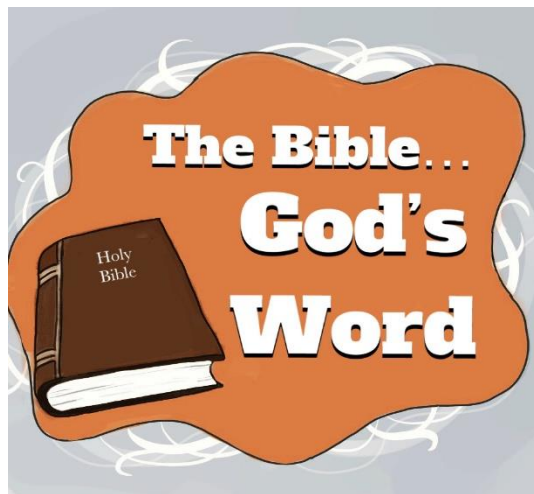


Front Cover

Handbook 2
**God's Great Plans
For the Ages**

**Selected Studies
for Edifying the Saints**

By Albert Fairweather



*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path"*

*"Therefore all Your precepts concerning all things
I consider to be right; I hate every false way"*

Psalms 119:105,128

Vessels of the Tabernacle

Back cover



Golden
Lampstand



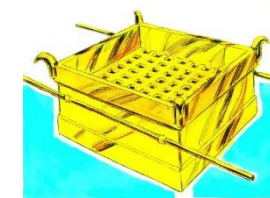
Ark of the
Covenant



Incense
Altar



Table of
Shewbread



Brazen Altar



The Laver for Washing



Israel's Great
High Priest

Printing Aid Abroad

Email: Albert Fairweather afairweather1@gmail.com

John Denman jldenman@hotmail.com.au

Dr Mel Heazlewood pheazlew@bigpond.net.au

Handbook 1. The Shepherds' Handbook' and 'The Holy Spirit'

A Guide for Elders, Bible Teachers & Students of God's Word

Handbook 2. God's Great Plans for the Ages

Selected Studies for Edifying the Saints

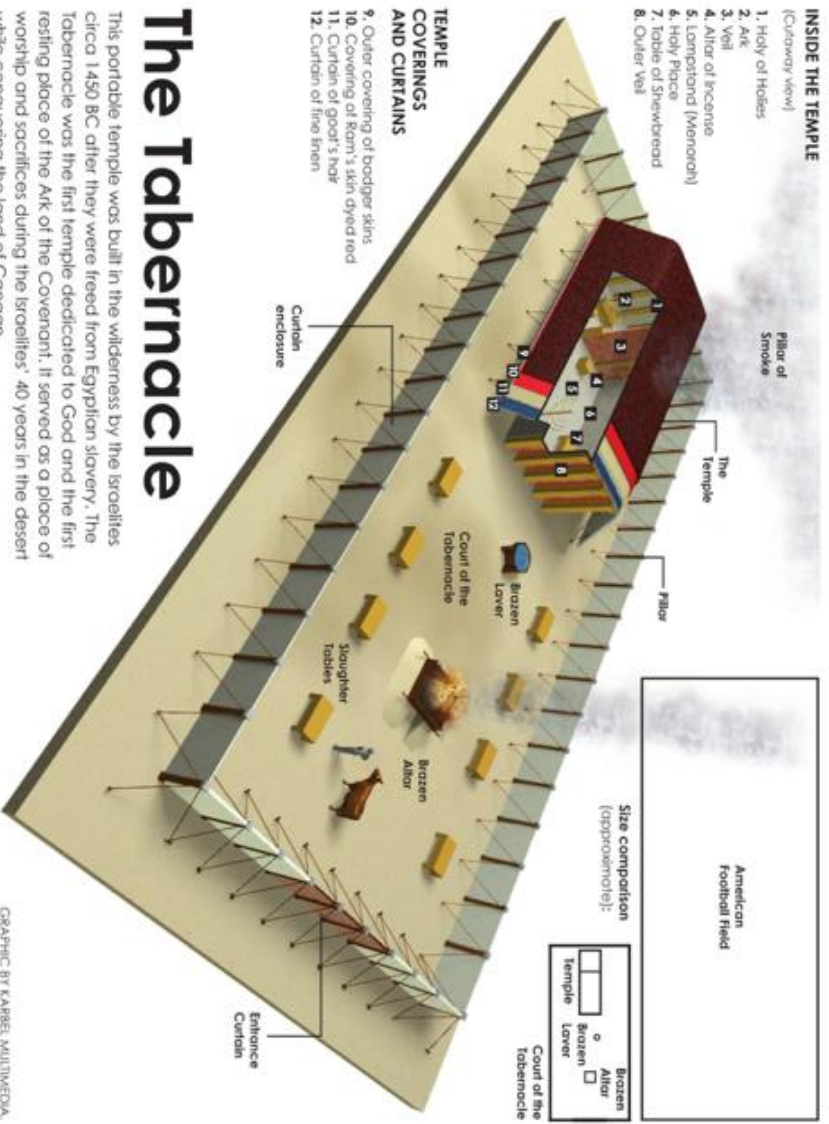
Handbook 3. 'Things to Come'

Studies on the Prophetical Books

Handbook 4. Triumphant over Trials

Lessons from the Book of Ruth, Job and others

Books printed as funds allow, and available in PDF format on request.



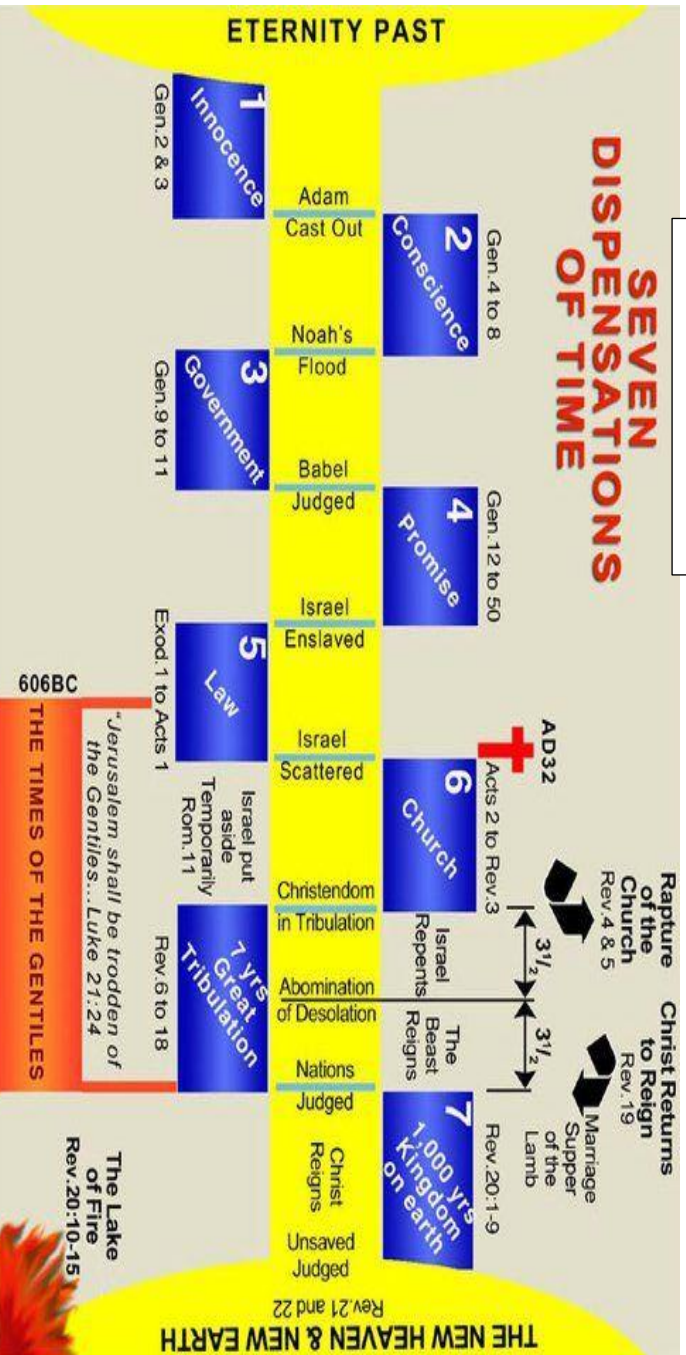
GRAPHIC BY KAREL MULTIMEDIA,
COPYRIGHT 2008 LOGOS BIBLE SOFTWARE

The Tabernacle

This portable temple was built in the wilderness by the Israelites circa 1490 BC after they were freed from Egyptian slavery. The Tabernacle was the first temple dedicated to God and the first resting place of the Ark of the Covenant. It served as a place of worship and sacrifices during the Israelites' 40 years in the desert while conquering the land of Canaan.

Inside back cover

This chart is courtesy of 'The Herald of Hope' Magazine



Inside front cover

In this Handbook,
All Scripture taken from the New King James version.
Copyright © by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Table of Contents

- [1] Christ the Messiah in Prophecy
- [2] The ‘Sonship’ of Christ
- [3] Some Attributes of God
- [4] Relationship between O.T & N.T. Believers
- [5] The Seven Dispensations
- [6] The Seven Covenants of the Lord
- [7] The Priesthood of Believers
- [8] The Sabbaths and the Law of Moses
- [9] The Tabernacle in the Wilderness
- [10] Levitical Offerings
- [11] The Levitical Feasts
- [12] Is There a Heaven and Hell
- [13] Assurance of Salvation
- [14] The Judgement Seat of Christ
- [15] Crowns, the Christian’s Reward
- [16] Faith, Hope and Love

The Bible

Introduction

The Lord Jesus in God’s Greatest Plan for the Ages

Jesus said, **‘I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life’**

Have you ever been lost? It is not a pleasant experience for a child to be lost and wander away into the woods. As a young man I was lost to God living in sin, then I found **the way back to God**. An old hymn points us to Him as the only way:

“There’s a way back to God, From the dark paths of sin; There’s a door that is open, that all may go in: At Calvary’s cross Is where you begin, When you come as a sinner to Jesus”.

The Lord Jesus is ‘the way’ in God’s great plan:

God the father planned the only way to heaven by sending His Son into this world: The Lord Jesus said, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”** (John 14:4-6).

He not only shows us the way, but He is the way! When we accept this we begin on this Christian journey. He said this: *“and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out”* (John 6:37). By coming to Him, we become a prepared people ready for a prepared place. The Lord Jesus said: **“In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you”** (John 14:2-3). Heaven is indescribable in its glory. King David found the way and the destination, for he wrote, *“You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore”* (Psalm 16:11).

The Lord Jesus is ‘the truth’ in God’s great plan:

He not only taught absolute truth, but truth dwells in Him. The world is full of lies, and the devil is the father of lies, and deceives with his lies. John wrote to his disciples, *“I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth”* (1 John 2:21).

All truth dwells in the Lord Jesus, all lies dwell in Satan: *“for he is a liar and the father of it”* (John 8:44). We are released from the bondage of sin and lies and find true rest and deliverance when we come to Him and believe His word of truth. He said, *“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:31-32).

The Lord Jesus is ‘the life’ in God’s great plan:

He is our creator, for *“All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made”* (John 1:3). He gave us a body and inner life, with ‘self-consciousness’ and ‘God-consciousness’. *“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it”* (John 1:4-5). ‘Life’, ‘light’ and ‘darkness’ are referred to here in the spiritual sense.

He also said, *“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life”* (John 6:63). He said that we must be born of the Spirit, for we are dead to God spiritually because of the darkness of the ‘flesh’, referring to our fallen sinful nature. So ‘life’ and ‘light’ proceed from our Lord, but ‘darkness’ refers to ‘sin’ and Satan’s hold.

Life and Light:

Where there is 'life', there will be 'righteousness' or 'right living'! We receive this spiritual 'life' from God the moment we believe and then we die spiritually to sins 'darkness'. The Bible says: *"For you died, and **your life** is hidden with Christ in God. **When Christ who is our life** appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory"* (Colossians 3:3-4).

Where the 'light' or 'illumination' given by the Holy Spirit from hearing God's word enters our hearts, His 'love' will shine where once the darkness of sin dwelt. We experience a 'love' even for the unlovely, and begin to love as our Lord taught us to love: He said: *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"* (John 13:34-35).

So, are you 'lost' to God's great plan for you? *"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10).

.....

Study 1

Christ the Messiah in Prophecy

The greatest plan God has for all people is that His Son, Jesus Christ, would bring in His great plan of redemption, through the shedding of His blood on the cross at Calvary, as foretold by the Old Testament Prophets, especially in Isaiah Ch. 53.

The first verse of the Bible introduces the **Father, Son and Holy Spirit**: *"In the beginning **God** (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the **Spirit of God** was hovering over the face of the waters* (Genesis 1:1-2).

'Elohim' is a **plural noun** with the underlying thought of **'unity'**. Thus, the Trinity is revealed in **Elohim**. This is highlighted in Genesis 1:26: *"Then **God** (Elohim) said, "Let Us make man in **Our** image, according to **Our** likeness...". It is written of the Lord Jesus that, *"All things were made **through Him**, and without Him nothing was made that was made"* (John 1:3).*

In **'Elohim'** we see the unity of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, working together to create the heavens and the earth and all living things and Adam and Eve would be the pinnacle of His creation.

The sin of Adam did not surprise the Lord! For Christ is the *"Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29); For this very purpose *"He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world"* (1 Peter 1:20).

The Messiah Redeemer would be born of a woman, the promised **'Seed'** of the woman, **Christ** and He would bruise the **serpent's** (Satan's) head at the Cross (Genesis 3:15).

Blood was shed when God performed the first sacrifice to provide skins to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness and this points to His sacrifice so as to forgive our sins and transgressions. *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace"* (Ephesians 1:7).

Tracing Christ, the Messiah, through the Old Testament

God promised both Abraham (Genesis 12:3; 15:1-6) and David (2 Samuel 7:12-17) that the Christ would be from their 'seed'. Matthew's Gospel Ch.1 traces this 'seed' as coming from Abraham and David down to Joseph, husband of Mary. Her genealogy, the mother of our Lord, is traced back to Adam in Luke 3:23-38.

Christ the Messiah is revealed as the **'Angel of the Lord'** in many Old Testament appearances (Genesis 16:7-11; 22:11-18; Judges 6:11-22) etc. He appeared to Joshua as *"the Commander of the army of the Lord"* (Joshua 5:13-15).

The 'Anointed One'

Christ the Messiah is called 'His Anointed' and 'My King' in Psalm 2. The word Christ (from the Greek) and Messiah (from the Hebrew) means 'the Anointed One'. The Holy Spirit 'anointed' and alighted upon Christ at His baptism and was upon Him in His ministry (Read Luke 3:21-22; 4:1, 14).

David foretold His resurrection in Psalm 16:8-11; His sacrificial suffering in Psalm 22; He is the good Shepherd in Psalm 23 and the coming King in Psalm 24. Psalm 110 and many others speak of Him. Job identified Him: *"For I know that my **Redeemer** lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth"* (Job 19:25).

All the prophets witnessed to Him

Isaiah prophesied of His person and work: The 'Messiah', would be from the tribe of Judah, the offspring of Jesse, David's father in Ch. 11. All kings from David on came from this tribe. He will reign as King in Isaiah 32:1-8, and will be the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah Ch. 42. He is the Lord's Servant and a light to the Gentiles in Isaiah Ch. 49, and the suffering Messiah in Ch. 53. **He** invites all to an abundant life in Isaiah Ch. 55.

Zechariah prophesied of Christ: He wrote about the Messiah and Israel's repentance in Chapters 12 and 13 and Messiah and the **'Day of the Lord'** in Chapter 14, when He returns to judge the nations and establish His kingdom of perfect righteousness.

There are many more references to the Messiah in the Old Testament, and many of these were fulfilled in the New Testament and many await future fulfilment.

On the road to Emmaus, Jesus met with two disciples; *“And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself”* (Luke 24:27). ‘Moses’ refers to the first 5 books of the Bible.

These scripture references will encourage you to read carefully and prayerfully the Word of God in the Old Testament, and there see Jesus portrayed. This will richly bless your life and service for the Lord.

Study 2

The ‘Sonship’ of Christ

In God’s great plans for the ages the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ is revealed.

[1] He is ‘The Son of God’

The Gospel of Mark begins: *“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God”* (Mark 1:1). This name is first mentioned in the Old Testament by King Nebuchadnezzar, *“I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God”* (Daniel 3:25). God protected the Jewish young men who stood up for their Lord.

The ‘Son of God’ is His divine name linked to the Messiah, the Christ: *“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel”* (Isaiah 7:14). ‘Immanuel’ means ‘God with us’. He is called the ‘Mighty God’ (Isaiah 9:6-7).

The Angel Gabriel said to Mary: *“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God”* (Luke 1:35).

The ‘Son of God’ was tempted by the devil, *“If You are the Son of God...”* (Matthew. 4:3,6; See Genesis 3:1-6). This ‘if’ is the seed of doubt that the devil planted in the mind of Eve, *‘Has God said...’*.

Many confessed Him as *‘The Son of God’* who witnessed His life, saw His divine power in healing and heard His powerful teaching.

Many confessed His as the Son of God

This is what John the Baptist said as he first beheld Jesus (John 1:34), Nathanael when he met Jesus (John 1:49), His disciples when He walked on water (Matthew 14:33), the blind man Jesus healed (John 9:35-36) and the centurion at His crucifixion (Matthew 27:54).

When Saul met the Lord, his life was changed from a persecutor to a follower of the Lord Jesus. He immediately began to preach Jesus as **the Son of God** (Acts 9:20). Later he wrote of Jesus as *“the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”* (Romans 1:4).

The secret of Paul’s life: *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me”* (Galatians 2:20).

What His enemies said:

The Unclean spirits: *“And the unclean spirits, when ever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, “You are the Son of God”* (Mark 3:11).

The Jewish leaders who falsely accused Him asked Him: *“Are You then the Son of God?”* So He said to them, *“You rightly say that I am”* (Luke 22:70). He could not deny Himself, and for this He was condemned to be crucified.

The Son of God displays His power:

a. In raising the dead: Jesus said, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live”* (John 5:25).

b. In raising Lazarus from the dead: *“When Jesus heard that, He said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it”* (John 11:4).

c. In healing a man born blind: *“Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” He answered and said, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” And Jesus said, “You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you”* (John 9:35-38).

d. In His victory over Satan: *“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy (render inoperable) the works of the devil”* (1 John 3:8).

The blessedness of all who believe:

For all who believe in Him there is now no condemnation, no future judgement for our sins: *“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten **Son of God**”* (John 3:18).

For all who believe in him there is life through His name: *“but these are written that you may believe that **Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**, and that believing you may have life in His name”* (John 20:31).

He is ‘The Lord Jesus Christ’, Lord of all and exhaled above all. Of all who believe in Him it is written:

He overcomes the world (1 John 5:5), God abides in him and he in God (1 John 4:15), He has the witness in himself (1 John 5:10) and he knows that he has eternal life (1 John 5:13).

Some of His wonderful names:

He is the Lamb of God (John 1:29). He is Shiloh, meaning the Peaceable One (Genesis 49:10). He is the Bright and Morning Star (Revelation 22:16). He is the Sun of Righteousness (Malachi 4:2). He is the Alpha & Omega, the Almighty (Revelation 1:8).

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God” (1 John 5:13).

[2] He is the Son of Man

Jesus asked this question: *“Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”* (Matthew 16:13). In the first mention of His name His glory was revealed to Daniel: *“I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven!”* (Daniel 7:13-14).

As the Son of Man, deity is linked to perfect humanity:

He came in poverty: *“Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”* (Matthew 8:20).

He came to seek, save and forgives *“for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:10). *“But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”* (Matthew 9:6).

He came to die and rise from the dead: *“Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, ‘Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead’”* (Matthew 17:9; see also Matthew 12:40).

He came with authority to judge: *“For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man”* (John 5:26-27). He will return to judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:30-31).

He told the apostles: *“Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration (earth’s renewing), when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel”* (Matthew 19:28; Revelation Ch 20).

The significance of this Name

He is the perfect representative Man. He is contrasted with Adam; *“The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven”* (1 Corinthians 15:47).

He took on a body of flesh, the only sinless Man. He took our place under the judgement of God for our sin: *“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit”* (1 Peter 3:18).

He is the glorified Man who represents us in heaven. He has *“passed through the heavens”* (Hebrews 10:19-22). He is our High Priest and represents us in heaven as *“a merciful and faithful High Priest”* (Hebrews 2:17) who can *“sympathise with our weaknesses”* and we are told, *“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need”* (Hebrews 4:16; Hebrews 7:25-26).

His name, the Son of Man and ‘Jesus’ (Saviour), is linked to His Manhood: *“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins”* (Matthew 1:21).

God has *“given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth”* (Philippians 2:9-11).

[3] He is the Son of Abraham, the promised ‘seed’

He is *“the son of David, the Son of Abraham”* (Matthew 1:1). He is the Christ, descended from the seed of Abraham and David down to Mary (Luke 3:23-38).

All records of Jewish ancestry were lost in the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. The ancestry of Christ alone has survived, preserved by the Lord in the Bible and is traced through Mary back to Adam, the first man, in Luke 3:23 to 38.

The “*everlasting covenant*” (Genesis 17:1-8) was made with Abraham and his ‘seed’. From Abraham, the Christ would be born who would be a blessing for all: “*And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*” (Genesis 12:3).

God promised Abraham in his old age a ‘seed’ (Genesis 21:12) and that Seed would be Christ. For this read Hebrews 11:17-19. “*Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ*” (Galatians 3:16).

[4] He is the Son of David, and He will be King of kings.

He is “*the son of David, the Son of Abraham*” (Matthew 1:1). The covenant made to Abraham was confirmed to David: “*Kings shall come from you*” (Genesis 17:6-7). The Lord said to David, “*And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever*” (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

Isaiah wrote of Him before 700 BC: “*For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this*” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Paul the apostle wrote of His birth: “*concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh*” (Romans 1:3).

He fulfilled Old Testament prophecies: He was born to Mary in Bethlehem, descended from David and Abraham. The angels said to shepherds: “*For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord*” (Luke 2:11).

The prophet Micah wrote of Him before 400 BC, “*But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.*” (Micah 5:2).

One day He will reign over Israel and all the nations. He is “*King of kings and Lord of lords*” (1 Timothy 6:16; Revelation 19:16). His Prince Regent on earth will be David (Ezekiel 34:24-25; 37:24; Jeremiah 30:9; Hosea 3:5; Amos 9:11).

The Holy Scriptures assure this: “*And so all Israel will be saved*” (Romans 11:26). “*Behold. the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David*” (Revelation 5:5). His kingdom will come as surely as the sun arises (Matthew 6:10).

What a wonderful and glorious day that will be!!

Study 3

Some Attributes of God

Brief sketches on the greatness of our Creator God, the One who planned all things after His sovereign will.

The prophet Isaiah said, “*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts*”. He “*who is and was and is to come, the Almighty*” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

God is ‘love’: this is first among His many attributes and of His very essence! “*And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him*” (1 John 4:16).

The Lord has revealed much more for:

He is Omnipotent – all powerful, able to do all things (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1-3)

He is Omniscient – He knows all things (Gen. 3:9; John 1:43-51).

He is Omnipresent – He is present everywhere (Psalm 139:7-12; John 3:13).

He is Holy and to be feared (Isaiah 6:1-4; Romans 1:18)

He tempts no one to sin (James 1:13)

He ‘avenges’ and must judge evil doers and His enemies (Nahum 1:2)

He ‘remembers’ and yet can ‘forget’ our sins (Ezekiel 16:60; Isaiah 43:25)

He judges nations and all sin (Matthew 25:31-46; Acts 17:30-31)

He is a Triune Being: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is seen at Christ’s Baptism (Matthew 3:13-17) and in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20)

Here are words easy to remember: “**He is three in One, yet One in three, and the Man in the middle died for me!**”

He gives and keeps His Word:

His word is sure, and can be trusted (Psalm 19:7-11). They are given by divine inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The words of Jesus will never pass away (Matthew 24:35).

His purposes and plans are unchanging as is His plan for the ages (Acts 15:13-18; Ephesians 1:10; 3:1-11; 1 Peter 1:18-20), as is His providential care and control (Esther 6:1-3; Romans 8:28-39).

His names declares His glory and attributes:

Elohim, ‘God’, is a plural noun singular in meaning (Genesis 1:1). This name reveals the unity of the divine substance of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Jehovah, the Great ‘1 AM’, The ‘LORD’ (Exodus 3:14; 34:5-7). He is the eternal and self-existing One, revealing the continuity of His dealings with man; His unchanging promises, the covenant keeping and revealing One fully revealed in Christ (Matthew 11:25-27; John 14:9).

Lord is ‘Adonai’, ‘Master’ and is applied to both God and man (Genesis 15:2).

Lord God is ‘Jehovah Adonai’ (Genesis 15:2).

God Most High is ‘El Elyon’ (Genesis 14:18).

His compound names and meanings:

Jehovah Elohim, ‘LORD God’ (Exodus 34:5-7)

Jehovah-jirah, ‘the LORD will provide’ (Genesis 22:13-14)

Jehovah-nissi, ‘the LORD is my banner’ (Exodus 17:8-15)

Jehovah-rapha, ‘the LORD who heals you’ (Exodus 15:26)

Jehovah Sabaoth, ‘the LORD of Hosts’ (1 Samuel 1:3)

Jehovah-shalom, ‘the LORD is peace’ (Judges 6:24)

Jehovah-shammah, ‘the LORD is there’ (Ezekiel 48:35)

Jehovah-tsidkenu, ‘the LORD our Righteousness’ (Jeremiah 23:6)

His name declares His glory and attributes: (Exodus 33:18-23; 34:1-7). He is merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abounding in goodness and truth and forgiving. Yet He cannot overlook sin because He is holy and righteous.

His glory is seen in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:3-6). He is full of grace and truth (John 1:14). Yet He is also the judge of all (John 5:22-24).

He is the Redeemer: (Job 19:23-27). When sin entered, God promised the ‘seed’, who is Christ, and covered Adam and Eve’s nakedness (Genesis 3:14-15). He instituted ‘sacrifices’ and ‘sin offerings’ to cover man’s sins until Christ came to fulfill all these sacrifices (Genesis 4:1-7; Leviticus Chs. 1-6). These sacrifices were all sign posts pointing to Christ (Isaiah 53:10; Eph. 1:7).

He is the ‘Father’: To Israel (Malachi 1:6): To us (Luke 11:2; Rom. 8:14-17).

All of the above attributes are seen in both the Father and the Son. The Lord Jesus said, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

Study 4

God’s plan for People through the Ages

Before we were born, God planned a path for our lives. As we trust Him and submit to His will, He leads us in His paths for His name’s sake.

“For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvellous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them” (Psalms 139:13-16).

God’s plan for Abraham: He made promises to Abraham, that through him and his family, later called Jacob and Israel, from his **seed**, the Christ, **all families** of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-6).

The Law and Israel, His special chosen people

God’s plan for Israel: The covenant of Law given to Moses was for Israel, given after they left Egypt and 430 years after Abraham! (Genesis 15:13; Galatians 3:17). All from Adam to Moses were NOT under this Law. Christ was born under this Law and it was in force until Christ shed His blood on the cross: Jesus said, *“This cup is **the new covenant** in My blood, which is shed for you”* (Luke 22:20-21).

The Law was perfect and revealed God’s perfect righteousness: Israel said: *“All the Lord has spoken **we will do**”* (Exodus 19:8). It was added because of transgressions: *“What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed (Christ) should come to whom the promise was made...”* (Galatians 3:19). It was added until Christ brought in the New Covenant.

Its purpose for today is still to expose sins: *“Therefore the law was our tutor (a strict schoolmaster) to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith”* (Galatians 3:24). *“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin”* (Romans 3:20).

Why did Israel fail? *“Why? Because they did not seek it **by faith**, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone”* (Romans 9:32). Many people still think they must ‘do good’ to enter heaven.

God’s plans under the Covenants

Under the Old Testament, Israel were servants (slaves) to obey. The law said ‘obey and live, disobey and die’ (Leviticus 18:4-5; Galatians 3:10-12).

Under the New Covenant, believers, both Jew and Gentile, are children and sons by adoption (Romans 8:12-17). Christians are not slaves to obey God, but children and sons. This is a new relationship entered into by the new birth. His Spirit comes into our hearts when we receive Him, and we obey His commandments out of love for Him (John 13:34). The Lord Jesus said, *“If you love Me, keep my commandments”* (John 14:15) and, *“We love Him because He first loved us”* (1 John 4:19).

Christ and the Law in God’s Plan

Christ was born under the law: *“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ”* (Galatians 4:4-7).

Christ in God’s plan: The law awaited a perfect Man to fulfill its claims. *“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill”* (Matthew 5:17). To fulfill means to ‘fill up’, to ‘complete’. He fulfilled all righteousness. He knew no sin, did no sin, in Him there is no sin.

He was the only man to perfectly keep the law, for He exalted it and made it honourable and also made restoration, for on the cross He met all that the law demanded. For this truth, read Isaiah 42:21 and Psalm 69:4.

God’s plan for Christians and New Relationships

Christ leads them out from under the law into the liberty of sons. The Lord Jesus was a Jew and His disciples were all Jews. He taught all to have ‘faith’ in God and His word. He was not like the Pharisees who relied on doing the ‘works’ of the Law! He sent them out to preach the Gospel (the good news). He taught them to keep the Lord’s Supper (Luke Chapter 22) and to make disciples and baptise them (Matthew 28:18-20). He did not teach them to obey the Law.

The Apostles were all Jews: Peter preached faith in Christ and 3000 were saved at Pentecost (Acts Chapter 2). *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers”* (Acts 2:42)

Paul did not teach Christians to obey the Law: He only preached the Gospel: *“For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified”* (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Paul rebuked Peter for returning to law practices (Galatians Chs.1-2). *“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God”* (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Paul preached this message in Jewish Synagogues on the Sabbath, where the law keeping Jews met. The only day he met with Christians was on the first day of the week, our Sunday, the resurrection day (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:1-2).

When Peter preached, both Jews and Proselytes (Gentiles who followed Judaism), were converted (Acts Ch. 2). Later, Samaritans were saved (Acts Ch. 8). Then, Gentiles were converted (Acts Ch. 10).

These first Christians were gathered into local churches under elders and deacons and there were no denominations as we have today. Jewish congregations did not separate from the Gentiles. Paul taught against this (Galatians Chs. 1&2).

The early churches around Jerusalem were made up of Jews and Proselytes; further afield, both Jews and Gentiles met together under the teaching of the Apostles who had been taught by Christ. Read carefully Paul’s words in Ephesians 2:14-22. Some Christian Jews in Jerusalem tried to bring Gentile converts back under the law. Paul answers this in the book of Galatians, Chs.1 & 2. The Apostles and elders met in Jerusalem to consider this same question and ruled on these issues (Acts Chapter 15). Gentile converts were not in any way under the law of Moses.

It took the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in AD 70 to finish off that form of Old Testament worship with its priesthood and animal sacrifices. This scattered the Jews among the Gentiles where they had no Temple, sacrifices or priesthood, and where now they only have Synagogues as places of worship.

The Book of Hebrews was written to warn Jews who professed faith in Christ as the Messiah not to return to Judaism. Paul wrote to the Colossian Christians and warned them not to believe the philosophy of man’s wisdom, or to return to the Jewish legal practices of abstaining from certain foods and drink, and from observing new moon festivals and Sabbaths (Colossians Chapter 2).

Today God’s great plan is to call a people out of all nations for His name.
Jesus said, “I will build My Church” Matthew 16:18.

Study 5

The Seven Dispensations

The colour chart on Page 2 will introduce you to these seven Dispensations and their place in all of history.

In God's plan, a Dispensation is a period of time when man is tested in relation to God's revealed will. It is a progressive and connected revelation of God's dealings with man, each ending in man's failure and judgement.

In eternity past, God planned out His eternal purposes in dealing with the human race, for *"Known to God from eternity are all His works"* (Acts 15:18). In His plan there are seven ages we called *'dispensations'*, or *'periods of administration'* (Ephesians 3:2). A Study of these will help us to better understand Bible themes.

God has always existed: In eternity past, He had no beginning and in eternity to come, He has no end of days. When He spoke the word, He created time, space and matter to form the earth and the celestial bodies and all life forms (Genesis Chapters 1 and 2).

"Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Psalm 90:1-2).

[1] Innocence – the first Dispensation

Genesis Chapters 2 and 3. Adam and Eve, created by God, lived sinless lives in the Garden of Eden. God created our first parents in innocence. Adam had great intelligence for he named all the animals and Eve was made from his rib to be his companion and helper. They lived in a perfect world and were naked and felt no shame. We are not told how long this 'Dispensation' lasted.

[2] Conscience:

Genesis Chapters 3 to 8. This changed when they disobeyed God's command and ate the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Sin and death then came into the world, and revealed Satan as the enemy of God and man.

The result of sin meant that childbirth brought pain and sorrow to women, and the man had to work hard to provide food for his family. **The first sacrifice:** God killed and shed the blood of animals and took their skins to make a

covering for their nakedness. This pointed to the death of His Son, to provide a sacrifice to redeem us from our sin.

While it is not written, God must have told them to kill innocent lambs and offer them as burnt offerings as a 'covering' for their sins. Approach to God was always through a sacrifice, with the shedding of the blood of innocent animals.

When they sinned, Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden. God gave them a **'conscience'**, a still small inner voice of understanding that is within everyone's heart. They had the *'the knowledge of good and evil'*, but not the power to always choose and to do what that small voice said was right. Temptation became a fact of life, for all people to this day are tempted to sin.

Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Able. Able was a **man of faith**, offering a lamb as God required. Cain was a **religious man**, and offered a bloodless sacrifice of the fruits of his own **works**. God rejected this, and pleaded with him to bring a lamb. He refused and in a fit of rage killed Able his brother who pleased God.

Sadly, *'Cain went out from the presence of the Lord'*, and from him came generations of godless people. They became so wicked that God sent the Flood to cleanse the earth from bloodshed and their corrupt ways (Genesis Chs. 6-8).

[3] Human Government

From Genesis Chapters 9 to 11. The Flood was worldwide and when it ended, Noah (and all the rulers who came after him) was to govern with good laws and order. Before the Flood people were vegetarians (Genesis 2:16); now they were given dominion over all beasts, birds and fish, and they were for their food.

God placed great value on the blood, and whoever shed man's blood was to be put to death. Under the law of Moses, Israel was not to eat blood (Lev.17:8-12).

Governments still have the responsibility to make good laws and to impose the death penalty for murder. The history of nations shows that they fall when moral corruption rules and God given laws are set aside! Read Psalm 9:17.

[4] Promise

From Genesis Chapters 12 to 50, and to Exodus Chapter 19. This was from the call of Abraham and the promises God gave to him, to the law given to Moses. God gave Abraham and his 'seed', the nation of Israel, special promises, while all other nations continue to this day under the Dispensation of Human Government.

Abraham's 'seed' also pointed down through his descendants to Christ, born of the 'seed' of Abraham after the flesh. God called him out from Ur, and led him to the land of Canaan. He promised to make him a great nation, and give his descendants, later known as Israel, the land of Canaan.

God promised to bless Abraham and make him a blessing. God would bless those who blessed him and curse those who cursed him.

His unconditional covenant made with Abraham and Israel still stands.

[5] The Law Given to Moses

From Exodus Chapters 20 to Acts Chapter 1. The law, the Old Covenant, was given to Moses and was in place for Israel to keep until the Church age.

Israel were slaves in Egypt. God sent Moses to deliver them and bring them into the land of Canaan promised to Abraham and his 'seed'. God gave Israel special laws to live by, and a portable Tabernacle, and later a Temple as places of worship.

These laws and sacrifices were only given to Israel, God's special people, and the Gentile nations were never placed under them. Israel's history has been one of failure, culminating in the rejection and crucifixion of their Messiah.

The nation of Israel was defeated in AD 70 and scattered among the nations. Some were regathered to their land and in 1948 they once again become a nation.

A third of Israel will be saved during the Great Tribulation and delivered when Christ returns to earth at the battle of Armageddon (Zechariah 13:7-9 to Ch.14).

[6] The Church

From Acts Chapters 2 to Revelation Chapter 3. The New Covenant was brought in through the death and resurrection of Christ. The Church was formed at Pentecost and this dispensation continues until the Rapture.

The Church is God's new creation. They are a people saved out of all nations, both Jew and Gentile, and indwelt and sealed by the Holy Spirit. These people are of the faith of Abraham, but are not under the law given to Moses. They are in-lawed to Christ, for they are His children, born of the Spirit and adopted as sons and daughters of the living God.

The Church age will end on the day of the Rapture, when Christ returns and takes His own to heaven (Read John 14:1-3 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Then the Church appears at the judgement seat of Christ, for each to receive rewards

for faithful service, or loss of reward. This will make ready His people for the Marriage of the Lamb. Read 2 Corinthians 5:9-10 and Revelation Chapter 19.

The Great Tribulation follows the Rapture, and intervenes before the Kingdom Age. Read Revelation Chapters 6 to 18. It is a period of seven years as foretold in Daniel 9:27 and the time of God's judgement on a Christ rejecting world. Jesus said that unless those days were shortened, no flesh would survive.

The invasion foretold in Ezekiel Chapters 38 and 39 will bring unbelieving Israel to repentance, and to faith in the Lord Jesus. Read Revelation 7:14; Matthew 24:21-29; Luke 21:20-26; Daniel 7:24-27; 9:24-27; 12:1; Jeremiah 30:4-7.

[7] The Kingdom Age and Eternal State

Read Revelation Chapters 19 and 20. This brings in the 1000 year reign of Christ. He returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to reign for 1000 years, also known also as the 'Millennial'. He will put down all authority and reign in peace and righteousness.

The earth will be restored almost like the Garden of Eden, but death will still reign, although people will live to great ages (Isaiah 65:17-20). Redeemed Israel will head the nations and the Church age saints will reign with Christ. The apostles will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28).

Satan will be bound in the bottomless pit for the 1000 years, then released to again deceive the nations, but his end is to be cast into the Lake of Fire (called Hell and Gehenna). Then the unsaved dead, small and great, are raised, and will stand before the great white throne of judgement. All those whose names are not written in the Book of Life will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

The eternal state

Read Revelation Chapters 21 and 22. This brings in the eternal state. There will be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells perfect righteousness. The Church will be seen in the City of New Jerusalem, surrounded by the saved of Israel and of the nations from all ages. And ***"The Lamb is its light"*** (Revelation 21:23).

"And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God" (Revelation 21:3-3).

Study 6

The Seven Covenants of the Lord

These follow closely the seven Dispensations. In His great plan for the Ages, God has brought in a number of ‘Covenants’. These are formal, solemn and binding agreements with people and the nations.

A legal ‘Will’ is also a ‘Covenant’, where the testators leave their property upon their death to a relative. The death of Christ brought in the New Covenant! The Old and New Testaments are Covenants, because they set forth God’s promises, laws and commands with the human race over this world’s history.

[1] God’s Covenants with Adam in Eden

This is found in Genesis 2:16-17. God put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They could eat of all fruits of the trees, but not of *“the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”*. They were to propagate the human race and subdue the earth and have dominion over the animals. They failed to keep the command of the Covenant, and were driven out of the Garden.

[2] God’s Covenant with Adam after the Fall

This is found in Genesis 3:15-19, giving conditions for life with sin and death in the world, a Covenant lasting until Christ’s kingdom is established on earth.

Under this covenant, Satan is cursed, women would conceive and bear children in pain and come under man’s headship, and man would work hard to overcome weeds in his fields and to provide food for his household and they would die.

Fallen man has a **conscience** to know both good and evil, but sadly he chose evil and the Flood of judgement was sent to cleanse the earth of wickedness.

The ‘Seed’ of the woman. Here the promise was made to Eve that the *‘Seed of the women’* would bruise the Serpent’s head (Satan). This was fulfilled when Mary, the virgin mother gave birth to our Lord Jesus Christ the Redeemer. On the cross and in resurrection, He bruised Satan’s head, and delivered all who believe from sin’s penalty and Satan’s power (Hebrews 2:15; 1 John 5:4).

Satan is a bad master, for the wages of sin is death. Jesus is a good master, for He gives the gift of eternal life to all who with accept Him (Romans 6:23).

[3] God’s Covenant with Noah

This is found in Genesis 9:1-17. This Covenant instituted **Human Government**, and its highest function is to protect the sanctity of human life as being a gift from God, and to curb sin with the death penalty being imposed for murder.

This Covenant is binding to this day on all who govern, and nations who fail to keep this Covenant will fall. *“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God”* (Romans 13:1). But please note that individuals have no right to take human life.

God set the rainbow in the clouds. This is a guarantee that never again would divine judgement fall with a Flood. No longer were they vegetarians; now animals became human food. Sadly, both Jew and Gentile have failed to rule justly and only when Christ reigns will righteousness be found in all the earth.

[4] God’s Covenant with Abraham

This is found in Genesis 12:1-4, and confirmed in Genesis 13:14-17; 15:1-7.

God promised to make from Abraham a great nation, to bless him, to make his name great, make him a blessing, and to curse those who cursed him and bless all who blessed him. Israel is the nation that came from Abraham’s ‘seed’.

All families on earth would be blessed through him; that is, those who believe among all nations would be blessed. God also promised his **‘seed’** (his descendants and thus Christ) the land of Canaan.

This Covenant is unconditional, and still holds good for Israel today. All who believe the Gospel are blessed with believing Abraham (Galatians 3:9). One day Israel will be restored to their land and be saved. Read Romans Chapters 9-11.

Christ will establish His kingdom and rule over all the earth from Jerusalem. *“He remembers His covenant forever, The word which He commanded, for a thousand generations, The covenant which He made with Abraham, And His oath to Isaac, And confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, To Israel as an everlasting covenant, Saying, “To you I will give the land of Canaan As the allotment of your inheritance,” When they were few in number,*

Indeed very few, and strangers in it” (Psalm 105:8-12; 1000 BC). See also Psalm 111:9.

There will be the fulfilment of this Covenant in Christ’s kingdom: *“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:2-5; 720 BC).*

[5] God’s Covenant given to Moses, called the Law

This is found in Exodus 19:5 and expanded to cover:

[1] His Commandments, setting forth God’s righteous will (Exodus 20:1-26).

[2] His Judgements, to order Israel’s social life (Exodus 21:1, to Exodus 24:11).

[3] His Ordinances to order Israel’s religious life (Exodus 24:12 to Exodus 31:18).

All these together form the Law binding on Israel.

The law provided a Tabernacle and later a Temple for the centre of their religious observances (Exodus Chapter 25 to Chapter 27).

This Covenant gave to Israel:

[1] A High Priest and Priesthood, Aaron and his sons, to represent the nation before the Lord (Exodus Chapter 28 to Chapter 30).

[2] Priests who were to offer animal sacrifices to God on behalf of the people; to ‘make atonement’ or to ‘cover’ their sins until their Messiah came to offer the perfect sacrifice of Himself (Leviticus Chapter 1 to Chapter 7).

[3] It also gave Israel their feasts, festive days to keep and to rejoice together before the Lord (Leviticus Chapter 23).

[4] The law given by Moses covered all aspects of Israel’s life, their walk and their warfare (Read the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy).

[5] When Israel accepted this law, saying, ‘*All the LORD has spoken we will do*’ (Exodus 19:8), they moved from grace to law. The law would bless them if they obeyed and bring a curse if they the disobeyed (Read Deuteronomy Chapter 27).

[6] The Palestinian Covenant: This is part of the law, and is found in Deuteronomy Chapter 30. If Israel disobeyed the law, its curses would come upon them, and they would be driven out of their land to be captives among the nations. But it gave a promise, for if in their captivity they remembered His law, the blessings and the curses, and repented and returned to the Lord to obey His voice, then He promised to gather them and bring them back to their land.

A warning to Christians, who can be in danger of moving from grace to part of the law (Read Acts Chapter 15 and the book of Galatians). *“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:13-14).* We are not under law but under grace.

[6] God’s Covenant with David

This is found in 2 Samuel 7:1-17. Saul was chosen as Israel’s first king (1 Samuel Chapters 9-10). He failed to keep the commands of the Lord (1 Samuel Chapter 15), and David was chosen as king to replace him (1 Samuel Chapter 16).

When David was established in his kingdom, he wanted to build a house to replace the old and tattered Tabernacle, the place where God’s presence dwelt, but God said that he had shed much blood; his son, Solomon, would build this Temple.

The Lord also promised that David’s kingdom would be established forever. Jacob on his death bed prophesied that from Judah would come the scepter to rule, Shiloh, meaning the Peaceable One, the Christ (Genesis 49:9-14).

Judah became the royal tribe. Mary, of whom the Christ was born, came from Judah and the house of David (Luke 3:23-38). Read carefully the Old Testament.

The prophet Isaiah foretold: *“For unto us a Child is born (the Christ), Unto us a Son is given (God’s Son crucified) And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and*

peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:6-7, about 700 BC).

[7] The Covenant of the New Testament

The Prophet Jeremiah foretold that God would make a new Covenant with Israel: *“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jeremiah 31:31-34).*

The Book of Hebrews refers to this as well: *“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah... In that He says, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away” (Hebrews 8:7-13).*

The blood shed by our Lord Jesus Christ brought in the New Covenant: *“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:26-28).*

The bread we break at the Lord’s Supper reminds us of His body nailed to the cross, and the cup reminds us of His blood shed to save us. *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7).* Jesus ‘redeemed’, or ‘paid the price’ to free us from the slave market of sin.

Under this New Covenant all sins are forgiven, and there is no need for any more animal sacrifices and offerings: *“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,” then He adds, “Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more” ‘Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin’ (Hebrews 10:16-18).*

Christians are reminded of their glorious future: *“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel” (Heb. 12:22-24).*

Gentiles are blessed under this Covenant: *“I, the LORD, have called **You** (the Christ) in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles, To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the prison, Those who sit in darkness from the prison house” (Isaiah 42:6-7).*

Believers have a glorious future under the New Covenant.

Study 7

The Priesthood of Believers

Under the New Covenant, Christ is our Great High Priest and all believers are priests.

*“But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of **the new covenant**, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance” (Hebrews 9:11-15).*

The Messiah, the Christ, Son of God, Son of Man, has come to this earth.

[1] Priesthood from Creation to the giving of the Law

Adam and Eve lived in innocence in a perfect creation, until Satan tempted them and sin entered the world.

After the fall of Adam, God covered the nakedness of Adam and Eve with animal skins. This was the first sacrifice, a priestly act, performed by the Lord Himself.

From then on, **the head of each family** acted as **family priest** by sacrificing burnt offerings to the Lord (Noah, Genesis 8:20; Abram, Genesis 12:7; Isaac, Genesis 26:25; Jacob, Genesis 31:54; the Priest of Midian, Exodus 2:16; Job - Job 1:5).

God saw the faith of these men, and accepted them. For *“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness”*. This system prevailed until Jacob’s descendants left Egypt 430 years after Abraham, when the law of Moses was given to Israel (Galatians 3:17; Exodus 12:40-41).

[2] Priesthood and the Law given only to Israel

God called Israel out of Egypt for a special purpose: *“And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel”* (Exodus 19:6).

Israel came under the law when they said they would be obedient, but no one can perfectly keep this law. *“Then he (Moses) took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.” And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, “This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words”* (Exodus 24:7-8).

This was a pivotal moment in Israel’s history, and they remained under this law until Christ came: *“For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ”* (John 1:17).

God made provision under this law for all who believed His word, and He introduced animal sacrifices, as listed in Leviticus Chapters 1 to 7. This ‘atoned’ or ‘make satisfaction’, or ‘a covering’ for sins. These sacrifices were temporary and pointed to the one sufficient and perfect sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, when He fulfilled all the sacrifices of Burnt, Meal, Peace, Sin and Trespass Offerings.

[3] The Priesthood of Christ

The key Old Testament teaching concerning Christ is found in Psalm 110:4, and repeated in Hebrews 7:21: *“for they (those priests under law) have become priests without an oath, but He (Christ) with an oath by Him who said to Him: “The LORD has sworn and will not relent, ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek”*”.

The Levitical priests died and were replaced by their sons. But with the death and resurrection of Christ, the Levitical law system died to be replaced by the new.

In contrast, the Melchizedek system continues forever, for it is based on the risen Christ ‘*who ever lives to make intercession for us*’ (Hebrews 4:14-16 & Ch. 7). The perfections of Christ’s priesthood are highlighted in Hebrews 10:14. *“For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified”*. The Old Covenant made with Israel has been replaced by the New Covenant, brought in by the shedding of the blood of Christ (Matthew 26:26-30; Hebrews Chs. 8 & 9).

[4] The Priesthood of Believers in the Church Age

In the Church age, all believers are said to be priests. The apostle John wrote that the Lord Jesus has: *“made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen”* (Revelation 1:6).

We are called a Holy Priesthood: *“you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 2:5). ‘Holy’ means ‘sanctified’, or ‘set apart from sin and the world for God’s use’ (1 Peter 1:15-16).

We are also a Royal priesthood: *“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light”* (1 Peter 2:9). We are ‘Royal’ because of our **relationship** as **children of God** (John 1:11-13) and as **sons of God** by ‘adoption’ or ‘son placing’ (Romans 8:14-17).

We need to remember that as priests we have offerings to make, and that all our service and prayer life is priestly in nature, and that we have a glorious future: *“Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years”* (Revelation 20:6).

[5] Christians are called to Worship

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman: *"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."* (John 4:23-24).

All believers are joined with all others, forming a holy spiritual temple for worship, *"in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord"* (Ephesians 2:19-22).

"Give to the LORD the glory due His name; Bring an offering, and come before Him. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!" (1 Chronicles 16:29).

[6] Christians are called to pray, praise and do good

This is part of our priestly sacrificial service: *"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased"* (Hebrews 13:15-16).

Christians do not offer animal sacrifices, but spiritual sacrifices. Christ constantly intercedes for us, as does the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:27).

As priests we are called to pray and to intercede with, *"supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men"* (1 Timothy 2:1). We are called to pray and to always ask in His name: *"And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son"* (John 14:13; 16:26).

Prayer is very powerful to overcome the devil, and to place **every** need before the Lord. *"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us"* (1 John 5:14).

In prayer we do not ask for our **'wants'**, but for our **'need'** – *"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:19). James gave this warning: *"You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures"* (James 4:3).

God is faithful, for He is trustworthy and reliable: *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God"* (Philippians 4:6).

Let us be faithful in prayer: *"pray without ceasing"* (1 Thessalonians 5:17); *"praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful*

to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:18).

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).

"Having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:21-22)

Let us draw near and function as priests of our God, for we are as a chosen priesthood.

Study 8

The Sabbaths and the Law of Moses

Should Christians meet on Saturday, the Sabbath, or on Sunday, the day when Christ rose from the dead?

The word 'Sabbath' means 'cessation' or 'rest'. God gave Israel a day, and also days of physical rest from labour. Those who believed down through the centuries also found rest in His promises, even though they were poor and worked very hard.

In Genesis 2:20, the Lord rested on the 7th day, but it is not said that Adam rested. At that time all of creation was perfect, enjoying a peaceful rest every day.

It was 2500 years later before the Sabbath rest is again mentioned, when it was given only to Israel as a sign that God 'sanctified' or 'set them apart' to be His special treasure. He delivered them from slavery in Egypt, following their redemption by the blood of the lambs slain on Passover night (Exodus Chapter 12).

They had no rest as Egypt's slaves, but would have a day of rest in the fiery trials of the barren wilderness, and in the land of Canaan (Exodus 31:12-18). No other nation was given such laws as He gave them (Deuteronomy 7:6-11).

Israel were a people chosen above all others. The Lord gave them a Sabbath day of rest (Exodus 16:23; Leviticus 23:3) and every 7th year and every 50th year a Sabbath year of rest (Leviticus 25:1-17).

**God gave Israel special days of rest after the Sabbath, on our Sunday.
Leviticus Ch. 23 details these feast days.**

[1] **Following the Passover**, they were to bring “*the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it*” (a sheaf of barley). (Lev. 23:10-11). Barley is the firstfruits of grain, and harvested before the wheat.

Christ fulfilled the Passover: “*For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us*” (1 Corinthians 5:7). Christ, as our Passover, arose from the grave on the day that the priest waved this barley sheaf before the Lord. This was on our Sunday: “*But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep*” (1 Corinthians 15:20). Barley was the ‘firstfruits’ of harvest and the sheaf waved before the Lord looked forward to Christ’s resurrection.

[2] **The feast of Pentecost** (it means ‘fifty’), came fifty days after the Passover. They were to: “*Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath (our Sunday); then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD*” (Leviticus 23:16).

This would be the first of the wheat harvest, made into two loaves with leaven. This was a sign pointing on to both Jew and Gentile being joined together in one body. But the leaven (a type of sin), was arrested by the fires of the oven.

There is still sin ‘in’ us, but not ‘on’ us, “*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*” (2 Cor. 5:21).

These loaves were presented before the Lord on our Sunday. This is beautiful: Barley is the food of the poor, and wheat the food of the rich. “*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich*” (2 Cor. 8:9).

The Failure of the Freed Slaves

[1] Because Israel sinned through their unbelief in the wilderness, they could not enter the land of Canaan where the Lord promised them rest (Read Hebrews 3:16-19). Only Caleb and Joshua and the new generation entered (Numbers 14:26-35).

Israel were promised rest if obedient: “*Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness, Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, ‘They always go astray in*

their heart, And they have not known My ways.’ So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest’” (Psalm 95:7-11 and repeated in Hebrews 3:7-11).

[2] Israel under Joshua were given the land as God promised, but they failed to possess it to the fullest extent and continued to sin as the Book of Judges records. Joshua, which means ‘Jehovah’s Salvation’, could not give them rest (Hebrew 4:8). Jesus, meaning ‘Saviour’, is a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew ‘Joshua’.

This rest was again offered when David reigned. He wrote, “*Today if you will hear His voice*” (Psalm 95:7-8). The people in David’s day were still in unbelief.

Neither Moses, Joshua nor David, Israel’s greatest leaders, led the people into rest. Their generations continued in sin and unbelief **except for a remnant**. (There has always been a remnant). As a result, they were harassed by enemies.

Where True Rest is Found

The Lord Jesus, the Messiah, alone gives lasting rest: He said, “*Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28).

This is not a physical rest from work, but a rest in work for the inner being, finding all fulfilment and rest for the conscience in Him.

It is only those who **believe** in Christ who enter His rest (Hebrews 4:1-9). This rest is not received through good works, or trying to keep any law. It is freely given to all who believe (Romans 3:21-26). It is ‘His’ rest to give, not ours to try and earn.

“*There remains therefore a rest for the people of God*” (Hebrews 4:9). Here a Greek suffix is added to a Hebrew word for the first time, to make a new word, *sabbatismos*.

This is Christ’s perfect ‘rest’, for it is ‘peace, rest, tranquillity, and repose’.

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath

And He, Jesus, said to them, “*The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.*” (Mark 2:22-28). He rose on the day **after** the Sabbath, the **first day of the week** (Matthew 28:1),

Jesus said: “*Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil*” (Matthew 5:17). “*For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled*” (Matthew 5:18). “*The LORD is well pleased for His righteousness’ sake; He will exalt the law and make it honourable*” (Isaiah 42:21).

The Messiah fulfilled the law and to 'fulfil' means to fill up and to complete. He was born of a woman, born under the law, to lead believers out from under the law (Galatians 4:4).

He 'fulfilled' *all its holy requirements* in His life and death on the cross. All that was demanded of man He alone could and did fulfil. We who believe rest in His finished work, for we do not strive to keep a law that no man can keep.

His holy requirements are recorded now for us in the New Testament. If we keep one point of the law, we must keep all! "*And I testify again to every man who becomes **circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law***" (Galatians 5:3). We must ask the question, are we to keep all the law? The answer is no! The Ten Commandments, called '*the ministry of death*', has passed away (2 Corinthians Ch. 3).

The Sabbath in the Church age

We must ask, on what day did the early Christians meet? The answer is they met on the first day of the week, our Sunday, the resurrection day (Acts 20:7). The churches also took up their collections on this same day (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

The Rabbi Paul preached in the Synagogues on the Sabbath to the unsaved Jews (Acts 13:4-44; 18:4). This was not a church meeting, for he became all things to all men that he might win some to the Lord (1 Corinthians 9:22).

What does this teaching mean for churches?

Paul gave instructions on this matter: "*So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ*" (Colossians 2:16-17).

"But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have laboured for you in vain" (Galatians 4:9-11).

The first church council decided these questions

Gentiles are not to be circumcised or to keep the law of Moses (Read Acts Ch.15). Does this not also include the Sabbath? (Acts 15:22-29). There is a vast difference between slaves and sons! "*And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"*" (Gal. 4:6).

Israel were servants (slaves) to obey under the Law. Christians are children of God and sons by adoption and serve the Lord out of love
(Romans Ch. 8).

Creation days foreshadow future events: God began his creation on the first day, Sunday, He finished it on the sixth day, Friday. He rested on the seventh day, Saturday. He began His new creation, the Church, on the first day, Sunday.

Christ was crucified on the day of the Passover, was in the tomb on the Sabbath, and rose again on the first day of the week, our Sunday. "*But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep*" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor 5:17).

We conclude: Sunday is the only day mentioned when the churches met.

Study 9

The Tabernacle in the Wilderness

This sets forth the Old Testament way of approaching God. The Tabernacle is illustrated on the inside back cover of this book.

The Tabernacle was an 'Example', a 'Shadow' or a 'Pattern' of 'Heavenly things', for Moses on Mt. Sinia was given a glimpse of things in Heaven (Exodus 25:40; Hebrews 8:1-5). It typifies in various ways Christ and His ministry. God's glory, the 'Shekinah' glory, rested on the Tabernacle.

We can see many parallels in the Old Testament with teaching found in the New Testament, for Jesus 'dwelt' or 'Tabernacled' among us (John 1:14). God wanted to dwell among His people, and this was His plan for Israel and also for Christians today (Read Exodus 25:8 and Matthew 18:20).

Tabernacle vessels which manifest God

These vessels are illustrated on the back cover.

Exodus 25:1-2. The Lord wanted His people to offer willingly their time, talents, and materials to build the Tabernacle (Exodus 35:5,21,25; 36:6). God wants all that we are and have to be devoted for His service (Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8:5).

Exodus 25:3-7. The materials described:

- (1) The pure gold** reminds us of the **deity** of Christ, for we are to preach Christ.
- (2) The silver** reminds us that we must preach **redemption** through the blood of Christ, for the silver half shekel was the **ransom** price given by every male in Israel who were 20 years old and over (Exodus 30:11-16). We are redeemed, bought out of the slavery of sin with the blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-21).

(3) The precious stones were set on the **shoulders and breast** of the High Priest's garments, and the names of the 12 tribes of Israel were engraved on them (Exodus 39:8-29). They were set on his shoulders (place of strength) and worn on his heart (affections); the High priest wore these in the Lord's presence in the Holy Place.

The precious stones remind us of our fellow believers, for they are loved, valued, and carried by our Lord before the Father in heaven. An old Hymn says:

*'On His heart our names are graven, On His shoulders we are carried;
Of our God beloved in Jesus, We can love Him in return'.*

These materials remind us that we also are building by the way we live, either for self, or for God. At the Judgement Seat of Christ all our works will be tested to reveal the real character and quality of deeds done in our bodies.

I Corinthians 3:12. To build our 'house of life' with a '**Christ-centred life**' is 'gold, silver, precious stones', and we will receive a reward. To build with a '**self-centred life**' is 'wood, hay, stubble' and all will be burnt up, with no reward.

Exodus 25:8-9. God wanted to dwell among Israel. Today He dwells not in Temples made with hands, but **(a)** In our Bodies (I Corinthians 6:19). **(b)** In the local church (Matthew 18:20), and **(c)** In the Church which is His Body (Ephesians 2:21-22).

[1] The Ark of the Covenant

From the vessels and various materials of the Tabernacle, we may learn many lessons. The following teaching is suggestive of how the Tabernacle relates to Christ and to Christians today.

Exodus 25:10-16. The Ark speaks of Christ. This is where God dwelt, where the glory or 'shekinah' cloud rested above the Tabernacle and on the Ark (John 1:14).

The materials the Ark was made from:

(1) The Acacia Wood, was a hard enduring tree that pictures Christ's perfect humanity, for God became the Man, Christ Jesus (Luke 1:35).

(2) The pure overlay of Gold on the Ark pictures His Deity, for gold typifies perfect righteousness suited to God's nature, which is love (1 John 4:8). His Humanity (acacia wood) and Deity (gold) are inseparable.

(3) The Staves and Rings for carrying the Ark speak of pilgrimage. God is with His people in all their wilderness travels (Hebrews 13:5-6; Matthew 28:20).

Also placed in the Ark

(1) Two Tables of Stone, written with the Ten Commandments. On one were five Commandments teaching responsibility to God, on the other five teaching responsibility to man. Christ is the only one who fulfilled these (Matthew 5:17). He '*delighted to do God's will*', and God's law '*was in His heart*' (Psalm 40:8).

We have not had this delight, but His spirit placed in our hearts gives the desire and the will to please Him, if we receive Christ as Saviour and walk in the Spirit.

(2) A Golden Pot filled with manna (Hebrews. 9:4). Jesus is the Life-Giving Christ, the true Bread from Heaven who gives life to the World (John 6:30-33).

(3) Aaron's dead rod that budded with leaves, flowers and almonds. This speaks of Christ as the resurrection and the life, the first fruits of them that slept (I Corinthians 15:20). God would silence all who rebel against His anointed (Numbers 17:1-12). Like Him, we need to die to self, that His life might be seen in us.

The Golden Censor was also kept in the Holiest of all, and with the incense burnt in it, typifies worship (Leviticus 16:12-13). It was lit with fire from the Brazen Altar. The incense was made from spices and was not to be used for any other purpose (Exodus 30:34-38).

Nadab and Abihu offered 'strange fire' before the Lord and died (Leviticus 10:1-5). From this we learn that fleshly worship in self-will is condemned. Korah led rebellion against God's appointed Priests, under the guise of giving liberty (Numbers 16). God did not accept the worship of those who rebelled.

Exodus 25:17-22. The mercy seat and cherubim sat on top of the Ark. Here the **blood of atonement** was sprinkled once a year, and God in mercy passed over the sins of Israel (Leviticus Ch. 16). We also have a mercy seat (Hebrews 4:14-16).

The Cherubim were fixed to the Mercy Seat, guarding His holiness and showing God's judicial power (Genesis 3:24). Here is displayed His love and mercy, all watched over by His holiness. All this pre-figures Christ on the cross, where, "*Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other*" (Psalm 85:10).

At Calvary, Christ met every claim of divine holiness, and shed His blood that we might obtain mercy; now His throne is a throne of grace.

[2] The Table of Showbread

Exodus 25:23-30. This table was made from Acacia wood and covered with gold, again teaching that Christ's humanity and deity are perfectly blended.

Twelve loaves of **Showbread** were always set upon this table, one loaf for each tribe of Israel, and they were replaced each Sabbath. Israel's 12 tribes were always set before God in the place where His presence dwelt.

The **Showbread** reminds us that He is the **life-sustaining Christ** who is food for His spiritual priests (I Peter 2:1-9). The **manna** reminds us that He is the **life-giving Christ** (John 6:31-58). The loaves were eaten by the priests in the Sanctuary.

[3] The Golden Lampstand

Exodus 25:31-39. Made of gold, it teaches Christ's deity; its **seven branches** were fed with pure olive oil, typifying the **Holy Spirit** (Exodus 27:20-21; Zech. 4:1-7).

The light from this beautiful Golden Lampstand shone on the gold covered Tabernacle walls and on the curtains of beauty. **Oil** caused light to shine and typifies the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is given to reveal Christ to us, and for us to shine as lights in this world (John 16:12-15).

The Curtains covering the Tabernacle

Ex. 26:1-14. These all speak of Christ. The fine-twined linen speak of Christ's spotless purity and righteousness. We need His imputed righteousness upon us (Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:22; Isaiah 61:10). We also need to cultivate 'righteous acts', for these are the garments of Christ's wife, the Church (Revelation 19:8).

The curtains of blue speak of Christ's heavenly origin. **Purple** is the priestly colour; Christ is our High Priest in heaven. The **Scarlet** worn by royalty, points to Christ as 'Son of David', the King of the Jews, and as 'Son of Man', He is King of kings and Lord of lords. **Scarlet** also speaks of sacrifice, His blood shed on the cross. **The Cherubim** teach us of His judicial power; they guarded God's holiness.

The curtains were coupled together with gold clasps, speaking of the Divine unity, a unity to be kept in our churches.

The Goats' Hair curtains could remind us of the Prophets garments (Matthew 3:4). Prophets exposed the people's sin and foretold the future. Christ is Prophet, Priest and King. **The clasps of bronze** speak of judgement, for Christ the Prophet exposes our sin and meets its judgement (John 3:17). We need a prophetic ministry today (I Corinthians 14:3).

Rams' skins dyed red. Rams were used in the consecration of the priests (Exodus 29:15-18). They teach Christ's devotedness, and red can remind us of His sacrifice. He is to God our devotedness, all that we are not. And we are accepted in Him!

The Badgers' skins. These resisted the elements, so Christ resisted Satan and this world's lusts (Matthew Ch. 4). He wants us also to resist and overcome (Ephesians 6:10-18). The curtains hid from view the beauty and glory of the inner tabernacle, so also Christ was veiled in flesh, "*There is no beauty that we should desire Him*" (Isaiah 53:2; John.1:14). The world does not know Him! (I John 3:3-1).

The Boards of wood

Exodus 26:15-30. These were **covered with gold**, and teach our standing in Christ, for we are seen hidden in Him (John 17:23; Colossians 3:1-4).

Each board stood on two sockets of silver, made from the ransom price of every male in Israel (Exodus 30:11-16). **Silver speaks of redemption.** We are not now redeemed with silver or gold, but with Christ's own blood (I Peter 1:18).

The Gold Rings bound the back corner boards together. God's love, gold, is to bind believers together (Ephesians 4:1-6).

[4] The Brazen Altar

Exodus 27:1-8. The Bronze Altar. The bronze speaks of judgement, of man being tested in responsibility and found wanting, for man has failed on every point. Christ also was tested and fulfilled all righteousness.

At this altar the sacrificial animals were slain for bringing Israel into **worship**, and **in keeping** and **restoring** them to fellowship with the Lord when they sinned. God accepted these, and the fire on this Altar was to burn continually (Leviticus Chs. 1 to 7).

This altar was double the height of the mercy seat. Christ more than saves sinners, He takes them to Heaven, for He also glorifies God. The **wood** speaks of Christ's humanity.

At this altar the priests served and all Israel offered 'The bread of their God' and fed at 'The table of the Lord' (Leviticus 21:6; Malachi 1:12; 1 Corinthians 10:21)

The Inner and Outer Veil

Exodus 26:31-37. The Inner Veil and Cherubim. Made of in-worked gold, it barred access to His presence and stood on four pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold on sockets of **silver**. Behind this the Ark was placed. In this inner Sanctuary, called the Holiest of All, only the High Priest could enter, and only once a year on the Day of Atonement, and not without blood (Leviticus Ch.16, Hebrews 9:6-10).

This veil speaks of Christ's flesh. He was given a body by which He passed through in death to provide a new and living way into God's presence (Hebrews 10:19-25). **The outer veil** had five pillars overlaid with gold on sockets of **brass**, speaking of self-judgement, for the priests entered this Holy Place after washing at the Brazen Altar, for "*Judgement must begin at the House of God*" (1 Peter 4:17).

The Outer Linen Curtain and Gate to the Tabernacle

Exodus 27:9-19. The whole Tabernacle was surrounded by a white linen curtain. This speaks of personal righteousness (Revelation 19:8). This curtain was too high to climb over, and the only entrance was through a gate on the east, covered with a beautiful multicoloured curtain. This all points to Christ as being the door, and the only way to enter heaven. Jesus said "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*" (John 14:6).

The Consecration of the Priests

Exodus 29:1-37. The consecration of the priests. They washed all over, then the blood of the sacrifices was applied to his ear, thumb and big toe, and sprinkled around the altar. Only then was he consecrated and ready to serve in the Tabernacle (Read Leviticus 8:1-36).

Only those washed in the blood of Christ and clothed with His righteousness can enter into, and serve in His presence.

Study 10

The Levitical Offerings

Leviticus, a Manual for the Priests

Here we are introduced to the Types and Shadows of the Offerings:

Leviticus is the book of Worship and Communion. The law had been given to Moses, and now God speaks from the Tabernacle, and holiness is the main theme. In God's plan, the way of approach to God in the Old Testament was always through sacrifices.

Israel were redeemed by the blood of the Passover Lamb (Exodus Ch. 12), and for a redeemed people to approach and worship God, a Tabernacle (Tent) was constructed where God dwelt. There the Israelites would bring their animal or bird as an offering.

At the bronze altar, sacrifices were offered for bringing Israel, a redeemed people, into worship, and in keeping and restoring them to fellowship with the Lord when they sinned. A High Priest was appointed to represent them before God, and priests, of the tribe of Levi, were appointed by the Lord to slay and offer up the offerings.

God performed the first sacrificial offering when He shed animal blood to provide the skins to cover the sin and nakedness of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21).

All the offerings of Abel, Noah, Abraham and Job were **burnt offerings**. As head of their families, they were family priests and offered sacrifices in worship to the Lord.

All these sacrifices were signposts pointing to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, for He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Christ is seen in all these Offerings

(1) **Christ is the offeror**, for He offered Himself (Ephesians 5:2).

(2) **Christ is the perfect offering**, by the death of the **sinless One** at Calvary (Hebrews 10:5-14).

(3) **Christ is High Priest**, for He is Mediator between God and man, and He represents believers before the Lord (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 7:23-27).

As Son of God and Son of Man, He joined together deity and humanity, and became a Man under the law, to meet the law's demands, God's holy and just requirements.

In His perfect sinless humanity, He meets our every need, and represents us and intercedes on our behalf before the Father, for He is accepted, and in every aspect He brought delight to the Father (John 8:29).

He represents us and stands in our place before the Father.

The Place of Offering

All offerings were burnt on the Bronze Altar. It is called, "*The table of the Lord*" (Malachi 1:7), where "*The bread of your God*" was offered (Leviticus 21:8). This was where portions, or all of the offering were wholly burnt, and all the offerings satisfied God's holy and just requirements.

The Sweet Aroma Offerings of Chapters 1 to 3

The **Burnt** and **Peace Offering** with their **Grain Offering**, were **voluntary** offerings, and were for worship, communion and appreciation. As a redeemed people, Israel stood without sin before God. This is how we stand before Him in Christ.

As the offerings burnt, a sweet aroma ascended for God's enjoyment (see Ephesians 5:2). The law for these offerings is found in Leviticus 7:11-38.

The Non-Sweet Aroma Offerings of Chapters 4 to 6

The **Sin and Trespass Offerings** were **compulsory**, for cleansing the Israelite from sin's defilement. The offerors placed their hand on the head of the offering as it was slain in their stead. They stood before the Lord convicted and confessing their sins. The animal was burnt, and the blood was sprinkled and the fat burnt. These offerings restored the offeror, and we as believers are restored when we confess our sins (1 John Ch. 1). The Law for these offerings is found in Chapters 6 and 7:1-10.

[1] The Burnt Offering

Leviticus 1:3-4. This is first in order of the Offerings. For the first time, God spoke from the Tabernacle where His glory dwelt, and He offered grace to Israel through sacrifice. This offering also speaks of Christ in death.

The Burnt Offering must be without blemish, for there was no sin in Christ. It was not compulsory, and offered from a *'free will'*, and for *'acceptance'*. It was accepted on his behalf. With his hand on the head, the offeror **identified** with the offering as it was slain (Ephesians 5:2). We by faith identify with Christ and worship Him.

It made 'atonement', meaning **'making satisfaction'**, or a **'covering'** in God's eyes. The Burnt Offering met God's holy and just requirements *'for acceptance'* of the offeror's imperfect worship. Christ *'offered Himself without spot to God'* (Hebrews 9:14).

Leviticus 1:5-9. A life was given, and the blood was shed. Life belongs to God, for He gave it (Leviticus 17:10-12). All was burnt on the Brazen Altar, as a sweet aroma to God. So, worship and not sin is in view. Washing by water speaks of the Word of God (Ephesians 5:26); the skin of the animal sacrificed was the priests.

Leviticus 1:10-14. There were various grades of offerings as seen in the various animals and birds. All represented Christ's offering in different aspects. Some were of the flocks, such as a lamb, which symbolised submission without murmuring. Some were of the fowls, such as a dove, which symbolised harmless innocence. Christ was the Man of sorrows, the mourning one. Even the poor could make an offering, for Joseph and Mary were so poor they could only offer a dove (Luke 2:21-24).

In these offerings, Christ is seen as satisfying Jehovah.

Christ did this as a Man under law, perfect in obedience, with the surrender of all to the Father's will. He gave to the Father what truly satisfies Him. He is all that we are not! All was 'bread' for God's enjoyment (Leviticus 21:8). Christ is the true bread from heaven, offering Himself without spot to God (Ephesians 5:2). Now the believer in Christ can also give back to God offerings pleasing to Him (Hebrews 13:15).

The 10 Commandments were written by God on two flat stones, 5 one each. Christ fulfilled the first 5 Commandments. We fulfill this in loving God (Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Matthew 22:37-40).

[2] The Grain or Meal Offering

The grain offering: This was **added** to the Burnt Offering (Numbers 15:1-21). It set forth Christ in life, for no blood was shed (Leviticus 2:1-16; 6:14-23). In this the lovely character and life of Christ is seen in His service for man.

Leviticus 2:1. Fine Flour and was man's portion. It was ground, and Christ was bruised and suffered under trial brought by man.

Our duty to man was fulfilled by Christ to perfection as He daily gave Himself. Fine Flour also speaks of the evenness in His character, always the same even under severe trial. We are not to grow weary in helping others!

Oil speaks of the Holy Spirit, and Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, who was also **in Him** and **upon Him** (Luke 3:22; 4:1,14). **Frankincense** is a precious perfume, and fire brings out the fragrance. It is a fit emblem of Christ's giving of Himself in ministry to others.

Leviticus 2:2-10. A handful of grain was God's portion, burnt as a sweet aroma. The rest was for the priests, Aaron and his sons. There was nothing for the offeror, all was for others, as should also be our service in this world.

Leviticus 2:11-12. Leaven and Honey were excluded. Leaven is the emblem of corruption (Matthew 13:33; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8). Honey is sweet, but ferments. Fire brings out the fragrance of the frankincense, but corrupts honey. Our natural sweetness often fails under fiery trials.

Leviticus 2:13. Salt preserves; it is **the emblem of perpetuity and preservation** (Numbers 18:19) and of **active righteousness** (Mark 9:49-50; Colossians 4:6).

Leviticus 2:14-16. The grain Offering was not wholly burnt. A handful was offered to the Lord. The rest was food for the priests and eaten in the sanctuary.

God found delight in Christ serving man. We should delight in serving Christ and others.

[3] The Peace Offering

Leviticus 3:1-2. This sets forth Christ as the basis of our peace and fellowship with the Lord. Again, the offering must be without blemish - a bull, lamb, or a goat, speaking again of Christ's sinless life. The hand was placed on the head as each offeror identified with the offering. The priests sprinkled the blood all around the altar. By faith we identify with Christ who is our peace and made peace by the blood of His cross (Ephesians 2:14; Colossians 1:20).

Leviticus 3:3-5. The fat and the two kidneys were burnt on the altar as a sweet savour to the Lord. The inner loveliness of our Lord is here seen and accepted by God. The fat and blood were for God alone (v.16).

The Law of the Peace Offering:

Leviticus 7:13-21. This section gives instructions on the part of the offering that was for the offeror, but they must be clean to partake.

Leviticus 7:28-38. This section gives instructions on the portion for the priests and their families. Theirs was the breast (affections) and right thigh (strength), all found in Christ. Israel, the priests, family and friends all could enjoy 'fellowship' ('sharing') with God, expressing their joy in Him as they ate the Peace Offering together.

We have been brought into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Corinthians 1:9). He is our peace, He made peace and proclaimed peace (Ephesians 2:14-18).

We commune together with Him at the Lord's Table, as Israel did at the Tabernacle.

[4] The Sin Offering

Leviticus Ch. 4; 6:24-30. The sin offering was a Non-Sweet Aroma offering, and was compulsory, for it met the 'defilement' caused by sin.

Leviticus 4:1-2. This offering was not made for salvation, but to restore a redeemed Israelite who sinned unintentionally and who was ceremonially 'unclean' as a result of his nature.

Leviticus 4:3-21. When a priest or the whole congregation of Israel sinned, the priest or leaders of the congregation laid their hands on the head of a young bull. It was killed, its blood brought into the Holy Place, where some blood was sprinkled seven times before the veil, some on the horns of the Golden Incense Alter and the rest was poured at the base of the Brazen Altar. Its fat and inward parts were burnt

on the Brazen Altar, but the rest of the bull was burnt outside the camp. This is where Christ suffered for us (Hebrews 9:11-12. 13:10-14).

The sin of a priest or the congregation whom he represented could reach into the Holy Place and it needed cleansing. No one could eat of this offering.

Leviticus 4:22-35. When a ruler sinned, he had to bring a male goat. When a common person sinned, he had to bring a female goat. The blood was smeared on the horns of the Brazen Altar, and the rest poured at its base; only the fat was burnt on the Brazen Altar.

The sin of a common person could reach to the Brazen Altar. The rest of the animal became food for the priests, for they had not sinned (Lev. 6:24-30).

[5] The Trespass Offering

Leviticus Ch. 5; 7:1-10. This was a Non-Sweet Aroma Offering, and was compulsory. This offering met 'a debt needing to be discharged'. It met God's offended justice for wrong done to God or man. Christ more than fully met this need! "But He was wounded for our transgressions" (Isaiah 53:5). It has much in common with the Sin Offering and it more than repaid injury done to God or a person.

Leviticus 5:1:13. It lists a number of trespasses. In verse 6 he must bring a female lamb or kid (goat). The poor could bring two doves or pigeons, one a sin offering and the other a burnt offering. The sin offering must be offered first. Cleansing before worship is taught here.

Leviticus 5:14-19. A Trespass could be a sin against the holy things or the commandments of the Lord. He may have brought a dove but could afford a lamb! A ram must be brought, the value of his omission calculated by the priest, and one fifth added, and given to the Lord.

Leviticus 6:1-7. Here sins against a neighbour were met by a ram. But the loss or injury done to the person must be repaid, and a fifth was added and given to that person when the Trespass Offering was made.

The Law of the Trespass offering

Leviticus 7:1-10. The Law of the Trespass Offering is the same as the Sin Offering - one Law for both. Again, it was eaten by the priests in the holy place. The skin was given to the priest, as was a handful of the grain offering.

Christ perfectly fulfilled the Sin and Trespass Offerings, for He more than met our every transgression, and is more than sufficient for the sins of the whole world!

"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin (a sin offering) for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The Christ, who was perfect in all His ways, restores us who are sinners, through His once and for all sufficient sacrifice on the cross. *“Though I have stolen nothing, I still must restore it”* (Psalm 69:1-4), and, *“For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified”* (Hebrews 10:14).

This ends our Study on the sacrificial offerings of Leviticus.

Study 11

The Levitical Feasts

Jehovah the Host, Israel His Guests

A Prophetical view of God’s dealings with Israel and the Church.

“The feasts of the Lord”. These Feasts are Festivals!

All males were to be present at the three Feasts: Firstfruits (Passover); Harvest (Pentecost) and Ingathering (Day of Atonement). See Deuteronomy 16:16.

Lev. 23:1-3. The Sabbath precedes the Feasts. *“Six days shall work be done”*. Sabbath means ‘to cease in rest’. It pointed to the believer’s rest in Christ.

The Sabbath was observed at home, each week. All the other Feasts were observed annually, held at the Tabernacle and later at the Temple in Jerusalem.

[1] The Passover (Leviticus 23:4-5)

Exodus Chapter 12. The Passover, Israel redeemed. The foundation for all Feasts, this was the day the lambs were killed and the blood applied to the door posts, and the Lord ‘passed over’ Israel, while the firstborn in Egypt died. It pre-figures Christ our Passover, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The Passover was kept on the 14th day of the first month of ‘Abib’. Israel was given a new calendar! Christians have a new beginning and a new life in Christ: *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new”* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

A Perfect Lamb

Their Lamb had to be without blemish. Each household had to choose a lamb and it was observed from the 10th to the 14th day to make sure there were no blemishes. Christ lived a perfect life, for He was without sin. The first 9 days remind us of the early life of Christ before He was revealed. The next 4 days reminds us of the public life of the perfect Christ, for no sin was found in Him.

Their Lamb was put to death on the evening of the 14th day; its **blood** put in a basin and applied to the door posts and lintel of their homes. This reminds us that *“the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”* (1 John 1:7).

The whole family ate the Lamb, and this is a picture of our communion with the Lord as ‘worshippers’, especially at the Lord’s Supper. *“Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!”* (Psalms 34:8).

It teaches us: “In Him we have redemption through His blood...” “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (Ephesians 1:7; 1 Cor. 5:1-8).

[2] Feast of Unleavened Bread

Leviticus 23:6-8. During the seven-day Feast of Unleavened bread they were to eat the *‘bread of affliction’* (Deuteronomy 16:3). This was a reminder of those years of slavery in Egypt, for slaves only had barley bread as this is food for the poor.

All leaven was removed from their homes, for leaven represents sin, and this teaches us to put away known sins from our lives and to rejoice and *“keep the feast”* or *“festival”*. We are to rejoice in the Lord (1 Corinthians 5:6-8). This pictures the whole life of the believer, for we enjoy communion with God based on redemption and as we walk in the Spirit abiding in Christ.

A Burnt Offering was offered each day of this feast. Christ is the offeror and the sinless offering that pleased the Father and brought joy to His heart!

[3] The Feast of Firstfruits

Leviticus 23:9-14. The Israelite was to bring to the priest a sheaf of the Firstfruits of his harvest. This would be barley, for it comes in before the wheat. It was *“Accepted on your behalf”*, and Christ has been accepted on our behalf!

The priest was to wave the sheaf before the Lord *“on the day after the Sabbath”*, that is on the Sunday after the Passover, the day Christ arose.

Christ was crucified on the day of the Passover, and He was in the tomb on the Sabbath, and rose again on the first day of the week, our Sunday. *“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”* (1 Corinthians 15:20).

Barley was the food of the poor (Ruth 1:22). Christ was so poor; He had no home and the clothes He wore to His crucifixion were probably a gift. Yet He possesses all the true riches (Colossians 2:1-3). *“For you know the grace of our*

Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

On the day of this Feast, a male Lamb was sacrificed as a Burnt Offering along with a Grain Offering. In this, Christ is seen in all His loveliness, as pleasing to His Father!

Christ the altogether lovely One became poor that we might become rich in Him! All that we are and have of worth we owe to Him.

[4] The Feast of Wave Loaves

Leviticus 23:15-22. This Feast was kept 50 days after the Passover and ‘Pentecost’ means ‘fiftieth’. Again, it was ‘the day after the seventh Sabbath’, or Sunday!

On this day two loaves baked with leaven were waved before the Lord. Two loaves were made from the first of the wheat harvest and baked with leaven and then waved by the priest before the Lord in the Tabernacle and accepted by Him.

This offering was “*a new grain offering*” from the first of the wheat harvest, the food of the rich. It had to be of fine flour, as in the Grain Offering, speaking of the inner perfections of Christ.

It was at the Feast of Pentecost that the Church was formed by the Holy Spirit who links us to the risen Christ who is the Firstfruits (Acts Ch. 2). The two loaves teach us that God has made of Jew and Gentile “*one new man*” and “*one body*” (Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:11-18). In verse 16 it is called a ‘*new grain offering*’. The Church has replaced Israel, and is God’s new light in the world.

Leaven was in these loaves and it speaks of sin; there is sin ‘**in**’ every believer, but no sin ‘**on**’ any believer! In this bread the leaven was arrested by the fires of the oven. Christ suffered for us and our sins in the fires of Calvary’s cross.

On this day seven lambs and two rams were offered as Burnt Offerings with their Grain and Drink Offerings (see Exodus 29:40; Philippians 2:17). A Sin and Peace Offering were also offered (verse 19).

The Church is here seen in type with all the necessary offerings that speak of Christ in the many aspects of His sacrifice. For this is “*to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved*” (Ephesians 1:6).

A freewill offering was to be given, and they were to rejoice before the Lord (Deuteronomy 16:9-12).

Harvest ending, God’s Social Security Provision

Leviticus 23:22. In this verse we have the end of harvest, with food left in the fields for the poor and strangers (Ruth 2:2). No date or time is given for end of harvest! Christ will return!

The sheaves standing in the fields were gathered in and the end of harvest is also coming for the Church when the last souls are saved. Then there will be gleanings among Israel and the nations (Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-28; Revelation Ch. 7).

There was a long period of six months to the next feast. 2000 years have passed since Calvary and still we wait for the return of our Lord and events leading to Israel’s conversion. God has the times and seasons in His hands and all is well.

[5] The Feast of Trumpets

Leviticus 23:23-25. This Feast is prophetic of Israel’s regathering to their land. It was a ‘memorial’ and is still in the future to be fulfilled. On the 1st day of the seventh month was another ‘Sabbath’ set by the new moon. The silver trumpets were blown and Israel gathered to celebrate this feast. The trumpets were blown for calling the leaders and the people together and for directing the march of Israel.

They were also blown “*in the day of your gladness*” at the appointed feasts, over the Burnt and Peace Offerings (Numbers 10:1-10). In a coming day the Trumpet will sound (Isaiah 27:13; Matthew 24:31) and all Israel will come back to their land (Isaiah Ch. 11; 18:3-11; Jeremiah Ch. 29:31; Romans Ch. 9 to 11).

[6] The Day of Atonement

Leviticus 23:26-32. This day was held on the 10th day of the 7th month and was a day of sorrow and repentance for their sins. It was not called a ‘Feast’. It was a ‘Sabbath’ of solemn ‘rest’, and no work was allowed (See Leviticus Chapter 16).

On this day the High Priest laid aside his garments of glory and put on the linen robe, and took the blood of a bull into the ‘Holiest of All’ and sprinkled it on the Ark of the Covenant and made ‘atonement’ or a ‘covering’ for the sins of Israel (Read carefully Leviticus Chapter 16; Hebrews 9:1-16).

When our Lord came into this world He laid aside His garments of glory and humbled Himself and was found in fashion as a Man (Philippians 2:5-11). In a coming day He will return in glorious splendour to judge this world and reign in perfect righteousness over the nations (Revelation 19:11-16).

The day is also coming when Israel will repent and turn to the Lord (Zechariah 12:10-14; Romans 11:26-27). The dry bones will live (Ezekiel Ch. 37). The year of Jubilee was trumpeted on this day at end of the 49th year (See Lev. 25:8-17).

[7] The Feast of Tabernacles

Leviticus 23:33-44. Israel at rest in the land. From the 15th day of the seventh month this Feast was held for seven days. The harvest work completed, Israel dwelt in booths made from leaves. It pictures the millennial rest on earth when our Lord reigns and Israel will be head of the nations and all will worship at Jerusalem.

In verse 39 is an eighth day Sabbath-rest! It points to Israel's resurrection to life, and Israel's future millennial rest in their land. (Zechariah 14:16-21).

Study 12

Is There a Heaven and a Hell

A study on what God has planned for those who believe His word, and for those who refuse to accept His word.

What does the Bible say about heaven?

This is what the Lord revealed to King David: *“In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore”* (Psalm 16:11).

This is what the Lord Jesus has revealed to us: *“In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also”* (John 14:1-3).

This is what the Lord revealed to John the apostle: *“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away”* (Revelation 21:4).

What does the Bible say about Paradise?

This is what Jesus said when Lazarus died: He went to Paradise, called ‘Abraham's bosom’, a place of ‘comfort’, to join all the Old Testament Saints (Luke 23:39-43). ‘Paradise’ is a Persian word that was used for “A walled king's pleasure garden”, which the king shared with favoured subjects. It had beautiful flowers and trees.

To the Jews it came to mean: “A place of timeless harmony in a perfect state”, where there are *“pleasures forevermore”*.

To the dying thief on the cross Jesus said: *“Assuredly, I say to you, **today** you will be with Me in **Paradise**”* (Luke 23:39-43).

Paradise was in Hades, and Hades was a place of blessing but also a place of suffering with a great gulf fixed between the two parts.

Paradise was a blessed place where the Old Testament saints were held in perfect peace, joy and rest, awaiting the resurrection.

It was a place for reflection

(1) For the saved to be thankful for their salvation, and to enjoy the company of all the faithful believers of Old Testament days, those listed in Hebrews Ch. 11.

(2) For the unsaved, lost forever, to suffer and remember past opportunities.

Jesus holds its keys, for *“I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death”* (Revelation 1:18).

What does the Bible say about Hell?

Hell is to be distinguished from ‘Hades’. Hell is ‘Gehenna’, the final destination of lost sinners whom God will judge (Matthew 18:7-9). It is the same as the ‘Lake of Fire’ where the dead, small and great, were cast (Revelation 20:11-15).

The Hell mentioned in 2 Peter 2:4 is not *Gehenna* or *Hades*, but ‘Tartarus’, the holding house of angels who sinned. Christians will one day judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:3).

Satan will also be given a time for reflection; a place prepared in the ‘bottomless pit’, where he will be bound for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-3). During this time this earth will enjoy true peace and rest while Christ rules for one thousand years (Read Isaiah Chapter 11; Revelation Chapter 20).

Hell is synonymous with ‘the Lake of Fire’. All unbelievers will be cast alive into the Lake of Fire, and this is called the second death (Revelation 20:11-15).

This will not be the loss of being, but loss of well-being. It is a place to be feared. We are warned to *“flee from the wrath to come”* (Matthew 3:7).

Paradise Transferred to Heaven

In the Old Testament ‘Hades’ is called ‘Sheol’ - *“For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One (Christ) to see corruption”* (Psalm 16:10). Again, it was in two parts, the same place where Lazarus went.

After His resurrection, Jesus transferred Paradise to Heaven: *“When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men...He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?”*, to Hades (Ephesians 4:8-9).

Paul was caught up to the third Heaven, to Paradise (2 Corinthians 12:1-4).

Hades Today

Hades is now the holding house of lost souls awaiting their resurrection and judgement. It holds the lost souls from the days of Cain (Genesis 4) to this present time. Death and Hades, along with all the unjust, will be cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the eternal place of suffering reserved for all lost souls, and for the devil and his angels (Revelation 20:15; Matthew 25:41)

Heaven is the Father’s house for the blessed saved souls of all ages. They will rejoice for evermore, because of Jesus: *“who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification”* (Romans 4:25).

Paul gave believers this assurance: *“We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 5:8).

These believers Jesus will bring with Him, for when He returns in the air the dead in Christ will rise first, and their bodies will be reunited with their soul and spirit. Then the living Christians are ‘caught up’ together with them and all are given a glorified body to be forever with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Philippians 3:20-21).

This is the Christian’s ‘blessed hope’, saved and redeemed by the blood of Christ, and raised and caught up with Him to be ‘forever with the Lord’.

Study 13

The Assurance of Salvation

Assurance is ‘confidence’ in God’s word, that He will be faithful to His promises.

God has revealed His power to both save and keep us. It takes the power of God to break the power of sin in our lives, and to defeat the power of Satan. Paul was a blasphemer, imprisoning and killing Christians, but Jesus met him and saved him. Paul said this: *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek”* (Romans 1:16).

The message of the Gospel is this: *“that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day*

according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). The Old Testament Scriptures reveals this.

Sadly, many will not accept the message and stay in unbelief, *“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God”* (1 Corinthians 1:18).

God’s power works through the Holy Spirit

The word ‘Gospel’ means ‘Good News’, for those who accept it become His children: *“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”* (John 1:12-13).

This is through the Spirit’s power: Jesus said: *“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”* (John 3:5). The ‘water’ is the word of God, working with the Spirit within the heart.

He adopts these as Sons: *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father”* (Romans 8:14).

Believers are kept by His power: Peter wrote *“who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time”* (1 Peter 1:5).

Would I disinherit and divorce my only son if he sinned? Neither will God

When Christians sin, they lose the **joy** of their salvation, but not salvation: *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us”* (1 John 1:9-10). There are times when we all sin and fail Him.

God gives proof of salvation and promises eternal life, for He seals us with the Holy Spirit of promise: *“In whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory”* (Ephesians 1:13-14). The ‘seal’ is God’s guarantee of ‘ownership’ and ‘security’. We are His forever.

Jesus was judged for our sins for He said; *“Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world (Satan) will be cast out”* (John 12:31). A hymn says:

‘Because the sinless Saviour died, My sinful soul is counted free; For God the Just is satisfied, To look on Him and pardon me’.

His children have everlasting life

Judgment is now past for everyone who believes: Jesus said; *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life”* (John 5:24). This word **‘has’** is a present possession and assures us of everlasting life now!

Jesus said: *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one.”* (John 10:27-30). Read also Romans 8:31-37. There is no power that can separate a Christian from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Only unbelief can deny this power from working in your life.

Christ is enthroned in the heavens and for a child of God to lose their salvation, Christ must first be dethroned and there is no power that can do this.

God’s word says, *“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”* (Romans 10:9-10).

Trust in His word, for God said it, therefore believe it, and that settles it.

Study 14

The Judgment Seat of Christ

The next event in God’s plan for His people is the rapture of the Church, the bride of Christ, and they will then appear before the judgment seat of Christ to prepare them for the marriage supper of the Lamb.

For the marriage of the Lamb, *“His wife (the Church) has made herself ready, and to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints”* (Revelation 19:6-10).

God has created us with a conscience to know good and evil. He made us thinking, reasoning beings, capable of making choices, and therefore we are accountable to Him, our Creator, for our choices. His Spirit within tells us what is right or wrong.

He has called all Christians to live self-judged lives, and before the marriage of the Lamb, His wife will be made ready at the judgment seat of Christ. All Christians should so live as to be ready, or will be made ready by the Lord’s searching eyes.

This is taught in Romans 14:10 and in 2 Corinthians 5:9-11: *“Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror (or fear) of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences”.*

Are we ready, living self-judged lives, watching our words, deeds and motives? Or will we be made ready, for **‘all’**, without exception, must appear before the judgment seat of Christ before we go to *‘the marriage of the Lamb’*.

The judgment seat, or Greek **‘bema’**, was a raised platform where the judge sat to review cases brought before him, or to adjudicate at games. For Christians, the **‘bema’** will be a heavenly scene, where the Lord’s estimate of the deeds done in our body will be reviewed. There will be rewards for faithful service, and loss of reward for our failure to act on the teachings in His word or to act in the flesh.

All will be put right in His sight. Our secret sins and matters not put right with others, saved or lost, will then be put right. Our motives will be judged. Were our **‘works’** or **‘acts’** done with pure motives, or for the praise of men?

Paul was concerned over the conduct of some of the Corinthian believers, and he warned them of the **‘terror’** or **‘fear of the Lord’**. This is not a slavish fear, but reverential awe and trust, and the fear of displeasing Him, *“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”* (1 Peter 4:17).

This is not the judgment of our sins, for that is past for every believer, for Christ was judged for us on the cross (John 5:24).

1 Corinthians 3:1-4: There are three types of people

Those who are **‘natural’** and without the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14)

Then there are Christians who do not live the life. These are called ‘**carnal**’ for they walk after the flesh, not the Spirit, and do not do the works God has prepared for them (Ephesians 2:10). These will receive the loss of reward.

Then there are Christians who are ‘**spiritual**’, who walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 25), fulfilling God’s purposes for their lives, guided or led by the Holy Spirit. Their daily food is the word of God, and they will have crowns as rewards.

1 Corinthians 3:5-9: The Spirit filled workmen and the work

Paul and Apollos were ‘one’; they were workers together with God and would be rewarded for their labour. This stresses unity among the workers, and is in contrast with the disunity in Corinth. They laboured in “God’s field” and ‘God’s building’, the church at Corinth. Sadly, weeds can grow in church ground and need removing. Paul and Silas were kept busy teaching and caring for such a troublesome ‘field’!

1 Corinthians 3:10-11. Paul, the wise master builder

God is the great Designer, the Word of God gives the plan, the apostles and prophets were the ‘master builders’, while the Lord Jesus Christ is the only foundation to build local churches on and for our own house of life (Matt. 7:24).

1 Corinthians 3:12-15: Building in one of two ways

1. Building with a Christ-centred life, with works that will abide the testing fire of that Day: The materials are: **Gold**: preaching Christ, for He is pure gold; **Silver**: man’s need met with the Gospel, the price of redemption paid with the precious blood of Christ; **Precious Stones**: a ministry that builds up believers, so they display Christ likeness, with His beauty and glory reflected in them (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

It is interesting to note that gold was used to make the Ark of the Tabernacle, which reflected the glory of Christ, while Israel’s High Priest wore a vestment on his heart set with 12 precious stones engraved with the names of the 12 tribes of Israel, and two onyx stones worn on his shoulders, also engraved with their names. Christ, our great High Priest, holds us secure on His shoulders and to His heart.

2. Building with a self-centred life: This is the work of the flesh, living to fulfill its lusts and desires. This is Wood, Hay and Straw. All such ‘work’ is the fulfilling of our own will and to be consigned to the flames, ‘burnt up’ for *‘the Day will declare it’*.

This is the loss of reward and not the loss of salvation, *“saved, yet so as through fire”*. This is like a man saved from a burning house with only the

clothes he wears. It is sad for a Christian to have lived a mis-spent life. The missionary C.T. Studd said:

‘Only one life and soon will be past, and only what’s done for Jesus will last!’

“And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming” (1 John 2:28).

1 Corinthians 3:16-23: Warnings regarding the ministry

The place where we minister is the local church. It is the ‘temple of God’, the ‘inner sanctuary’ where He dwells. *“For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them”* (Matthew 18:20). Those who defile this Temple by following worldly wisdom, are deceived and God will destroy them. God will confound the wisdom of this world, so there should be no place for it in the local church, for the wisdom of this world should not deceive any believer.

The amazing thing is that even though we do fail our Lord, He has compassion on us, and anything we do for Him is of His grace and enabling! Praise His name.

Always remember, “all things are yours” in Christ. If we have Him, we have all we need for time and eternity. “And you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s”.

Study 15

Crowns – The Christian’s Reward

In God’s great plans for the ages, there are crowns to be won, rewards to be given to those who faithfully serve Him in this life. There are two crowns mentioned, the ‘Diadem’ and the ‘Stephanos’:

The ‘Diadem’, the Kingly or Imperial Crown:

Only our Lord Jesus Christ has the right to wear this crown. He will wear many crowns when He comes to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. *“His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself”* (Revelation 19:12).

The ‘Stephanos’, the Victor’s or Overcomer’s Crown:

This crown was given to victors in games and contests. It was a wreath made from Laurel leaves. The ‘Stephanos’ crown thrust upon the head of our Lord was a crown of thorns, a crown of terrible suffering and reproach. Yet He was

the victor over the powers of darkness that surrounded Him on the cross (John 19:1).

Now He wears the Victor's Crown: *"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone"* (Hebrews 2:9).

A Hymn of Praise and Worship

*'Crown Him with many crowns, The Lamb upon His throne;
Hear now the heavenly anthem drowns All music but its own!
Awake, my soul, and sing, Of Him who died for you,
And hail Him as your matchless King Through all eternity.'*

'Stephanos' crowns are promised to believers who overcome:

"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Revelation 3:21).

There is an Imperishable Crown. *"And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown"* (1 Corinthians 9:25).

This Crown is given for running well in the Christian race (Hebrews 12:1), and for overcoming the world, the flesh and the devil (1 John 2:12-17); for competing according to the rules (2 Timothy 2:5) and for taking heed to yourself and the doctrine and thus saved from making shipwreck (1 Timothy 1:19; 4:16).

There is a Crown of Righteousness. Paul finished his race well, *"Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing"* (2 Timothy 4:8). To win this crown we need to live righteous lives, and to do this we need to put on the full armour of God (Ephesians 6:10-18). We do not want to be ashamed at His appearing (1 John 2:28), *"And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure"* (1 John 3:1-3).

There is a Crown of Rejoicing. This will be given for soul winning, *"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?"* This will be given for faithful evangelism, for saints established in the faith and for their continuance in the faith under persecution (Read 1 Thessalonians Chapters 1 to 3). All of this will bring us rejoicing at the judgment seat of Christ (Hebrews 13:17).

There is a Crown of Glory for faithful elders. *"And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away"* (1 Peter

5:4). It is a special crown for faithful under-shepherds (elders), who care for the flock, for they must give an account for the sheep that they lead (Hebrews 13:17).

Church members have a responsibility to respect and obey elders so that they gain their reward at the judgement seat of Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

There is a Crown of Life: This is for those who are martyred for Christ. *"Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life"* (Revelation 2:10). The martyr's crown is reserved for a select few, for those who pay the ultimate price out of love for their Lord.

Jesus said, *"Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown"* (Revelation 3:11). *"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death"* (Revelation 12:11).

We must run the race of life well so as to overcome and win a crown.

Study 16

Things that abide:

A Study on Faith, Hope & Love

The importance of these in God's great plan for the ages.

Life is short, and we must ask ourselves, what are the most important and the greatest things in life? The Bible gives us the answer: ***"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love"*** (1 Corinthians 13:13).

The first is Faith

Faith means to believe; to adhere to, trust, rely on and to depend on God. It is the leaning of the whole personality on Him in absolute trust and confidence. 'Faith perceives as real fact what is not revealed to the senses' (Quote from W.E. Vine).

Hebrews Chapter 11 is the great 'faith' chapter: *"Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see"* (Hebrews 11:1-7). Faith gives understanding that God is the Creator, and reveals those who lived by faith: Abel, Enoch and Noah. We cannot please God without faith, for we must believe that He is, that He exists, and rewards the diligent seeker (See Matthew 7:7-8).

Defining Faith: Faith comes by hearing God's Word (Romans 10:17) and thus to make a decision to accept or to reject His word. Accepting is to receive into the heart God's word as the truth. Rejecting brings condemnation (John 3:16-21).

God's word will accomplish His purposes, in spite of Satan's opposition and man's unbelief and rejection. Faith is *"the gift of God"*. It is the effect of the Word of God and the Spirit of God on the human spirit (Ephesians 2:8-9).

2 Peter 1:1-11. We are to add to our faith: The first is 'virtue', for He has *"called us by His own glory and virtue"*. So, *"for this very cause"* we are to 'add' one virtue in the exercise of another. 'Virtue' is the attractive power of His own beautiful life in calling us to salvation. 'Virtue' is 'excellence' and the divine 'energy' exhibited in the believer's life. It is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the one who abides in Christ (John 15:1-8; Galatians 5:16 - 26).

'Knowledge' is "a seeking to know, an enquiry, investigation" (W.E.Vine).

'Self-control' has the thought of 'strength', for it is the Christian's response to God's righteousness. It is strength to hold the passions and desires in check.

'Perseverance' is 'patient endurance' that honours God, especially under great trial or persecution. It not only bears with, but also contends for the faith.

'Godliness' is piety, or God-likeness exhibited in the Christian's life.

'Brotherly kindness' means to be saturated with 'brotherly affection'. 'Love' completes and fulfills our faith. This is God's divine love working in our life, for it is sacrificial in living and giving. It means to love the Lord with all our heart and soul and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

If these things are added to faith and abound in us, it will make us fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The second is Hope

What is meant by 'Hope'? The English word has changed its meaning. Today there may be uncertainty about it, for we may 'hope' to do something and be unable to do so. The Bible word for 'hope' has 'certainty' at its core. It is 'A favourable and confident expectation, the certainty of God fulfilling all His promises', His keeping His word as He will not fail or deny His very nature.

Christians live in the 'certainty' and *'hope of eternal life'* (Titus 1:2). They have *'the hope of righteousness'* since all their sins are forgiven (Galatians 5:5), for *"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures"* (1 Corinthians 15:3).

It is a 'a living hope', for Christ rose from the dead on the third day (1 Peter 1:3). It is a living hope because He lives, and we live in Him, and will be with Him in glory. Jesus said, *"Because I live, you will live also"* (John 14:19)

It is a 'a blessed hope', for it 'teaches' or 'schools' us to live holy lives and to live rightly with others as we await the 'hope' of the rapture (Titus 2:13). Sadly, many live *'without God and without hope in this world'*. God is *'the God of all hope'*.

It is an anchoring hope, *'as an anchor for the soul'* (Hebrews 6:17-20). God promised with an oath to bless Abraham and all families on earth who share his faith (Genesis 22:15-18). Nothing can be more secure. One day Christians will also have *'the hope'* and certainty *'of glory'* in His presence (Colossians 1:27).

It is an 'unseen hope', for hope cannot be seen! *"For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance"* (Romans 8:24-25).

It is a 'purifying hope', *"And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure"* (1 John 3:3). What *'manner of love'* the Lord has poured out upon us! We are the children of God, and when we see Him, we will be morally like Him, free from sin, but each having his or her own distinct features.

The third and greatest is Love

There are two Bible words used for 'love'. The first is the Greek word **'philio'** and it has the meaning of **'an affectionate love'**, such as we have for our close family, and that Christians should have for others in the Church family.

The second is the Greek word **'agape'** and it has the meaning of **'a sacrificial love'**, to live for and serve others no matter if they are friends or enemies. The Bible says that some people would even die for a good man and some have done that, *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8). Here is love, for Christ died for His enemies.

Love is the greatest of all God's laws. When Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment, He said, *"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'"* (Matthew 22:37-39).

His perfect love ends fear: *"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us"* (1 John 4:18-19).

"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13).
