

Dedication

I dedicate this book to the Person of the Holy Spirit of God. My prayer is that every believer will have an undying gratitude for His indwelling presence, and for the comfort, peace and joy His presence brings.

Introduction	07
The Feasts of Israel	14
The Tabernacle and Worship Vessels	52
The Psalms and the Prophets	65
The New Birth	116

INTRODUCTION

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you – that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.”

(Luke 24:44-45)

That the Lord God came to this Earth as a Man, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, is a fact that can be made with great certainty. As we will demonstrate in the following pages of this book, the Old Testament Scriptures, from the Book of Genesis to Malachi, contain hundreds or more predictions about the coming Messiah, who God was to send into the world as Saviour for all mankind.

Jesus Christ fulfilled more than three hundred of these Old Testament prophecies in His short life here on Earth, including twenty-nine major prophecies in just one day, the day He died.

All these prophecies, accurately foretold by various Jewish Prophets hundreds of years before our Lord was even born, describe in specific detail Jesus’ prenatal eternal origin, virgin birth, childhood, ministry, sinless-ness, atoning death by crucifixion, betrayal by a friend, His resurrection, ascension into Heaven, and His Second Coming to judge the world, destroy death, and bring in eternal peace.

Therefore, anyone who takes an honest, unbiased look at what the Old Testament Prophets foretold about the Messiah, and compares it with what the New Testament historical records say concerning Jesus of Nazareth, can come to no other conclusion other than the fact that He was God in the flesh and Israel’s promised Messiah.

Prophecy as the Foundation of the Gospel

It can never be emphasized enough that the Christian faith was not a new cult or a first-century invention, but the culmination of a long Jewish heritage; founded solely upon the consistent message and progressive revelation the Hebrew Prophets had declared for centuries.

This progressive revelation presents a single story of God's plan of redemption for mankind – redemption from the curse of sin and condemnation to a life of unending joy in the presence of God the Father – through His Divine Son, who was to come into the world to die for humanity; so that by believing on Him we would inherit eternal life as a free gift.

A close examination of the New Testament documents reveals its writers continually appealed to the fulfilment of these Old Testament prophecies to establish Jesus' claims to deity and Messiah-ship. They often based their entire presentation of the life-giving Gospel on what the Prophets had written. Below are a few examples:

And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days argued with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This is the Messiah Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you."

(Acts 17:2-4)

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the Gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead.

(Romans 1:1-5)

In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer.

(Acts 3:18)

All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

(Acts 10:43)

When they had carried out everything that was written about him, they took him down from the tree.

(Acts 13:29)

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

(1Corinthians 3-5)

Like living stones let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture: "See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone, chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

(1Peter 2:4-7)

Because the residents of Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize him or understand the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath, they fulfilled those words by condemning him.

(Acts 13:27-28)

Although he had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in him. This was to fulfil the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah: “Lord, who has believed our message, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

(John 12:37-39)

These things occurred so that the scriptures might be fulfilled, “None of his bones shall be broken.” And again another passage of scripture says, “They will look on the one whom they have pierced.”

(John 19:36-38)

The Apostle Peter wrote his Second Epistle to warn believers of the dangerous influence of false prophets and teachers in the Church. Convinced that the best remedy for heresy is a firm knowledge of the truth, he exhorts his readers to live holy lives, to grow in the grace and knowledge of God, and especially to have a firm appreciation of biblical prophecy:

So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

(2 Peter 1:19-20)

And let us not forget that during His earthly ministry Jesus Himself continually appealed to the fulfilment of Messianic prophecy to substantiate His claims:

You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf.

(John 5:39)

Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father, your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.

(John 5:45-47)

With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says: “You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive.”

(Matthew 13:14-15)

This is the one about whom it is written, “See I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.”

(Matthew 11:10-11)

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the scriptures: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes?”

(Matthew 21:42-43)

For I tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in me, “And he was counted among the lawless;” and indeed what is written about me is being fulfilled.

(Luke 22:37-39)

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil.

(Matthew 5:17-18)

At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day by day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But all this has taken place, so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled.”

(Matthew 26:55-57)

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

(Luke 4:20-22)

But now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. It was to fulfil the word that is written in their law, “They hated me without a cause.”

(John 15:24b-26)

Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But then how would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?

(26:53-55)

He said to them Elijah is indeed coming first to restore all things. How then is it written about the Son of Man that he is to go through many sufferings and be treated with contempt?

(Mark 9:12-14)

For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.

(Mark 14:21-22)

When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them, “You will all become deserters; for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.”

(Mark 14:26-28)

And after His resurrection Jesus used the same approach with His two unbelieving disciples on the road to Emmaus. He gave them a harsh rebuke for not understanding what the Prophets had plainly foretold, showing that it is the duty of every believer to have an intelligent knowledge of Scripture:

Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the Scriptures.

(Luke 24:25-28)

In recent years many Christian leaders have prayed for revival in the Body of Christ and urged believers to return to the simple and powerful Christianity of the early Church. However, very little is said of the effective role the fulfilment of Messianic prophecy would play in bringing about such a revival, despite the fact that it is a biblical method and the most powerful means of winning souls to Christ.

In addition to the amazing prophecies in the Psalms and the Prophets concerning Jesus of Nazareth, the Tent of Meeting, or Tabernacle, and all its furnishings described in the Law of Moses; together with the seven feasts of Israel, celebrated annually by the Jewish people to this very day, not only have great historic significance, they are also infused with profound spiritual and prophetic meaning. They all point to Christ the Saviour. This is how the Spirit of Jesus was able to say in Psalm 40 before the incarnation: *“In the scroll of the book it is written of me.”*

Dear reader, I invite you to follow me in the following chapters where we will examine these important and glorious truths in more detail.

01

THE FEASTS OF ISRAEL

Soon after the Jewish Exodus God established seven feasts for the children of Israel, which were celebrations of the time He delivered them out of slavery in Egypt (see *Leviticus 23*). These feasts (*appointed times* in Hebrew) were *God's* own holy days and He gave specific instructions for their observance. The Israelites were to appear together before Him in Jerusalem three times a year and they were not to come before the Lord without bringing an offering (*Deuteronomy 16:16*).

These seven feasts were divided into three feast seasons: **Passover**, **Pentecost** and **Tabernacles**, and they were extremely significant times for the ancient Hebrews, as they reminded the children of Israel and their descendants to honour God for what He had done for them.

But, more importantly, the Old Testament appointed feasts all foreshadowed and pointed to Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who was the ultimate and final reality of the Passover story and the true Passover Lamb (see *1 Corinthians 5:7*). This is why when Jesus approached John the Baptist at the River Jordan, He openly declared the identity and purpose of the life of our Redeemer with these words, “*Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*” (*John 1:29*).

Because Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins, Jews and Gentiles alike, once and for all, we do not have to live under the Old Testament Law and observe these annual holy days. We are free to serve God under the New Covenant of grace, in the spirit and not in the letter. Yet we cannot fully understand the true meaning of the New Covenant, and what Jesus accomplished for us on the Cross, until we fully grasp the hidden truths and profound prophetic significance of the feasts of Israel.

THE FIRST FEAST SEASON – PASSOVER

The first feast season of the Lord is called **Passover** and includes the **Feast of Passover**, the **Feast of Unleavened Bread**, and the **Feast of First Fruits**. These first three feasts occurred over eight days during the spring time and were designed to teach the Israelites how to find and enter God's true rest.

Passover, or the Hebrew word *pesach*, literally means *protection* and comes from the explicit instructions God gave to Moses on the night the angel of death passed over those homes marked with the blood of the sacrificed lamb.

This feast was actually ordained for the Israelites just before their exodus from Egypt, but it was also established as an appointed holy time each year throughout the subsequent generations. It was a feast that was to be kept forever (see *Exodus 12:11-14*); that is, until it had its fulfilment in Christ.

Passover Inaugurated

While the Jewish people to this very day have celebrated the Passover in obedience to the command given Moses, there was, in reality, only one Passover event. This occurred sometime around 1446 B.C. in Egypt and the events that led to the event are probably the most dramatic in the Law of Moses.

The Book of Genesis relates how Joseph, one of the sons of Jacob, was sold by his brothers into slavery in Egypt. Yet though Joseph endured great hardship initially, he was eventually given a top position in the nation's government because of God's favour in his life, and Egypt flourished because of his influence and administration.

It occurred that during a severe famine in the land of Canaan Joseph's older brothers – the same ones who had sold him for thirty

pieces of silver – came to Egypt to obtain grain to save them and their family. In due time, Joseph revealed to them that he was their brother, forgave them and invited the entire family, seventy in all, to come and live in Egypt.

After many years Joseph and his brothers died and their descendants multiplied in the land of Egypt. Pharaoh died also and his predecessor apparently had no regard for the Israelites. Forgetting what Joseph had done for Egypt, the new Pharaoh decided to take action against the growing influence and numbers of the Israelites. They were brutally forced to build cities, erect monuments, construct roads and hew stones. When the children of Israel could no longer endure their terrible suffering and oppression, God intervened, remembering His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and delivered their descendants from their cruel bondage under the Egyptians.

It was at this time that God called Moses and instructed him to go to Pharaoh and demand the freedom of His people. But Pharaoh haughtily refused, saying that he had never heard of the God of Israel. After a series of pleas to free the Israelites were denied, God hardened Pharaoh's heart and unleashed a series of ten horrible plagues upon the Egyptians. When the final plague was announced God declared:

About midnight I will go out through Egypt. Every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first born of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the firstborn of the female slave, who is behind the hand-mill, and all the firstborn of the livestock.

(Exodus 11:4-6)

However, at that very same moment, God told Moses that He was about to give His chosen people a very new beginning:

This month shall mark for you the beginning of months, it shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a Lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbour in obtaining one, the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight.

They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs and inner organs. You shall let none of it remain until the morning, anything that remains until the morning you shall burn.

This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand, and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the Passover of the LORD. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals, on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgements: I am the LORD.

The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live, when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

(Exodus 12:2-15)

Here we learn that when the blood of the sacrificed lamb was applied to each doorpost or gate in faith and obedience to God's command, that house was "*passed over*" and the life of the firstborn was spared. All succeeding observances of the Passover over the centuries until this very day have been memorials of that one and only Passover.

Because the children of Israel ate the lamb, they were a healthy people, there was not one feeble person among the tribes. The blood of the lamb had become their salvation. This is a perfect picture of the redemption the Lord Jesus has provided for us and the spiritual and physical healing that flows from our Saviour's punishment on the Cross, for it is "*By His bruises we are healed*" (*Isaiah 53:5c*).

Passover in Modern Times

To this very day the Jewish people celebrate the Passover Feast in much the same way as they did in the time of our Lord; with the exception of the sacrificed lamb. On the evening before the festive meal, each home is cleansed of all leaven in obedience to the command given Moses:

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses.

(Exodus 12:15)

Only then can the unleavened bread or *matzos* be brought into the house. These three pieces of unleavened bread represent the unleavened cakes that the Israelites hastily prepared when the Pharaoh at last declared that they could leave the country (*Exodus 12:39*).

On the table you will also observe other traditional symbols of the first Passover celebrated by the ancient Israelites on the night of their flight from Egypt. These include some bitter herbs, a glass of

salt water, four cups of red wine, a shank-bone and the *charoseth*, a clay-like substance made of apples and nuts which typifies the clay from which the Israelites were forced to make bricks to build the mighty Egyptian cities.

The salt water is symbolic of the Red Sea through which God led His people and the bitter herbs are reminiscent of the tears that the Hebrews shed during their enslavement. The four cups of red wine are symbolic of the lamb's blood and the shank-bone is in place of the lamb itself.

The Deeper Significance

In the four Gospels we learn that Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, ate the Passover meal together with His twelve disciples in the Upper Room, where He also ordained the most sacred celebration for Christians – the Last Supper – that commemorated His sacrificial death, resurrection and Second Coming.

It was in that Upper Room that the Jewish Passover, celebrated for centuries and centuries, at last obtained its true meaning and deepest significance. It not only commemorated the deliverance from slavery in Egypt, but had a much deeper spiritual application that, as Jesus explained to His disciples, would be fulfilled through His death.

Our Redeemer “*eagerly desired*” (*Luke 22:15*) to celebrate the last Passover with His disciples to communicate these very profound truths in an intimate way to them. He used the Passover symbols listed above to illustrate His whole purpose in becoming a Man.

Here was the true and perfect Lamb who was about to shed His blood on the Cross that all who would believe in Him, both Jew and Gentile, might be set free from the slavery of sin and enabled to begin a new life as children of God and partakers of the promises to Israel. After Jesus had broken the unleavened bread and given it to His disciples He said:

This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, this cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

(Luke 22:19-21)

Every one of us deserves judgement because of our sin (*Romans 3:23, 6:23*), but Jesus provided Himself as a spotless, sacrificial Lamb for us (*John 1:29; 1Peter 1:19*), so that if we apply His blood to our lives (*John 7:53-60*), by believing in Him (*John 3:16*) and confessing Him as Lord (*Romans 10:9*), God will forgive us and “pass over” us on Judgement Day.

Christ was sacrificed on the fourteenth day of the first month of the Jewish year – the exact time that the Passover lambs were being slain (see *John 18:28*). Contemplating the story of the ancient Jewish Passover feast and our Lord’s substitutionary death and resurrection the Apostle Paul wrote:

For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

(1Corinthians 5:7-9)

As we can see, the beautiful story of the ancient Passover Feast and the celebration of the Lord’s Supper merge into one complete story of deliverance and celebration. The Jewish people as a whole have completely missed this future prophetic meaning of the Passover. Without knowing it, every time a Jew partakes of the Passover in modern times, he bears witness to the Messiah. Every time a Christian partakes of the Lord’s Supper, he remembers the One of whom the Passover lamb portrayed, the Christ, by whose blood he is now cleansed and forgiven.

THE FEAST OF FIRST FRUITS

The story of the Passover and the Lord's Supper would be incomplete without the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. But Christ did rise, victorious, through the power of God, according to His promise that He would not let His Holy One see decay (see *Psalms 16:10; Acts 2:29*).

In the Book of Leviticus we read that on the day after the Sabbath, that is, the Passover Sabbath, the priest was to bring the sheaf of the wave offering (a sheaf of the first ripe barley) into the Temple, which signified the beginning of the new harvest, the beginning of the first fruit. Moses wrote:

When you enter the land that I am giving you and you reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall raise the sheaf before the LORD, that you may find acceptance; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall raise it.

(Leviticus 23:10-11)

These ancient words were prophetic of the One, who on the very day after the Passover Sabbath, rose from the dead and became the first fruits of the resurrection, as the Apostle Paul explains in his First Epistle to the Corinthians:

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

(1Corinthians 15:20-24)

Paul is saying that Jesus was just the first among many to be raised from the dead. Unlike the other people who were miraculously raised from the dead prior to and during His earthly ministry, our Lord was raised from the dead never to die again. He was the first Person ever raised to immortal life, and therefore became the hope and promise of the believer's own spiritual and physical regeneration. In that same chapter the Apostle gives us much knowledge about the glory of our physical and resurrected bodies (see *1 Corinthians 15:35-45*).

At the end of the Passover celebration the Jewish people sing the *Hallel* (Psalms 113 to 118). In *Psalm 118* from verse 18 onward we begin to see a picture of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus. Then from verse 22 we read these powerfully significant prophetic words:

The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the LORD'S doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day that the LORD has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.

(Psalm 118:22-25)

These are the very words that Jesus and His disciples sang after they had celebrated their last Passover meal together in the Upper Room. As we read in the Gospel of Matthew, "*When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives*" (*Matthew 26:30*).

In the mouth of our Lord the words of *Psalm 118* were to take on a remarkable prophetic significance. Earlier in the Gospel of Luke Jesus pointed out that the stone which the builders rejected referred to Himself, and Luke records Peter's words in the Book of Acts that these words were fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ:

Let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the

name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. This Jesus is “the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.” There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.

(Acts 4:10-13)

Jesus Christ was the stone which the builders rejected and through His death and resurrection He became the cornerstone of God’s mighty building, His Church, where men and women of all generations and of every race and tongue have found refuge and peace for their souls. As the Psalmist says, “*This is the LORD’S doing and it is marvellous in our eyes.*”

THE SECOND FEAST SEASON: PENTECOST

The second season of feasts, **Pentecost**, was a single gathering of the Jewish people. Although it was originally called the **Feast of Weeks**, or **Feast of Harvest**, by New Testament times this holy day became known by its Greek name, Pentecost, meaning *fifty*. The day was designated by this name because it was celebrated on the fiftieth day after the Passover Sabbath. These are the words of the institution of Pentecost in the Old Testament:

And from the day after the sabbath, from the day on which you bring the sheaf of the elevation offering, you shall count off seven weeks, they shall be complete. You shall count until the day after the seventh sabbath, fifty days; then you shall present an offering of new grain to the LORD. You shall bring from your settlements two loaves of bread as an elevation offering, each made of two-tenths of an ephah, they shall be of choice flour, baked with leaven, as first fruits to the LORD.

(Leviticus 23:15-18)

For centuries Israel has been an agricultural nation that depended greatly on the produce of her land for sustenance. Pentecost was the feast of the ingathering of the first-fruit of the wheat harvest, a thanksgiving festival in which the Jewish people expressed their dependence on God for their daily bread.

This very popular holy day fell in early summer (June) and Jews from every part of Israel and from abroad would journey to Jerusalem to appear before the Lord God (see *Acts 2:1-14*).

Over the years, however, when the Jews became widely dispersed among the nations of the world, the Feast of Pentecost lost its primary character as a harvest festival and became known as the **Feast of the Giving of the Law**. The ancient rabbis came to the

conclusion that God gave the Law to Moses on this day. Consequently, it is a time of great rejoicing and celebration among the Jewish people.

As Pentecost is considered the anniversary of the giving of the Law, it is therefore considered the birth of Judaism. Significantly, in the Book of Acts we learn that Pentecost was the day in which the Holy Spirit was given to the believers and the day in which the Church of Christ was born (see *Acts 2:1-48*).

The Spiritual Harvest of Pentecost

As we noted previously, *Leviticus 23:11* says that on the day after the Passover Sabbath the priest was to bring the sheaf of the wave offering into the Temple to consecrate the coming harvest, the beginning of the first fruits. We also noted that these words were prophetic of Jesus Christ, who on the very day after the Passover Sabbath rose victoriously from the dead and became the first fruits of the resurrection.

Leviticus 23 then goes on to say that on the day of Pentecost, fifty days later, two wave loaves made of newly harvested wheat and baked with leaven were to be brought to the Lord. This is very significant.

Fifteen hundred years after God had given the commandment to His people to observe the Feast of Weeks, the One prophesied by all the Prophets in between this period finally came to Earth, was crucified according to the eternal purpose of God, to save humanity from sin, and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven He commanded His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were endued with the Holy Spirit. The disciples waited forty-nine days after His resurrection, just as the Jews waited forty-nine days from Passover to Pentecost (see *Acts 2:1-2, 5*).

It was in this period, after the Holy Spirit had come down on the first disciples, that the Apostle Peter addresses his fellow countrymen who had come to Jerusalem from all over the world, as well as a number of Gentile proselytes, and witnessed to them concerning the Messiah.

The power of the Holy Spirit worked so powerfully in Peter that day that about three thousand persons were added to their group and the Church, made up of both Jews and some Gentile proselytes, was born (*Acts 2:41*). Here we begin to see the prophetic meaning of the *two wave loaves*.

It is significant that of all the cereal offerings, only these two wave loaves were made with leaven, which very often is symbolic of sin in Scripture. The Passover bread was to be without leaven because it was symbolic of the sinless body of Christ, who being without sin became sin for our sake (*2 Corinthians 5:21*).

On the other hand, the two wave loaves were to be baked with leaven because they represented the Church of Christ, of which both Jew and Gentile, who are not without sin, are members.

The Church composed of 3,000 believers established in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost was the spiritual ingathering of the first-fruits of the Lord's Church, purchased by His blood.

Pentecost of the old Jewish dispensation was pointing to the time when both Jew and Gentile would come to know and worship the One true God – the God of Israel. In Christ alone this prophetic vision became a living reality.

Today both Jew and Gentile believers in Jesus are united in one faith and one body, of which Christ Jesus is both the cornerstone and Head. In his Letter to the Ephesians the Apostle Paul wrote:

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.

He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.

So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.

In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

(Ephesians 2:13-22)

THE THIRD FEAST SEASON: TABERNACLES

The third season of Israel's ancient feasts is collectively known as **Tabernacles**. This season includes the **Feast of Trumpets**, the **Day of Atonement** and the **Feast of Tabernacles**, or **Booths**, as it is also called. This is the most glorious season of all and is celebrated over twenty-one days in the Fall of each year.

THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS

In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of complete rest, a holy convocation commemorated with trumpet blasts.

(Leviticus 23:24)

As the month of Tishri is the seventh month of the year, it is therefore a sabbatical month. What the seventh day is to the week, Tishri is to the year. The first day is celebrated as a Sabbath, a day of rest, with the blowing of trumpets and the offering of sacrifices. This biblical festival is known in Scripture as *Yom Teruah*. Instructions for this celebration are given in the Book of Leviticus and Numbers.

According to the ancient rabbis, the blowing of the horns and trumpets ordained by the Lord, and observed in the Temple in Jerusalem and throughout the land of Israel, had several purposes. First, it reminded the Lord of His covenant relationship with His people Israel and to deal gently with them, not according to their merits, but according to His promises made to Abraham and the Patriarchs. Second, the blowing of trumpets was to confound and confuse Satan, who, according to the rabbis, accused Israel on this solemn day.

The horn used on the occasion was a ram's horn, Shofar, which brought to mind Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac, at God's command. Because Abraham had shown absolute trust and obedience to God at any cost, the Lord substituted a ram in the place of Isaac for the sacrifice.

For Christians, Abraham's sacrifice of his beloved son typified the sacrifice of our heavenly Father of His beloved and only begotten Son, Jesus, and the willingness of the Son to lay down His life for the salvation of all men.

Third, for the Jewish people the blowing of trumpets on the first day of the month also heralded a time of preparation for the Day of Atonement, called the *Ten Days of Repentance*. In this case, the trumpet sound was a sort of alarm call to repent.

For the New Testament writers, the blowing of trumpets on this particular day had a more spiritual and prophetic significance; it foreshadowed the future Day of Judgement at the Lord's Second Coming to Earth for His Bride, both Jew and Gentile alike (see *Matthew 24:31*; *1Corinthians 15:52*; *1Thessalonians 4:16*; *Revelation 11:15*).

As a side note, in Talmudic Judaism there are actually two New Years. One of them is biblical and begins on the first day of the month of *Nisan* or *Abib*, literally translated Spring. This month would be equivalent to our April. The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, "*This month shall be to you the beginning of months*" (*Exodus 12:1-2*).

However, the Jews also officially recognize and celebrate another new-year's day, *Rosh Hashana* (literally, head of the year), which is the first day of the seventh month, the month of *Tishri*, (equivalent to our September, October) and they celebrate it in the Feast of Trumpets.

Why the rabbis celebrate the New Year in the Feast of Trumpets, in the month of Tishri, instead of in the season of the Feast of

Unleavened Bread and Passover as prescribed in (*Exodus 12:1-2*) is a question of much debate.

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

The Day of Atonement, **Yom Kippur**, begins at sundown at the end of the ninth day of Tishri, the seventh month of the biblical year. Of all the Jewish holy occasions this is the most solemn of all, the Sabbath of Sabbaths.

The word Yom Kippur comes from the Hebrew word *kapper*, which means to *cover*. According to this meaning, God covers the sins of His people by the blood of the sacrificed animal and therefore sees only the penalty paid and the person covered with the blood, who appears sinless before him.

These Old Testament animal sacrifices express perfectly the idea of substitutionary death and propitiation and point directly to the heart of the Gospel message:

For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith.

(Romans 3:23-25)

The underlying idea in both the Old and New Testament is that there is no atonement except through the blood of the sacrifice, and on this fact all Jewish commentators are very clear. The Talmud says in Yoma 5a: “There is no atonement except with blood.” Likewise, in the New Testament Letter to the Hebrews we read, “*Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins*” (*Hebrews 9:22*).

Sacrifices for Yom Kippur

The elaborate ritual for the Day of Atonement, as was observed in the Tabernacle and the Temple in Jerusalem, is described in Leviticus chapter 16. The appointed sacrifice for the day included two goats, one of which was killed and the other, the scapegoat (*Azazel* in Hebrew), was kept alive.

The priests were to lay their hands on that animal, as if to transfer all the sins of the people on the scapegoat and it would be sent into the wilderness never to return again. The second goat was killed by the High Priest in the Temple and its blood was sprinkled to make atonement for all the uncleanness and transgressions of the children of Israel.

This was a type and picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Scape Goat; He takes all our sins upon Himself and carries them away never to return again, never. In the words of the Prophet Isaiah: *“The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all ” (Isaiah 53:6c)*. Jesus is the sacrificial animal also; He pays the penalty in full for our sins and is slaughtered in our place. In addition to the goats, lambs and bullocks were also sacrificed on this day.

The High Priest’s Role

On the Day of Atonement the High Priest, assisted by 500 priests, performed the solemn and elaborate rites of Yom Kippur. He was separated for seven days from the people in preparation for this solemn occasion. The climax of the Day of Atonement was when the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place, where the Ark of the Covenant was situated with the Mercy Seat overshadowing it. Above the Mercy Seat was the Shekinah Glory – the visible presence of Almighty God in a cloud.

After slaying the bullock and the second goat, which had been set apart for the Lord, the High Priest sprinkled the Most Holy Place, the Veil, the Altar of Incense, and the Altar of Burnt Offering, cleansing them from the defilement of sin. He then appeared before the very presence of God and implored the Lord by His mysterious and sacred name, Jehovah.

Only the officiating priests were initiated in the secret of the pronunciation of the sacred tetragrammaton YHWH, the holy and mystical name of God, for it was instilled into them, “*You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain*” (Exodus 20:7). Even today, Orthodox Jews refrain from using the word *Jehovah* in any matter.

It is interesting to note, among the many things which the religious Jews accused Jesus of was that He somehow misappropriated the sacred pronunciation of the name of Jehovah from the High Priest and thereby performed miracles. It seems that this was an effort on the part of the rabbis to account for the relationship between our Lord Jesus and His Heavenly Father, and His position as Mediator between God and man.

While the High Priest was in the Most Holy Place in the very presence of God, the people waited for him to reappear in terrible fear that his prolonged time in the Holy of Holies meant that God had not forgiven His people and had slain their unworthy High Priest. When the High Priest finally came out, the people sighed with relief that their service had been accepted and their sins forgiven.

A Shadow of the Reality

The Book of Hebrews gives a divine commentary and a deeper understanding of the High Priest’s role, the sacrifices, the rituals, and how they all pointed to Christ:

Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary. For a tent was constructed, the first one, in which were the lampstand, the table and the bread of the presence; this is called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a tent called the Holy of Holies. In it stood the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which there was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant, above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot speak now in detail.

Such preparations having been made, the priests go continually into the first tent to carry out their ritual duties, but only the high priest goes into the second, and he but once a year, and not without taking the blood that he offers for himself and for the sins committed unintentionally by the people.

By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the sanctuary has not yet been disclosed as long the first tent is still standing. This is a symbol of the present time, during which gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various baptisms, regulations for the body imposed until the time comes to set things right. But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!

(Hebrews 9:1-15)

As you can see, without the New Testament, the Old Testament is incomplete, a promise without fulfilment, a shadow without substance. All these sacrifices, like the Tabernacle and Temple themselves, were just a forecast of the perfect sacrifice offered and fulfilled in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He is now our Atonement and perfect Mediator between God and man. In Him all the verities of the Old Testament – the Temple, the High Priest, the offerings, gifts, and animal sacrifices – have been embodied and fulfilled.

It is He who offered Himself once and for all to bear the sins of many and “*Will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him*” (Hebrews 9:28). We who have been washed, forgiven, and redeemed by the blood of Christ should be eternally grateful, since we have been bought with such a great price.

Mystery of the Red Heifer Sacrifice

Another important Old Testament ritual worth mentioning involved the red heifer sacrifice described in detail in chapter 19 of the Book of Numbers. After being slaughtered with a large knife outside the camp by the young Levitical priest, the body of the red heifer was completely burned, together with cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet wool, in a large fire.

The ashes were to be placed in a clay vessel and deposited outside the camp in a clean place to be used for the waters of purification. The final few ashes that remained from the previous sacrifices were added to the new ashes to provide a sacred continuity.

After the Temple had been built in Jerusalem many centuries later, this unusual sacrifice of the red heifer was resumed until the destruction of the Second Temple by the Roman legions in 70 A.D. One aim of this sacrifice was to purify someone from the defilement

of death. The ashes and water produced the *waters of purification* necessary to purify people who had become ritually defiled by touching a dead corpse at a funeral.

Yet the red heifer sacrifice itself is paradoxical. While its aim was to ritually purify priests and sacred objects from spiritual defilement, resulting from contact with death, the young priest participating in the sacrifice of the red heifer himself became defiled (unclean) until the evening of the day of the sacrifice.

The Talmud declares that the nature of the sacrifice was so inscrutable that even King Solomon, with all his wisdom, completely despaired of learning the spiritual mystery behind it. When Solomon said: “*All this I have tested by wisdom; I said, ‘I am determined to be wise’ – but it was far from me*” (*Ecclesiastes 7:23*), the Jewish commentary known as the *Mishneh* claimed that he was alluding to his inability to understand the profound mystery and paradoxes connected with God’s commands given in Numbers chapter 19.

Apparently, Solomon could not understand how this sacrifice purified the un-pure and at the same time rendered impure the pure. The Apostle Paul gives us the answer. He says that during His atoning sacrifice for us on the Cross, Christ, “*Who knew no sin, became sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God*” (*2 Corinthians 5:21*).

The cedar wood used in the purification ceremony of the red heifer sacrifice points directly to the Cross of Christ and the scarlet thread to His suffering on our behalf. The hyssop symbolizes the faith of a Christian, because it was used in the Old Testament to apply the blood of the sacrifice (see *Exodus 12:22*). The Psalmist David prayed: “*Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow*” (*Psalms 51:7*).

The red heifer was a pure sacrifice, without blemish, and was the only animal to be sacrificed outside the camp or the walls of the

city. In an obvious parallel, Jesus, the Son of God, became the pure sacrifice for us, without spot or blemish, and was sacrificed outside the walls of Jerusalem:

For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured.

(Hebrews 13:11-14)

Here the writer of Hebrews points out that there is more to being taken out of the city gate than that of the sin offering. It also recalls the shame of ritual impurity shared by lepers and others who had to stay outside the camp of the Israelites, separated and isolated from the people.

In this way, the Jewish authorities tried to keep the unclean or disgraced persons away from the people as a whole. Jesus was executed by those who regarded Him in similar disgrace.

It is important to note the author of Hebrews exhorts those who claim to be followers of Jesus to go to Him outside the camp also. We must be there with Christ bearing the disgrace He bore if we truly belong to Him. Jesus Himself warned on several occasions about hiding our faith and face when He said:

Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciples.

(Luke 14:27)

Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

(Matthew 12:30)

Those who are ashamed of me and of my words of them the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and the holy angels.

(Luke 9:26-27)

Jesus died as a Man rejected by His own people, the religious leaders, the Gentiles, and even His family and friends, and was abused and despised by the brutal Roman government of that time. His true followers will never know the full joy and friendship that total commitment to Him brings unless they turn their backs on the security of keeping their faith to themselves. The Apostle Paul was well aware of this when he said:

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings, by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

(Philippians (3:10-11))

It is possible that some of the Jewish believers who had read this Letter were tempted to stay safely “within the camp,” that is to say, that they might have been tempted to keep quiet about their faith in Jesus as Israel’s Messiah. Therefore, Hebrews urges them, and us, to accept the cost of being a disciple and to identify with our Redeemer who identified with us in coming to die on our behalf outside the camp.

Substituting the Blood Sacrifice

Since the Jewish people have not had a Temple, priest or sacrifice since the destruction of Herod’s Temple in A.D. 70, rabbinical Judaism has made a consistent effort to water down the importance

of the blood sacrifice. In place of the atonement other substitutes have been added. For example, the Day of Atonement itself has been declared to make atonement for sinners, without the necessity of a sacrifice. Other substitutes include repentance, which includes reparation of wrong, and prayer, charity and fasting.

For one month before the Day of Atonement, special prayers known as *slihoth* are offered at midnight for forgiveness. Then in the afternoon before the Day of Atonement, a festival meal is consumed by the family in preparation for the fast.

On the solemn day a complete fast is observed, which excludes even the moistening of dry lips with water. This fast is to be observed by every Israelite from the age of thirteen upward, with the exception of those who are seriously ill.

Also, the suffering of oneself is considered a substitute for atonement, especially the suffering of the righteous. The Orthodox Jews of Eastern Europe used to observe the custom of inflicting on themselves thirty-nine stripes called *malkoth*. Here we see the striking similarity of these practices, and other rabbinical traditions, with those of Roman Catholicism.

Vain Attempts to Reach God

In spite of all the man-made atoning sacrifices mentioned above, there is absolutely no assurance of the forgiveness of sins for those who practice them. Only the Son of God can give this assurance – to those who come to Him in faith. Like many other counterfeit religions, Talmudic Judaism could be best summed up as man's attempt to justify himself by his own effort without the atonement made by a Saviour, something that cannot be done.

The rabbis have tried hard to find a substitute for Christ and unscriptural, so-called Christianity is trying hard even today. But

the result is only a dead religion that increases the abyss between God and those who practice it, leaving them in legalistic bondage.

Hopes of Jew and Gentile Converge

The Yom Kippur solemnities end by the blowing of the Shofar that is believed to herald the coming of Messiah. Here the hope of Jews and Christians converge. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ know that the Messiah has already come and brought rich blessings to the whole world. We now look for His Second Coming when He will come to rescue His Bride from the Great Tribulation that is coming on the whole Earth (see *1Thessalonians 1:10, 4:16-17; Revelation 3:10*).

THE FEAST OF BOOTHS

Five days after Yom Kippur comes **Succoth** – the **Feast of Booths**, also called **Tabernacles** or **Ingathering**. Succoth means a *temporary dwelling place* in Hebrew. This celebration begins on the fifteenth day of *Tishri*, the seventh month according to the Bible calendar, and lasts for eight days, although the eight day was not originally considered a part of the Feast of Tabernacles, but as a culmination of the annual cycle of Feasts. Moses wrote in the Old Testament:

Now in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall keep the festival of the LORD, lasting seven days; a complete rest on the first day, and complete rest on the eighth day. On the first day you shall take the fruit of majestic trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days.

You shall keep it as a festival to the LORD seven days in the year; you shall keep it in the seventh month as a statute forever throughout your generations. You shall live in booths for seven days; all that are citizens in Israel shall live in booths, so that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

(Leviticus 23:39-44)

The first day consisted of a holy convocation or large assembly. It was also considered as a Sabbath day in which no work was to be carried out. Burnt offerings and sacrifices were to be made daily and the eighth day, which was also considered a Sabbath day, concluded with a solemn assembly. Then the cycle of the Autumn holidays was finished with the *Simchat Torah*, the rejoicing over the Law.

The Historical Nature of Booths

The Feast of Booths is one of the three great occasions upon which God commanded the children of Israel to assemble in the Temple at Jerusalem to present their sacrifices and offerings. The Feast of Tabernacles is first mentioned in *Exodus 23:16* as the Feast of Ingathering and, historically speaking, it is mainly agricultural in character. It marked the end of Israel's agricultural season; when the harvest had been brought in, not only from the fields, but from the orchards and the groves also.

Not only were the barns now completely full; God commanded that hearts too were to be full of joy and praise for His blessings. So Tabernacles is Israel's thanksgiving festival, *the Feast*, as the Apostle John calls it (*John 7:37*).

Made to Remember

Apart from its agricultural nature, the Feast of Tabernacles was also spoken of in Leviticus 23 as a feast ordained by God to remind the children of Israel of the Lord's miraculous deliverance of their ancestors from Egypt, and their forty years of wilderness wandering when He made them to dwell in *booths* or *tents* (see *Exodus 16:16; Numbers 1:52; 9:17-23; Deuteronomy 1:32-33*). It was a statute to be observed forever throughout every generation.

For the last 3,500 years Jewish people all over the world have observed Succoth, in obedience to the prescription the Lord gave through Moses. They construct little booths with walls of plaited branches and thatched roofs. These little tabernacles were and are often constructed on rooftops, in courtyards and streets and even in the court of the Temple, where the Jewish people lived for the duration of the Feast.

For believers in Jesus our earthly bodies are temporary tents or tabernacles. This means our whole life is to be a life of rejoicing in the Lord and a celebration of the Feast of Succoth, while we wait for our new glorious bodies:

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, if indeed, when we have taken it off we will not be found naked.

For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

(2 Corinthians 5:1-6)

In chapter fourteen of the Book of Zechariah, which deals with the Second Coming of Jesus and His Millennial Reign on Earth, the Feast of Booths is mentioned as something that people of all nations will be required to observe. Thus, the statute that God proclaimed to be observed forever will still be observed during the Millennium:

Then all who survive of the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the festival of booths.

(Zechariah 14:16-17)

The Final Ingathering

The Feast of Tabernacles, like the other Jewish feasts, focuses not only on what God has done for His people in the past, but on what He will do in the future also. During the Feast of Tabernacles numerous sacrifices of bullocks, rams and goats were offered in the Temple at Jerusalem for a sin offering. On the first day of the Feast thirteen bullocks were offered, twelve the next day, eleven the third, diminishing every day until seven bullocks were offered on the seventh, making a total of seventy altogether (*Numbers 29:12-40*). This number of seventy bullocks was a sacrifice on behalf of the seventy nations of the world. The rabbis say it looked towards their conversion to the God of Israel and their being gathered under the Shekinah Glory.

This, in part, ties in with New Testament teaching and explains why it is also called the Feast of Ingathering; because, ultimately, people of all nations, those under the blood of Jesus, will enter into the Kingdom of God and the New Jerusalem.

Prophetic Nature of Temple Rituals

There are two very significant features that characterized the Temple service during the Feast of Booths. First, **the pouring of water** in the Temple each day, and also **the illumination** of the Temple, which involved the erecting of four enormous candelabra in the court of the women that transformed the Temple into a brilliant focus of light and lit up most of Jerusalem and its surroundings.

All through the seven days an appointed priest was sent to the Pool of Siloam accompanied by the people with a golden pitcher in his hand to bring water from the pool. Followed by dancers and musicians playing flutes, the priest would then lead the people in procession to the Temple, shaking their *lulabs*, a little bundle of leafy branches of willow and myrtle, bound with a golden thread. These represented the leafy shelters they had used on their journey to the Promised Land.

In their left hand the people would hold an *etrog*, a citrus fruit, which represented the good land into which the Lord had brought them.

When they arrived at the Temple, the High Priest would pour the water into a bowl or basin at the foot of the altar. Wine was also poured from another pitcher into the same basin. The significance of the pouring of water was threefold. First, it was a symbolic and ritual prayer for rain. Unless God answered their prayers in the coming months, there would be no produce and no celebration the next year.

Second, it was to remind everyone of the water God miraculously provided for the Israelites in the desert. Finally, the significance of the pouring of water was prophetic and Messianic in its hope; it looked toward the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Israel and the believers of all nations under the reign of the Messiah King.

Living Water from Within

The ritual of water pouring lasted six days and climaxed on the seventh day, the end of the Feast of Booths. This day was called *Hoshana Rabba*, the **Day of the Great Hosanna** and has a profound Messianic significance. The pouring of the water from the golden pitcher took place amid the blasts of trumpets and the singing of sacred music by the Levites, while the people, waving their palm branches, all sang the Hallel. The closing words of this Psalm read:

Save us, we beseech you, O LORD! O, LORD, We beseech you, give us success! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD. We bless you from the house of the LORD. The LORD is God, and he has given us light.

(Psalm 118:25-27)

It was from the words “*save us*” (*Hoshana in Hebrew*) that this day was named the Great Hosanna. It is a Messianic Psalm, a prayer for salvation through the coming of the Messiah. It is highly significant that on one occasion Jesus was greeted by the crowds waving palm branches and singing, “*Hosanna to the Son of David,*” which means “*save us Son of David*” (see *Matthew 21:9*).

It is even more significant that it was on this final day of the Feast, the Great Hosanna – amid the blasting of the trumpets by the priests, the pouring of water into the altar basin, the singing of Psalms by the Levites and the prayers of the people, “*Save us, we beseech you, O LORD*” – that the Lord Jesus stood in the Temple and “*cried out*” these words:

Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the Scripture has said, “Out of the

believers heart shall flow rivers of living water.” Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive, for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

(John 7:37-40)

John’s use of the words “*cried out*” in this verse speak of a shout that Jesus used to draw the attention of the crowd from the central event of Tabernacles to Himself. What our Saviour was saying through these words quoted above was: “I am the answer to your hope and prayers, and to the prayers of many generations of Jewish history. If anyone is thirsty let him come to *Me* and drink.”

In the following verse the Apostle John adds the note confirming that Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit who would be given to each believer at Pentecost, after the Lord had risen from the dead (see *Acts 2*). This Messianic claim of Christ was clearly understood by the people for, “*There was a division in the crowd because of him.*”

We said above the Feast of Tabernacles was also celebrated to remind the Jewish people how God provided water for the Israelites in the wilderness for forty years before their entrance into the Promised Land. Jesus here boldly called the people to Himself to drink and satisfy their deepest thirst, which was spiritual in nature. In the Old Testament God spoke through the Prophet Jeremiah and lamented:

For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and dug out cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that can hold no water.

(Jeremiah 2:13-14)

Sadly, modern men and women rush to fill the emptiness of their lives with a whole parade of stimulants and anti-depressants, only to find that they do not satisfy. These things are “*cracked cisterns*” that cannot hold water. But when we come to Christ and develop a relationship with Him, we are coming to a fountain of living water and will never thirst.

As Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, “*The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life*” (John 4:14). A living relationship with Jesus Christ will truly satisfy each thirsty soul and the water He gives will well up within and flow out of us to others.

Messiah Still Unknown

In modern times, on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, the Day of the Great Hosanna, the Jewish people observe the custom of striking the *Arba'ah*, the branches of the willow, three times in an effort to shed all the leaves, which represent sins. At this time special Messianic prayers are said, and with each falling leaf a sin is said to fall away from the one who prays.

The basic weakness here is that there is an awareness of sins plural, but an ignorance of sin – the essential drive in human beings toward evil and the sinfulness of our very nature. Sadly, Israel’s Messiah, Jesus Christ, who alone is able to bring forgiveness and change human nature, is still rejected by the Jewish people as a whole.

The True Light

As noted previously, another central feature of the Feast of Tabernacles was the fantastic illumination of the Temple in Jerusalem during this time of year. One commentator noted that the enormous size of these candlesticks can be seen from the fact that

their fuel reservoir contained four and a half gallons of oil to provide light for the night. It is said their wicks were made from the discarded robes of the priests which were plaited together and said to be the thickness of a man's thigh.

Historical records reveal that on the first night of Tabernacles there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect that light. "Men of piety and good works used to dance before them with burning torches in their hands, singing songs and praises, and countless Levites played harps, lyres, cymbals and trumpets and instruments of music" (Mishna Sukkah 5:2-3).

The light from these great candlesticks represented the glory of God which was seen by the Israelites as they travelled from Egypt towards the Promised Land. It appeared as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (*Exodus 13:21*). But when the Feast of Tabernacles ended, these great lights were extinguished. It was then, on the next day, that Jesus again stood among the people and proclaimed:

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.

(John 8:12)

This was an astonishing claim to make, even more so against the background of Tabernacles; the candelabra provided such powerful light that it was said you could not find a dark corner anywhere in Jerusalem during the Feast. Yet here Jesus was saying, "Why put up these candelabra to represent the glory of God, when I, the true light of the world and glory of God, am here among you?"

The Final Feast

Dear reader, as you can see, the powerful evidence presented so far bears witness to what we said in the opening lines of this book: that the Old Testament feasts are infused with profound spiritual and prophetic significance. They all foreshadowed many aspects of the Person and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To give you a quick recap: **Passover** prefigures His atoning death for sin; **First Fruits** His resurrection and the spiritual and physical resurrection of all believers; **Pentecost** corresponds to the giving of the Holy Spirit and the birth of His Church; **Trumpets** points to the Lord's Second Coming to judge the world and take His Bride (*Matthew 24:31; 1Corinthians 15:52; 1Thessalonians 4:16*); the **Day of Atonement** perfectly expresses the redemption that is in Christ Jesus and points to Israel's final cleansing (*Zechariah 12:10*).

Finally, **Tabernacles** points to the completion of Christ's Church through the final ingathering of those who are to be saved, both Jew and Gentile alike, at the end of the age. These will celebrate the greatest Feast of all: "*The Marriage Supper of the Lamb.*" My prayer is that you will be "*invited.*"

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready."

(Revelation 19:6-8)

Should Christians Observe these Holy Days?

It is very important that Christians, whether coming from a Jewish or Gentile background, do not get involved in unhealthy and legalistic practices associated with the celebration of the Old Testament feasts, or any other observance of the Law of Moses, as there are many warnings in the New Testament against doing this. Celebration of the biblical feasts is not a means for a Gentile or Jewish believer to get saved. It is through faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ that both Jew and Gentile have equal standing before God, and the observance of the Law of Moses does not give either one a spiritual advantage over the other.

It is absolutely clear that through the coming of the Messiah our relationship to the Torah was radically changed. Now, our King and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is to have centrality in everything we do, our fullness is found in Him rather than in the celebration of holy days or observing special seasons. The Apostle Paul is very explicit on this subject in his Letters. In his Epistle to the Galatians he wrote:

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified! The one thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard?

Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? Did you experience so much for nothing? – if it really was for nothing. Well then, does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?

(Galatians 3:1-6)

You are observing special days, and months, and seasons, and years. I am afraid that my work for you may have been wasted.

(Galatians 4:10-12)

The problem here was that the Galatian converts to Christianity thought they were required to observe the Law of Moses and observe special days and months and seasons and years. And worse than this, they believed that by doing so they would increase their spiritual standing before the Lord. Nothing could be further from the truth. Again, in his Epistle to the Colossians, Paul had the same thing in mind and addressed a related phenomenon:

Therefore, do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons or sabbaths. These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

(Colossians 2:16-18)

However, it has long been the practice for some Christians, especially Jewish, to celebrate the biblical holy days, as they believe celebration of them, or at least annual teaching of them, is a good way to understand and recover the Jewish roots of our faith that were lost since the time of Emperor Constantine.

Second, they believe celebration of these feasts can be a means by which they may witness to the unconverted Jews, as the Apostle points out in His Letter to the Corinthians:

For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's

law) so that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the Gospel, so that I might share in its blessings.

(1Corinthians 9:19-24)

To repeat a statement made earlier; it is true that without a firm knowledge of the historic background and meaning of the Old Testament feasts and rituals, we can easily miss the profound and prophetic significance that they point to.

In addition to that, we can also have difficulty in understanding many statements made by the New Testament writers, and the Lord Himself in the four Gospels.

For example, the Apostle Paul frequently made reference to the Jewish feasts in his Letters to the churches. In *1Corinthians 5:28* he pointed to the spiritual application of Passover, and in *1Corinthians 15:20* to First-Fruits, and so on.

It is also true that a Christian should take every opportunity to preach the Gospel to the unbelievers through the culture that they understand. However, we must remember there is a big difference between using the unbeliever's culture to preach the Gospel to them, and engaging in their culture as though it were the true Word of God, and teaching our fellow believers to do likewise. So, yes, let us love the unsaved, but not above righteousness. Let us not compromise the Word of God.

02

THE TABERNACLE AND WORSHIP VESSELS

The Tabernacle, or Tent of Meeting, was first set up at Mount Sinai by the Israelites after their escape from slavery in Egypt. About fifty chapters of the Bible relate to its construction, indicating its importance in the development of the religious life of Israel. The Tabernacle represented not only God's presence among His chosen people, but was also a place where His will was communicated to them.

It was at Mount Sinai, identified today with Jebel Musa, at the base of which stands St Catherine's Monastery, that Moses received the Law from God. When the children of Israel turned to worship the golden calf in the wilderness, Moses angrily shattered the Tablets of stone inscribed with the Ten Commandments.

Then, after the people repented of their sin, Moses climbed Mount Sinai a second time to intercede with God for them. The Lord renewed His Covenant with Israel, gave them a second copy of the Law and invited them to offer materials with which to construct the Tabernacle.

The Israelites, ashamed after the incident with the golden calf, gave so generously toward the building of the Tent that the giving had to be discouraged (*Exodus 35:20-24, 36:4-7*). The work went ahead under the direction of the expert craftsmen, Bezalel and Oholiab, (*Exodus 35:30, 36:2*), and was completed on the first day of the first Jewish month (*Abib* – March, April) in the second year after the Exodus from Egypt. The cycle of sacrifice and worship that God had laid down for the new sanctuary was now ready to begin (*Exodus 40:2*).

The Structure of the Tabernacle

The Tabernacle was a Tent which could easily be dismantled, transported and reassembled, and was suitable for the Israelites as they travelled through the wilderness. It was thirty cubits (about 13.5 metres) long, ten cubits (about 4.5 metres) wide, and ten cubits high.

The Tent stood within a curtained courtyard and was divided into two rooms: an outer room called the *Holy Place*, where only the priests were allowed to enter, and an inner room called the *Most Holy Place*, or *Holy of Holies*.

This room could be entered only by the High Priest once a year, on the Day of Atonement, when he sprinkled the blood of the sacrificed animal on the cover of the Ark of the Covenant for his own sins and the sins of the people.

These two areas, or rooms, were divided by a *curtain* or *veil* (meaning *separation* in Hebrew). The position of this *veil* made the Most Holy Place a perfect cube of about 4.5 metres, and the layers of overlapping material and attention given to covering the joins reveal that it was completely dark in the innermost shrine. God was surrounded by darkness, carefully isolated from any unauthorized spectator (see *Psalms 97:2*).

The Holy Place, the outer room of the Tabernacle, occupied an area of about 30 feet (9 metres) by 15 feet (4.5 metres), almost twice the area of the innermost shrine. It contained three pieces of furniture: a solid gold oil-fed lamp, which was the only source of light in this heavily curtained room; an altar on which incense was burnt; and a low table on which fresh loaves of bread were placed each Sabbath day.

Carefully Constructed

As the Sanctuary was intended to be a dwelling place for the Lord where He would meet with man on Earth, it was therefore constructed using extremely high quality materials and the very best of human skills. To underline its importance, the details of the Tabernacle are spelt out three times in the Book of Exodus. The specifications are recorded in Exodus chapter 26, its construction is described in *Exodus 36:8-38*, and its final erection in *Exodus 40:16-19*).

The pattern of the Tabernacle and its furnishings was given directly to Moses by God (*Exodus 25:8*), and to ensure that the pattern was followed correctly, Moses was often reminded to, “*Make them according to the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain*” (*Exodus 25:40; Hebrews 8:5*).

Before his death, Moses anticipated to the Israelites that once they had entered the Promised Land, and peace and security had been established, they were to build a national, permanent shrine as a place to worship God (*Deuteronomy 12:10-11*).

This came to pass in the days of King Solomon, when the First Temple was erected (*2 Samuel 7:10-13; 1 Kings 5:1-5*). The Tabernacle was thus a forerunner of the Temple and are closely linked both historically and by their similarity in construction.

Heavenly Treasures in Jars of Clay

The Tabernacle, the Temple, and their furnishings, have also a great symbolic significance. The New Testament emphasizes the fact that the Tabernacle is a symbol of the Church of Christ, a dwelling in which God now lives by His Holy Spirit (*Ephesians 2:20-22; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Peter 4:6*).

It is also a symbol of each believer in Christ, whose body is a temple of the Holy Spirit through the New Birth (*1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16*). Finally, the earthly Tabernacle is a symbol or pattern of the true dwelling place of God in heaven (*Hebrews 8:5-6, 9:11-13, 9:23-24; Revelations 13:6*).

God also gave to Moses specific instructions that dictated the fashioning of the sacred gold, silver and brass vessels that were to be used in the worship services in the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple; as well as the special garments to be worn by the priests. When King Solomon built the First Temple, he created a new set of vessels after the pattern given to Moses for the greatly expanded Temple worship services and rituals.

These garments and vessels of worship were all symbols and types of Jesus Christ and His ministry. They illustrate the atonement for sin that He was to accomplish for mankind during His earthly ministry, and His present and everlasting role as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary on our behalf (see *Hebrews 7:23-26, 9:23-28, 10:19-21*). Below is a short introduction to a few of them.

THE ALTAR OF SACRIFICE

(Exodus 27:1-8, 38:1-7)

The bronze altar of burnt offering, where burnt sacrifices were offered to God for sin, was immediately in view for anyone entering the court of the Tabernacle. According to the Law of Moses, this was the only place where sacrifices to the Lord could be made.

This beautiful altar stood in the courtyard in front of the sanctuary, probably halfway between the entrance and the Tabernacle itself (*Exodus 40:29*), reminding the people that God could not be approached except by the place of sacrifice.

The first altar of burnt offering for the Sanctuary in the wilderness was cast by Oholiab of the tribe of Dan. The second altar of burnt

offering, for the Temple of Solomon, was cast by a craftsman supplied by Hiram, King of Tyre (*1Kings 7:46*). And when the Jews returned from the Babylonian deportation in 586 B.C., they immediately built an altar for sacrifice prior to rebuilding the Second Temple.

At each top corner of the altar was a projecting triangular horn, possibly a symbol of the creatures. These horns could be used to tether the animals before sacrifice. An Israelite could also claim sanctuary by clinging to the horns of the altar, perhaps because he was symbolically offering himself in sacrifice to God, and so claiming protection (*1Kings 1:50*).

Without Spot or Blemish

On the Altar of Sacrifice the priest would offer an animal without blemish to be sacrificed for the sins of the people. By participating in the offering of sacrifice the people were acknowledging their sin and asking God to cover it, as demanded by the Law of Moses. The bronze altar is symbolic of Christ's Cross and the sacrifices a type or symbol of His body, which He freely offered as a whole burnt offering without blemish to God on our behalf (see *Hebrews 9:11-15*).

The Levite priests were responsible for maintaining the altar fire which was never to be allowed to go out (*Leviticus 6:1-3*). They were also not to let ashes build up at the bottom of the altar, but piled them up beside the altar. Later, they took them outside the camp or city.

THE LAVER OF CLEANSING *(Exodus 30:18-19, 38:8)*

This cleansing laver or basin was a brass vessel used to hold water for cleaning the hands and feet of the priests as they officiated during Temple services. Because their duties involved much handling of live and dead animals before and after each sacrifice, it was essential that they constantly washed their hands and feet so they would remain sanctified before entering the Tabernacle for service.

No specifications concerning the shape and size of the laver have survived, but it was probably round and quite large. Washing in the Bible was always done with running water and so the basin was probably supplied with taps from which the water could flow over the hands and feet of the priests.

Washed by the Word

This laver of washing has great prophetic significance for the Church today, as it points to the need for believers to be continually washed and sanctified by the water of life from the Word of God:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendour, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind – yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish.

(Ephesians 5:25-28)

Here we notice that it is not enduring tribulations and trials that sanctify and purify a believer, though they have their place, but rather it is the washing and sanctifying process of the daily spiritual

cleansing and renewing of the mind by the Word of God (see *Romans 12:2-3*).

Just as the priests of the Old Testament were purified by the water from the laver, Christians are daily purified by studying and submitting themselves and their conduct to the teaching of Scripture.

THE TABLE OF SHEWBREAD *(Exodus 25:23-30, 37:10-16)*

The portable Table of Shewbread, or the Table of the Bread of the Presence, was made of acacia wood overlaid with pure gold. Its size was three feet long, one and a half feet wide, and two and a half feet high, and had a five-inch-high golden crown border on top with four rings at the corners to allow the priests to carry it like the Ark on wooden staves overlaid with pure gold.

This Table was placed on the north, or right-hand side of the Holy Place facing the Lampstand (*Exodus 40:22*), and was accompanied by various pure gold vessels comprised of plates for the shewbread, dishes or spoons for the incense, and bowls and pitchers with a spout.

Each Sabbath twelve specially prepared loaves sprinkled with frankincense were placed by the Levites on this Table, in two piles of six each (see *Leviticus 24:5*), as an offering to the Lord. These loaves were replaced every Sabbath with fresh ones (*1Samuel 21:6*), prepared overnight by the Levites (*1Chronicles 9:32*), and were to be eaten solely by the priests in the sanctuary. According to the Jewish sages these cakes remained supernaturally fresh all weeklong because of the Divine Presence in the Tabernacle.

The Living Bread

The Bread of the Presence represents in type the offering of the Body of Christ which would be broken for us. As our Lord Himself said of the Passover bread on the night of the Last Supper, “*This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me*” (Luke 22:19).

The shewbread also symbolizes Christ as the Bread of Life who sustains every believer who receives Him as Lord (see *John 6:35-36, 48-52*).

THE GOLDEN LAMPSTAND **(Exodus 25:31-32)**

On the south (left) side of the Holy Place, opposite the Table of the Bread of the Presence, stood the seven-branched golden Lampstand or Candlestick (*Menorah* in Hebrew); the most impressive of the three pieces of furniture in this room.

For the lamps of the Golden Lampstand, only the best quality oil was used (*Leviticus 24:1-5*), to ensure that the light was as bright as possible (*Exodus 27:20*). This pure or clear oil was prepared from olives that had been cleansed of leaves, twigs and dust before being crushed and beaten.

When the Second Temple was recaptured from Antiochus Epiphanes, the Maccabees wanted to light the *Menorah*, the seven-branched golden candelabra. They searched the Temple Mount and discovered a small vial that had escaped destruction by the Syrian army.

This vial held only one day’s supply of the holy oil that was used to light the candelabra. According to Jewish tradition, God miraculously allowed this tiny amount of sacred oil to burn during

eight days of worship services. This allowed the Jews enough time to obtain new supplies of the purified oil to keep the Menorah lit. To this very day, Jews all over the world celebrate **Hanukkah** every year to acknowledge God's deliverance of Israel from their spiritual slavery in 165 B.C. Each day during the eight-day celebration, in late afternoon, one candle is lit, with another being lit on each successive night until the eighth night when all eight candles burn. Later, after the complete destruction of Herod's Temple by the Romans in A.D. 70, predicted by Jesus in the Gospels, the Candlestick was taken to Rome as booty. This event was recorded in a famous bas-relief sculpture on the Arch of Titus in Rome. The Golden Candlestick in the Tabernacle and Temple represented to Israel the Divine Light of God that manifested itself through the seven lamps; a symbol of God's perfection. Prophetically, it was also a type of Christ, whom the Apostle John announced as "*The true light which enlightens everyone...*" (John 1:9). And again, John says:

In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."

(John 1:4-6)

The Golden Candlestick also symbolized all believers of every age as a people called to be children of light in the world; a witness and example to unbelievers (*Matthew 5:14*).

THE ALTAR OF INCENSE *(Exodus 30:1-2)*

The Golden Altar of Incense occupied a central space in the Holy Place, opposite the Ark of the Covenant, but just outside the six-inch-thick veil that hid the Ark in the Holy of Holies, between the Table of the Bread of the Presence and the Lampstand (see *Exodus 40:15*).

This Altar consisted of a simple square box of acacia wood completely overlaid with pure gold. It had horns similar to those on the altar of sacrifice, and a golden moulding around the top on all four sides. The Altar of Incense was often called the Gold Altar (*Exodus 40:5*) to distinguish it from the bronze altar of sacrifice outside the Tabernacle door.

Every morning and evening the High Priest, when he came into the Holy Place to light the lamps of the Candelabra, was to burn a sweet-smelling incense before God that was manufactured according to a special recipe and only to be used in the Temple worship (*Exodus 30:34-36*).

God commanded Moses that it was to be burned as a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout all generations (*Exodus 30:8*). It is said that this incense created the most wonderful fragrance that it filled the whole of Jerusalem with its aroma, a reminder of the wonderful sweet smelling savour of the Holy Spirit, whose presence fills and changes our lives and makes us to bear fruit acceptable to God in Christ.

In the Song of Songs Jesus the Bridegroom commends this spiritual fruit brought about by His Spirit in the life of the believer in these terms:

How sweet is your love my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine and the fragrance of your oils than any spice.

(Song of Songs 4:10-11)

Prayers of the Saints

In the Book of Revelation John refers to the four living creatures that surround the throne of God, together with the twenty-four elders with harps and golden vials of incense which are said to be the prayers of the saints (*Revelation 5:8*).

Here our prayers are symbolized as fragrant incense as they rise to the Throne of Heaven. Again, in *Psalms 141:2* the sweet-smelling smoke from the burning incense rose to God as a pleasing aroma, symbolizing the prayers of the godly. Therefore, the fragrant incense smoke that always burned in the earthly Tabernacle or Temple was also a symbol of the believer's prayers of every generation coming before the throne of God.

THE DIVIDING CURTAIN ***(Exodus 26:31-35)***

God commanded Moses to set up a Curtain in the Tabernacle to separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, or Holy of Holies, where the Ark of the Covenant and its covering was placed. The curtain was hung on four posts of acacia wood standing in silver bases.

This curtain that divided the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place is highly prophetic in its meaning. It symbolized that before Christ died on the Cross for our sins there was no direct access for man to the presence of God (*Hebrews 9:6-13*). The Lord told Moses to

warn his brother Aaron not to come whenever he wanted into the sanctuary inside the curtain before the mercy seat, or else he would incur guilt and die (*Leviticus 16:2*). In Hebrews we read:

Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

(Hebrews 10:19-23)

The point the writer is trying to make here is that the atoning death of Christ removed the necessity for the separation and limited access between God and His people. For centuries the death of unblemished animals was required for sin. However, the fact that these sacrifices were repeated daily, and year after year, revealed that they could only cleanse a person temporarily and outwardly:

Otherwise would they not have ceased being offered, since the worshipers, cleansed once for all, would no longer have any consciousness of sin?

(Hebrews 10:2-3)

But when Christ the perfect Lamb of God offered Himself upon the Cross, His sacrifice was permanent and gives inner cleansing as well:

For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

(Hebrews 10:14)

Interestingly, in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, we learn that when Jesus gave up the Spirit and died, the curtain in the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. This again signalled the end of the Old Testament era of animal sacrifice and limited access to the presence of God. Believers could now come boldly to the throne of grace and find mercy and help in time of need (*Hebrews 4:16, 7:25, 10:19-23*). Amen. What a new and wonderful way of approaching God that our Blessed Saviour has provided for us!

03

THE PSALMS AND THE PROPHETS

As we said in the opening words of this book, the Old Testament, from the Book of Genesis through to the Book of Malachi, contains hundreds of very specific references to the coming Messiah, who God was to send into the world as Saviour and Judge of all mankind. These prophecies were all accurately foretold over a thousand-year period by the ancient Jewish Prophets, who lived in widely separated communities, hundreds of years before our Lord was even born. Even more remarkably, it has been calculated that twenty-nine of these ancient Messianic prophecies were fulfilled in the final twenty-four hours of Christ's life alone.

In this chapter we will examine just a few of these remarkable prophecies, and the evidence for their precise fulfilment in Jesus Christ of Nazareth, which proves beyond all doubt to any unbiased observer that He is the promised Messiah, the Son of God. We will also examine the possibility of these individual predictions being fulfilled on purpose. All the prophecies listed below were fulfilled by Jesus at His first appearance.

MESSIAH WOULD BE BORN OF A VIRGIN

Prophecy:

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; Behold a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel.

(Isaiah 7:14)

Fulfilment:

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary... Then the angel said to her, do not be afraid Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a son.

(Luke 1:26, 30-32)

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel – which means, God with us."

(Matthew 1:22-24)

The very accusation with which the religious establishment condemned Jesus to death – that He claimed to be the Son of God and therefore equal to the Father – was the fundamental credential of Israel's Messiah. Throughout the Old Testament the Hebrew Prophets made it abundantly clear that in order to redeem His people the Messiah would have to be God Himself; born upon this Earth as a Man through a Virgin Birth. And that He would have to be crucified, rise from the dead and go back to heaven from whence He came.

The prophecy of Isaiah quoted above could not have stated it more clearly. The name Immanuel, God with us, does not mean with us in a general way, like on our side, but personally present. Therefore, naming this Child Immanuel could only mean that He was God come as a Man.

Isaiah makes another astonishing statement of this kind further on. He says that the child to be born to us; to rule upon the throne of David and establish everlasting peace would be named, "*Wonderful*

Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6-7). In this prophecy, 730 B.C., all the attributes of the Holy Trinity are given. This is how Jesus was able to say to His disciples, “He who has seen me has seen the Father. I and the Father are one” (John 14:9).

The divine Son-ship of the Messiah is given again in the Second Psalm which reads:

I will tell of the decree of the Lord. He said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.”

(Psalm 2:7-8)

And again, in *Psalm 110*, written 1000 years before it was fulfilled, we see several remarkable statements about the Messiah’s divinity:

The Lord says to my lord, “sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.”

(Psalm 110:1-2)

This Psalm clearly states that Jesus Christ is Lord who sat at the right hand of God when He ascended into heaven after His resurrection. It also states that Jesus is King David’s Lord, implying that He is co-equal with the Father, Jehovah. The question Jesus put to the religious leaders of His day defeats the so-called theologians of our day, who water down these prophecies and try to make them refer to David and his kingdom:

What do you think of the messiah? Whose son is he? They said to him, “The son of David.” He said to them, “How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord?”

(Matthew 22:42-44)

Jesus' question to the Jewish authorities was like this: "If David calls the Messiah his Lord, in what way is the Messiah David's Son?" It can only be explained through the incarnation. The pre-existing Christ took on flesh by the Virgin Birth and became Man. That is why David in Psalm 40 (cited by author of Hebrews) speaks the following words given him by the Spirit of Jesus before the incarnation:

Sacrifice and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, "See, God, I have come to do your will, O God, in the scroll of the book it is written of me."

(Hebrews 10:5-8)

You may have noticed in the original version of this Psalm that the second line is not so clear. A marginal note may say, "meaning unknown." A comment on the original Hebrew version will tell you that the Hebrew here has got a little mixed up, as the translators did not fully know what the sentence was. Fortunately, the New Testament writer of the Book of Hebrews preserved the original text for us: "*A body you have prepared for me.*"

In this Psalm the eternal Spirit of Jesus is saying that when He would come into the world, God would supply Him with a Body to be sacrificed for sin on the Cross.

One thousand years before our Lord Jesus was born the Holy Spirit showed King David that the animal sacrifices provided by the Law of Moses were only a prophetic symbol of the perfect atoning sacrifice that Jesus would make. Complete sacrifice for sins could be made only by a Person who was sinless, yet a Man, and who was also Eternal, and therefore a God-Man.

But how can we be sure that the words, "*A body you have prepared for me,*" were not added after this prophecy was fulfilled in Christ?

Because these words were actually in the Greek translation of the Old Testament made 280 years before Christ was born and are still in the Greek Septuagint today. Furthermore, the copies of the Dead Sea Scrolls have confirmed it. In them was found the missing words of *Psalm 40*.

The next words of this Psalm reveal the Lord Jesus had been foretold in the Old Testament even before David penned His prophecies of the coming Messiah. It says, “*In the scroll of the book it is written of me.*” Here David is speaking of the earlier parts of the Bible written up to that time. God told Moses that the king was to have a copy of these and meditate on them regularly, which David did.

Another example of the Trinity in the Old Testament comes again from the Book of Isaiah which says:

Draw near to me, hear this! From the beginning I have not spoken in secret, from the time it came to be I have been there. And now the Lord has sent me and his Spirit.

(Isaiah 48:16-17)

The One speaking in this passage is obviously the Lord God, who has existed and spoken from the beginning of time and revealed Himself to man. Yet in the above words He says, “*The Lord has sent me and His Spirit.*” Here it is obvious that three distinct Persons are presented as God. God the Son was sent by God the Father and His Holy Spirit. The Apostle John refers to the same event with the addition of a New Testament commentary in the following words:

And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world.

(1John 4:14)

In Zechariah chapter twelve we find yet another astounding example. Speaking through His Prophet the Lord says:

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

(Zechariah 12:10-11)

Notice the way the Lord speaks here. He says “*they shall look upon me*” and “*mourn for Him.*” The pronouns *me* and *him* refer to two individuals yet appear to be the same Person. In the Hebrew the word *pierced* means pierced to death by sword or spear. But when and how was God pierced?

The answer is clear and undeniable. It is given in the prophecies we have examined above concerning a virgin-born Son who would be the “*Everlasting Father*” Himself.

We will examine many other examples of Jesus’ divinity in the following pages of this chapter, but I will leave you with one more obvious example from the Book of Genesis. God the Father made the following statement to Satan when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden:

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel.

(Genesis 3:15)

Notice in this passage that the woman is emphasized and not the man. This appears quite unusual until you see the Messiah was conceived not through the union of a man and woman, but by the power of the Holy Spirit:

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law.

(Galatians 4:4)

Denials of the Virgin Birth

Some liberal critics have tried to deny the significance of Isaiah's prophecy about the Virgin Birth by suggesting that the word *almah*, translated as *young woman* or *virgin*, does not necessarily imply a virgin as we would use the term today. While it is true that the word *almah* does not primarily and solely refer to the virginal sexual status of a girl, it does, however, refer to a young unmarried woman.

In Hebrew, the word *virgin* is denoted by two words: *bethulah*, meaning a virgin maiden, and *almah*, meaning a young woman of marriageable age. Though it is true that *almah* is not the common word for a virgin, its employment in Scripture always denotes virginity. There is absolutely no place among the occurrences of the word *almah* in the Old Testament where it is used of a woman who was not a virgin.

Moreover, the definition of *almah* as a young unmarried girl obviously implies that the unmarried girl in question has not engaged in sexual relations, otherwise the Prophet would have used another word to refer to an immoral woman.

Furthermore, the sign of the Virgin Birth came at a very traumatic period of Judah's history. King Rezin of Syria and King Pekah of Israel's northern kingdom were raging war against Jerusalem to overtake the city.

Isaiah met the unrighteous King Ahaz to assure him that God would deliver Jerusalem, and to warn him against any alliance with the power-hungry Assyrians. As proof that Isaiah was a true Prophet, and that God had the power to deliver Judah, Ahaz was told to ask for a sign to confirm God's message:

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, “Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test.”

(Isaiah 7:10-13)

Ahaz refused the sign from God because of the political implications involved and because of his unbelieving heart. After rebuking him, the Prophet Isaiah continued his message to the house of David:

Hear ye now, O house of David! Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

(Isaiah 7:13-15)

In this context, the sign of the birth of a child to an *almah* should be understood as a highly unusual event for the nation of Israel; it was to be an attesting miracle that would confirm God’s message. If it is true that Isaiah’s prophecy merely predicted that a young unmarried girl would give birth to a child through normal sexual relations, in what way would such a common event as a woman having a child out of wedlock serve as a miraculous sign to the house of David?

Obviously, the sign refers to a supernatural Virgin Birth, as the New Testament writers also confirm. A woman becoming pregnant through natural sexual intercourse could not possibly fit the criteria for a miraculous sign.

It is also noteworthy that the Hebrew scholars who translated the Old Testament into the Greek Septuagint chose to translate the word *almah* into the Greek word *parthenos*, which clearly indicates a virgin. Centuries before the prophecy of Christ’s birth was

fulfilled, or the disciples wrote the Gospels, these Jewish scribes clearly understood that Isaiah's prophecy declared that the Messiah would be born of a virgin.

More Objections

Some have opposed this conclusion arguing that the prophecy was to be a sign from God to Ahaz indicating the nearness of the conquest of both the northern and southern kingdoms by the Assyrians. They conclude that since the birth of this child was to be a sign to Ahaz, it is only natural to conclude that the birth took place during his reign.

While this view may seem reasonable to some, it must adapt an understanding of the word *almah* that does not require it to include virginity. But we have already seen the evidence in Isaiah's prophecy clearly shows that *almah* means a young virgin woman of marriageable age, and not simply a young woman. If some want to adhere to this position, they must come up with two virgin births in history; one during Ahaz's time and the other identified with Jesus' mother, Mary.

Further, the sign that God proposed is not evidently directed to King Ahaz, who rejected the first offer, but to "*you*" plural, meaning the Davidic kings who would follow him. Ahaz was afraid of the extinction of the Davidic Dynasty and his displacement by a Syrian pretender.

The prophecy was to demonstrate to Ahaz and his descendants that the Davidic kingly line would survive them. The longer the time needed to fulfil the promise to the Davidic house, the longer the dynasty would be in existence.

Also, within the larger context of the prophetic utterances of Isaiah, the Child to come from the womb of the virgin had to be a God-

Man, and not simply any man. No other person in history can fit this description except Jesus of Nazareth (*Isaiah 9:6-8, 11:1-4*).

The Trinity in the New Testament

As we have powerfully demonstrated above, according to the Old Testament Prophets, Israel's promised Messiah could be no less than God Himself. Yet in total ignorance to their own Scriptures the religious establishment of Jesus' day, and to this very day, insisted that the Messiah, though a great Man, would be no less than a human being.

In like manner, many modern cults today that call themselves Christians totally deny the divinity of Christ. They interpret His words, "*I and the Father are one,*" to mean one in purpose, goal or interest. However, Jesus' statements clearly intended one in essence, affirmations for which He was also condemned to death by the religious leaders.

Groups like the *Way International*, *Christian Science*, the *Jehovah Witnesses* and the *Mormons* are among those who oppose the doctrine of the Trinity as something pagan, unreasonable and of the devil. The Jehovah Witnesses make Jesus Christ out to be a mere creation of Jehovah God, who earned His own salvation and immortality, and the Holy Spirit as God's impersonal force by means of which He carries out His holy will.

In a similar fashion, the Mormons maintain that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not immortal, but were individual spirit-men created by a sexual union of their parent deities, each of whom then later evolved into Godhood. Therefore, Mormonism totally rejects the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and teach *tri-theism* – a belief in three separate gods.

While it is true to say that the word *Trinity* does not appear anywhere in Scripture, it is, as partly demonstrated above,

everywhere presupposed. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are so closely tied together throughout the whole Bible that to deny the Trinity would make some biblical passages very difficult, if not impossible, to understand. Consider the following New Testament examples:

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

(1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

I urge you brothers by our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.

(Romans 15:30)

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

(Matthew 28:19)

But you dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

(Jude 1:20-22)

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

(2 Corinthians 13:14)

But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but

because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

(Titus 3:4-7)

For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

(Ephesians 2:18)

It is of vital importance for each individual to understand what the Scriptures teach concerning the Trinity, as failure to do so can lead to rejection of the One true God and worship of a false deity. The Bible teaches a monotheistic view; that there is One true God, and that this One true God exists eternally as three Persons:

There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

(Ephesians 4:4-7)

The doctrine of the tri-unity of God was defended from the earliest times as Christian teachers sought to safeguard the unity of God against *tri-theism*, and to also maintain the respective deity of all three Persons. This can be seen from the writings of the Church Fathers and the historic creeds. From as early as the 200 A.D. written discourses on the Trinity had already begun to appear. Contrary to what some liberal theologians and religious cults teach, there have always been three Persons in the eternal Trinity, each of whom is eternally divine. One or more of the Persons did not come into being at a point in time, nor at some point in time did one of them become divine.

There has never been any change in the essential divine nature of the triune God, even though the function of one member may for a time be subordinate to one or both of the other members. However, this does not mean that He is in anyway inferior in essence. When the Second Person of the Trinity incarnated and became a Man, He did not become less than the Father, although, functionally, He did become subordinate.

And even though one member of the Trinity may have a more prominent part in a specific action or role, such as creating or redeeming, all three Persons are still involved. Therefore, the Bible often substitutes or includes a specific member of the Trinity in events where the term God is used. To further illustrate the Trinity is taught in the New Testament, try to answer the following questions without reaching that conclusion.

Who Sanctifies Man?

Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ.

(Jude 1:1)

Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood.

(Hebrews 13:12)

To the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ.

(1Peter 1:1-3)

Who Raised Jesus from the Dead?

This man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, who you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death...

(Acts 2:23-24b)

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

(John 2:19-22)

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

(Romans 8:11-12)

Who Does the Bible Say Is God?

One God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

(Ephesians 4:6-7)

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited but emptied himself taking the form of a slave.

(Philippians 2:5-8)

While we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

(Titus 2:13)

“Ananias” Peter asked, “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, were not the proceeds at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You did not lie to us but to God.”

(Acts 5:3-5)

Who Created the World?

And to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things.

(Ephesians 3:9-10)

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for by him all things in heaven and on earth were created.

(Colossians 1:15-16)

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

(Genesis 1:1-3)

Why a Virgin Birth Was Necessary

Since the Garden of Eden all humanity has been contaminated through the original sin of Adam. In his Letter to the Romans Paul wrote:

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned.

(Romans 5:12-13)

In other words, the entire human race has been effected through the original sin of Adam and we have all inherited his sin nature. This being so, it was necessary that our Redeemer be totally free from that contamination in order to offer Himself as a perfect sin sacrifice on our behalf. This would not have been possible unless Jesus had been supernaturally conceived through the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ was born under the dispensation of the Old Testament Law and was the only Man who ever kept that Law flawlessly (*Matthew 5:17*). Although He was already righteous and perfect before He became a human being, Jesus came to Earth and earned for us sinners the righteousness that comes from the Law through being perfect. He then bore the curse and punishment that we should have received for breaking that Law.

Jesus literally became our substitute on the Cross. Here is the important point: the death of a sinner could not be efficacious for other sinners. The sacrifice had to be someone sinless who had shared our humanity and been subject to all the temptations we experience.

MESSIAH WOULD BE THE SON OF GOD

Prophecy:

*I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me,
“You are my son; today I have begotten you.”*

(Psalm 2:7-8)

Fulfilment:

*And a voice from heaven said: “This is my Son the beloved,
with whom I am well pleased.”*

(Matthew 3:17)

MESSIAH PREEXISTED

Prophecy:

But as for you Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you one will go forth for me to be a ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.

(Micah 5:2-3)

Fulfilment:

And he is before all things, and in him all things consist.

(Colossians 1:17-18)

Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, before Abraham was, I Am."

(John 8:58-59)

HE WOULD BE THE SEED OF ABRAHAM

Prophecy:

In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.

(Genesis 22:18)

Fulfilment:

The book of genealogy of Jesus Christ the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.

(Matthew 1:1-2)

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed”, meaning one person, who is Christ.

(Galatians 3:16)

MESSIAH WOULD BE SON OF ISAAC

Prophecy:

Then God said, “Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.”

(Genesis 17:19)

It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.

(Genesis 21:12)

Fulfilment:

Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers... and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

(Matthew 1:2-3, 16)

Jesus... Son of Judah, son of Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham...

(Luke 3:23a, 34)

HE WOULD BE SON OF JACOB

Prophecy:

I see him, but not now, I behold him, but not near, a star shall come forth from Jacob, and a scepter shall rise from Israel, and shall crush through the forehead of Moab, and tear down all the sons of Sheth.

(Numbers 24:17)

Fulfilment:

Jesus... Son of Judah, son of Jacob, son of Isaac...

(Luke 3:23a, 34)

HE WOULD BE OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH

Prophecy:

The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the rulers staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.

(Genesis 49:10)

Fulfilment:

Jesus... Son of Judah...

(Luke 3:23a, 34)

For it is evident, that our Lord arose from Judah...

(Hebrews 7:14)

The dictionary describes the word sceptre as a gold stick covered with precious stones carried by a king or queen. The word that is translated *sceptre* in the above passage means *tribal staff* or *tribal identity*. The tribal staff, or royal authority, of Judah was not to pass away before *He* (*Shiloh*, in the King James version) comes to whom it belongs.

For many centuries, Jewish and Christian commentators alike have interpreted the word *Shiloh* to be a name for the Messiah. According to the above prophecy in Genesis 49, and to the Jews in Jesus' time, two important signs were to take place soon after the advent of the Messiah. First, the removal of the sceptre or royal identity of Judah, and then suppression of her judicial power.

The Sanhedrin Court or Council held all legislative and judicial powers from the time of the Exodus from Egypt until the Babylonian army took away Israel's sovereignty and burned the First Temple in 586 B.C.

Yet even though Judah was deprived of her national sovereignty during that seventy-year period, she never lost her tribal staff or identity. Israel still possessed her own lawgivers or judges even while in captivity (see *Ezra 1:5, 8*). And when the Jewish exiles returned from Babylon seventy years later, Ezra reinstated the Great Sanhedrin to provide leadership and guidance for the people, which remained intact until the days of Christ.

However, the first visible sign of the removal of the sceptre of Judah came about when Herod the Great, a foreign Edomite with no royal Jewish blood, succeeded the Maccabean princes, who belonged to the tribe of Levi and were the last Jewish kings to have their reign in Jerusalem. Shortly after, twenty-three years before the trial of Christ, the legal power of the Sanhedrin was greatly restricted and involved the loss of power for the Jewish authorities to pass the death sentence.

According to the Jewish historian Josephus, an eye-witness of that period, the legal power of the Sanhedrin, which involved the loss of power to pronounce the death sentence, occurred after the deposition of Archelaus, the son and successor of Herod, in A.D. 11. The procurators, who administered in the Augustus name, took the supreme power of the Sanhedrin away so they could exercise the *jus gladii* themselves, which is the sovereign right over the life and death sentences.

In fact, all the nations that were subdued by the Roman Empire were deprived of their ability to pronounce capital sentences. We can see an example of this in *John 18:31*. The Sanhedrin retained only such rights as excommunication (*John 9:22*), imprisonment (*Acts 5:17, 18*), and corporal punishment (*Acts 16:22*).

Again, Josephus bears witness not only to the Sanhedrin's loss of power to carry out the death sentence, but of their violation of the Roman authorities in this regard. In A.J., Book 20, chapter 9 we read:

After the death of the procurator Festus, when Albinus was about to succeed him, the high priest Ananus considered it a favourable opportunity to assemble the Sanhedrin. He therefore caused James the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, and several others to appear before the hastily assembled council, and pronounced upon them the sentence of death by stoning. All the wise men and strict observers of the law who were at Jerusalem expressed their disapprobation of this act...

Some even went to Albinus himself, who had departed to Alexandria, to bring this breach of the law under his observation, and to inform him that Ananus had acted

illegally in assembling the Sanhedrin without the Roman authority.

HE WOULD BE OF THE FAMILY LINE OF JESSE

Prophecy:

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of council and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth.

(Isaiah 11:1-4c)

Fulfilment:

And Jesse begot David the king... and Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.

(Matthew 1:6, 16)

Jesus... Son of Jesse...

(Luke 3:23, 32)

The *Branch* was another name for the promised Messiah. It is figurative language and depicts Jesse as the stem of a tree, and the *Shoot* or *Branch* as someone from his lineage.

It is amazing that these prophecies concerning the Branch were foretold in 759 B.C., when the occupants of King David's throne were still flourishing as a prosperous royal power. It was in the year

that King Uzziah died that Isaiah was first told that David's tree would become a stump when it was felled, but that a Holy Seed would come out of that stump (see *Isaiah 6:13*). 156 years later God speaks again of the Branch to the Prophet Jeremiah, when the royal tree of David had just been savagely sawn down by Babylon:

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: The Lord is our righteousness.

(Jeremiah 23:5-7)

In spite of God's promise to King David that his throne would be forever, it looked as if the royal tree had been completely sawn down to the roots. Only the stump remained in the dry ground from the time King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Judah.

From the Book of Zechariah we learn that even after the exiles had returned home to Jerusalem from Babylon there is still no king on David's throne; a descendant of his named Zerubbabel is made only governor.

Yet Mary's lineage was intact to produce a descendant for King David. For God says: "*I am going to bring my servant the Branch... and I will remove the guilt of this land in a single day*" (*Zechariah 3:8c, 9b*). In *Zechariah 6:12-14* it is also emphasized that the Man whose name is the Branch will be both Priest and King. Furthermore, Jesus would never have been born in Bethlehem had not Joseph's descent also been from the house of David.

MESSIAH WOULD BE OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID

Prophecy:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he 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. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

(Isaiah 9:6-8)

Fulfilment:

Jesus...Son of David...

(Luke 3:23a, 31)

It is interesting to note that Christ is the only individual to have ever claimed to have fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies concerning the promised Messiah, who would come to bear the sin of His people and reign forever on the throne of David.

Moreover, the genealogies recorded in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke reveal that Jesus was the only Person who could prove by the genealogical records kept in the Temple that He was of the royal lineage of King David. Since the destruction of the Temple and its records in A.D. 70, it would be impossible for anyone else to ever prove their claim to be the Messiah based on their genealogical descent from David, the son of Jesse.

MESSIAH WOULD BE BORN IN BETHLEHEM

Prophecy:

But as for you Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you one will go forth for me to be a ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.

(Micah 5:2-3)

Fulfilment:

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem.

(Matthew 2:1)

A STAR WOULD ANNOUNCE HIS BIRTH

Prophecy:

I see him but not now; I behold him, but not near, a star will come forth from Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise from Israel, and shall crush through the forehead of Moab, and tear down all the sons of Sheth.

(Numbers 24:17)

Fulfilment:

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, wise men came from the East to Jerusalem, saying, where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East and have come to worship him.

(Matthew 2:1-3)

Many Bible commentators feel that the magi's comments reflect a knowledge of Balaam's prophecy concerning the star that would come forth from Jacob.

MESSIAH WOULD BE PRESENTED WITH GIFTS

Prophecy:

The kings of Tarshish and of distant shores will bring tribute to him, the kings of Sheba and Seba will present him gifts.

(Psalm 72:10)

Fulfilment

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?..." On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and myrrh.

(Matthew 2:1-2b, 11-12)

HEROD WOULD KILL THE CHILDREN

Prophecy:

Thus says the Lord, "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachael is weeping for her children, because they are no more."

(Jeremiah 31:15-16)

Fulfilment:

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its environs, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the magi.

(Matthew 2:16-17)

MESSIAH WOULD BE A JUDGE

Prophecy:

For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our King, it is He who will save us.

(Isaiah 33:22)

Fulfilment:

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge.

(2 Timothy 4:1-2)

He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.

(Acts 10:42)

MESSIAH WOULD BE A PROPHET

Prophecy:

I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

(Deuteronomy 18:18-19)

Fulfilment:

And the multitudes were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.”

(Matthew 21:11)

HE WOULD BE ANOINTED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Prophecy:

The spirit of the Lord will rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

(Isaiah 11:2-3)

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me.

(Isaiah 61:1a)

Fulfilment:

After being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God, descending as a dove, and coming upon him, and behold a voice out of the heavens, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

(Matthew 3:16-17)

He stood up to read and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me...” Then he began to say to them, “This scripture today has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

(Luke 4:17-18b, 21)

God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.

(Acts 10:38a)

HE WOULD BE PRECEDED BY A MESSENGER

Prophecy:

See I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple.

(Malachi 3:1a)

A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness, make smooth in the desert a highway for our God."

(Isaiah 40:3-4)

Fulfilment:

What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes I tell you and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, "See I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you."

(Matthew 11:9-11)

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness; prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

(Matthew 3:1-4)

HIS MINISTRY WOULD INCLUDE MIRACLES

Prophecy:

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped, then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

(Isaiah 35:5-6b)

Fulfilment:

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness.

(Matthew 9:35-36)

MESSIAH WOULD BE CALLED IMMANUEL

Prophecy:

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; Behold a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel.

(Isaiah 7:14-15)

Fulfilment:

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet; “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel – which means, God with us.”

(Matthew 1:22-24)

MESSIAH WOULD BE A PRIEST

Prophecy:

The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, you are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

(Psalm 110:4-5)

Fulfilment:

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

(Hebrews 5:7-11)

We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf has entered, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

(Hebrews 6:19-20)

But he holds his priesthood permanently because he continues forever.

(Hebrews 7:24)

MESSIAH WILL TEACH THROUGH PARABLES

Prophecy:

I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old.

(Psalm 78:2)

Fulfilment:

All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables, and without a parable he did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world."

(Matthew 13:34-35)

HE WILL HAVE GREAT ZEAL FOR GOD

Prophecy:

Because zeal for your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.

(Psalm 69:9)

Fulfilment:

Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And he found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business. When he had made a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. And he said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make my Father's house a house of merchandise!" Then his disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house has eaten me up."

(John 2:13-17)

HIS MINISTRY WILL BEGIN IN GALILEE

Prophecy:

But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times he treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on he shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.

(Isaiah 9:1)

Fulfilment:

Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he departed to Galilee. And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned."

(Matthew 4:12-17)

HE WILL BE A STUMBLING STONE TO THE JEWS

Prophecy:

The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

(Psalm 118:22)

See I am laying in Zion a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation. One who trusts will not panic.

(Isaiah 28:16b-17)

He will become a sanctuary, a stone one strikes against, for both houses of Israel he will become a rock one stumbles over, a trap and a snare for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

(Isaiah 8:14-15)

Fulfilment:

For it stands in scripture: “See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” To you then who believe, he is precious, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner,” and, “A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

(1Peter 2:6-9)

But Israel, who did strive for the righteousness that is based on the law, did not succeed in fulfilling that law. Why not? Because they did not strive for it on the basis of faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written, “See I am laying in Zion a stone that will make people stumble, a rock that will make them fall, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

(Romans 9:31-33)

MESSIAH WILL BE A LIGHT TO THE GENTILES

Prophecy:

It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

(Isaiah 49:6b-7)

Fulfilment:

The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.

(Matthew 4:16-17)

A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles and glory of your people Israel.

(Luke 2:32-33)

HE WILL ENTER JERUSALEM ON A DONKEY

Prophecy:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; he is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

(Zechariah 9:9-10)

Fulfilment:

Now when they drew near Jerusalem and came to Bethphage at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to

them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘the Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.”

All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet saying; “Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold your king is coming to you, lowly and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.” So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set him on them.

(Matthew 21:1-8)

MESSIAH WILL BE BETRAYED BY A FRIEND

Prophecy:

Even my close friend, in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.

(Psalm 41:9)

Fulfilment:

I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but that scripture might be fulfilled, “He who eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me.” Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He.

(John 13:18-20)

Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him...

(Matthew 10:4)

BETRAYED FOR THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER

Prophecy:

And I said to them, “If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!” So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages.

(Zechariah 11:12-13)

Fulfilment:

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver him to you?” And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

(Matthew 26:14-17)

THE MONEY GIVEN FOR A POTTER’S FIELD

Prophecy:

So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the Lord.

(Zechariah 11:13b-14)

Fulfilment:

When Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priest and the elders. He said, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood,” but they said, “What is that to us? See to it yourself.”

Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since they are blood money." After conferring together, they used them to buy the potter's field as a place to bury foreigners.

(Matthew 27:3-9)

HE WOULD BE DESERTED BY HIS DISCIPLES

Prophecy:

Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.

(Zechariah 13:7a)

Fulfilment:

Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of me this night, for it is written; 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'"

(Mark 14:27-28)

All of them deserted him and fled.

(Mark 14:50-51)

HE WOULD BE ACCUSED BY FALSE WITNESSES

Prophecy:

By a perversion of justice he was taken away.

(Isaiah 53:8a)

Malicious witnesses rise up; they ask me of things that I do not know.

(Psalm 35:11)

Fulfilment:

For many gave false testimony against him and their testimony did not agree.

(Mark 14:56-57)

Now the chief priests and the whole council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, in order that they might put him to death, and they did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward.

(Matthew 26:59-61)

HE WOULD BE SILENT BEFORE HIS ACCUSERS

Prophecy:

He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

(Isaiah 53:7)

Fulfilment:

And while he was being accused by the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.

(Matthew 27:12-13)

Now when Pilate heard this he was more afraid than ever. He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus: “Where are you from?” but Jesus gave him no answer.

(John 19:8-10)

MESSIAH WOULD BE BEATEN AND SPIT UPON

Prophecy:

I gave my back to those who struck me, my cheeks to those who plucked out the beard: I did not cover my face from shame and spitting.

(Isaiah 50:6)

Fulfilment:

Then they spat in his face and beat him with their fists; and others slapped him.

(Matthew 26:67)

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head.

(John 19:1-3)

HE WILL SUFFER REJECTION FROM HIS PEOPLE

Prophecy:

He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we did not esteem him.

(Isaiah 53:3-4)

Fulfilment:

Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, said to them, "You have brought this man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined him in your presence, I have found no fault in this man concerning those things of which you accuse him; neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us, and indeed nothing deserving death has been done by him.

I will therefore chastise him and release him" (for it was necessary for him to release one of them at the feast). And they all cried out at once, saying, "Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas."

(Luke 23:13-19)

For no one who wants to be widely known acts in secret. If you do these things show yourself to the world (For not even his brothers believed in him.

(John 7:4-6)

MESSIAH WOULD FALL UNDER THE CROSS

Prophecy:

My knees are weak through fasting; my body has become a gaunt. I am an object of scorn to my accusers, when they see me they shake their heads.

(Psalm 109:24-26)

Fulfilment:

So they took Jesus, and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called the place of the skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha.

(John 19:17-18)

HE WOULD BE SCOURGED AND WOUNDED

Prophecy:

He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, the chastening for our well-being fell upon him, and by his scourging we are healed.

(Isaiah 53:5-6)

Fulfilment:

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head.

(John 19:1-3)

Then he released Barabbas to them, and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

(Matthew 27:26)

MESSIAH WILL SUFFER THIRST AND BE GIVEN VINEGAR TO DRINK

Old Testament Prophecy:

And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

(Psalm 69:21)

New Testament Fulfilment:

They gave him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when he had tasted it, he would not drink it.

(Matthew 27:34)

Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty."

(John 19:28)

MESSIAH'S FRIENDS WOULD STAND FAR OFF

Prophecy:

My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague, and my relatives stand far off.

(Psalm 38:11)

Fulfilment:

And all his acquaintances and the women who accompanied him from Galilee, were standing at a distance, seeing these things.

(Luke 23:49)

HE WOULD INTERCEDE FOR HIS PERSECUTORS

Prophecy:

Yet he himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.

(Isaiah 53:12d)

Fulfilment:

When they came to the place called the skull, there they crucified him... Jesus said, "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

(Luke 23:33a, 34a)

MESSIAH'S SIDE WOULD BE PIERCED

Prophecy:

They will look on me whom they pierced...

(Zechariah 12:10b)

Fulfilment:

One of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.

(John 19:34)

MESSIAH WOULD COMMIT HIMSELF TO GOD

Prophecy:

Into your hand I commit my spirit...

(Psalm 31:5a)

Fulfilment:

Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father into your hands I commit my spirit."

(Luke 23:46)

HIS GARMENTS WILL BE PARTED AND LOTS CAST FOR THEM

Prophecy:

They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

(Psalm 22:18)

Fulfilment:

Then the soldiers when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. They said therefore among themselves, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be," that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." Therefore the soldiers did these things.

(John 19:23-25)

PUT TO DEATH WITH TRANSGRESSORS

Prophecy:

Because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors.

(Isaiah 53:12c)

At that time two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left.

(Matthew 27:38)

HIS HANDS AND FEET WOULD BE PIERCED

Prophecy:

Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet.

(Psalm 22:16-b)

Fulfilment:

And when they came to the place called the skull, there they crucified him.

(Luke 23:33a)

PEOPLE WILL SHAKE THEIR HEADS AND MOCK

Prophecy:

I also have become a reproach to them; when they see me, they wag their head.

(Psalm 109:25)

All those who see me ridicule me; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head saying, "He trusted in the Lord, let him rescue him; let him deliver him, since he delights in him."

(Psalm 22:7-9)

Fulfilment:

And those who were passing by were hurling abuse at him, wagging their heads.

(Matthew 27:39)

Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and another on the left. And those who passed by blasphemed him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross if you are the Son of God!"

In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He is the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said,

'I am the Son of God.'” In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

(Matthew 27:38-45)

HE WOULD BE BURIED IN A RICH MAN'S TOMB

They made his grave with the wicked and the tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

(Isaiah 53:9-10)

Fulfilment:

There came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph ... and asked for the body of Jesus ... When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb.

(Matthew 27:57-60)

NONE OF MESSIAH'S BONES WILL BE BROKEN

Old Testament Prophecy:

All my bones are out of joint...

(Psalm 22:14a)

He guards all his bones; not one of them is broken.

(Psalm 34:20)

New Testament Fulfilment:

But coming to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

(John 19:33)

MESSIAH WILL BE FORSAKEN BY GOD

Old Testament Prophecy:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

(Psalm 22:1a)

New Testament Fulfilment:

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani," that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

(Matthew 27:46)

MESSIAH'S HEART WILL LITERALLY BREAK

Old Testament Prophecy:

My heart is like wax; it has melted within me...

(Psalm 22:14b)

You know the insults I receive, and my shame and dishonour; my foes are all known to you. Insults have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity but there was none; and for comforters but I found none.

(Psalm 69:19-21)

New Testament Fulfilment:

But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.

(John 19:34)

DARKNESS WOULD COVER THE LAND AT NOON

Prophecy:

And it will come about in that day, declares the Lord God, that I shall make the sun go down at noon and make the earth dark in broad daylight.

(Amos 8:9)

Fulfilment:

Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour.

(Matthew 27:45)

MESSIAH WOULD RISE FROM THE DEAD

Prophecy:

You will not abandon me to the grave; nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

(Psalm 16:10)

Fulfilment:

While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.”

(Luke 24:4-6b)

David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, “He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption.” This Jesus God raised up and of that all of us are witnesses.

(Acts 2:31-32)

MESSIAH WOULD ASCEND TO HEAVEN

Prophecy:

Thou hast ascended on high...

(Psalm 68:18)

Fulfilment:

Then he led them out as far as Bethany and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven.

(Luke 24:50-52)

HE WOULD SIT DOWN AT GOD'S RIGHT HAND

Prophecy:

The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."

(Psalm 110:1)

Fulfilment:

Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit... For David did not ascend into the heaven, but he himself says, "The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool."

(Acts 2:33-36)

When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

(Hebrews 1:3b)

Prophecy Fulfilled on Purpose?

The prophecies listed above could not have been purposely fulfilled by Jesus Christ unless He was who He claimed to be. Bible critics have suggested that Jesus being a rabbi had knowledge of these Old Testament predictions and simply arranged the events surrounding His life to fulfil prophecy and substantiate His claims.

First, such a suggestion is completely contrary to the pure and loving character of our Lord Jesus. His example and moral teachings have had an unprecedented influence upon the course of history and humanity itself to this very day.

Further, there is absolutely no way that Jesus could have controlled many of the events necessary for the Messiah to fulfil if He were an impostor. How could He have chosen His place of birth, the tribe He would come from, or the betrayal of a friend for a precise amount of money? And why would a self-serving false messiah want to fulfil the manner of such a horrific death?

04

THE NEW BIRTH

Dear reader, the evidence presented in this book powerfully demonstrates that Jesus Christ was not mistaken about the claims He made concerning His identity. This means each individual is accountable to Him who will judge each one of us at the end of this age based on how we responded to His offer of salvation:

Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

(John 3:18-19)

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.

(Acts 4:12-13)

These declarations are in contrast to the natural inclination of mankind to believe that if you are a sincere and good person, God will allow you into heaven regardless of what you believe. This is not even close to what the Word of God teaches. The Gospel of John records the answer Jesus gave to the religious leader Nicodemus when he enquired about the true path of salvation:

I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is

born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but Spirit gives birth to spirit.”

(John 3:3-7)

Nicodemus was a man who tried to keep high moral standards. Yet Jesus told him he must be “*born again.*” In other words, the New Birth is the key to true reconciliation with God and a prerequisite for eternal life.

What Is the New Birth?

The New Birth is not simply a moral or religious reform, but the bringing of *new life*. To belong to the Heavenly Kingdom one must be born into it, and this is not something we can do for ourselves, but is a work of God’s Spirit upon the heart of a person, making you a completely new creature when you believe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new.

(2 Corinthians 5:17)

When Christ suffered on the Cross, He not only made it possible for our sins to be forgiven; He dealt decisively with the root cause of our sin – our sinful human nature.

God is Spirit and therefore makes direct contact with each person through his human spirit. Before the New Birth a person is spiritually dead, and consequently unable to have a right relationship with his Creator.

But when the Father sent His Son to die for humanity, and suffer the punishment that we deserved, He took not only the sin of the entire world to the Cross; He took the believer as well, that we

might die in Him. God, in His mercy, literally places the repentant sinner in His Son Jesus:

But of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption – that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.”

(1Corinthians 1:30,31)

This is what water baptism signifies; that the person you used to be is not only put to death, but has been buried with Christ. Your old sin nature is dead, buried and done away with:

Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

(Romans 6:3-5)

However, God’s purpose is not to leave a believer dead and buried, but to raise him to a new life in His Son. Jesus rose from the dead and those who put their faith in what He did on the Cross are raised to new life in Him. He then places His Spirit within believers to enable them to live that new life to its full:

And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So, you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

(Galatians 4:6-8)

What a glorious truth! What has happened to Jesus, has happened to the believer, and what belongs to Him belongs to us also. When

Jesus died and rose again, so did we spiritually. We are forever united and joined to Him and His history is our history, His righteousness our righteousness, His victory our victory.

What Must I Do?

1. **Believe** that **we are all sinners** and that your sinful rebellion prevents you from ever entering heaven unless you are forgiven by God and cleansed by the blood of Jesus:

For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood effective through faith.

(Romans 3:22-26)

2. **Repent** of your sins:

While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

(Acts 17:30-32)

Repent means much more than to just simply confess our shortcomings. It involves shame, sorrow, regret, and a total **distaste for sin**, together with a deep longing to lead a life that is centred on God as opposed to being centred on self.

3. **Reject** any possibility of being reconciled to God on the basis of moral achievements, membership of a church, the giving to charity, or anything else that we may judge to be an acceptable moral standard of living. Rather, place total faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on your behalf:

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not the result of works, so that no one may boast.

(Ephesians 2:8-10)

If you are willing and ready to place your faith and trust in the Lord right now, it is as simple as just saying the following prayer with your whole heart, and you will be instantly born again, a new creature, translated from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God's glorious Son.

Father I come to you through your Son Jesus Christ just as I am. I believe that Jesus came to Earth and died for my sins on the Cross and I now accept you as my Lord and Saviour. I repent of all my sin and rebellion and ask you to forgive and transform me so I can forgive others and receive courage to live my new life in Christ and share my faith with others. Amen.