

Recognizing Christ in the Old Testament



Jim Raddin

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RECOGNIZING CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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J H Raddin LLC
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With great thanksgiving
To my Lord Jesus Christ
And to those who have served Him in my life
Most notably my dear wife Janie
In whom He has been eminently recognizable
Through fifty-two years of marriage
And never more than Now

Jim Raddin
San Antonio, Texas
July 2019

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I am grateful that Christ has touched my life through many of His People over the years. He uses them in various ways to draw me closer to Him. You know who you are. That seems to be how the Body of Christ works. It is an intimate individual fellowship **with** Him and an intimate joint fellowship **in** Him. He awakes an urgency in us for one another and for those He would draw to Himself.

I have written these pages with an open Bible before me, seeking the Holy Spirit to translate it to my heart. The quotes from the Bible are typed in italics, with ellipses (...) to indicate every ellipsis (omission of words). I have tried to avoid altering any meaning. Quotations are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) unless otherwise noted. The exceptions are generally from the older King James Version (KJV) that I grew up with and first read and taught from. The careful reader will do well to read with an open Bible before them too. I believe God has the capacity to touch us using a variety of translations.

I have referred often to Hebrew-English and Greek-English dictionaries, usually The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible. I have found BibleHub to be a particularly convenient digital reference, especially their interlinear Hebrew and Greek texts. Parenthetical inserts in the italicized quotes are from marginal notes in the translations and/or dictionary references.

I have quoted little from commentaries or commenters, not because I consider them of no value, but because I have spent most of my time simply in His Word. What I have been burdened to share had to come from Him, but I'm sure I am not the first to have made the observations shared in these pages.

Thanks also to the Christian brothers and sisters who have taken time and effort to read through the draft: my dear wife Janie, my cousin Rev. David Raddin, my friends Dr. Jim Yoder and Henry Flick, and my dear daughter Rebecca.

In all your ways acknowledge Him... Proverbs 3:6

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, “Before Abraham was born, I am.” John 8:58

We have a tendency to use some words in everyday conversation without really recognizing their meaning. The failure to recognize happens for the hearers as well as for the speakers. I do it often myself. The tendency is one cause of our frequent miscommunication.

Take the word “recognize” as an example. I have used it in the title of this book and twice more in the opening paragraph. “Recognize” is just a word we all know. We have no reason to look it up in a dictionary, but the word is more interesting than we may “recognize”.

Like many words, “recognize” has more than one definition. A common but secondary definition is to accept the existence or authority of something. One nation can recognize the validity of another nation’s new government. You can recognize the jurisdiction of a court of law or the boundary of a city or someone else’s property. Someone may superficially and impersonally recognize the existence of Christ in such a way, but that is not what this book is about.

The typical primary definition of “recognize” is based simply on the structure of the word. “Cognition” has to do with knowing. If you are cognizant of something, you have knowledge of it. The prefix “re” has to do with the idea of doing something over again. We may redo, remodel or repeat. So “re-cognition” is to know something or someone again. It requires a personal knowledge.

The interesting thing about all this is that you cannot know someone again if you have not known them before. You must have some level of prior experience or knowledge before you could possibly recognize someone. The more experience and knowledge of a person you have, the easier they are to recognize, even in a crowd or in dim light or in an unfamiliar setting.

For most people, I think, the Old Testament is a relatively unfamiliar setting. It was true for me for many years, but the Old Testament is becoming more and more familiar to me as I have spent time there. I have started recognizing and recalling passages.

For most people, I think, Jesus Christ is unfamiliar as well, at least in terms of personal knowledge and experience. Such was the case for me. I knew **about** Christ before I knew Him personally as my God. The personal knowledge was not of my own doing. Since God is God, it should not be surprising that I cannot produce an experience with Him by my own effort. I cannot create a knowing relationship with God by my diligent study, by trying to follow rules, by accepting a belief system or by affiliating with some group. God is God. An experience with Him is His to give, not mine to grasp. Jesus actually said in John 6:44 that nobody comes to Him unless the Father who sent Him draws them to Him.

The miracle is that God loves us, He chooses to draw us, and He enables an acceptable response within a willing heart. God is the One who chooses to grace us with the experience of His Presence by His own doing. Only God is able to make Himself knowable and distinguishable from all our other experiences, thoughts and influences. God is able to visit us and to visit us again, making Himself unmistakably recognizable as we know Him again in each subsequent encounter.

Most remarkably, the Bible says He desires to make Himself consistently knowable, to live in us and for us to live in Him (John 15). As we respond to, and desire after His touch, we actively participate in the experience. We not only accept His existence and authority, but we also personally know Him again. We recognize Christ. We recognize Him not only in the Old Testament but in all our ways, because He chooses to reveal Himself there.

My own knowledge of Him has been halting and tentative on my part at times and remains a growing experience. In each fresh encounter, I find more of Him to know than I have yet known. On His part, He graciously and consistently draws me back from my inconstancy and woos me into a deeper, more constant knowledge of the recognizable Christ. May He continue to draw me, and to draw you, to Himself.

For now, in this volume, I invite you to examine a few striking examples in which Jesus Christ has shown Himself recognizably to me in the pages of the Old Testament. His Word in the New Testament will be helpful as we go along. As it turns out, the Old Testament has as much to do with Jesus Christ as does the New one.

We will see that the Old Testament literally speaks the name of Jesus all through it. Two of its books bear His Name directly and the name of others describe His Character. “Jehovah (The Lord) is salvation” is a literal translation of the name of Jesus from the Greek New Testament. It is also a literal translation from the Hebrew of the names of the Old Testament books of Joshua and Isaiah. Hosea, meaning just “salvation”, comes close. Again, and again, the Name of Jesus is repeated in the form of individual declarations, such as “The Lord is salvation” or “He has become my salvation”. Exodus 15:2 and Psalm 118:14 are but two examples.

The Old Testament is rich with explicit and implicit prophetic passages telling us of the Christ to come in the flesh. He is the One who would be “God with us” or Immanuel. He is the One who would be the Good Shepherd in whom God Himself would lead and care for His people. He is the One who would be the Light come into the world. He would be the Suffering Servant by whose mistreatment even I might be healed. The Old Testament is also full of patterns and illustrations in which people and situations form analogs picturing the nature, the character, the work and the very life of the Christ to come.

We are not left to surmise these things or figure them out for ourselves. The New Testament tells us directly in Galatians 3:24 that the old law is simply a tutor to bring us to Christ. A tutor is there to teach and help us. The tutoring is not by our independent endeavor but is rather an active work done in us by the Living Word of God.

That Word of God came directly and personally to various people in the Old Testament. They were often identified as prophets, because they spoke forth the Word of God to others. A prophet, by the way, is not defined as someone who simply foretells the future. A prophet is a spokesperson, one who receives the Word of God directly and then speaks it forth to others.

In the New Testament, the first chapter of John explains not only that the Word of God is living, but that His Name is Jesus. The book of John starts

by declaring Jesus to be that Word from the beginning. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1). And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14).* He remains that Living Word today.

Consider what this means. Since Jesus is the Word of God from the beginning, when the Bible says the Word of God came to Isaiah and Jeremiah and the others, we should recognize Jesus, as being the One personally coming to them. When the Word of God comes to us now, the same is true. We have a capable Tutor. The One who brings us close to Christ is Christ Himself coming to us by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ did not have His beginning in Bethlehem's stable. He became clothed in human form there, but Jesus is with God and is God from before the creation. He was there and active throughout the Old Testament, and not just when the Word of God came to a prophet in the form of words. He actually shows up in person as the Revelation of God to His people.

Do you recognize Jesus as the One who walked with Adam in the Garden of Eden? The Word of God who was to be made flesh is God in personal contact with us. Do you recognize Jesus as the One who spoke to Moses at the burning bush? His Presence made the ground Holy. Do you recognize Jesus as the One seen by His namesake, Isaiah, to be sitting on a throne, high and lifted up in Isaiah 6? We certainly see Him sitting on the throne in Revelation. Moreover, John 12:41 explicitly tells us that Jesus is the very One Isaiah saw. We will look in more detail at these and other examples.

Why should it be important to recognize Christ in the Old Testament? Because He is the Word, the One in whom God speaks to us directly and personally, there and everywhere else. We need to recognize Him everywhere He touches us.

The vitally important recognition for us is not simply for us to accept that these things are true. We cannot truly know Him second-hand. The prophets heard Him first-hand, but many of the second-handers only recognized His existence but not His touch. They only operated on the basis of beliefs, principles and effort-dependent enterprises organized into diverse groups of Pharisees, Sadducees and others. Jesus condemned all that. The organized, second-hand, do-it-yourself approach remains with us today. The Intimate

Christ can be hard to know in the feel-good, emotional entertainment of a slick, commercial version of the church.

The first verses of Hebrews tell us clearly that God is speaking to us in these days through His Son. When God speaks to us through Christ by the Holy Spirit, we do not hear Him second-hand on television, in an auditorium over a public-address system or in the words of a book, this one included. We hear Him and know Him personally and intimately in the depths of our beings. He draws close and makes Himself knowable. As we hear Him and acknowledge His Presence, we know Him and then we are able to recognize Christ. We must first know Him. Then we can recognize or “re-know” Him again and again into the fullness of a personal relationship.

The necessary and sufficient “recognition” is for us to know Him again, personally and intimately as God with us, in all our brief times and in His endless eternity.

*My sheep hear My voice and I know them and they follow Me;
and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish: and no one
will snatch them out of My hand... I and the Father are one.*
John 10:27,28 and 30

*“But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel
after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them
and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God and they shall
be My people. They shall not teach again, each man his neighbor saying,
‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them
to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity,
and their sin I will remember no more. Jeremiah 31:33-34*

CHAPTER 2

CREATION

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:1

The creation is the needful place to begin. Genesis starts there. If Christ is to be recognized throughout the Old Testament, should He not be found at the start? Let's take a look.

The Bible begins with the simple but far-reaching declaration quoted above. The statement encompasses all there is, and simply says God made it. How are we to think about such a statement? Why should it matter to us?

Few of us have seen God or have known anyone who has. How could we know Him? We do not typically consider that we all face the same limitations with the creation. None of us have seen "all there is". On the clearest night, without a telescope, we can see only a few thousand stars. It seems like we are seeing a lot more. In fact, scientists have estimated there are probably around a billion trillion stars in the universe. The fact that they, or we, have not seen the tiniest fraction of them does not hinder their belief, or ours, that the complete, unexamined creation exists in all its vastness.

People tend to pick and choose what they believe about God, about the creation, about the Bible and about most everything else based upon whether or not it fits with their assumptions. That is a fundamental reason why people's beliefs range all over the map and beyond. You see, we are born with no assumptions at all. We acquire them, largely from untested sources like parents, acquaintances, experiences and things we read, hear or see. Our assumptions change. The assumptions we have as a child, a teen, a young adult, a middle-ager and a senior citizen generally differ. When we get a cancer diagnosis, they may change suddenly.

The Bible hasn't changed much at all lately. It remains the oldest text in wide circulation across the world, but it is still a subject of study and discourse. The Old Testament's "old" adjective has been well-earned. Significant parts of the Old Testament have been demonstrably present in some written form for over 2500 years. Its first words may have been known well over 3000 years ago. By contrast, the New Testament is not all that "new", dating back 2000 years or so. In greater contrast, the vast majority of

what is read and discussed in these days was written far more recently. The Bible still has relevance in many lives yet today, but none of this necessarily forms a compelling reason why someone else should accept the existence of God or the Bible as truth.

Some believe the Bible to be true without really knowing what it says. Others reject the truth of the Bible without knowing much about what it is that they disbelieve. It seems there are a lot of people ready to take a position on the Bible but relatively few people who have read it.

The Genesis text for this chapter is a good case in point. People do not know what to make of it. Many contradictory and changing theories have been advanced, generally in the form of attempts to deduce some details about how the creation happened. Few declarations from other sources having to do with the creation purport to come from the One who did it. I do not propose to assess the question of how the creation was done. Let's just see if the One who did the creation can be recognized in the Bible accounts.

People have become remarkably comfortable with contradictory beliefs here, even among those who accept the Bible as true. Consider the time-honored statement known as the Apostles' Creed, which seems to define a belief about the One who formed the creation. It is called the Apostles' Creed, rather than the Apostle's Creed, because authorship of the Creed is attributed to all the Apostles rather than just one. Many think it to be authoritative without really knowing who wrote it or when. It appears to have been around in some form for at least 1500 years. It has surely been repeated more than hundreds of millions of times by many millions of people. It is still being done. I recall repeating it myself. Maybe you have too.

Now there always seem to be problems introduced when anybody tries to reduce their beliefs into brief formalisms expressed in words. The Bible, both Old and New Testaments, appears to be far more concerned with Who you believe rather than what you believe.

Here is one issue with the Apostles' Creed. The Creed starts with the words, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator (or maker) of heaven and earth..." It goes on to discuss "Jesus Christ His Son". The issue is that Genesis 1:1 says nothing about the Father Almighty. It just says God. The Bible introduces the idea of God as Three Persons in One: Father, Son and

Holy Spirit. The Apostles' Creed identifies the One who created the heavens and the earth as the Father, in significant conflict with the rest of Scripture.

Consider John 1:10 for example, but keep fully in mind that John surely was and is an Apostle. The passage states clearly that Jesus was in the world, and the world was made by Him but the world He made did not recognize Him. Consider Hebrews 1:2 which says the Son was the One through whom God made the world. Consider Colossians 1:16 which tells us the Son is the One by whom all things were created in the heavens and on earth, including invisible things, nations and authorities. John 1:3, from the same Apostle again, says nothing was made apart from Jesus. Why would John reverse his position for the Creed? I think he did not. These are not the only passages that testify to Jesus the Christ as the means of the creation.

If you read and accept these passages, you are confronted with the necessity to recognize Jesus as One with the Father in the creation. If you accept the Apostles' Creed, you are not. It should not surprise us. A group of words cannot recognize Him. He calls us individually to do that personally. No collection of our words is sufficient to touch us with the intimate knowledge of the One who made us. Only the Word made flesh can reveal to us His Glory.

I'm not suggesting that we stop using words. I'm writing words right now. Words are significant in our communication (and sometimes miscommunication) with one another. Words matter, and how we use them matters a lot. As we recognize Christ, however, it is apparent from the beginning that He does not communicate with us using just words. I'm not talking about smoke signals or "open doors". He communicates with us directly, by the Spirit. God Himself imparts Himself so that we may live in Him and He in us.

Look again at the New Testament parallel to Genesis 1:1: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* (John 1:1) It does not say that in the beginning there were words. It is simply "Word". It is "Logos" in the Greek. It means "Word" in the sense of being One's expression to another. In the truest sense, God defines Himself to us as the very Expression of Himself to us. The Word is truly Jesus the Christ. *...and the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory...* (John 1:14). Jesus is with God and He is God, from the beginning.

Do you know Christ to be, most surely, the means of all creation? That is who He is. The Babe of Bethlehem is indeed the very One who hung the star announcing His birth! The creation, including us, is a fundamental part of God's Expression of Himself to us. He is the Word.

Listen to the New Testament: *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.* (Romans 1:20). Or, from the Old Testament: *The Heavens are telling the glory of God; and the expanse is declaring the work of His hands.* (Psalm 19:1)

Observe the creation continuously repeating His grand theme of death and resurrection. Night gives way to day and we awake from our slumber. Winter gives way to Spring and the earth turns green. Plants, animals and people all die but new life comes forth. Even the stars die and are reborn.

The grand and immense creation is an expression of Himself to us. The creation is the work of the Word who was made flesh and dwelt in it with us so that we might behold His Glory, not only in the creation, but face to face.

Do you also recognize Christ, the One who fashioned the entire creation, as the maker of the new creation as well? In the 21st chapter of the book of the Revelation, the same Apostle John saw the entire heaven and earth of the old creation had passed away. John saw an entirely new heaven and an entirely new earth, and he saw Christ, in God and as God, seated on the throne. Then John heard this: ... *He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."* (Revelation 21:5). Behold indeed the faithful and true words from the Word who was made flesh. He is the Creator of not just one creation, but two. But do not just behold the words. Behold the Word. Behold His Glory. Behold Him. God is inseparably Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Recognize Christ in the first verse of the Old Testament and in all your ways.

...I go to prepare a place for you... John 14:2

...He who has seen Me has seen the Father... John 14:9

CHAPTER 3

LIGHT

The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. Genesis 1:2-3

I do not propose to cover every verse in the Old Testament, but it is helpful at the outset to move on from the first verse of Genesis to the next two. God started the creation, which reveals Him, with the creation of light. If Jesus was the One who carried out the creation, we certainly must see Him as the One who formed the light. It is not enough, however, just to understand the truth of that statement. We need to recognize Him, to know Him here.

Let's look first at what was there before the first words of creation were spoken. The Bible clearly says God is there. The first chapter of the Revelation identifies God as literally being the beginning. The One who called Himself "I AM" is self-existent, the One who is, was and is to come. The second verse of Genesis also speaks of the Spirit's presence before the third verse speaks of created light. Another thing that exists before created light is darkness. That seems to make sense to us, but a potentially more surprising thing that shows up in verse 2 is water. You do not hear of God saying, "Let there be water" in the description of the creation.

Another surprising thing is that there was light as a part of the creation before the sun or the stars were there. Those do not show up until the fourth "day", or time period, of the creation. Created light was there from the first "day". Plants and trees were there on the third. Where did the created light come from? We tend to think of light from the sun, other stars, flames, light bulbs or LED's. Created light came first to the world from God in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said it Himself. He put it this way in John 8:12, "I am the Light of the world". Earlier in John, He was described in this way: *All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.* (John 1:3-5). It was similar to the situation described for the New Jerusalem: *And the city has no need of the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of*

God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. (Revelation 21:23) Jesus Christ is that Lamb of God, the sacrifice in our place. Recognize Him as the Light.

Two types of light seem to be discussed in the first three verses of Genesis. It is clear from I John (the letter, not the gospel) that “God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all” (I John 1:5). How then can the Spirit of God be moving over the surface of the waters in darkness? Maybe that darkness did not make as much sense as we thought. God, being Spirit, is Spiritual Light, but Genesis announces that He has graciously chosen to reveal Himself in and to His physical creation by creating physical light at the outset to pierce the physical darkness. What a fitting revelation of Him it is!

In the next few paragraphs, consider several aspects of how this created light shows us God. We are still not sure about what light actually is, but the more we learn about created light, the more its characteristics point us to the Light of God in Christ.

First, we should observe that light, the beginning of the creation, is the basis for all the physical creation to follow, just as God is. Allow me to get a bit technical for a few moments. Physicists have discovered that all material things are basically forms of packaged light, packed in extravagant amounts. Einstein demonstrated that mass and energy are equivalent when he wrote, “ $E=mc^2$ ”. Mass is transformable into energy and energy into mass. The conversion constant is huge, namely the immense speed of light multiplied by itself. The conversion happens, for example, in the explosion of a nuclear bomb, when a tiny amount of mass disappears in a fission or fusion chain reaction and is turned into a blinding flash of light and heat. The conversion of mass to light and heat is going on in the sun and stars continuously. The package is being slowly unwrapped, but an unimaginable amount of light remains stored for now in the vast material creation.

We should also observe that light is the source of all life, just as God is. Without light, plants could not grow and, therefore, animals and people could not live either. The world would be an unimaginably dark, cold, empty and inhospitable place.

We should observe that light is the means of all revelation, just as God is. We could not know anything of the creation except for the part we could

touch. Four of our five senses require our sense organs to come into direct physical contact with atoms or molecules of matter. You cannot touch, hear, smell or taste the moon. Our physical eyes see because they are sensitive to some of the light. (We miss the infrared, the ultraviolet, x-rays and cosmic rays, for example, without special equipment.) Most of us are sensitive to physical light, but we are only able to see Spiritually when Christ touches us and makes us sensitive to the Light of His Person.

We should observe that light is fundamentally unapproachable by our own efforts, just as God is. Not only can we not exceed the speed of light, we cannot even reach the speed of light. If you are in a race with light, no matter how fast you can get yourself going, you will find that light is still going the speed of light away from you. Light is an absolute thing in creation, as God is.

We should observe that light fills the creation, just as God does. Deep space may look very dark and empty but it is chock-full of light, from all the stars. The light is going in all directions, even from stars our eyes are not sensitive enough to see. Wherever an astronaut goes, the stars are viewable out the window. Just stand in a dark open field on a clear night and look up. Then move over a few inches in the darkness and do it again. The light from the stars is still streaming by at every location. We just can't see light from the side as it passes by. Our inability to see it does not mean it isn't there. The same is true of God.

We should observe that light shows us eternity, just as God does. According to our current physical understanding, time does not pass at all for something moving at the speed of light. A photon arriving from a star a million light-years away is just as fresh as the instant it departed. We think it has been travelling for a million years from our point of view. The photon could go everywhere in the universe in no time at all as far as the photon of light is concerned, just as God can. He is everywhere at once.

God, the Bible says, is light and Jesus is the light of the world. Recognize Him here.

One more aspect of the Light of the World should be observed. John 1:9 talks of the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every person. Not everyone receives the Light of the Son of God, but verse 12 tells

us something startling. Everyone who receives Him receives the right to become a Child of God too. Jesus even goes so far as to say that we also become the Light of the world (Matthew 5:14).

How can we be the Light of the world? Clearly, I do not believe He is talking about physical light here. As Christians, we do not emit a physical glow from our worldly bodies. Even Christ did not have a blinding physical radiance except on a few special occasions. He did create physical light for the world, but He came as the true Light of the world to reveal the Person of God to those who would receive Him. When we are in Him and He in us, we become part of that process.

We close this chapter with a passage from the Old Testament that speaks forth the name of Jesus (the Lord is Salvation) but adds something more. Recognize Him!

The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? Psalm 27:1

CHAPTER 4

ADAM

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth. Genesis 1:26

As we turn to Adam, we will continue to set aside consideration of the “how” question. We will not explore what people choose to believe. We will not try to understand God. We will simply look at what this Word says. Those who insist on a god they can understand will never have much of a god. Those who look to the Word, and lean not to their own understanding, will recognize the Word Made Flesh.

The work of creation reached its climax with the creation of man in the image of God and in His likeness. The Hebrew word for “image” here is the plural form so it is commonly translated as “Our image”, implying an image of the complete revelation of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Man was given a privileged place over the entire creation. The creation was made for him. God breathed into him the breath of life and he became a living being by God’s doing (Genesis 2:7, in the second description of man’s creation). He was in the image of God, but he was not God.

Remarkably, the Hebrew word translated as “man” is literally “adam”. It is the generic term for man. The formal, personal, capitalized form of the word, properly defined as the name, “Adam”, does not start being used until Genesis 3:17. Up until then, Adam is just called “the man” but it is basically the same word. Both forms of the word derive from the Hebrew word for ruddy or reddish. Some have defined the name of Adam as being “the one who shows the blood”.

Adam walked and talked with God, being gifted with the personal relationship with God that defines real Life. But knowing God requires that we know Him as God. We only know Him on His terms, not ours, because He is God. Adam chose to pursue his own way and defy God by eating of the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In doing so, Adam transgressed the relationship. Within the relationship, God produces the Good and leads us out of temptation and away from evil. When we choose to operate independently, we are incapable of producing the good we may

desire and the evil comes forth, despite our best intentions. Knowing good is not the same as knowing God.

It is noteworthy that Adam did not choose instead to eat of the Tree of Life. That Tree had also been available to Adam. It is a picture of Christ. God does not want us to know good and evil; God desires for us to know Him.

God said that Adam would surely die on the day he ate of the forbidden tree (Genesis 2:16-17). The Hebrew for “surely die” is literally “die, die”. God was not kidding. Adam did in fact die on that day. His walk with God ceased, meaning that his continued breathing could not properly be described as Life. He went on to have children, but he did not impart to them the image of God. That image had been changed and His likeness had been marred beyond recognition.

It is here that God did an amazing thing. The Love and Grace of God came forth in Jesus Christ. God Himself prepared an animal skin as the covering for Adam’s sin. God interposed a death by which life might come forth. An animal must die if it is separated from its skin. The first sacrifice was not carried out by mankind in obedience to God’s command. The first sacrifice was carried out by the Loving Hands of Christ, who solemnly killed the animal whose skin covered the nakedness of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21). I believe the animal was a lamb. Its death was a promise of the Cross.

Adam indeed “showed the blood”. The skin was from a freshly killed animal. The blood of the animal was upon Adam, as the Blood of Christ is upon me.

Of course, there is much more. The Old Testament continues to follow a trail of substitutionary blood that leads us to Christ. The New Testament adds to the story. Luke 3 traces the genealogy of Christ all the way back to Adam, but there is a critical difference with Christ’s Birth. All the descendants of Adam on the list were fathered in turn by one of those who had inherited the marred image of Adam. Jesus was born of the virgin, as described in Luke’s first two chapters. Luke 3:23 says that people supposed Him to have been Joseph’s son, but He was not. There is an important reason. He did not inherit the marred image. He is the Son of God, not just some image, not one with a likeness to God, but God Himself in the form of a man.

Hebrews 1:3 tells us that Jesus the Christ is the radiance of God's Glory and the "exact representation" of God's nature. Jesus could truthfully say in John 14:7-9 that if we have seen Him, we have indeed seen God the Father. He said directly in John 10:30, that He and God the Father are One. Jesus physically occupies the physical creation which was the work of His Hands.

He did not come to stand alone. Romans 8:29 makes abundantly clear that He stands as a new and different kind of Adam. The first Adam passed along a marred image to a long list of sequential generations with many intermediary fathers. With Christ, by the work of His Blood, those who receive His Perfect Image of the Father receive it directly from the Father Himself. There is to be only one generation, and it is His. Jesus told us we must be born again to join it. Our verse in Romans says God the Father knew us in advance. He planned out for us to become conformed to the Image of His Son, so that Christ would be the Firstborn among many brothers and sisters. Have you noticed? God has no grandchildren. Jesus did not encourage any of us to pray to our grandfather who art in heaven. He taught us to pray to the same Father He did, not in the Father's name, but to ask and to praise in the Name of Jesus. Don't just borrow His Name to end your prayer. We must pray as He puts Himself instantly into our hearts. We must not just pray as He prayed. We must pray as He **is** praying in us.

As it turns out, God loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever would believe in Him might not die but have everlasting Life. You may have heard that before. The everlasting Life is in and through Christ. The issue is not whether we believe the statement from John 3:16 to be true. The eternally significant issue is whether we believe **in** Him, whether we believe **into** Him, whether we **know** Him. If we do, we recognize Him here.

*For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive...
So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul."
The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not
first, but the natural; then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth,
earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those
who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.
Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of
the heavenly. I Corinthians 15:22 and 45-49*

CHAPTER 5

NOAH

But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. Genesis 6:8

The world of Noah was vastly different from the one we know. People of today scoff at the notion of the lengthy lives lived by the people before the flood. Methuselah, a contemporary of Noah, died at the age of 969 years. We cannot imagine people living hundreds of years in our world. The fact is, they didn't. They lived hundreds of years in theirs.

In those days, it did not rain on the earth. No hurricanes. No tornados. A mist went up to water the ground (Genesis 2:4-6). Genesis 1:6-8 describes how a lot of water had been separated and remained above the earth, later providing the source for the flood. It also made a big difference in the nature of the world. Direct sunlight apparently did not penetrate the water vapor barrier. There were no rainbows and likely no shadows. People had a radiation shield. We still use water pools to absorb the emissions from a nuclear reactor. Skin cancer and other cancers were for future generations. The DNA passed along from Adam and Eve was not chock full of mutations yet. Pesticides, air pollution and so many other disease sources were yet to be experienced. Automobile accidents, machine guns, bombs, dioxin and Agent Orange were unheard of. Smoking may not have occurred to anybody. Would you not expect tremendously longer lives?

One thing not in short supply was sin. Sin was rampant. God was ignored instead of being sought. Created beings deserved destruction for their sin as did Adam, but I am concerned that Genesis 6:5-7 has been often misinterpreted. Translations say God was "sorry" for the creation He had earlier seen to be good. They say God "repented" of having done it. I think we are missing the sense of the word. The Hebrew word "nacham", usually translated here as "sorry", is more commonly translated elsewhere as "comfort", as in Isaiah 40:1. It literally means to sigh over something or someone. I think God was not surprised at how things had developed. Revelation 13:8 describes Christ as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, because God knew the Cross would be required. When you fail, God is not sorry He made you, but He sighs over you deeply in the person of Christ on the Cross.

Genesis 6:8-9 says Noah walked with God and found favor in God's eyes. When you do a favor for someone, it is not because they earn it. The Hebrew word actually derives from the idea of a superior choosing to stoop down to help an inferior. That describes God in Jesus Christ. Noah did not walk with God by ascending to heaven to find Him. God, in the Person of Jesus the Christ, stooped and drew near to Noah on the earth.

The story of the building of the ark is reasonably well known, but you can refresh yourself on the details in Genesis 6. It was a very large, multi-story ship. The ark was about 450 feet long and about 75 feet wide. The Santa Maria, the flagship of Columbus when he "sailed the ocean blue", was only about 60 feet long. The Pilgrim's Mayflower was only about 100 feet long. In fact, it was over 4,000 years later, in our early twentieth century, before a longer, multi-story ship was built. Many of today's cruise ships are not as long as the ark. Most translations say the ark was covered, or pitched, inside and out, with pitch. The Hebrew word translated as "cover" is "kaphar". The Hebrew word translated as "pitch" is "kopher".

The word "kaphar" is used over 100 times in the Old Testament, but very differently from the way it is translated here. Almost always, it has to do with making atonement for sin, usually by sacrifice, as in Exodus 30:10, in describing the altar of sacrifice. Listen to the words used for "kaphar" as listed in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance: "appease, make an atonement, cleanse, disannul, forgive, be merciful, pacify, pardon". "Kopher" is used in the Old Testament only around 17 times but this is the only place where it is translated as "pitch". "Kopher" usually is used to describe a ransom as a redemption price, as in Exodus 30:12. Christ is here.

Black, tarry pitch probably made sense to many translators, because Noah needed something to keep the water out. But why would asphalt-like pitch deposits have even existed before the flood buried all that plant and animal material to eventually form coal, oil and pitch? What Noah really needed was something to keep the death out, and the Life in. We do too.

There is yet another meaning for kopher. It can also describe the henna plant and, in particular, a reddish dye made from it. Might God have ordained a red stain to be placed on the ark by which Noah and his family passed over the death and destruction of the flood? We have seen that "kaphar" is the covering of God's mercy, atonement and pardon. Could His Mercy have

been represented to Noah and all creation by the red stain of “kopher” which is God’s ransom price in Christ Jesus?

Many of you, as children, may have seen the cartoonish drawings of the white-bearded fellow standing in the little brown ark with a couple of giraffes sticking their heads up. Nothing is right about that. Not the size. Not even the color. If you accept the pitch version, the ark should be almost black like tar, inside and out. If you recognize Christ here, you may plainly see, along with Noah, a red ark covered with the Blood of His “Atonement” that makes us “at one” with Him. Like Adam, Noah too shows us the Blood.

Other common notions about Noah and the flood are seriously deficient. The rain did indeed last forty days and forty nights, but the flood lasted much longer. Noah lived in the ark for over a year. A common notion also has one pair of each animal species in the ark. That’s the movie version, but it isn’t true either. Genesis 7:1-3 records God’s command to take the clean animals and birds literally “seven seven”, usually translated as “by sevens”. There was an important reason for it. In Genesis 8:20, Noah built an altar when he came out of the ark. There he burned sacrifices from every kind of clean animal and bird. You can see why more than one breeding pair was needed. Others of the extras may have provided sustenance during that year for the ark’s occupants. There was not yet any written law requiring animal sacrifices, but we recognize again the Lamb of God, slain in our place, from the foundation of the world. God Himself had provided the sacrifice for Adam, but Noah was a more active, priestly participant in the sacrificial deaths.

Consider another surprising observation. The protected and well-watered earth before the flood must have been extravagantly productive to provide the plants and animals to form our vast fossil fuel reserves. Let’s consider just the potential human contribution to the supply. Ten, very long-lived generations take us from Adam to Noah. The flood occurred more than 1656 years after Adam, when Noah was 600 years old, putting you at least into the twelfth generation. If you assume everyone was multiplying in a similar way to that recorded for the named patriarchs, you can estimate that the total human population dying in the flood may well have exceeded the roughly seven billion people living on the earth today.

If you calculate from the recorded dates, you will find that Methuselah's life came to an end around the time of the flood's onset, raising the potential of drowning as the cause of his death. The gas tank in your car may contain contributions, not only from Methuselah, but potentially from a whole lot more of those unnamed persons who became part of our fossil fuels.

They were not unnamed in the mind of God, and here Christ comes in again. Noah was not the only person loved by God in those days. We may think of the poor young children who drowned, but God thinks also of the worst adult sinners. God so loved the world of His creation that He gave His Only Begotten Son, and He gave Him here too. Look at an obscure New Testament passage, I Peter 3:18-20. It says Jesus, by the Spirit, went and preached to the spirits "in prison" who were once disobedient in the days of Noah when he was building the ark. It appears Jesus conducted a personal revival service for them, after the fact. He loves us all.

You will not hear very many sermons preached on these verses, nor do I have a ready explanation of how this all works, but I recognize Christ here. I believe there is some further Light cast on these observations as you explore such passages as John 10:14-16 and Romans 10:11-17.

Finally, read the next two verses in I Peter (3:21-22). The experience of Noah and his family in the waters of the flood is compared to the waters of baptism. Those who have experienced their death with Christ on the Cross are buried in baptism along with their old world of sinfulness. New Creatures, alive in Christ's Resurrection, are brought forth out of the water.

We will see multiple pictures of baptism as we read the Old Testament. Examples include the parting of the Red Sea in Exodus. The Israelites passed through on dry land and the Egyptian army drowned. Even the pillar of cloud that guided the Israelites in the wilderness provides a baptism illustration in Exodus 13:20-22 (see I Corinthians 10:1-2). Other pictures include the passing of the Israelites through the Jordan river into the Promised Land in Joshua 3 and 4. The waters parted here too, allowing God's people to pass on dry land. These pictures didn't involve any of the saved people getting wet. In stark contrast, the waters did not part for Jesus at His Baptism (Matthew 3). Jesus got fully wet in the Jordan at the place where the dry Israelites had come into their promise. Going beneath the water, Jesus was promising to go to the Cross. Recall those initial verses of

Genesis when the first creation emerged from the primordial waters into the glorious Light of Christ. The new creation is emerging from the waters now.

“For this is like the days of Noah to Me, when I swore that the waters of Noah would not flood the earth again: So I have sworn that I will not be angry with you nor will I rebuke you. For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken”, says the Lord who has compassion on you. Isaiah 54:9-10

CHAPTER 6

ABRAHAM

Then he (Abram) believed in the Lord and He (the Lord) reckoned it to him as righteousness. Genesis 15:6

Much had happened in the time between Noah and a man called Abram, the one God would later rename Abraham. Another ten generations, of much shorter duration, had restarted the population of humans on the earth. At first, they all spoke the same language as Noah. They began to work together to make their own name for themselves, independent of God. God stopped their project by confusing their languages from one another. I guess they could no longer agree on which name to use for themselves. They still can't.

Thousands of years later, God would demonstrate for His people a settlement of that Genesis 11 tower of Babel confusion in a remarkable way. The Holy Spirit came upon them at Pentecost in Jerusalem. The event is recorded in Acts 2. It describes a crowd of people, who spoke various languages, all hearing the disciples of the Risen Christ declaring the mighty works of God as if they were each hearing them in their own native language. Christ still speaks to us that way by the Holy Spirit.

Abram heard His Voice long ago, and he was called out of his home in that same area of Babylon and eventually into the Promised Land. Early on, he faced difficulty which forced a trip into Egypt for refuge. That pattern would have meaning later in Genesis for Jacob and again, in a different way, for Joseph, Mary and Jesus as recorded in Matthew. Through it all, Abram prospered, despite having settled in what seemed a poorer part of the land. Then his nephew Lot, who had accompanied him and had chosen the richer-looking territory, was kidnapped by invaders. Abram and his men came to the rescue, and at this point Jesus personally enters the story again.

Abram had travelled well north of the Promised Land to accomplish the rescue. He then returned in a generally southern direction toward his home in the area of Hebron, south of what is now Jerusalem. His route went by the location of the future Jerusalem before it became a city or received its name. Its name would mean City of Peace. Some would think it a misnomer because of the years of violence there, extending to the present. Others

would recognize Jerusalem as the chosen place of God's temple and the area of Christ's Crucifixion where our Peace with God was purchased.

Abram met a Man at this noteworthy place. His name was Melchizedek. The name literally means "King of Righteousness". Genesis 14:18 tells us He was the King of Salem (Peace). He was not the King of the City of Peace; He is the King of Peace itself. The verse also explains that He is Priest of the Highest God, well before any organized priesthood was established. As if that would not be sufficient for us to recognize Him, the same verse tells us He also brought forth bread and wine for Abram, just as Jesus would later do for His disciples. Next, Melchizedek pronounced the Blessing of God on Abram, just as Jesus would do for others, as in His Sermon on the Mount. Then we find Abram giving this Man a tenth part of everything he had. Abram gave Him God's share, as would be defined much later in Leviticus 27:30.

There is more. Much later, David the king would say of Him, *The Lord says to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."* ...*The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."* (Psalm 110:1 and 4) King David spoke of what the Lord God said to David's Lord, his Shepherd, the One we know as Jesus the Christ.

The picture is made clearer for us in Hebrews 6:20. It speaks of the place of God's Holy Presence, where only the High Priest could enter, but *where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek*. I know only one Member of this exalted priestly order, until the work of the Cross and the Resurrection has its way. In Exodus 19:6, Moses heard the Word on Mount Sinai expressing God's intent to make all His People a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. I Peter 2:9 tells us that those born again in Christ are that royal priesthood and holy nation referred to in Exodus. (Similar pronouncements are in Isaiah (61:6) and Revelation (1:6, 5:10 and 20:6)). The entire seventh chapter of Hebrews follows with a detailed elucidation of this Melchizedek as a precise picture for us of Jesus Christ.

Where did Abram meet Him? Genesis 14:17 says it was in the valley of Shaveh, or the King's Valley. The King's Valley is defined in II Samuel 18:18 as the place where King David's son Absalom set up a monument to himself. The monument is apparently in the Kidron Valley where a number

of the later kings are buried. Among them was Jehoshaphat, a name having a similar derivation to Shaveh. Joel 3:2 tells us that the Valley of Jehoshaphat is the place where God will gather all the nations and render judgment upon them there.

The Kidron Valley lies between the Old City of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. Jesus would pass through it often. Look at what Jesus did after He got up from the Last Supper. He had just distributed the bread and wine to His disciples and had pronounced a Blessing of God upon them in His prayer recorded in John 17. *When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron where there was a garden in which He entered with His disciples.* (John 18:1) The name of the garden was Gethsemane.

Was Abram actually met by Christ here, in the same place where He was to prepare to take upon Himself the judgment of all nations? I expect someday to learn that He did. Could Abram have partaken of the bread and wine at the nearby site where a building with an upper room would be built later? I do not know, but I recognize Christ here in this Holy Place.

The text placed at the beginning of this chapter comes at a point just after Abram had his encounter with the King of Peace and Righteousness. Abram was promised a son and many descendants by the Word of the Lord in a vision (Genesis 15:1-5). The next verse is our text, which can be too easily trivialized. The word translated as “believed in” is “aman”, which means more than to accept the truth of something said. It means to confirm, to receive assurance and to trust. The King James Version of our text says Abram had faith, and God counted that faith to him as righteousness.

We may trivialize faith too. Some would say that faith is just firm belief. If someone says they do not know if they will recover from an illness or if a difficult situation can be resolved, they are typically told “You gotta have faith!” It is almost as if faith is the idea of believing contrary to the evidence.

The Bible says faith is relational. It is the Gift of God rather than something of our own doing, according to Ephesians 2:8-9. I Thessalonians 5:24 tells us God is truly faithful. It is not that He believes in us firmly. Instead, He is committed to the relationship with us, all the way to the Cross. He gifts us

with faith, enabling our responsive commitment to the relationship with Him. His Good Purpose comes forth only within that relationship.

The Hebrew “aman” is interchangeable with a variant form which means “to go to the right hand”. Christ, seated at the Right Hand, is the very Word who was encountered by Abram in the Person of Melchizedek and in the Word of the vision of chapter 15. Abram went to the Right Hand, because the Right Hand came to Abram. In I Thessalonians 2:13, Paul is thankful that his words to the Thessalonians were received, not as being from men, but rather as the Word of God, which *also performs its work in you who believe*.

We are not delivered by our feeble attempts at belief. An intimate relationship with the One who went to the Cross for us is the only means of our deliverance. By the second verse after Genesis 15:6, God has made more promises to Abram and Abram’s response is to ask “How will I know it will happen?” Quite a believer, wasn’t he? Reminds me of me. God’s answer, as it has been for me, was to personally show himself as Christ. In Genesis 15:13, God says, “Know for certain...” In Hebrew, it is literally “Know, Know”. God had caused Abram to prepare multiple sacrifices which lay there until late into that dark night. Then the Light of the World, who would be our sacrifice and Abram’s too, passed among the dead animals so that Abram, and we, might recognize Him again in another promise of life from death through the Cross.

Abram followed the trail of sacrifice begun in Adam and Noah. He was to prepare more sacrifices, as we will see when we look next at his son Isaac. God richly fulfilled His promise of a host of descendants to come from Abram, changing his name from “High Father” to “High Father of a Multitude”. Abraham was to become the father recognized by many Jews, Christians and Muslims as the beginning of their heritage. These groups comprise the vast majority of those on earth even today who subscribe to religious belief. The eternal issue, however, is not whether we recognize Abraham, but rather whether we recognize Christ. Abraham did.

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham? Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.” John 8:56-58

CHAPTER 7

ISAAC

“...But where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” Genesis 22:7

Times had certainly changed since the days of Noah. Back then, people began having their first children when in the age range of 65 to 162 years (or more) but that was no longer how things worked. The world was different after the waters came down and produced the flood. Abraham was an old man in his mid-eighties. His wife was ten years younger, but that was still her mid-seventies. They had no children despite God’s promise of many descendants. They had gotten too old to start the promised family. They agreed together to try to fix the problem themselves while there might still be time. Abraham fathered a child with his wife’s handmaid (Genesis 16).

The next chapter of Genesis makes clear that God’s plan for Abraham was different. God now specified that Abraham, through his own wife, would yet have a son who would fulfill God’s earlier promise. By this time, Abraham was 99, his wife was 89 and the handmaid’s child was 13 years old. Our “believing” Abraham fell on his face laughing at the very idea. His wife Sarah was to get a chuckle out of it too. But the relationship with God was changing Abraham, because he then arose and accomplished the covenant of circumcision God directed in Genesis 17. That took a true, personal commitment in blood. Remarkably, and very graphically, he was later to intimately share that changed, circumcised part of his body with his wife in the process of producing a new life.

A year later, Abraham and Sarah had their only child together. God directed that he be named Isaac. Today, he would be called “Chuckles”, or something along that line. The name means laughter. Isaac’s name would remind his parents from then on of their initial response to God’s promise. God was preparing Abraham for another meeting with Christ, the very Word who had been speaking all these promises to him. God was also preparing Isaac to meet Christ for the first time. Isaac was to recognize Him as his personal savior.

You know of some Isaacs, Isaac Newton for one. You may know others, perhaps more than you would immediately recognize. Two men who recently served as Prime Minister of Israel share the name. Both Rabin and

Shamir shared the first name of Yitzhak. You have to pay attention if you are to see Isaac there, but now you may recognize a few more. Recognition is a funny thing.

It is not abundantly clear how old Isaac was when God set Abraham the most difficult task ever set for a father. Isaac was certainly young. Neither is it clear where Abraham resided at the time. Candidate locations are Beersheba and the area of Hebron. What is abundantly clear in Genesis 22 is the task: to travel to a place God would show him and to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering. The stunning thing is that Abraham's trust in this God had grown to the point that he set about to do just that. When Abraham raised the knife over his son, Hebrews 11:19 tells us that Abraham considered God able to raise the dead to life and that is, in a picture, what happened.

We should notice here that God tested, tried, or proved Abraham in these events, depending on your translation of Genesis 22:1. However, I do not get the sense that God was unsure about what would happen. God proves us by proving to us the sufficiency of a relationship with Him. Furthermore, when God later says in verse 12, "Now I know...", it does not imply that He did not know back in verse 1. After all, God had already prepared the substitute sacrifice from the beginning. What Abraham came to know was a small part of the Heart of a Father giving His Son up to die, but Abraham was doing it out of obedience. Our God does it voluntarily out of His love for us.

We should also notice that God did not ask Abraham to do the deed in his backyard. *He said, "Take now your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."* (Genesis 22:2) Instead of just anywhere, God called Abraham to travel to a specific place, but He did not give him all the details in advance. God would be active in leading Abraham as he responded to Him by following. Such is the God I know. He does not tell us the way and then expect us to find it. He **is** the Way.

The name of Moriah appears in the Old Testament only twice. The only other place is II Chronicles 3:1 where we are told Mount Moriah is the place where the temple of God's Presence would be built. It would be the location for the altar where many future burnt offerings would be offered to God. It would likely have been an easy three-day journey from Hebron, harder from

Beersheba. Moriah means “God sees” or “God is seen”. He intended to be seen right there.

Abraham was being called back to see God at the spot where Jerusalem would later be built. He was going right back to the very place he had seen the King of Kings in the person of Melchizedek, who is King of Righteousness, King of Peace and Priest of the Most High God. He would be offering his son Isaac’s body and blood at the place where he had been offered the bread and wine which later would represent the body and blood of Jesus, offered for him.

Where was the exact spot chosen by God? Was it the site of the future temple altar or was it a nearby hill later to be called Golgotha or Mount Calvary? I do not know, but Christ looms large to me here.

What about Isaac’s view of the matter? He had asked, “Where is the lamb?” but had only been told that God will provide, as recorded in Genesis 22:7-8. Abraham was well over a hundred years old when he bound his son and placed him on the altar. Isaac was a vital young man, but there is no indication of a struggle, any more than when Jesus was placed on the Cross. When you add up the numbers, Isaac and Jesus could have been the same age when they were offered up. As his father raised the knife, Isaac’s sentence of death was surely apparent, immediate and personal, but then came the Word of God. My sense is that Isaac heard too. God had provided. *Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son.* (Genesis 22:13)

Christ was seen by Isaac in the person of a sacrifice prepared to die in his place. Isaac was taken up from the altar and the ram took his place as the sacrifice. There is no indication of a struggle here either. Could the ram have struggled to exhaustion in that thicket through the long preceding night? Jesus was to go through struggle years later in the nearby garden. The name Gethsemane means the place of the olive press. That’s where the oil for our anointing was squeezed out.

Look again in the thicket where Abraham and Isaac saw the ram so inextricably ensnared. Do you suppose they saw what I am recognizing? The Ram was wearing a Crown of Thorns.

“... but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” Genesis 22:7

*The next day he (John the Baptist) saw Jesus coming to him and said,
“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”*
John 1:29

And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head...
Matthew 27:29

CHAPTER 8

ISRAEL

... “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” John 1:51

Genesis 25 tells us Isaac and Rebekah had twin sons, apparently fraternal rather than identical. We will spend time looking primarily at the second-born son, named Jacob, but later to be called Israel. Jacob seems hard to admire. He lied to and cheated those close to him in Isaac’s dysfunctional family. He was also lied to and cheated even by those close to him in his own dysfunctional family. None of this came as a surprise to God. It is somehow reassuring to see that God is not just the God of those who would seem not to need Him. Instead, He is the God of those, like me, who need Him desperately and are willing to cling to Him. Jacob was such a man.

Jacob was born grasping at the heel of his first-born twin brother. His name means the one who craftily follows at the heel, who supplants and overreaches. You know some Jacobs, at least by name. You may have heard of Jacob Marley, Jacob Javits and John Jacob Astor IV, who died on the Titanic. The list expands somewhat if you recognize where the name Jake comes from. It is a nickname for Jacob. We have a cat named Jake. The list expands much more if you recognize translations of the name into other languages. You have heard of me, in some way, now that you are reading this book. My name is James, the English form of Jacob.

Jacob was to live up to the meaning of his name. He intensely desired the right to the promise of God that belonged by birth to his elder brother Esau. Early on, he craftily “purchased” it from Esau for a bowl of soup. Esau appears to have considered it a joke. In Genesis 27, it gets more serious. With his mother’s help, Jacob masqueraded as his brother to steal Esau’s blessing, pronounced by their aged, nearly blind father. Jacob did not consider the birthright to be a joke. It was too late when Esau began to understand its value, as it has been for many others. Jacob desired it above all else and, despite Jacob’s method, God gave him the desire of his heart. The name of that desire is Jesus the Christ.

Jacob then made a trip back to Abraham's original homeland. He travelled alone with the dual purpose of finding a wife from among the hometown girls and allowing Esau's anger to cool down after the blessing incident. Much more was accomplished. One night, as he slept along the way, God came to him vividly. *He had a dream, and behold, a ladder (or staircase) was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and your descendants...and in you and your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed."* (Genesis 28:12-14) Jacob had just received the Blessing he had sought, but this time it came directly from Christ. The Blessing directly parallels that given to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 and 22:18 and inherited through Isaac according to Genesis 17:19. Now it was upon Jacob.

Christ is the Word of the Lord from above the ladder, but Christ is also the ladder itself and its promise. We do not have to reason our way to this conclusion. Jesus said so directly in the text that I quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Here it is again, from John 1:51: *"... you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."* He is the ladder. He is saying He is the staircase for us. We need to pay far more attention to the Ladder than we do to the angels.

Jesus also says the same thing in other places. *"... I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."* (John 14:6). *"I am the door; if anyone enters through me, he will be saved..."* (John 10:9). Jesus is the very means of access for us to approach God the Father because He is the very means by which God intimately approaches us.

God did more for Jacob than to simply confirm upon him the promise to Abraham and Isaac. The promise is **from** Christ, but it is also the Promise **of** Christ, for Christ is the descendant through whom all the nations of the earth may be blessed. Jacob had experienced a personal encounter with the Birthright to a New Birth.

Jacob was given the new name of Israel. The name is first introduced in Genesis 32:24-32 during an episode that has provoked many conflicting interpretations. Jacob was struggling within himself over the impending meeting with Esau. The sense of most translations is that a "man" appeared

with whom he “wrestled” all night. Jacob “prevailed” in some way that showed his power with God and resulted in God’s blessing being pronounced over him. The “man” asked Jacob what his name was and pronounced on him the new one, but he declined to reveal his own name to Jacob or to us. Who was that “man”? Was it Christ? I don’t know.

I think it is generally unhelpful for us to picture Jacob besting God in some kind of match like we might see on televised professional wrestling. However, something momentous surely happened here for the man who had already received God’s Promise. The Hebrew term translated as “man” is not the specific “adam” nor is it the far more common “iysh”. It is the non-specific “enosh”, often translated simply as “another”. “Wrestled” is a Hebrew word used only here. It is derived from the word for dust, literally meaning to get dusty, and has the sense of “struggled”. “Prevailed” is a term for being able or to endure. The name of Israel means the one who has contended, persevered and persisted with God. From Israel’s point of view, he declares he had seen God face to face.

I have struggled with God on many occasions, sometimes not recognizing who I was contending with. It can be painful in the extreme, usually leaving a mark. Too often I have failed to persist and persevere to the blessing, turning away instead to my own way. Jacob held on to Him desperately and received a blessing from God which would be made available to the world in the Person of Jesus the Christ.

Christ would later appear personally as the Word of God to confirm Israel’s new name in Genesis 35:9-15. It is worth reading. It took place at the same spot where He appeared to him earlier as the Ladder. The place was named Bethel, the House of God. Abram’s new name of Abraham is used about 175 times in the Old Testament, but his descendants of the Promise are known as the Children of Israel. Jacob’s new name of Israel is used over 2500 times. We should pay attention.

Another very different view of Christ was given to Israel later in his life. You can read about it in Genesis from chapter 37 to the end. Israel had twelve sons, by four different women, but Joseph was his clear favorite. His jealous brothers considered murder but decided instead to sell him into slavery in Egypt. They told their father that Joseph had been killed, and showed him his bloody robe to prove it. As Israel mourned his son, God was

raising him up out of slavery to become the right-hand man of the ruler of Egypt. Joseph became the means by which Israel and his family would be delivered out of famine. Joseph's name means "he who will add". His two sons born in Egypt became adopted into the promise by Israel, giving Joseph a double share and effectively increasing the twelve tribes to thirteen.

We see repeated themes of Abraham at Moriah here. Both fathers were mourning over a son. Both sons were delivered out of death, as a Substitute died to stain Isaac's altar and Joseph's coat with blood. Later themes of Christ are here too. Jesus was betrayed for money by one of the twelve. He was thought to be permanently dead, after staining the Cross with his own Blood, but He is actually raised to great power at the right hand of God. He is Himself the King of Kings who offers to bring us, not just a temporary deliverance from famine, but to an eternal deliverance into His Presence.

Genesis 45 details how word came to Israel that Joseph was alive in splendor in Egypt. Israel could not believe it, not until he saw the host of wagons and pack animals sent to him by Joseph, laden with riches from Egypt. Then he believed, and departed to join him. Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit among us in power that we might know His Splendor before we depart this place. The Old Testament is rich with the patterns of Christ that we might believe and know Him.

Jacob was a selfish, flawed and fretful person who was touched by God. He was changed into the Israel who clung to the Christ who touched him, and was delivered to bless his children. How fitting that I should share his first name. How I desire to share his new one!

Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive." Genesis 50:19-20

But Jesus was saying, "Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." Luke 23:34

CHAPTER 9

MOSES

“The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you...” Exodus 12:13

The Children of Israel would remain in Egypt for 430 years, much of it as slaves, which they became when Joseph died and his influence ended. Exodus 1 records that the Israelite population had increased over these years, to the point that the Egyptians became concerned enough to try limiting their numbers by killing their newborn males. This selective, post-birth abortion program was not fully successful. Against this backdrop, Moses came on the scene.

Moses was born of Hebrew parents, both descended from Israel’s son Levi, as described in Exodus 2. His mother hid him for three months to keep him alive, but he became increasingly difficult to hide as he grew. She placed him in a little reed (or papyrus) box, covered with real pitch and tar, and put the baby afloat in the Nile River. His life was preserved. Do you detect themes from Noah here? Would it help if I told you the Hebrew word for the baby’s little vessel is the same as the word for Noah’s much larger one? This time, we see the real word for pitch, but a similar figurative picture of baptism is still recognizable. The name of Moses even means “drawn out of the waters” and he was indeed drawn forth and adopted by Pharaoh’s daughter into the ruler’s household. Here we have themes of Joseph too.

Moses had one of his multiple encounters with Christ after he fled Egypt to avoid the consequences of having killed an Egyptian who had been mistreating a Hebrew slave. Exodus 3 tells us Moses was tending sheep when he turned aside to see a bush that was aflame but not being burned up. The text says the messenger of the Lord appeared to Moses in the flame, but this Messenger then introduces Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jesus is always the Word to us, being with God and being God Himself who would be with us, according to John 1. He told Moses the ground in that place was Holy because He was there. The place was Mount Sinai, also called Horeb (or desolate), but known as the mountain of God. Place is important to God and to us. Christ would meet him and others at Sinai on multiple occasions. Moses left that place to participate in a Christ-

like deliverance of his people from their valley of tears to the land of promise (Psalm 84:5-7).

Moses would see a picture of the form of our deliverance in the tenth and last plague upon Egypt. In the face of the impending death of the first-born of everybody and everything, God promised the substitutionary death of His Only-Begotten Son as He instituted the Passover. The children of Israel took a spotless lamb into each household for a few days and then killed it. The blood of the lamb was smeared upon the doorposts of their homes. The text placed at the beginning of this chapter tells why. The blood was a sign of a deliverance to those in the homes because, to God, it signified a debt which was to be paid on the coming Cross. By the way, the Bible says it was no “death angel”, but God Himself, who passed through Egypt and took the lives of the other firstborn. The blood had the same significance as the covering of Noah’s ark and the blood of the ram smeared over the altar in place of the blood of Isaac. The Old Testament looks to Christ as it consistently shows us the One whose death would purchase our life.

On the night of the first Passover, the Israelites, including Moses, consumed the body of the lamb in a manner similar to Abraham’s earlier consumption of the bread and wine offered to him by Melchizedek, the King of Peace and Righteousness. God instructed His people to continue observing the Passover each year. Much later, as Jesus prepared to go to the Cross, it was, of course, Passover time. The lamb’s blood adorned the entry that led to the Upper Room and the lamb’s body was consumed by those gathered there. After that meal, Jesus offered His Own Body and Blood to be consumed by the disciples, and by us. He then went forth to place His Own Blood on the Cross, fulfilling the promise of the Old Testament Passover.

The deliverance of God’s people through the Red Sea and the death of the pursuing Egyptians was another reprise of Noah, the flood and baptism. It was deliverance and judgment at the same time. Then Moses led the people right back to Mt Sinai. Moses received much more on the mountain than simply a list of commandments, laws of sacrifice and specifications for building the Tabernacle, the Altar and the Place of God’s presence. Moses had an intimate, personal experience there with the Living God. In response to a request from Moses, God partially revealed to him His Visible Presence

(Exodus 33:18-23). I suggest to you that Moses saw God in the Person of Jesus Christ. Allow me to explain why.

First, may I insert a word of caution. I fear that we may too easily toss around words and ideas relating to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as if we comprehend and understand the God who made us. He is also One God. We err when we think of the Three Persons as separate in any sense from the Person of God. Our minds are not made to look at Him from above. At the end of our conjectures, we must simply seek the experience with Him that He offers. We will not gain an understanding from some separate perch.

From my experiential perspective, as I receive God's Word concerning God and Moses on Mount Sinai, I recognize God in the Person of Jesus Christ through my own knowledge of Him. It is not based on the idea that Christ is the Word, the Expression and the Revelation of God to humankind. It is my hearing and experience of that Word.

Look at the whole of it. Turn to the Gospel of Matthew and see Moses on the mountain beholding the Glory of Jesus. *Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves, and He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.* (Matthew 17:1-3) Moses was with Jesus on the mountain and saw His Face. He gazes upon it now with adoration. I must surely recognize Jesus as the One meeting him on Sinai. It is noteworthy that the face of Moses also shone brightly when he came down from his encounter with Christ on Sinai, as recorded in Exodus 34:29-35. Why should it be otherwise?

There was a sixth person in the group. His name was Elijah. We will consider him in Chapter 16 of this book. For now, let me just say that Elijah was to make the long trip all the way back down from the Promised Land to meet Christ on the very same Mount Sinai where Moses met Him. He was the only other one to do so in that place. It may come as no surprise that I also recognize Christ in that meeting on Mount Sinai with Elijah.

People have made various conjectures about the location of the Mount of Transfiguration. Several candidate mountains have been proposed in or near the Promised Land. For me, it was Sinai. If the Holy Spirit can transport Phillip out of the desert after his meeting with the Ethiopian in Acts 8:39-40,

then surely Christ can move three disciples to Sinai. After all, He was able to move Moses and Elijah from heaven to earth. Place is important to God and to us. The recognition of the Christ is far more important, but God may sometimes use a location to assist our recognition.

Moses led the children of Israel through the wilderness for forty years. More accurately, God led them by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. God also provided food in the form of manna and water too when needed, but the people did not follow very well. Exodus 17 records how the people grumbled and threatened Moses when they thirsted on the way from the Red Sea to Sinai. God told Moses He would stand before him on the rock. Moses was to strike the rock with his staff before the people. Water flowed forth from the rock when he did.

Much later, after the encounter on Sinai, a very similar thirst and rock incident is recorded in Numbers 20. Although Moses had met with Christ on the mountain more than once and conversed with Him along the way, he still did not follow flawlessly. This time, Moses made a serious mistake. I get the clear sense that it was not the number of times Moses struck the rock that caused his problem, as some have thought. Instead, verse 12 says it was his choosing to present himself, in the place of his Lord, as being the one bringing forth the water. How remarkable that God's Grace caused the water to come forth to the people from the rock anyway! It encourages me that we keep finding God patiently drawing imperfect followers to His Perfection. How gently and how surely does our Shepherd lead us!

The New Testament offers a startling four-verse observation on all this that we might otherwise miss. *For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.* (I Corinthians 10:1-4) Recognize Him! He pours forth Living Water to halting followers (John 4:13-14).

Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. Deuteronomy 34:10

CHAPTER 10

LEVITICUS

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing...” Leviticus 14:1-2

Leviticus was not a person. Leviticus is a book of the Old Testament. I do not know of anybody who has Leviticus at the top of their list of favorite books of the Bible. Leviticus probably ranks somewhere down there with Nahum. (Yes, that’s also a book, but a person too.) When have you ever heard of anyone deciding to set aside an evening and read Leviticus? I have never heard a definitive sermon series preached on Leviticus. But here we are. If we recognize Christ even here, it should get our attention.

Leviticus is largely composed of the Word of God as spoken to Moses, usually for transmission to the people or to his brother Aaron. The content for the most part relates to various procedures to be followed, including those for the priesthood and for the sacrifices as they were required in various circumstances. Clean and unclean gets defined. The annual Day of Atonement is specified. There is some history here too. The name Leviticus means the law of the priests. These priests were selected from the tribe of Israel’s son Levi. Moses and his brother Aaron were Levites and Aaron became the first priest. Does this sound exciting so far?

I think a fair number of Christians, in effect, simply write Leviticus off as irrelevant. They may see it as the book of “eye for eye and tooth for tooth”, and the one that says we are not to mark our bodies. Maybe they assume we are not under law anymore but under grace, so law can be ignored. Maybe they assume the “priesthood of all believers” is in effect, so the formalisms of a select priesthood can be ignored. I think we ignore God’s Word to our peril. Even Jesus said, “...until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” (Matthew 5:18) (In the King James version, the “jot” in this verse refers to the smallest letter in the alphabet and the “tittle” refers to the tiny stroke with it, like the dot on the letter “i”.) Maybe we should look at this Book.

Leviticus 11:44, 19:2, and 20:7 for one example, specifies that we are to be holy because God is. This is quoted in I Peter 1:16 and expanded upon. We begin to recognize that it is not our obligation to come up with holiness to match God's. Instead, the indwelling of the Holy God in the Person of Christ makes us so. Leviticus 20:8 says that too: "*I am the Lord who sanctifies you.*" In Leviticus 26:11, He says, "... *I will make My dwelling among you...*" That is Immanuel; that is God With Us; that is Christ talking.

Let's get much more specific. Look at Leviticus 14, from which the text is taken that begins our chapter. The text details the procedures to be followed when someone who has leprosy is cured. The procedures are very specific and very detailed, but, for the most part, basically useless for many centuries. Leprosy was an incurable disease. The few who were reported to have been cured by God in the Old Testament were not reported to have followed the Leviticus procedures. Not only were the priests out of practice on this, they never got into practice on this.

Leprosy is an odd disease which has caused untold human suffering for thousands of years. It is caused by a bacterium related to the one causing tuberculosis, but that fact was not known until 1873. Lepers were generally isolated from the population, often in colonies where they suffered together. The best-known leprosy sanitarium in the United States was in Louisiana. An effective cure was first developed within my lifetime. I am a physician, but I have never treated or cured a case of leprosy.

Leprosy can be a horribly disfiguring disease. Skin changes take place in lepers which can make other people uncomfortable around them. Lepers can lose parts of their bodies, including arms and legs. The loss occurs in a surprising way. The bacteria attack peripheral nerves, producing numbness and visible skin changes. The numbness prevents the leper from having sensitivity to the kinds of mechanical or thermal stress and irritation from which normal people would automatically withdraw. Therefore, the leper accumulates damage from minor trauma and associated infection which, over time, causes progressive tissue loss which can include entire limbs. Even if the disease is treated and the bacteria eliminated, the accumulated damage is not reversed.

In some ways, leprosy has similarities to sin. When sin has its way with us, we progressively lose our sensitivity to what hurts us and we become hurt all the more.

Now that we know what we are dealing with, look with me at God's law of the leper in the day of his cleansing. What we shall see is perhaps the most beautiful picture of Jesus Christ that I have found anywhere in Scripture. Just read it with me, as we pick up where the introductory text left off.

"...Now he shall be brought to the priest, and the priest shall go out to the outside of the camp. Thus the priest shall look, and if the infection of leprosy has been healed in the leper, then the priest shall give orders to take two live clean birds and cedar wood and scarlet string and hyssop for the one who is to be cleansed. The priest shall also give orders to slay the one bird in an earthenware vessel over running water. As for the live bird, he shall take it together with the cedar wood and the scarlet string and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the live bird in the blood of the bird that was slain over the running water. He shall then sprinkle seven times the one who is to be cleansed from the leprosy and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the live bird go free over the open field. (Leviticus 14:2-7)

Notice that this is not an offering to be brought to seek healing. It is an offering of thanksgiving for a healing received, for which, apart from Christ, the leper could have had no hope. The wood, scarlet and hyssop speaks, in some way, of the wood of the Cross, the purple robe and the hyssop used to lift the vinegar to Jesus in John 19:29. The Blood of the One who died covered the one released to fly free. I'm grateful it does for me too.

Recognize that this picture of my Savior was given to Moses and was stored up, unused, for centuries, waiting for a leper to come to Jesus saying, *"Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."* Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, *"I am willing; be cleansed."* And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, *"See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest and present the offering Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."* (Matthew 8:2-4)

The priest had to dust off the pages and read what he was supposed to do. Jesus already knew. He is the One who had placed the Word on the pages. The cleansed leper received the promise of the Cross that Jesus had given to Moses so many long years before. The promise had been stored up for this very moment. Then the priest and the former leper watched the living bird fly free, covered with the blood of the bird who had died in its place. The

former leper, even then, was already covered with the Promise of the Blood of the One who had touched him and was soon to die in his place.

I am convinced the cleansed leper was among those gathered at the foot of the Cross. I hope the priest was there too.

Surely Christ is recognizable here, even in Leviticus.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
Hebrews 13:8

*So, let us go out to him outside the camp, bearing his reproach.
For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city
which is to come. Hebrews 13:13-14*

*Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good news,
Who announces peace! ... Nahum 1:15 (Yes, that Nahum! (p.38)
His name comes from “nacham”. Yes, that “nacham”! (p.17))*

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you...” John 14:27
(We should indeed behold the feet of the One who announces Peace.
We will see the nail prints.)

CHAPTER 11

JOSHUA

*“... Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you;
I will not fail you or forsake you.” Joshua 1:5*

Joshua became the new leader after Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. Moses had failed to honor God at the Rock, but Moses was not utterly rejected. He was turned around, as you can see in his final song in Deuteronomy 32. In verses 3 and 4, he proclaims and ascribes greatness to God, the Rock. As we have seen, that Rock is Christ. Moses was raised out of the grave, where God Himself had buried him, and went on to meet Christ again on the mountain. Joshua would meet Him too, in the Promised Land.

You can't get beyond Joshua's name without seeing Christ, because “Joshua” is the Hebrew form of “Jesus”. It means Jehovah the Lord is Salvation. His original name was just salvation (Hoshea) but Moses changed it to Jesus. Joshua was not descended from the priestly line of Israel's third son Levi, as was Moses. Neither was he descended from the kingly line of Israel's fourth son Judah, as was David, a named ancestor of Jesus. Instead, Joshua came from the birthright line of Israel's eleventh and favorite son Joseph (I Chronicles 5:1-2), who had delivered his people from famine and who had received Israel's fondest blessing (Genesis 49). Joshua inherited that abundant blessing through Joseph's second son Ephraim, whom Israel had blessed in the place of Joseph's firstborn (Genesis 48).

Joshua had already demonstrated his consistent reliability as a leader of the army and an assistant to Moses, starting before the people arrived at Sinai (Exodus 17 and 24). He was one of the twelve spies who had searched out the Promised Land. He and Caleb, of the tribe of Judah, were the only ones who had given a positive report according to Numbers 13. Moses, in Deuteronomy 31:1-8, told all the people and then told Joshua, *“He will not fail you or forsake you.”* Christ is the “He” of whom Moses was speaking. After Moses died, his words were confirmed to Joshua directly from Christ in the text that begins our chapter. As God had been with Moses in the Person of Jesus Christ, so He would be with Joshua.

How could we possibly know that it was Christ speaking directly to Joshua here? Look at the place where our text is quoted in the New Testament, in a

passage whose subject is Jesus. The promise is confirmed to be directly from Jesus Christ to Joshua: ... *for He Himself has said, "I will never leave you, nor will I ever forsake you"* (Hebrews 13:5) Today, it remains a promise **of** Christ, directly **from** Christ, and now He speaks it directly to us. He says the same thing in Matthew 28:29: "... *Lo, I am with you always ...* "

The group that entered the Promised Land was younger than the one that left Egypt. God told His grumbling people in Numbers 14 that all the men, above the age of twenty, would die in the wilderness. Joshua and Caleb were specifically excepted. Since Israel was in the wilderness for forty years, Joshua and Caleb were the only men over sixty years old who entered.

Even the crossing into the Promised Land, in Joshua 3 and 4, pictured Christ. The crossing was accomplished through the power of His Presence residing above a chest, built according to the design given to Moses at Sinai, called the Ark of the Covenant (a different word than for the arks of Noah and Moses). The Ark was carried into the flooded river, but not to float across. The waters parted for the people to pass, just as the Red Sea had done forty years before. Joshua set up twelve stones in the middle of the river where the Ark waited for the people to go over. It is another picture of baptism: the stones were washed when the waters returned, but Israel was delivered out, as shown by another twelve stones from the river placed in the Promised Land.

The site of the Jordan crossing was to have a continuing significance in future years. Just as with Sinai, Elijah would come here too, as we shall discuss in Chapter 16. Most notably, Jesus Christ would come to this spot for His Baptism. He would be placed into the water with the stones and raised up, as God's Presence with us, to deliver us into His Promise.

In Joshua 5, God's order was accomplished for the circumcision of those males born during the forty years in the wilderness. There had been a continuing requirement from God that all male children be circumcised shortly after birth. The people did so in Egypt, but not during the forty subsequent years. It was not because of a lack of convenient hospitals; there were no hospitals in Egypt either. They had simply been ignoring the God of their deliverance. To me, the most remarkable thing is that the circumcisions took place after they crossed the Jordan!

If I had been running things instead of God, I suspect I would have ordered the circumcisions to be done before they could enter the Promised Land. From a practical viewpoint, it would have made more sense to me to do this painful procedure to the army, and let them heal, while there was still a flooded river separating them from the enemy troops. God was not worried about that. From a spiritual perspective, I would surely have required the people to fulfil the clear requirement of His law before I let them into the Land of Promise. God doesn't do things that way either. To paraphrase Ephesians 2:8-9, "It is by grace they were saved through faith, and even that faith relationship was not out of themselves, it is the Gift of God. It cannot be out of works, lest any of them should be proud of their law-keeping." God consistently surprises me with a better idea, namely Jesus Christ.

The Children of Israel first encamped in their new homeland near the fortified city of Jericho. There is an old song that announces, "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho", but he didn't really. God did, in the Person of Jesus Christ. Joshua got to meet Christ face to face before the battle, as recorded late in Joshua 5. A Man appeared to Joshua near Jericho. The Man held a drawn sword. Joshua did not recognize Him, so he asked whose side He was on. Jesus responded that He was not come to be on a side, but that He was there as the Captain of the Lord's Host. Joshua immediately fell on his face before Him and awaited orders. When people try to worship an angel, they are told to cut it out and worship God (Revelation 19:10 and 22:9). This was no created angel. This was Joshua's "burning bush experience". Joshua heard the same thing Moses had heard, "Get your shoes off, you are on Holy Ground." Christ makes the place of His Presence Holy. That's one reason for the great significance of His Promise, in John 15, that He will abide **in us** by the Holy Spirit.

We will see the Captain of the Lord's Host coming again with His sword. John saw Him in Revelation 19:11-16. The armies of Heaven follow the King of Kings. He is Jesus the Christ. Many seem to miss the totality of what He comes to do, but Joshua did not. Joshua would observe both the undeserved Grace to Israel and the Judgment of Jericho. Jesus comes to accomplish the full Will of the Father, involving incomprehensible Grace showered upon us at the Cross but also fierce Judgment upon those who do not receive Him. The Captain of Grace is also the very One who delivers God's Wrath, as you will see in the rest of Revelation 19.

Do not miss another profound truth revealed to Joshua in this encounter. As we have seen, Jesus said He was not taking sides here, as if in a dispute among men. The Captain of the Lord's host was not opposed to all of Jericho as an entity. In fact, there was one family among them who had recognized God and received His Grace. You can read about Rahab the harlot receiving the two spies in Joshua 2. When the city was destroyed, Joshua 6:21-25 records that Joshua then sent the two men back into Rahab's house to deliver her and her family. Please recall that her house was on the city wall. Therefore, that part of the wall did not "come tumblin' down". By Christ's doing, it stood as a lone bastion of God's Grace. As we receive His Grace, He empowers us to surrender our group prejudices and rely on "Jesus Christ, who is to judge the living and the dead", according to II Timothy 4:1.

The deliverance of the land was not yet complete when Joshua died. In his farewell addresses to Israel in Joshua 23 and 24, Joshua implored them to cling to the Lord rather than the peoples, and their gods, who were being driven out. If they did, God would complete their deliverance. If they chose instead to accept and mingle with what God had condemned, God would not drive those people out, but would leave them to be a continuing snare, and thorns in their eyes, until they perished there (Joshua 23:13). I suppose you know the choice most of them made and what has happened since. The warning is still timely. I suppose you recognize the wrong choice is still being tragically made by many across the world even today.

Recognize the Savior as He approaches us even here and even now. By His Grace poured out at the Cross, we may remain **in** the world for a time, but not be **of** the world, as we cling only to Him (John 17:13-17).

"Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."
(Joshua 24:14-15)

CHAPTER 12

RUTH

*“May the Lord reward your work, and your wages be full from the Lord,
The God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge.”*
Ruth 2:12

After the death of Joshua and before Israel had kings, a series of Judges did the leading. They were not like the ones wearing robes in a courtroom. The Book of Judges says they were deliverers, raised up by God to rescue His people out of their consistent failings. During this period, a woman named Ruth arose, whose life demonstrates Christ in multiple ways.

We learn a lot from the women of the Bible. We saw in Romans 1:20 that the creation shows us God. We should therefore not be surprised to learn something of Christ from His choice to make humans as male and female. No one should be offended that the Father and the Son are male figures. We are invited to be part of the Church, the female figure destined to be the Bride of Christ. Isaiah 62:5 tells us, *...as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God will rejoice over you.* This promise is fulfilled, as Revelation 21: 9, shows us *“...the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”*

The discussion of God’s desire for the behavior of husbands and wives is specifically defined as a picture of Christ and the Church in Ephesians 5:32. I identify unashamedly with the Bride as I look to Christ. As a husband, I need to humbly seek Him that I might love my wife in a way that patterns the way He loves the Church and gave Himself for her (Ephesians 5:25). From this perspective, there is a deeper meaning in the way He made Eve out of Adam and the way He brought forth life from their union. The Church is called the Body of Christ and Life proceeds from that Union.

Consider the origin of the matriarchs who accompanied the patriarchs. Abraham’s wife Sarah came with him to Canaan from his original homeland in Chaldea, the area of Babylon. Isaac’s wife Rebekah was his second cousin, brought back from that same family. Jacob brought back Leah and Rachel, his first cousins, along with two handmaids, again from the same family. Joseph was the first to break the pattern. His two sons were from a foreigner, the daughter of an Egyptian, but they were adopted into the

Promise of God. More adoptions would follow, including Rahab the Canaanite of Jericho from the last chapter, and now Ruth the Moabite.

Moab was a son of Abraham's nephew Lot. His name is an odd combination of the names for mother and father, the "ab" part being the "father" part of Abraham. Moab himself was an odd combination. His mother was Lot's eldest daughter. His father Lot was literally his "mother's father", the meaning of Moab's name (Genesis 19:27-38). Moabites, though distantly and incestuously related to Israel, were prohibited from the assembly of the Lord (Deuteronomy 23:3) and foreigners to His Promise. Still, Ruth had married into a family of the tribe of Judah from the little town of Bethlehem.

Elimelech, his wife Naomi and their two sons had come to Moab from Bethlehem to escape yet another famine. Elimelech had died in Moab and both brothers had married Moabite women. Ruth was married to the brother named "Weak and sickly". The other brother was named "Failing and destruction". Perhaps predictably, with names like that, the brothers soon died too, leaving Naomi alone with two Moabite daughters-in-law. Naomi's name means "Pleasant", but she did not feel that way. Naomi resolved to return to Bethlehem where she still had land. She urged her two daughters-in-law to return to their own people. One did, but Ruth was adamant that she would go with Naomi. She announced that Naomi's people and Naomi's God had become hers. Ruth was being adopted by Christ and Christ was being adopted by Ruth. That is precisely the way He works in us.

When they got home, no apparent provision awaited, so Ruth went forth to glean. A gleaner follows after the harvesters to pick up what they may leave behind. Ruth "happened" to glean in a field belonging to a rich and mighty kinsman named Boaz. She would glean the Grace and Love of God.

Christ is here. In Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30, we read of another foreign woman and would-be gleaner. She was descended from the people of Syria and Phoenicia, but she sought out Jesus trying to obtain healing for her daughter. Jesus told her it is not good to waste the bread provided for God's children. I don't think He said that to be mean, but to allow her to say, and to allow us to hear, the same faith response of Ruth the gleaner: *"Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs."* (Mark 7:28) The God of the children and His Rich Provision became hers.

Chapters 2 through 4 of Ruth describe how Ruth then sought the presence of Boaz and Boaz sought after Ruth. Boaz not only desired to make material provision for Ruth, but he also desired to marry her, just as Christ desires to marry us. To qualify, Boaz had to be the near kinsman of her dead husband and he had to pay for Naomi's land as the redemption or buy-back price. Christ also came to earth to be our near kinsman and to die on the Cross, paying our debt of sin to redeem us. Boaz also had to offer the richness of his own estate to Ruth. There was a nearer kinsman who was first in line ahead of Boaz. He wanted the land, but was unwilling to pay the price of being entangled with Ruth. Boaz desired Ruth, just as God so loves us in Christ and as He also offers to share with us the riches of His Estate.

Boaz and Ruth offer us a clear picture of Christ, our Kinsman-Redeemer. Ruth's adoption also offers us Christ Himself. Matthew 1:5-6 says, ...*Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of David the king.* Ruth was David's great grandmother! Matthew 1 continues on to document the named line of descent down to Jesus the Messiah. That's why Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem for His Birth. They were of the ...*house and family of David* (Luke 2:4). Without Boaz and Ruth, there would have been no David, but God is Sovereign. Ruth's adoption was not just into the Children of Israel but into the line of the kings and the Line of Christ. Ruth is a short book, well worth reading.

Allow me a final observation before we move on to David. Do you have any curiosity about how Boaz was schooled in the grace he showed to Ruth? The obvious answer is that it derived directly from Christ, but we can see more about the way He instilled it. I left out the first few words of Matthew 1:5 in my last paragraph. Here they are: *Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab.* Rahab was the mother of Boaz! I have mentioned that Rahab, the harlot of Jericho, was going to be adopted too. She was, and also into the line of the kings and the Line of Christ. Her son showed God's same Grace to Ruth.

God often makes His Grace to be the Mother of grace to another. If you care to see it, just ask among my children and grandchildren about my wife Janie. Or just ask me. I also had a mother and grandmother who shared Jesus with me, preparing the way for me to know Him. The result may not be seen in your lifetime here, but what difference does that make?

*So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife and he went in to her.
And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.
Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed is the Lord who has not left you
without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel.
May he also be a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age;
for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you
than seven sons, has given birth to him." Ruth 4:13-15*

CHAPTER 13

DAVID

“...For He has made an everlasting covenant with me, ordered in all things and secured; for all my salvation and all my desire, will He not indeed make it grow?”

II Samuel 23:5

David was a king born in Bethlehem, so we have the beginnings of a picture of Christ already. His name means “Beloved”. His father Jesse had eight sons, David being the youngest. You may recall that Boaz, from the last chapter, was Jesse’s grandfather. It might cause us to consider whether Jesse inherited the family place there in Bethlehem. Might David have tended his sheep on the same hills Boaz redeemed from Naomi’s estate? Might David have pastured his flock in the Kinsman-Redeemer’s fields where Ruth had gleaned? Might David have been born on the site where an inn with a stable would later be built? Were other shepherds abiding with their sheep in the very same gleaning fields centuries later, so they could hear an angelic announcement of another Birth in Bethlehem? I do not know, but I know that place is important, and I see Christ here.

Another notable birth had occurred at Bethlehem. David surely would have been familiar with the monument to it. Saul, the first king over Israel, and the one who would try to kill David, was not born in Bethlehem, but Saul’s tribe of Benjamin was born there. Jacob’s beloved wife Rachel, the mother of Joseph, died as she gave birth to Benjamin, Jacob’s youngest, while Jacob and Rachel were traveling. As she died, she called him Ben-oni (Son of my Sorrow), but Jacob named him Benjamin (Son of the Right Hand). She was buried alone there in a well-marked grave. Centuries later, another Joseph would pass by that grave on the road to Bethlehem with another pregnant woman ready to deliver. The child Mary brought forth would be both the Man of Sorrows and the Son of the Right Hand. Rachel died giving life to her son; Mary’s Son would die to give life to His mother, and to me.

I Samuel 15-16 tells how Samuel anointed David king after God had rejected Saul as king, but it would be some time before David’s kingship would be recognized. Jesus would also walk the earth as the unrecognized

King of Kings, while the displaced king of this world also attempted to kill Him. At his son's anointing, I think I can hear David's father Jesse saying, "This is my son Beloved, in whom I am well pleased." (See Luke 3:21-22).

The story of David and Goliath in I Samuel 17 is well-known. For now, just consider David's armor. The worldly armor of a worldly king was not appropriate. David wore only the armor Christ would wear, as described for Him in Isaiah 59:15-20 and recommended for us in Ephesians 6:10-17. It's worth taking a look.

David was thirty years old when he began his recognized kingship, first over his own tribe of Judah and then over all Israel (II Samuel 5:1-5). Jesus was the same age when He began his public ministry (Luke 3:23). David promptly conquered Jerusalem, where Abraham had met Melchizedek and Isaac had been placed on an altar. David desired to make it his capital city and to bring up the Ark of God's Presence, which had been neglected during Saul's reign (I Chronicles 11-13). The Ark had remained where it had been stored since it was returned from a brief time with the Philistines, which you can read about in I Samuel 4-7.

The power of God's Presence was again demonstrated when the Ark was not recognized as Holy during its transport to Jerusalem, and it frightened David and the people. They put it back in storage in the home of another apparent foreigner named Obed-Edom. Obed derives from the same name as the son of Boaz and Ruth, but Edomites were enemies descended from Esau, Jacob's brother who lost his birthright to God's Promise. Obed-Edom is also identified as being from Gath, a city of the Philistines, another, more distantly related enemy of Israel. Nevertheless, this strange amalgam of a man was blessed by the Presence of God. His adoption encouraged David to bring the Ark home to Jerusalem with the proper respect (II Samuel 6).

The Ark entered Jerusalem with sacrifices offered every six paces and David celebrating the Presence of God with complete abandon. He removed his kingly outer garments and danced before the Ark with all his might. His wife, Saul's daughter, thought David was making a disgraceful, non-kingly spectacle of himself. David could see only the King of Kings. David also saw something terribly wrong for him to be living in a palace while God's Presence remained in a tent, so he resolved to build a grand temple for Him. God's response to David's worship was a very specific promise of Christ.

The prophet Nathan relayed God's Promise to build a grander house out of David. *"...I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me..."* (II Samuel 7:12-14). God was not talking about David's son Solomon. That kingdom was temporary. Even David realized in verse 19 that God was talking about the distant future. The promise was fulfilled by the coming of God's Only-Begotten Son, to be called by the name Jesus. He was to say *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."* (John 2:19) John would later say of his vision of the New Jerusalem, *I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.* (Revelation 22:22)

David would go on to commit adultery with another man's wife, have the man killed and take her as an additional wife for himself. At first it seems incomprehensible to me that David could do such things after his experiences with God, but then God shows me myself and my folly. Nathan confronted David with Christ, the Word of God, saying, *"You are the man!"* (II Samuel 12:7). David was moved to an abject and profound repentance which we can gain some insight into by reading Psalm 51. You may not choose to stop here and take the time to read it, but you should. I did.

We are not capable of generating true repentance out of ourselves. Christ needs to confront us and tell us, "You are the one" before we will see our sin as He does. Our tendency is to repent superficially, and temporarily, of a few sins that have caused us inconvenience. Christ confronts us with our sin in all its ugliness. Do not read Psalm 51 as being just the words of David. They are first and most importantly the Words of Christ. Do not think for a moment that Christ had no sin to confess to the Father. He had mine! And He had yours. He took our sin upon Him as His Own, and it hurt Him beyond all measure. Such was the pain of Gethsemane and the Cross, incomparably beyond the physical agony. It may be time to read Psalm 51 yet again...

Before he died, David chose, in response to Satan's temptation, to number the people of his kingdom as if they were his (I Chronicles 21). God had earlier caused His people to be numbered when He brought them out of

Egypt, but here was David doing it for his own reasons. Here is a parallel to the sin of Moses when he acted like he was the one bringing water out of the Rock. In God's judgment on him, David was surprisingly given a choice among three bad alternatives. David chose the one which would be finished the quickest and which was under the hand of the One he knew to be a merciful God. The people took the brunt of the punishment. Seventy-thousand died. Then came another experience with Christ.

God had already decided to show His Mercy to His people when He showed Himself to David as recorded in I Chronicles 21. David saw One similar to the One Joshua had seen. A Messenger of God with a drawn sword in His hand, was standing, this time not on Holy Ground outside Jericho, but between earth and heaven, where Christ as Jacob's Ladder had stood. His sword was still stretched out over Jerusalem. David's response shows us a picture of the Christ who was showing Himself to David. David said the sin was his and asked that the punishment fall on him instead of the people. He volunteered his own death that others might live. Christ can surely be recognized here, both in David and above him.

Once again, place is important. David was commanded to build an altar right there and offer an animal sacrifice whose death was substituted for David's. He called the place the House of God, as Jacob had named the different place where he had seen the Ladder. David resolved that the temple for the altar and Ark would be built on this new spot, and it was indeed. A vast number of sacrifices would be offered here, each looking forward to the Cross. The place, of course, was Mount Moriah. Christ appeared to David at the very same place where the ram had been provided in place of Isaac and where the King of Righteousness and Peace had provided His Body and Blood as bread and wine to Abraham. David, the man after God's Own Heart, patterned Christ by offering himself so that others might live. Christ's offering is far more remarkable. David was in fact the guilty one, confessing his own sin. Christ's offer is for us, even though we are the guilty ones. He confesses our sin as His, and chooses to make us the Place of His Presence.

*...For we are the temple of the living God...
"And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and
daughters to me," says the Lord Almighty. II Corinthians 6:16-18*

CHAPTER 14

PSALMS

*How blessed is the man who does not walk in the council of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates
day and night. Psalm 1:1-2*

Psalms are prayers and praise to God typically set to music to be sung. The Book of Psalms is like a hymnbook with 150 numbers. By no means are they all attributed to David. By my count, a typical translation shows nearly half as being attributable to him, but there are a number with no attribution. Several are attributed to a man named Asaph, some to the Sons of Korah, one or two to Solomon, and one to Moses (Psalm 90). Some people have called Psalms the Prayerbook of Christ and I believe that to be accurate, as we shall presently see. I would go even further and attribute the authorship of all 150 to the Word, Jesus Christ, through multiple transcriptionists.

Psalms begins with the two verses quoted above. Some would quibble with these words and tell us they should be expanded to include women here by making the terms gender neutral. I would argue against that. As I read the six verses of Psalm 1, I do not find that I am included either. As I read about the Blessed Man, I do not recognize myself in the description. Even if it said “man or woman”, I think an honest appraisal by each of us would conclude that we are all left out. This Psalm is about only Jesus, the Blessed Man. We must sing only about Him if we sing it. It can only be about any of the rest of us if we are abiding in Him.

You will find this to be generally true throughout. A Psalm is only true of us if it is first true of Him. Take the most well-known Psalm, one attributed to David. Psalm 23 begins, *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want*. How often have you heard those words? How often have you found comfort in repeating them for yourself? How few are the Christian funeral services that do not include them? Some might also consider those words as coming not from us but from David. He was a shepherd who recognized clearly that he had a Good Shepherd of his own, namely Jesus Christ. As we read the Psalm from David’s perspective, we obtain additional meaning. But there is yet another perspective that makes both David’s and ours possible.

Read Psalm 23 again, but this time consider the words as coming from the lips of Christ. Do you see that even the Good Shepherd depended on a Shepherd of His own, moment by moment? Do you hear Him saying, *I shall not want*. As He told the disciples, *“I have food to eat that you do not know about.”* (John 4:32). He was led by the Father in the “paths of righteousness” and He actually followed! The Valley of Kidron, with Gethsemane, and the road to the Cross was a “valley of the shadow of death” like no other. In the Upper Room, a “table was prepared” for Him in the presence of Judas who chose to be His enemy. His “anointing oil” was the Holy Spirit at His Baptism. His “cup overflows” that I might drink Life from His abundance. It was His Own “Goodness” and His Own “Mercy following”, so that I might dwell with Him forever.

At the end of his earthly life, David was given to understand that the words of the Psalms were in fact the Words Christ spoke and would speak. In David’s last words, he said, *“The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue. The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me...”* (II Samuel 23:2-3). As we have seen, that Rock was Christ. David recognized His Word here; as should we. Recognize Him as the Word.

Go back one and read Psalm 22, another Psalm of David. It begins, *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* Jesus would repeat those precise words, in a different language, from the Cross in John 27:46. Some at the foot of the cross actually quoted Psalm 22:8 to Jesus as they taunted Him in John 27:42-43. Read on in Psalm 22. You will find Jesus saying that God was His from His mother’s belly (v.9-10), that His bones were dislocated on the Cross (v.14), that He thirsted there (v.15), that they pierced His hands and feet (v.16), that they removed His clothes (v.17) and that they cast lots for His clothing (v.18). When did any of this happen to David? It would all happen to David only when, by God’s Grace, he was in Christ on the Cross. That’s when, and how, it all happened to me too.

Psalm 22 begins with nine words Christ sings solo for us. We do not sing them with Him because of His Promise not to leave or forsake us. The Psalm goes on to a shared Cross and Resurrection Victory: *Let your heart live forever* (v.26). This is no forced interpretation. Take a look at the parallel Psalm 69, another from David, also picturing His Cross and His Victory. Take your time, but don’t do it on your own. Let Christ show you Himself here, as He did to David and as He does to me. No single Gospel provides as complete a description of the Crucifixion as do these two Psalms.

I find it helpful to read the Psalms first as words sung by Jesus. Then I go back and find Him enlivening His words for my own heart.

I hear His Praise of God the Father, and then I take part in it. Psalm 8, for example: *O Lord, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth.*

I hear His confession of my sin as He takes it upon Himself as His Own. We saw that in Psalm 51, for example, in our last chapter.

I hear also of Christ as the One who executes God's Wrath, as in Psalm 109. As a result, I find thanksgiving for His Grace in my own deliverance, and an urgency in my heart for reaching a world choosing its own way.

I hear His cries for help from the Father as He approaches the Garden and the Cross, as in Psalms 86 and 102. Then I join my voice with His in my own, less-severe, hard places. I also hear the reassurance of help from the Father in those Psalms, and others like Psalm 121.

I hear His prophetic descriptions of His Own Coming, and I rejoice in His Love for me. Psalm 118, for example, speaks the name of Jesus (God my Salvation) in v.14 & 21 and v.25-26 provides the script for the crowds to shout at His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem in Matthew 21. (We need to recognize that the "Hosanna" they shouted is the Hebrew for "Save Us We Pray" in verse 25. They were simply asking Jesus to be Jesus.) He is indeed the Lord's Doing and marvelous in my eyes as in v.22-23. Blessed indeed is the One who comes in the Name, and with the Name of the Lord! (v.26).

I hear His pleas for the Father to know Him thoroughly, as in Psalm 139. Christ requested in the last two verses for the Father to search Him and see if there were anything wicked there. The Father would find nothing unclean in His Heart. When I dare to ask for Him to search me, He changes what was there into His Likeness, and chooses to find only Christ there. He then goes about building Himself into my experience.

I hear Him praying the words He had given to Moses in Psalm 90. He makes them my own. I see and know the God of Now in such a way that time starts becoming less consequential to me. I begin to know the Changeless God I will see face-to-Face in a New Jerusalem that has no years.

Adopt the Prayerbook of Christ as your own, and recognize Him here.

Psalm 1

*How blessed is the man...He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams
of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither...*

Psalm 46

*There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy
dwelling places of the Most High. God is in the midst of her...*

Psalm 73

*My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart
and my portion forever.*

Psalm 91

*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide
in the shadow of the Almighty.*

Psalm 100

*Give thanks to Him, bless His name. For the Lord is good;
His lovingkindness is everlasting...*

Psalm 150

*Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.
Praise the Lord!*

And the rest of them.

CHAPTER 15

SOLOMON

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. Proverbs 3:5-7

Solomon was David's son who succeeded him to the throne after his death. Once again, had I been running things, I certainly would not have let that happen. Solomon was not the eldest, or the second, or the third. In fact, Solomon was probably about the tenth of David's many sons by many wives (II Samuel 3:2-5 and 5:14-16). But that's not the reason I would have disqualified Solomon. You may recall David's adultery and his murder of the woman's husband after she became pregnant. The woman was Bathsheba. That child died, but she had another later, as one of David's wives in his dysfunctional family. That child was Solomon.

I would have held that awful sin against David until the bitter end. I would have chosen a son of any of the other wives, but not Bathsheba! What kind of God do we have? A most merciful one! I have a God whose forgiveness places my own sin as far from me as the east is from the west, and he did that for David too. Grace is available because Christ is here. Maybe we all need to read Psalm 51 again. And again.

Solomon was, for a while, a wise king who built the temple for which his father had made preparations. He was given the wisdom to ask for wisdom to reign wisely, and God gave him more wisdom than any man before or since (I Kings 3:1-15). How much more meaningful, then, is the text quoted at the start of our chapter. The first part, at least, is reasonably familiar, but we sometimes ignore the fact that it was written by the wisest man who ever lived. Even he recognized that our own understanding is not to be trusted above our God. Solomon was to learn some of his wisdom at great cost, because he too had great failings (I Kings 11 and Ecclesiastes 1:17-18).

As we consider the Books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and The Song of Solomon, the first verse of each provides attribution to Solomon. We have already seen Solomon credited with at least one Psalm (127). Other writers also contributed at least to Proverbs, but God used Solomon to share with us

out of some of the wisdom he was given. Most significantly, Solomon was used to share Christ with us here.

Take Psalm 72 for example. The Psalm is unusual. Many translations include an attribution to Solomon, but the Psalm ends with the words: *The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended* (Psalm 72:20). Could the Psalm be a Psalm of David **about** Solomon rather than **by** Solomon? Perhaps, but either way, I believe Psalm 72 is really about Jesus, as He is pictured as the son of the king. Try reading Psalm 72 as being about Christ. You will find God's Righteousness given to the King's Son (v.1). He will judge God's people with righteousness (v.2). He will vindicate the afflicted (v.4). There will be abundance of peace until the moon is no more (v.7). He will rule to the ends of the earth (v.8) and all kings will bow down before this King of Kings (v.11). He will deliver the needy (v.12), and save their lives (v.13). All nations will call Him blessed (v.17), and the whole earth will be filled with God's Glory (v.19). You tell me. Is that Solomon? Or do you see Christ here?

The Song of Solomon, or Song of Songs, is essentially a Psalm, but long enough and different enough and significant enough to deserve its own book. It is full of the most intimate language to be found in the Bible, starting with its second verse. Many people don't know what to make of the Song, but then many don't know what to make of Christ either. It is actually Christ who makes singers out of us, if we are willing. The book is a Love Song of Christ to me and of me to Him.

I find it unhelpful, as usual, to attempt to assign specific meanings to each phrase as if every term stands uniquely for something else. I recommend just reading it. You find here a man and a woman alternately expressing overwhelming, intimate love for each other, with occasional interjections from something like a chorus. The man is the king, the woman is his heart's desire and she responds in kind. As I read this, as in Psalm 72, I recognize Christ here, and when I do, I recognize myself as the object of His Love.

Consider just a few aspects. How in the world could I possibly see myself as being the one the King desires? In 4:7 of the Song, He says of her, *You are altogether beautiful, my darling, and there is no blemish in you*. How could that refer to me? But then He shows Himself as the one who took not only my blemishes, but all of me to the Cross. Look at Ephesians 5:25-27:

Husbands, love your wives as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she would be holy and blameless. What He does for the church is a thorough work, and He does it for each member personally. We do not have just a corporate relationship, we have an individual, intimate and eternal love affair with Jesus Christ.

Consider the frantic search of the bride-to-be early in Chapter 3. Her Love is nowhere to be found and she seeks His Presence. I know that feeling. I seek my Lord, sometimes with great yearning, when it seems He is not there. I have generally found that I was the one who had turned away, not Him. We also need to recognize the Bridegroom's desire in Chapters 4 and 5. He desires my company more deeply and consistently than I desire His. We generally seek His Presence when we need or want something, but the Song reminds me that I may choose to seek Him out simply to respond to **His** Desire for **my** presence. Some of my most memorable times with Him have been those when I came to Him without Christmas lists or desperation. Those are the times when I begin to see there is no reason to leave.

Look at 4:10 of the Song: *How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride!* The words may sound strange and confusing if we impose our worldly context. Who would marry his sister? If we respond to His context, the Word becomes a word of Grace. Jesus says in Matthew 12:50, *"For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother."* God's Will is only done by those in Him, those in whom He dwells. The Bride of Christ is only made up of His brothers and sisters.

Husband-wife, parent-child (or grandparent-grandchild), brother-sister and friend are the most intimate human relationships in His creation. Jesus created them all to graphically picture for us the far more intimate relationship we have with Him in His New Creation. The Body of Christ is both the Living Church and the Bride of Christ in a way that transcends mere human sexuality and fulfills it. Janie and I have been given to share a 52-year marriage relationship that sketches out what is to come in some wonderful ways. But when we see Him face-to-face, we will know Him, and we will know each other, in ways beyond our fondest expectations.

Christ woos me here in surprising and overwhelming ways. Read with me a passage from the Song (2:8-13), using the King James Version. I want to share it using the same words and phrases He used to provoke my initial recognition of Him in this Song. *The voice of my beloved! Behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice. My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle(dove) is heard in our land; the fig putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

Christ approaches us when we least expect. However, if my earthly death draws near before His Second Coming, I fully expect to see Him through the lattice and to hear the Voice that His sheep unmistakably know. Should that occur, I will be asking for no prayers for healing in that day, for I will hear His Call. It will be the One who hung the stars, calling me out to play.

(If a funeral service is conducted for me, please include the passage from the Song of Songs 2:8-13, preferably from the KJV, and recognize Christ here.)

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory...
Ephesians 3:20-21

"He has brought me to his banquet hall, and his banner over me is love."
Song of Solomon 2:4

"...Just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom..." Luke 22:29-30

"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13

CHAPTER 16

ELIJAH

And He said, “Go forth and stand on the mountain before the Lord.”
I Kings 19:11

Solomon’s heart was later drawn away from God in his later years, through his hundreds of foreign wives. Neither David nor Solomon had heeded God’s advance warning in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. After Solomon’s death, the kingdom split, as God had prophesied. Most of the tribes formed a kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam of the tribe of Ephraim. The southern kingdom of Judah, made up of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, was ruled by Solomon’s son Rehoboam. Both ruled poorly and led the people into idolatry. Israel would be ruled by a discontinuous series of generally bad kings before it was conquered by Assyria. Judah was ruled by a continuous succession from the Judaic throne of David, as God had promised him, until its later conquest by Babylon. A few of those kings were better, but many were not. God raised up multiple prophets during this period, sending some to each nation to turn their hearts. Among the prophets was a man named Elijah, whom God sent to Israel during the reign of Ahab, a notably bad king. Recognize the striking relationships with Christ as we review some of Elijah’s story.

Elijah comes on the scene in I Kings 17:1 with little introduction. People argue about his origin, but, taken at face value, he may well have come from the half-tribe of Manasseh (the other tribe out of Joseph) that lived east of the Jordan (see Numbers 26:29). He arrives with the announcement that there will be no more rain until he says so. Then he goes into hiding. King Ahab is startled, all the more so when the rain stops for over three years. During the drought, God provided for Elijah initially by water from a brook and by ravens bringing him bread and meat (I Kings 17:6). After Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, angels provided similarly for His needs (Matthew 4:11). Recall also Christ’s own provision of water from the Rock, manna and quail for the people in the wilderness.

God later made lodging for Elijah with a widow and her son, for whom a continuing supply of food was provided from a handful of flour and a little oil in a jar (I Kings 17:7-16). Jesus would feed thousands with a few loaves

and fishes. The widow's son soon died but was raised to life after Elijah stretched himself out on top of the dead child (I Kings 18:17-24). It does not say if Elijah stretched himself in the shape of the Cross or if the boy's name was also Lazarus, but I still see Him here, raising the dead to Life.

Before Elijah gave the word for rain to return, a contest of sorts took place between Elijah on one side and 450 priests of Baal on the other. Of course, the contest had to do with sacrifice, and whose would be proven by fire to be acceptable. Baal did not show up, but fire from Elijah's God consumed not only the prepared sacrifice but also the stone altar and its surroundings (I Kings 18:20-40). I recognize again the promised Acceptable Sacrifice.

Elijah then left town after Queen Jezebel vowed to kill him for wiping out her priests of Baal. We might have preferred to see him stand fearless before her, but Christ had an appointment with him on Mount Sinai, exactly where He had met Moses. Elijah walked alone through hundreds of miles of wilderness by God's Provision of a single meal. It took him 40 days to get there, fasting all the way. Christ fasted alone in the wilderness for exactly the same length of time when He was tempted (Matthew 4:1-11). It does not say whether Elijah and Jesus followed the same path in the wilderness or whether the high mountain of Christ's temptation was the same Sinai. I expect to find out someday soon, but even now I recognize Him here.

Upon Sinai Elijah complained to God about being the only faithful one left, but it rings hollow the first time, even more so when he repeats it (I Kings 19). God showed him great displays of His Power there, a rock-breaking wind, an earthquake, and a fire, but God Himself was not in any of them. Then, *...after the fire, a sound of a gentle blowing*. The KJV has it as *...a still small voice*. Christ is here. He shows us Himself intimately, then He sends us forth in His Power, because He goes with us and we with Him.

Promptly upon his return from Sinai, Elijah called Elisha to serve under him and to take his place according to God's instruction. Their callings as prophets of Christ were conjoined. The first thirteen chapters of II Kings describe similar Elijah-like miracles worked through Elisha. Together, they preview many of the works of Christ. People were fed from token amounts, although only a hundred men were fed by Elisha's word rather than the thousands at the Word of Jesus. The dead were raised to life, with Elisha also stretching himself over the Shunammite's son as Elijah had over the

widow's son and Christ did over me. A leper was healed at Elisha's word, but several by the Word of Christ. Jesus walked on the water, contrary to physical laws. Elisha commanded iron to float.

Consider also the names. Elijah means God is Jehovah. Elisha means God is Salvation. Taken together, as God specifically invites us to do, their names tell us God is Jehovah-Salvation which is Joshua or Jesus.

Elijah not only followed Moses to Sinai, he also followed Joshua to the Jordan. II Kings 2 describes how Elijah and Elisha travelled to the Jordan River near the old city of Jericho, which is where Joshua led the Children of Israel into the Promised Land. While others watched from a distance, they approached the Jordan from the Promised Land side. Elijah struck the water with his garment and the waters parted for the two men to cross, just as it had when the Ark of the Presence of God reached the river with Joshua. It was not just men with the name of Jesus here; the Presence of God is here in Christ. Elijah was clothed with Him, as He invites us to be (Romans 13:14). It is noteworthy that Elijah's garment is passed to Elisha in the transition, as Elisha begins his miracle experiences with another water parting to make a way for him back into the Promised Land.

Observe that Elijah does not die here. It does not say God buried him as He did Moses. And it was not the "sweet chariot" that was "coming for to carry me (or him) home". The chariot acted to separate the two men, but Elijah was taken up by a storm or whirlwind. Jesus was also taken up in the sight of others who were to carry forward His work on the earth (Acts 1:1-11).

As we shall see when we get to Malachi, the Old Testament concludes with a verse referring to Moses and then these two verses about Elijah. *Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.* And here we are led to consider the startling idea that Elijah, in a very real sense, later returned once again to this same spot in the Jordan to baptize Jesus.

We first observe that the angel Gabriel (Man of God) later appeared to a childless man named Zacharias (Jehovah has Remembered) with the promise of a child who would be filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother's

womb. *“And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah. ‘To turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children’, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”* (Luke 1:16-17). The child’s name was to be John. We know him as John the Baptist. A few months later, the same messenger named Man of God appeared to a relative of John’s mother Elizabeth. The relative’s name was Mary. John would later say of Mary’s Son, *“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”* (John 1:29).

Look how complicated this gets if you try to figure out **how** God works. When John the Baptist was asked if he was Elijah come again, he denied it (John 1:21). Jesus, on the other hand, said, *“...if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come.”* (Matthew 11:14). Elijah and John even looked alike, as described in II Kings 1:8 and Matthew 3:4. The disciples who saw Jesus with Elijah at the Transfiguration later asked Him why people said Elijah had to come ahead of Him. Jesus said Elijah is both yet to come and already come, but he was not recognized when he did. *Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist* (Matthew 17:13). John the Baptist gave a powerful testimony of Jesus as the Christ (John 3:22-36), but he later sent word to ask if Jesus was the One or should they wait for another. Jesus responded with a powerful testimony of John as the promised forerunner (Matthew 11:1-15).

What am I to make of all this? I do not see here some Egyptian idea of a reincarnation in which the same person comes back in some other external form. Instead, I come to a new revelation of the mystery of being born again. The one who experiences New Birth in Christ is the old person who has become a New One on the inside, and it will show on the outside too. We need an experience in Him rather than an understanding from afar.

John the Baptist was put to death before Elijah appeared with Christ at the transfiguration. John lived to about the same age as Jesus and was killed under orders from Herod Antipas, the son of the Herod who had been threatened by news of Christ’s birth. When Jesus was on trial, Pilate sent Him briefly to Herod Antipas (Luke 23:1-12), who had earlier feared Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead (Matthew 14:1-12).

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” Matthew 11:15

CHAPTER 17

ISAIAH

These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory and he spoke of Him.
John 12:41

Years after Elijah, the prophet Isaiah was called out to speak of Christ during the reign of four successive kings of Judah. Isaiah also was allowed to see Him directly. The name Isaiah is, like Joshua, the name Jesus. It's just spelled backwards in a way. Instead of "Jehovah is Salvation", it is "Salvation is of Jehovah". The Book of Isaiah probably contains a larger number of explicit prophesies of Christ than any other in the Old Testament, but we need to see Him as Isaiah did. When the Word of the Lord came to Isaiah, John 1 says that Word was Christ. We must know Him here too.

The book begins with hard words of deserved accusation, but there is a promise of deliverance in Isaiah 1:18-19 for those who *consent and obey*. The KJV says, *If ye be willing and obedient...* The Hebrew word for consent or willing means literally to "breathe after". Until we breathe after Him, obedience and deliverance does not occur. Obedience derives simply from intimate willingness in His Presence.

Isaiah's foundational, direct experience with Christ is described in the sixth chapter. Isaiah ...*saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple* (v.1). That may sound to many people more like a vision of God the Father Almighty rather than an encounter with Christ, but consider the text at the top of this page. John's statement follows quotes from Isaiah having to do with Christ. It is clear Isaiah did speak of Christ, but John made just as clear it was Christ whose Glory Isaiah saw.

When we are personally confronted with Jesus Christ, we lose all pretense. Isaiah certainly did (v.5). He could not stand up and plead not guilty, and neither can we. Knowing Him and being known by Him leads to real repentance. The world prefers a cheap repentance from what we find troublesome, but God's Word had already declared "...*O My people! Those who guide you lead you astray and confuse the direction of your paths.*" (Isaiah 3:12). When we see Him directly, we see ourselves as He sees us.

After Isaiah's abject confession, *...one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs.* (v.6). Not even a seraph (or saraph, "a burning one") can hold a coal from God's Altar in his hands. It speaks a promise of Christ's Holy Sacrifice to come. *He touched my mouth with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven* (v.7). The word translated as "forgiven" is, once again, the Hebrew word "kaphar". You may remember this as the word for the "covering" of the ark in the chapter on Noah (p.18). The word speaks of cleansing, mercy, pardon and atonement. It speaks of Christ, the One on the throne, who would go to the Cross for Noah, for Isaiah and for us.

This is when and where Christ happened to Isaiah. Within his continuing experience in Christ, Isaiah would go on to speak of Him in startling detail to his people, to kings, to the New Testament writers and to me. Allow Him to speak through Isaiah to you, and recognize Him. Here are some excerpts.

When the coming birth of Jesus was announced to Joseph by an angel (or messenger) of the Lord, Matthew 1:22 confirms Isaiah's prophetic word as being about Christ. *Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet* (and then quotes Isaiah 7:14): *Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel.* Then Matthew 1:23 adds: *...which translated means "God with us."*

Isaiah 9 speaks in detail of the coming Prince of Peace. Again, Matthew confirms this prophecy in 4:12-17: *...Jesus...settled in Capernaum... the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles- The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great Light, and those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, upon them a Light dawned..."* (Quoted from Isaiah 9:1-2). Isaiah 9:6-16 continues, *A child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called...Mighty God... Prince of Peace... forevermore... Yet the people do not... seek the Lord of hosts...those who guide this people are leading them astray...* In Matthew 23:13-33, Jesus said the same thing: *But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees...blind guides...* Still, there is hope: *...In spite of all this, His hand is still stretched out.* (Isaiah 9:17)

Isaiah 11 and 12 tell us of the coming Eternal King who will fulfill the promise to Jesse's son David (11:1). He is the One upon whom the Spirit of the Lord will rest (11:2), the One who will bring both grace and judgment (11:3-9) *...and His resting place will be glorious. (11:10). ...You will say on that day, "...Behold God is my salvation (Behold Jesus), I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation."* Therefore you will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation. (12:1-3). Isaiah's prophecy looked forward to Jesus, who would meet a Samaritan woman hundreds of years later. He offered her the same living water, after which she would never thirst again. He said it will become *"...a well of water springing up to eternal life."* (John 4:7-14).

Consider the rest of this passage in John's Gospel dealing further with the position of Jesus as King. *The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us."* Jesus said to her, *"I who speak to you am He."* (John 4:25-26). The promised Saving Ruler is called the Messiah in the Old Testament (Daniel 9:25, for example). "Messiah" is Hebrew for "Anointed One". "Christ" in the New Testament is Greek for "Anointed One", referring to the same Person. Jesus is here identifying Himself as Messiah and Christ. Among those who would also "Behold Jesus", was a man named Simon, whom Jesus renamed Peter. *Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* (Matthew 16:16).

Consider yet another prophecy in Isaiah. *The Lord of Hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain... And on this mountain, He will swallow up... the veil which is stretched over all nations. He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken. And it will be said in that day, "Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us... Let us rejoice..."* (Isaiah 25:6-9). Then consider three statements from Revelation. *Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' ..."* (Revelation 19:9). *...God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death... (Revelation 21:3-4). "...the Lamb...their shepherd... will wipe every tear from their eyes."* (Revelation 7:17). Christ is here.

Isaiah 35:4-10 tells of the coming healing ministry of Jesus as He walked the earth. As I quote from it, I have inserted a few example fulfillments. *Say to*

those with anxious heart, "...He will save you." Then the eyes of the blind will be opened (see John 9) and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped (see Mark 9:17-27). Then the lame will leap like a deer (see John 5:1-17), and the tongue of the mute will shout for joy (see Matthew 9:32-33).

Isaiah 40 speaks of Jesus sighing deeply over us in Gethsemane and on the Cross. *"Comfort (sigh, over, pity and console; "nacham" again), O comfort My people," says your God. ...her iniquity has been removed...Behold the Lord God will come with might...Like a shepherd He will tend His flock...those who wait on the Lord...will mount up with wings as eagles... In John 10:11, the Shepherd discusses the cost of removing our iniquity. "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."*

Isaiah 49:14-16 speaks to those who feel God has forgotten them. *But Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me, and the Lord has forgotten me." "Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands."* John 20:24-29 explains how deeply we are inscribed there. *But Thomas was not with them when Jesus came. ...he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails and put my finger into the place of the nails, ...I will not believe." ...Then He (the Risen Christ) said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger..."*

Christ is to be clearly recognized in Isaiah 53, the well-known Suffering Servant chapter. It presents a precise picture of the Cross. Here are the briefest of excerpts. *...He was pierced through for our transgressions... and by His scourging we are healed...the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him...By His knowledge, the Righteous One My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities.* I have no adequate comment on this chapter. Just go there and know Him.

Isaiah 60 speaks of the coming of Christ in Bethlehem, His Resurrection and His coming again in glory *"Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. ...darkness will cover the earth ...But the Lord will rise upon you and His glory will appear upon you. Nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your rising. ...They will bring gold and frankincense, and will bear good news of the praises of the Lord. ...Then you will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior and your Redeemer..."* Here are three of many fulfillments. *... "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the*

light of life.” (John 8:12). “The glory which You have given Me I have given to them...” (John 17:22). ...they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. (Matthew 2:11)

Consider with me a further Word of God in Isaiah 61. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord...* (Isaiah 61:1-2). Christ spoke this Word to Isaiah, the prophet whose name is Jesus, but He intended to speak it again Himself a few hundred years later. This Word was a script for the Word Made Flesh. As Jesus began His earthly ministry, ... *as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...” And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”* (Luke 4:16-21). Christ Himself says He can be recognized in Isaiah.

As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God will rejoice over you. Isaiah 62:5

“But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing and her people for gladness. I will also rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people...” Isaiah 65:18-19

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. Revelation 21:2

When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom... John 2:9

*“But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”
Matthew 26:29*

CHAPTER 18

JEREMIAH

“You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:13

Jeremiah, whose name means “Raised Up by Jehovah”, delivered God’s Word to Judah during the reign of her last five kings and into the Babylonian conquest and captivity. The northern kingdom of Israel had already fallen to Assyria during the earlier time when Isaiah had been a prophet in Judah. Isaiah and Jeremiah were not contemporaries, but both spoke in detail of the coming conquest of Judah by Babylon and the later deliverance of God’s people. Jeremiah was, however, a contemporary of the two prophets we shall examine in the chapters that come next. All three were prophets of the exile, from different points of view. Some have called Jeremiah the weeping prophet. The Book of Lamentations also contains words Jeremiah spoke or wrote, but both books declare Jesus Christ, who is God’s Word then and now, to “raise us up” from our weeping to rejoicing in Him.

God did indeed raise up Jeremiah to deliver His Word concerning the coming judgment to be visited on Judah, and Jeremiah did indeed mourn for his people. But we must recognize Christ even in the judgment. Christ is the One who comes to also execute the Wrath of God on a world that refuses His Grace, as we have seen in Revelation 19:11-21. Those of the Body of Christ who are scattered through the world, as judgment is being prepared, will suffer with the world and with Him, so that some might yet know Him.

In the midst of prophesies of judgment on the “foolish” people, there is a call to *“Return, O faithless sons... Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding.”* (Jeremiah 3:14-15). Instead of responding to His call, many *“...have healed the brokenness of My people superficially, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ but there is no peace.”* (Jeremiah 6:14). This Word remains appropriate for people today. God can be *near to their lips but far from their mind* (or from the depths of their being) (Jeremiah 12:2).

The Word of judgment on the people around him was intensely painful to Jeremiah, to the point that he regretted his own birth, as described in

Jeremiah 20:14-18. Still, it was impossible for him to have God's Word within him and remain silent. *But if I say, "I will not remember Him or speak anymore in His name," then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire shut up in my bones; and I am weary of holding it in, and I cannot endure it.* (Jeremiah 20:9). A weeping prophet indeed! I know of others.

God's Word in Jeremiah 23:1-6 previews the Shepherd passages we will soon examine in Ezekiel. *"Woe to the shepherds who are destroying the sheep of My pasture!" declares the Lord. "...then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock..."* (Recognize the Good Shepherd.) *"Behold, the days are coming ...when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king ...Judah will be saved ...He will be called, the Lord our righteousness."* (Recognize the Eternal King promised to David.)

Jeremiah mourned the false prophets of his day, as well we should in ours. The rest of Jeremiah 23 addresses them and, remains timely today. *"...I am against the prophets," declares the Lord, "who steal my words from each other. ...I did not send them or command them, nor do they furnish this people the slightest benefit..."* Jesus was against them then. He was against them when He walked the earth. He is against them today. His Word to His genuine prophets is placed within them personally. He Himself abides there, a cleansing, burning fire, not in their bellies, but in their very bones.

The Promise is Christ. The *"...congregation shall be established before Me; ...Their leader shall be one of them, and their ruler shall come forth from their midst; and I will bring him near and he shall approach Me: for who would dare to risk his life to approach Me (or who would give his heart in exchange or as security)?" declares the Lord. "You shall be My people, and I will be your God."* (Jeremiah 30:20-22). Jesus indeed took His Heart and Life to the Cross. *"I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness."* (Jeremiah 31:3 and, basically, John 3:16). *"...Proclaim, give praise and say, 'O Lord, save Your people...'"* (Jeremiah 31:7, and, basically Psalm 118:24-25). Recall the discussion of Psalm 118 on page 56. Once again, we see the Hebrew words of "Hosanna" and praise as the people shouted to Jesus during His triumphal entry into Jerusalem in Matthew 21.

Observe in passing that here Christ also provides resolution for what I had long thought to be a New Testament passage full of great sadness. After we

read of the visit of the wise men (“magi”) and the escape of Joseph and Mary with Jesus into Egypt, we find this: *Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi. Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and she refused to be comforted, because they were no more.”* (Matthew 2:16-18). These babies were the only people on earth of whom it could be said, in any sense, that they literally died in the place of Jesus. How profoundly sad that they were simply gone! But it gets more confusing. Recall that Rachel was Jacob’s beloved wife who died while giving birth to Benjamin at Bethlehem, but she appeared to be weeping over her own death rather than the death of her children (Genesis 35:16-20). What gives here?

It was some years before Christ led me back to the actual Jeremiah passage quoted in Matthew. Yes, it is quoted correctly, but I finally took the time to actually read it in Jeremiah, right here in Chapter 31, where we have been recognizing Christ. The quote is from Jeremiah 31:15. All I needed was to read the next two verses: *Thus says the Lord, “Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears; for your work will be rewarded,” declares the Lord, “and they will return from the land of the enemy. There is hope for your future,” declares the Lord, “and your children will return to their own territory.”* It will be a great pleasure to meet them all. I do not expect to hear complaints from them about having missed out on anything.

Jeremiah 31 goes on immediately in the next verse (18) to respond to God’s correction by asking: *Bring me back that I may be restored, for you are the Lord my God.* Jeremiah provides a similar verse at the end of Lamentations (5:21): *Restore us to you, O Lord, that we may be restored...* In both verses the KJV uses “turn”: *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned...; Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned.* The Hebrew word is “shub” which means “to turn back”. We understand here that we don’t turn back unless He turns us. We can’t even repent on our own. Christ alone shows us our sin, as He shows us Himself. Then we have reason to cooperate in the turning, but Christ is the One who does it, else it is not done.

There is yet more in this foundational Chapter 31. There is a New Relationship with God in Jesus Christ. It is called a covenant. The word derives from the idea of “cutting”. Covenants, including this New One, are founded on the shedding of blood and look to the Cross: New Blood for a New Covenant. Listen to the One speaking directly to us in verses 31-35: *“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord. “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers ...which they broke ...although I was a husband to them ...But this is the covenant which I will make, ...I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write (engrave) it; and I will be their God and they shall be My people. They will not teach again each man his neighbor and ...his brother saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, ...for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”*

No longer a Law hanging over your head; it will be engraved lovingly by Jesus Christ on your new circumcised heart (Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6), because He will be your new heart’s desire and He will abide in you. No more intermediaries; we are each invited to know Him intimately. As Jesus later said, *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me...”* (John 10:27). A New Relationship begins with the One whose handiwork we are and whose New Handiwork He makes us to be. Jeremiah’s tears are transformed, along with ours, from tears of sadness to tears of joy. Christ gently wipes those away too.

“For I know the plans that I have for you...” Jeremiah 29:11

“Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” Jeremiah 33:3

...the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, ...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Colossians 1:26-27

“You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:13, again

“...seek, and you will find...” Matthew 7:7

CHAPTER 19

EZEKIEL

“Behold, you are to them like a sensual song by one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; for they hear your words but they do not practice them. So when it comes to pass - as surely it will – then they will know that a prophet has been in their midst.” Ezekiel 33:32-33

Ezekiel’s name means “God Strengthens”. He was a priest, as was Jeremiah, but he was called to prophesy only after he had been carried away among thousands of captives from Judah to Babylon. Isaiah had told of the coming Babylonian conquest much earlier (Isaiah 39). Jeremiah had described it too, many times. Jeremiah, remaining in Judah, and Ezekiel, in Babylon, both foretold the second installment, when Babylon would return to destroy Jerusalem and the temple. Both prophets also spoke of God’s ultimate deliverance of His people and both knew the source of that deliverance firsthand.

The beginning of Ezekiel’s prophetic call, like Isaiah’s before, starts with a similar view of God’s heavenly beings and a similar view of Christ on the throne (Chapter 1). Ezekiel fell on his face. Once again, Christ takes action to raise His prophet up and send him forth with God’s Word. *Then He said to me, “Son of man, stand on your feet that I may speak with you!” As He spoke to me the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet; and I heard Him speaking to me.* (Ezekiel 2:1-2). Ezekiel is sent to speak that Word, but he is not given responsibility for its reception by the hearers. *As for them, whether they listen or not - for they are a rebellious house – they will know that a prophet has been among them.* (Ezekiel 2:5).

Ezekiel is given no authority to water down the Word in an attempt to avoid offending anyone. The Word of Grace contains within it the Word of Judgment against those who choose to reject it. Ezekiel was asked to physically consume a scroll with the written Word full of ...*lamentations, mourning and woe...* (Ezekiel 2:8-3:3). It tasted sweet in Ezekiel’s mouth, but, as we see in the rest of the book and as specifically confirmed in Revelation 10:8-11: *...in my mouth it was sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter.*

Parenthetically, take the time to examine the parallel prophetic calls of Isaiah (Chapter 6), Ezekiel (Chapters 1-3), and John (Revelation, Chapters 1, 4-5 and 10). Ezekiel defines the heavenly beings he saw at the throne as cherubim (10:20). He heard the sound of their wings. Cherubim are referred to in Genesis 3:24 guarding Eden. We also see them represented in the design of the Ark of God's presence and of the place of God's presence in the temple. Isaiah defines the heavenly beings he saw at the throne in Chapter 6 as seraphim (burning ones or shining ones). John names the ones around the throne in Revelation 4 and 5 simply as "living creatures". Like Isaiah, John describes them in terms similar to those used by Ezekiel. I think our minds are not well suited to intellectually comprehend encounters with our God, so I see no need to try to categorize classes of angels. Christ makes our spirits alive to experience His Presence as He draws us close. I am certain Ezekiel is not the only person who has been given to hear the sound of those wings. Why should we expect them all to use identical words to describe the indescribable?

Neither should we be surprised that Ezekiel delivered both a hard word and an invitation, just as Isaiah and Jeremiah had done. John did too, because they all delivered a Word from the throne. The Occupant of that throne is Christ Jesus. He made the same offer of God's Love directly from His Own lips to an ...*evil and adulterous generation*... as He walked the earth (Matthew 16:4). He speaks the same offer directly to unrepentant hearts as He calls us to know Him.

Starting with Ezekiel 2:1, Christ commonly addresses Ezekiel using a name at least similar to one used by Jesus to refer to Himself: *Son of man* (Matthew 16:4, for example). Jesus was indeed made like us so that we might be made like Him, the Son of God. The Hebrew here is "Ben-adam", "ben" for "son of" as in Benjamin, the Son of the Right Hand, and "adam" as in Adam, the one who shows the blood. We are all born children of Adam but we may be reborn and offered a seat with the Son of the Right Hand. Hold that thought. We will add to it when we look at Daniel in the next chapter.

Ezekiel declares again the promise to Jeremiah to "...*establish an everlasting covenant with you.*" (Ezekiel 16:60). Once more, the consistency should not surprise us. It is the same Word of Christ spoken through these prophets.

We see the promise of Christ with great clarity in Ezekiel 34. Hard words are first spoken “...*against the shepherds of Israel...*” (v.1) who have been selfishly profiting and living off the flock but not caring for it. The flock is “...*scattered over all the surface of the earth, and there was no one to search or seek for them...*” (v.6). Therefore, God will deliver the flock from the worldly shepherds (v.10). God says a startling thing: “...*I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out... As a shepherd cares for his herd when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day.*” (v.11-12). No matter how desolate the place or how dark the day, God Himself will find you in the Person of Jesus the Christ.

Verse 15 repeats what had been said through Isaiah: “*I will feed my flock and I will lead them to rest,*” declares the Lord God. However, hard words are also spoken against some of the flock. The only solution is Christ. “*Behold I, even I, will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ...I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David ...he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God... I will make a covenant of peace with them... so that they may... sleep in the woods.*” (v. 20-25). David was long dead when these words were spoken, but the Enduring King promised out of David’s line was yet to come.

When Christ came, He did not say, “I am **a good shepherd**.” He said He is **The Good Shepherd** (John 10:11-15). He is telling us He is come as God Himself, the Shepherd of Ezekiel 34 (John 10:27-30). He said hard words indeed to the shepherds and the sheep, but He came “...*to seek and to save that which was lost.*” (Luke 19:10). That includes lost sheep. When He found me, He lay me on His shoulders, rejoicing (Luke 15:5). We both were, along with the angels (Luke 15:7 and 10).

Jesus fulfilled the covenant of peace from v.20-25 too. “*Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives...*” (John 14:27). He did not give me peace He carried in His pocket. He gave me His Peace that carried Him through Gethsemane and on to the Cross.

Late in Ezekiel, God provided grand plans and procedures for a new temple (Chapters 40-48). They are in some ways more specific than those provided for the Tabernacle of Meeting and the first temple as places of God’s

Presence. The temple design in Ezekiel was apparently never physically built. Some expect it to be constructed in the earthly Jerusalem in the future, perhaps after Christ's Second Coming, because Revelation 21:22 tells us that there will be no temple in the heavenly New Jerusalem other than the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb. However, I just do not expect to see another physical place built to house His Presence nor do I expect a resumption of animal sacrifice. The Dwelling of God is now with His People and His Cross is the Sufficient Sacrifice for all time. But neither does the God I know lay out plans that don't come to fruition.

In place of the various explanations, I find Christ here. The Church, we are assured, is indeed the Body of Christ because we are His New Creation. We are indeed in Him and He in us. *Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are* (literally "who you are"). (I Corinthians 3:16-17). Just as physical baptism pictures a far greater spiritual reality, the specifications and procedures of the temple in Ezekiel may well point to what God is presently working out in this world through the Body of Christ.

Can I provide a slick, point-by-point, academic elucidation of how each temple specification is spiritually fulfilled? No, not any more than I can fashion God into my life or re-enter the womb to be born again. I can't even explain John 3:16, but Christ is here. Read further from our I Corinthians 3 text (v.18-23). If you make it to verse 20, you will find a quote from Psalm 94:11: *The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless*. If you look back at the quoted verse in Psalm 94, it is translated: *The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are a mere breath*. But Christ? Now He is One who issues an invitation to us in Isaiah 1:18, "*Come now, and let us reason together,*" says the Lord. Recognize Him.

"...I have appointed you a watchman... so you will hear a message from my mouth and give them warning..." Ezekiel 33:7

"Yet your fellow citizens say, 'The way of the Lord is not right,' when it is their own way that is not right." Ezekiel 33:17

"I am the way..." John 14:6

CHAPTER 20

DANIEL

...behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming...

Daniel 7:13

...He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. Acts 1:9

Daniel's name means "God is my Judge". He and three friends were among thousands brought to Babylon as captives to be exploited for their knowledge. The king of Babylon had no idea they would bring the knowledge of Christ. They all were given new names by their captors, but it is noteworthy that Daniel is still known to us by his original name. The other three are probably more familiar, to most of those who know of them, using the names assigned to them in Babylon. Daniel's experience in Babylon is similar to that of Joseph's in Egypt. God gave both of them knowledge and precise interpretations of the ruler's dreams and both rose from captives to high authority at the right hand of the ruler.

Daniel's exalted position in Babylon was a very modest picture of Christ's higher position at the Right Hand of the Father. Daniel's lowly estate as captive was also an inadequate picture of the Cross. Still, there is sufficient basis for me to recognize Christ here. Daniel heard the unmistakable Word from Him and also saw Him directly. Daniel's friends, and even Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, would see Him too.

It was reported to the king that Daniel's three friends refused to worship the huge golden image he had set up. In a rage, the king had them bound and thrown into a blazing furnace heated seven times hotter than usual. Nebuchadnezzar expected them to be rendered into fine, powdery ash. Instead, he saw them loose and walking around in the fire unharmed. He saw a Fourth Person with them. It was not Daniel. He appeared to the king *like a son of the gods* (Daniel 3:25). The king was seeing the King of Kings. The experience drove him to his knees in worship.

Babylon later fell, as foretold by the prophets, and Daniel witnessed its fall (Daniel 5). By the way, Belshazzar, the last king of Babylon, was not terrified by the "handwriting on the wall" as some have supposed. What scared him was the Hand, writing on the wall (Daniel 5:5-6). Whose Hand

do you suppose it was? You may recall that Thomas, the doubting disciple, could recognize it by the nail prints. Even just Christ's Hand will provoke either worship or terror in those who see Him. The name of Babylon continues to be used to refer to those who will fall to destruction in unrepentant rejection of the Grace of Christ (Revelation 18, for example).

The Medes took over Babylon, but Daniel continued to serve the new king. It was therefore not Nebuchadnezzar but Darius who was in power when palace intrigue led to the lions' den episode. However, I suspect Darius may have seen, the same Extra Person from the furnace, if the stone had not been placed over the mouth of the den. Darius called out to Daniel, asking if His God had been able to protect him. Daniel responded that God had *...sent His angel* (or messenger) *and shut the lions' mouths...* (Daniel 6:22). The term translated here as "angel" is used only twice in the entire Bible. The other place was in Daniel 3:28, when Nebuchadnezzar used it to describe the Fourth Person he had seen in the furnace. We should recognize Him.

I need to insert here a brief linguistic aside. The word translated as "angel" in Daniel 3:28 and 6:22 is not a word in the Hebrew language. It is a word in the Aramaic language. Aramaic was the common language in much of the Middle East for hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus and for some time thereafter. Many from Judah would have known it or learned it in exile.

For years, I thought the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament was written in Greek. For the most part, that is true, but portions of both show up in Aramaic, especially in Daniel and Ezra. Furthermore, writers often wrote in an "academic" language that differed from their spoken language in everyday conversation. Many speakers and hearers could neither read nor write. John records in John 19:19-22 that the inscription Pilate had placed on the Cross was written in Hebrew, Latin and Greek, but Aramaic was apparently the common language spoken in everyday discourse in the multilingual culture of Palestine.

The fact that the New Testament was written almost entirely in Greek does not imply that the speakers being recorded were actually speaking in Greek. Sometimes, Jesus is specifically quoted as speaking in Aramaic, as when He said, from the Cross, "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*" (Matthew 27:46). He was repeating the beginning of Psalm 22:1, "*My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?*" The Psalm was written in Hebrew. Christ spoke it forth not in

Hebrew, and certainly not in Greek. He spoke in Aramaic, as He did in other places, including the raising of dead children (Mark 5:41), the healing of the deaf (Mark 7:34) and the renaming of Peter (John 1:42). In Acts 26:14, Paul reports that Christ even spoke to him from heaven in Aramaic when He met him on the road to Damascus (NASB calls it “the Hebrew dialect”). Daniel 2:4-7:28 is entirely in Aramaic, which can be significant as we read it.

We can now return to the point about Ben-Adam (Son of Man) that we left hanging in the last chapter. As the Word came to Ezekiel, he was addressed as Ben-Adam (Son of Man) again and again, nearly one hundred times, starting in Ezekiel 2:1. Daniel, on the other hand, was addressed as Ben-Adam only once, in Daniel 8:17, when Gabriel (Man of God) used that term with him. Yes, that’s the same Gabriel who appeared in Luke to the father of John the Baptist and the mother of Jesus to announce the births of their sons.

A different Son of Man also shows up in Daniel, but He is no Ben-Adam. Chapter 7 recounts Daniel’s throne experience. He first saw a vision of four startling beasts. These beasts captured Daniel’s attention, and that of many other people over more than two thousand years since. But Daniel **kept looking**, and so should we. Daniel was given, and shares with us, an intimate, prophetic view of both God the Father and the coming Christ.

I kept looking until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze... A river of fire was flowing... out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; the court sat and the books were opened. Then I kept looking... I kept looking until the (fourth) beast was slain... I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:9-14)

Why was this Son of Man not a son of Adam? As we just discussed, this passage in Daniel was written not in Hebrew, but in Aramaic. I do not believe it was an accident. We have here not Ben-Adam, but Bar-Enash; not a son of Adam, but a son of humankind. We are confronted here by the

depth of the mystery of the Virgin Birth. Ezekiel, Daniel, you and I all had earthly fathers and all inherited not the direct Image of God, but a marred image as children of Adam. Jesus had no earthly father. He is the Son of God. God the Father said so from heaven. Jesus, John the Baptist, Peter and others confirmed it on the earth. Jesus bears the Father's Image sufficiently that He could truthfully say that if we have seen Him, we have seen the Father (John 14:9). But He was also a son of humankind, born of Mary. He was made sufficiently like us, so that we might be newly made like Him.

In the New Testament, Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of Man over eighty times. Nobody else calls Him that. Some are duplicates recorded in parallel Gospel accounts, but I won't list all the references. It does not say Ben-Adam in any of them, because it is written in Greek (*huios tou anthropos*), but I don't believe He said it in Greek. If He spoke it in Aramaic, Jesus was identifying Himself, in the precise words, as the Son of Man Daniel saw, and described in Aramaic, as the Everlasting King of Kings.

What does God now call those who are in Him and in whom He dwells? Are Ezekiel and Daniel still called Ben-Adam today? I don't think so. A New Birth demands a New Name. In Revelation 1, John describes his encounter with God in remarkably similar terms to Daniel's. John also records this promise in Revelation 2:17: *To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.* We are born into a large body, but each of us is given an intimate, private relationship with God who is great enough to know us and bless us, every one, by name.

On multiple occasions Daniel was called a man greatly beloved of God. He met Christ in the lions' den, was given to see a Revelation of both the Father and of Christ together and he was later given precise timing for Christ's First Coming. On multiple occasions, John also called himself the disciple whom Jesus loved. He was given to walk with Jesus, see His Glory, see Him Risen, and receive a Revelation of Christ and His Second Coming. Daniel and John both were given a unique and overwhelming Love of God in Jesus Christ. But then, so have I. And so have you.

Greater love has no man than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.
John 15:13

CHAPTER 21

ZECHARIAH

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.
Zechariah 13:6, KJV

Zechariah was a priest whose name means “God has Remembered”. His name is shared by more than twenty people mentioned in Scripture. This Zechariah started out in the region of Babylon and was one of the thousands of exiles who returned to Jerusalem under the civil leadership of Zerubbabel (Begotten in Babylon) and under the high priestly leadership of a man named Joshua (Hebrew for Jesus).

Once again, we find a man named Jesus. It was a man named Joshua (Jesus) who first led his people over Jordan and back into the Promised Land when they were brought back out of slavery in Egypt. Now we have another man named Joshua (Jesus) leading them back into the Promised Land again as they come forth out of their captivity in Babylon-Media-Persia. Do you detect a pattern here? Do you sense the coming Eternal Jesus leading His People into the coming, Eternal Promised Land? Zechariah certainly did.

Zechariah is shown a vision of his high priest named Jesus standing before the “malak” (Messenger or angel) of the Lord in Zechariah 3. Satan was standing right there to accuse him (v.1). This Jesus was wearing filthy, awful clothing (v.3). I think the filthy clothes looked just like my sin. Those clothes were removed at the order of the Messenger of the Lord and replaced with festal robes (v.4). The filthy ones were put in storage to be worn to the Cross by the Jesus I know, because that’s what Zechariah was told next.

The Messenger, who speaks God’s Own Word in the first person, then said, *“Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you – indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch. ...and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.”* (v.8-9) That day turned out to be a Friday, the Good One.

By the way, Christ did not just wear **my sin** to the Cross. My sin could not be simply peeled off like clothing. Believe me, I have tried. I was stained with it to the core. Christ wore **me** to the Cross, by God's doing, and when He died I died. *For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God* (Colossians 3:3). You cannot be born again until your old life is dealt with. I could not be raised out of the baptismal waters until I had been buried beneath them.

This same Branch had also been promised in Isaiah (4:2-4, 11:1-10) and Jeremiah (23:5-6) among others. We see Him again in Zechariah 6:11-13, when an ornate crown is placed on the head of Joshua, again as a symbol of the One who would build the True Temple and rule. The Priest would also be the King. An even more detailed picture of Christ gives us an advance view of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem: *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey* (Zechariah 9:9). Matthew 21 records that Jesus sent two of His disciples ahead to get the donkey and its colt, prepared and waiting for Him. John 12 tells us the people hailed the King of Israel. Both passages quote the cries of the people to "Save us" (Hosanna) and the clear fulfillment of the prophecy in Zechariah.

Zechariah articulates the Promise of God in 12:10-13:1. (Notice that God is appropriately using "Me" and "Him" interchangeably.) *"I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced: and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn... In that day a fountain will be opened... for sin and for impurity.* Yes, that day did indeed turn out to be a Friday, with a Glorious Sunday to follow.

In Zechariah 11, we find a variously-interpreted, symbolic prophecy describing two staffs, each given names. The passage contains a brief section which would have been hard to recognize as prophetic until its fulfillment. *I took my staff Favor and cut it in pieces, to break my covenant which I had made with all the peoples. So it was broken on that day, and thus the afflicted of the flock who were watching me realized that it was the word of the Lord. I said to them, "If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!" So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages.*

Then the Lord said to me, "Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them." So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the Lord. (Zechariah 11:10-13). The Hebrew word translated as "potter" means "to form". It relates to a potter as a person who forms a vessel out of clay. It was also used to describe created man being formed out of the dust of the earth. What do you suppose an early reader of Zechariah might have made out of this passage? Why would the Lord say the modest price here would be a valuation of the Lord Himself?

To apprehend God's Word, we always need His direct help. Matthew provides a first step. *Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?" And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him. (Matthew 26:14-15). ...Judas ...felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." ...And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary ...and went away and hanged himself. The chief priests took the pieces of silver and ...bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers. (Matthew 27:3-7).*

It is not enough to simply see a conceptual relationship here. God does not make it that easy or superficial. People have grappled with two difficult aspects to these words. One is that Peter is later quoted as presenting an alternate narrative about Judas in Acts 1. The other is that Matthew 27 goes on to refer to the earlier prophecy but uses Jeremiah's name instead of Zechariah's. People have offered various explanations. Some point out that Peter spoke before the coming of the Holy Spirit. Some say Matthew was referring to the Book of the Prophets which started with Jeremiah. But that is not the point. God is not calling us to sort out a text. We need deeper help than that. He is calling us to know Christ, here and everywhere else.

Now we come again to our initial passage. *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 (Zechariah 13:6, KJV).* The NASB uses "arms" here, but they note that the literal translation is "hands". The very next verse (v.7) is also about Jesus: *"Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the man, My Associate," declares the Lord of Hosts. "Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered..."* Jesus confirmed it Himself. On the night before the Cross, as He made His way to Gethsemane,

Jesus quoted Zechariah in Matthew 26:31: *Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, 'I will strike down the Shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered' ...".* Jesus knew the Book of Zechariah well. He is the One who spoke it first.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 23:34-35 that Zechariah also suffered a share of His wounds in the house of His friends. *"Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar."*

There was another faithful priest–prophet named Zechariah who was killed in the court of the temple long years before. That Zechariah was the son of Jehoiada (II Chronicles 24:20-22). Our Zechariah was the son of Berechiah (Zechariah 1:1). Some have wondered how two men named Zechariah could possibly have both been killed at the temple hundreds of years apart. They may be less likely to notice or question how three men named Jesus each led their people from captivity into the Promised Land, but as Zechariah's name implies, "God has Remembered".

Zechariah the son of Jehoiada and Zechariah the son of Berechiah each show us Christ and prefigure people like Paul and like others today or tomorrow who have suffered or may yet suffer along with Him. Paul states in Colossians 1:24, *Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.* I wonder if our Zechariah said something similar as he came to his death. The sufferings of the Cross continue to this day in the members of His Body the Church. His hands are still being wounded.

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "For your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were counted as sheep to be slaughtered." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.
Romans 8:35-37, quoting Psalm 44:22

CHAPTER 22

OTHERS

“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me...” John 5:39

There is no such thing as a “minor prophet”. Not if they are really prophets. Some have called Zechariah and others “minor prophets” because of the number of words in their books, but there is nothing minor about one of God’s people bringing forth a Word from God’s Own Heart. Prophets spoke forth words of the Christ, but they and others in the Old Testament also lived lives which speak Christ to us. In no particular order, here are just a few more Old Testament selections in which God has provoked in me a recognition of Jesus the Christ.

In Hosea, I find a call to turn and know Christ. His name is half of Jesus, meaning just “Salvation”, and that is what he calls us to. The Joshua who took over from Moses started out with the same name, as did several others, but Moses changed it from Hosea to Joshua, the full name of Jesus. The prophet Hosea gives us His Word so that we can be known by that Name in full. *“...I will say to those who were not My people, ‘You are My people!’ and they will say, ‘You are my God!’” (Hosea 2:23). “Come, let us return to the Lord, for He has torn us, but He will heal us; ...He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, that we may live before Him. (I think the third day will be a Sunday.) So let us know, let us press on to know the Lord. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; and He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth.” (Hosea 6:1-3).* Once more, the “return” used here is the same Hebrew “shub” which, Jeremiah tells us, requires God’s action to be accomplished.

Joel transmits a similar message in the face of coming judgment. Joel’s name means “The Lord is God”, basically Elijah spelled backward. *...Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming; surely it is near. (Joel 2:1). “Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “Return (shub) to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning; and rend your heart and not your garments.” (Joel 2:12-13a). “And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered... Even among the survivors whom the Lord calls. (Joel 2:32).*

Micah (Who is like Yah, the Lord?) shows me Jesus the Shepherd coming out of Bethlehem (House of Bread). *“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah (Fruitful), ...From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.” ...He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. ...This One will be our peace.* (Micah 5:2-5).

Amos (The Burden Carrier) was a shepherd called to be a prophet of Christ. He delivers God’s Word to me, ... *“Seek Me that you may live.” ...He who made the Pleiades and Orion and changes deep darkness into morning... The Lord is His name.* (Amos 5:4-8). We are to seek the One who hung the stars.

In Job, I find new insight into what expectant waiting for Christ means. Job heard Him, saw Him and was turned in repentance. He lost most everything he had valued, but he found Someone far greater. *And as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God; whom I myself shall behold, and whom my eyes shall see and not another...* (Job 19:25-27). As Job tried to make sense out of his difficulties, he was finally asked some questions directly by Christ, the One who laid the foundation of the earth. One of them was, *“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me if you have understanding.”* (Job 38:4). Later, after Job stopped leaning on his own understanding, he said, *I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; therefore, I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.*” (Job 42:5-6). From his flesh he saw Christ.

Ezra, a priest whose name means “Help” or “Helper”, led a later return of people from Babylon to Jerusalem in which treasures were also brought back for service in the rebuilt temple. It is significant to my experience with Christ that the temple of His Presence was rebuilt before beginning the restoration of the walls to protect the city. Indeed, the altar of sacrifice was the very first thing to be rebuilt by Joshua (Jesus) and Zerubbabel. The altar was used for sacrifice even before the temple foundation was laid (Ezra 3). I recognize that walls are not my fundamental protection. The Cross of Jesus comes first, so that I might be touched by His Presence and recognize Immanuel (God with Us). Walls can come later. Revelation 21 tells of a city with immense walls, but their gates will never be closed (v.25). The Temple of the New Jerusalem will be God Himself and the Lamb (v.22). The Lamb I know as Jesus will be my Light (v.23), because His Sacrifice on the Cross, as “God with Us”, was the Way for us to be with God.

Esther (Star) was the foreign name given to an exiled Jewish woman named Hadassah (Myrtle), a subject of the king of the Medes and Persians. She became the queen, just as Joseph and Daniel had been previously raised to positions of great power in other great kingdoms. She acts as Christ in some ways as she puts her life on the line for her people who were faced with imminent destruction. Her adoptive father Mordecai had told her that if she did not act, God would deliver the rest of His people some other way. But then he asked her, “...*who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?*” (Esther 4:13-14). Esther resolved to go forth, “...*and if I perish, I perish.*” (Esther 4:16). Jesus knew Esther even then, and also as He contemplated the Cross in Gethsemane. She amplifies His harder choice. For Him, there was no “**If**” involved. He knew He would perish on the Cross. It was the only Way my deliverance could come.

Prophets like Obadiah and Nahum speak of God’s judgment upon a rebellious world, but they too show me Christ. He is the instrument of judgment as surely as He is the instrument of grace, as confirmed in Revelation 19:11-21. In these prophecies, He awakens an urgency in me for those who do not recognize Him. Habakkuk adds His promise that “...*the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*” (Habakkuk 2:14). Zephaniah adds His promise for that day: “*The Lord your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will (renew you in) His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.*” (Zephaniah 3:17). The sense of the Hebrew word translated here as “rejoice” is literally to spin around in celebration. Does that give you a new appreciation for Hebrews 12:2? (...*fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross...*). Can you imagine? My Lord Jesus spins around and shouts with joy over what He has done for me! Shouldn’t we?

Haggai, along with Zechariah, spoke God’s call for the returned exiles to rebuild the temple, but He also speaks of a later one. “*For thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land. I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory... The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine... The latter glory will be greater than the former... and in this place I will give peace,’ declares the Lord of hosts.*” (Haggai 2:6-9). We are reminded in I Corinthians 3:16, *Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?* He calls forth yet more shouting.

In Jonah I find new insight into the depths of Christ's sufferings. You probably have at least some familiarity with the basics of this well-known story, but much more can be gained by reading this short book (two pages in the Bible I have open). His name means "Dove", like those used as small sacrifices. I will only discuss here the reference Jesus made to Jonah in Matthew 12:39-41. *"An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth..."*. Jesus tells us we can find Him here, but for years I did so only superficially because I did not pay attention. When I did, I initially became confused. I could understand three days, because He did spend parts of three days in the tomb. But then why did He, and Jonah, specify three nights? There was Friday night. There was Saturday night. Where is the third night?

I discovered that people have argued much over this, but I found nothing satisfying in their arguments. Then I learned something more of His suffering, directly from Him. He gave me a new appreciation of Gethsemane and the violence of that awful night. I saw afresh the pain of betrayal, denials and the mocking and torture inflicted upon Him by men He had come to save. Jesus truly suffered for me, beyond all measure, deep in the heart of an earth of His Own Creation. **He**, not the verse, suddenly became clearer to me. He had begun counting with Thursday night! Now I do too.

In Nehemiah 8, we find the book of God's law being read to all the people and translated to give the sense so that the people understood. (v.8). *...all the people were weeping when they heard...* (v.9). Nehemiah said, *"...Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."* (v.10). One of the readers was a man named Jeshua (Jesus) (v.7). He is still in the business of translating His Word to our hearts.

... there is no distinction... ...but Christ is all and in all.
Colossians 3:11

*When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also
will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him,
so that God may be all in all.* I Corinthians 15:28

CHAPTER 23

MALACHI

“Behold, I am going to send My messenger and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the Lord of hosts. Malachi 3:1

The Old Testament books are not arranged in chronological order. For that matter, several books are not even chronologically arranged within themselves. However, just as it was appropriate to begin our review with Genesis, it is fitting to finish with Malachi. It belongs here.

We have seen Malachi’s name before. It means “My Messenger”. Malachi derives from the Hebrew “malak”, commonly translated both as “angel” in some places and as “messenger” in others. It is used twice in the text above. The first time, it sounds like it could refer in various ways to Malachi, Gabriel, Elijah and/or John the Baptist. In Matthew 11:10, Jesus quoted the first one and told us it was directly about John the Baptist. But the second time “messenger” is used above, it sounds more like it is referring specifically to Christ. That would not be a strained reference, since Jesus is the Word of God, the very expression of God, the direct message of God come in the flesh to establish the New Covenant in His Blood. Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel used a closely related Aramaic word, usually translated as “angel”, to describe the Fourth Man in the furnace and the One who stopped the lions’ mouths. I recognize Him here.

I am being weaned away from conventional understandings that lull me into thinking that I actually comprehend something of the God who has touched me with an eternal experience. For example, I have generally thought of Gabriel, the Man of God, as an angel, whatever that is. Gabriel is surely important, but who is he really? Is not Jesus more surely the Man of God and the Messenger of the New Covenant? Could Gabriel be Jesus too? Could Jesus have actually announced His Own Birth to His mother Mary? Well, He hung the star that announced His Birth. And, as we have seen, the Word who was made flesh had been coming to men and women of the Old Testament with that announcement for thousands of years. Don’t settle for knowing some things about Him. Know Him. Let Him show you who He is.

Malachi begins with God's word out of John 3:16: "*I have loved you...*", to the people of His creation, but we ask, "How can that be so?" (Malachi 1:1-2). He goes on to describe His rejection of those who reject Him or those who just go through the motions of a response and consider it a bother (v.13). God is particularly hard on the priests. "*For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger (malak) of the Lord of hosts. But as for you, you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by the instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi,*" says the Lord of hosts. (Malachi 2:7-8). Therefore, God will send a New Messenger, a New Malak of a New Covenant, as announced in our text from Malachi 3:1, quoted at the beginning of our chapter. Look back a page and read it again.

Then look at the next verse: "*But who may endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness.*" (Malachi 3:2) That's no created angel. That's Jesus! It's about the Lord's Coming, both the first, in the stable of Bethlehem, and the second, in the clouds of glory.

This promise is to more than just some descendants of a man named Levi. The priests were sons of Levi, but among the first words God gave to Moses on Sinai to speak to the people were these: "'...*And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.*' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." (Exodus 19:6). That's a larger group, but the promise is also given to more than just some descendants of Levi's father Israel. In I Peter 2:9-10, we are told, *But you are a Chosen Race, a royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation, a People for God's Own Possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were Not a People, but now you are The People of God; you had Not Received Mercy but now you have Received Mercy.* In this passage, a non-priest fisherman is quoting liberally and fulfilling prophecy from all over the Old Testament. Besides Exodus 19:6, you can look at Isaiah 43:18-21 and 61:6 as well as Hosea 1:10 and 2:23 (which verse I also quoted in the section on Hosea in our last chapter). Peter was not born into the Levitical priesthood, but he was reborn into a higher one. By God's Authority, Peter extends Christ's offer to us.

God calls us once more in Malachi to return. “...*Return to Me and I will return to you,*” says the Lord of hosts... (Malachi 3:7). He goes on to answer the question of how we may do that. At first the explanation sounded confusing to me, because it tells me I need to stop robbing God and bring my tithes and offerings to Him and I will be blessed (Malachi 3:7-12). I have had this passage quoted to me from numerous pulpits as part of an inducement to the congregation to increase their giving to the church. Is that all there is to it? Do we act first so that God will respond? Not so.

In fact, God is the Great Initiator, as Job discovered when he was asked where he was when God in Christ laid the foundation of the earth. Christ is indeed the Great Initiation of God. He went to the Cross ...*while we were yet sinners...* (Romans 5:8). *We love, because He first loved us.* (I John 4:19). God most certainly makes the first move, and many more after, but He chooses to deal with willing hearts. God asks us to turn from ourselves to Him, and He offers to act so that our turning may be genuine.

A tithe is the tenth part, but it is not a tenth part of any creation of ours. It is the tenth part of what God has bestowed. It comes from Him. The reason it was to be brought to the “storehouse” in Malachi 3:10 is that the tithe was set aside in the Old Testament to be used for various purposes. In some cases, it was consumed in a celebratory feast together or to provide for the seventh year when the fields were left fallow or the fiftieth holiday year of Jubilee. Some was used to support the Levites, who had no territorial inheritance, or the orphan, the widow or the poor. We attempt to rob God when we hoard for ourselves that which He bestows.

Based on my own experience, I think it likely that people concentrate more on what they desire from God than on what they desire to give back to Him. The desires of our hearts center on things like our health, our wealth and our relationships. We want to be physically and emotionally “comfortable”. Our generosity, if you can call it that, typically only extends far enough to ask that those same desires to be also realized for those we love, or at least like. Consider the selfish content of our praying and the temporary nature of our requests. We have hearts that need turning. God calls us to return so that He may change our hearts.

Consider two profound Old Testament passages. *Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to*

the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it. (Psalm 37:4-5). (The whole Psalm is well worth reading.) It is good that He does not give me the desires of my unturned heart. 'I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the Lord, and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with their whole heart.' (Jeremiah 24:7). No more half-hearted attempts. God gives us a heart to know Him. Then He gives us our whole heart's desire. We desire Him and He gives us Himself in Jesus Christ.

In Revelation 4:10-11, the elders in heaven *will cast their crowns before the throne saying, "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power..."*. Those crowns will not have been made by the hands of those elders. When He gives us Himself in Jesus Christ, we render back to Him our sacrifice of praise and offer back all that He has made us to be.

Back to Malachi: *Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and esteem His name. "They will be Mine," says the Lord of hosts, "on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him."* (Malachi 3:16-17). God's Only Begotten Son served Him, and He served me, on the Cross and the Father spared Him in the Resurrection. Those who are His will serve Him here for a brief time as they take up His Cross and follow Him. This passage is God's Promise that we also have a part in His Resurrection. May we speak well His Word to one another.

"For behold, the day is coming burning like a furnace... But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall."
Malachi 4:1-2

"Remember the law of Moses My servant... Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet... He will restore (turn back; "shub") the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse." Malachi 4:4-6

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. II Corinthians 13:14

CHAPTER 24

CONCLUSION

Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.
(Psalm 127:1)

We have just begun to scratch the surface. The Scriptures indeed testify of Jesus the Christ on every page, sometimes with shouts, sometimes in whispers, but He **is** the very Word of God. I am reminded of John's conclusion to his Gospel. *And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written* (John 21:25). John was not overstating the case. Such could not be said truthfully of any man born of Adam in this world, but it is abundantly true of the Christ who made it.

The words of this book will be insufficient to cause you to recognize Christ in the Old Testament. He retains that prerogative for Himself. If we are to know Him, the Father must personally draw each of us to Him, and He must reveal Himself directly to each willing heart by the Holy Spirit. I pray that He will personally draw each one who may come to read these words.

There are many Old Testament selections I could have chosen for this book. He has led me to discuss these few, which are prominent among those in which He has shown Himself to me in my walk with Him over the years. It may be that He will draw near to you in some of these as well. If you seek, you will find others because you will find Him. He keeps at it with me whenever I hear Him.

This book has been a labor of Love. It comes not so much out of my love for Him but far more out of His Love for me. Writing it was assuredly not my idea. The book is about Jesus Christ. Parts of it have felt like I was taking dictation instead of writing it. That should have been much more thoroughgoing on my part, but I pray fervently that my part will not stand in the way of whatever His Purpose may yet be. His Purpose for me has already been well served through my own experience with Him in this process.

Let me describe the approach I am taking to the book's publication. I have felt a clear direction not to market the book in a conventional way. That is not to imply that I have any notion that it could be successfully marketed at all. It may simply be for my family and a few close friends, or just for me. I will be making the book available for free download in digital form for anyone's personal use and for free distribution (drjimraddin.com). It is copyrighted, and I ask that it not be sold or profited from. I will have some physical copies made at my expense through a print-on-demand source (link at drjimraddin.com). I will give them away as opportunity arises. You are welcome to do the same or to print it yourself on your own from the download. I will be taking care to avoid "monetizing" the book myself.

I want what may happen to this work to continue to be in His Hands.

I have grieved over today's widespread economic exploitation of Christ. Books employing His Name can be efficiently marketed, spawning profit, sequels, study guides and continuing, profitable speaking tours. People can become remarkably well-to-do through "not-for profit ministries". Commercial churches, with favorable tax treatments, can employ sometimes lavishly paid ministerial staffs while becoming churches of entertainment. Churches may grow to immense size by going through the motions, avoiding offending anyone, and speaking emotional reassurances people long to hear, all while bearing little similarity to the Church, the Body of Christ.

The early Church did not monetize its Lord. It was not commercial or "efficient", but the counterfeiters arrived quickly. I am convinced the true Church today is not commercial either, nor does it strive for efficiency. The Church is not flawed. It is a Living New Creation in Christ and He secures its health. The True Church just seeks to know its Lord.

By God's design, His Body the Church is now deployed through the world. It can be found scattered through the commercial churches, secular businesses, the military, educational institutions, hospitals and nursing homes, with lives being poured out "wastefully", like fine perfume, to touch people with the Love of Christ. I have personally experienced His Church in all those venues, and more, as I have experienced Him there. The commercial churches of today provide the Church a rich mission ground as He sends His people into them, and into the rest of the world, giving people rich opportunity to recognize Him.

Allow an observation here. I find that my dog, in some ways, pictures aspects of where I should be with Jesus Christ, sometimes more helpfully than from other sources. It is certainly not a detailed picture, because he is just a dog and I am just me, but it's helpful nonetheless. I don't think Keegan really understands much about me. He probably can't, and he probably doesn't need to. He has a sense for the meaning of a few words and he has some notions about what I want and don't want him to do. But he also has a real sense of my feelings for him and I have a deep sense of his feelings for me. My dog knows me. He trusts me. He wants to be close to me and he does especially well when he is there. He recognizes me every time I come in the door and he greets me enthusiastically. I suppose that is all quite enough, for a dog. What is enough for me? It is not a "What". It is simply Christ, intimately close.

Typical purveyors of organized religion commonly portray the Christian experience as something I am to do rather than Someone I am to know. Preachers and teachers prescribe many activities I need to carry out. I need to read, believe, pray, repent, obey, attend meetings, give, bear witness, encourage, remember this or that, and not lose heart. It is hard to do it all.

People may attempt to follow all this, even as the prescriptions increase and change. But if you see real Christians doing such things, they are not really the ones doing them. The Christian is simply called to know the only One who ever lived the Christian Life. He is still the Only One who can.

Paul recognized Christ, personally and intimately. Paul's desire was simply *...that I may know Him...* (Philippians 3:7-15). For Paul, it was *...no longer I who live but Christ lives in me...* (Galatians 2:19-21). Paul was given to know the mystery of *...Christ in you, the hope of glory.* (Colossians 1:25-27). Only Christ will *...equip us to do His will, **working in us** that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ...* (Hebrews 13:20-21). My working out of myself is not even pleasing in my own sight, much less His.

Some point to passages describing activities or attributes characterizing Christians as if those passages are prescriptive of what I should be trying to do out of myself. It is as if you should *...work out your salvation with fear and trembling...* (Philippians 2:12) without completing the sentence: *...**for it***

is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. (Philippians 2:13).

It is not about me. It is about Him. He is the One who chooses to be about me. Surely that is far more than quite enough, even for me.

It is true, for every book ever written, that most people won't read it. Among the very few who actually pick up this book and read it, some may say, "I don't care about this." Others may say, "I already knew that." Some might say, "That's interesting." Some might even say, "I've learned something new about Christ." But this book is intended for someone else entirely. As I type this out, I am seeking in the Lord that there might be a person who will respond as Job did, not to the book at all, but directly to Him. Job, you will recall, did not even say, "Now I see Him!", when He responded to Christ in Job 42:5-6. What he said was more like, "Now I see **You**, and I turn."

*And even when I am old and gray, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare
Your strength to this generation, Your power to all who are to come.*
Psalm 71:18

*"But to this one I will look (or regard with pleasure), To him who is humble
and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word. Isaiah 66:2*

*Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand
in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our
Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and
authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (So let it be.)*
Jude 24-25

APPENDIX

NAMES

Names can be important. Names of God are particularly important. More than one name for God is found in the Old Testament. In the first verse of Genesis, “God”, who did the creating, is the Hebrew word “Elohim”. The word is a plural form of the singular “Eloah”. Sometimes we see simply “El”. The God who created the heavens and the earth is properly plural as God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, but He is also properly singular as One God. In Mark 12:29, when Jesus quoted what He called the Greatest Commandment from Deuteronomy 6, He began with v. 4, ...*The Lord our God is one Lord...*

As we have seen, the Bible is clear that Christ the Son was the instrument of creation but All of God is decisively involved. I find no encouragement anywhere to think of God in parts, acting independently, or in one sole revelation either. Many have noticed the view of Christ as He emerged from His Baptism, with the Holy Spirit descending and the Voice from heaven proclaiming Him as “My Son”. We see Three Persons of God in one scene. But we need to do far more than think of God or observe things about Him. We need to know Him. It has nothing to do with what we think we understand. It has everything to do with the One we are called to know.

The most common name for God in the Old Testament is “YHVH”. It speaks of the One who simply **Is**, the One who exists apart from any cause. YHVH appears over 6000 times and is almost always translated as “Lord”. YHVH is there for both of the two uses of “Lord” in Deuteronomy 6:4 above. The “God” there is “Elohim”, still plural, so we have again, in one verse, a singular-plural God. We are typically seeing YHVH when we read ...*saith the Lord...* You may be wondering how to pronounce that. So do I. People have adopted “Jehovah”, effectively by adding three vowels, or “Yahweh”, by adding two, because God’s name was generally considered too holy to speak. YHVH first shows up in Genesis 2:4 as “Lord God”, again with “Elohim”. Sometimes we see His name as the “Lord of Hosts” with “Hosts” having to do with armies, military might and warfare.

Many of the names of people discussed in this book derive from the name of God. For example, Joshua or Jesus. The “Jo” comes from Jehovah; so does

the “iah” in Isaiah and the “jah” in Elijah. The “el” is Elohim, so Elijah means “Elohim is Jehovah”. Joel means “Jehovah is Elohim”. You can also see the “el” in Daniel, Elisha, Ezekiel and others. The “sha” in Elisha and the “shua” in Joshua is from “yasha”, to save or deliver. Therefore, we have “Elohim is Salvation” and “Jehovah is Salvation”. There are many other examples of God’s name used in different forms as part of the names of other people in the Bible.

There are also many other names of God. Some are compound names, often with “El” or “JHVH” combined with some descriptor, such as the Lord our Righteousness or, again, the Lord our Salvation as in Jesus. The Bible provides a large number of names for God. For example, El Shaddai is God Almighty. That was the Name by which God was known to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We learn that in Exodus 6:2-3. *God spoke further to Moses and said to him, “I am the Lord (YHVH) and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as God Almighty (El Shaddai), but by my name Lord (YHVH), I did not make Myself known to them.”* God chooses the name by which He will be known to a person.

The Triune God had already spoken further to Moses at the burning bush and gave him another name by which He would be called. *Then Moses said to God (Elohim), “Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God (Elohim) of your fathers has sent me to you.’ Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them? God (Elohim) said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM” (HAYAH ASHER HAYAH); and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”* (Exodus 3:13-14). God is indeed the One who simply **IS**. He decides what He will be called in each situation. The later sons of Israel were shocked to hear Jesus say, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”* (John 8:58). They tried to kill Him then and there. They thought they were hearing blasphemy instead of truth.

Another special and particularly illustrative name of God is found in the Hebrew “Adon” and its plural “Adonai”. It means lord and master, most commonly applied to human ones, like Abraham in Genesis 24. It is related in meaning to the Greek “kurios”, also typically translated as “lord” as in John 13:13. Adon is sometimes capitalized in our translations when it is occasionally used as a name of God. For example, in Isaiah 1:24, God is called “Adon Yahweh” in Hebrew, and similarly in four other Isaiah passages. The combined term speaks of the Existant One in a human term. I

think the translators had trouble with this. They tend not to use “Lord Lord” here. I understand some have spoken the human term Adonai to refer to God as Lord and Master to avoid daring to pronounce His Holy Name.

The same form of Adon from Isaiah is used in one other place. You wouldn’t be likely to know it from a translation, because it usually comes out as “Lord”, just like JHVH does in thousands of other places. Significantly, in Malachi 3:1, we find Adon used all by itself. Here it is again: ...*the Lord (Adon) whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple...* That is Jesus. He is God made in the form of human flesh, which is emphasized by using Adon, the human form for Lord. He certainly did come to the temple. He was at the temple when He called Himself the “I AM” in John 8:58 a couple of paragraphs back. He had also come to the temple in John 2 and threw out the moneychangers. At that time, He had said, ...*“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” ...But He was speaking of the temple of His body.* (John 2:19-21). The temple is the place of His Presence. Here He introduces a new temple, the Temple of His Body, the Church. *Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?* (I Corinthians 3:16).

The Lord whom you seek is the Lord who seeks you, to make of you a New Creature in Him that He may dwell in you. Adon, the Lord made in human terms, is the One I sought without knowing who or what I was seeking. I did not yet know what name I should use. God drew me to Him so that I might recognize Him when He suddenly came to me, and made me His temple. It happened in May 1954. I was alone in bed. Suddenly, I was no longer alone.

Since that night, He has been creating in my experience a growing recognition of who He is and what a thoroughgoing work He has done.

*He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen.
Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.
Revelation 22:20-21*



Recognizing Christ in the Old Testament

This book describes some of the ways Christ shows Himself to me in the Old Testament. He comes as a surprise to me there, as He generally does in all of life.

I was expecting only a few scattered prophecies of Him. Instead, He shows Himself personally and intimately from Genesis to Malachi.

My problem was not only that the Old Testament is longer and harder to read than the New one. My problem was me, and my reliance on myself and others to figure out what it said. I was ignoring the One doing the saying. Seek Him with me.