rock in itself couldn't give them water. There was no endless water fountain inside it; it did not have life in itself. However, Christ, the author of life, was on it, and therefore it flowed forth water. And this comes as a direct answer to the question that the people of Israel asked: “Is the Lord among us or not?” In this way, the Lord showed them that He really was among them. They received from Christ whom the Scriptures say,

Psalm 36:⁹ ... *is the fountain of life*: ...

And we read regarding Him:

²⁷⁵ Exodus 17:6

Isaiah 33:²¹ But there **the glorious LORD will be unto us** a place of **broad rivers and streams**; Wherein shall go no galley with oars, Neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.

As the Scriptures say, in the Lord is the fountain of life, the source of water, the river of pleasures²⁷⁶, a place of rivers for Israel. It would be later said of them:

Jeremiah 2:¹² Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. ¹³For my people have committed two evils; **they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters**, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

This is exactly what Jesus Himself taught when He was here on earth:

John 4:⁹ Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." ¹⁰Jesus answered and said unto her, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, 'Give me to drink'; thou wouldest have asked of him, and **he would have given thee living water.**"

And Jesus continues saying:

John 4:¹³ "... Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: ¹⁴But **whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst**; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

We see here that Jesus gives living water. To whom? To anyone who desires it. That's why there is the invitation:

Revelation 22:¹⁷ And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And **whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.**

The invitation is for everyone to drink of the water of life that proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb.

Regarding this, the apostle John gives the following testimony:

1 John 5:⁸ And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

When Christ was hanging from the cross, He prayed to His Father commending His Spirit into His Father's hands²⁷⁷, and He died. The Roman soldier pierced His side with

²⁷⁶ Psalm 36:8

²⁷⁷ Luke 23:46

a spear, and both water and blood came out of it²⁷⁸. Out of Christ comes water, the symbol of living water. Out of Christ comes blood; life is in the blood²⁷⁹. Christ commends His Spirit, which is life²⁸⁰. These three, the water, the blood and the Spirit, are thus in agreement that God so loved the world that Christ gives us His life²⁸¹.

John 7:³⁷In the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, **“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.** ³⁸He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” ³⁹(But this spake he of the Spirit, **which they that believe on him** should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

The living water is the Spirit of Christ.

Isaiah 44:³For **I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, And floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, And my blessing upon thine offspring:** ⁴And they shall spring up *as* among the grass, As willows by the water courses.

When we receive the Holy Spirit, we receive the life of Christ.

All of this was shown, declared, and taught to the Israelites when they received water from the rock. They were shown that the rock is Christ and that He truly was among them. They had their daily bread, the manna, and the water flowing from the rock, the daily teaching that without Christ they could do nothing²⁸². They had the teaching that Christ was everything to them, that He was their only hope in that desolate desert which is symbolic of this earth.

Psalms 105:⁴¹He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; They ran in the dry places *like* a river. ⁴²For he remembered his holy promise, *And* Abraham his servant.

As the gospel was given to Abraham, so Christ was presented to them.

1 Corinthians 10:²And were **all baptized unto Moses** in the cloud and in the sea; ³And did **all eat the same spiritual meat;** ⁴And did **all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.**

²⁷⁸ John 19:34

²⁷⁹ Deuteronomy 12:23, John 6:53-54

²⁸⁰ Romans 8:2, 6, 10-11, Galatians 6:8

²⁸¹ John 10:15, 17

²⁸² John 15:5

They all ate of the same spiritual meat, and they all drank the same spiritual drink. All of them heard the same teachings that the disciples later received through Christ, because they had the same teacher.

Deuteronomy 32:¹ Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. ²**My doctrine shall drop as the rain, My speech shall distil as the dew,** As the small rain upon the tender herb, And as the showers upon the grass:

That is why Paul says that in the time of Moses “they drank of that spiritual rock”, “and that Rock was Christ”. What Paul was teaching was the doctrine that was taught to them.

Psalm 68:⁸ The earth trembled, **The heavens also dropped rain at the presence of God:** Yon Sinai trembled at the presence of God, the God of Israel. ⁹ Thou, O God, **didst send a plentiful rain,** Thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary ¹⁰ Thy congregation dwelt therein: Thou, O God, didst prepare of thy goodness for the poor. ¹¹ **The Lord giveth the word:** The women that publish **the tidings** are a great host. ASV

God gave them His word, the good news or tidings or the gospel, and this teaching was as a plentiful rain because He gave them His Spirit to instruct them.

Nehemiah 9:²⁰ Thou gavest also **thy good spirit to instruct them,** and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst.

Thus we see that they made up the Christian body at that time, they were God’s ‘church’ in the wilderness. They were told:

Deuteronomy 30:¹⁴ But **the word is very nigh unto thee,** in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.

To us, as well as to them, it is told:

Romans 10:¹ Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. ²For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. ³For they being **ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.** ⁴For **Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.** ⁵For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, **That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.** ⁶But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, **‘Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:)**

⁷Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)’ ⁸But what saith it? *‘The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and*

in thy heart:’ that is, the word of faith, which we preach; ⁹That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ¹¹For the scripture saith, ‘Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.’ ¹²For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

¹³For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

¹⁴How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!’ ¹⁶**But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, ‘Lord, who hath believed our report?’** ¹⁷**So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

¹⁸**But I say, ‘Have they not heard?’** Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.’ ¹⁹**But I say, ‘Did not Israel know?’** First Moses saith, ‘I will provoke you to jealousy by *them that are* no people, *and* by a foolish nation I will anger you.’ ²⁰But Esaias is very bold, and saith, ‘I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.’ ²¹But to Israel he saith, ‘All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.’

It is the same salvation, and in the same way, for everyone throughout the ages. It is through the same channel, God’s covenant, the new covenant, which are the promises of God. Only through Christ is there forgiveness and salvation of sins.

From the beginning starting from Adam, going through Abraham, ancient Israel, New Testament Israel and right up until our time and the end times, the forgiveness of sins and salvation has been only through Jesus and the sacrifice of His life, the outpouring of His Spirit.

The righteousness that is by faith doesn’t take into account that Jesus isn’t visibly by their side. On the contrary, righteousness by faith recognizes that the word of God doesn’t need to be brought from a far-off place, but that Christ is nigh, in the mouth²⁸³ and in the heart²⁸⁴.

Isaiah 59:²¹ As for me, this *is* my covenant with them, saith the LORD; **‘My spirit that *is* upon thee, And my words which I have put in thy mouth,**

²⁸³ Luke 21:14-15

²⁸⁴ Revelation 3:20; Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 13:5

Shall not depart out of thy mouth, Nor out of the mouth of thy seed, Nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed,' saith the LORD, '**From henceforth and for ever.'**

Faith comes by hearing God's word, it comes by receiving God's promises. And once God's word is received, it becomes a fountain that springs forth eternal life, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks²⁸⁵.

Proverbs 18:4 ... *And* the wellspring of wisdom *as* a flowing brook.

Proverbs 10:11 The mouth of a righteous *man* is a well of life: ...

The Wisdom of God is like a flowing brook, and the mouth of the Righteous one is a well of life. The lessons of Christ in the New Testament are not a new revelation, because they are in the Old Testament. However, it is clear that these lessons had been lost to His contemporaries. Let us receive the Word learning from the lessons of our forefathers.

²⁸⁵ Matthew 12:34

The Giving the Law of God and its Purpose

God's Sanctification

When they left Rephidim, they arrived at the desert of Sinai on the first day of the third month, and the people camped before the mountain.

Exodus 19:³ But Moses went up unto God, for the Lord had called out of the mount unto him, saying, "Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel. ⁴'Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I carried you upon eagle's wings, and have brought you unto me. ⁵ Now therefore **if ye will hear my voice indeed, and keep my covenant**, then ye shall be my chief treasure above all people, though all the earth be mine. ⁶ **Ye shall be unto me also a kingdom of Priests, and an holy nation.'** These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel."
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God highlighted what He had done for them and that if they continued with Him, He would bless them abundantly. God wanted to give them clearer instructions regarding this righteousness that they needed so much, and of which they were so ignorant.

"If you will hear my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, you shall be my chief treasure". They would be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. And here, together with what we read in Exodus 6, we find the conditions of God's covenant. He doesn't expect any response from human beings except Yes and Amen. He longs for a response of faith.

This voice, the one that said "hear my voice", is the same one that was later heard saying:

John 10: ¹⁴ **I am the good shepherd**, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine. ¹⁵ As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and **they shall hear my voice**; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd. ... ²⁷ **My sheep hear my voice**, and I know them, and they follow me:

The Shepherd's divine voice would guide them to green pastures and to still waters²⁸⁶.

Now, what does the word "keep" mean?

²⁸⁶ Psalm 23:1-2

Strong 8104. שָׁמַר *shâmar*, *shaw-mar'*; a prim. root; prop. to *hedge* about (as with thorns), i.e. *guard*; gen. to *protect, attend to*, etc.:—beware, be circumspect, take heed (to self), keep (-er, self), mark, look narrowly, observe, preserve, regard, reserve, save (self), sure, (that lay) wait (for), watch (-man).

The first incidence of this word “keep” in the Bible is found when Adam received the garden of Eden:

Genesis 2:8 And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. ... ¹⁵ And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and **to keep it**.

God gives man the garden, and man only has to receive it and treasure it. Man is to value and regard what God does and gives, and that we do by listening to His communication with us.

Deuteronomy 28:¹ And it shall come to pass **if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God to keep and to do all his commandments** which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all the Gentiles of the earth; ² and **all these blessings shall come upon thee and overtake thee when thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.** JUB

Only when God is heard attentively and his word kept that all His blessings can flow.

And we ask ourselves, what is God’s covenant? God’s covenant, as we have seen, is His promises, His words in promise. And not only that; it gets more specific. Let’s read:

Deuteronomy 4:¹³ And **he declared unto you his covenant**, which he commanded you to perform, *even ten commandments*; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.

The covenant that God makes with His people consists of the Ten Commandments that God gives them. These are God’s promises.

And where did God’s people have to keep the covenant and treasure the Ten Commandments?

Deuteronomy 6:⁶ And these words, which I command thee this day, **shall be in thine heart**:

Deuteronomy 11:¹⁸ Therefore shall ye lay up these my words **in your heart and in your soul**, ...

Deuteronomy 32:⁴⁶ And he said unto them, “**Set your hearts unto all the words** which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law.”

God’s request and plea to them is that they absorb His words into the deepest part of who they are. This is the process of sanctification. So how did Ancient Israel respond to this offer to be a holy nation?

Exodus 19:⁷ And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. ⁸ And **all the people answered together, and said, “All that the LORD hath spoken we will do.”** And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

The people of Israel promised to do all that the Lord had spoken. But God hadn’t asked them to promise anything, only to hear and keep. We don’t know if, in their promise, they promised to be a holy nation, but we do know that God was not looking for this promise; He only desired them to hear and keep His word.

The Giving of the Law

After giving the people these words, Moses went up the mountain once again. God told Moses that He would come in a cloud and speak to him so that all the people could hear, that they might believe in Moses forever. Also, He asked the people to sanctify themselves on that first and second day of the third month²⁸⁷, and to be ready because on the third day the Lord would descend upon the mount. Now, we know that man cannot sanctify himself; it is only God who sanctifies²⁸⁸. How then can we understand the word of the Lord? We could ask the same regarding those verses in which God urges us to do His covenant:

Deuteronomy 4:¹³ And he declared unto you **his covenant, which he commanded you to perform**, *even* ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.

It is God who sanctifies, and He urges His people to sanctify themselves by letting Him sanctify them. When God urged them to sanctify themselves, He called them to put themselves and their families in order, so as to be emotionally and psychologically prepared. He invited them to stop resisting, and to remove whatever might impede His presence, to reflect on their faith and relationship to Him. Then He writes His law in their hearts, making them doers of it through hearing with faith²⁸⁹.

²⁸⁷ Exodus 19:1, 10

²⁸⁸ Leviticus 20:8; Exodus 31:13; Ezekiel 37:28

²⁸⁹ Galatians 3:2, 5; Hebrews 4:2

If the heart is in the old covenant, His word will be received as a burden of work rather than a promise to be treasured. Carnal man perceives it as an unloved order that ought to do. Thus the word can be understood in two ways: spiritually and carnally, becoming also a mirror²⁹⁰ that reflects our condition, because doers of the word are only the hearers who keep and treasure the word in their hearts.

God instructed Moses to set bounds to the camp around the mount, that the people might not die. Moses descended from the mount and gave the instructions. On the third day in the morning there was thunder, lightning and a thick cloud upon Mount Sinai, and the loud voice of a trumpet. Moses then took the people out from the camp and they stopped at the foot of the mountain. The Lord had descended in fire, and the mount was like a furnace with smoke ascending, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

The sound of the trumpet waxed louder and louder: Moses spoke and God answered. And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai and called Moses, and Moses went up. Once Moses arrived, the Lord commanded Moses to go down and warn the people to not try to gaze unto the Lord²⁹¹, that they not perish because of His glory²⁹². Then Moses went down, and the Lord identified Himself as the one who had taken them out of Egypt and He gave them the words, the Ten Commandments²⁹³. This was the manner in which God's promises were given to the people, the law of love to God²⁹⁴ and love to man²⁹⁵. The following verses tell us of how God appeared in the eyes of the people:

Deuteronomy 4:11 And ye came near and stood under the mountain; and **the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness.** 12 And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, **but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice.** 13 And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, *even* ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.

Deuteronomy 5:22 These words the LORD spake unto all your assembly in the mount **out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more.** And he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me. 23 And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, (for the mountain did burn with fire,) that ye came near unto me, *even* all the heads of your tribes, and your

²⁹⁰ James 1:22-25

²⁹¹ Exodus 19:21

²⁹² Exodus 33:20

²⁹³ Exodus 20:1-17

²⁹⁴ Deuteronomy 6:5

²⁹⁵ Leviticus 19:34

elders; ²⁴And ye said, 'Behold, the LORD our God hath shewed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth. ²⁵Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, then we shall die. ²⁶For who *is there* of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we *have*, and lived?'

God revealed Himself to all the people from the cloud. The Lord was in the midst of the fire. This fire was surrounded by cloud and darkness, to protect the people from the brightness of His glory. They could all hear His voice, but they did not see any appearance. God spoke the covenant, gave the words of the Ten Commandments and did not speak anymore; He did not add any more words.

The word of God was heard, and we know that the Father does all things through His Son²⁹⁶. It was the voice of the Son of God which declared the word of God. Stephen confirms this when he says:

Acts 7:³⁸This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the **angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai**, and *with* our fathers: **who received the lively oracles to give unto us:**

This angel who spoke with Moses and the people is He in whom is the name of the Lord²⁹⁷. The Father gave the Son "the lively oracles to give unto us". These words from the Father to the Son sounded like thunder and shook the earth²⁹⁸. That's why Jesus is identified as the messenger or angel, and as a prophet like unto Moses²⁹⁹, who brings the words of God³⁰⁰. These words, said to Moses and to the people, are words of life. The covenant, the Ten Commandments, are a declaration of righteous existence. Jesus Himself would later say, when speaking of the Father's words:

John 12:⁵⁰And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: ...

And how is it life everlasting? Jesus affirms that His words are Spirit and they are life³⁰¹. We know that the words of Jesus are the words that the Father gave to Him³⁰², which He gives to us – and thus life is channeled to us through the mediator of God's words.

²⁹⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:27; Colossians 1:17-20

²⁹⁷ Exodus 23:20-21

²⁹⁸ Hebrews 12:26; John 12:29

²⁹⁹ Deuteronomy 18:15

³⁰⁰ Exodus 23:20-22

³⁰¹ John 6:63

³⁰² John 14:10; 7:17

Galatians 3:¹⁹ Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions... *and it was* ordained by angels **in the hand of a mediator**.

1 Timothy 2:⁵ For *there is* one God, and **one mediator between God and men**, the man Christ Jesus;

We then confirm that the Father and the Son were present when the covenant was given on Mount Sinai. This law was given by God in the hands of a mediator, the Son of God, to Moses and to the people.

Considerations regarding the Law

Let us consider a few points regarding the covenants and the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. Did the law exist before it was declared on Mount Sinai? Did the people of God know of the Ten Commandments before they were proclaimed there?

Firstly, the Sabbath had already been reminded to them when Moses returned to Egypt. Before arriving at Sinai they were reminded of the Sabbath by the giving of the manna from heaven and when the Israelites didn't obey God responded by saying:

Exodus 16:²⁸ And the LORD said unto Moses, "How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?"

So we see that the people of Israel, upon leaving Egypt, had a knowledge of the commandments and laws of God. But if we go even farther back in time, we read the following regarding Abraham:

Genesis 26:⁵ because that Abraham hath **hearkened** to My voice, and **keepeth** My charge, My commands, My statutes, and My laws.

Abraham kept the commandments and thus they would have been well known by His descendants, as they were transmitted orally from parents to children³⁰³. It is only with Moses that God gives His law in written form. Paul confirms that the law was already known and existed in the world since before it was pronounced on Mount Sinai:

Romans 5:¹² Wherefore, as **by one man sin entered into the world**, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: ¹³ (For **until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law**).

The verse is clear in telling us that:

- a. Before the law was given at Sinai there was sin in the world.
- b. When there is no law, sin is not imputed.

³⁰³ Genesis 18:19

- c. However, sin and death entered by one man.
- d. In other words, the law already existed before Adam sinned. Since he sinned, sin entered the world and man was imputed with sin.

In this way we confirm that the law was in the world since before and after man sinned. The law always existed. The law existed before, during and after it was declared and written on Mount Sinai. In that sense, there was no change in the relationship between God and man. Nothing new was added. The same law existed since the very beginning, with the same demands on every human being. This is only natural if we consider that the law is God's righteousness, the written manifestation in human language of God's character and way of living. Now, having established this, we cannot avoid mentioning the following verse:

Galatians 3:¹⁹ Wherefore then *serveth* the law? **It was added because of transgressions**, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

The law was "added because of transgressions". The term that has been translated here as "added" is the same word that is translated as "speaking words" in Hebrews 12:19, which is referring to the same event:

Hebrews 12:¹⁸ You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; ¹⁹ to a trumpet blast or to such a **voice speaking words** that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them. (NIV)

So the law "added" means it was 'spoken' or 'declared', because of transgression.

If law had always existed, why then was it proclaimed at Mount Sinai?

Romans 5:²⁰ Moreover **the law entered, that the offence might abound**. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

The Israelites had forgotten aspects of the law while in Egypt, so the law was proclaimed in great majesty to make sin "abound" – be made more clear and heinous – so that God's grace to forgive and heal might "much more abound". The law does not cause sin, but its own nature uncovers sin. Paul says this elsewhere:

Romans 7:¹³ Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; **that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful**.

The law, which is good, shows sin as being exceedingly sinful. Sin existed in the life of the Israelites, but the law was declared for the terrible nature of sin to be manifested more clearly, together with the greatness of God. The Lord descended on fire, a pillar of smoke rose from Sinai as if from a furnace, the trumpet of God sounded increasingly louder, the mount trembled greatly and the ground itself trembled.

Now that this manifestation had occurred, overabounding grace was also given. The holiness of God, the solemnity of the law, and the magnitude of sin, shown through that extraordinary experience at Sinai, was done so that the people might realize how much they need Christ. Note this important process: First, human beings are given a revelation of sin and its terrible nature, deformity and monstrosity. Secondly, right there, in that same time and place— when the human heart is convicted – Romans 5:20 says that an even more overabounding grace is given.

When the Father and the Son came over Mount Sinai, they didn't come alone. We read:

Deuteronomy 33:2 And he said, "The LORD came from Sinai, And rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from mount Paran, And **he came with ten thousands of saints: From his right hand went a fiery law for them.**"

Galatians 3:19 Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; **and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.**

The heavenly hosts were deployed and placed in order on Mount Sinai. All this glory was for the purpose of showing the whole universe that:

Romans 3:20 ... for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

God was trying to save man, for sin, which is the transgression of the law, begets death. We can imagine the situation in which the people of Israel heard and received this law. Their own conscience told them and convinced them of their guilt in transgressing the law that was being given. The boundaries placed on Mount Sinai declared that the sin that dwelt in the people of Israel was death. In this way the people were taken to what could be called a "ministration of death"³⁰⁴: when hearing and receiving the promises of God, the Ten Commandments, the condemnation that came from the guilt of transgressing the law surfaced. It is when going through this experience that the hardening of the heart can manifest.

The law could not give life then, and it can't give life today. However, if Israel accepted their sinful reality and heard God's will to make them holy, accepting the grace and forgiveness of God rather than hardening their hearts, they would have then received the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus³⁰⁵. But if the heart is hardened, this proclamation of the law only brings the knowledge of sin, and the conviction of death. The verse tells us:

³⁰⁴ 2 Corinthians 3:7

³⁰⁵ Romans 8:2

Romans 7:⁹For I was alive without the law once: but **when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.** ¹⁰And **the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.** ¹¹For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew *me*.

The people of Israel went through this process. When the law entered their conscience convicting them, God right then and there was longing to give them His overabounding grace for the forgiveness of sins and the power of a new life³⁰⁶. God longed for them to receive His Spirit right then, that the fullness of their terror be converted into complete victory over sin through faith.

The law then becomes a schoolmaster, a teacher, an instructor³⁰⁷ that, by revealing to us the inevitability of death due to our sinfulness, it places us at the feet of Christ, that we might receive from Him forgiveness, comfort, peace, hope and the Comforter³⁰⁸. The sword of the Spirit is the word of God³⁰⁹, which pierces “even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”³¹⁰. Though the Holy Spirit convinces us of sin³¹¹, He is still the Comforter. There is comfort and hope in the conviction of sin that He brings to us. He points us to Christ³¹², the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world, as the expression of God’s great love for us, and He urges us to cling to Him to find timely help.

The great sin of the people of Israel until that moment had been their lack of faith and trust in God. They trusted more in themselves than in God. In this sin we see our own sin. What they needed was for something to completely destroy that self-confidence so that, once it was destroyed, faith might reign in their hearts. The law was given in a way to provoke this, that it might destroy the self-confidence that reigned in *all* hearts and have the people understand that the righteousness of the law does not come by works but by hearing the word itself that was giving them the law. Now we read:

Galatians 3:¹⁷ And this I say, **that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ**, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

The covenant of God towards Christ had already been confirmed 430 years before the law was given at Sinai. This contrasts what most think; for to human eyes, God ratifies His covenant at the cross event. The covenant already having been confirmed refers to

³⁰⁶ Romans 5:20

³⁰⁷ Galatians 3:24; 4:1-2

³⁰⁸ John 14:16

³⁰⁹ Ephesians 6:17

³¹⁰ Hebrews 4:12-13

³¹¹ John 16:8

³¹² John 15:26

the moment in which God promised the land to Abraham's seed³¹³; in other words, He promised it to Christ. This is how God ratified His covenant with Christ.

The ratification or confirmation of the covenant is the repetition and the carrying out of the commitment that the Father gave to His Son when He interceded for humanity in case it might fall. God promised His Son the inheritance of all the redeemed.

When He promised Abraham that He would give the land to Christ, the Father was confirming the covenant or the promises of the Father to Christ which were made in Heaven prior to the Fall of man into sin. However, this is not the first time that God ratified His covenant.

Genesis 3:¹⁵ And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; **it shall bruise thy head**, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

God gave the covenant or promises to His Son, embarking with Him on the redemption of the human race. This is done by offering forgiveness and grace to write the righteousness of God in the hearts of those who will hear and keep. God's promise to Christ was ratified upon the first sin, and grace is given to Adam and Eve. God confirmed His covenant with Christ in the promise made to the woman that her Seed would bruise the head of the serpent.

Let's return to the text we were analyzing:

Galatians 3:¹⁷ And this I say, *that* the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

The law had come exactly 430 years later. The law was given on Sinai fifty days after the Sabbath of the feast of Unleavened Bread, which would be the Sunday of Pentecost, another feast day, and we then discover that on that same date of Pentecost, but 430 years earlier, Abraham received the promise of the earth in the Seed.



³¹³ Genesis 12:7

Genesis 12:⁷ And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, **“Unto thy seed will I give this land:”** and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

God appeared to Abraham the day of the wave sheaf and gave him His covenant, and called him to go out from Haran to the land that He would show him. The journey with his family and possessions would take him around 40 days until they reached Shechem, where God appeared to him again, now on the day of Pentecost, and promised him the seed. Not only that, but He promised the land to the Seed (in other words, to Christ)³¹⁴, in that way ratifying His covenant with His Son. It is this verse³¹⁵ from Paul which establishes a second period of 430 years which is separate to the one in Exodus 12³¹⁶, which allows us to seal the fulfillment of the times for both periods, and the key for their interpretation is the ratification of God’s covenant to His Son. Thus the experience of Abraham is re-lived by His descendants 430 years later to lock the events in God’s people mind.

So the law did not annul nor repel the promise. In fact, God gave the law so that Israel might go to their Savior and be healed, and in this way the promise might be fulfilled – by being counted with the Seed as heirs³¹⁷. The reception of the law in their hearts is what would allow for God’s promise to be fulfilled. That’s why it is said that the law is God’s covenant; it is His promises. The law doesn’t in any way invalidate God’s promise; rather, it is part of the promise itself. For just as the channel carries what comes from the source, even taking the name of the very thing that it carries, so the law brings what the covenant promises. So the promise of the eternal inheritance is within the law when it is received, and it becomes a commandment unto eternal life.

How did the people react to this whole experience? We read the following:

Exodus 20:¹⁸ And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw *it*, **they removed, and stood afar off.** ¹⁹ And they said unto Moses, **“Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.”** ²⁰ And Moses said unto the people, **“Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.”**

The people asked Moses for God to not speak to them anymore³¹⁸, precisely when God’s request was for them to hear His voice! Paul verifies this:

³¹⁴ Psalm 2:7-12

³¹⁵ Galatians 3:17

³¹⁶ Exodus 12:40, 41

³¹⁷ Galatians 3:27-29

³¹⁸ Deuteronomy 5:23-25

Hebrews 12:¹⁹ And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which *voice* **they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:**

God gave the Ten Commandments, and in response all the elders, representing all the people, came to Moses and asked that God not speak to them anymore. So God spoke no more to the people directly after the 10 commandments, and instead spoke only to Moses, whom Israel had requested be their mediator. They chose a flawed mediator, a sinful human being like themselves, when God actually wanted to give them another mediator, “one among a thousand”³¹⁹ – Christ Jesus. And God accepted their request, which would have later implications in the golden calf and other incidents.

Now let’s come back to their request to not hear God’s voice anymore. Hadn’t we read before that they had promised God that they would do all that the Lord had said? In only three days they broke their promise to God. We see how this was a promise of the flesh: first a Yes, then a No. And God understood them in their carnal nature, yet how He longed for their hearts to be more receptive to His word!

Deuteronomy 5:²⁸ **And the LORD heard the voice of your words**, when ye spake unto me; and the LORD said unto me, “I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken. ²⁹**O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always**, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever! ³⁰Go say to them, ‘Get you into your tents again.’ ³¹But as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do *them* in the land which I give them to possess it.”

God gave them hope in their failure: allowing them to reap the consequences would make them realize that man is unable in his own strength to achieve the lofty heights of holiness. Though this is true, still the keeping of God’s commandments is essential for man to be saved, therefore God Himself would do it in their hearts – if they would believe.

³¹⁹ Job 33:23

The Old Covenant, Ratified and Broken

The Ratification of the First Covenant

After the people asked that God not speak to them anymore, Moses came to Him, and God continued speaking directly with Moses. God gave him additional laws, and when He had finished these laws or judgments, He said:

Exodus 23:²⁰ Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee by the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.²¹ Take ye heed before him, and hearken unto his voice; provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgression: for my name is in him.²² But **if thou shalt indeed hearken unto his voice, and do all that I speak**; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries.

Here the Father once more appeals to the people to hear the voice of the Angel who speaks the words of God. Then Moses went down the mountain and told them all the words that God had given him. Remember that this is man's covenant to God: Israel promised God that *they* would do all the Lord had said, rather than letting God do it in them.

Deuteronomy 5:²⁷ Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto thee; and **we will hear it, and do it.**

Exodus 24:⁵ And he [Moses] sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD.⁶ And Moses took half of the blood, and put *it* in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.⁷ **And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, "All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient."**⁸ And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words."

The Lord had made reference to the sacrifices and burnt offerings after Israel explicitly expressed that they no longer wanted to hear God's voice³²⁰. When God mentions the offerings of peace and the burnt offerings, He says, "**your** burnt offerings and **your** peace offerings"³²¹. These offerings and sacrifices are from Israel.

Israel had shown they didn't have faith in God, yet they didn't realize the extent of their problem. They still trusted in themselves and in their ability to fulfill God's

³²⁰ Exodus 20:19

³²¹ Exodus 20:24

words. Since they were the ones who were shaping this covenant, God entered it in accordance to how they thought.

Then Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, saying, “behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made”. Now, we’ve seen that these are the offerings and sacrifices of Israel, so the covenant of Israel is made with the promises of men, based on the blood of animals that could not make him that did the service perfect. This is how the people of Israel established or entered into the first covenant³²² with the Lord. God condescended to enter into the covenant of men in order to take them into His own covenant, where *He* makes the promises and fulfills them.

Hebrews 9:18 Whereupon **neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.** ¹⁹For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, ²⁰Saying, ‘This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.’

This event was the confirmation or the start of the first covenant through the shedding of blood. In addition to man’s promises, he also offers God blood sacrifices. These were peace offerings, offerings of appeasement. God accepts and enters into this covenant while man thinks that this IS God’s covenant!

Leviticus 18:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ²“Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, ‘I am the LORD your God. ³After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances. ⁴Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I *am* the LORD your God. ⁵**Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I *am* the LORD.”**”

Here God clearly tells them that the man who does these things will live. In the promises of man, in the old covenant, man purposes to do God’s work himself. These promises depend on man: if he fulfills them, he will live. It further says:

Deuteronomy 27:11 And Moses charged the people the same day, saying, ¹²“These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people, when ye are come over Jordan; Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Joseph, and Benjamin: ¹³And these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse; Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. ¹⁴And the Levites shall

³²² Hebrews 9:9

... speak, and say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice, ... ²⁶**'Cursed be he that confirmeth not *all* the words of this law to do them.'** And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'"

The man who did not do the words of this law would be cursed. Paul specifically attributes this to the old covenant, since the law itself says that he that does them will live in them.

Galatians 3:¹¹ But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is evident*: for, 'The just shall live by faith.' ¹² And **the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.**

However, for man this is impossible, because the flesh is weak³²³. Man does not have the power, the strength nor the will to do them³²⁴.

Now, having in mind that the covenant that was confirmed to Abraham held the promise of redemption, why was another covenant made on Sinai? The covenant of Abraham included everyone who was of Christ; His provisions were broad enough so that no other covenant was needed. Why, then, was another covenant needed?

During the time that Israel was in Egypt, the people had mostly lost the knowledge of God and the principles of the covenant that He had made with Abraham. This being their condition, God sent them Moses with a religious reform, and also freed them from slavery that they might serve Him. In this process of deliverance, God clearly manifested to them His power, mercy, love and paternal care towards them. He took them to the Red Sea, where they could see that when faced with a situation that was humanly impossible to escape from – and then He opened the way in the sea. There, they could see their total helplessness and inability to save themselves, and their absolute need for divine help. When they were conscious of this, God freed them. It is in the sum of these actions that God tried for them to be filled with respect, love and gratitude towards Him, and for them to see that He really was their Redeemer.

This process they went through was also meant to engrave in their minds higher realities. The first is that, as in the material world so in the spiritual world: they were completely incapable of saving themselves from the slavery of sin. Their spiritual situation was just like what they were going through physically: they were without any possibility of escaping. Having lived in an environment full of idolatry, they had a wrong understanding of the holiness of God. And not only that, they also didn't know their insurmountable sinfulness and their complete inability to obey God's law. They needed to learn and become acutely aware of the fact that they had an urgent need for a Savior.

³²³ Romans 8:3

³²⁴ Romans 8:7

God revealed their true condition to them again and again during their journey to Mount Sinai, where He made known to them His glory and majesty and had given them promises of abundant blessings if they heard His voice and kept and treasured His word. If they did not resist, all of Israel would come to be a holy people and a kingdom of priests. They did not know, and did not understand, that without Christ it was impossible to keep His law.

The Passover lamb, the liberation at the Red Sea, the pillar of cloud, the manna and the water, all of this had been explained to them as being symbols of Christ and His power to make them obedient. However, they were not yet aware of their sinfulness, and they hastened to make their own covenant with God. They thought that they could be righteous by themselves and obey God's law, and they quickly established their own covenant, the first covenant, with God. Thus, they affirmed, "Everything the Lord has said, we will do"³²⁵.

We remember Peter, who, not knowing his own condition, also offered promises to our Lord³²⁶. Even though all the other disciples might abandon Christ, Peter presumptuously affirmed that he wouldn't. Like Peter, Israel wouldn't need to wait long before the real sinful condition of their hearts, and their pressing need of Christ, would be clearly revealed to them. When the first covenant is established, there is no need for Christ, because man purposes to do the words of God by himself, not realizing that without Christ, we can do nothing³²⁷.

The Sanctuary and the Work of God

Once the first covenant was established, Moses was called to go up the mountain once more, and now the Lord was going to show him in a practical way what was happening.

Exodus 24:12 And the LORD said unto Moses, "Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and **I will give thee tables of stone**, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them."

When it was revealed that they would not continue listening, but were rather trying to establish their own righteousness, God gave them the ministration of the letter. Up until now God had been attempting to enter an eternal covenant with them, one in which He might speak directly to their hearts, and where the people might hear His voice and keep His words. But now that they had hardened themselves down a path of appeasing God rather than listening to Him, how would God bring them to a new

³²⁵ Exodus 24:7

³²⁶ Matthew 26:30-35

³²⁷ John 15:5

covenant ministration of the Spirit, instead of a human ministration of the letter through Moses?

They needed to learn that their word was defective, their heart unstable, and that their heart was, in reality, at enmity with God. And God came to where they were, to remove them from this state, giving them the ministration of the letter, the ministration of the written law, with the express purpose that they might finally acknowledge how desperately they needed the Spirit of Christ to give them a new heart and to write His law in their hearts.

In this ministration, He very clearly declared their condition. Since God could not write the law in their hearts, He would now write it on tables of stone. The stone was a direct reflection of the hardness of their hearts. God in this act placed a mirror in front of them, that the condition of their hearts might be shown to them. The law became a mirror³²⁸ that reflected the condition of man.

By taking upon themselves the responsibility of doing the work of God, they were ignorant of their own condition, and they showed a lack of appreciation for God's power and holiness. It is only when men are ignorant of God's righteousness that they attempt to establish their own, and by doing this they refuse to subject themselves to God's righteousness.

Romans 10:³ For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

The promises that they made, this Old Covenant, was useless.

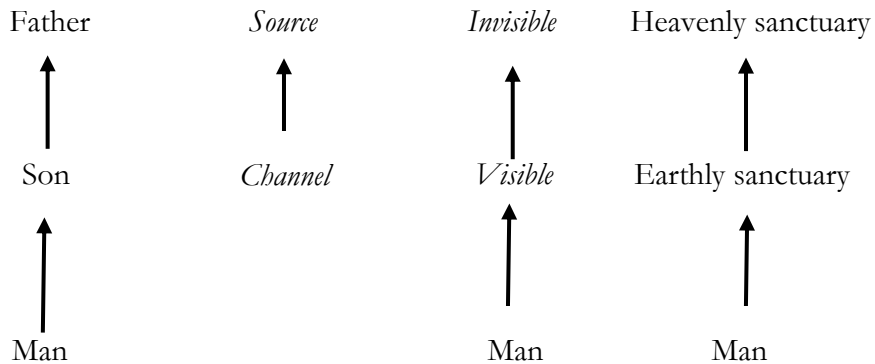
God always seeks, in every time and place, to draw His children to Himself, no matter what their condition is. When He perceives the tiniest signal that there is a desire in them to serve Him, He immediately tries to grow that desire to bring the soul to greater love, a more complete trust, and to a fuller and broader knowledge and understanding of God. This is what God would try to do for the Israelites, working in the mindset they were in.

God would give them further instructions regarding this first covenant. Since they longed to work, He gave them a task through which they might now come near to Him: He established the sanctuary and its service. Even though they had failed the test when they received the law, God would use this expressed desire to serve Him by taking them to a more favorable position regarding their relationship to Him. So He gave them instructions and spoke in a way that He wouldn't have if His words had been accepted and believed in the first place.

³²⁸ James 1:22-25

Hebrews 9:1 Then verily the first *covenant* had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.

The Sanctuary itself was not an innovation, since it was only an earthly figure of heavenly realities, upon which the people might put their faith. A visible channel was established in order to help them reach, comprehend, and cling to an invisible reality. The earthly sanctuary is a visible channel, and the heavenly sanctuary is the invisible source.



As it says:

Hebrews 8:5 Who **serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things**, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, *that* **'thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.'**

God through the sanctuary, would teach them the realities of the new covenant that they were rejecting. Because it says:

Exodus 25:8 And **let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.** ⁹ According to all that I shew thee, *after* the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make *it*.

God's intention was then that, through the earthly sanctuary, they might learn that God wanted to live in them through His Spirit³²⁹.

Now, the Lord does not dwell in temples built by hands³³⁰. How strange, then, that He would ask man to build a house where He might dwell among them! Why would He ask for something like this? Simply because they were presumptuous; they believed they could do the works of God without the need to give Him room to dwell in their hearts and inspire their thoughts and actions. Because the following texts declare:

³²⁹ Ephesians 2:22; 1 Corinthians 3:16

³³⁰ Acts 17:24

Psalm 34:¹⁸ **The LORD is nigh** unto them that are of a broken heart; And saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

Isaiah 57:¹⁵ For thus saith the high and lofty One That inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; **'I dwell in the high and holy place, With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit,** To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.'

The Lord could not dwell in them, because He dwells with those who have broken and humble spirits. But this was not their condition! Yet the Lord did not give up on them, but rather, He wanted to make His presence manifest in a marked way through the Sanctuary, hoping that they would finally be drawn to Him. The Lord gave Moses instructions regarding the sanctuary, starting from the Most Holy Place, its purpose and meaning, and extending towards the outer court. Then He gave instructions regarding the priesthood and the offerings.

Exodus 29: ⁴³ And there I will meet with the children of Israel, **and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory.** ⁴⁴ And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office. ⁴⁵ And **I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God.** ⁴⁶ And they shall know that I *am* the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I *am* the LORD their God.

God established the sanctuary for them to know that The Lord is their God, that He wanted to dwell among them, and that in this dwelling He would be their God by sanctifying them with His presence. God's glory would bring about this sanctification. And at the end of chapter 31, He concluded with instructions regarding the Sabbath:

Exodus 31:¹³ Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, 'Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it *is* a sign between me and you throughout your generations; **that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.'**

Why would God repeat instructions regarding the Sabbath? The Sabbath was given as a reminder that it is God, and not man, who sanctifies man. The Sabbath is a memorial of creation, and it was God who created – not man. It is the Lord who works in us the work of holiness. By His presence making the Sabbath holy, it establishes it as a reminder and a sign of the new covenant, that on that day especially, God longs to give His word to His people. This way, the Sabbath becomes the seal of sanctification³³¹, the sign of the new covenant and the day of communion with Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:³⁰ But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and **righteousness, and sanctification,** and redemption:

³³¹ Ezekiel 20:12

Through the sanctuary service God wanted to teach His people that it is by the presence of Christ dwelling in the heart that He would make God's righteousness a reality in their flesh.

The establishment of the sanctuary opened a huge field of understanding regarding what God does for man in the new covenant. And it is impossible to cover everything regarding it, although we note the following:

- a. There is a Sanctuary and a true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched³³².
- b. This tabernacle has a High Priest, which is Jesus, who sits at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens³³³.
- c. The priesthood, the offerings and the earthly Sanctuary are a figure and shadow of heavenly things³³⁴.

The evidence for this is in the fact that the Sanctuary and its services would be carried out according to the pattern that was shown to them³³⁵.

The Golden Calf

While God was giving His instructions to Moses, those in the camp quickly forgot the promises made to God.

Exodus 32:1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, "Up, **make us gods, which shall go before us**; for *as for* this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him..." ⁷ And the LORD said unto Moses, "Go, get thee down; for **thy people**, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted *themselves*:"

God tells Moses to go down because "thy people" have been corrupted. Why does it say Moses's people? Aren't they God's people? What might Moses have been thinking regarding his role and his work with Israel?

Upon seeing the golden calf and the people defiling themselves, Moses broke the tables of the Ten Commandments. When Aaron was questioned regarding what had happened, he gave the outlandish explanation that the people had given him gold, he had thrown it into the fire, and out of the fire had come the calf³³⁶. How could God

³³² Hebrews 8:2

³³³ Hebrews 8:1

³³⁴ Hebrews 8:3, 5

³³⁵ Hebrews 8:5

³³⁶ Exodus 32:24

come near to them now, given that they were clearly rejecting Him, and were not ready to acknowledge their error?

Moses, interceded for them with the agape love that comes from the heart of God: Moses is willing to give his life for those who were murmuring so much against him³³⁷.

It is in this context that the promise that the whole of Israel would be a nation of kings and priests was reduced to the priesthood of the children of Levi³³⁸. It was their own attempt to fulfill the promises of God, and then forgetting their own promise and rebelling against God, that ended up stopping Him from being able to give them what He longed to give. In the event of the golden calf, the people broke the covenant that they had made with God with which they had bound themselves in a covenant of blood – which they had promised with blood. In other words, they had pledged their own lives in its fulfillment.

The covenant that they had made had no provision for forgiveness. The terms of the old covenant were that the man who did these things (referring to the law of God) would live by them³³⁹. Therefore, he who continued not in all the things which were written in the book of the law to do them would be cursed³⁴⁰. In this old and now broken covenant, they could not expect God's favor.

But now, seeing that their own promises and covenant were useless, they could become aware of their sinfulness and their need for a personal Savior. God's desire was that they might now join themselves to Him through faith and love, and consider Him the Redeemer from their sins. Now, they could begin to appreciate and notice the benefits of the new covenant.

The better promises of God are the new covenant. Here it is clearly manifested that even though they were free from the slavery of the Pharaoh, they were still slaves to sin. And this slavery could only be broken by the Lamb of God³⁴¹. God's promises were thus within their reach, because the promise was that He would give them His law and write it in their hearts.

The blood of Christ is what cleanses us from all sin. The obedience of Christ is given to us. We no longer need to attempt to establish our own righteousness; we instead accept God's righteousness through Christ. Only then the Spirit of God will quicken the mortal body to produce fruit in its time. It is only through the Spirit of Christ that we can follow in His footsteps. In this sense, it is important to clearly establish the relationship that exists between faith and the law in the new covenant. Paul says:

³³⁷ Exodus 32:30-34

³³⁸ Exodus 32:28-29

³³⁹ Romans 10:5, Galatians 3:12

³⁴⁰ Galatians 3:10

³⁴¹ John 8:34-36, John 1:29

Romans 3:³¹ Do we then make void the law through faith? **God forbid: yea, we establish the law.**

This is a very important point: faith does not make the law void, but rather, it establishes it. Where does faith establish, or write, the law? In the heart. Because faith hears to keep and treasure the word in the heart.

It is impossible for the law to justify man, because man, in his sinful flesh, cannot keep the law.

Romans 8:³ For **what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh**, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: ⁴That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Through the Holy Spirit who writes the law in the heart, the believer can walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, in this way fulfilling the righteousness of the law. In this sense, the work of God has always been the same throughout the ages. There have been different manifestations and developments of God's power, always according to the need of each time, group and being³⁴².

When we look at Abraham, and then throughout the history of the people of Israel, we see a development in the manifestation of the plan of salvation. This development is centered in the revelation of the Savior. This growing manifestation of the Savior is found in the symbols of the stories of the Old Testament. The same Savior is then revealed in the New Testament. The teachings of the New Testament are discovered in the same stories and ceremonies of the people of Israel in the Old Testament. And the shadows that covered His presence begin to disappear as Christ is clearly revealed.

Let us continue with the narration of the story of the people of Israel:

Exodus 33:¹ And the LORD said unto Moses, "Depart, *and* go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, **unto the land which I swore unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'Unto thy seed will I give it:'** ²And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: ³Unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for **I will not go up in the midst of thee;** for thou *art* a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way."

How could God dwell in them if they were unbelieving despite such countless expressions of love? He would not be able to be among them because the glory of the Lord would consume them because of their sins.

³⁴² Hebrews 2:3-4

Thus the meeting tent was moved outside the camp, as a sign that the sins of the people made God turn His face away. It is now when Moses pleads to God in the following way:

Exodus 33:¹² And Moses said unto the LORD, "See, thou sayest unto me, 'Bring up this people': and **thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me.** Yet thou hast said, 'I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight.'¹³ Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, **shew me now thy way, that I may know thee,** that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation *is* thy people."

Moses is asking God to tell him who He will send with him. He begs God to show him His way, the way to know God³⁴³. Moses is asking for Jesus. And to this, God promises that He will send His presence³⁴⁴ among them.

The Possessing of the Land

The people of Israel came near to the promised land, but the previous sequence of events predicted a disastrous outcome for this generation. When God attempted to give them the land of Canaan, their lack of faith in God's promises was manifested once more. In His word, God had clearly established how they would possess the land.

Exodus 6:⁶ Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, 'I *am* the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments:⁷ And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.⁸ And **I will bring you in unto the land,** concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and **I will give it you** for an heritage: I *am* the LORD.'

God promised that He would bring them into the land of Canaan in the same way that He had taken them out of Egypt: through His power. They never needed to take up arms nor fight against their captors in order to leave Egypt, and neither needed they use carnal weapons against the Canaanites.

Exodus 23:²⁰ Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee by the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. ...²⁷ **I will send my terror before thee, and will discomfit all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee.**²⁸ And I

³⁴³ John 14:6; 1:18

³⁴⁴ Exodus 33:14

will send the hornet before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee. ²⁹ I will not drive them out from before thee in one year, lest the land become desolate, and the beasts of the field multiply against thee. ³⁰ By **little and little I will drive them out** from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land. ASV

The terror of God would be sent before them, and it would cause the Canaanites to leave. The news of how they had left Egypt, together with the news of the miraculous provision of water and manna, would reach Canaan and would fill with terror those who had closed their hearts to God's voice. Also, Israel's enemies would be delivered to them – meaning their enemies would end up being without God's protection, not because God is a respecter of persons, but because of their decision to drive Him out of their lives He would no longer be able to protect them.

God would make their enemies turn their backs, or flee from them. The fact that it would be God (not them) who would drive their enemies out from before them and would give them the land was repeated several times³⁴⁵. In case Israel was tempted to doubt God's work, clear instructions were given.

Deuteronomy 7:¹⁷ If thou shalt say in thine heart, 'These nations *are* more than I; how can I dispossess them?' ¹⁸ Thou shalt not be afraid of them: *but shalt well remember what the LORD thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt;* ¹⁹ The great temptations which thine eyes saw, and the signs, and the wonders, and the mighty hand, and the stretched out arm, whereby the LORD thy God brought thee out: **so shall the LORD thy God do** unto all the people of whom thou art afraid. ²⁰ **Moreover the LORD thy God will send the hornet** among them, until they that are left, and hide themselves from thee, be destroyed. ²¹ Thou shalt not be affrighted at them: for the LORD thy God *is* among you, a mighty God and terrible. ²² And the LORD thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee. ²³ But the LORD thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction, until they be destroyed.

Were Israel to become afraid, they would do well to remember what the Lord their God did unto Pharaoh and Egypt, because so would the Lord do unto those nations. God would do it; this He kept reminding them:

Joshua 24:¹² And I sent the **hornet** before you, which drave them out from before you, *even* the two kings of the Amorites; **but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow.**

³⁴⁵ Deuteronomy 6:18; 11:22-25; Exodus 33:2; 34:11, 24; Leviticus 20:22-23

The hornets declare the work of God: not by sword, nor by might³⁴⁶, because the warfare is spiritual and not carnal. In this warfare, only spiritual weapons are mighty to the pulling down of strongholds³⁴⁷.

2 Chronicles 20:¹⁷Ye shall not *need* to fight in this *battle*: set yourselves, **stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD** with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD *will be* with you.

God wanted to give them the land and save them in stillness. And once in the land, what would happen? How would these nations be destroyed? The previous context explains how this would happen:

Deuteronomy 7:¹ **When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land** whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; ²And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, *and* **utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them:** ³**Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.** ⁴For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. ⁵**But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire.**

How would Israel utterly destroy these nations? By not showing mercy to them by making deals with them, nor making marriages with them. If this were to happen, their hearts would be turned away to other gods. Destruction was not by killing them by sword and bow, as these instructions make obvious. Without being able to negotiate with the Israelites, they would leave, and thus their kingdoms would perish. The only thing they were to physically destroy were their altars and idols.

Seeing this, we can begin to visualize God's amazing work that has been planned for His children. Before one, a thousand would flee, and before two of God's children, ten thousand would flee³⁴⁸. Those who hid in their fortresses would see their walls fall down, and with them, their courage. Rahab and her family, Ruth and so many others would hear of the God of Israel and would be invited to accept Him.

³⁴⁶ Zechariah 4:6

³⁴⁷ 2 Corinthians 10:4

³⁴⁸ Deuteronomy 32:30

In this way, they would be ushered into the kingdom of priests³⁴⁹ into which the whole nation was called. The fact that Israel would enter without sword nor bow, that the inhabitants would flee out of their own fears, and that they would be driven out by hornets and vomited³⁵⁰ from the land, would be a marvel to the nations. Quickly, news would reach all four corners of the earth regarding a people who without human instruments, but solely through the presence and glory of their God, had opened the sea³⁵¹. This would not generate prejudice against them, nor bitter disputes regarding the land; the kingdom of priests would spread, and the gospel would have been preached to every nation, kindred, tongue and people.

Once they reached the borders of Canaan, the word of God came to them:

Deuteronomy 1:⁸ Behold, **I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land** which the LORD sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.

Just like they had walked into the Red Sea, they were now invited to enter the land, because God had already set the land before them. And He repeats:

Deuteronomy 1:²⁰ And I said unto you, 'Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the LORD our God doth give unto us. ²¹ Behold, **the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee;** fear not, neither be discouraged.' ²² And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, 'We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come.'

God called them to go up and possess the land, and He had told them how it would be done. And we ask ourselves: Did they hear the word? Did they treasure this word in their hearts? No. They would spy out the land and find their own way to take the land. God, then, allowed them to walk in their own counsel.

Number 13:¹ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ² 'Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them.' ³ And Moses by the commandment of the LORD sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men *were* heads of the children of Israel.

³⁴⁹ Exodus 19:6

³⁵⁰ Leviticus 18:25

³⁵¹ Isaiah 17:12; Revelation 17:15

God gave them their will, yet He asked that those who they sent be rulers among them: people who had been close to Moses and had been able to clearly³⁵² see God's work. When they returned, they gave their report:

Numbers 13:²⁸ "Nevertheless the people *be* strong that dwell in the land, and the cities *are* walled, *and* very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there..."

³⁰ And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it."

³¹ But the men that went up with him said, "We be not able to go up against the people; for they *are* stronger than we." ³² And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, "The land, through which we have gone to search it, *is* a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it *are* men of a great stature. ³³ And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, *which come* of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight."

All of God's words regarding what He had promised them were ignored, neither was there the memory of God's work in taking them out of Egypt. They only saw themselves, and they believed they had to fulfill God's promise. They believed they had to conquer the land by force. Seeing that this was impossible for them, they accused God of taking them out in order to destroy them. What a terrible accusation! In spite of Moses' appeals, they still did not believe, nor did they want to enter in the land³⁵³.

And God once more gave them their will, telling them that they would not enter into the land. When they heard this, they decided to go in, thus showing that a heart hardened by rebellion actually wants to do the opposite to what God says, regardless of the circumstance.

Deuteronomy 1:⁴¹ Then ye answered and said unto me, "We have sinned against the LORD, **we will go up and fight, according to all that the LORD our God commanded us.**" And when ye had girded on every man his weapons of war, ye were ready to go up into the hill.

They once again ignored God's word, disrespecting Him, yet tragically they believed that God was asking them to fight with man's weapons of war. They went up, they were defeated, and they returned to the desert, where they would wander for forty years.

³⁵² Exodus 24:9-11

³⁵³ Deuteronomy 1:19-32

Isaiah 30:¹⁵ For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; 'In returning and rest shall ye be saved; **In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength': And ye would not.**

This is a big warning to those of us who have reached the end of the ages. It is clear that no demonstration of power or glory is enough to convert those who do not wish to be converted. Neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead³⁵⁴.

God's original intention was for ancient Israel to take the gospel to the world, with a first layover in the land of Canaan, from where the kingdom of priests might be extended throughout all the earth, and finally give them the restored promised land together with eternal life. However, their lack of faith, their mistrust and their hardness of heart made it impossible to God to fulfill all these promises.

God could not fulfill the promise to them; He could not introduce them into the heavenly Canaan with them being in that state. And God showed them this situation by making them return to the desert for forty years, with the whole generation of those older than 20 years old being unable to enter Canaan. They disqualified themselves from receiving the greater reality, and this is shown to them in this additional pilgrimage. The verse explains it this way:

Acts 13:¹⁸ And about the time of forty years suffered He their manners in the wilderness.

God suffered their practices and provocations. The history of this generation is one of constant murmuring and rebellion.

Psalms 78:²² Because they believed not in God, And trusted not in His salvation:

They didn't believe God. They did not trust in the Lord's salvation. They did not trust in Jesus.

Psalms 81:⁸ Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me; ⁹ There shall no strange god be in thee; Neither shalt thou worship any strange god. ¹⁰ I *am* the LORD thy God, Which brought thee out of the land of Egypt... ¹³ **Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, And Israel had walked in my ways!** ¹⁴ **I should soon have subdued their enemies, And turned my hand against their adversaries.** ¹⁵ **The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him: But their time should have endured for ever.**

If Israel had received and treasured God's covenant, they would have kept His commandments, which include "thou shalt not kill". If Israel had heard and treasured

³⁵⁴ Luke 16:31; John 11:44-53

God's words, God would have overthrown their enemies, and those who hated Jehovah would have submitted to Him. Israel would have been God's special treasure, holy people and the whole nation a royal priesthood over all the earth. Their time would have been forever. Thus God could have fulfilled the promises made to Abraham³⁵⁵.

What Happened to Israel?

Moses himself tells them when he summarizes the story:

Deuteronomy 9:²⁴ Ye have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you.

After meeting God in the burning bush, Moses brought to them, for the first time, the words and promises of God, but they did not hear due to the cruel bondage and anguish of spirit that they were in. And at the end of his life, Moses reproached this attitude in the people. Why had rebellion become Israel's defining characteristic?

Jeremiah 9:¹³ And Jehovah saith: Because of **their forsaking My law that I set before them, And they have not hearkened to My voice nor walked in it,** ¹⁴ And they walk after the stubbornness of their heart, And after the Baalim, that their fathers taught them, YLT

Not listening, Israel abandoned the law that God Himself gave to them, and they went after gods of their own heart. And how did this happen?

Jeremiah 11:⁶ And Jehovah saith unto me, "Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying: **Hear ye the words of this covenant, And ye have done them.** ⁷For I certainly testified against your fathers, In the day of My bringing them up out of the land of Egypt -- till this day, **Rising early and testifying, saying, Hearken to My voice,** ⁸ **And they have not hearkened nor inclined their ear,** And they walk each in the stubbornness of their evil heart, And I bring on them all the words of this covenant, That I commanded to do, and they did not." ⁹And Jehovah saith unto me: "A conspiracy is found in the men of Judah, And in the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ¹⁰**They have turned back to the iniquities of their first fathers, Who refused to hear My words, And they have gone after other gods to serve them, The house of Israel, and the house of Judah, Have made void My covenant, that I made with their fathers.**" YLT

³⁵⁵ Acts 7:17

The Israelites never realized why they should listen, that it is because God's voice is powerful; He commanded, and it came to be³⁵⁶. That's how it was in the natural world. But God will not force human beings; He will only work with their agreement. The same is revealed to us in another verse within the same book:

Jeremiah 7:²³ But this thing I commanded them, saying: **'Hearken to My voice, And I have been to you for God, And ye -- ye are to Me for a people, And have walked in all the way that I command you, so that it is well for you.'** ²⁴ **And they have not hearkened, nor inclined their ear,** And they walk in the counsels, In the stubbornness, of their evil heart, And are for backward, and not for forward. ²⁵ Even from the day when your fathers went out of the land of Egypt till this day, I send to you all my servants the prophets, daily rising early and sending,²⁶ **And they have not hearkened unto Me, nor inclined their ear, and harden their neck,** they have done evil above their fathers. YLT

If the divine voice is heard, God becomes their God, and they become His people. And how would this happen? How would God do it?

2 Corinthians 6:¹⁶ What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, **'I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'**

Ephesians 2:¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom **the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.** ²² **In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.**

This can only happen with God living among them, in their hearts through His Spirit. If they accepted this promise, God would give them the fullness of redemption.

But they didn't hear their God. And this brings them back to Egypt, to slavery, to bondage. And eventually, it disperses them to the four corners of the earth.

Nehemiah 9:¹⁴ And Thy holy sabbath Thou hast made known to them, and commands, and statutes, and law, Thou hast commanded for them, by the hand of Moses Thy servant; ¹⁵ and bread from the heavens Thou hast given to them for their hunger, and water from a rock hast brought out to them for their thirst, and dost say to them to go in to possess the land that Thou hast lifted up Thy hand to give to them. ¹⁶ **And they and our fathers have acted**

³⁵⁶ Psalm 33:9

proudly, and harden their neck, and have not hearkened unto Thy commands, ¹⁷**yea, they refuse to hearken, and have not remembered Thy wonders** that Thou hast done with them, and **harden their neck and appoint a head, to turn back to their service, in their rebellion;** and Thou [art] a God of pardons, gracious, and merciful, long-suffering, and abundant in kindness, and hast not forsaken them. YLT

The people of Israel acted proudly, they were unable to acknowledge their errors. They were attached to their bondage.

Psalm 81:7 In distress you called, and I delivered you; I answered you in the secret place of thunder; I tested you at the waters of Meribah. *Selah* ⁸**Hear, O my people, while I admonish you! O Israel, if you would but listen to me!** ⁹There shall be no strange god among you; you shall not bow down to a foreign god. ¹⁰I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it. ¹¹**But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would not submit to me.** ¹²**So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels.**

What did the people of Israel have to do? Open their mouth, that God might fill it with every word that comes from the mouth of God³⁵⁷. Open their mouth, that God might fill it with bread from heaven³⁵⁸. Open their mouth, that God might give them of the water that springs forth eternal life³⁵⁹.

But the people did not want to hear, God finally had to give them up³⁶⁰. Respecting their decision, He left them to their own counsel and they then did their will. There are two wills: God's will and man's will. If man refuses to be helped by God, He will leave man to his own will.

Let's see another verse that describes what happened:

Zachariah 7:¹¹ But **they refused to hearken**, and pulled away the shoulder, **And stopped their ears, that they should not hear.** ¹²**Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone**, lest they should hear the law, And the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit ...

This lesson Paul warns us the not to repeat:

Hebrews 3:⁷ Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, **To day if ye will hear his voice,** ⁸**Harden not your hearts**, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: ⁹When your fathers tempted me, proved me,

³⁵⁷ Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4

³⁵⁸ John 6:32-35, 37, 48-59

³⁵⁹ John 4:10

³⁶⁰ Hebrews 8:9

and saw my works forty years. ¹⁰Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in *their* heart; and they have not known my ways. ¹¹So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) ¹²Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. ¹³But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. ... ¹⁹So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. 4:¹ Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left *us* of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. ²For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard *it*.

Israel's rejection of God caused Him much grief and pain, for God knew where it would lead. He could not find contentment in that generation because they didn't actually want to know what He was like. What a terrible tragedy, because Israel ended up going through the same experience that the Pharaoh went through. Just like he had hardened his heart when faced with God's mercy, so did Israel.

What caused the hardening of their hearts? It is due to the deception of sin. When the law enters into their conscience, convincing them of sin and death, sin causes man to not see grace and thus becomes blind in unbelief. They are offended and don't wish to hear anymore. They decide even more firmly to fulfill God's promises in their own power.

The voice of the Holy Spirit promises to heal them, saying "if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me"³⁶¹.

It is self-denial that man resists; man is proud and he resists acknowledging his own condition. The heart is hardened when man does not admit he needs help. Notice how the situation is described:

Deuteronomy 33:²And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, And rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from mount Paran, And he came with ten thousands of saints: From his right hand *went* a fiery law for them. ³Yea, **he loved the people; All his saints *are* in thy hand:** ...

Isaiah 63:⁷I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, *and* the praises of the LORD, According to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, And the great goodness toward the house of Israel, Which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, And according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses. ⁸**For he said, Surely they *are* my people, Children *that will not lie:* So he was their Saviour.** ⁹**In all their affliction he was**

³⁶¹ Luke 9:23

afflicted, And the angel of his presence saved them: In his love and in his pity he redeemed them; And he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. ¹⁰But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: Therefore he was turned to be their enemy, *and he fought against them.* ¹¹Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, *and his people, saying,* Where *is* he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? **Where *is* he that put his holy Spirit within him?** ¹²That led *them* by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, Dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? ¹³That led them through the deep, As an horse in the wilderness, *that they should not stumble?* ¹⁴As a beast goeth down into the valley, The Spirit of the LORD caused him to rest: So didst thou lead thy people, To make thyself a glorious name.

God loved His people; He had them in the palm of His hand. The mercies and benefits that He gave His people, both physical and spiritual, were countless. He was their Savior. And God felt anguished in their anguish, and He redeemed them and saved them and carried them at all times. Yet that Spirit that He wanted to give them was rejected and grieved³⁶². In their madness of sin, they saw as an enemy the Spirit of Christ that was trying to heal them. Moses himself testifies of what they did:

Deuteronomy 32:¹ Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. ²My doctrine shall drop as the rain, My speech shall distil as the dew, As the small rain upon the tender herb, And as the showers upon the grass: ³Because I will publish the name of the LORD: Ascribe ye greatness unto our God. ⁴*He is* the Rock, his work *is* perfect: For all his ways *are* judgment: A God of truth and without iniquity, Just and right *is* he. ⁵**They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not *the spot of his children:* *They are* a perverse and crooked generation.** ⁶**Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise?** *Is not* he thy father *that hath bought thee?* Hath he not made thee, and established thee? ⁷Remember the days of old, Consider the years of many generations: Ask thy father, and he will shew thee; Thy elders, and they will tell thee.

⁸When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, When he separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. ⁹For the LORD's portion *is* his people; Jacob *is* the lot of his inheritance. ¹⁰He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; **He led him about, he instructed him, He kept him as the apple of his eye.** ¹¹**As an eagle stirreth up her nest, Fluttereth over her young, Spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, Beareth them on her wings:** ¹²**So the LORD alone did lead him, And *there was* no strange**

³⁶² Ephesians 4:30

god with him. ¹³He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; And he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock;

¹⁴Butter of kine, and milk of sheep, With fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, And goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; And thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape. ¹⁵But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: Thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered *with fatness*; **Then he forsook God *which* made him, And lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.** ¹⁶**They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, With abominations provoked they him to anger.** ¹⁷**They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; To gods whom they knew not, To new gods that came newly up, Whom your fathers feared not.** ¹⁸Of the Rock *that* begat thee thou art unmindful, And hast forgotten God that formed thee.

This is how Israel could not enter into God's promises. They refused to listen to God, and lifted up the imaginations of their perverted hearts and ended up worshiping the demons.

We see that this is a human problem, and not limited to that generation, when Joshua, at the end of his life, makes a final appeal³⁶³ to the people of Israel. He urged the people to choose whom they would serve. The people responded that they would serve the Lord. They did not know their own condition, and Joshua knew the carnal nature of their promise, because he assured them that they would not be able to serve God. They needed God in order to serve Him, because if they left God, God would end up handing them over to their enemies. However, the people insisted that they would serve God.

To this, Joshua told them that they were witnesses against themselves, because of their words, to which the people consented. Joshua told them to then remove their idols and to open their hearts to God. To this, the people responded that they would serve God and obey Him. Thus, we see, in the generation at the time when Joshua was about to die, the same presumption that it is man who fulfills and does God's promises.

Today the Promise is Repeated

God's first attempt to make a nation (church) that revealed His glory all over the earth was cut short. What was the Lord's purpose? Let us read:

³⁶³ Joshua 24:14-28

Exodus 15:¹⁷Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, *In the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, In the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established.*

God wanted to take them directly to the mountain of their inheritance to live with Him, for He says that this is where He dwells and where His Sanctuary is. And where is that?

Psalm 48:¹Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, *in the mountain of his holiness.* ²Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, **is mount Zion, On the sides of the north, the city of the great King.** ³God is known in her palaces for a refuge.

God wanted to take them to Mount Zion, a place not built by human hands, but by divine hands. This is the promise that the Lord was hindered from fulfilling. However, He did not forget them:

2 Timothy 2:¹³If we believe not, *yet* he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

We have the promise that the Lord will repeat His work. The purposes of God will be fulfilled in a group of believers who will receive God's covenant with faith:

Isaiah 11:¹¹And it shall come to pass in that day, **That the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people,** Which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. ¹²And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, And gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. ... ¹⁶**And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; Like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.**

For the second time, God will raise His hand to redeem the remnant of His people. He will do it like He did with Israel. He will do it with a people who will offer themselves voluntarily, and that will be the day of the Christ's power³⁶⁴. Because this is the promise:

Jeremiah 31:²⁷Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, "That I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast. ²⁸**And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; So will I watch over them, to build, and to plant,**" saith the LORD. ²⁹In those days they shall say no more, 'The fathers have eaten a sour

³⁶⁴ Psalm 110:3

grape, And the children's teeth are set on edge.' ³⁰ But every one shall die for his own iniquity: Every man that eateth the sour grape, His teeth shall be set on edge. ³¹ **Behold, the days come, saith the LORD," That I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: ³² Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers In the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; Which my covenant they brake, Although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: ³³ But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, And write it in their hearts; And will be their God, And they shall be my people.**

³⁴ And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: For they shall all know me, From the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: For I will forgive their iniquity, And I will remember their sin no more. ³⁵ Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, *And* the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, Which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts *is* his name: ³⁶ If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, *Then* the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. ³⁷ Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, And the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.

God promises that the time will come in which the time of the scattering of the holy people will end³⁶⁵. In this appointed time, He will gather the spiritual house of Israel, which is dispersed among all nations, through the voice of the Shepherd.

This time His plan will be fulfilled: He will put His law in our hearts and His commandments in our minds. And by receiving this covenant, we will know God just as He is. The promise is extended:

Ezekiel 36: ²² Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not *this* for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. ²³ And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; **and the heathen shall know that I *am* the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.**

²⁴ For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. ²⁵ Then will I sprinkle clean

³⁶⁵ Daniel 12:7

water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. ²⁶ **A new heart also will I give you,** and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. ²⁷ **And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes,** and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*.

²⁸ And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; **and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.** ²⁹ **I will also save you from all your uncleannesses:** and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. ³⁰ And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.

³¹ Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that *were* not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. ³² Not for your sakes do I *this*, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. ³³ Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause *you* to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. ³⁴ And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. ³⁵ And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities *are become* fenced, *and* are inhabited. ³⁶ Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined *places, and* plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken *it, and* I will do *it*.

³⁷ Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet *for* this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do *it* for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. ³⁸ As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

The promises of God will have a wonderful final fulfillment. All nations will see the change wrought in us when we are sanctified by the presence of the Lord. This is His work. It will be the Lord who will sprinkle us with clean water and who will cleanse us from all filth. The Lord will be the one to cleanse us from all our false idols, from those things in which we place our trust, energy and/or time. It is God who will give us a new heart, and who will change our heart of stone for a heart of flesh. He will put a new spirit in our hearts, giving us a reconciled mind that we can receive more and more of His Spirit, making it so that we will treasure and keep all His words.

Then God will become our God, and we His people. God spoke those promises to be fulfilled in the future, and that future has come: the prophetic clock shows us that today is the acceptable time; today is the time for the gathering of the holy people;

today is when God sets out to do all this in a marvelous way among His people. May God help us in our daily walk to always hear His voice, to not harden our hearts, and for the new covenant, the ministration of the Spirit, to become a reality in our lives.

The Ministration of Death

Two Different Ministries

In the previous pages, we've mentioned the ministration of the Spirit of God as part of God's covenant, or the new covenant. Let us read the following verses about this:

2 Corinthians 3:¹ Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some *others*, epistles of commendation to you, or *letters* of commendation from you? ²Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: ³*Forasmuch as ye are* manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, **written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.** ⁴And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: ⁵Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency *is* of God;

⁶Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for **the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.** ⁷But if the ministration of death, written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which *glory* was to be done away: ⁸How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?

Having this context in mind, let's focus on verse 6 onwards. God has called us to the ministration of the new covenant. What does this specifically consist of? The new covenant is the ministration of the Spirit. It is the covenant and the ministration of the Spirit of God that gives life. This ministration is glorious with an exceeding, excelling glory. It is the Spirit of God writing in our hearts of flesh.

Regarding the old covenant, we read that it is the one of the letter. The letter kills. The ministration of death was written with letters on stone. This ministration of death was also glorious, though less so than the ministration of the Spirit. So here we have both covenants, the old and the new, contrasted.

God's covenant, the new covenant, is Him giving His law through His Spirit. But in the old covenant, that same law is received as letter without the Spirit, because it meets a hardened heart which accepts God on its own terms. The old covenant, then, is based on the letter of the new covenant, but without the Spirit of the new covenant.

But how is it possible for the letter of the Ten Commandments to be a ministration of death when we read the following regarding the law?

Proverbs 13:¹⁴ **The law of the wise is a fountain of life,** to depart from the snares of death.

The law of the wise, the law of wisdom, is a fountain of life.

James 2:¹² So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the **law of liberty**.

The law given by God is the law of liberty. And Jesus adds:

John 12:⁵⁰ And I know that his commandment **is life everlasting**: ...

The commandment of God is life everlasting. Now, the law of God, His commandments, are a fountain of life, they are life everlasting. But this is only possible if the spirit of the law is received, for the verse says that the Spirit is what quickens and gives life.

So how does it become, without the spirit and therefore in the letter, the ministration of death? First, let's read regarding the letter of the law:

Romans 2:²⁰ An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

It is a big benefit for the people of God to have the law written in letters, because it is a witness to whether we are in righteousness or not. But in the letter, it does one thing. Let us read with Paul as he explains it:

Romans 4:¹⁵ Because **the law worketh wrath**: for where no law is, *there is no transgression*.

We see that where there is no law, there is no transgression, and consequently, there is no wrath. However, when the law is given, when it comes in or is received, transgression is revealed in the conscience and there, when sin is revealed, it produces wrath.

Romans 7:⁷ What shall we say then? *Is the law sin?* God forbid. Nay, **I had not known sin, but by the law**: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, 'Thou shalt not covet.'

The knowledge of sin comes through the law. If the law didn't say "thou shalt not covet", this sin wouldn't be revealed in my life. It would still be there, as always, but my conscience wouldn't be conscious of it.

Romans 7:⁹ For I was alive without the law once: but **when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died**.

The law enters into the conscience privately, in a way that is not visible³⁶⁶ externally. It is then when guilt comes and the realization that sin dwells in me and that I am worthy of death. It is then when the ministration of death is produced. The verse continues:

³⁶⁶ Romans 5:20; Strong G3922

Romans 7:¹⁰ And **the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.** ¹¹For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew *me*. ¹²Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

The commandment allows me to see sin in its true light. That is why it is holy, just and good.

Romans 7:¹³ Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me **by that which is good;** that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. ¹⁴For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

The apostle makes it clear: in no way is the law death. Death does not come by the law, but rather, sin produces death through that which is good, through the law. We realize our guilt, our conscience is burdened, and our mind uneasy. Because of this, some people think the answer is to remove the law, and thus not realize our sinfulness – but this is a superficial answer, a temporary painkiller.

We must allow this work of conviction to be done now, or we cannot stand before Christ. There our sin will be revealed and exposed and immediately slay us³⁶⁷. We need to let the old man die and find grace in the eyes of God now, for if we wait the shock and terror of that future meeting will overwhelm us.

Therefore this “ministration of death” through the law is necessary. The mere revelation of God’s law or His righteousness, the mere presence of the Lord, brings to light the sin that dwells in man, and when sin is manifested, it begets death.

Having established that it is sin that produces death, we read:

Romans 6:³ Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Paul is revealing to us the science of salvation. When we accept the guilt of sin and its condemnation to death, we see Christ and we accept the offering of His life. It is by accepting the grace of God, His mercy and forgiveness, that we go from being in a state of condemnation and death by sin to His kingdom of grace. And here we notice something important: **in order to receive grace and forgiveness to be raised to new life, we first need to go through the conviction of sin and death.** This is the ministration of the law. The law cuts to open the sickness inside for Christ to heal. Paul explains this:

³⁶⁷ Revelation 7:17; 2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 19:21

Galatians 3:²⁴ Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

The law bring us to Christ. And Christ uses the law to give more spiritual healing.

Romans 5:²⁰ Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But **where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:** ²¹ That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Why did the law enter? Why was the law given on Mount Sinai? For sin to abound, for the law to do its ministration of death in the conscience. When Christ pronounced the law on Mount Sinai, all the people became acutely aware of their sinfulness. The presence of God, the pillar of fire, the thunder and lightning, the brightness of His glory covered by the cloud of darkness, the trembling of the mountain and the earth, the instructions that none come near the mount to gaze because they might die – all of that happened together with the proclamation of the law.

But the verse tells us that right there, in exactly this same time and place where sin and conviction of guilt and death abounded, grace did much more abound. So when the Lord was bringing them conviction of sin at Sinai – the biggest manifestation of the sinfulness in the history of man until the crucifixion of Jesus – He was also immediately giving His grace, His Spirit calling at the door of each heart that they might accept the forgiveness He offered. And while the measure of sin that was manifested to the people of Israel was abundant, the grace that was given at that very moment in the offer of forgiveness was much greater, overabounding.

They were given grace to accept Christ. He was pleading that they let Him dwell in them. However, the people of Israel closed this door to Christ. They chose to not listen to the voice of forgiveness and mercy. The people of God, in their carnality, were offended that sin was being manifested in their own lives. They decided to do the word of God themselves, without Christ, and they asked that He not speak to them anymore.

They thus refused to enter under the grace of Christ, and remained under the law and the condemnation of sin. For the law says “cursed is he that confirms not all the words of this law to do them”³⁶⁸. The people, then, rejected the ministration of the Spirit, and they remained with their own promise and will to do what God said; they remained in the ministration of death, the ministration of the letter.

Instead of choosing Christ, the mediator of the Spirit, they chose Moses a mediator of the flesh³⁶⁹. Thus Christ would be born as a man for His brothers³⁷⁰ so they might

³⁶⁸ Deuteronomy 27:26

³⁶⁹ 2 Corinthians 3:3, 7, 13-17

know that He is there for them. Since the chosen mediator was Moses, Christ would be like Moses³⁷¹. Israel rejected His voice and His words which are spirit and life³⁷², and instead they promised to fulfill all that God might say to them through Moses, who had to write the words in a book. They no longer wanted their lives to be epistles written by the Spirit of God, but would rather have a written book that they could read and obey themselves. Then, as evidence of what happened, Moses came down with the tables of stone that had the Ten Commandments.

As the law came to the people of Israel, it also comes to us. Since He needs our consent to live in us, He longs for sin to abound in our conscience so that we would come to Him for life. This is the ministration of death which is glorious, for it lays the groundwork for the ministration of the Spirit which is even more glorious.

The Ministration of Death in King David's Life

2 Samuel 12:1 And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, "There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. ²The rich *man* had exceeding many flocks and herds: ³But the poor *man* had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. ⁴And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him."

⁵And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this *thing* shall surely die: ⁶And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

⁷**And Nathan said to David, "Thou art the man.** Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; ⁸And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if *that had been* too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. ⁹Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast

³⁷⁰ Hebrews 2:17

³⁷¹ Deuteronomy 18:15-16;

³⁷² John 6:63

taken his wife *to be* thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. ¹⁰Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. ¹¹Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give *them* unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. ¹²For thou didst *it* secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun."

¹³And David said unto Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said unto David, "The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. ¹⁴Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *that is* born unto thee shall surely die." ¹⁵And Nathan departed unto his house...

David, after entering into an illicit relationship in direct contradiction to the word of God, had commanded that Uriah be killed. For David's salvation, God needed to reveal his true condition to him. Nathan does this through a parable to which David was to pronounce judgment. David declares that what the man did is worthy of death – and Nathan declares that David is that man. Out of the words of the sinner himself comes the condemnation of death.

Here is where David's future enters a delicate and terrible balance. Would he accept the word of reproof, the condemnation of death, or would he harden his heart? The chosen path would decide how much influence he would allow God to have in his life. David surrenders fully to the conviction of the Spirit of God and confesses that he has sinned against the Lord. He says nothing else. There is no excuse for sin. Because of this God can forgive David's sins, and assures him that he won't die.

It is the acceptance of our own condition that allows God to forgive and to give us His quickening Spirit. This is the path that God wants to follow with every sinner, to be able to reveal the condition of the human being in order to be able to give him forgiveness and healing. What would have happened if David had hardened his heart? Are we aware of how difficult it would have been for God to save him? What would God have to do for David to accept that he had been wrong?

God would have had to allow the consequences to take David to a place where he could see his sinfulness with a fresh perspective, where God could once more make an appeal to him that might be successful. God would not seek to break David's will and force him to repent, but instead, if his heart was hardened, he would finally be left to the destroyer. However, thank God for David's example, who shows us the way to life: not hardening the heart, but in acknowledging the condition of our soul.

What we should consider here is not only actions. Let us not fall into the temptation of the Pharisee, which is the attitude of worldly Jerusalem³⁷³ who thinks only of performance. The Pharisee thanked the Lord because he didn't do this or that, but instead did what was right³⁷⁴. Let's look instead at our heart. And there we will see, as Christ said, the fountain of all that contaminates man³⁷⁵. That is the natural condition of our heart.

Our thoughts are the key, even before our actions, because thoughts are, according to the Divine Pattern, the invisible source, while actions are the visible manifestation and magnification of the thoughts³⁷⁶. God wants to solve the problem at its source – so when our thoughts go where they shouldn't, the Spirit of God draws His sword, which is the word of God³⁷⁷, to convict us of sin. What do we do with this thought that is suddenly revealed as sinful? Right there, in that very time and place, there is overabounding provision of forgiveness and grace from Christ. This is how God is our ever-present help in trouble³⁷⁸.

It is my experience that sometimes our minds are trained to go through paths that are not the Lord's, and the struggle in the thoughts becomes titanic. The carnal heart wants to dominate the will to do good and seek God, and, as if it were the force of gravity, it tries to direct us to our habitual patterns of behavior. Yet the Lord is there, inviting us to kneel and accept His help so that these thoughts won't have control over our life. The Lord sees our plea and receives our permission to change us and makes anew, building a wall against sin.

Peter's Experience

Let's look at a Bible story that illustrates what we've mentioned. During most of Christ's ministry, and especially on his last trip to Jerusalem, the disciples were immersed in quarrels as to who would be the greatest and when Christ would be king. Even though they were greatly attracted to Christ and they marveled at His life and teachings, and even though they accepted Him as the Messiah, the Son of God and Savior, they were still not fully understanding the depth of their carnality. God's agape love was still not dwelling in them. The death of Christ would make all of this clear:

Matthew 26:³⁰ And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. ³¹ Then saith Jesus unto them, "All ye shall be offended

³⁷³ Galatians 4:25

³⁷⁴ Luke 18:9-13

³⁷⁵ Matthew 15:18-19

³⁷⁶ Proverbs 30:32; Luke 6:43-45

³⁷⁷ Ephesians 6:17

³⁷⁸ Hebrews 4:16

because of me this night: for it is written, 'I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.' ³² But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee."

³³ Peter answered and said unto him, "Though all *men* shall be offended because of thee, *yet* will I never be offended."

³⁴ Jesus said unto him, "Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice."

³⁵ Peter said unto him, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." Likewise also said all the disciples.

Christ announced that they would be offended because of Him, and they would be scattered. Peter, full of self-confidence, declared that while it was possible for the others to be offended because of Christ, he never would be³⁷⁹. Jesus, who doesn't lie, revealed the condition of his heart. Peter would surely deny his Master three times that very night. Peter insisted in his self-sufficiency and promised that even though he should die, he would not deny Christ. And they all joined Peter. Let's carefully notice the sequence:

- a. Christ tells them what will happen and how they will deny Him. Here we have the revealing of the heart to Peter and the disciples. This is the word, the law, entering the conscience and declaring its sinful state.
- b. Peter, with self-sufficiency and not knowing his own condition, denies it and promises that he won't do it. He hardens his heart to the revelation of his condition, and he promises to not reject Christ. This promise is an initial Yes.
- c. Christ confirms what He said, to which Peter and the disciples once again self-reliantly deny that they will reject Christ. They don't realize that without Christ, they can do nothing³⁸⁰. So Peter and the disciples were, in regards to Christ, in an old covenant relationship where they were more confident in their own ability than in the word of their Master.

Christ was taken to trial, and John and Peter managed to enter the courtyard. Once inside, Peter was trying to pass by unnoticed regarding what was happening in the trial, but his intense interest kept him alert as to what was happening. He was horrified by the mocking and ill treatment to which Christ was being subjected. Trying to hide his true feelings, he mixed with those who had arrested Christ that night, yet they wondered about his behavior and his accent. He was questioned once, then again, and was accused of being a follower of Jesus.

³⁷⁹ Mark 14:26-31

³⁸⁰ John 15:5

Finding himself in a tight spot, he swore that he did not know Christ. After a while, he was questioned again. Those who have spent years of their life with Christ cannot go by unnoticed. When Peter was questioned, he grew angry, and to prove that there was no relationship between Christ and himself, he said, through oaths and curses, that he did not know Christ. And while the curses were still coming out of his mouth, the rooster crowed once more.

Peter turned and looked at Christ, and Christ looked at Peter³⁸¹. Peter saw that hurt face; he saw pity, sorrow and forgiveness in His eyes. There was no anger. Looking at that compassionate face broke the hardened heart of Peter, who ran off weeping. He could not stop remembering the previous hours, and how the Lord had anticipated what would happen, and how He had said that Peter would deny Him three times that very night. Peter had just declared with oaths and curses that he did not know Christ, yet now it had become evident how well the Lord knew him, while he himself was ignorant of his own sinfulness. Yet despite of all this, Jesus had loved and guided him up to that very day with tenderness, care and devotion. And reaching Gethsemane, where Christ had, just a few hours before, poured His soul out in agony while they slept, Peter wept bitterly.

The time of the test came, and Peter manifested what was in his heart, which he himself did not know of, he broke his promise. There, the No was manifested. We then have in Peter the word of the carnal man: the Yes and No. However, when the rooster crowed twice, he remembered the words of Jesus. And there the law entered Peter's conscience. And not only that, but Peter entered into the presence of Christ. Peter looked at the Savior, and the Savior looked at Peter, and there, the words and the face of Christ became like fire in his conscience.

What a terrible moment! Here, Peter had his ministration of death. Yet in that very moment, the Spirit of God had the provision of forgiveness and grace. Peter realized the sin of his impulsiveness and self-confidence, and thus fully threw himself into the arms of Christ, trusting in Him to save him.

The Glory and the Shadows

Let's keep on reading:

2 Corinthians 3:⁹For if **the ministration of condemnation be glory**, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. ¹⁰For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. ¹¹For if that which is done away *was* glorious, much more that which remaineth *is* glorious.

³⁸¹ Luke 22:61

Though the ministration of death/condemnation is less glorious than the ministration of the Spirit/righteousness, it is still glorious. Why is glorious? Because it is the work of God casting down the glory of man. It is only when man is able to see his own nothingness and his complete inability to do anything good by himself that he will be ready to be clothed with the righteousness of God that Christ prepared.

2 Corinthians 3:12 Having therefore such a hope, **we use great boldness of speech,**¹³ and *are* not as Moses, *who* put a veil upon his face, that the children of Israel should not look stedfastly on the end of that which was passing away. ASV

The apostle Paul continues saying in his letter to the Corinthians that, given that the ministry he received is of the Spirit and not of the letter, he speaks with great boldness, not because he is self-competent, but because the competence comes from God.

2 Corinthians 3:5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency *is* of God...

This statement confirms that Paul is in the new covenant and has the ministration of the Spirit. And since he is a minister of the Spirit he speaks with much confidence, directly and without a veil in between. Why did Moses have to wear a veil?

Exodus 34:29 And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that **the skin of his face shone** while he talked with him.³⁰ And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and **they were afraid to come nigh him.**

³¹ And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them. ³² And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in mount Sinai. ³³ And *till* Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face.

³⁴ **But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the vail off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel *that* which he was commanded.** ³⁵ **And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.**

After Moses spoke with God and saw God's glory, his face shone. Because of this light, the people were afraid of coming near to Moses; they could not behold God's glory even in His human channel. Moses himself didn't need the veil to talk to God; it was not God that needs a veil. The veil was something that all of Israel had before them.

Out of respect for the people of Israel, it is Moses who wears the veil (rather than all the Israelites putting on a veil), and removes it when he speaks to the Lord. The channel needs to cover the glory with the veil so that Israel can see him and speak with him. This is a figure of a greater reality. Just like Moses condescended to put on a veil for the people's sake, so also Christ condescended to put on a veil. In other words, He was incarnated or tabernacled³⁸² with us, that humanity might speak to and look at the Mediator of God. This is because the brightness of Christ without the veil of humanity would have driven humanity away out of fear, just like it happened when Christ came to Adam and Eve after they had sinned³⁸³.

Now, what happened to the people of Israel? They did not want to **hear** and they hardened their hearts; consequently, they could now not **see** the glory with which God longed to bless them, either. Their sinful and carnal condition prevented it. The unbelief that was in them acted as a veil over their eyes and ears, and prevented them from hearing and seeing God's light.

2 Corinthians 3:12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: ¹³ And not as Moses, *which* put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel **could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:**

The eyes of Israel could not see the end of that which is abolished. Let us remember the use of the word "end", and see a verse that uses the exact same word in its original language:

Romans 10:4 For **Christ is the end of the law** for righteousness to every one that believeth.

The "end" – the objective or destiny of the law – is Christ. But the end, the objective, or the purpose of that which is abolished is also Christ. And here we may ask, what is it that is abolished? While we are called to remember His statutes and judgments³⁸⁴, the sacrifices and offerings are abolished³⁸⁵. The service of the sanctuary and the Aaronic priesthood are abolished³⁸⁶. Also, the context of the chapter we are analyzing tells us that the first covenant, the covenant of the letter, the ministry of condemnation, is done away, even though it is glorious. Absolutely all of this that is abolished and is ready to vanish away³⁸⁷ points to, directs to and has its end point in Christ. The end, the objective of the sacrifices, the offerings, the Sanctuary, the

³⁸² John 1:14; Hebrews 10:20

³⁸³ Genesis 3:8

³⁸⁴ Malachi 4:4

³⁸⁵ Daniel 9:27

³⁸⁶ Hebrews 10:1-2

³⁸⁷ Hebrews 8:13

priesthood and the old covenant is Christ and is taking us to Christ. A bit farther ahead in Paul's letter he makes it very clear:

2 Corinthians 3:¹⁸ But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord. ... 4:⁵ For **we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord**; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

What the Israelites could not behold was the objective of that which is abolished. They could not behold Christ nor His glory; it made them afraid.

2 Corinthians 3:¹⁴ But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which *veil* is done away in Christ.

The people of Israel were blind to Christ in all the events that were happening to them due to their unbelief. They purposed more firmly to not hear the voice of God, and at the same time, to fulfill all His words. And Paul tells us that this has been happening until now³⁸⁸. We have the same problems as the Israelites, and it remains hard for us to see Christ in every story of the Old Testament.

This veil that stood in the way between the light that wanted to shine on them (that is, Christ³⁸⁹) would only leave the people of Israel in shadows. They had asked for a mediator in the flesh, Moses, but even then they couldn't behold his face, while the face of the transfigured Christ shone like the sun³⁹⁰ to the disciples. They did not receive the substance, but only the figures of the realities that they were promised. We clearly see it in the different experiences of the people of Israel:

- a. God had promised the people of Israel that if they heard His voice and treasured His covenant, the whole nation would be a kingdom of priests. This never happened. Instead the priesthood was given to Aaron's family of the tribe of Levi. And this priesthood, instead of being worldwide, was mostly limited to the people of Israel. However, when we accept Christ just as He reveals Himself, and we see His glory, we are made a royal priesthood³⁹¹ to offer spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ³⁹².
- b. God had promised that He would take them to His dwelling, to the Sanctuary pitched by the Lord's hands. Instead, they were pilgrims in the desert for forty years, and through this experience the loss of this heavenly entrance was

³⁸⁸ Acts 13:38-41; 28:24-29

³⁸⁹ John 1:9

³⁹⁰ Matthew 17:2

³⁹¹ 1 Peter 2:9

³⁹² 1 Peter 2:5

revealed to them, and those who didn't die in the desert entered the land of Canaan.

- c. God wanted to dwell in their hearts through His Holy Spirit, and having His throne there, to write His law in their hearts. When He couldn't do this due to the hardening of their hearts, He taught them what He wants to do in them through a Sanctuary made by human hands, where the Shekinah would dwell in the Most Holy Place.
- d. God, according to the covenant made with Abraham, promised that the law would be put in their minds and written in their hearts. By hardening their hearts, they received the law on tables of stone. Instead of receiving the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus³⁹³, the living rock that is the cornerstone³⁹⁴, they received the letter of the covenant on cold dead stone.
- e. Instead of receiving the ministration of God's righteousness, the ministration of the Spirit of the Lord, they only received the ministration of the letter, the ministration of death. And this is so, because what is savor of life to those who believe, is savor of death to those who do not believe.

We see then that the people of Israel were left with an imperfect covenant, an imperfect sanctuary, an imperfect priesthood, an imperfect ministration, and with imperfect offerings and sacrifices. In spite of this, we see the grace, mercy, patience and tender care of God towards His people. God gives them the good news of His promises, He gives them Christ as a messenger of the covenant, yet the people put a veil of unbelief in the way of the radiant light of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

With the veil being there, God communicates with them through the symbols and figures that spring forth from the shadow that result from this veil being in the way of the light. Yet still, the shadows in themselves declared everything to whoever wanted to hear and see the eternal realities of the glory of God in His Son. The shadows continually testified, to whoever wished to hear, of the glory of God's loving character manifested in Christ, of the work that God wanted to do for each of His children individually, of the divine fatherly love, infinitely greater than human motherly love³⁹⁵, with which the Father tenderly looks at each of His lost children. And that reality was there, within their reach, whenever they so desired to grasp it by faith. In this Old Testament and covenant, in this Torah, we see, then, the form of knowledge and truth³⁹⁶.

We have read that the veil is abolished or taken away by Christ. When we hear and treasure the Word of God, we receive Christ. By receiving Christ, we can grasp the

³⁹³ Romans 8:2

³⁹⁴ 1 Peter 2:4

³⁹⁵ Psalm 27:10

³⁹⁶ Romans 2:20

realities instead of the shadows. The veil would be removed when the people of Israel held onto Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:¹⁶ Nevertheless **when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.** ¹⁷ Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty. ¹⁸ But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Paul, within the context, explains that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the Spirit³⁹⁷, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty³⁹⁸. There, where the people of Israel were offered freedom and received the law of liberty³⁹⁹, the new covenant, right there was the Lord Jesus Christ, by His Spirit trying to put God's law in their minds and write it in their hearts. The Spirit of the Lord that shepherded them is the Lord Jesus Christ⁴⁰⁰.

And now, says Paul, we who have received the ministration of the Spirit look at the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ without a veil. The glory of the Lord is His character. Jesus prayed to the Father, saying, "Father, I have glorified thee on the earth"⁴⁰¹. The Father is glorified when the Spirit of Christ dwells in the heart and manifests the fruit of the Spirit⁴⁰².

In His prayer Jesus expands on what this glorification consists of. Christ had made known the name of the Father⁴⁰³. Christ has declared in word and in action during His whole life and ministry that the living God is love⁴⁰⁴, that He loves with a love so self-sacrificing that He sent His own Son to the world⁴⁰⁵, in Spirit and in human flesh⁴⁰⁶, to draw men back home⁴⁰⁷. And just like Moses, when beholding the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, we are transformed into the same image of what we observe. It is from glory to glory, as we comprehend the endless depths of God's character and His love, as we discover every deeper and more encompassing facet of His consideration towards His erring children, that we are transformed from discovery to discovery, from revelation of Christ to revelation of Christ, by the Spirit of the Lord.

³⁹⁷ 2 Corinthians 4:5

³⁹⁸ John 8:36

³⁹⁹ James 1:25; 2:12; Psalm 119:44-45

⁴⁰⁰ Isaiah 63:10-14; 40:10-11; John 10:11, 16

⁴⁰¹ John 17:4

⁴⁰² John 15:8; Galatians 5:22-26

⁴⁰³ John 17:6-8, 25-26

⁴⁰⁴ John 14:7-11; 17:23, 26

⁴⁰⁵ John 3:16; 1 John 4:8-10, 14-16

⁴⁰⁶ Galatians 4:4, 6

⁴⁰⁷ Luke 15:4

2 Corinthians 4:¹ Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; ² But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Having this ministration of the new covenant where we announce the glories of the Lord, the mystery of God which is Christ in His people⁴⁰⁸, we renounce the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully. Evidently when man is in the ministration of the letter, the old covenant, he falls into the terrible error of using the word of God with craftiness and deceit. When man is in the old covenant, he does not see Christ nor the glory of the Lord in the Old Testament, and thus he does not see what Christ is trying to do now. He is unaware of and resistant to the revelation of his own condition, which causes him to walk in dishonesty. The truth causes us to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

2 Corinthians 4:³ But **if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:** ⁴ In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. ⁵ For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Being and remaining in the first covenant, with the veil of unbelief placed before us because we cannot behold the glory of Christ, is to be lost. It is the enemy of souls, the destroyer, who blinds the understanding of this world, the understanding of unbelievers, that they might not see the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, the image of God. The most terrible thing about this is that the bright light of the good news of salvation in Christ produces fear in the spirit of those who are blinded by the deceit of sin and unbelief. How incredible! That which is life is seen as death, and that which is death is held onto as if it is life.

Parables

Paul, in his ministration of the Spirit, spoke with plainness – he spoke directly and explicitly⁴⁰⁹. This is how the Lord spoke to Moses⁴¹⁰, who could behold the glory of the Lord without the need of a veil. So we ask ourselves: what happens when the Lord

⁴⁰⁸ Colossians 1:27

⁴⁰⁹ 2 Corinthians 3:6, 12

⁴¹⁰ Numbers 12:8

finds a hardened heart, one not willing to hear and treasure the word? What happens when the Lord meets with a people who are in the old covenant, who cannot behold the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces?

Matthew 13:¹⁰ And the disciples came, and said unto him, **“Why speakest thou unto them in parables?”** ¹¹ He answered and said unto them, **“Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given...”** ¹³ Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. ¹⁴ And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, ‘By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive.’ ¹⁵ **For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.** ¹⁶ **But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.** ¹⁷ For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous *men* have desired to see *those things* which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear *those things* which ye hear, and have not heard *them*.” ...

³⁴ All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: ³⁵ That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, ‘I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.’

To those close to Jesus, who wouldn’t willfully misunderstand Him, was given the knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God. To the rest who don’t want to hear, all things are given through parables.

Mark 4:³³ And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, **as they were able to hear it.** ³⁴ But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, **he expounded all things to his disciples.**

Jesus would state things clearly to the disciples, without the shadows created by the “veil of unbelief”, because they had ears to hear and eyes to see. The evidence that this is so is in that they followed Christ and accepted Him. So we see in this another principle in the work of God with human beings: God adjusts His language and His way of coming near to human beings according to the condition in which they are, according to what they can hear. The more open the heart is to receiving the word of God, and the more it can receive the message without getting offended, the clearer the Lord can declare it all.

But if the heart is hardened, the Lord then speaks through illustrations and shadows. These are given with the intention that the people hear these words, and because they

are more open to interpretation, people might be more willing to accept them and thereby open their hearts.

Isaiah 29:¹³ Wherefore the Lord said, "Forasmuch as this people draw near *me* with their mouth, And with their lips do honour me, But have removed their heart far from me, And their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:"

This condition of honoring with lips but with hearts removed from God is the natural condition of man. The parables are there to make known the mystery, the things hidden since the foundation of the world, to those who are with hearts removed from God and are resistant to hearing the word. The parable is part of the ministration of the letter and the old covenant. The word becomes to them foreign words, until they fall backwards, are broken, bound up and taken prisoners⁴¹¹, in other words, until the ministration of death can do its complete work.

Isaiah 30:⁸ Now go, write it before them in a table, And **note it in a book**, That it may be for the time to come For ever and ever: ⁹That this *is* a rebellious people, lying children, **Children that will not hear the law of the LORD:** ¹⁰Which say to the seers, See not; And to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, Speak unto us smooth things, Prophecy deceits: ¹¹Get you out of the way, Turn aside out of the path, Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.

Even though by their lips they profess to want to follow the Lord, they do not want to hear God's law. They do not want to hear the reality of their sinfulness, but would rather hear smooth things. The voice of the Holy One of Israel offends them, and they can't bear to hear it even though it speaks to them with mercy. The fear of God in them is a commandment of men; they have been given teachings about God which are human and not divine.

Because of this condition, God asks that it be noted in a book. These things were written for us, those of us who have reached the end of the ages, that we might learn from the condition of our forefathers and what has happened in the past. It continues saying:

Isaiah 30:¹² Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, **Because ye despise this word, And trust in oppression and perverseness,** And stay thereon: ¹³Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, Swelling out in a high wall, Whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant. ¹⁴And he shall break it as the breaking of the potters' vessel that is broken in pieces; he

⁴¹¹ Isaiah 28:12-13

shall not spare: So that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, Or to take water *withal* out of the pit.

¹⁵For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; **In returning and rest shall ye be saved; In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: And ye would not.** ¹⁶But ye said, 'No; for we will flee upon horses'; Therefore shall ye flee: And, 'We will ride upon the swift'; Therefore shall they that pursue you be swift. ¹⁷One thousand *shall flee* at the rebuke of one; At the rebuke of five shall ye flee: Till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, And as an ensign on an hill.

While God offers to be their refuge and strength, His people discard His word and trust in violence and iniquity for their salvation. This refusal to hear the word of God ends up being a breach in the protection⁴¹² that God gives. Respecting their free-will, He accepts the decision that they don't want Him in their lives⁴¹³ and withdraws His protection as one who breaks a potter's vessel⁴¹⁴. If only they knew that God wants to save them without violence, in peace and rest and in trust in His word!

Isaiah 30:¹⁸ And **therefore will the LORD wait**, that he may be gracious unto you, And therefore will he be exalted, that he may have **mercy** upon you: For the LORD *is* a God of judgment: Blessed *are* all they that wait for him. ¹⁹For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: Thou shalt weep no more: **He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry;** When he shall hear it, he will answer thee.

²⁰And *though* the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, Yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, But thine eyes shall see thy teachers: ²¹**And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, When ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.** ²²Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver, And the ornament of thy molten images of gold: Thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; Thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence. ²³**Then shall he give the rain** of thy seed, That thou shalt sow the ground *withal*; And bread of the increase of the earth, And it shall be fat and plenteous...

The promise is that when they return to God, He will have mercy, because He is just, He will take pity and will hear the cry of His people. They will realize the loving voice of the divine Shepherd, and accept Him as their teacher, and He will show them the way. When they follow the voice of the Shepherd, they will no longer be deceived by

⁴¹² Isaiah 5:5; Ecclesiastes 10:8; Job 16:11, 14

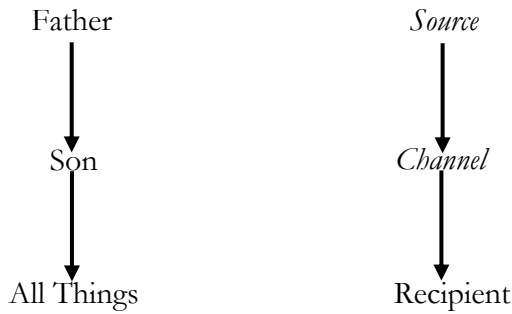
⁴¹³ Isaiah 30:8

⁴¹⁴ Psalm 2:9; Jeremiah 19:11; Revelation 2:27

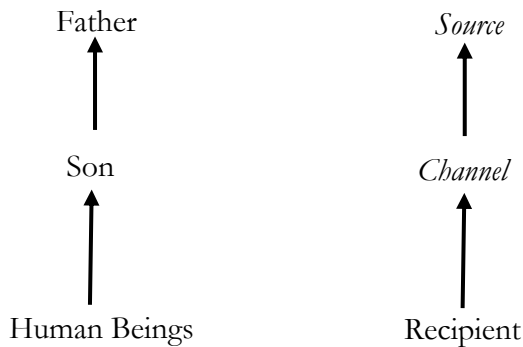
the imaginations of their own minds. God will be able to pour the wonderful promises of the refreshment of His presence, the mystery of God which was kept secret since the world began⁴¹⁵.

The Divine Pattern, the Key to the Covenants

Having seen all this, let us return to the establishment of the shadows or figures, the ministration of the letter, as a means whose objective is to bring us to Christ, and we will connect it with the Divine Pattern, and how the treasures of wisdom are hidden in this model⁴¹⁶. The Father is the source of all things, and they exist through His Son⁴¹⁷. So the Father is the source or origin, and the Son is the means or the channel. It is Christ, or the channel, who gives us light regarding the Father, and helps us know Him, reveals Him to us, and brings us close to Him⁴¹⁸.



Jesus Himself said, “No one comes to the Father but by me”⁴¹⁹. It is only by accepting Christ that we accept God the Father⁴²⁰.



⁴¹⁵ Romans 16:25; Revelation 10:7

⁴¹⁶ Colossians 2:2-3

⁴¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 8:6

⁴¹⁸ John 17

⁴¹⁹ John 14:6

⁴²⁰ John 13:20

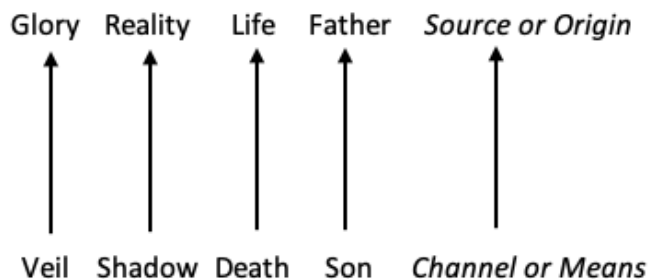
Having looked at these concepts briefly, we can now correlate them with the old covenant and the new covenant under the Divine Pattern. Just like Jesus is the way to the Father:

- a. The old covenant is the way to the new covenant
- b. The ministration of the letter is the way to the ministration of the Spirit
- c. The ministration of condemnation is the way to the ministration of righteousness
- d. Death to self is the way to life in Christ Jesus
- e. The shadow is the way to reality
- f. The parables are the way to God speaking to us directly
- g. The veil is the way to the glory of God
- h. The tables of stone are the way to the heart
- i. That which is glorious but perishes is the way to that which is outstandingly glorious and remains
- j. The law is the way to Christ
- k. The law of God is the way to the grace of God

This is how we establish the relationships between the parts:



God enters into the old covenant, the covenant of men, with the objective of taking us to the new covenant. God, who is Spirit, condescends to His Son's incarnation in order to reach us. God gives the ministration of the letter with the objective of taking us to the ministration of the Spirit.



God, through the ministration of death, seeks to bring us to life. Christ took upon Himself the curse of sin and carried our penalty in order to give us His life. For He says:

Deuteronomy 32:³⁹ ... I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal ...

It is necessary for God to wound first in order to be able to heal. In other words, He needs to make sin and its condemnation manifest in order to then be able to give life. Those who accept and believe this, show it in baptism. That's why it says:

John 3:³ Jesus answered and said unto him, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, **Except a man be born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

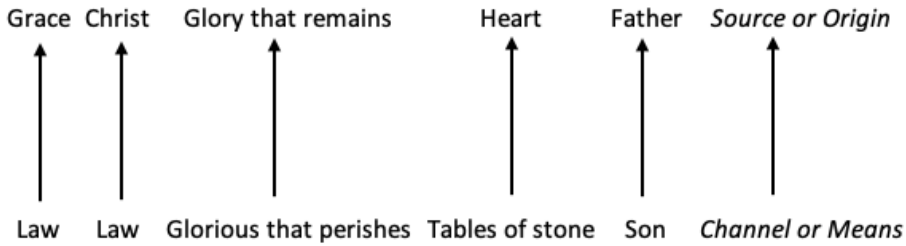
Romans 6:³ Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore **we are buried with him by baptism into death**: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. ⁵For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his* resurrection: ⁶Knowing this, **that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin**. ⁷For he that is dead is freed from sin. ⁸Now **if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him**: ⁹Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. ¹⁰For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. ¹¹Likewise **reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord**.

Matthew 16:²⁴ Then said Jesus unto his disciples, "If any *man* will come after me, **let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me**."

Galatians 2:²⁰ **I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me**: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

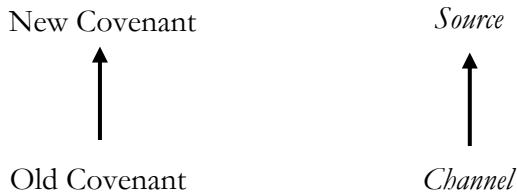
It is only through the death and crucifixion of self, of the old man⁴²¹, that we can receive the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. We are to follow in His footsteps and not live to self. This implies accepting the ministration of death.

⁴²¹ Ephesians 4:22



The law was given to us not only to reveal our condition to us, but also to testify of Christ and to bring us to Him⁴²². The law, then, is the way that leads us to the grace of God. It shows us the preciousness of Jesus.

Both Covenants are necessary in the plan of salvation due to the nature of man. The new covenant is the source, and the old covenant is the channel. No one will be sealed in the new covenant unless it is through the old covenant. The Spirit of the new covenant is what accepts the old covenant as a means through which we can approach the new covenant.



When I accepted Christ, I saw and received Him as my Savior, and I threw myself into His arms believing that He would save me. Having been convicted of my sin, and as a result, of my guilt, and that the wages of sin is death, right there and then God's overabounding grace was revealed, and I entered by faith into His salvation and into the new covenant. Yet there was so much I didn't know! It wasn't long before I revealed my lack of faith in His promises, and I sinned. Faced with this, I started making promises to the Lord.

In other words, I was entering myself into the experience of the old covenant. And it was constantly made evident to me that I always broke my promises to the Lord! And that can be very disheartening. How could it be that I could not keep my promises to the Lord? Yet the Lord patiently bore with my purposing to do by my own power – the sign of the old covenant – and allowed circumstances to show me that it's not by might nor by power, but only by God's Spirit⁴²³.

⁴²² Romans 3:21-22; 10:4; Galatians 3:24

⁴²³ Zechariah 4:6

I've had several instances in my life in which I surrendered to the Lord and said, "Lord, I cannot live up to the law! Save me!" Each of these instances was a revelation of my weakness and inability. These experiences laid my pride and self-sufficiency in the dust. And in this way, years of my life have passed bouncing between the old and new covenant.

I always had two possibilities: our Lord's way of life and glory, or the way of man in the wilderness that leads to death and darkness⁴²⁴. Two paths: hearing the voice of Christ and treasuring it, or hardening the heart and speaking my own words.

The life of sanctification consists of this coming and going between the old and the new covenant. It is this way because of our sinful condition. Using His law, by His Spirit, Christ convinces us of sin, this causes us to run to Christ. He then shows us and teaches us the law to us⁴²⁵, revealing more of our sinfulness to us. This shows us even more how precious Christ is to us, drawing us closer to Him. This is the circuit of sanctification, the process by which we overcome all sin and enter into rest, being changed into His image. In this way, Christ can save us from ourselves.

We notice several things in this process. In order for grace to much more abound, sin has to abound⁴²⁶. Knowing this, we heed Paul's warning of those who misunderstand this concept:

Romans 3:8 **And not rather**, (as we be slanderously reported, and **as some affirm that we say,)** **Let us do evil, that good may come?** whose damnation is just.

This process does not mean that we willfully sin. The revelation of God's righteousness shows us sins we are *ignorant* of, and it shows us in greater detail how destructive to ourselves and others our sinfulness is, and thus we ask for more grace. We don't knowingly sin so as to force God to give us more grace; this is to pervert His goodness, malevolently thinking we can make God our accomplice in wickedness. It is to this mindset that the scriptures declare:

Galatians 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. ⁸For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

God gives us His much more abounding grace through the revelation of our sinfulness through His law and His Spirit⁴²⁷. The problem is that we don't understand, and we

⁴²⁴ Deuteronomy 30:15

⁴²⁵ John 14:15

⁴²⁶ Romans 5:20

⁴²⁷ John 16:8

tend to cut off the process through which He wants to bless us with much more abounding grace. We short circuit this process of blessing when we do not bear the revelation of our own sinful condition. Even though God's word is like a double-edged sword⁴²⁸, it is the medium through which God bless us.

The other thing we notice is that those of us who have reached the ends of the world⁴²⁹ (the end times), who have participated in the purifying of the sanctuary when the consummation of the mystery of God occurs⁴³⁰, will have gone through this coming and going between the law and Christ, between the old and the new covenants, enough times that the moment will come when Christ will be perfectly reproduced in our lives. This, which had happened in the lives of Enoch, Elijah and who knows if there was anyone else, will become a reality in the 144,000. Christ will have His throne in our whole being and will be able to give us the fullness of His faith, the faith of Jesus.

When that happens, after a severe ministration of death that Jesus equated to a woman giving labor⁴³¹, similar to the one the disciples went through when Jesus was crucified, He will be able to seal us in God's covenant of the outpouring of the latter rain with the character of the Father⁴³² on our foreheads, and which He will ratify when He will speak the new covenant after the fifth plague. May God help us to always hear Him and receive His voice, His word, His law and His Spirit. Our desire is that the God of our peace comfort our hearts, we who are members of Laodicea⁴³³. Today Christ, through His Spirit, wants to dwell in His people to end in us the work that He began. May God help us to receive Him.

⁴²⁸ Hebrews 3:7-4:13

⁴²⁹ 1 Corinthians 10:11

⁴³⁰ Revelation 1:1; 10:7

⁴³¹ Matthew 24:8

⁴³² Revelation 14:1

⁴³³ Colossians 2:1-2

The Genesis of the Old Covenant

The Fall of Man

Having seen the old covenant manifested in the people of Israel and in Abraham, we ask ourselves, when did the old covenant first appear? We need to go back to the beginning.

Luke 3:³⁸ ... which was *the son* of Seth, which was *the son* of Adam, which was *the son* of God.

While all other humans would be sons of Adam, Adam was a son of God. He was head of the human race. When Adam was created, he was put within the ideal context to follow God's instructions and to not sin. He was given an inheritance: the earth to have dominion over. He also received a garden to keep which God had already prepared. Yet not everything was given to him, and he is told:

Genesis 2:¹⁵ And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: ¹⁷ **But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.**"

This command was not kept, for man was tempted and fell:

Genesis 3:¹ Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, "**Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?**"

The woman had evidently come close to the tree without her husband, since the serpent first tempted Eve, and then Eve tempted Adam. The serpent asked Eve a question, thus inviting her into a conversation. The question was: "So has God said that you shall not eat of **every** tree of the garden?"

The intention of the question was to generate an answer to clarify God's request, but at the same time it equated the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to all the other trees in the garden. The question also insinuated that God had forbidden them to eat from all of the trees. Thus through an apparently innocent question, the serpent began to plant doubts regarding God's character.

Genesis 3:² And the woman said unto the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: ³ But of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God hath said, 'Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.'"

Eve clarified that they could eat of all the trees, except of the one in the middle of the garden, giving us the location of this tree. What the serpent said next caused Eve's whole perception of reality to tremble.

Genesis 3:⁴ And the serpent said unto the woman, **“Ye shall not surely die:
⁵For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then **your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”****

The serpent declared the opposite of what God said, saying, “you shall not surely die”. This introduced the idea that their lives were not dependent on God. Satan taught them that there was inherent life in themselves and that they didn't depend on anyone to live it, not even on God. In this statement he taught them that they didn't need to follow God's law of life, the law of agape love, to live.

And the serpent sealed this understanding by stating that God forbade the tree because He knew full well the benefits that they would get from eating of it. In this way, the serpent painted God as evil who didn't want them to be better; as if He didn't have their best interest at heart. God, according to the serpent, was hoarding godhood, thus attributing to God selfish traits and self-centered motives.

The serpent also showed the woman a path towards ascension. He told the woman, “Your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods.” This was a different motivation for life, opposite to God's agape love. It was Eros, a principle of taking what is not yours, or disobeying an authority, to reach an enlightened state. Our loving heavenly Father gives us the very best, but this is presented as despotism holding you back, and by overcoming this you will become superior.

Eve could become like God only by disobeying God and by taking what was forbidden to her. This is how force and violence and death was introduced. This philosophy of life – which is sin – would be a terrible plague to humanity. It denies the goodness of God's command, and believes that man can decide himself better. Satan suggests that God is not the source of what is meaningful, but by possession of some object, material or immaterial, man can gain what is truly worthwhile: a new identity, gnosis, enlightenment, self-actualization. That which is created is treasured more than the Creator and His word. Why be a child of God when Eve could just be a god?

Genesis 3:⁶ And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

According to her own judgment, and disregarding what God had said, Eve thought the tree was good. She thought she could gain sustenance, wisdom, and beauty through doing what God had forbidden. There, in this tree and in this temptation, was the philosophy and the teaching of Lucifer. Eve ate of the tree, and also gave it to her husband to eat.

We thus see Eros⁴³⁴ taking shape here on earth, a new germinating order. We note that Satan induced Eve to take the exact same path that he had previously taken in his rebellion. This awareness that others have something that I don't, this dissatisfaction with one's current state, this coveting of what others have, this snatching in order to reach that supposed ideal condition, this longing to be like God⁴³⁵, is what constituted sin both for man and for Lucifer.

Eve was deceived, but when she came to Adam, Adam realized what had happened⁴³⁶. He had been commanded directly by God, while Eve had only heard the command by his relaying it to her. He had a greater responsibility than Eve, and his eating was a more willful rebellion against God. He did not want to lose Eve, so without proper consideration to the consequences and without consulting God, he ate – thus dramatically expanding the seed of rebellion. It is Adam's sin that is the fall of man⁴³⁷.

Genesis 3:7 *And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.*

The serpent had promised that their eyes would be opened upon eating the fruit, but I'm sure they were not expecting that it would be like this. Now they had a new knowledge, the knowledge that they were naked. What they gained was the knowledge of disobedience and disloyalty to God, which brings shame⁴³⁸ and guilt.

Jeremiah 13:22 *And if thou say in thine heart, 'Wherefore come these things upon me?' **For the greatness of thine iniquity** are thy skirts discovered, *and thy heels made bare.**

Iniquity uncovers the nakedness of man, yet it is guilt that brings shame over the soul⁴³⁹. And so they sewed fig leaves to cover themselves. We ask ourselves about this, surprised: did they pull the leaves off the tree? Did they cry over these leaves as they

⁴³⁴ "Eros" is not a word which appears in the Scriptures. However, in Greek philosophy we find a description of an order of things under this term, which is of this world (1 John 2;16). Eros is the appetite, the desire, the urge that is awakened by the attractive qualities of its object. Eros should not be understood as sensual, earthly love, because in Eros is the tendency and the search to be free from what is merely sensual. While sensual love ties the soul to the material world, the task of the philosophical Eros consists of freeing the soul from the chains of the senses and elevating it to a more sensitive world, the self-perceived "heavenly" world. This reaches its more spiritual level in the search for God in order to satisfy self. Man searches for God to satisfy his necessity to possess and enjoy the perfection of divine gifts. It is the search in order to take, to serve oneself, to be satisfied.

⁴³⁵ Isaiah 14:14

⁴³⁶ 1 Timothy 2:14

⁴³⁷ Romans 5:12

⁴³⁸ Revelation 3:18

⁴³⁹ Genesis 2:25

tore them off the tree? Here we have the first revelation of their new condition: man does not wait for God to provide the garments, but instead uses his own efforts to deal with his problem sewing a garment to replace the garments of innocence that God had given him. In this condition of nakedness, he needs God's covenant.

Ezekiel 16:⁸ Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time *was* the time of love; and **I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee,** saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.

Upon sinning, man lost everything. God had created him perfect, "very good"⁴⁴⁰, and had given him a spiritual inheritance, that of being a son of God in character⁴⁴¹, whose visible manifestation was his garments of light⁴⁴², and a material inheritance, the earth with all that it contained, except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Man became estranged from His Father, the source of life. Thus, man would die naked, as God warned him.

Would God give him His garments, His covering, His love and nourishment? God was the only one who could redeem and sanctify him. The nakedness and shame revealed his wickedness, and his need for holiness. It was impossible for man to cover himself with holiness and recover his lost state. Man was filled with anxiety, dread and unrest, yet he didn't know what the cure for it was; He had inherited the mind of Satan and he would seek remedies from his own efforts on Satan's principles. He now had a new lord. Man, with the love of God no longer dwelling in him⁴⁴³, now saw God as His enemy⁴⁴⁴. But his own man-made garments were totally useless.

Isaiah 64:⁶ But we are all as an unclean *thing*, And **all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;** And we all do fade as a leaf; And our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Isaiah 59:⁶ Their webs shall not become garments, Neither shall they cover themselves with their works: Their works *are* works of iniquity, And the act of violence *is* in their hands.

Having accepted the serpent's lie, Adam not only believed that God didn't want what was best for him, but also the shame and nakedness he felt were to him an evidence of God's displeasure. He didn't perceive God as being merciful and loving anymore; he saw God as full of wrath and willing to kill him in order to fulfill His word that man

⁴⁴⁰ Genesis 1:31

⁴⁴¹ Matthew 5:44-45

⁴⁴² 1 John 1:5; Psalm 118:27

⁴⁴³ 1 John 2:15

⁴⁴⁴ Romans 8:7

would surely die. What a terrible challenge for God! How would He show man what was really happening, when everything God did was suspect in man's eyes?

Genesis 3:⁸ And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife **hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God** amongst the trees of the garden. ⁹ And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, "Where *art* thou?" ¹⁰ And he said, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and **I was afraid, because I *was* naked; and I hid myself.**"

The Lord comes to them. And what is man's reaction? God called, but he hid because he was scared, because he was naked. To Adam and Eve, being naked heralded even worse things to come.

Hebrews 2:¹⁵ And deliver them who **through fear of death** were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Christ came to free all those who were in bondage due to fear of death. Adam and Eve, whom Christ also came to set free, were scared and fearful of what would happen to them. God's words "thou shalt surely die" still sounded fresh in their ears. They had already eaten of the tree and since they were not dead, they supposed, how would they die if not directly by God's doing? The serpent did say they wouldn't die from eating the fruit, so the cause of death must be God striking them in His anger.

Fear is never a good counsellor, and sadly our first parents were trapped by fear of the unknown. They were overwhelmed by disturbing thoughts and emotions they had never experienced before. Satan's spirit had taken over them, and they simply could not trust in God as a loving Father. Like the prodigal son, they left their home and lost their sense of being beloved children. In their minds they no longer had a Father. They were now devoid of approval and blessing, were completely alone and needed to stand on their own.

Genesis 3:¹¹ And he said, Who told thee that thou *wast* naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?

Right in that question, God implied that this condition did not come from God, suggesting to Adam that the other voice he had listened to was responsible for Adam's condition. Then he asked a question that went straight to the heart of the matter, not because God didn't know, but because He wanted to hear what Adam had to say about it: "Have you eaten of the tree that I commanded that you shouldn't eat?" Have you disobeyed me? The answer would indicate the depth of the problem of sin in Adam. What would man respond? Would he be able to simply acknowledge that he had been wrong? The problem is that man, already in sin, is incapable of responding differently than Adam did.

Genesis 3:¹² And the man said, “**The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me** of the tree, and I did eat.”

It was impossible for Adam, right then, to acknowledge his error without blaming someone else. He claimed that the woman that God gave him had given him of the tree. Notice that he mentioned Eve twice, and God once –Adam was not taking responsibility and implying that God was partly to blame. What would Eve’s response be, now that Adam had pointed to her as the one responsible for making him eat?

Genesis 3:¹³ And the LORD God said unto the woman, “What is this *that* thou hast done?” And the woman said, “**The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.**”

Eve responded in the same way, pointing to the serpent who had beguiled her and caused her to eat. In this, Eve was telling the truth⁴⁴⁵, but she placed the responsibility of her actions upon the serpent. Then God spoke to the serpent, saying:

Genesis 3:¹⁴ And the LORD God said unto the serpent, “Because thou hast done this, thou *art* cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:”

God declared the curse that this action would bring to the serpent. However, God opened a door for man to choose holiness if he so desired.

Genesis 3:¹⁵ “And **I will put enmity** between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

God promises to put enmity; He would not allow the serpent to have full control over humanity. God did this because in that moment there was a desperate common purpose between the serpent and humanity. This promise would break Satan’s complete influence over man due to his being in bondage to Satan’s system of thought, giving man the ability to make a choice between God’s ways or Satan’s.

That is how, through Christ, the promised Seed, a door of hope was opened to man. This is the promise and the covenant of God: changing the heart of man and putting in him a spirit that is at enmity with the spirit of the world. Because while the spirit of the world, seeking its own, seizes as it seeks to ascend, the Spirit of Christ seeks not its own⁴⁴⁶, but rather, is willing to descend and to empty itself⁴⁴⁷ to rescue and save what was lost.

⁴⁴⁵ 1 Timothy 2:14

⁴⁴⁶ 1 Corinthians 13:5

⁴⁴⁷ Philippians 2:6-8

The Sacrifice of the Old Covenant

Genesis 3:²¹ Unto Adam also and to his wife **did the LORD God make coats of skins**, and clothed them.

God, having given His covenant, promising enmity and the triumph of the Seed, and having told them the consequences that sin would bring to man, made coats of skin for them. Their man-made garments would not cover the shame of their nakedness. The fig leaves sewn together are the arguments and actions of man to cover and justify his sin. However, man remains a transgressor and there is still estrangement between man and God. Man needs God to make him garments, but these garments of skin entail the death of the lamb. It is the sinner who kills the lamb⁴⁴⁸. In order to cover the nakedness of man, only a divine power could make heavenly garments. However, regarding God and man, who had to make a change when it came to their mutual relationship?

Colossians 1:¹⁹ For **it pleased the Father** that in him should all fulness dwell; ²⁰ And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, **by him to reconcile all things unto himself**; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven.

God is not the one who needs to be appeased; He is not the one who is at enmity with man. All the contrary, it is man who is at enmity with God. It is man who lost his peace. It is human beings who need to be reconciled with God, and the Father does this through Christ and the blood of His cross, not imputing the trespasses of men⁴⁴⁹. It is man who needs to be covered with a garment, not God.

Why the sacrifice of the lamb? Why the death of Christ? Was God pleased with the death of His Son, and did He demand it, in order to forgive us our sins? What is the meaning of the sacrifice of the lamb, if it's not that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son? Does God desire, and is God pleased, with the sacrifice of animals?

Psalm 40:⁶ Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; Mine ears hast thou opened: Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.

God is not pleased with sacrifice and offering, nor has He demanded it.

Hebrews 10:³ But in those *sacrifices there is* a remembrance again *made* of sins every year. ⁴ For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

⁴⁴⁸ Leviticus 4

⁴⁴⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:19

The sacrifices of bulls and male goats cannot take away sin. Only the Lamb of God takes away the sins of the world⁴⁵⁰.

Hosea 6:6 For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

What God desires is mercy and not sacrifice. God wants us to know Him. The knowledge of God brings with it the reception of the mercy of God. In that sense, what Jesus⁴⁵¹ wants to give us in the revelation of God's character⁴⁵² is that God really loves us and we can trust His plan of mercy. Because it is by knowing Him⁴⁵³ that the glory of His character is revealed to us⁴⁵⁴, and this will reconcile our anxious and suspicious hearts towards Him. And then we can be merciful and reconciled to our fellow man.

So we ask ourselves, why did God institute sacrifices? If He didn't require nor demand them, then it was evidently man who needed someone to take his blame.

Genesis 3:12 And the man said, "**The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.**"

Adam's response revealed that he does not want to carry the weight and the burden of sin – death, and placed it ultimately in God's hands. He was accusing Eve and God of his disobedience. In his despair, he needed a scapegoat, someone other than himself to carry the load of guilt. So to show him directly what he was psychologically doing with his sin, God gave him the sacrifice of the lamb as a means to show him the consequence of sin and of acknowledging what he was doing – this would allow repentance to enter Adam's mind and he would be able to believe that God forgave him.

Adam and Eve's sin also consisted in rejecting God's word. God's word, which was to be kept and treasured in the heart, was expelled, and a new word was treasured in the heart: the word of the serpent. This spiritual expulsion implied the crucifixion of the Word of God, the shedding of the blood of the Lamb from the foundation of the world⁴⁵⁵.

With them being unable to acknowledge their sin and unable to hear, God spoke to them in parables. Adam and Even could not hear and keep the voice of God, they were afraid, and being unable to hear God's question⁴⁵⁶ automatically took them to the

⁴⁵⁰ John 1:29

⁴⁵¹ Matthew 9:12-13

⁴⁵² 1 John 2:12

⁴⁵³ Luke 10:22

⁴⁵⁴ Exodus 33:18-20

⁴⁵⁵ Revelation 5:6; 13:8

⁴⁵⁶ Genesis 3:8, 10-12

sacrifice of the lamb⁴⁵⁷, a symbol of Christ. In other words, Christ is crucified when we harden our hearts to hearing God's word. Christ is rejected and becomes a man of sorrows⁴⁵⁸ when we do not open our hearts to His speaking to our conscience.

This attitude by man brings about the need to appease God. Man doesn't want to hear God but he still wants relief from his guilt, and this leads to increasing sacrifices and meritorious works to gain God's favor. We see this clearly in the exodus of Israel from the land of Egypt. Only once did God ask them to sacrifice a lamb, and that was on the night of their liberation upon leaving Egypt. With that sacrifice, He longed to write in their hearts the reality of the cost of their deliverance, that only the sacrifice of Christ made it possible.

We know what happened though. They refused to listen and be reconciled to God according to God's ways. This led to a whole train of future iniquities which they would seek to fix by offering sacrifices in their search to appease God.

Exodus 20:4 An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon **thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen**: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.

For that reason, to guide this blood-thirsty worship that comes from the sinful heart, God gave more specific instructions regarding "**thy** burnt offerings, **thy** peace offerings, **thy** sheep and **thine** oxen". This is confirmed in the following verse:

Jeremiah 7:22 For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices: ²³ But this thing I commanded them, saying, 'Hearken unto my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.' (ASV 1901)

God never commanded nor asked for any burnt offerings and sacrifices the day that He brought them out of the land of Egypt. He only asked them to hearken unto His voice, and by hearing and treasuring His voice, God would become their God and they would become His people. This is the promise of the new covenant which is only possible by having the Holy Spirit write God's law in their hearts. It is in the old covenant where animal sacrifices are offered⁴⁵⁹. So why all the instructions regarding sacrifices in the Pentateuch? Because the Bible is clear that it is God speaking and giving those instructions. We find the answer in the following verse:

⁴⁵⁷ Leviticus 4:1-4

⁴⁵⁸ Isaiah 53:3

⁴⁵⁹ Exodus 24:3-8; Hebrews 9:18-22

Mark 10:2 And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, "Is it lawful for a man to put away *his* wife? tempting him."

³ And he answered and said unto them, "What did Moses command you?"

⁴ And they said, "Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put *her* away."

⁵ And Jesus answered and said unto them, "**For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. ⁶But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.**"

It is man's hardness of heart to God's attempt to save him which leads to commandments such as those being written, in order to confront man with his own choices. In trying to accommodate man's flawed worldview, God institutes a pathway for salvation in the establishment of a system of sacrifices and offerings linked to the sanctuary. God gave instructions to His people to limit the shedding of blood in the sacrifices that a hardened heart would seek to offer.

Another example of this is God not wanting His people to have a king; in fact, the desire to have a king was a rejection of God⁴⁶⁰. However, God in His mercy gave directions for the king⁴⁶¹, not because He wanted them to have a king, but because even though His people asked for a king, they still manifested a desire to follow Him. God then sought to feed this desire as much as possible, while He gave instructions to minimize the harm that would come from having a king. In these examples we see that God allows man to have his own will when he insists on rejecting God's counsel.

So we see that the problem with sin began with Adam, and thus the experience of old and new covenant began with him too. Adam would try by his own means to remedy the situation that was created by his sin. And God had to reveal to him that it was impossible for Adam to do it by his own means. Only God can supply the covering of holiness. This is a lesson that all men must learn, and this was revealed to Adam in the instituting of the sacrifice of the lamb and expanded upon later in the sanctuary service for Israel.

Only God could provide the garments. Now, this doesn't mean that once this happened, there was not longer the need to sacrifice a lamb. Just like with baptism, God established the sacrifice of a lamb as a way to manifest faith in God's promises. In this ceremony, man acknowledges the guilt from committed sin that brings with it the death of Christ. It is the ministration of death for the unhardened heart. We read in the Scriptures:

⁴⁶⁰ 1 Samuel 8:7

⁴⁶¹ Deuteronomy 17:14-20

Hebrews 11:⁴ **By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.**

Animal sacrifices would be until the midst of the week⁴⁶², when the Messiah would be put to death. Once the Lamb that takes away the sins of the world had come, sacrifices would cease to be a sign of the righteousness which is by faith.

However, we asked: Why the death of Christ? Why does His death on the cross take away the sacrificial system? Was God pleased with the death of His Son, and did He demand it, in order to forgive us our sins?

Psalm 40:⁶ Sacrifice and offering **thou didst not desire**; Mine ears hast thou opened: **Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.** ⁷ Then said I, Lo, I come: In the volume of the book it is written of me, ⁸ I delight to do thy will, O my God: Yea, thy law is within my heart.

Inspiration directs David to write the words of Christ⁴⁶³ Himself prior to His incarnation. God is not pleased with sacrifices and offerings. In spite of that, Christ comes to this world, as a sacrifice before God for a sweetsmelling savor⁴⁶⁴. Paul, explaining the verse, says:

Hebrews 10:³ **But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.** ⁴ For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. ⁵ Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, '**Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:** ⁶ **In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.** ⁷ Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.'

Although God did not want nor demand the cross of Christ, He sent Him into the world, because only the Lamb of God could take away the sin of the world⁴⁶⁵.

John 17:⁴ I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

Christ in the prayer of Gethsemane had finished the work that His Father had given Him, which consisted in making known the words, the name and the glory of the Father⁴⁶⁶. What follows from there in the life of Jesus is the work of man⁴⁶⁷. However,

⁴⁶² Daniel 9:27

⁴⁶³ 1 Peter 1:11

⁴⁶⁴ Ephesians 5:2

⁴⁶⁵ John 1:29

⁴⁶⁶ John 17:4, 6, 8, 22

⁴⁶⁷ Luke 22:53

in the light of the texts read, it is evident that the incarnation of Christ has to do with sacrifice and offering. When the people of Israel asked that God no longer speak to them but only through Moses, choosing a mediator of their own flesh, Christ is promised to come to partake of the same as His brothers.

Deuteronomy 18:¹⁵ The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;
¹⁶ According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.'

God sends a prophet like Moses according to the request of the people of Israel. The incarnation of Christ is God's answer to Israel's request. While the AMP translates it as "this is according to all that you asked of the Lord", the CSB says "this is what you requested from the Lord your God" and the CEB says "that's exactly what you requested from the Lord your God" and the YLT says "according to all that thou didst ask from Jehovah thy God". While Christ let His Father open His ears, the problem ultimately is that Israel had not. They had hardened their hearts, and rejected the call of the Holy Spirit, and in that act cast out and hurt the very chosen Mediator. This spiritual action would be revealed and have its physical manifestation 1500 years later in the crucifixion.

Hebrews 2:⁹ But **we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels** for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. ... ¹⁴ Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; **that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;** ¹⁵ **And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.**

Christ became flesh according to Israel's request, consequently being able to die. And by dying for all, Christ accomplished two things. First, by His death He destroyed him who had the power of death. And secondly, by means of His death He freed those who were all their lifetime under bondage, that is to say, who were slaves to sin. Thus Christ tasted death for all, since those who were under bondage were full of the fear of death.

Hebrews 9:¹⁵ And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, **that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.**

Christ's death was to deliver, to redeem them which are called. The called ones could only receive the promise of eternal inheritance by means of death. To do this they had to be freed from their sins in the first covenant. The sin of the first covenant is the

rejection of the voice of Christ in the soul and wanting to do it our own way. The incarnation and sacrifice is a demand from God's people when they are in the first covenant, and the manifestation of what their hearts do. The sacrifice of the Father in giving His Son, and Jesus' cross, was not because the heathen did not believe, but because God's people hardened their hearts and did not believe, for if they had believed, the heathen would have been converted⁴⁶⁸. Thus, the thoughts of many hearts were exposed⁴⁶⁹. However:

Acts 3:¹⁷ "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did *it*, as *did* also your rulers. ¹⁸ But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled."

John 12:³² And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, **will draw all men unto me.**

The Son of God interceded, and God the Father condescended to give His Son as an atoning sacrifice, to die the most ignominious death in order to make our condition known to us, to reveal to us the love of the Father and to make us believe that we could be forgiven. At the foot of the cross, we can only be silent.

Zachariah 13:⁶ And *one* shall say unto him, 'What *are* these wounds in thine hands?' Then he shall answer, '*Those* with which I was wounded *in* the house of my friends.'

The Sacrifice of the New Covenant

The plan of salvation has unrolled in stages, in accordance with how man has responded to God reaching out to him. It is all aimed at reconciling man to God, and it is accomplished by the blood of the cross of Christ, the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world.

Fundamentally the stability of the universe is dependent on understanding that the Son is the channel/priest to God the Father, the sole source of life. The Son is the righteousness of God, and the character of His relation to His Father and to created beings – the love, compassion, submission, and self-sacrifice – is the glue that keeps everything in harmony, and that is why His Spirit is so necessary for living in the eternal light of the New Covenant.

Colossians 1:¹⁷ And he [Christ] is before all things, and by him all things consist. ¹⁸ And **he is the head of the body**, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.

¹⁹ For it **pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;** ²⁰ And,

⁴⁶⁸ Luke 10:13-15

⁴⁶⁹ Luke 2:35

having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven.

John 20:¹⁷ ...I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and *to my God*, and your God.

It is the life of the only begotten Son that is given to us, that we rejected due to our sinfulness, but our rejection was made clear and overcome through the cross. God would bring mankind into a place where He could reach him by the complete life of Christ, who only healed and went about doing good⁴⁷⁰, and His voluntary surrender to the murderous impulse. This impulse, which was in seed form in Adam's humanity after he sinned, would now be manifested and made known to us. Thus we are made able to enter into the New Covenant and accept Christ and what He believes in – what is important to Him becomes what is important to us, and thus His life becomes our life.

Isaiah 53:⁴ Surely he hath borne our griefs, And carried our sorrows: Yet **we did esteem him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted.** ⁵**But he was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities:** The chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; And with his stripes we are healed.

We esteemed Christ stricken and smitten of God, but that is where we are mistaken, not knowing God's righteousness nor the nature of our being. It was our sins that struck, smote, bruised and chastised Him. How mistaken we have been!

Psalms 36:¹⁰ **O continue thy lovingkindness** unto them that know thee; And **thy righteousness** to the upright in heart.

God's righteousness was revealed and fulfilled in God giving us Christ to suffer our treatment of Him, manifesting to the whole universe⁴⁷¹ the mercy of God, and in this way reconciling us through the cross. Once achieved, the system of animal sacrifices can cease, that which mankind has been doing since Adam has been fully manifested and revealed.

1 Juan 1:⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Only because God is just does He forgive our sins, because the text declares this, thus in giving mercy He manifests His justice. Christ reveals it when He says:

Matthew 26:²⁸ For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

⁴⁷⁰ Acts 10:38

⁴⁷¹ Ephesians 1:10; 3:9-11

The new covenant has better sacrifices and a better mediator⁴⁷². The blood of the new covenant is the spilt blood of Christ, a sacrifice that we accept by faith upon baptism⁴⁷³ and in communion service⁴⁷⁴. When we behold Christ we receive the revelation of God's glory, His love, righteousness and character. We learn that what God has ever wanted was for us to behold and appreciate Him – to truly love Him in spirit and truth. Believing on Him is how we please the Father and draw near the Father – not our own empty works. With Jesus we are able to follow the most important commandment: “Hear Oh Israel...love God with all your heart”⁴⁷⁵.

Micah 6:⁶Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, *And* bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, With calves of a year old? ⁷**Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, Or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?** Shall I give my firstborn *for* my transgression, The fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul? ⁸**He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; And what doth the LORD require of thee, But to do justly, and to love mercy, And to walk humbly with thy God?**

What God asks of us is not animal sacrifices, but only to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God – and we don't do that ourselves, but through Christ. Then we will bear the fruit of sacrifices that are acceptable to the Lord: in God's works of righteousness, and in mercy and humility.

Philippians 4:¹⁸But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things *which were sent* from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

Psalms 116:¹⁷I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, And will call upon the name of the LORD.

Hebrews 13:¹⁵By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name.

Sacrifices which are acceptable unto God in the new covenant consist of the help given to those who carry the word, prayer and confessing God's character, and songs of thanksgiving⁴⁷⁶ and praise.

Having established the new covenant sacrifice, it is still necessary to mention the following: it is because Christ loved us that He gave Himself as a sacrifice. This gift reflects not only the love of Christ, but the love of the Father as well, and this love is the true foundation of the relationship that God wants us to have with Him. In the old

⁴⁷² Hebrews 12:24

⁴⁷³ Romans 6:5-7

⁴⁷⁴ 1 Corinthians 10:16

⁴⁷⁵ Mark 12:29

⁴⁷⁶ Psalm 107:22

covenant, man begins by seeing the concept that sacrifice is an offering and the giving of something valuable. It is a covenant offering, a way of appeasing God by acknowledging our sinfulness and God's existence. There are those who feel compelled to offer the most valuable thing they have in order to win God's favor. However, when walking with God, man realizes that God doesn't really want the giving of offerings, but rather man's attention and obedience.

1 Samuel 15:22 And Samuel said, "Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, **to obey is better than sacrifice, And to hearken than the fat of rams.**"

Man still remains in the old covenant when he considers that the offering that God wants is obedience, righteousness, good behavior and love (rather than listening, receiving and accepting). And in the old covenant, man seeks to gain God's favor through those means. That was how Paul sought to please God when he was a Pharisee⁴⁷⁷. It is the search for righteousness through the law. This is the path of the old covenant, when we have not yet discovered God's agape love. It is trying to approach God and win His favor through an ordered life, paying tithe of mint, anise and cumin⁴⁷⁸, being vegan and wearing old rags.

Often, what man thinks God wants is what the culture around him says is good; and often he is upheld by his community as a paragon of holiness, which well serves the carnal heart that needs its worthlessness placated. Yet all this is still human effort to please God – is that enough?

Psalms 51:17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

We learn that humility and humiliation is what makes man acceptable before God's presence. This being so, it would seem that giving their lives to an austere regime, as a monks or hermits, would give them righteousness. However, man can greatly deceive himself in this, thinking that humiliation and humility is the way to God, and that his humility makes him acceptable unto God. However, isn't this belief anything but humility?

In all of these aspects of sacrifice, man keeps on being the center. It is still about man's way to God. It is the cross that brings to light the selfish spirit that dwells in man and rebukes it. There is no way of man to God, but rather, it is God in His self-sacrificing agape who descends; and in Christ there is a way to God, from God⁴⁷⁹. The cross nullifies every sacrifice that man can do as a means to come to God. We don't have to

⁴⁷⁷ Philippians 3:3-9

⁴⁷⁸ Matthew 23:23

⁴⁷⁹ John 14:6

appease God nor win His favor, because we have already had His favor since eternity. The evidence for this is that He gave us His own Son⁴⁸⁰. And we see that this is a totally different sacrifice. In this world, it is not man who makes the sacrifice, nor God who receives it. In the cross of Christ God is not the recipient. **The cross of Christ IS God's own sacrifice. The cross of Christ IS Christ's own sacrifice. And the recipient of this sacrifice is man.**

2 Corinthians 5:¹⁸ **And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ**, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Sacrifice, then, is no longer man's way to God, but God's way towards man. And it establishes the way of communion with the Father and Son⁴⁸¹ which is only possible by receiving the Spirit behind this sacrifice⁴⁸².

1 John 3:¹ Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, ...

1 John 4:⁹ In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

1 John 4:¹⁹ We love him, because he first loved us.

Christ, then, is the sacrifice; He lives a life of self-denial by trying to reach those who hate Him – that is humanity – though we constantly spit in His face. By beholding Christ, we see the enormous sacrifice that He made so that we might believe in the mercy of our God.

Ephesians 5:² And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

By knowing and seeing such a gift, we are invited to participate in the same offering, in giving ourselves to God.

Romans 12:¹ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service.*

We are invited to reason, to give our hearts and bodies to God, this being the acceptable sacrifice to God, the sacrifice of the new covenant. It is a sacrifice of praise for what God has done for us.

⁴⁸⁰ Romans 8:32

⁴⁸¹ 1 John 1:3

⁴⁸² 2 Corinthians 13:14

Philippians 2:⁵ **Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:**

⁶Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

The mind or Spirit that was in Christ is the only acceptable sacrifice, the death of self, and being begotten to new life by the Spirit. The only acceptable sacrifice is to be crucified with Christ, and for Christ to live in me. And even though the cross might seem big and heavy, and self-denial might seem impossible, it is only by becoming aware of our incapacity and inability that we will be led to plead for help. His promise that He will be with us unto the end of the world⁴⁸³ will then become a reality through the reception of God's agape, the Spirit of His life⁴⁸⁴.

The Two Mirrors

The story of Adam and Eve repeats a concept to us that we had already seen before in the stories of Abraham and the people of Israel. God's word not only shows man God's righteousness and the work that He wants to do, but it also shows man his natural condition, in this way acting as a mirror.

James 1:²² But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. ²³For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: ²⁴For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. ²⁵But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

It is impossible for man to sanctify himself, for God's ways and thoughts are higher than our ways and thoughts⁴⁸⁵. Thus no one becomes a doer of the word without first hearing and treasuring⁴⁸⁶ it. When God's communication is not valued but rather falls on the wayside, or on unsuitable soil, it results in not producing fruit⁴⁸⁷. When this happens, we notice that two things happen. The first is that the law reveals our condition. However, if we don't persevere in beholding the law and considering ourselves in relation to it, we will consequently forget our condition. This is the case of him who has ears to hear but does not hear. The second thing that happens is that, at the same time that the word or law is revealing our condition, we see the law and project our own condition onto the Lawgiver, thus showing that we do not know God. In the context of sacrifices, we find it described in the following way:

⁴⁸³ Matthew 28:20

⁴⁸⁴ Romans 5:5

⁴⁸⁵ Isaiah 55:8-9

⁴⁸⁶ Psalm 119:92

⁴⁸⁷ Matthew 13:3-9

Psalm 50:⁷ Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I *am* God, *even* thy God. ⁸**I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices Or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me.** ⁹I will take no bullock out of thy house, *Nor* he goats out of thy folds. ¹⁰For every beast of the forest *is* mine, *And* the cattle upon a thousand hills. ¹¹I know all the fowls of the mountains: And the wild beasts of the field *are* mine. ¹²**If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: For the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.** ¹³**Will I eat the flesh of bulls, Or drink the blood of goats?** ¹⁴**Offer unto God thanksgiving; And pay thy vows unto the most High: ...** ²¹**These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: But I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.**

Man, in his natural condition, thinks that God is like himself, and he ignores God's greatness and how insignificant and weak he is. As the word is not treasured, man forgets his own condition and projects it onto God. He beholds the law and sees the reflection of his own face; he thinks God is surely like himself.

Isaiah 55:⁶ Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, Call ye upon him while he is near: ⁷Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts: And let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; And to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. ⁸**For my thoughts are not your thoughts, Neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.** ⁹**For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are my ways higher than your ways, And my thoughts than your thoughts.** ¹⁰For as the rain cometh down, And the snow from heaven, And returneth not thither, But watereth the earth, And maketh it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: ¹¹**So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: It shall not return unto me void, But it shall accomplish that which I please, And it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.**

When God gave Adam instruction that as a sign of acknowledgment and repentance of his sin he should sacrifice a lamb, he was placing before him a mirror in His word. He was telling him on clear terms that the rejection of His word causes the suffering and the spilling of the Lamb's blood. At the same time, He showed Adam that only through the sacrifice of the life of the Lamb could he obtain God's righteousness and have the nakedness of his shame covered. Man's hardness of heart and his enmity lead him to believe that God demanded the sacrifice and the death of lambs, and that Christ, the Beloved of the Father, was wounded by the Father⁴⁸⁸. We think that God's righteousness was satisfied in the spilling of the innocent blood of His Son. That's how man projects his condition on God. However, God requesting sacrifice was a channel

⁴⁸⁸ Isaiah 53:4

to dissuade man from sinning, because it would give him awareness and understanding regarding the cross of Christ. It was the mirror provided in God's word for man to become aware of what he was doing, of the cost of his salvation, and to be dissuaded from sinning.

Within the series of stories we have been covering, circumcision is the next one that shows us God's word as a mirror. Circumcision was given to Abraham for him and his descendants to constantly remember that God's covenant and promises do not come from the strength of the flesh, but from God's power. Circumcision in the flesh would then become a channel or vehicle that would lead Abraham and his descendants to understand true circumcision, which is righteousness by faith.

Abraham had some faith in the beginning, enough to come out of Ur, but it wasn't perfect to receive God's promise fully – thus his series of setbacks in the old covenant, most notably the situation with Hagar and Ishmael – and this experience is archetypal of what all humans will experience when they believe in God. The request for circumcision was a mirror that God placed before Abraham's eyes, that he and humanity might know their true condition. God gave circumcision to Abraham to reveal a heart that was still not sensitive enough to the impressions of God's Spirit to be able to have those promises written in it. Circumcision then became a declaration of man's condition, and a sign of what God wanted to do.

When God pronounced the law on Mount Sinai, His intention was to write His law in the hearts of the people of Israel through the giving of His Spirit. He hoped that they would have learned the lessons of their forefathers, and realized their own weakness and God's faithfulness. However, they hardened their hearts and no longer wanted to hear the voice that spoke to them. God then gave them the Ten Commandments, the mirror, with which He showed them the condition of their hearts. They did not accept the inner law, and remained with the law outside their hearts, which reflected to them and showed them that they were resisting God's Spirit in their hearts. At the same time that it reflected their condition, it also told them what God wanted to do: sanctify and save them, writing His law in their hearts.

Before the law, God asked the people of Israel to sanctify themselves. Yet it is impossible for man to sanctify himself. If the heart is focused on works or on the old covenant, the word is received as something to do. Carnal man perceives it as an order that he must fulfil. We see that the word can then be understood in two ways: spiritually or carnally. This is how God's word becomes a mirror, reflecting our condition, while at the same time – maybe the majority of the time – we judge God and make Him into our image, thus not knowing Him and projecting our own characteristics onto Him. And the question is: can we see this in the life of Christ?

Since the Spirit of Christ inspired the prophets⁴⁸⁹, was this mirror condition revealed in His life and in His words?

Luke 17:7 "But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, 'Go and sit down to meat?' ⁸ And will not rather say unto him, 'Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?' ⁹ Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow [think] not.

¹⁰ So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.'"

When we read these words, we think that Christ and His kingdom is of that nature. The way we treat our servants is mirrored back to us. But how does Jesus act as a master toward His "servants", the disciples?

John 13:3 Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; ⁴ He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and **took a towel, and girded himself.** ⁵ **After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel** wherewith he was girded.

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things unto His hands, and that He had come from God, and went to God, stood up and served His disciples. How incredible! What a spirit! He washed His disciples' feet and wiped them dry. He took the bread, broke it and gave them to eat; He did the same with the wine. That is how Christ gives us the testimony of His life:

Mark 10:⁴⁵ For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

By reading these passages we learn and know that in the wedding feast of the Lamb the Lord Himself will gird Himself and serve us⁴⁹⁰. Don't we do the same with our children, and appeal to them to hear us and obey us, because our hearts and words contain our best desires towards them? Yet through this parable Jesus is causing us to reflect on our relationships to God and to each other, especially as he frames it in the form of a question:

Let's read once more the verse we are considering:

Luke 17:7 "But **which of you**, having a servant...

⁴⁸⁹ 1 Peter 1:11

⁴⁹⁰ Luke 12:37

Which of us, having a servant, wouldn't ask him to serve us first, after he has finished his work? Isn't this how it works in the world? Does the master even thank the servant? Christ asks this when speaking of human beings in their natural state, but He is not saying that He is like that.

Christ declares our condition to us; He tells us we are ungrateful and we serve ourselves first. Why do we attribute self-service to Him, then? When we are in this state, in the state of servants in God's house, doing in order to belong, seeking righteousness through the works of the law, Christ will seek to make us acknowledge that there is no virtue in works.

Even though we might have imagined that we made great sacrifices and did great works, there is no merit whatsoever in man for doing what he had to do. But what spirit did he do those things with? Lack of humility is manifested in this way. Works won't save anyone, but neither will a life without fruits. Yet Christ calls us to receive His Spirit of love, that we might not see God as a harsh, relentless, exacting and demanding Master⁴⁹¹, but as a loving Father.

John 15:¹³ "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. ¹⁵Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. ¹⁶Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. ¹⁷These things I command you, that ye love one another."

Christ, with His words in a parable, reveals their condition. But man projects this, his own condition, onto God. Realizing our projection and mischaracterization of God is central to understanding the power of sin, the need to be humble, to not be a judge, and that we need a Savior to give us a new mind.

Let us see another story in which the words and actions of Jesus served as a mirror:

Matthew 15:²¹ Then Jesus went thence, and departed into **the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.**

Why did Jesus go to Tyre and Sidon? God guided His activities each day and showed Him what His day would be like.

⁴⁹¹ Matthew 25:14-30

Isaiah 50:⁴The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, **That I should know how to speak a word in season to *him that is weary***: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. ⁵The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, And I was not rebellious, Neither turned away back.

Each day God's will was given to Jesus, and He took pleasure in doing His Father's will. He went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. He wasn't only going to rest from the constant questioning of the Pharisees and Scribes⁴⁹², but He was also going to see someone.

Matthew 15:²² And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* **Son of David**; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."

We notice that a Canaanite Syro-Phoenician woman came to Him. She did not belong to the nation of Israel; she was part of an idolatrous nation. These people were rejected and despised by the people of Israel. However, news had come to the area regarding a prophet and His miracles. This woman's daughter was gravely ill and tormented by a demon, and as she heard about Jesus, her heart brightened with hope.

One day, she heard that Jesus was in her city. What a surprise! What an opportunity! Jesus placed Himself in her path, which the disciples didn't understand. Because the people of Israel gloated in their supposed superiority, they were completely ignorant to the needs of their neighboring nations. They considered the blessings that God had given a platform from which to despise those whom they considered to be disconnected from the covenant. So the disciples were exasperated when she addressed Christ as the Son of David.

Mark 12:³⁵ And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, "How say the scribes **that Christ is the Son of David?**"

In her own words this woman, who was supposedly foreign to God's people, was acknowledging Him as the promised Messiah! This which was impossible for the spiritual leadership of God's people to acknowledge⁴⁹³ was manifested with such simple faith by a person who did not belong to the people of Israel.

Matthew 15:²³ But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, "Send her away; for she crieth after us."

Jesus did not say a single word. Why not? What we see is that the disciples immediately reacted, manifesting the prejudice of their religion and nation. Peter would need time to understand. And what did he need to understand?

⁴⁹² Matthew 15:1-6, 21

⁴⁹³ Matthew 26:63-64

Acts 10:³⁴ Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, "**Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:** ³⁵ But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."

Christ did not respond immediately, and what did the silence of Jesus do? It revealed the condition of the disciples' hearts. The silence of Jesus made it possible for what is in the heart to be manifested. What did the disciples ask for? "Send her away" – a response that shows there was no compassion in them.

If Christ had immediately responded, the disciples' condition would not have been revealed. They interpreted His silence as confirmation of their religious prejudice. At the same time, His silence was a test of faith for the woman, to reveal whether she really believed in this prophet or not. Christ, then, went to Tyre and Sidon for this woman, but He also went for His disciples.

Matthew 15:²⁴ But he answered and said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

And here, Christ defined His mission: He was sent unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. How do we read this text? What does the Bible itself state and explain regarding Christ's mission and the house of Israel? His answer seemed to confirm the prejudice of the disciples, didn't it? However, it was actually a reproof to them, and to all those who have a hard time understanding that Jesus had come to save the whole world.

John 1:²⁹ The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, "Behold the Lamb of God, **which taketh away the sin of the world.**"

Jesus is the Savior of the world, not only of the Jews. As the Samaritans themselves said, after they were taught by Christ:

John 4:⁴¹ And many more believed because of his own word; ⁴² And said unto the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: **for we have heard *him* ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.**"

Jesus is the light that lights every man, and that is what He taught them. So what did Jesus refer to when He spoke of the house of Israel?

John 8:³⁹ They answered and said unto him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus saith unto them, "**If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.**"

The Jews here are said to not be the children of Abraham because they did not want to do his works. In other words, belonging to Abraham's seed and to the inheritance of

the promises does not come from blood relations, but from character. Paul, who was instructed by Christ Himself, says⁴⁹⁴:

Romans 2:²⁸ For **he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly**; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: ²⁹ But **he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and** not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

Who is truly a Jew? Who is part of the people of Israel? He who is in the spirit. In this way, when Jesus was referring to the house of Israel, He was referring to His spiritual kingdom, to those whom He had come to seek and to save. He was referring to the kingdom of those who accept and receive the Holy Spirit. He was referring to those who are led by God⁴⁹⁵. He wasn't referring to a specific ethnicity or religion. So this woman, in coming to Christ, in acknowledging Him as the Messiah, in begging for His help, was showing that she was hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit, and that she was indeed part of God's Israel. What was her reaction?

Matthew 15:²⁵ Then came she and worshipped him, saying, "Lord, help me."

Did she believe that the Messiah was only for the physical Israel? Did she think that the Messiah was not for her? Absolutely not! Rather, she appealed even more insistently. She heard the words that Jesus had spoken to His disciples, and though there might have been doubts in her heart, she clung to the conviction that the Messiah really is the Savior of the world. She knelt down and begged for help. Now, Jesus said:

Matthew 15:²⁶ But he answered and said, "It is not meet to take the children's **bread**, and to cast *it* to dogs."

What Jesus said here seems harsh. What is happening here? Let's join this verse with the following text:

John 6:³⁵ **And Jesus said unto them, "I am the bread of life: ...** ³⁷ All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and **him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."**

Because of this verse, we know that the Father had guided this woman and that Jesus was not casting her out. Jesus' statement was made in such a way that it could allow doubt to manifest itself, that He is prejudiced like us humans, when what God wants is for us to search the word of God deeper. We must remember that we have the old covenant nature within all of us, and thus we always need to be checking our assumptions of how we are interpreting what is happening.

⁴⁹⁴ Galatians 1:11-12

⁴⁹⁵ Romans 8:14

So what do we see in this story? The woman's love for her daughter, Jesus' eyes and face, what she had heard of the Messiah, the Spirit calling her – all led her to speak once more. And notice her request:

Matthew 15:²⁷ And she said, "Truth, Lord: **yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.**"

She confirmed the Lord, but added that even dogs ate of the crumbs. Even though she could have recognized herself as a daughter of the kingdom of heaven, she was humble, and chose to identify with the dogs. It reminds us of the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican⁴⁹⁶.

Here we have a woman who was not of God's people, who was within an idolatrous context, who showed that she had no ambitions of greatness; yet she knew who Jesus was and was willing to follow Him and plead for Him to help her. She also referred to the masters at the table, understanding it referring to the Jews to whom were committed the oracles of God⁴⁹⁷ and who God desired to use as His ministers for the blessing of the nations⁴⁹⁸, humbling herself further in the process. What more could be asked of her? Even though she called herself a dog, she still clung to Jesus by faith. How incredible! And now comes the lesson for the disciples:

Matthew 15:²⁸ Then Jesus answered and said unto her, "O woman, **great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.**" And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Beautiful words from Jesus! He tested this woman's faith, to see if she really believed in the Messiah for the world, or if she clung to her prejudice. His words could have hardened her, but because of her faith, they purified her belief in Him. She received according to the measure of her faith. And where the leaders of Israel faltered, she was victorious, thus proving that the "last shall be first, and the first last"⁴⁹⁹. In this answer she showed herself a daughter of Israel, because she clung to Christ and didn't let go⁵⁰⁰.

Through this experience, Jesus revealed the condition of His disciples. His words were said in such a way that they projected their own prejudice and intolerance onto Christ. His word and conduct thus turned into a mirror which, upon the resolution of the story, should have shaken them regarding their assumptions of Christ and His work. This lesson would help them to be more open to the gentiles, thus ready to go to the sea of Galilee to the region of Decapolis.

⁴⁹⁶ Luke 18:10-14

⁴⁹⁷ Romans 3:2

⁴⁹⁸ Exodus 19:5

⁴⁹⁹ Matthew 20:16

⁵⁰⁰ Genesis 32:26-28

What might our own unknown prejudices be?

We've now looked at several instances in which we discover that, according to the teaching of the Scriptures, the word of God and His law are stated in such a way as to become a mirror which declares our true condition. The problem is that man projects his own image onto God; he attributes his own characteristics to God. To solve this, God provides us with another mirror. We read:

Colossians 1:¹⁵ Who is the **image** of the invisible God, ...

Hebrews 1:³ Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and **the express image of his person**, ...

John 1:¹⁸ No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, **he hath declared *him***.

Matthew 11:²⁷ All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; **neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him***.

Remember, Christ's incarnation was necessary because mankind remain trapped in the old covenant. For the child of Israel in this relation to God, the glory of God is as a consuming fire⁵⁰¹. Moses, who evidently had not hardened his heart so as to be unable to hear the voice of God, could enter into the cloud that covered the mountain and commune with God to the point where his face shone from gazing at God's glory. But those who sought righteousness through the law were blinded and fearful, and saw in that blazing fire their own projection. What was wonderful about all this is that, while Moses was the meekest man on the earth⁵⁰² and reflected Christ to such an extent that God declared that in His incarnation Christ would be like Moses⁵⁰³, the people of Israel accused him of being wicked and of wanting to kill them in the desert⁵⁰⁴, in this way reflecting how the words that Moses gave to the people were judged according to the hearer's own character⁵⁰⁵.

This situation is even more pressing when God gives Israel his own will.

Matthew 19:⁷ They say unto him, "Why did **Moses then command** to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?" ⁸ He saith unto them, "**Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you** to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so."

⁵⁰¹ Exodus 24:17

⁵⁰² Numbers 12:3

⁵⁰³ Deuteronomy 18:15-18

⁵⁰⁴ Exodus 16:2-3; Numbers 16:12-14, 41

⁵⁰⁵ Acts 7:38

The disciple thinks that it is the prophet of God, Moses, who **commands** to give a writing of divorcement, when in reality it is something that was **suffered** because of the hardness of their hearts. However, God's will is that what God has joined together, let no man put asunder. Man in his carnal condition thinks that what God finally gives is His own will, but He actually gives man his own will (for it is man who wants divorce).

Psalm 81:¹¹ But my people would not hearken to my voice; And Israel would none of me. ¹²So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: *And they walked in their own counsels.*

Ezekiel 20:²⁴ Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols. ²⁵**Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live;**

It is the stubborn resistance to hearing God's voice that finally leads God to giving them the will of their hearts. This manifests itself in statutes and decrees, such as stoning and instructions for war, by which they could not live while remaining in them. But man, in the first covenant, sees these instructions and words of God as His perfect will. Thus, he sees his own natural face reflected.

Man misunderstands due to his hatred of God (his "enmity" with God⁵⁰⁶, manifested in blaming God for his troubles like Adam), and so finally God gave His Son. He is the only one who can make the Father known; He is the revealer of the Father. Christ then becomes the mirror, the image, the brightness of the glory of the Father. And it is this second mirror that we need to keep calibrated in order to receive the word of God in its original spirit, without corrupting it with our own carnal lenses. As the Scriptures say:

2 Corinthians 3:¹⁸ But we all, **with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord**, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

We are changed into the image of the Son as we behold the glory of the Lord, without looking away from Him who acts as a mirror revealing the Father to us. So there are two mirrors: the law of God and the life of Christ. When both these mirrors are separated, the veil is over our eyes. When we can't see the gospel of Christ in the dispensation of the Old Testament and God's dealings with man through the old covenant, then we cannot see the law in its correct light, and we project our own attributes onto the Lawgiver. The first mirror, the mirror of the law, is linked to the work of the ministration of death. And the second mirror, the glory of the Lord, which

⁵⁰⁶ Romans 8:7

is the life of Christ on this earth⁵⁰⁷, is the ministration of the Spirit. Christ and His life, just as it was manifested on this earth, is the complete revelation of the totality of God's character. Because it is written:

1 Timothy 3:¹⁶ And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:
God was manifest in the flesh, ...

Jesus Himself said to His disciples:

John 14:⁹ Jesus saith unto him, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? **he that hath seen me hath seen the Father;** and how sayest thou *then*, Shew us the Father? ¹⁰ Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? **the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."**

Thus, the mirrors illustrate the covenants. The mirror of the law and God's word has the objective of making sin abound. It shows us our condition and what we think regarding God and man. Additionally, God's Son was also given to us with the objective of making sin abound; He shows us our condition and what we think regarding God and man. The presence of Christ makes evil deeds manifest.

John 1:⁹ *That* was the **true Light**, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

John 3:¹⁹ And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and **men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.** ²⁰ For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, **lest his deeds should be reprov'd.**

In the mirror of the law and the word of God we also see the beauty of the glory of His character.

Psalms 119:¹⁸ Open thou mine eyes, That I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

Romans 7:¹² Wherefore **the law is holy**, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Likewise, He gave us His Son so that in Him we might behold the fullness of the beauty of His character lived out in humanity. God gave us His Son so that in Him we may find the human, living way of God's life.

And we ask ourselves: are they two mirrors or one? Because we cannot dissociate the word of God with the Word of God. We cannot dissociate the Scriptures from Christ⁵⁰⁸.

⁵⁰⁷ John 17:4

First we need to consider the conditions of man. The first condition is that of darkness, which is the old man, the first man, carnal, Adam after the fall, at enmity with God. On the other hand we have the second man, spiritual, a new man, the second Adam, who delights in God and is the brightness of His glory, so much so that he who has seen Him has seen the Father. While we are all born of the flesh, of the first Adam, we are called and invited to be born of the Spirit, to be sons of Christ, the second Adam, since God has predestined us to be made in His image⁵⁰⁹. It is this process of being made in His image, in which it does not appear what we shall be, which constitutes the third condition of man.

All God's communications with man are Him trying to bring mankind from the first man to the second man. The aim of the word of God is to show faithfully the things of the flesh, to make manifest to the first man his condition.

In the case of the first man, he attests to the divine nature of the law, because he is without excuse⁵¹⁰. Given the inconvenience of receiving the wages of sin, he could well receive the word but reject the Spirit that comes with it. He would cling to the letter while rejecting the conviction of his natural condition. Not realizing the depth of his enmity with God, he ascribes to the Lawgiver his own attributes which he sees reflected. By not receiving the Spirit, he remains unable to see the things of the Spirit⁵¹¹, and remains carnal. He therefore withdraws from beholding the word, forgetting his own condition.

What about Jesus? We know He Jesus is glorious, "full of grace and truth"⁵¹². But does He also reveal sin? It is evident in how the Jews reacted to Him and how He lived that He does reveal sin. But how can He faithfully reveal two such contradictory things, the glory of God as well as sin? He does not do so in the manner of Satan, for He has nothing to do with the accuser⁵¹³. Nor does He have sin, but reveals it in the fact that He was made sin for us⁵¹⁴ so that we might see in Him our sin⁵¹⁵. That is why the text says "blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in Me"⁵¹⁶, which indicates that the believer no longer finds in Jesus the revelation of his own sins, because they have been cleansed, they have been eradicated.

⁵⁰⁸ John 3:34

⁵⁰⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:45-50

⁵¹⁰ Romans 1:20; 2:1

⁵¹¹ John 3:3; 1 Corinthians 2:14

⁵¹² John 1:14

⁵¹³ Revelation 12:10; John 5:45

⁵¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 5:21

⁵¹⁵ Isaiah 53:3-4

⁵¹⁶ Matthew 11:6, ASV

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, after that night of unsuccessful fishing, Peter fell on his knees before Jesus, saying: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man"⁵¹⁷. In a daily life activity Peter found himself close to the Lord, and he found himself a sinner. To which Jesus' answer is important, because right there He told him: "fear not". Clearer revelations would come later with Jesus.

We see therefore that it is the same with the word of God as with Word of God, Jesus Christ. Just as the living Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart⁵¹⁸, so Mary brought the child to the temple, and was told that the same sword would pierce her soul, so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed⁵¹⁹. This is what was happening to Peter in his encounter with Jesus; that sword spoken of was manifesting the things of the flesh in Peter. **Thus the mirrors illustrate the covenants, insofar as they reveal what man is like.** The operation of the law and the Word of God is indeed to faithfully display the things of the flesh, but it is also to lead to the things of the Spirit. **Thus, the mirrors illustrate the covenants, because they reveal what God is like.**

But, why is it that in the law, in the word of God, some see themselves reflected in their true and degraded condition, while others see the glory of God, and are transformed into that likeness? Why is it that while some see prohibitions and demands, others see promises? Why do some see No, and others Yes, some see that which perishes, and others that which remains? Who are the ones, and who are the others? Can it be possible that in the same thing they see such different things?

It is the very nature of the mirror that determines that things look so different, not because the mirror has changed in any way, but because what changes is what is placed before the mirror. The man who comes to observe the mirror finds only that which he is able to see. In the case of the carnal man, he will only see the things of the flesh, because we are told that the carnal man does not discern spiritual things⁵²⁰. But if the operation of the Word of God is to show the carnal in order to lead to the spiritual, the question arises: how does the change of vision take place, from the carnal to the spiritual? It is in beholding only the One who was given to us, the One who by us was lifted up, that the conviction of sin can remain, and right there in Christ begin to glimpse the sacrifice of man's peace, and receive His Spirit.

⁵¹⁷ Luke 5:8

⁵¹⁸ Hebrews 4:12

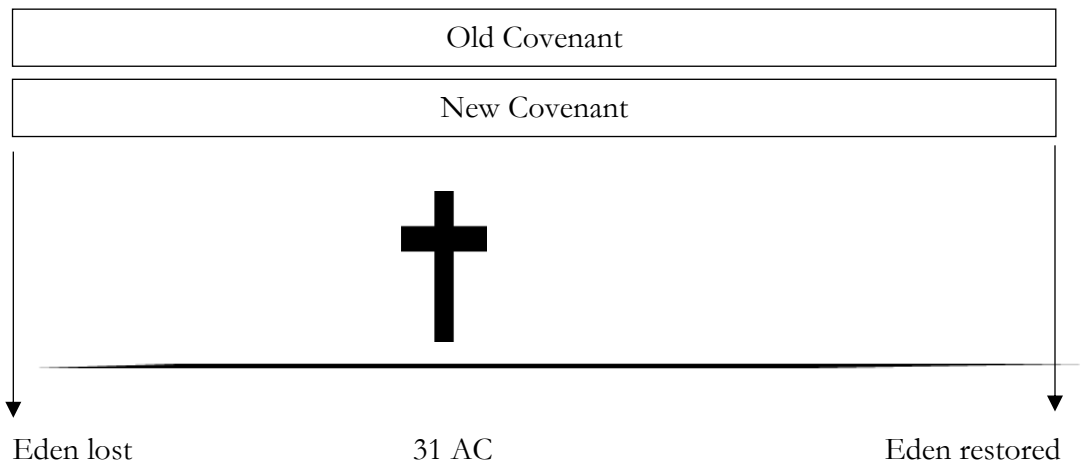
⁵¹⁹ Luke 2:35

⁵²⁰ 2 Corinthians 2:14

Under the Law

Children of Abraham

We had come to the conclusion that the old covenant and the new covenant are two experiences of the heart that run parallel to each other from the beginning to the end of history.



They are also two experiences that run parallel throughout our lives. Both covenants are manifested within each of us.

Romans 4:¹⁶ Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, **but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,**

The heirs, those who have become one with Christ, will manifest the same faith of Abraham. In this sense, Abraham is our father, as we live the experience of his life. How is this manifested? What are the events that are common and distinctive to all life experiences of the children of Abraham?

1. We hear about God and His love and how He gave His Son Jesus Christ, and at some point in our lives we accept the voice of the Shepherd, and we hear and decide to give Him our lives, learning and believing that:

- a. He forgives our sins, and
- b. He will guide us in the Christian life, giving us grace and power to walk His ways to the heavenly Canaan, which is the renewed earth.

In this process, we begin, when reading and listening to His word, to gain knowledge of the great and most precious promises that He has given us. And we enter by faith into the new covenant or second covenant.

2. Life circumstances reveal our lack of trust in God's promises, He still rescues us, many times without us even being aware of it. He delivers us from the pit of our mistakes, and places us back on solid rock, that we might learn more regarding His promises and what He wants to do for us, in us and with us. The weakness of our carnal nature begins to be revealed to us as we see how we fail in our words, actions and thoughts.

3. Mistakes makes us doubt and hesitate regarding certain promises of God. We decide to make some of them happen by ourselves. This is exemplified by the experience of Hagar and Ishmael. The fruit is discord and strife, works without the Spirit of God, which come from the strength of our flesh. Meanwhile, we think that God is wonderfully blessing us in this work of our own hands, without realizing that it's actually as good as the fig leaves that covered Adam and Eve. This is the Yes and No experience.

4. God, through life experiences, sermons we hear, things we read, or the words of a friend, reveals to us that the work of our hands, our efforts, have no merit, and that unless we are born of the Spirit and allow it to dwell in our hearts, our works are dead works. God seeks to make us understand that we need to be born again, that it is necessary to have the true circumcision, that it is necessary for our heart to be converted. God wants us to return to our first love, to agape, while we are still in eros, or at best, in that love called phileo. When we begin to realize this, we see God's promises, and they seem hard to believe!

We just don't know Him enough to trust absolutely everything to Him. We communicate Him our plans, we tell Him of our decisions, and we ask Him to bless us. We are looking to Hagar to get fruits of obedience. We are in the first covenant. But God reveals this to us; He lets us know that He wants to bless us and give us His word, His promises and His covenant in our life. And the most difficult promise to believe, just like with Abraham, is that He can give life to this body of death⁵²¹. We find it very hard to believe that He can deliver us from sin⁵²². Yet, if we accept His word and continue growing in faith, the No of doubt will finally change to the full Yes and Amen to the Lord.

5. We get to understand in more detail everything that the Lord plans to do in our lives, and how much He blesses and takes care of us. Despite this, we still show flaws in certain life experiences, and we fail to believe in God's promises. We still don't

⁵²¹ Romans 7:23-24

⁵²² 1 John 3:9; John 8:36

fully know God's character and we are afraid that He will not protect us in every situation. There are things that we have a hard time handing over to Him.

6. We receive the confirmation that we are children of God and that God can fulfill His promises in our lives. In this way we are born again. We begin to gain awareness that we have really been made children of God; the Spirit of God reveals this and cries out in our hearts, "Abba, Father"⁵²³. We begin to become increasingly aware that it is not by our own power, but by the Spirit of God, and that God works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure⁵²⁴. We begin to stop being slaves in our heavenly Father's home.

7. When the fruit of the Spirit begins to reach certain maturity, it will contrast against the fruit of the flesh. It will also generate reactions in those who have not been born after the Spirit. We will become increasingly aware that every time we have acted in our own strength and intelligence, the fruit has been of the flesh, with all its negative consequences. We will clearly see that the flesh profits nothing⁵²⁵. We will be aware that of ourselves and in ourselves there is nothing good⁵²⁶, and that we live and have our being by the grace and mercy of God⁵²⁷. The glory of man is laid to the dust⁵²⁸. There is absolutely nothing of which we can glorify ourselves, nothing that we can take credit for, because we are saved by grace, and this is a gift from God⁵²⁹. We will know that we can do nothing⁵³⁰.

In a final decision, after a life of sharing, coming and going between Sarah and Hagar, between the first and the second covenant, between works of the Spirit and works of the flesh, we will finally completely give ourselves into the arms of Christ and we will allow Him to do everything. We will then have sent away the first covenant and its fruit from home.

8. When we face the test of our lives, we will be confronted with the decision of whether to send the first covenant away from our lives. And all we will be able to do is to wait on the Lord and trust that He will provide salvation. We, God's people, will willingly offer ourselves completely to Him in the day of His power⁵³¹. And right there and then, in that state, the Lord will be able to seal in us His new covenant forever. When we have abandoned self completely, He will be able to do His work and cleanse

⁵²³ Romans 8:15-16

⁵²⁴ Philippians 2:13

⁵²⁵ John 6:63

⁵²⁶ Romans 3:10

⁵²⁷ Acts 17:28

⁵²⁸ 1 Peter 1:24

⁵²⁹ Ephesians 2:8

⁵³⁰ John 15:5

⁵³¹ Psalm 110:3

us from all sin, and He will seal us with His Spirit. It took years of surrender, of mistakes, and of seeing God's powerful hand. What had started with a Yes and Amen, which through sin changed into Yes and No, God led into a No and Yes, to finally end once more in a Yes and Amen.

This is the way ahead of us. In the father of faith, in Abraham's life, we see the way of faith revealed. God invites us to walk in Him. Yet so often we don't understand Him, or we don't pay enough attention, or maybe we don't treasure His words, or we ignore His promises or harden our hearts. But He knows how we are, and He does not despair⁵³². He never stops being this way⁵³³ and hopes all things, while He continues to knock at our heart's door. And He reveals Himself that we might know Him, that we might trust Him and allow Him to work. The problem is that we don't allow Him to!

Though we act out of self-trust, yet the Lord goes before us, preparing the way, and cleaning our messes. That's why He is also the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega⁵³⁴. And He reveals Himself to us in our state, accommodating us, that we might learn that He is our Sustainer and Comforter⁵³⁵. He wants to do things that no eye has seen, nor ears heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him⁵³⁶. And thus, in this journey of life, He wants to fulfill all His promises, He wants to be our complete shield and reward, He wants to sanctify us by the baptism of His word⁵³⁷ and forever seal us in this choice. May God help us in this walk, and may He seal His covenant, the new covenant, in our hearts.

⁵³² 1 Corinthians 13:7

⁵³³ 1 Corinthians 13:8

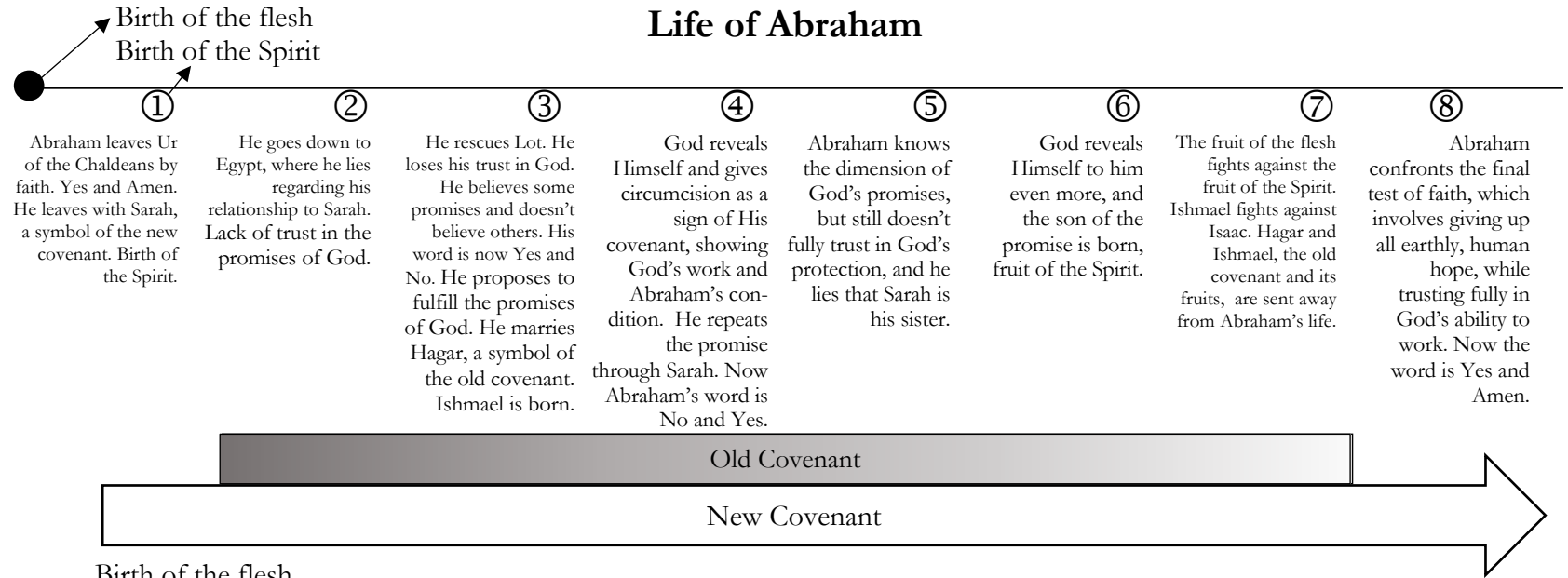
⁵³⁴ Revelation 1:8

⁵³⁵ Isaiah 51:12

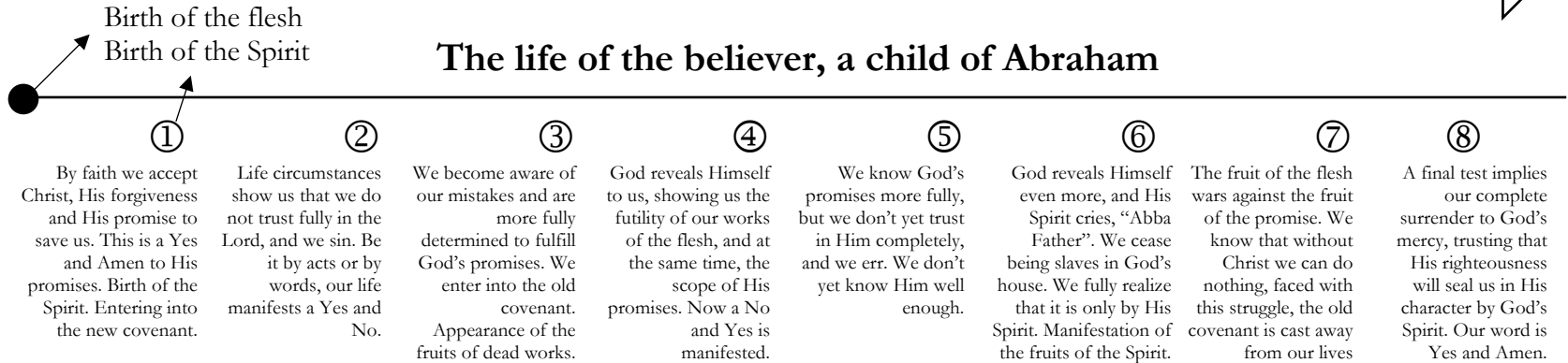
⁵³⁶ 1 Corinthians 2:9

⁵³⁷ Ephesians 5:26

Life of Abraham



The life of the believer, a child of Abraham



The Eternity of the Law

The Bible is abundant in its testimony on the law, and it is consistent and uniform in its position. When Christ began His ministry, after He announced that the kingdom of God was at hand, and after having given its practical principles, He declared:

Matthew 5:17 “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: **I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.** ¹⁸ For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, **one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.**”

It is interesting that Jesus connects the fulfillment of all things with the fulfilling of the law and with the new heaven and the new earth. We see that the law will continue to function in convicting of sin until the wicked die and the earth is established in its Edenic state. Then the law will be fulfilled, because with every thought and action in the new earth being a fruit of the Spirit, there is no law against such things⁵³⁸.

On the new earth, all will be in Christ and the law will no longer need to bring us to Christ. There will be perfect unity with Christ and all His children, and we will sincerely and naturally be doing good, which is the perfect will of Christ. There will be no legalistic spirit, but rather, as children of a loving Father, we will be in joyous service and communion. We will delight to do His will.

We also notice that Christ, by adding the prophets, is defining the law not only as the Ten Commandments and the Pentateuch, but also the Old Testament.

Psalm 19:7 The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul: ...

Since God’s law is perfect, it can only be eternal. God’s law converts the soul, bringing it to Christ.

Psalm 119:4 Thou hast commanded *us* To keep thy precepts diligently.

Psalm 119:41 Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, *Even* thy salvation, according to thy word. ⁴² So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: For I trust in thy word. ⁴³ And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; For I have hoped in thy judgments. ⁴⁴ So shall I keep thy law continually For ever and ever. ⁴⁵ And I will walk at liberty: For I seek thy precepts.

Hearing and keeping God’s law is God’s mercy, salvation and liberty⁵³⁹. This is why it’s the law of liberty.

⁵³⁸ Galatians 5:23

⁵³⁹ James 1:25

Under Sin

Now that we have established the eternity of the law, let us see how our own condition is presented to us:

Romans 3:⁹What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that **they are all under sin**; ¹⁰As it is written, 'There is none righteous, no, not one: ¹¹There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. ¹²They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.'

All men have sinned; all are under sin, none seeks God. We find that the law is given specifically to these kinds of people:

Romans 3:¹⁹Now we know that **what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law**: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. ²⁰Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

The law has been given to the kind of men who are slaves to sin, and are therefore under curse and condemnation. Being under the law means being in the natural state of man, where sin dominates, and as a result man is under the judgment of God and the condemnation of death that sin brings with it. It is impossible for man to be made righteous by the works of the law.

Romans 6:¹⁴For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

There are two states: being under the law, or being under grace. What does it mean to be under grace? It means that sin doesn't lord over us anymore; in other words, it means that we receive victory over sin.

Ephesians 2:⁵ ... (by grace ye are saved;)

Being under grace means having received the salvation of the Lord. To be "under the law" means man is lost. And who is saved?

Matthew 7:²¹Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; **but he that doeth the will of my Father** which is in heaven.

He who does the will of God will be in the kingdom of heaven. The will of God is that His commandments be diligently kept. Thus, salvation is with the commandments being diligently kept – where? In the heart. In other words, being under grace is salvation by living the will of the Father and keeping His commandments.

Now that we have received the grace of God, which consists in the new covenant, the forgiveness and the Spirit of God to walk in His way, should we continue sinning? Should we sin so that God can manifest His grace even more abundantly? God forbid! Rather, receiving grace consists precisely in dying to sin. Dying to sin is the victory of Christ in us. The way in which grace over abounds is not through man sinning, but through God giving His law. And we might ask, what is sin?

1 John 3:⁴ Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for **sin is the transgression of the law.**

So now that we are under grace we don't sin; we have the law kept in our hearts, and as a result, we stop breaking it.

Romans 6:⁶ Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Being planted in the likeness of the death of Christ consists in having crucified the old man with Christ. This is what being in Christ means.

Galatians 2:²⁰ **I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:** and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, ...

What dies is the body of sin, with the purpose that we might no longer serve sin. In other words, we stop breaking God's law.

Romans 6:¹¹ Likewise **reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.** ¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. ¹³ Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you: **for ye are not under the law,** but under grace.

So we come to the verse that we have been considering, seeing that being under grace means that the man of sin is dead. Being under grace means that we do the will of our Father in heaven, which consists in diligently keeping His commandments. Being under grace means being in Christ, being a new creature; sin no longer reigns in our bodies, we don't obey lusts, we are no longer slaves to sin. Thus, when we are under grace, sin will have no more power over us, nor will it have dominion over us.

As a result, we see that being under the law means that the man of sin is alive, that we are not in Christ, that the old man is alive and we have not been born in Christ, that we obey the lusts of the flesh, that we are slaves to sin, and that it has dominion over us. This is the natural condition of every human being. All men who are under the law are under the condemnation of sin which is death, until the moment they manifest faith in Christ.

If the law is a promise, as it indeed is, then it is implicitly declaring the condition of those it is addressing. “Thou shalt not kill” means that now wherever you are, you are killing⁵⁴⁰. When we realize this, we will give ourselves more fully to Jesus.

When man abides in Christ, he is justified. But man can go again under the law in two ways. If he sins, he comes under the condemnation of sin and remains within its jurisdiction until he comes to Christ once more. The second way in which he is placed under the law is when, being in Christ, the law enters, making him aware of a sin of which he was not aware. When this happens, he is once more condemned because of sin, until he comes to Christ once more for His grace and forgiveness.

And Paul continues saying:

Romans 6:¹⁵ What then? **shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?** God forbid. ¹⁶ Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? ¹⁷ But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. ¹⁸ Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

Here he strengthens the concept that if we are under grace, we keep His commandments. And he introduces us to the thought that being under the law is being slaves to sin. We are slaves to sin until the moment when we wholeheartedly receive the good news and surrender to this teaching. God then frees us from the slavery of sin and its condemnation of death, that we might be servants of righteousness.

The Flesh versus the Spirit

Let us now see the following instance in which we find the term “under the law”:

Galatians 5:¹⁶ *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. ¹⁸ But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not **under the law**.

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ²⁰ Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, ²¹ Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I

⁵⁴⁰ Matthew 5:21-22; James 2:10; Exodus 15:24; 16:2; 17:4

have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. ²⁴And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

There are two states: being in the Spirit, or fulfilling the lust of the flesh. The lust of the flesh is contrary to the Spirit, and the desire of the Spirit is contrary to the lust of the flesh. There is a struggle between two powers, which is manifested in human beings. If we are guided by the Spirit, we are not under the law.

Here once more we have a definition of what it means to be under the law: it is to fulfill the lust of the flesh. Being under the law means not following the Spirit. On the other hand:

Romans 8:³For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: ⁴**That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.**

Now we can believe that it is possible (not by our own means). All things are possible to him that believes⁵⁴¹. So if we walk after the Spirit, the righteousness of the law will be fulfilled in us. When we are under grace, the righteousness of the law is made manifest. This being so, we read:

Romans 8:¹ *There is* therefore now **no condemnation** to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

There is no condemnation for those who walk after the Spirit, for those who are in Christ Jesus; on the other hand, those who walk after the flesh are under the condemnation of sin.

The law is not against the fruit of the Spirit, but rather, approves it, or shows conformity to it, so there is no condemnation because there is no sin nor breaking of the law. There is no law against the Spirit, because the law is for those who transgress it, for those who are under it. For it is written:

1 Timothy 1:⁹Knowing this, that **the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient**, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, ¹⁰For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;

⁵⁴¹ Mark 9:23

The law has been given and placed, not against the righteous man, but against he who transgresses the law of God; it has been placed against the wicked. The intention of the law is that everyone might keep it, because a few verses before, it says that the end of the commandment is charity (love) out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience. The law was designed with the intention for it to be kept. To the man who keeps it, there is no controversy with the law. However, the law automatically finds guilty the man who does not obey it, and this man is then under the law or under the condemnation of sin.

The Law as Police that Imprisons

Let's see the next case in which we find the term "under the law". We will start from its previous context:

Galatians 3:⁶Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. ⁷Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. ⁸And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, 'In thee shall all nations be blessed.' ⁹So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

¹⁰For as **many as are of the works of the law are under the curse**: for it is written, '*Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*' ¹¹But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is evident*: for, 'The just shall live by faith.' ¹²And the law is not of faith: but, 'The man that doeth them shall live in them.'

¹³Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, '*Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree*': ¹⁴That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. ¹⁵Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though *it be* but a man's covenant, yet *if it be* confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

¹⁶Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. ¹⁷And this I say, *that* the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. ¹⁸For if the inheritance *be* of the law, *it is* no more of promise: but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise.

The covenant given to Abraham was already ratified and there is no way of adding nor invalidating it. The law referred here is not only the Ten Commandments or the moral law, but the whole Pentateuch, because it quotes from it, saying, "Cursed is he that

confirms not all the words of this law to do them”⁵⁴² and “he who does these things shall live by them”⁵⁴³. The main point is that the law, in other words the Pentateuch, which includes the Ten Commandments, does not invalidate God’s promises at all. And it tells us that the promise is not through the law. If it was through the law, it would cease to be a promise.

The promise, then, is not through the law, but rather, God freely gives His gift. This promise is fulfilled or comes to the life of those who are in Christ, those who are of Christ, and those who have received the faith of Jesus. At the same time, the law is given with the purpose that it be kept in the heart. Both things are simultaneous; one does not take away from the other. And the apostle continues:

Galatians 3:¹⁹Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. ²⁰Now a mediator is not a *mediator* of one, but God is one.

Since the law does not invalidate the promises, what is it for, then? What is its purpose, if it’s not possible to achieve the inheritance through it? Paul says that it was added. The word “added” itself, in its original language, Greek, is also translated as “spoken” in the book of Hebrews, referring to the same incident. The law was added, spoken, entered into the conscience of its hearers, because of transgressions.

The transgressions among God’s people made it necessary for God to reveal their condition in order to be able to save them. The law was thus added that sin might abound; it was added so it might work its ministration of death. But at the same time and place in which sin abounded, God’s grace abounded much more, seeking to cover all sin. So the law was given until the Seed might come to whom all the promises were given. We remember that not a jot nor a tittle would pass from the law until it should all be fulfilled⁵⁴⁴. So evidently, this is not referring to the first coming, but to the time when Jesus will receive the inheritance⁵⁴⁵ which is His kingdom⁵⁴⁶, and when the promises made to the seed will be fulfilled, and the reward and inheritance will be given.

In this sense, Christ in His first coming did not receive any of the promised inheritance, just like Abraham didn’t. He who had nowhere to lay His head was given a crown of thorns and then crucified, and His own received Him not⁵⁴⁷. The context

⁵⁴² Deuteronomy 31:9-13, 24-26; 30:10; 27:26

⁵⁴³ Leviticus 18:1-5

⁵⁴⁴ Matthew 5:17, 18

⁵⁴⁵ Ezekiel 21:27

⁵⁴⁶ Daniel 7:13-14, Revelation 11:15-18, Psalm 2

⁵⁴⁷ Matthew 8:20; 27:29; John 1:11

confirms this by affirming that the inheritance is not of the law, but of promise⁵⁴⁸, and that the law was added till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made. Thus, the inheritance is of promise, and the law is till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made. Consequently, when the Seed comes, He will have already received the kingdom⁵⁴⁹.

In addition, we notice that Paul wrote this at least 17 years⁵⁵⁰ after Christ's ascension, when His first coming was in the past, and he states that the law was added until the Seed should come, in Paul's own future. This very law has the purpose of bringing at the feet of Christ not only Paul and the Galatians, but us too. When Christ is accepted, we are given the adoption and we are made heirs of the promise⁵⁵¹, which will be received upon the second coming. It is significant, then, that the text says "to whom the promise was made". The text refers to the promise of the inheritance made to Abraham and the Seed, and not to the promise of the Seed Himself. So the law was spoken because of transgressions, and this law will fulfill its role of bringing the sinner to the feet of Christ until it is said, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still... he that is righteous, let him be righteous still"⁵⁵². The law of God will continue having this role until it brings man, corporately, to the fullness of the new covenant, and seal him through the words of God declaring His covenant⁵⁵³.

Wherefore then the law? The law will continue being used to convict of sin until the wicked die and the earth is left in its Edenic state. The law will continue until it has been written in the hearts of God's people, then the law will not be abolished, but it will be in the place for which it was originally designed: the heart. It will thus be lived in the lives of each person who received the faith of Jesus. Paul broadens this last point in the following verses:

Galatians 3:²¹ *Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. ²²But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*

To the question of whether the law is contrary to God's promises, or whether it invalidates God's promises, the answer is a resounding no. We might ask in the same sense: Do we show lack of faith in God's promises, do we despise God's promises, if we keep the law? Or we might ask ourselves: Are we denying Christ if we keep the law?

⁵⁴⁸ Galatians 3:18

⁵⁴⁹ Revelation 11:15

⁵⁵⁰ Galatians 1:18; 2:1

⁵⁵¹ Galatians 3:22-29

⁵⁵² Revelation 22:11

⁵⁵³ Hebrews 12:26-27

And Paul immediately answers: God forbid. And he explains that if the law could give life, righteousness would truly be through the law. So we see that the law is not in conflict with God's promises, because there is no chance of receiving the inheritance by keeping the law.

Hebrews 7:¹⁹ For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope *did*; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

The law cannot give life to man nor can it perfect him; God's Word does this. So the law is the promise of God as well as His work through His word, which brings in a better hope to us in the form of a schoolmaster. It is the Spirit that quickens⁵⁵⁴; Christ, the second Adam, is the quickening Spirit⁵⁵⁵. Eternal life is in Him; he who has the Son has life, and he who does not have the Son, does not have life⁵⁵⁶. If life came through the law, or if the law had the capacity to give us life, Christ and His promises would not have been necessary.

The Scripture has concluded the whole world under sin and in so doing makes God's promises available to all. The law is then defined as the Scriptures. Can man work without life, or does he need life to work? For the righteousness of God to be manifested through works, it is necessary to receive His life, His Spirit, first. Once the person is convicted of sin and becomes aware that he is under the law, or under the condemnation of sin, only then can the promise, which is by faith in Jesus Christ, be considered, accepted and made effective. We will say it again: Christ came to save sinners, whether they are conscious of their condition or not.

However, conviction of sin comes through the law. If man doesn't know his sinful condition, he will not be induced to believe in Christ for the remission of his sin, because those who believe they are whole do not need a physician⁵⁵⁷. So it is absolutely necessary for the law to be in the world, to lead all men to cling to the promises. And the text continues saying:

Galatians 3:²³ But before faith came, we were kept **under the law**, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

Before faith in Jesus was revealed in our lives, we were shut up, confined, under the law. When we are under the law, we are without faith, we are under the condemnation of sin, because whatsoever is not of faith is sin⁵⁵⁸. The law declares us guilty, under the condemnation of sin, shut up unto that faith that will be shown and given to us.

⁵⁵⁴ 2 Corinthians 3:6; John 6:63

⁵⁵⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:45

⁵⁵⁶ 1 John 5:11-12

⁵⁵⁷ Mark 2:17

⁵⁵⁸ Romans 14:23

And how can man be freed from this prison? He can only be redeemed through faith in Christ Jesus, the only way out. There is no way through which man can free himself from condemnation.

How long do men have to be shut up, imprisoned by the law, under the condemnation of sin? All the time that is necessary, until they receive and accept faith in Jesus. As soon as man understands, even faintly, the great truths of the gift of salvation of God through Christ, he reveals the faith he has received, and he becomes a free man. In this sense, all men are imprisoned; they are trapped without any way out. And the prisoner can try different ways to escape, but the Scriptures tell us that only through faith in Jesus can we escape the condemnation of sin manifested by the law.

The Law is Essential to Bring us to Christ the Redeemer

The case of the transgressor of the law is the worst, because he is not only condemned to be a sinner his whole life, but the sin that dwells in him condemns him to death.

He cannot try to dig his way out of this prison, nor can he bribe the guards. He can promise to never sin again; he can try all he can think of and all that might be possible, but it is impossible for him to be set free. But hope appears, and that hope is Christ. He has promised to free all those who believe in Him, and the unhappy sinner, believing that Jesus can save to the utmost, clings to the promise that Christ offers, and becomes a free man.

Paul tells us that before faith could be manifested, revealed or received in our lives, we were all locked up, imprisoned under the law. Not only Jews, but all those who are under the condemnation of sin; in other words, the whole human race. As soon as a man wants to be free, the law shows them the only way of escape, Jesus Christ who is the end of the law⁵⁵⁹. Thus the apostle continues:

Galatians 3:²⁴ Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

The law is absolutely necessary to take the sinner to Christ. Once at the feet of Christ, we receive instruction from Him. And Paul continues:

Galatians 3:²⁵ But **after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.** ²⁶ For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.
²⁷ For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

⁵⁵⁹ Romans 10:4

At the very moment we receive Christ by faith and believe in Him, we are free⁵⁶⁰. There is no more condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, those who walk not according to the flesh⁵⁶¹ but after God's Spirit⁵⁶². If Christ is in us⁵⁶³, we are a new creature⁵⁶⁴, and we thus walk in new life⁵⁶⁵, and we are no longer under a schoolmaster or under the law, but under grace. This is what it means to put on Christ, the garments of the righteousness of God woven by Christ in the divine loom.

If we don't open⁵⁶⁶ ourselves to Christ, we are under condemnation⁵⁶⁷, we are justifying ourselves, Christ has become of no effect to us, and we are fallen from grace⁵⁶⁸. Now, when we recognize our condition and receive Christ and His forgiveness, we are justified⁵⁶⁹, not by the law of Moses, but by the faith⁵⁷⁰ of Christ⁵⁷¹ from God⁵⁷². As long as we abide in Christ, hearing and treasuring His voice, we walk in new life and are justified. Therefore, we are justified by word and deed⁵⁷³: by Christ's words and deeds⁵⁷⁴, because we are dead to sin⁵⁷⁵ and He lives in us. Thus, the righteous live by the faith⁵⁷⁶ of Christ, however, no human being is justified by the law or by the works of the law, because by it comes the knowledge of sin⁵⁷⁷.

And Paul concludes this section in the following way:

Galatians 3:²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Just like the law which brings us to Christ is for all humanity, so are God's promises, regardless of our origin or condition. And Paul repeats the concept and concludes what he was saying with the following text:

⁵⁶⁰ John 8:36

⁵⁶¹ 2 Corinthians 4:10; Galatians 2:19-21

⁵⁶² Romans 7:21-8:2

⁵⁶³ Romans 8:9-11

⁵⁶⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:17

⁵⁶⁵ Romans 6:4

⁵⁶⁶ Revelation 3:20

⁵⁶⁷ Matthew 12:37

⁵⁶⁸ Galatians 5:4

⁵⁶⁹ Acts 13:38-39

⁵⁷⁰ Luke 18:13-14

⁵⁷¹ Romans 3:26; Galatians 2:16

⁵⁷² Romans 3:26

⁵⁷³ Matthew 12:37; Romans 2:13; James 2:21, 24-25; Galatians 5:6

⁵⁷⁴ Isaiah 59:21; Galatians 2:20

⁵⁷⁵ Romans 5:6-11

⁵⁷⁶ Galatians 3:11

⁵⁷⁷ Romans 3:20, 24, 28; Galatians 2:26

Galatians 4:¹ Now I say, *That* the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; ² But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. ³ Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

⁴ But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made **under the law**, ⁵ To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. ⁶ And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father'. ⁷ Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Here Paul uses the figure of a child to illustrate the condition of the sinner before he accepts Christ. Up until then, each man is imprisoned, confined by sin and its condemnation, and serving false gods – the rudiments of the world. Paul confirms this a few verses later when he writes:

Galatians 4:⁸ Howbeit then, when **ye knew not God**, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

The child, then, depicts the stage in which we don't know God, blown about by the empty idols of the environment we grew up in. To deliver us, God sent His Son born of a woman and under the law, that is, under the condemnation of sin. Christ redeemed us from the curse of sin by allowing Himself to be made a curse for us⁵⁷⁸. This is how God sent His Son under the law.

As is revealed in the Sanctuary service, the sinner places his sins onto the lamb's head⁵⁷⁹. So God sent His Son to be made under the law to free those who were under the law. Being under the law is, then, being under the condemnation or the curse of sin, and we placed Christ in this position.

1 Timothy 1:¹⁵ *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners**; of whom I am chief.*

Luke 19:¹⁰ For the Son of man is come to seek and **to save that which was lost.**

Christ came to save the lost. And how does this happen? By becoming aware of what He has done for us: by receiving the revelation that God so love us that He sent His Son. It is by getting to know of this love and accepting it that we receive the adoption of children, because sin had clouded for us the love of the Father, and it was necessary to reveal this love through the coming of His Son. This is faith in Jesus: believing what Jesus revealed to us of the Father and His love. And having received the adoption of

⁵⁷⁸ Galatians 3:13

⁵⁷⁹ Leviticus 4

children, God sends the Spirit of His Son which cries “Abba, Father” in our hearts. This is how we are made children of God⁵⁸⁰, and it means freedom. This is how we receive the new covenant, the promises of God, and this is how we are under grace.

⁵⁸⁰ 1 John 3:1

Under Grace and Forgiveness

The new covenant is made of two fundamental aspects:

1. The forgiveness of sin and the promise that God will never again remember our sins and transgressions.

1 John 1:9 **If we confess our sins**, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we only ask for forgiveness for our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us. For us to be able to confess our sins, we first need to become aware of them, or know of them, and this comes through the law and the Holy Spirit.

2. The second aspect is that He will put His laws into our minds and write them in our hearts. This is explained in the following way:

Hebrews 8:10 For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and **I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:** ¹¹ And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

God's act of writing His laws in our hearts and minds will cause Him to become our God.

2 Corinthians 6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹⁷ Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, ¹⁸ And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

When we become a temple of God, He gives us His laws in our hearts and minds, He becomes our God, and we His people, and we get to know Him.

Ephesians 2:18 For **through him we both have access by one Spirit** unto the Father. ¹⁹ Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; ²⁰ And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; ²¹ In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth **unto an holy temple in the Lord:** ²² In whom ye also are builded **together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.**

When God can dwell in us through His Spirit, only then can He do everything that He has promised to us.

Rich Grace

The Spirit of grace not only writes our heavenly Father's law in our minds and hearts, but it also comes to us rich in gifts.

Romans 12: ⁶ Having then **gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us**, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith;

Ephesians 4: ⁷ But unto every one of us is given **grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.** ⁸ **Wherefore he saith,** 'When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and **gave gifts unto men.'** ⁹ (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹ And he gave some, **apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;** ¹² **For the perfecting** of the saints, for the work of the ministry, **for the edifying of the body of Christ:** ¹³ **Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God,** unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

1 Peter 4: ¹⁰ As every man **hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another,** as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

2 Corinthians 9: ⁶ But this *I say*, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. ⁷ Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give;* not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. ⁸ And **God is able to make all grace abound toward you;** that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, **may abound to every good work:**

God wishes to make all His grace abound in us. He wishes that we might always have sufficiency in all things, and that we might abound to every good work. Thus He has given us abilities that we might mutually edify each other. So we notice that in the face of sin, God's reaction is not only to forgive us, but also to give us His Spirit and life, and with it abilities, capabilities and talents to perfect the saints into the image of Christ. In fact, the sum of the gift has been made to the measure of Christ, because Christ was given to us.

1 Corinthians 1: ⁴ I thank my God always on your behalf, for **the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;**

Jesus and Moses

The gifts of the Spirit are the fullness of Christ:

John 1:¹⁴ And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) **full of grace and truth.** ¹⁵ John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, 'This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.' ¹⁶ And **of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.**

When Christ was made flesh, we saw him full of grace and truth. We saw in Him the gifts He would give to us. And it continues saying:

John 1:¹⁷ For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

We notice that the word "but", being in italics, is an added word which the translator, in his understanding, used to give clarity to the text. It is here where our preconceptions and prejudices can work against us: in some translations it might seem that Jesus and Moses are opposed to each other. Let us see what the Scriptures themselves say of Moses:

Numbers 12:⁶ And he said, "Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, *I* the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, *and* will speak unto him in a dream. ⁷ **My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house.** ⁸ With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: **wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"**

God will speak with the prophets through visions or dreams, but God spoke to Moses face to face, clearly and not through figures or parables.

Deuteronomy 34:¹⁰ And **there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,**

There was no other prophet like him. The law and what he wrote was not of his own invention.

Deuteronomy 4:⁵ Behold, **I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me,** that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. ⁶ Keep therefore and do *them*; for **this is your wisdom and your understanding** in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation *is* a wise and understanding people.'

This is why Jesus Himself said:

John 5:⁴⁶“For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for **he wrote of me.** ⁴⁷But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?”

Believing Moses is believing in Jesus. If we don't believe in Moses, we don't believe in Jesus, because Moses wrote what he received from Jesus.

John 1:¹⁷For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Moses and Jesus are not against each other; they are not in opposition. The law that Moses gave came from Christ. So we see that the law, grace and truth come from Christ. This verse is **not** contrasting the law with grace and truth.

Psalm 119:¹⁴²Thy righteousness *is* an everlasting righteousness, And thy law *is* the truth.

The law of God is truth. **What is being contrasted is the power of Moses with the power of Jesus.** Though Moses did the Lord's will, Moses did not have the power nor the ability to put this law, this truth, in his heart nor the hearts of men. Neither does any other man.

However, Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life. Only He can change our hearts to one of flesh, and put truth, life, and God's commandments in our hearts. Paul, when comparing Moses with Christ, says:

Hebrews 3:¹ Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; ²Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses *was faithful* in all his house. ³**For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.** ⁴**For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.** ⁵And Moses verily *was faithful* in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; ⁶**But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we,** if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

Moses was faithful in all God's house, giving God's will, law and word to the people. However, Christ has much more honor, because He made and gave everything to Moses. This is why the honor is greater for the one who made the house (Christ) than for the house itself (Moses). And when it says "house", it is speaking of human beings as dwellings of God's Spirit, and it refers to Christ as the Son being over **His** house. This is why Christ has much more honor.

2 Corinthians 12:⁹ And he [God] said unto me [Paul], '**My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength** is made perfect in weakness.' Most gladly therefore

will I rather glory in my infirmities, that **the power of Christ** may rest upon me.

Grace is also the power of Christ, used in humanity and for humanity, doing what no other man can do for humanity.

John 1:17 For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.

Christ is the revelation of the Father. When we see Christ full of grace and truth, we see the Father full of grace and truth.

Christ had come to fulfill the law that He had given to Moses, and to show the fulfillment of this law in the Spirit of God, thus giving a complete revelation of the character of the Father. The law, then, comes through Moses, **but the law full of grace and truth is the life of Jesus on this earth**, because no man has seen God at any time, but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has made Him known.

From the Beginning

Now, regarding John 1:17 we might wonder: since when has grace been available through Jesus Christ? A hasty reading will lead some to say that it has been available since His first coming. Could it be that it has only been available since His death and resurrection?

In John 1:1 we read that Christ is the Word that was in the beginning. Christ is the Word and is God. All things were made by Him. He is the light that lights every man that comes to the world. He is always full of grace and truth⁵⁸¹ for every man who is born. The context itself then tells us that there never was a time in the existence of man when Christ hasn't been the light of men.

Yet, given that Moses gave the law, can we see Christ in the days of Moses, full of grace and truth? All ate of the same spiritual meat and drank the same spiritual drink⁵⁸².

Isaiah 63:10 But they rebelled, and vexed **his holy Spirit**: Therefore he was turned to be their enemy, *and* he fought against them. ¹¹Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, *and* his people, *saying*, Where *is* he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? Where *is* **he that put his holy Spirit within him**? ¹²That led *them* by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, Dividing the water before them, to make

⁵⁸¹ John 1:4-9, 14

⁵⁸² 1 Corinthians 10:1-4; John 6:35; 7:37-39

himself an everlasting name? ¹³ That led them through the deep, As an horse in the wilderness, *that* they should not stumble? ¹⁴ As a beast goeth down into the valley, **The Spirit of the LORD caused him to rest: So didst thou lead thy people,** To make thyself a glorious name.

The Lord gave them His Spirit, and He pastored them with His Spirit.

Haggai 2:⁵ *According to* **the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, So my spirit remaineth among you:** fear ye not. ⁶ For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, *it is* a little while, And I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry *land*; ⁷ And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: And I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. ⁸ The silver *is* mine, and the gold *is* mine, saith the LORD of hosts. ⁹ The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: And in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.

To the people who would leave the Babylonian captivity, God promises the exact same covenant that He did to those who left Egypt. This covenant of God consists is the presence of the Spirit of God in His people, so the covenant is defined as the word⁵⁸³ and the Spirit of God that was covenanted⁵⁸⁴. This word is sharper than a double-edged sword, and would dwell⁵⁸⁵ among⁵⁸⁶ them. Thus we clearly see Christ, full of grace and truth, in the days of Moses and in all the days of the people of Israel. This was the same covenant that was made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Christ was also full of grace and truth towards them.

Galatians 3:¹⁴ That **the blessing of Abraham** might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might **receive the promise of the Spirit** through faith.

⁵⁸³ Deuteronomy 4:13; Strong H1697

⁵⁸⁴ Strong H3772. כָּרַת **kârath**, *kaw-rath'*; a prim. root; to *cut* (off, down or asunder); by impl. to *destroy* or *consume*; spec. to *covenant* (i.e. make an alliance or bargain, orig. by cutting flesh and passing between the pieces):—be chewed, be con- [feder-] ate, covenant, cut (down, off), destroy, fail, feller, be freed, hew (down), make a league ([covenant]), × lose, perish, × utterly, × want.

⁵⁸⁵ Strong H5975 עָמַד **'âmad**, *aw-mad'*; a prim. root; to *stand*, in various relations (lit.) and fig., intrans. and trans.): ...

⁵⁸⁶ Hebrews 4:12-13

Strong H8432 תָּוֶק **tâvek**, *taw'-vek*; from an unused root mean. to *sever*; a *bisection*, i.e. (by impl.) the *centre*:—among (-st), × between, half, × (there-, where-) in (-to), middle, mid [-night], midst (among), × out (of), × through, × with (-in).

God's plan had always been that the blessing that Abraham received might reach every nation, kindred, tongue and people⁵⁸⁷. Thus would all the families of the earth be blessed. This blessing consisted specifically in the promise of the Spirit.

Now, we notice that John 7:39 says that the Holy Spirit had not yet come because Jesus had not yet been glorified. The action of the Spirit of God in human beings does not begin when Christ is glorified, like this verse seems to indicate. We know this because of the verses we have just read, and because of other verses such as the following:

Genesis 6:3 And the LORD said, "**My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.**"

In the days of Noah, the Spirit of God strove with man. Not because God wanted to fight against man, but because He was trying to save them from the way of perdition which man was set on following. What we do see is that the Holy Spirit had not yet been manifested in the followers of Christ the way it had manifested earlier, for example, in this instance:

1 Samuel 10:9 And it was *so*, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, **God gave him another heart:** and all those signs came to pass that day. ¹⁰ And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and **the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.** ¹¹ And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, 'What *is* this *that* is come unto the son of Kish? *Is* Saul also among the prophets?'

The Holy Spirit had not yet been manifested in the disciples and followers of Christ like it had in others in past times. But we find that in the Biblical record, in the event of Pentecost, is compared to a time of rain, specifically the early rain⁵⁸⁸. So, because of the abundance of God's grace, Pentecost, within the Biblical calendar, is presented as the time in which the outpouring of the Spirit of God to His people abounded the most. In this sense, the Lord's Spirit had never been poured out like it was here; the Spirit had never come as rain over His people. We also know that there will be an even greater manifestation called the latter rain. Why was it given in greater measure during this time?

Romans 5:20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

⁵⁸⁷ Genesis 12:3

⁵⁸⁸ Acts 2:14-16; Joel 2:23; Deuteronomy 11:14; 32:2; Hosea 6:3

What greater sin could there be, than having crucified the Son of God? Peter describes it this way:

Acts 2:²²“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: ²³Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, **ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:** ²⁴Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.”

The Jews had called upon their hated overlords, the Romans, to kill their Messiah, the man they had been waiting for over a thousand years. Peter’s sermon rent their hearts, and the horror of what they did caused them to seek God with their heart – where they found grace in amazing abundance.

So it wasn’t that God’s grace was available before the cross event, it was that it wasn’t appreciated. It had been given from the beginning, but we didn’t think we needed it because we didn’t know the depth of our enmity towards the Son of God.

2 Timothy 1:⁸Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; ⁹Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but **according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,** ¹⁰But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:

Before man came into sin, and before you and I existed, we were already in God’s plans. Before man existed, it was already God’s will to give us His forgiveness and grace if we should eventually sin.

When Adam sinned, God had the chance to manifest the grace that had always dwelt in Him towards human beings. He had the cure for us, for even the ability to repent was given to us in Christ Jesus. God has already forgiven me. God has already forgiven us. God has already given everything in the begotten Son, who is fully able to mediate for our sin!

Now, you might ask, what must I do to take hold of this grace? Let’s remember the story of the brethren of the church in Galatia. They had received the truth with joy and gladness, and the Spirit of God worked in them powerfully. But soon, men came among them who said they had to do certain things to be saved. And the letter to the Galatians is precisely Paul’s attempt to rescue and to bring them back into the gospel

of the grace of God⁵⁸⁹. Here is his response to the question of how to take hold of grace:

Galatians 3:¹ O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? ²This only would I learn of you, **Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?** ³Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? ⁴Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if *it be* yet in vain. ⁵**He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?**

The apostle questions them, saying, “How did you receive the Spirit? Was it by works, or was it by the hearing of faith?” And we already know the answer, don’t we? The Spirit is received by the hearing of faith. And what does the word say to man? “He who comes to me I will not cast out”⁵⁹⁰. And even when we have been cast onto the feet of Christ as sinners, what does Christ say to us? “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more”⁵⁹¹. Do we receive this word by faith? And what else does this word say?

Hebrews 10:¹⁷ And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

This is how we receive God’s grace, just by hearing His voice and treasuring it; by receiving His forgiveness and His Spirit, the grace of God, the covenant of God.

⁵⁸⁹ Galatians 1:6

⁵⁹⁰ John 6:37

⁵⁹¹ John 8:11

From the Foundation of the World

Defining “World”

If we search for a definition of the term “world”, we will find it in the following verse:

1 John 2: ¹⁶For all that *is* in the world, **the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life**, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

What is the world? What is all that is in the world? There are three elements:

- a. The lust of the flesh
- b. The lust of the eyes
- c. The pride of life

If we go back to the beginning of human history, we see Eve facing the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 3:⁶ And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

In this verse we have the world and the foundation of the world. When Eve saw the tree, what did she see, and what happened? When she saw that the tree:

- a. was good to eat; the lust of the flesh was manifested,
- b. was pleasant to the eyes; the lust of the eyes was manifested,
- c. was desired to make one wise; to be like God, the pride of life was manifested.

In the Garden of Eden, man made a decision based on these worldly/carnal principles, and thus he radically withdrew from God’s agape love. Thus the world was founded – the fallen world we inhabit –and sin began to exist on this earth.

We remember that the grace of God (forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit) was available to humanity since before the foundation of the world⁵⁹². If man was to sin, it was already in God’s plan prior to creation, to give him forgiveness and power to overcome sin.

God, full of agape love, created intelligent beings with the ability to receive maximum joy through perfect freedom of choice. This freedom brings with it the freedom to not choose Him. This freedom to relate to their environment meant every intelligent being was unique. God did not create clones.

⁵⁹² Ephesians 1:3-10

The free range of character development meant a diversity of beings and a diversity of abilities. They were free to pursue their interest in what area of blessing they would receive from God – for all good gifts come from God⁵⁹³. How did the free interaction between all beings work?

The intelligent design and the agape of the universe consists precisely in the fact that Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, received all things from the Father in order to give them. We thus discover that the joy of God is in giving, and it is the joy of the Son to receive. And this joy between the Father and the Son is passed on to the rest of the intelligent creation, which adds to the joy of being freely blessed in order to bless.

So in the creation of the universe, a circuit of beneficence was formed, in which no one lives for themselves, but everyone receives from God through Christ to give themselves in blessing for others. No one was created to himself, and no one lives to himself⁵⁹⁴. And it is precisely in this design, where there is unrestricted freedom together with diversity of gifts resulting in an infinite variety of beings, that the door is opened for someone to choose to reject God's love and to envy and aspire to occupy the position of someone else – ultimately God Himself.

God and His Son, in the creation of the first intelligent and moral being, considered and contemplated the possibility of rebellion, and at the request of Christ⁵⁹⁵, they developed a plan to resolve it if it were to occur. This was when the Father gave the eternal covenant, or His promises, to His Son. This is the eternal covenant, the plan and the promises of God to Christ⁵⁹⁶. This is the grace which has existed since before the foundation of the world in Christ Jesus.

Defining What was Lost

It is with the fall of man, however, that the operation of grace begins to manifest itself. This is the redemption found in the person of Christ.

Isaiah 42:⁶I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, And will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, And **give thee for a covenant of the people**, for a light of the Gentiles; ⁷To open the blind eyes, To bring out the prisoners from the prison, *And* them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

⁵⁹³ James 1:17

⁵⁹⁴ Romans 14:7

⁵⁹⁵ Zachariah 6:13; Psalm 110:4

⁵⁹⁶ In the spirit of the meaning of the word "covenant" in Hebrew (Strong H#1285: from 1262 in the sense of cutting), the plan of salvation entails the separation of divine powers, the giving of the Son of God to the world and His death in the hands of sinners. In the spirit of the meaning of the word "covenant" in Greek, the plan of salvation entails the breaking of the body of Christ (Matthew 26:26, 1 Corinthians 11:24, Ephesians 5:2).

Christ, being the depository of the promises of God, embodies them and is given to the people as a covenant. How is forgiveness and grace in Jesus? To answer these questions, let's return to the beginning, to what happened to man when he sinned. What were the consequences of sin? There are basically two:

- a. Man was lost
- b. Man's possessions were lost; he lost the dominion of the earth.

How was man lost?

Romans 3:¹⁰ As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: ¹¹ There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. ¹² **They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.**

Romans 5:¹² Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so **death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:**

Man lost control of himself. Choosing sin, he inherited the mindset of Satan and became a slave to sin. This was a state of bondage, and he was unable to once again choose, of his own strength and will, to follow God. It became impossible for him. All were unanimously lost. No one can seek God. All are gone out of the way. All became worthless. All came into enmity with God. When sin entered, death also entered as a result for all men.

Now, the verse tells us:

Genesis 2:¹⁷ But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Man cut himself off from the source of life and surely would have died that same day if Christ had not given Himself to become man's shield and reward. Christ placed Himself between the wages of sin and man.

Man's rebellion against God had an immediate impact on nature. Man had dominion over nature, and thus it followed him in rebellion; its discord manifesting as thorns and thistles. It would no longer be subject to man like it was before.

Hebrews 2:⁶ But one in a certain place testified, saying, 'What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? ⁷ Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and **didst set him over the works of thy hands:** ⁸ Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.' For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing *that is* not put under him. But now **we see not yet all things put under him.**

So we see that man does not have creation, the work of God's hands, subject to him yet. God subjected the world and everything in it to man, but that order was held

together in Christ Jesus. Thus when man sinned, the possession was lost. In the same measure that man did not submit to God, creation also did not submit to man.

God's Salvation in Christ

Sin instantly brings death with it⁵⁹⁷, and there Christ placed Himself so that this might not happen, that man might not receive the wages of sin, but might have a second chance. Then we read the promise, the gospel, preached to Eve:

Genesis 3:15 And **I will put enmity** between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Having given himself to sin, man's delight was in sin – in selfishness – and there was no harmony with God. God had created the universe under the principles of agape love, which is the giving of self in service to others. It is receiving all of God's blessings through its various channels in order to become a channel of blessing for others. The underlying principle of the universe was to live for the supreme wellbeing of others, manifesting the love of God through joy in His service.

With the entering of sin, man placed self in place of God. Since Eden, man has been taking from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, something directly opposed to the will of God, with the objective of satisfying self in order to become like God⁵⁹⁸. But God is not like this⁵⁹⁹; Lucifer lied regarding God's character. As a result of this lie, man received the mentality and the thoughts of Satan⁶⁰⁰, including his value system, and stopped being like God in character. This process leads to a complete perversion, in the mind of man, of all ideas regarding God.

Now all of Satan's lies regarding God seem to man natural and logical. Man in his carnal nature now sees God as a tyrant, as a dictator, as a relentless judge who does not give human beings even an inch of mercy, but will demand all from men. Satan has caused men to see God as selfish.

This is when Christ places Himself as mediator and begins the reconciliation of man with God, not because God is at enmity with man, but because man now considered God his enemy.

Colossians 1:21 And you, that were sometime **alienated and enemies in your mind** by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.

⁵⁹⁷ Genesis 2:17

⁵⁹⁸ Genesis 3:5

⁵⁹⁹ 1 Corinthians 13:5

⁶⁰⁰ Isaiah 14:13-14

Man believes falsely that God has separated Himself from humanity, and that God is the cause of man's suffering. This hostility is in the mind of man, not of God. Christ's mission therefore is to renew our reasoning and understanding⁶⁰¹, and to bring us into peace with God. He does it by showing us how God really is. Christ takes this work of reconciliation upon His shoulders the moment man sins, and places an escape door by putting enmity against the serpent of old in man. This is a door for him to open if he so desires it⁶⁰².

In other words, this enmity that God first puts in man through Christ, because the enmity is in the Seed of the woman, which is Christ, is the possibility for man to choose differently, for him to choose God. This plan consisted in that the Son of God⁶⁰³, the Beloved of the Father⁶⁰⁴, the Word of God⁶⁰⁵, the power of God⁶⁰⁶, the image of the invisible God⁶⁰⁷, the author of life⁶⁰⁸, the brightness of the glory of the Father⁶⁰⁹, the Spirit of God⁶¹⁰, the one who made the universe and all life together with the Father⁶¹¹, would give His life⁶¹² so that the sinner might have a fair second chance.

The life of Christ was given so that man might escape from sin and from the condemnation that sin brings. This, precisely, is salvation, the grace of God in Jesus Christ. And we ask ourselves, how does this happen?

John 1:9 *That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*

There is no man that has existed in this world who has not received the light of Christ. God implanted, through Christ, the thought of the grace of God, and man receives it as part of the inheritance of Adam and Eve. He implanted the thought of God's forgiveness and the attraction towards what is good. God's Spirit thus contends with each human being – in man's conscience, mind, and heart – in a work which is infinite in its scope and implications.

The Spirit of Christ does a unique, personalized work in each human being, designed for each person within their own context, with great care, to show them the love of

⁶⁰¹ Ephesians 4:23

⁶⁰² Revelation 3:20

⁶⁰³ Matthew 3:17; Romans 8:32

⁶⁰⁴ Matthew 12:18

⁶⁰⁵ John 1:1

⁶⁰⁶ 1 Corinthians 1:24; Matthew 28:18

⁶⁰⁷ 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15

⁶⁰⁸ Acts 3:15

⁶⁰⁹ Hebrews 1:3

⁶¹⁰ Isaiah 63:14; Romans 8:9-10

⁶¹¹ Hebrews 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16

⁶¹² John 10:15

God and bring them once again into the joy of the communion with God and His Son⁶¹³. This implanted enmity is cultivated and encouraged by the Spirit of God, guiding all towards repentance that all men might be saved. Though not everyone chooses Him, yet Christ by His Spirit intercedes with all, that they might have life. Where else do we see this?

The Wisdom of God

1 Corinthians 1: ²³But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; ²⁴But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, **Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.** ... ³⁰But of him are ye in **Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom,** and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

God gives His wisdom in the person of Christ. We see this clearly when Christ identifies Himself as wisdom.

Luke 11:⁴⁹Therefore also **said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles,** and *some* of them they shall slay and persecute:

Matthew 23: ³³*Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?* ³⁴Wherefore, behold, **I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes:** and *some* of them ye shall kill and crucify; and *some* of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute *them* from city to city:

Jesus, in His discussion with the Pharisees shortly before His crucifixion, identifies Himself as the Wisdom of God. In Luke's version, Jesus says the Wisdom of God sends the prophets and apostles; in Matthew's version Jesus says, "I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes"⁶¹⁴. Christ was naturally referring to the word of God, and in it we find the extension of Christ in His ministry as the Wisdom of God to the world.

Proverbs 1:²⁰**Wisdom** crieth without; She uttereth her voice in the streets: ²¹**She crieth in the chief place of concourse,** in the openings of the gates: In the city she uttereth her words, *saying,* ²²How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? And the scorners delight in their scorning, And fools hate knowledge? ²³**Turn you at my reproof: Behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.**

⁶¹³ 1 John 1:3

⁶¹⁴ Matthew 23:34

John 7:³⁷In **the last day, that great day of the feast**, Jesus stood and cried, saying, **“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.** ³⁸He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” ³⁹(But **this spake he of the Spirit**, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Christ, the Wisdom of God, walks along our streets and parks today. He comes to our homes with words of mercy. Invisible to human eyes, He is in our midst to heal and to bless. And “in the streets” and “in the chief place of concourse”, and “in the openings of the city gates”, He utters His voice and His words. He promises to give of His Spirit and to make known His words, that life might be found. That’s why it says:

Proverbs 2:¹⁰**When wisdom entereth into thine heart**, And knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; ¹¹Discretion shall preserve thee, Understanding shall keep thee: ¹²**To deliver thee from the way of the evil man**, From the man that speaketh froward things;

Proverbs 3:¹³**Happy is the man that findeth wisdom**, And the man that getteth understanding. ... ¹⁸**She is a tree of life** to them that lay hold upon her: And happy *is every one* that retaineth her.

Proverbs 4:⁷Wisdom *is* the principal thing; *therefore* get wisdom: And with all thy getting get understanding... ⁹**She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: A crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.**

The Wisdom of God, Christ, seeks to dwell in the heart. And if He does, His presence will deliver us from the way of evil. To receive this is to eat of the tree of life, because in Him is life⁶¹⁵. We receive His grace here on earth when we accept Him as Wisdom, and He will give us a crown⁶¹⁶ when we enter His kingdom.

Proverbs 8:¹Doth not wisdom cry? And understanding put forth her voice?
²She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths.
³She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, At the coming in at the doors.
⁴**Unto you, O men, I call; And my voice is to the sons of man.** ⁵O ye simple, understand wisdom: And, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart. ⁶Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; And **the opening of my lips shall be right things.** ⁷**For my mouth shall speak truth; And wickedness is an abomination to my lips.**

Wisdom makes its appeals and gives its calls. She cries in the city for people to hear the truth, to choose what is good, to choose life. Besides the literal sense of the word

⁶¹⁵ John 3:36; 6:40; 1 John 2:25; 5:11-12

⁶¹⁶ 2 Timothy 4:8; 1 Corinthians 9:25; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4

“city”, is there another meaning in which “city” is used in the Scriptures? Right there in Proverbs we find:

Proverbs 25:²⁸ He that *hath* no rule over his own spirit *is like* a city *that is* broken down, *and* without walls.

Man is compared to a city. The gates of the city are the senses through which we communicate with and perceive the external world, and the walls are the spirit of man, his character. So we see that Wisdom, the Spirit of Christ, is given right there in our experience of the world, right there where what is in the heart of man comes out.

Wisdom has been given for man to know how to choose the way of life and truth. It has been provided in the forehead, to our mind, so that man might be able to choose. Where it says “sons of man”, in the original Hebrew it says “ben Adam”. In other words, Wisdom has been given to all the children of Adam⁶¹⁷.

So the entire human race receives the Wisdom of God, the Spirit of Christ. That’s why it says that He is the light that lights every man that comes into the world. This water, this Spirit that proceeds from Christ, was preached by Him on the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 5:⁴⁵ “That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and **sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.**”

God the Father not only literally sends the sun and rain to everyone, just and unjust, but He also wants to provide everyone the sun of righteousness⁶¹⁸, and that we would receive the spiritual water that falls from heaven, in Christ. This is why the Scriptures say:

Acts 4:¹² Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

There are a great many people who never heard of Christ, and who never heard His story. However, they heard and received the impulses of Christ, and followed His voice. They will thus come from the east and from the west, and they shall sit with the patriarchs together with Jesus; while many who heard of Jesus and can repeat His stories from memory will be cast off into the outer darkness⁶¹⁹ because they did not follow Him in their spirit.

Romans 2:¹⁴ For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto

⁶¹⁷ Proverbs 8:31; Genesis 5:2; 3:15

⁶¹⁸ Malachi 4:2

⁶¹⁹ Matthew 8:12

themselves: **¹⁵Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;**)

There are gentiles who may never have heard of Christ, but who have the law written in their hearts! How is this possible? This is possible because they didn't harden their hearts to the light of the world, to whom they were faithful and true according to the environment they were in⁶²⁰.

The whole world, then, was given into the hands of Christ for our salvation. Christ gave Himself for the world. In Christ, the grace of God was manifested to each human being, in a personalized way in the delicate work of bringing each soul to God. This work was mostly invisible, but it was magnified and manifested in His first coming. And at the end of time, as the world becomes of one mind in its carnal ideology and therefore draws near self-destruction, a final great revelation of Christ will become necessary to save those who want to be saved, and end the great controversy.

The Sufferings of Christ

We see this intervention of Christ in the salvation of humanity in the days of Moses in a more detailed way:

Exodus 23:²⁰ Behold, I send **an Angel** before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. ²¹ **Beware of him, and obey his voice**, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for **my name is in him**. ²² But **if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak**; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries.

We know that the Angel that guided them on the way, in whom is the name Jehovah, is Christ Himself. Note that the invitation is for us to beware "of Him". The term translated here as "of Him" in the original Hebrew means "before His face" or "before His presence". The appeal is not only to reverence His presence but to listen to His voice. The verse continues saying, "provoke Him not". If we search for this word in the dictionary we find:

4843. מָרַר *mârar*, maw-rar'; a prim. root; prop. to trickle [See 4752]; but used only as a denom. from 4751; to be (causat. make) bitter (lit.) or fig.:—(be, be in, deal, have, make) bitter (-ly, -ness), be moved with choler, (be, have sorely, it) grieved (-eth), provoke, vex.

⁶²⁰ Psalms 87:4-6

It is saying do not embitter or grieve Him. This gives greater meaning to the appeal to guard His face. This same word is spoken of Christ in the following way in this verse:

Isaiah 22:⁴Therefore said I, Look away from me; **I will weep** bitterly, Labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people.

The Lord says here that He will weep bitterly for the spoiling of the daughter of His people. The word we are analyzing in Exodus, which has been translated as “provoke Him”, has been translated as “I will weep” in this case. The verse in Exodus says we should not make Christ weep, and it continues saying, “He will not pardon your transgressions”. The word “pardon”, when we look at its meaning, has several meanings:

5375. נָסָאׁ נָסָאׁ *nâsâ'*, *naw-saw'*; or

נָסָאׁ נָסָאׁ *nâcâh* (Psa. 4:6 [7]), *naw-saw'*; a prim. root; to *lift*, in a great variety of applications, lit. and fig., absol. and rel. (as follows):— ...

We see that it primarily means “to lift”, both literally and figuratively. It means to take, to carry, etc. It says that He will not bear, or lift, or carry their transgressions any longer. When we look at different verses, we read that Christ has truly and literally carried His people:

Deuteronomy 1:³¹And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the LORD thy God **bare thee**, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place. ³²Yet in this thing ye did not believe the LORD your God, ³³Who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents *in*, in fire by night, to shew you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day.

Here, the same word that we just saw is found in its original language in the word “bare”. So we see that Christ bore the people of Israel, by His Spirit, and carried them like a man lifts and carries His child⁶²¹. With love, tenderness and dedication, He supported and kept alive the whole nation, continually speaking and appealing to their hearts. The same word is also found when speaking of Jesus in the following verse:

Isaiah 53:⁴Surely he hath **borne** our griefs, And carried our sorrows: Yet we did esteem him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted.

Here the word is translated as “borne”. Some versions say “took up” (NIV) or “carried” (NLT). And here it is referring not only to Israel, but to all of humanity. He carried us in our griefs (the HCSB translates it as “sicknesses”); physical and moral sicknesses. He suffered our pain. Like a father who carries His child, and is moved by

⁶²¹ Isaiah 49:22; Deuteronomy 33:12

his child's fever to the point that he suffers with his child, so Christ also carries humanity and suffers when humans suffer. This is why it says:

Psalm 28:⁹ Save thy people, And bless thine inheritance: Feed them also, and **lift them up** for ever.

Lift them up forever, carry them forever (ESV), the psalmist pleads. So we see that we are admonished to care for and keep the presence of Christ, to protect His face and listen to His voice. Because if we don't do this, He will weep bitterly and will have to let us go, no longer being able to carry our transgressions. He will have to release us to the unrestricted passions of our unregenerated heart.

The Spirit of Christ has been knocking at the door of each heart, pleading for His voice of Wisdom to be heard. From the very beginning, starting with Adam, Cain, Abel, Seth, the antediluvians, and all those who followed up until our days, Christ through His Spirit has been contending at the door of each heart.

Galatians 3:¹ O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, **before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?**

How was Jesus Christ presented to the Galatians? As crucified. Where? In Jerusalem? No, among them in Galatia! When? Right there and then! Read the text carefully once more. Jesus Christ was clearly presented and taught, not by figures, not in shadows, but clearly as crucified among the very Galatians. And how is this? Let's see a bit more of the immediate context to get a more complete image:

Galatians 2:²⁰ **I am crucified with Christ:** nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

I am crucified with Christ. When? Now. And what is happening now? I am crucified. Alone? No, Christ is also now crucified, says Paul. How is this possible? The concept of the cross, even before the crucifixion of Christ, was presented and explained by Christ Himself. Notice what He says:

Mark 8:³¹ And he began to teach them, that the Son of man **must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed,** and after three days rise again. ³² And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. ³³ But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men."

³⁴ And when he had called the people *unto him* with his disciples also, he said unto them, "Whosoever will come after me, **let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.** ³⁵ For whosoever will save his life shall lose it;

but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. ³⁶For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? ³⁷Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

To take up the cross is to deny oneself. To take up the cross is to follow Christ, who meekly carries His cross. To take up the cross is, if the situation demands it, to suffer and give our lives for Christ. Taking up the cross is dying to self, it is not being ashamed of the words of Christ. Taking up the cross is being rejected by the elders, leading priests and scribes. Taking up the cross is suffering the resistance and the rejection of those to whom we are appealing. To suffer the cross is to receive reproach; the cross is the reproach of Christ.

We behold Christ: we see that daily He suffers the agonies of the crucifixion⁶²². Why? How? Because He carries in His Spirit every person on this planet, and He is calling at the door of each heart, and He is constantly being struck by their enmity. Why does He carry this cross? Because He so loves us, as children, that He was willing to give His life for each one of us.

In His love, He longs to save us. He longs, like a father towards His children, for us to hear His voice. And the appeal to the whole world is that we be aware of Him, that we protect His face, that we hold onto Him. He sustains you, even though you don't know it and you think there are two tracks in the sand instead of one.

Our rebellions, our rejection, our words, our hardening of heart, the closing of our ears to His call, reproof and conviction, hurt Him. To see His children choose the path of destruction wounds Him terribly. He knows that if we insist, then out of His respect for us, He will have to release us to our own fate, without protection, into the hands of the destroyer. This is why He is saddened and weeps.

Look at how the following verse describes it. The people of Israel had been in idolatry for eighteen years and had worshipped all kinds of gods, except for the true God. And finally, God left them in the hands of their choice, and after that, they returned to God:

Judges 10:¹⁶ And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and **his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.**

God was grieved for the misery of Israel. When He suffers rejection, when He has to allow them to expel Him from their lives and leaves them to their devices, He suffers and is grieved for all the misery that comes to them as a consequence. It is a cross because He then suffers our suffering for the consequences of sin. The cross at Golgotha revealed to humanity the sufferings of Christ and the Father since the foundation of the world.

⁶²² Galatians 3:1; Hebrews 6:6

Isaiah 63:7 I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, *and* the praises of the LORD, According to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, And the great goodness toward the house of Israel, Which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, And according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses. ⁸For he said, Surely they *are* my people, Children *that* will not lie: So he was their Saviour. ⁹**In all their affliction he was afflicted, And the angel of his presence saved them: In his love and in his pity he redeemed them; And he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.**

In all their affliction He was afflicted. Sometimes we see our children suffer from a bump or pain; they are going through a situation that saddens them terribly, and they cry. As parents, our hearts are moved and we feel their pain with them. How we long to extend our heart and cover their pain! In the same way, but much more is the love of Christ, because He is holy, pure, perfect, full of agape love, and we are weak and evil⁶²³, revealing the love of the Father for each of the human beings on this earth.

My mind cannot reach nor comprehend such love, such mercy. Because how many deaths have there been today? How many suicides? How many hungry and homeless? It's terrible. Christ sees all this, and His heart is wrenched. He has to bear it all, all the while pleading tenderly and lovingly to be heard. And do His people hear Him? Do we hear Him?

This is why the verse says that Christ is crucified among the Galatians. And He is also crucified among us today. Every hardening of heart is a thorn upon the head of Christ. Every rejection to the voice of the Spirit of His mercy is a nail upon His hands. This is how the Bible presents to us the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world⁶²⁴. All that we might come to accept Him and with Him receive His forgiveness and life.

⁶²³ Luke 11:11-13

⁶²⁴ Revelation 13:8

Abiding in Christ

God's promises are infallible. The word of God is powerful and creative to establish that which it entails. Just like the earth needs rain for plants to bring forth fruit⁶²⁵, human beings also need the word of God to have life⁶²⁶ and to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit⁶²⁷. The word of God is creative, God spoke and it was done⁶²⁸, and He calls those things which are not as though they were⁶²⁹. All those who are of Christ come to be, by virtue of God's all-powerful word, co-heirs and partakers of the promises of God. And how do they become of Christ? By hearing and treasuring the Word of God, who is Christ.

God's covenant is manifested towards humanity in the repentance of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. God has forgiven us and offered His forgiveness since the foundation of the world itself. It was in the heart of God to give us forgiveness in the event of sin.

Repentance, in itself, has several purposes. One is that we need to become aware of our erroneous behavior, and manifest this by acknowledging the sin. God does this through His assigned mirror. This isn't just because the law of God has been transgressed. We hurt God and His Son with our sins and errors; we bring them pain. So, if only for this sole reason, we ought to ask for forgiveness in order to repair the relationship and receive healing. Yet even this ability to recognize our true nature and want to change comes from Christ.

Acts 5:³¹Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for **to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.**

It is Christ Jesus who gives us repentance, and repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached and received in the name of the only begotten Son of God⁶³⁰. Let us note this important point: genuine repentance does not come naturally to human beings. In natural man's condition, he only repents of the consequences of his actions, but there is no true and genuine repentance. Christ Jesus is the source of the only true repentance, which is unto life⁶³¹. The other repentance, the one of consequences, is carnal and not unto life.

⁶²⁵ Isaiah 55:10-11

⁶²⁶ John 6:63; Genesis 2:7

⁶²⁷ Matthew 7:19; Galatians 5:22-23; Romans 8:1

⁶²⁸ Genesis 1:3, 6-9; Psalm 33:8-9

⁶²⁹ Romans 4:17

⁶³⁰ Luke 24:47

⁶³¹ Acts 11:18

Repentance is not only awareness; it is not a simple intellectual assent to a truth, but it also brings with it sorrow, sadness and pain. To repent is to receive from Christ His sorrow and pain due to sin, and in this way we become partakers of His Spirit⁶³² and sufferings⁶³³. But this sorrow which comes from the awareness of sin in our life is not unto death, but unto life.

2 Corinthians 7:10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

We remember Peter and Judas, two people who denied their Lord. Christ looked at both of them. Peter wept bitterly, but Judas, although he repented, his repentance led to self-condemnation and death. And how is it that Christ gives us repentance?

Romans 2:4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that **the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?**

The abundance of the goodness of God, His forbearance and His longsuffering, are what lead us to repentance. The generosity of God overflows beyond human comprehension. It is these attributes of God, which Christ reveals, that move us to repentance. God exalted Jesus through His life and His resurrection so that we would look to Him for grace.

Acts 3:26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

John 16:8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

We finally become aware that everything comes from, and is given through, Christ and His Spirit. This centrality reveals another point to us: the Son of God really is the all of a human being. He gives us absolutely everything; there is nothing outside of Christ. In this sense, we hear Christ telling Moses:

Exodus 33:14 And he said, "My presence shall go *with thee*, and **I will give thee rest.**"

In this promise, He gave His Spirit after the awful sin of the golden calf. And through this promise, God gave rest⁶³⁴ to Moses, like He wished to do with all of Israel⁶³⁵. And a many years later, we read that Christ says once more:

⁶³² Romans 8:26

⁶³³ 1 Peter 4:13

⁶³⁴ Isaiah 63:11, 14

⁶³⁵ Hebrews 4:5-6

Matthew 11:²⁸ Come unto me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and **I will give you rest.**

Rest can only be found in Christ, by receiving the Spirit of Christ. And what does this rest consist of? In that self is dead and that Christ lives in me. I no longer do my own will, but the will of God through His Son that always does His Father's will⁶³⁶. We no longer need to endeavor to work the righteousness of God, but rather, we can rest in knowing that Christ will do it for us and in us. We no longer need to build an identity for ourselves, nor build up our value, since we were made children of God, accepted in the Beloved.

It is Christ, who is God with us⁶³⁷ always, unto the end of the world. While He is left waiting at the door calling, there will be no rest. Only when self is crucified and Christ is king in our hearts (to this end He was born⁶³⁸), only then will there be peace in the soul. The rest that Christ offered the people of Israel in the desert is the same rest that He came to offer His disciples and everyone who wanted to listen to Him. And it is the same rest that He offers us today:

Hebrews 4:⁶ Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:
⁷ Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, '**To day**, after so long a time; as it is said, **To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**'
⁸ For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. ⁹ There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. ¹⁰ For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his.

¹¹ Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. ¹² For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³ Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

The word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; discernment is His personal characteristic. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight; in the sight of the Word of God. All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of "Him with whom we have to do". The invitation today is for us to consider and have faith in Him, not being scared that He knows everything about us but be

⁶³⁶ John 8:29

⁶³⁷ Matthew 1:23

⁶³⁸ John 18:37

comforted that someone so good and pure does, who is willing to make us whole if we are willing to listen.

The rest that God offers us is the rest of the beloved Son of God, and when we receive Him we receive the Spirit that believes God loves as a Father. We then hear the Spirit of Christ crying out in our hearts “Abba, Father!”

Receiving the Holy Spirit is the earnest, it is the down payment, of the inheritance. It is the first payment and the warranty that the rest of the inheritance will be received.

Ephesians 1:¹¹ **In whom also we have obtained an inheritance**, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: ¹²That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. ¹³In whom ye also *trusted*, **after that ye heard the word of truth**, the gospel of your salvation: **in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise**, ¹⁴**Which is the earnest of our inheritance** until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

The inheritance is all in Christ⁶³⁹. This inheritance has been predestined⁶⁴⁰ since the foundation of the world. And we receive the Holy Spirit of the promise as the earnest, as the first payment of the inheritance, until the redemption of the acquired possession.

All Our Works

What, then, does the Holy Spirit do? It writes the law of God in our hearts. It puts God’s law in our minds. And in this way, it makes us keepers of His word. So what is God’s work? Let’s see what Jesus says:

John 6:²⁸ Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? ²⁹Jesus answered and said unto them, **This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.**

God’s work is that we believe in the words of Christ. Notice that it is God’s work, not man’s. Not even the faith to believe in the One whom God has sent is our own; it is a gift from God. Just like God created the world by His word, He also re-creates man through His word.

Regarding the work of salvation, it is absolutely all God’s.

⁶³⁹ Hebrews 1:2

⁶⁴⁰ Romans 8:32

Philippians 2:¹³ For it is God which **worketh in you both to will and to do of his** good pleasure.

Ephesians 2:¹⁰ For **we are his workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Hebrews 13:²¹ **Make you perfect in every good work** to do his will, **working in you** that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Psalms 138:⁸ The Lord **will perfect that which concerneth me**: Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: Forsake not **the works of thine own hands**.

Philippians 1:⁶ Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:

And finally, God's people, when entering the New Jerusalem, will proclaim:

Isaiah 26:¹² LORD, thou wilt ordain Peace for us: **For thou also hast wrought all our works in us**.

This "working all our works in us" also includes believing. And it also says:

Isaiah 29:²³ But when he seeth his children, **the work of mine hands, in the midst of him**, They shall sanctify my name, And sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, And shall fear the God of Israel.

Psalms 85:¹² Yea, the LORD shall give *that which is good*; And our land shall yield her increase. ¹³ Righteousness shall go before him; **And shall set us in the way of his steps**.

Not by might, not by the sword, not by the will of a man or a woman, but by the Spirit of God⁶⁴¹. God begins the work in us and it is He who completes it. He has prepared good works beforehand, and if we hear His voice, He will set us in the way of His steps, and thus His righteousness before us.

Easy and Light

If this is so, we see that salvation is relatively easy and simple. We are told, "Hear, and live". We let Him work salvation.

Matthew 11:²⁸ Come unto me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. ³⁰ For **my yoke is easy, and my burden is light**.

⁶⁴¹ Zechariah 4:6

Christ tells us to carry His cross or yoke, and urges us to learn from Him, who is meek and humble in heart. The burden, the yoke of Christ, is easy and light; it is simple. It consists of denying oneself and being crucified with Christ. Peace and meekness enters the soul, no matter how trying the circumstances, because we have certainty in our Father's promised work. Why? Through the certainty of the relationship between God and His Son:

Matthew 11:²⁷ **All things are delivered unto me of my Father:** and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*.

Christ unreservedly trusted in His Father, and knew that all things had been given to Him by His Father. Whatever it was, good or bad, Christ had received it all from His Father – meaning that His Father oversaw it and allowed it. And the Son knew that the Father was truly His Father, and that He was truly His Son. This relationship is not a figure, but a reality⁶⁴². Everything He had and experienced was the perfect will of His Father; it was absolutely the best thing for Him.

It is the same way with us with regards to Christ. We know that Christ has given us all things. We know that the Father loves Christ, and He loves us like He loves Christ⁶⁴³, and He has given Him all things that He might give them to us. And we know that denying self, that taking up the cross or the yoke of Christ, is easy and light, because we know that the Father and the Son love us, and because we behold Christ and also see Him on His cross. And we know that everything that happens in our life is for the good of those of us who have received the love of God in our hearts⁶⁴⁴; that what happens in our life is the perfect will of our heavenly Father, the best that could happen to us.

Now, seeing that it is so easy to be saved, why, then, does it say the following?

Matthew 7:¹³ Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and **broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:** ¹⁴ Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and **few there be that find it.**

Why, being that the work of salvation is so easy, are there so few that find it? And perhaps we can begin to sketch an answer. Maybe the first point to highlight is that the door is Christ⁶⁴⁵, and Him crucified⁶⁴⁶, which for many is a stumbling-block, or

⁶⁴² 2 John 1:3

⁶⁴³ John 17:26

⁶⁴⁴ Romans 8:28

⁶⁴⁵ John 10:7

⁶⁴⁶ Matthew 10:38

foolishness⁶⁴⁷. The life of Christ, full of agape love, empty of love for self, full of the love of God, is something which the human natural carnal heart does not want to experience. Through this door, the wicked heart refuses to enter. This is the testimony of the Scriptures regarding our carnal hearts:

Jeremiah 17:⁹The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

What is the most deceitful thing in the world? The heart. Which heart? Our own heart. Yet humanity refuses to recognize this diagnosis of his condition. Man deceives himself regarding this. He refuses to acknowledge that God is the only one who can save him, instead believing that he can play a part in this salvation. He is offended when he hears the truth. His whole being rises up in resistance when truth touches a fiber, even at the unconscious level. This is why such an easy salvation becomes so difficult for human beings; it hurts his pride and is seen as patronizing. This feeling is exacerbated by our deep-seated mistrust and estrangement from God. Man resists surrendering completely to God while trying to help Him, and all he does in this state is to not enter through the narrow gate.

This whole situation was fully experienced by the people of Israel upon leaving Egypt, and their story has been given for our admonishment. God had done absolutely everything: He had freed them from slavery and from the Egyptians, He had provided them with water and bread. Everything they had gone through had been carefully designed so that they might learn that they depended on God for everything. However, in each test they failed.

God had drawn them to Himself in order to make Himself known, that they would believe He would work in them. However, the people hardened their hearts and asked that God not speak to them anymore, but that He speak to them through an intermediary, and the people then received the list of things that they purposed to do. The giving of the Ten Commandments was done in such a way that it was evident that its fulfillment was beyond all human possibility. Yet keeping the commandments is essential for the salvation of humanity. God purposed to keep the commandments Himself **in** us. In this way He made salvation easy for every human being, and removed every excuse. And these are the words of God:

Psalm 81:8 Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, **if thou wilt hearken unto me; 9 There shall no strange god be in thee;** Neither shalt thou worship any strange god.

⁶⁴⁷ 1 Corinthians 1:23

Isaiah 55:³ Incline your ear, and come unto me: **Hear, and your soul shall live;** And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, *Even* the sure mercies of David.

God's word, when it is heard and treasured, transforms the heart. His word and His Spirit transform the soul from the law of sin unto death to the law of the Spirit of Christ unto life.

John 15:³ Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

John 8: ³¹ Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, "**If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;** ³² And **ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**"

Ephesians 5: ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; ²⁶ That he might **sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,** ²⁷ That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

The word of God is life-giving. And just like God endeavored, by His word, to give Israel the promised land, He wants to do so today. We return to what has never stopped being urgent and current:

Revelation 3:²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: **if any man hear my voice, and open the door,** I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

Hebrews 12:² **Looking unto Jesus** the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

2 Corinthians 4:⁵ For **we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord;** and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, **hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.** ⁷ But we **have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God,** and not of us.

⁸ *We are* troubled on every side, yet not distressed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ **Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.** ¹¹ For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. ¹² So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

What has always been urgent and current? To hear the voice of Jesus and to open the door of our hearts. To look unto Jesus every single moment, beholding the majesty of His glory in these earthen vessels. This is our supreme calling.

1 John 3:⁶ **Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not:** whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

Abiding in Christ is to behold and to know Christ, and He frees us from sin.

Looking Unto Jesus

When we look unto Jesus, we see how He abided in His Father. Christ is our model to follow. Just like Christ abided in His Father, so should we abide in Christ. And how does Christ abide in His Father?

John 14:¹⁰ "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."

How was Jesus in the Father, and how did He remain in the Father? By allowing the Father to dwell in Him. By allowing His words to not be His own, but by letting the Father dwell in Him and do the works. And how did the Father dwell in Him? This is explained in another verse:

Acts 10:³⁸ How **God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost** and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

Isaiah 61:¹ **The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me;** Because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to *them that are bound*;

God, the Father, had anointed Christ with His Spirit. This is how the Father dwelled in Christ. They were in constant communion with each other; with Jesus voluntarily submitting His will to His Father.

Jesus explained to His disciples the model they should follow. Just like Christ had done with His Father, the disciples were also to do with Christ.

John 14:²⁰ "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."

Here we have the Divine Pattern presented. The Father is the source and Christ is the channel. How, then, would Christ be in His disciples?

1 John 3: ²⁴ ... And hereby we know that he abideth in us, **by the Spirit which he hath given us.**

He abides in us by the Spirit which He has given us.

John 15:1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. ... ⁵I am the vine, ye *are* the branches..."

Christ is the true vine, and the Father is the gardener. The Father planted the vine, Christ, in humanity, and while the Pharisees considered him to be a dry root in the desert, He was, for all those who believed in Him, a fruitful connection to the source of life. Only through the vine can the branches, the disciples, receive spiritual life and bear spiritual fruit. The life of the vine becomes the life of the branches.

John 15:2 "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. ³Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. ⁴**Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.** ⁵I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: **He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.** ⁶If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷**If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."**

The whole emphasis of the parable, which amplifies what was said in John 14, is in the disciples abiding in Christ through the reception of the Spirit and the word of Christ, and by allowing God to work in them this way.

How can we make this spiritual life sure, and not fall away into the life of sin that is so natural to us in our fallen world?

Psalm 5:3 My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; **In the morning will I direct** *my prayer* unto thee, and will look up.

Isaiah 50:4 The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to *him that is weary*: **He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.** ⁵The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, And I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.

Proverbs 8:17 I love them that love me; and **those that seek me early shall find me.**

John 6:48 "I am that bread of life. ⁴⁹Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. ⁵⁰This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. ⁵¹**I am the living bread which came down from heaven:** if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of

the world. ... ⁶³ **It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."**

Isaiah 30:²¹ And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, '**This is the way, walk ye in it'**, When ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.

We abide in Christ when, in every conscious moment, we are His presence. We abide in Christ when He is crucified before us, and we take the cross, the yoke, and deny ourselves, and behold Him, hear His voice, and do not reject Him. We abide in Christ when, hearing His voice, we meet Him early in the morning. We abide in Christ when, faced with temptation, we hear His voice telling us the way of truth. We abide in Christ when consulting Him becomes like breathing and songs praising Him drift us as we do errands. We want to know what He is thinking and what He is doing. He is everything to us. Without Him we can do nothing. He is our salvation, the desire of all nations⁶⁴⁸.

Isaiah 42:¹ Behold my servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, *in whom* my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. ²He shall not cry, nor lift up, Nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. ³A bruised reed shall he not break, And the smoking flax shall he not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth. ⁴He shall not fail nor be discouraged, Till he have set judgment in the earth: And the isles shall wait for his law.

⁵Thus saith God the LORD, He that created the heavens, and stretched them out; He that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; He that giveth breath unto the people upon it, And spirit to them that walk therein: ⁶I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, And will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, And **give thee for a covenant** of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; ⁷To open the blind eyes, To bring out the prisoners from the prison, *And* them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

Christ is the Seed to whom the promises were made. At the same time, He is the promise of God for this world. While the covenant is made to Christ, He Himself is given and made unto a covenant for the people. He has received the covenant from His Father in order to bring it to us. He Himself is life⁶⁴⁹ unto the families of the earth. The humanity and divinity of Christ are thus given to rescue us from the condemnation of sin. Christ is man's all, his shield and reward.

⁶⁴⁸ Haggai 2:7

⁶⁴⁹ John 1:4

REMOVING *the* VEIL

THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL IN THE COVENANTS

The Bible describes the work of salvation of mankind as framed within two great covenants. Unlike what is generally understood, these two covenants are experiences of the heart. What is the old covenant and the new covenant? What is God's and man's relationship with each of them? What is the gospel and what is its relationship to the covenants? What is the work of Christ? What role do works play in each covenant? What is faith and what role does it play in man's salvation? What is the condition of every man? How did man come to that state and how is he rescued? What is the work of God? This book details the mechanics of salvation, the condition of man, the love of God and the centrality of Christ in bringing God's promises near and making them a reality.

DANIEL E. BERNHARDT

