

THE FATHER
will take
HIS SEAT

To establish His kingdom in the time of the end

VICTOR HALL
WITH PETER HAY AND DAVID BAKER

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Preface

In our present season, the Father, by the Spirit, is inviting us all to come to the wedding feast that He has prepared for Christ and the church in the time of the end. Rev 19:9. The Father will personally host this great wedding feast when He takes His seat as the King upon His throne. In the parable, it is called 'the wedding feast for the King's Son'. Mat 22:2. The parable of the wedding feast, and the parable of the great banquet, both highlight that we must respond to the invitation of the Father *in a prompt manner* when it is extended to us. The parable of the wedding feast also teaches us that we must be clothed in an appropriate wedding garment. Mat 22:11.

We respond to the invitation of the Father to the wedding feast by embracing our participation in the fellowship of the *agape* meal *now*, in the place where the Father has placed us. Eph 3:14-15. Our participation in Yahweh's *agape* meal is our fellowship in the body of Christ and our fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings. In this fellowship, the word of Christ is washing and sanctifying us as individuals, families and congregations who belong to the bride of Christ. Eph 5:26. Furthermore, the blood of Christ is washing our priestly robe, and making it white, as we are led by the Holy Spirit on the offering journey that Christ has pioneered for us. Rev 7:14-15. Our priestly garment is our wedding garment!
Rev 19:7-8.

Jesus Christ is cleansing us *now*, in the fellowship of the *agape* meal, so that we are ready to participate with Him in the Father's wedding feast in the time of the end. Through His messengers, Christ is walking among His lampstand churches with eyes like a flame of fire. Rev 1:14. Rev 2:18. His eyes reveal His wrath upon our ungodliness and uncleanness while, at the same time, they reveal His jealous love for our sanctification as individuals, families and congregations who belong to Mount Zion. It is important to recognise that we must respond to Christ's cleansing initiative toward our families in the season of His visitation; otherwise, we will not remain in the heavenly Jerusalem when the Father takes His seat. Isa 4:2-6.

From Passover to Tabernacles

The offering of Christ as the Lamb of God, from the last supper to the cross, was the fulfilment of the true Passover. The apostle Paul declared, 'Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us.' 1Co 5:7. He then said, 'Therefore *let us keep the feast*, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.' 1Co 5:8. The 'old leaven' refers to all of our old gospels. It is helpful to remember that every old gospel will simply be a different manifestation of the Old Covenant. The true Passover is Yahweh's *agape* meal. It is 'the Lord's Supper'. 1Co 11:20. We keep the true Feast of Passover as we participate in the fellowship of His *agape* meal.

When the nation of Israel was delivered from their bondage in Egypt, the Passover meal was their *protection* from the judgement of God upon the world at that time, and it was the *provision* for their journey through the wilderness. The provision of the Passover meal for the people continued through the manna that fell from heaven each day and through the water that flowed from the rock that followed them. In his letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul described this provision as 'spiritual' food and drink. 1Co 10:3-4. During the church age, the true Feast of Passover is the provision of Yahweh to sustain the elect who have been scattered in the wilderness of the nations as the remnant of the true Israel of God.

The forty-year journey of the Israelites in the wilderness was a type of the church's pilgrimage in the wilderness of the nations for forty jubilees. Stephen referred to the nation of Israel as 'the church in the wilderness'. Act 7:38. In the same way that the Lord judged the Israelites in the wilderness, He has declared that He will judge His people, face to face, in the wilderness of the nations. Eze 20:35-36. In his letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul drew our particular attention to the judgement of God that fell upon the nation of Israel because of their idolatry, immorality,

grumbling and complaining. He said, 'Now all these happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.' 1Co 10:11.

When we consider that the wilderness journey is a type of the church's pilgrimage, we can also consider the promised land to be a type of the kingdom of God that will be established on earth after the Father has taken His seat. Dan 7:18. The Lord instructed the nation of Israel to keep the Feast of Tabernacles once they entered the promised land. They celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in remembrance of the miraculous provision and protection of the Lord on their journey through the wilderness. The Lord said, 'You shall live in booths for seven days; all the native-born in Israel shall live in booths, so that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out from Egypt.' Lev 23:42-43.

We note that the people *lived in tabernacles*, or booths, during their sojourn in the wilderness, but *the Feast of Tabernacles* was not celebrated until the time of harvest in the promised land. The provision for the entire wilderness journey was the Passover meal. The Feast of Tabernacles did not replace Passover. Rather, the *agape* fellowship that belonged to the Passover meal, in the first month of the year, *multiplied to fullness* in the Feast of Tabernacles in the seventh month of the year. The Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated in the *seventh month* at the time of the great harvest from the threshing floor and the wine vat. Deu 16:13.

The fulfilment of the Feast of Tabernacles

When we consider the events of the seventh month in the Hebrew calendar, we know that the Day of Atonement has already been fulfilled by the one offering of Christ. We have considered this significant point in other publications. The two goats that were offered on the Day of Atonement represented the two dimensions of Christ's one offering as the Lamb of God. Lev 16. The 'seven times' sprinkling of blood upon the mercy seat was fulfilled by the shedding of Christ's blood upon His physical body because of the seven wounding events that He experienced on His offering journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. 1Pe 1:2. Heb 12:24. His physical body was the altar, and the mercy seat, of the true tabernacle. Heb 13:10. Rom 3:25.

The implication of this point is that we are not looking for a future fulfilment of the Day of Atonement in the time of the end. As our great High Priest, seated at the right hand of God, Jesus Christ is presently ministering to us our participation in His finished work. Heb 10:12-14.

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This is the central point of the book of Hebrews. Heb 8:1. Likewise, we are not waiting for a future marriage between Christ and the church. Jesus Christ is already married to the church even though His lampstand churches, which comprise His corporate bride, have become the unclean daughters of Zion. Isa 4:1. During the church age, Jesus Christ is washing and sanctifying His wife, the church, by the washing of the water of the word. Eph 5:25-27.

In this regard, it is important that we do not confuse the fulfilment of the Day of Atonement with the fulfilment of the Feast of Tabernacles. There is a distinction between the *marriage* of Christ and the church, and *the wedding feast* that the Father is preparing for Christ and the church in the time of the end. The wedding feast will be the fulfilment of the true Feast of Tabernacles. The fulfilment of the true Feast of Tabernacles, as the full expression of Yahweh's Passover meal for a great multitude, will not be manifest until the Father takes His seat. The true Feast of Tabernacles belongs to the fellowship of the kingdom of God in the time of the end. This will be the time when the firstfruits of the true Israel of God will gather a great harvest from every nation into the kingdom of God.

The apostle John described this great multitude by saying, 'I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no-one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!".' Rev 7:9-10. The fact that this multitude had palm branches in their hands shows that they were ready to celebrate the true Feast of Tabernacles. Neh 8:15. Notably, unlike the Israelites of old, the great multitude will not need palm branches to make their own tabernacles. The Father will spread His own tabernacle over them! Rev 7:15.

The celebration of the true Feast of Tabernacles in the time of the end will be far more than a remembrance of the Lord's provision for the pilgrim church in the wilderness of the nations during the church age. When the Father takes His seat in the middle of the heavenly Jerusalem, it will initiate *a new dimension* of fellowship in the *agape* meal. There will be a new dimension of fellowship because *the tabernacle of God the Father will be with men!* The true Feast of Tabernacles will be the Father's *agape* meal for His entire kingdom in the time of the end. The key point is that it will be celebrated under the covering of the Father's tabernacle. Rev 7:15.

Our provision and protection

This brings us to a wonderful point! The *agape* meal that the Father is preparing for Christ and His church in the time of the end will include the full provision of Christ's resurrection life, while we are still in our mortality as sons of God. The prophet Isaiah declared, 'They shall neither hunger nor thirst, neither heat nor sun shall strike them; for He who has mercy on them will lead them, even by the springs of water He will guide them.' Isa 49:10. Likewise, we read in the book of Revelation, 'They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes'. Rev 7:16-17.

The prophet Isaiah declared, concerning the *provision* and *protection* that belongs to the true Feast of Tabernacles, 'Then the Lord will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a covering. And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain.' Isa 4:5-6. The Father's *agape* meal in the time of the end will be the total provision for our protection, in our mortality, from His judgement upon the world. It will also be our protection from the malicious persecution that will be directed toward the church by Satan, the rulers of the nations, the administration of Babylon, and Antichrist, in the time of the end.

The prophet Zechariah described the sovereign judgement of God upon the nations at the opening of the sixth seal. Zec 14. Rev 6:12-17. He then said, 'It shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles'. Zec 14:16. Following the opening of the sixth seal, 'the mountain of the Lord's house' will be established above all the nations of the world for at least seven years. Isa 2:2. There will be a great multitude from every tribe, nation, people and tongue who will keep the true Feast of Tabernacles.

Describing the fellowship of this great feast, Zechariah declared, 'The [cooking] pots in the LORD's house will be like the bowls before the altar.' Zec 14:20. The prophet Isaiah also described this great feast in Mount Zion by saying, 'In this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all people a feast of choice pieces, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of well-refined wines on the lees. And He will destroy on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that

is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces.' Isa 25:6-8. Rev 7:17.

During the blowing of the seven trumpets, Antichrist will revive and reorganise the seventh world kingdom in direct opposition to the rule of Christ over the nations. At that time, the Father will make a final division between those who belong to His tabernacle in the heavenly places and those who belong to the outer court in the world. Rev 11:2. The entire world will become a wilderness when it is delivered to Antichrist, to be trampled by him for 3 ½ years. However, during the same 3 ½ year period, the church will continue to be fully nourished and protected under the shelter of the Father's tabernacle, by the resurrection life of Christ in the fellowship of the Father's *agape* meal. Rev 12:6.

Not settled in complacency

To conclude this Preface, let us say again that the Father is inviting us all to come to the wedding feast that He has prepared for Christ and His bride in the time of the end. The prophet Zephaniah declared, 'Be silent in the presence of the Lord God; for the day of the LORD is at hand, for the LORD has prepared a sacrifice; *He has invited His guests.*' Zep 1:7. The prophet then continued to describe the judgement of God upon all those who are not ready for the wedding feast because they are clothed in foreign apparel. Zep 1:8. Notably, the Lord declared through Zephaniah, 'And it shall come to pass at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and punish the men who are *settled in complacency*, who say in their heart, "The LORD will not do good, nor will He do evil".' Zep 1:12.

In this season, let us take heed to what the Spirit is saying to the churches, and consider both the goodness and the severity of God. Rom 11:22. The *polarising impact* of the word that is proclaimed by the messengers of Christ is increasing in our day because we are fast approaching the time when the Father will take His seat. If we are ambivalent to the word of the Lord, as those who are 'settled in complacency' in the heavenly Jerusalem, we will be removed from Zion by the judgement of God. Rather, let us give more earnest attention to what the Spirit is saying to us in this season, as those who fear God. Heb 2:1. Let us be those who are watching and praying with Christ by the Spirit, so that we are prepared for the season ahead and so that we do not fall into the temptation of unbelief. Mat 26:41. Mar 13:33.

Chapter I

Nebuchadnezzar's prophetic dream

The book of Daniel is the introduction, or the prelude, to the book of Revelation. A significant portion of the prophecies regarding the world kingdoms in the book of Daniel have already been fulfilled. For example, the struggle between the Seleucids and Ptolemies has been fulfilled with such remarkable accuracy that many commentators have concluded that this section of the book of Daniel must have been written after the events had already occurred. Dan 11:1-31. In contrast to this assumption, we simply conclude that the fulfilment of this prophetic detail bears witness to the immutability of the Father's word and the veracity of the prophetic Scriptures.

One of the most striking features of the book of Daniel is the way that the world kingdoms are identified and graphically portrayed. Dan 2:31-35. Dan 7:1-8. In this regard, the book of Daniel addresses the history of mankind from the time of the Babylonian Empire to our present day. However, *the major focus* of the book of Daniel is the time when the Father will take His seat to initiate the time of the end. Dan 7:9. For example, when Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's prophetic dream, he began by saying,

'There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar *what will take place in the latter days*'. Dan 2:28.

Daniel's prophetic vision of the four beasts, which is recorded in Chapter 7, described the same world kingdoms as in Nebuchadnezzar's dream but with different points of emphasis. Dan 7:1-8. Significantly, its major focus is also the time when the Father will take His seat as the Ancient of Days. Dan 7:9. Further to this, the angel Gabriel said to Daniel concerning the 2300-year prophecy, which is recorded in Chapter 8, and then expanded in Chapter 11, 'Understand, son of man, that the vision refers to *the time of the end*'. Dan 8:17. It is important that we understand this continual point of emphasis on the time of the end in the book of Daniel.

When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were thrown into the fiery furnace, because they refused to worship the golden image that had been constructed by Nebuchadnezzar, it was *an historical event* that happened during that world kingdom. Dan 3:8-30. However, that event was also *a prophetic harbinger* of the great fiery trial that will be experienced by the church at the hands of the administration of Babylon which rules over the seventh world kingdom. Dan 12:1. Mat 24:21. The fact that the furnace was made 'seven times hotter' draws our attention to the persecution of the church, by the seventh world kingdom, during the opening of the seals. Dan 3:19.

In a similar way, the account of the seven times, or seven years, that passed over King Nebuchadnezzar, to teach him that the Most High God rules in the affairs of men, was an historical event. Dan 4. It was also the prophetic harbinger of the seven years that will pass over the rulers of the seventh world kingdom following the opening of the sixth seal in the time of the end. Rev 6:15-17. The opening of the sixth seal will completely shatter the power of the seventh world kingdom. It will be followed by seven years of destroying all weapons as a great multitude from all nations stream into the mountain of the Lord's house for the wedding feast. Eze 39:9. Isa 2:2-4. Zec 14:16.

When we recognise that the major focus of the book of Daniel is the time of the end, we understand why the Lord said to him, at the conclusion of his life and ministry, 'Shut up the words, and seal the book *until the time of the end*; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.' Dan 12:4. The Lord commanded Daniel to place a seal upon the entire prophetic book. In the first case, the spiritual seal of the prophet Daniel has preserved the integrity of the book, and it is the guarantee of the authenticity of the contents of the book.

In the second case, the seal of the prophet Daniel upon the book has limited the ability of man to read and understand the contents of the book before its time. The book of Daniel has been somewhat like the vision that is described by the prophet Isaiah, when he said, 'The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one who is literate, saying, "Read this, please". And he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed". Then the book is delivered to one who is illiterate, saying, "Read this, please". And he says, "I am not literate".' Isa 29:11-12.

The prophet Isaiah continued to describe the nature of the veil that was over the eyes of the people by saying that their religious practices had been taught by the commandment of men. Isa 29:13. In this regard, we recognise the many sacramental practices, and vain traditions, that we have embraced in our own families and congregations. 1Pe 1:18-19. However, we also rejoice that, as we have been turning from these religious practices, the Spirit has been illuminating us about the significance of the Father taking His seat. We have begun to understand the nature of the *agape* meal that the Father has prepared for Christ and His Bride.

Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the great image

In the second year of his reign, King Nebuchadnezzar had a prophetic dream. Dan 2:1. He saw an impressive and awe-inspiring statue. Dan 2:31. The head of the image was made of fine gold. The chest and arms of the image were made of silver. The belly and thighs of the image were made of bronze. The two legs of the image were made of iron. And finally, the feet of the statue were made from a mixture of iron and clay. Dan 2:32-33.

King Nebuchadnezzar then saw a stone that had been cut without hands from a mountain. The stone struck the feet of the statue. When it broke the feet into pieces, the whole statue crumbled and was crushed. The remnant of the statue became like chaff from the summer threshing floor, which the wind carried away. Most notably, the stone that had struck the feet of the statue then grew into a great mountain and filled whole earth. Dan 2:34-35.

The king was so troubled after this dream that he could no longer sleep. He immediately called all the Babylonian magicians, astrologers, and sorcerers to ask them for an interpretation. Dan 2:2-3. However, to ensure that the interpretation was not deceitful or speculative, he refused to tell them the dream. He demanded that they accurately recount the dream to him first, so that he could be sure that their interpretation was divinely inspired. Dan 2:4-9.

The Babylonians rightly said to the king that such a request was impossible for any man on the earth. It was beyond the limits of the power of sorcery.

Furthermore, they noted that this request was completely unprecedented. No king had ever demanded that his servants fulfil such a difficult task. Dan 2:10-11. Driven by his own fear regarding the dream, and enraged by the incapacity of his own sorcerers, the king ordered the execution of every wise man in Babylon. Dan 2:12-13.

As soon as Daniel heard about this matter from the captain of the king's bodyguard, he bravely petitioned the king for some more time to give him an interpretation of the dream. Dan 2:14-16. When the king granted his request, Daniel hastened to his own home, gathered his friends, and began to prayerfully seek mercy from the God of heaven. Dan 2:17-18. The God of heaven is the Father. He is the Lord of heaven and earth.

God's revelation to Daniel

The Father revealed the dream and its interpretation to Daniel during the night. Having received this revelation, Daniel proclaimed, 'Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him.' Dan 2:20-22.

This was a most remarkable confession of faith. The prophet Daniel not only received an insight into the king's dream and its interpretation; he received a profound revelation about the nature of the Father's name and His sovereignty over the kingdoms of this world. It is this same illumination which motivates us to pray, by the Spirit, 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven'. Mat 6:9-10.

Daniel came to understand that it is the Father who '*changes the times and the seasons*' in relation to each world kingdom. Dan 2:21. The transition from one world kingdom to the next has been sovereignly ordained by the Father. For example, it was God the Father who removed King Belshazzar and gave his kingdom to the Medes and Persians. Dan 5:24-28. As surely as we can study the history of the world and identify the transition between each kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, we can be assured that the Father will take His seat to establish His own kingdom. The Father will take the rulership over the nations from the leaders of the seventh world kingdom and He will give it to Jesus Christ and His overseers.

The psalmist described the time when the Father will take His seat, by saying, 'You will arise and have mercy on Zion, for the time to favour her, yes, *the set time*, has come. For Your servants take pleasure in her stones,

and show favour to her dust. So the nations shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth Your glory. He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, and shall not despise their prayer.' Psa 102:13-17. The psalmist was referring to those who join the travail of Christ, as those who are bankrupt in spirit, to pray for the coming of the Father's kingdom.

The psalmist then declared, 'This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord'. Psa 102:18. The psalmist knew that what he had just written, under the anointing of the Spirit, was for the sake of a generation that did not yet exist. He was writing prophetically for the generation who will be alive when the Father takes His seat. It is remarkable to consider that the psalmist was writing for our generation! We are the generation who should be joining the travail of Christ, by the Spirit, so that we are ready to praise the Father when He takes His seat.

When we consider Nebuchadnezzar's dream, we know that we are fast approaching the time of the end when the stone will hit the feet of the statue. However, the exact timing of this event will be determined by the sovereign will of the Father. When the disciples asked Jesus about the timing of the restoration of the kingdom that belongs to the true Israel of God, He said, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority'. Act 1:7. No man can know the exact day or hour when the Father will take His seat. Mat 24:36.

However, the Father does give insight into His times and seasons to overseers within the fellowship of the body of Christ. 1Th 5:1-4. Daniel also came to understand that the Father reveals deep and secret things by giving wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. Dan 2:21. It is the work of overseers to proclaim the word of present truth, in due season, to give food to all who belong to God's household. Mat 24:45. Summarising the work of Christ's messengers, we read in the book of Daniel, 'Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever'. Dan 12:3.

Having received the revelation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation, Daniel promptly asked to be taken to see the king. He began by saying, 'There is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be *in the latter days*'. Dan 2:28. As we have already considered, this is a notable statement in the book of Daniel. Even though the statue in the king's dream covered more than 2500 years of world kingdoms, the major focus of the dream was the

establishment of the kingdom of God in the latter days. The latter days refer to the time of the end.

The nation of Babylon and the administration of Babylon

Daniel accurately recounted the dream to the king. He then gave the king its interpretation. Dan 2:36. We will consider the five world kingdoms that are represented in the statue. However, it is important to remember that God had already raised up two world kingdoms – the Egyptians and the Assyrians - before the time of King Nebuchadnezzar. From the perspective of *all seven world kingdoms*, the nation of Babylon was the third kingdom. From the perspective of the great image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the nation of Babylon was the first kingdom.

King Nebuchadnezzar saw the world kingdoms from his own day until the time of the end. The head of gold was Nebuchadnezzar himself. He was the absolute monarch of the nation of Babylon. God had given Nebuchadnezzar a kingdom, power, strength, and glory. He had been given rulership over the children of men, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heaven. Dan 2:38. However, in opposition to God, the heart of Nebuchadnezzar became lifted up in pride when he presumed to be the head of *the administration of Babylon* over the nations.

There is an important difference between the nation of Babylon and the administration of Babylon. The administration of Babylon was first established by the fathers of the nations when they rebelled against God and determined to build a city in the plain of Shinar, with a temple that reached into the heavens. The motivation for the fathers of the nations to build this city, under the leadership of Nimrod, was to make a name for themselves and to avoid being scattered abroad over the face of the earth. Gen 11:4. The administration of Babylon is built upon misappropriation, and it stands in opposition to God.

The fundamental characteristic of the administration of Babylon is man's desire to *reject and replace* the administration of God over the nations by unifying mankind for the sake of collective peace and prosperity. The administration of Babylon is the fruit of the trading relationship that exists between Satan and the rulers of the nations. The rulers of the world are empowered by Satan to exceed their God-given mandate by exploiting the resources of others, while, at the same time, Satan feeds upon their God-given mandate for the sake of exercising his own rulership over the nations. Joh 12:31. Luk 4:5-7.

The administration of Babylon is *the harlot administration* that Satan uses to rule over the nations. In the book of Revelation, the administration of

Babylon is depicted as a great harlot sitting upon a scarlet beast with seven heads and ten horns. The name of the harlot is 'Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth'. Rev 17:5. The seven heads upon the scarlet beast are also likened to seven mountains upon which the woman sits. Rev 17:9. The seven mountains are the seven world kingdoms. Rev 17:10. All seven world kingdoms have supported and carried the administration of Babylon because of the trading relationship between Satan and the rulers of the nations.

The head of gold – the strength of economic prosperity

This trading principle was exemplified by Nebuchadnezzar who was deceived and empowered by Satan to set up a golden image for himself. Dan 3:1. The dedication of this image included the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counsellors, the treasurers, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces. Dan 3:2-3. The key point is that the image was more than a great statue. It represented an entire administration that Nebuchadnezzar had reorientated to stand in opposition to God and His messengers. By setting up this image, Nebuchadnezzar misappropriated the rulership that he had received from God and became the human vassal for Satan's administration over the nations.

It is likely that Nebuchadnezzar made this image from *gold* because Daniel had explained to him that he was the head of gold that belonged to the statue in his prophetic dream. Dan 2:37-38. This brings us to an important point in relation to the various metals that comprised the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The metals do not simply represent the strength of each kingdom. The various metals represent the *specific mechanisms* that have been employed by each world kingdom to rule over the nations as part of the administration of Babylon. Satan has empowered these mechanisms in each kingdom for the sake of strengthening his own influence and dominion over the world.

When we consider the world kingdoms, we observe that each new kingdom had a greater social and cultural influence over the world than the previous kingdom. However, at the same time, each new kingdom in the statue was represented by *an inferior metal*. As the influence of the administration of Babylon has grown over the nations, the strength and cohesion of the world kingdoms have progressively diminished. Isa 14:12. For example, the seventh world kingdom is the largest and most influential of all the kingdoms because it covers the entire world. However, it is also the weakest of all the kingdoms. As we will consider further, the defining characteristic

of the seventh world kingdom is that it is a *divided kingdom*. Dan 2:41. Mar 3:24.

The fine gold that comprised the head of the statue represented the strength of *economic prosperity* that belonged to the kingdom of Babylon. Under the kingship of Nebuchadnezzar, the city of Babylon was the largest and wealthiest in the world. Nebuchadnezzar built the wealth of the city of Babylon through numerous trade agreements with neighbouring city states. The city was renowned for its opulence. It is notable that merchant banks became a significant part of the Babylonian economy. Nebuchadnezzar was proud to say, 'Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honour of my majesty?' Dan 4:30.

Since the Babylonian kingdom, the *maximisation of wealth*, through trading and usury, has become foundational to the administration of Babylon that rules over the nations. The administration of Babylon promotes specialisation and trade as the most effective way of maximising wealth for all nations. However, the principles of trade that belong to Babylon invariably lead to the rich ruling over the poor and the strong exploiting the weak. Satan promotes and empowers the mechanisms of trade and usury in the world for the sake of his own gain. We are reminded that, in the beginning, Satan was corrupted by the abundance of his trade. Eze 28:16.

The silver – the strength of the rule of law

The chest and arms of the statue, which were made of silver, symbolised the kingdom of Medo-Persia. Dan 2:32,39. The silver represented *the rule of law* that was introduced by this kingdom. The rule of law was added by the Medo-Persians to the principle of economic prosperity to further strengthen the administration of Babylon over the nations. The account of Daniel in the lion's den demonstrated the power of the rule of law that was introduced by the Medo-Persians. King Darius was bound by the law once it had been established. Dan 6.

In addition to this, King Cyrus was the ancient pioneer of human rights. When King Cyrus entered Babylon, he freed the slaves, established racial equality, and declared that all people had the right to choose their own religion. Historians consider the 'Cyrus Cylinder' to be the world's first charter of human rights. The Scriptures recorded that it was King Cyrus who allowed the Jews to return to their homeland to rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem. Eze 1. In this specific case, we know that the favourable disposition of Cyrus toward the Jewish remnant was far more than a human rights initiative. The prophet Isaiah declared that God would raise up King Cyrus and anoint him for this specific purpose. Isa 44:28.

Isa 45:1-6. The decree of Cyrus, in relation to the Jewish remnant, also fulfilled the word of the Lord through the prophet Jeremiah. Eze 1:1.

The bronze – the strength of the wisdom of man

The belly and thighs of the statue, which were made of bronze, symbolised the Greek Empire. Dan 2:32,39. The Greek Empire is particularly notable in the book of Daniel. It is the only kingdom that received dominion from the heavenly places. Dan 7:6. Dan 11:5. In the time of the Seleucids, the Greeks became empowered by Satan from the heavenly places because of the ongoing corruption of the Jewish priesthood after they returned from exile in Babylon. Empowered from the heavenly places, the Greek Empire has had a profound impact upon the culture of the world. The bronze represents the wisdom and strength of man that belonged to the Greek Empire.

Under the influence of the great philosophers, the Greeks valued and celebrated the wisdom and power of man. Alexander the Great was taught by Aristotle. He later became a powerful military leader who rapidly expanded the Greek Empire. In all respects, the Greek Empire promoted the greatness of man. It produced many of the world's great philosophers, educators, orators, scientists, architects, artists, and sportsmen. The Greek Empire has, arguably, contributed more to the strength of Babylon than any other world kingdom. The administration of Babylon still uses areas such as philosophy and education, health and science, sport and the arts, to influence and cohere the nations of the world.

The iron - the strength of state religion

The two legs of the statue, which were made of iron, symbolised the Roman Empire. Dan 2:33,40. We know that the Roman Empire began before the birth of Jesus Christ. Significantly, it was Pontius Pilate, as the representative of the Roman Empire, who ordered Christ to be crucified. Mar 15:15. The crucifixion of Christ by the Romans is particularly important in relation to the Seventy Weeks prophecy and the 2300-year prophecy in the book of Daniel. Dan 9:24-27. The clearest example of 'the transgression which causes horror' in the Scriptures is the way that Judas betrayed Christ into the hands of the religious leaders, who then delivered Him to the Romans to be crucified. Dan 8:13. Joh 19:10-11.

Interestingly, when we consider Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the Roman Empire is represented by two separate legs. The emphasis is not the united Roman Empire at the time of Christ. The point of emphasis in Nebuchadnezzar's dream is *the divided Roman Empire* that began around 250 years after the death of Christ. The Roman Empire was split between

East and West soon before the reign of Constantine. It is the ruling mechanism that was introduced in both the eastern Roman Empire and the western Roman Empire that has further strengthened the administration of Babylon over the nations.

The iron represents the strength of state religion. It was the Emperor Constantine who initiated the process to make Christianity the official state religion of the Roman Empire in both the East and the West. From that time onwards, the strength of state religions became another powerful mechanism that was employed by the administration of Babylon to rule over the nations of the world. For many centuries, the Roman Catholic Church in the West and the Eastern Orthodox Church in the East wielded incredible power over the nations. This included the religious authority to crown kings. It also included the power to give a religious imprimatur for holy or just wars.

Over the many centuries that belonged to the divided Roman Empire, other state religions also emerged and became remarkably influential. For example, the Islamic faith produced a powerful state religion that was adopted by many nations in the East. When the Church of England split from the Catholic Church, it formed another state religion in the West. Also in the West, the Reformation in Europe was largely a political movement that began in reaction against the powerful Catholic Church. From the perspective of the administration of Babylon, the strength of state religions was intended to help unite the nations with common beliefs, morals, and ethics. However, in practice, history has recorded that the power of religious Babylon has been the cause of much division and bloodshed in the world.

The seventh world kingdom

The two feet of the statue, which were made of iron and clay, symbolised the seventh world kingdom. Dan 2:33. Dan 2:41-43. The first and second world wars marked the transition from the remnants of the divided Roman Empire to the seventh world kingdom. The League of Nations was established after the first world war, but it was replaced by the United Nations after the second world war. The United Nations is the seventh world kingdom. It was established in 1945 by the victors of the second world war. The founding nations included America, Britain, and France in the West. It also included Russia and China in the East.

These five founding nations are the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. The Security Council is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. It is one of the seven

heads that belong to the seventh world kingdom. In the book of Revelation, the seventh world kingdom is likened to a great red dragon *with seven heads* and ten horns. Rev 12:3. The great red dragon is Satan himself. The seven heads are 'crowned' because it is through the seven heads, or the seven administrative headquarters, that the administration of Babylon rules over all nations in the seventh world kingdom. When we consider the seven heads, we note that many of the world's international organisations have been founded on the same principles that were established by the previous world kingdoms.

For example, when we consider 'the head' of international trade and finance, we note that organisations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organisation have been founded on the same principles of trade and usury that characterised the Babylonian kingdom. Equally, when we consider 'the head' of international law and human rights, we note that organisations such as the International Court of Justice and the United Nations Human Rights Council have been founded on the same principles of the rule of law and human rights that characterised the Medo-Persian kingdom. In this regard, the ruling principles that belong to the administration of Babylon have been carried forward, and then formalised to varying degrees, in the seventh world kingdom.

The United Nations is the greatest manifestation of the administration of Babylon that seeks to unify the nations of the world for the sake of collective peace and prosperity. Nevertheless, the reality is that the seventh world kingdom is the most divided kingdom of all. In the first case, when we consider the nature of the two separate feet that belonged to the statue, we observe that the division between East and West has continued in the seventh world kingdom. The history of the seventh world kingdom bears witness to this ongoing division between the East and the West. However, the prophet Daniel explained to King Nebuchadnezzar that there is a further element of division in the seventh world kingdom, which is the division between *the iron and the clay*.

The mixture of iron and clay – religion and the spirit of antichrist

The division between the iron and the clay is more detrimental to the strength of the administration of Babylon than the division between East and West. It is notable that Daniel spent more time discussing the mixture of iron and clay than any other element of the statue. He said to Nebuchadnezzar, 'Whereas you saw the feet and the toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, *the kingdom shall be divided*; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with the ceramic clay.

And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with [in] the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay.'

Dan 2:41-43.

As we have already considered, the iron represents the strength of religion, which was established as a ruling principle over the nations during the time of the divided Roman Empire. The strength of religion has been significantly weakened in the seventh world kingdom, but it is still enshrined in the governing laws of many nations. More broadly, the strength of religion is still reflected in the morality and family values that have been entrenched in many nations for centuries. However, the new material that belongs to the seventh world kingdom is the clay! The prophetic Scriptures clearly identify the meaning of the clay. The clay is symbolic of the spirit of antichrist that seeks to redefine the nature of humanity.

The Lord declared through the prophet Isaiah, 'Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay, that what is made would say to its maker, "He did not make me"; or what is formed say to him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?' Isa 29:16. Likewise, we read in the book of Isaiah, 'Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker - an earthenware vessel among the vessels of the earth! Will the clay say to the potter, "What are you doing?" Or the thing you are making say, "He has no hands?" Woe to him who says to a father, "What are you begetting?" Or to a woman, "To what are you giving birth?"' Isa 45:9-10.

When we read these verses, we note that the principle of the clay includes the rejection of the existence of God as the Creator of man. It also includes the redefinition of gender identity and sexuality. Further to this, when we consider these prophetic verses, we observe that the clay is doing *a lot of talking* against the Potter around these issues. The clay is motivated by the spirit of antichrist to speak pompous words against the Most High God. In our Western society, the media often functions as a mouthpiece that promotes and propagates the humanistic philosophy that belongs to the clay.

The seventh world kingdom will always contain the mixture of iron and clay - and the iron and clay will never adhere to one another in the seed of men. Dan 2:43. The seed of men simply refers to all of the people in the nations of the world. Let us say again that the fundamental characteristic of the seventh world kingdom is that it is *a divided kingdom*. Dan 2:41. As we rapidly approach the time when the Father will take His seat to judge the

world, we observe that all the fracture lines in the seventh world kingdom are growing deeper. This includes the broad division between the East and West, but it also includes the division within every nation on political, racial, religious, and social grounds.

In recent years, it has been significant for us to realise that we are already living in the time of the seventh world kingdom. In conjunction with this, it is important for us to recognise that the seventh world kingdom will not last for a long time. Considering that it was established in 1945, this is a sobering point. When the apostle John saw the seven mountains that represent the seven world kingdoms, the angel said to him, 'There are also seven kings [kingdoms]. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue *a short time*.' Rev 17:10. We know that John lived during the time of the Roman Empire, which was the sixth world kingdom. It is the seventh world kingdom that only continues for 'a short time'. Rev 17:10.

The ten toes belong to the final phase of the seventh world kingdom. The ten toes are the same as the ten horns of 'the great and terrible beast' that Daniel saw in his prophetic vision, which was recorded in Daniel Chapter 7. Dan 7:7. The ten toes, or ten horns, represent ten rulers. Each ruler is the leader of a powerful nation or the leader of a group of nations that has been formed by political and economic alliances. The beginning of birth pains in the world also initiates the period of transition from the two feet to the ten toes. Mat 24:8. We observe that each birth pain in the world shakes the strength and cohesion of the seventh world kingdom. Furthermore, each birth pain contributes to a progressive rise in nationalism, and a progressive shift in focus from globalisation to regionalisation.

The stone cut without hands

The key point is that Daniel declared to Nebuchadnezzar, 'In the days of these kings [the ten toes], the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.' Dan 2:44. Jesus Christ is the chosen and precious Cornerstone of Mount Zion. Psa 118:22. Isa 28:16. However, the stone that crushes the feet of the statue is not Christ alone. It is important to recognise that the stone is firstly cut *from a mountain*. The stone is cut *from Mount Zion*. The stone represents the remnant, who have made their call and election sure, in Christ's lampstand churches as we approach the time of the end.

THE FATHER WILL TAKE HIS SEAT

The remnant from Mount Zion is sanctified by the work of the Spirit, not by the work of human hands. Furthermore, it is important to recognise that the stone comes from Mount Zion and not from any part of the statue itself. The stone is not made of iron and clay, or any of the other precious metals. This is an obvious point to make, but it has notable implications. The remnant, who belong to Christ's lampstand churches, do not have a political agenda, and nor are they entangled with the affairs of the world. 2Co 6:17. 2Ti 2:4. It is not the work of Christ's lampstand churches to influence or reform the administration of Babylon.

The bride of Christ has been scattered to the four winds, and subjected to the administration of Babylon that rules over the nations of the world, for the entire church age. However, when the Father takes His seat, Jesus Christ will stand up to bring all of the overcomers from lampstand churches with Him to the Father's throne. The Father will give the throne of David to Jesus Christ and His administration for the time of the end. The overseers who belong to Christ's administration will be seated with Him on His throne, which will be the twenty-four thrones around the throne of the Father. Rev 3:21. Rev 4:4.

When Jesus Christ opens the first seal, the 144 000 will be sent into the world, as the firstfruits of the true Israel of God, like the vanguard of an army. Rev 6:1-2. The stone will strike the feet of the statue as the 144 000 proclaim the gospel of the kingdom as a testimony in all nations. Mat 24:14. The stone that strikes the feet of the statue will become a great mountain that fills the whole earth. Dan 2:35. Jesus taught, in the parable of the wheat and tares, that the harvest is the end of the age. Mat 13:39. The firstfruits of the true Israel of God will bring in a great harvest from every tribe, nation, people, and tongue. Rev 7:9. We expect that this great harvest will include at least fifty percent of the world's population.

The kingdom which the Father will establish on the earth in the time of the end, to replace the seventh world kingdom, is *the true eighth world kingdom!* The prophet Isaiah described the Father's kingdom in the time of the end by saying, 'Now it will come about that in the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths". For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from [the heavenly] Jerusalem.' Isa 2:2-3.

Chapter 2

Daniel's vision of the world kingdoms

In the first year of King Belshazzar, Daniel had a prophetic dream during the night. His dream was comprised of *four visions*. Dan 7:1. The summary of the four visions, which comprised the one prophetic dream, is recorded in Chapter 7 of the book of Daniel. Daniel identified the transition from one vision to the next, by saying, 'I watched' or 'I looked'. Dan 7:9,11,13. In this regard, we note the similarity to the book of Revelation in which John used phrases such as, 'After these things I saw', to indicate the beginning of a new vision. Rev 7:1,9. Rev 14:1.

The first vision in Daniel Chapter 7 is focused upon the world kingdoms and is recorded from verse 2 to verse 8. The second vision is focused upon the Father taking His seat and is recorded from verse 9 to verse 10. The third vision is a continuation of the first vision. It is focused on the judgement of antichrist and is recorded from verse 11 to verse 12. The fourth vision is focused upon the coming of the Son of Man to the Father and is recorded from verse 13 to verse 14. The remainder of the chapter contains the interpretation of the dream with a particular focus on its application to the time of the end.

In the first vision, Daniel saw the four winds of heaven stirring up the Great Sea. Dan 7:2. In this instance, the four winds of heaven belong to the angelic administration. Zec 1:7-17. Jer 49:36. Under the leadership of the archangel Michael, the four winds of heaven serve God by stirring up the nations to raise up specific world kingdoms in due season. Each world kingdom, which has been raised up by God in this manner, has then been used by Him as an instrument of judgement in His hand. Isa 10:5-6. The Scriptures identify that God has raised up seven kingdoms over history - Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the seventh world kingdom.

The Great Sea refers to the sea of all humanity. Eze 47:10. It is the sea of the nations. The symbolism of 'the sea' was explained to the apostle John, when the messenger said to him, 'The waters which you saw where the harlot [Babylon] sits, are people and multitudes and nations and tongues.' Rev 17:15. Daniel specifically saw four great beasts coming up out of the sea of the nations. Dan 7:3. The four beasts had unique characteristics because they each represented a different world kingdom. The first beast was like a lion, the second beast was like a bear, and the third beast was like a leopard. Dan 7:5-6. The fourth beast was different from the other beasts. It was described as a dreadful, terrible, and exceedingly strong beast. Dan 7:7.

The first beast like a lion

The first beast was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. In Daniel's vision, the wings of this first great beast were plucked off, and then it stood up on two feet, like a man. Dan 7:4. Remarkably, *a man's heart* was given to it. The beast, that was like a lion, represents the kingdom of Babylon. The wings of this beast were plucked off when the Lord humbled Nebuchadnezzar for a period of seven years, to teach him that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men and that He gives it to whomever He chooses. Dan 4:17.

The book of Daniel recorded that, for a period of seven years, King Nebuchadnezzar was given the heart of a beast. Dan 4:16. He ate grass like the oxen and his body became wet with the dew of heaven. His hair grew like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws. Dan 4:33. In this regard, God humbled Nebuchadnezzar to such an extent that he literally began to resemble an eagle with no wings. Most significantly, at the conclusion of the seven years, Nebuchadnezzar lifted up his eyes to heaven and his *understanding* returned to him. Dan 4:34,36. Having had the heart of a beast for a period of seven years, Nebuchadnezzar was given *the heart of a man*.

When the king was given the heart of a man, it was more than the recovery of the mental faculties that he had lost for seven years. The fruit of God's judgement upon Nebuchadnezzar for seven years was a new understanding. It was a new capacity for sound reasoning. Rather than being deceived by the delusion of his own grandeur, Nebuchadnezzar had learned a simple, yet profound, truth. He had come to understand that the Most High God rules in the affairs of men! Dan 4:17. Of course, this insight does not mean that Nebuchadnezzar was saved. However, it does mean that he recognised God's sovereignty over his kingdom and the authority of Daniel as God's messenger to him.

Without this basic understanding of God's sovereignty, and the authority of His messengers, a world leader has no connection to reality or capacity for sound reasoning. When Nebuchadnezzar was given the heart of a man, he immediately articulated his new-found understanding by praising and honouring God who lives forever. Dan 4:34. He declared, 'His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?" ' Dan 4:34-35.

It is notable that the heart of a man, which was given to Nebuchadnezzar as the king of Babylon, was subsequently lost by his successors. We know that Belshazzar was familiar with the account of the seven times that had passed over Nebuchadnezzar, but he did not possess the same understanding. Daniel rebuked him because he had lifted himself up, in pride, against the Lord of heaven. Dan 5:18-23. The handwriting upon the wall of his palace, which was written by the finger of God, and illuminated by the light of the lampstand, proclaimed the sovereign judgement of God upon Belshazzar and the Babylonian kingdom. Dan 5:5,24-28.

The heart of a man that was given to Nebuchadnezzar, as the king of Babylon, has not been possessed by the rulers of each subsequent world kingdom. We observe that the heart of a man was expressed, in a limited and isolated way, by the Persian kings – Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes – when they issued the various decrees that enabled the Jewish remnant to rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem. Ezzr 1:1-4. Ezzr 6:1-12. Ezzr 7:12-26. However, as we will consider further, the heart of a man was not the fundamental characteristic that belonged to the Persian Empire. Neither was the heart of a man possessed by the Greek Empire or the Roman Empire.

Furthermore, the heart of a man is not presently possessed by the rulers of the seventh world kingdom. It is important to recognise that a leader's belief that there is a God, or their self-righteous presumption that they are serving God, is not the heart of a man. The conflicts that exist in the world, along with the fact that Christ's lampstand churches are maligned and hated by all nations, demonstrates that the seventh world kingdom is motivated by the heart of a beast. Even though much of the world is religious, there is no knowledge or fear of God among the nations. Rom 3:18. Nor is the seventh world kingdom submitted to Christ's messengers.

The book of Revelation recorded the response that the rulers of the seventh world kingdom will make when God sovereignly intervenes in the affairs of men at the opening of the sixth seal. We read, 'The kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" ' Rev 6:15-17. The opening of the sixth seal will initiate the season in which the rulers of the seventh world kingdom will learn that the Most High God rules in the affairs of men.

The second beast like a bear

The second beast was a like a bear. It was raised up on one side and it had three ribs in its mouth. Dan 7:5. The bear represents the kingdom of the Medes and the Persians. It was raised up on one side because the Persians became much stronger than the Medes. The three ribs in the mouth of the bear represent the prominent nations, or kingdoms, that were devoured by the Medo-Persian Empire during its rise to world supremacy. It is likely that the three ribs represent Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon, which were the three preceding world kingdoms.

In Daniel's dream, he heard the four winds of heaven say to the Medo-Persian kingdom, 'Arise, devour much flesh'. Dan 7:5. This is a significant statement. It identified the insatiable appetite that belonged to the Persian Empire to consume other nationalities and groups of people for the sake of their own growth and expansion. The Persian Empire became significantly larger than all the preceding kingdoms. Stretching all the way from Egypt to the borders of India, it covered more than 5.5 million square kilometres and included half of the world's population.

Interestingly, one of the primary characteristics of the Persian Empire, from an historical perspective, was its religious and cultural tolerance. Rather than displacing and dispersing the people that they conquered, like the Assyrians, the Persians allowed the people to remain in their homeland and to retain their religious and cultural practices. In this regard, the Persian Empire was more tolerant and peaceful than previous kingdoms. So why was the Persian Empire depicted as 'a beast' with such a voracious appetite that it had been given the command to 'devour much flesh'?

The Persians did not simply devour other nations by military conquest. They fed upon the resources of other nations by employing a coercive *trading mechanism*. When a nation was conquered, the Persians offered religious and social tolerance in exchange for the payment of taxes and tributes to the Persian rulers. When the enemies of the Jews tried to stop the rebuilding of the temple, in the days of Zerubbabel, they relied upon this well-established trading mechanism within the Persian Empire. Ezz 4:11-16. We recall that the basis of their accusation was that the Jews would not pay tax and tribute to the Persians. Ezz 4:13.

To state the principle simply, the Persians traded 'tolerance for tribute'. It is important to recognise that the trading mechanism that was employed by the Persians, to control their vast empire, was just as beastly in nature as any other kingdom that was seeking to control by brute force and violence. In fact, the Persians exemplified the trading mechanism that belongs to Satan who promises *freedom* to mankind in exchange for *worship*. By this means, Satan is the ruler of the world and devours much flesh by feeding upon mankind and the resources that God has given to the nations. Joh 12:31. 1Pe 5:8.

The government of the Persian Empire combined the centralisation of power with the decentralisation of administration. Dan 6:1. The centralised power belonged to the emperor and his officials. However, the empire was administrated in provinces. In each province, a governor, or satrap, was responsible for civil matters and a general was responsible for military matters. This ensured that a single person did not control both the finance and the military in a region. The Persian form of government was so effective that it was adopted, with little modification, by the Greek Empire. It also greatly influenced the government of the Roman Empire.

The Persian principle of centralised power and decentralised administration has also been embraced by many denominations during the church age. The Persian satraps have simply been replaced by church bishops or local pastors within a hierarchy of central and regional administration. Furthermore, the strength of many denominations is built upon the same

trading mechanism that was exemplified by the Persian Empire. For example, local congregations may enjoy significant freedom and autonomy in exchange for their loyalty and financial support of the denomination.

The third beast like a leopard

The third beast was a like a leopard with four heads. Dan 7:6. It also had four wings on its back. The leopard with four heads represents the Greek kingdom. It had four heads because the Greek Empire was divided into four distinct kingdoms following the death of Alexander the Great. The most notable element of Daniel's vision of 'the leopard with four heads' is that this beast *was given dominion*. Dan 7:6. This is an important point. The Greek Empire was the first kingdom that was given *dominion from the heavenly places* to empower its rulership over the nations in the world.

It is the 2300-year prophecy that explains when, and how, the Greek Empire received dominion from the heavenly places. This prophecy is recorded in Daniel Chapter 8, and then expanded further in Daniel Chapter 11. We have considered the detail and implications of the 2300-year prophecy in other publications. When the Jews returned from exile in Babylon, the mandate to guard the sanctification of the continual offering and, hence, the fellowship of the Lord's table, was given to the priests. At that time, the priests were given access to the heavenly places to function *alongside* the angelic administration. Zec 3:7.

The great privilege and responsibility that was bestowed upon the priests, when they were given access to the heavenly places, also carried a significant risk. When the priests failed to guard the sanctification of the continual offering, it enabled Satan to regain access to the heavenly places. Mal 1:10. We are reminded that Satan only functions by advantage and misappropriation. 2Co 2:11. Significantly, when Satan regained access to heaven, because of the corruption of offering among the Lord's people, the Greek kingdom became empowered from the heavenly places to exercise *dominion* in the world.

Even though Alexander the Great was a mighty conqueror, Daniel's vision of the leopard *with four heads* revealed that the Greeks did not receive dominion until after his death when the kingdom split into four regions. More specifically, the 2300-year prophecy revealed that the Greek kingdom was given dominion during the reign of the Seleucid Empire. Dan 8:9-12. Dan 11:5. In the first instance, this dominion enabled the Hellenistic culture of the Greeks to spread throughout the world in a remarkable fashion. The pervasive influence of the Hellenistic culture in the world, and in the church, has continued to our present day.

Further to this, during the reign of the Seleucid Empire, the Greeks exercised *dominion* over the Lord's messengers. As we have already said, this dominion was the outcome of the corruption of offering among the Lord's people. When Satan regained access to the heavenly places, it enabled him to empower a series of 'little horns' in the world to persecute and trample the Lord's messengers and His people. Dan 8:10. Dan 11:33-35. This trampling began during the reign of the Seleucid Empire, and it will continue for a period of 2 300 years until the time of the end when Satan is cast out of the heavenly places forever. Dan 8:13-14.

To understand how the violation of fellowship, among the Lord's people, leads to the trampling of the Lord's messengers by secular rulers, it is helpful to consider the example of Christ Himself. Satan gained access to the fellowship of the twelve disciples when Judas rejected the word of Christ and embraced another gospel, or doctrine. Joh 13:10-11. The alternative doctrine was the lie of Satan that denied the need to join the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Having believed this lie, Judas began to cling to Christ in hypocrisy, for the sake of his own gain. Dan 11:34. Joh 12:4-6. We have considered the progression in the life of Judas, from an *unbeliever*, to an *opposer*, to a *betrayor*, to a *traitor*, in the book, *The Mystery of Christ and the church*.

In relation to the transgression that causes the horror of trampling, we observe that the transgression of Judas began with unbelief, and then reached a fullness when he betrayed Jesus into the hands of the religious leaders. Luk 22:21-22. The Jewish religious leaders delivered Jesus to the Roman secular authorities because they were envious of Him. Mar 15:10. Jesus was crucified by Pontius Pilate, who was the representative of the little horn in the region of Judea. Significantly, Pilate only received the power to crucify Christ because He had been betrayed by Judas and delivered up by the priests of the Jewish nation. Joh 19:11.

Jesus explained to the disciples that the transgression which causes horror will also reach a fullness within the church in our day. He said, 'Many will be offended, *will betray one another*, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.' Mat 24:10-13. Acts of betrayal and treachery among brethren are the fullness of the transgression that causes horror, which is also called 'the abomination that makes desolate'. Mat 24:15. Dan 8:13. It is remarkable to consider that Jesus highlighted betrayal in the church as one of the major signs that we are approaching the time of the end.

The dreadful and terrible beast

The fourth beast was dreadful, terrible, and exceedingly strong. Dan 7:7. It had huge iron teeth. It devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the remnant of all the previous world kingdoms. Daniel recorded that this beast was *different* from all the previous beasts. In the first case, this beast was different because it was not likened to a particular animal. However, the most significant difference is that this terrible, and exceedingly strong, beast embodies more than one world kingdom. It encompasses the sixth world kingdom, the seventh world kingdom, and the reign of antichrist for 3 ½ years in the end of the age.

The sixth world kingdom was the Roman Empire. In King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great statue, we recall that the divided Roman Empire was symbolised by the legs of iron. Dan 2:33,40. Picking up the same symbolism of 'the iron', the great and terrible beast had huge iron teeth. It used its iron teeth to rip, tear, and devour the nations, before it trampled whatever was left, with its feet. When we consider that 'the iron' represents the strength of state religions, it highlights the devouring nature, and the destructive impact, that man-made religion has had upon the nations of the world during the sixth world kingdom.

When the angel explained the meaning of the fourth beast to Daniel, he said, 'The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and *will devour the whole earth* and tread it down and crush it'. Dan 7:23. It is notable that the angel said that this beast would 'devour the whole earth'. During the long period of time that belonged to the fragmented sixth world kingdom, the entire world was progressively absorbed by various empires. For example, during the age of colonisation, European nations used the principles of discovery, conquest, and settlement, to expand the size and strength of their empires around the world.

Significantly, the great and terrible beast also includes the seventh world kingdom. We know this because it had ten horns upon its head. They are the *same ten horns* that the apostle John saw on the great red dragon, which specifically represents the seventh world kingdom. Rev 12:3. Furthermore, the ten horns represent *the same ten rulers* as the ten toes that belonged to the feet of the great image in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Dan 2:41-42. Dan 7:7,24. The great image teaches us that these ten rulers belong to the latter period of the seventh world kingdom when the Father will take His seat to judge the world. As we considered in Chapter 1, each horn represents the ruler of a powerful nation, or the ruler of a group of nations that has been formed by economic and political alliances.

When the prophet Daniel saw this great and terrible beast in his prophetic dream, he was particularly interested in the ten horns. He recorded, 'While *I was considering the horns*, there was *another horn*, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words'. Dan 7:8. The little horn represents the final antichrist. He will not be one of the ten horns. Daniel clearly identified that the little horn will be *another horn*. In this regard, it is important that we do not confuse antichrist with the king of the north, who is called 'Gog' in the book of Ezekiel. Eze 39:1-2.

The rise of antichrist

In the book of Revelation, the seventh world kingdom is depicted as a great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns. Rev 12:3. The seven heads belong to the administration of Babylon. The heads are 'crowned' because Satan uses the seven administrations, and the various international organisations that belong to these administrations, to rule over the nations of the world. When the sixth seal is opened, God will shatter the power of the seventh world kingdom. The United Nations will receive a deadly wound. The seven heads that belong to the administration of Babylon will cease to have any rulership, or power, over the nations of the world. The rulers of the nations will come to learn that the Most High God rules in the affairs of men.

For seven years, every world leader will bow the knee to the authority of Christ and His overseers over the nations. The major agenda in the world will be the wedding feast that the Father has prepared for Christ and His Bride in the time of the end. Zec 14:15-16. The whole world will be polarised between those who have chosen to join the Father's *agape* meal and those who have rejected His invitation. Zec 14:16-21. The blowing of the trumpets will announce the beginning of the judgement of God upon all those who have stubbornly rejected the invitation to join the Father's kingdom. Having already received a deadly wound, the seventh world kingdom will be revived by antichrist, in direct opposition to God and His kingdom, at the blowing of the fifth trumpet. Rev 9:1-2. Rev 13:3. Rev 17:8.

For all those who have rejected the invitation to join the wedding feast, the coming of antichrist will be warmly welcomed with eager anticipation. Antichrist will proclaim his vision for a new image of 'man', in direct opposition to Jesus Christ who is the full revelation of Man in the image and likeness of God. We read in the book of Revelation, 'The whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; they worshipped the dragon [Satan] because he gave his authority to the beast, and they worshipped the

beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?" ' Rev 13:3-4. The angel's explanation of Daniel's prophetic dream revealed that there will be *two dimensions* to this warfare when antichrist emerges to revive the seventh world kingdom.

In relation to *the first dimension* of warfare, Daniel asked the angel to explain 'the meaning of the ten horns that were on its head [the great and terrible beast] and the other horn which came up, and before which three of them fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts and which was larger in appearance than its associates.' Dan 7:20. The angel answered Daniel's question, by saying, 'The ten horns are ten kings [rulers] who shall arise from this kingdom [the seventh kingdom]. And another [antichrist] shall rise after them; he shall be different from the first ones, and shall *subdue three kings*.' Dan 7:24. When antichrist revives the seventh world kingdom, it will evidently lead to conflict between himself and three of the ten horns from the seventh world kingdom.

The three rulers who resist the rise of antichrist, and the establishment of his new economic and political system, will be powerless to stop him. Antichrist will not use military means to supplant these leaders. The leaders will be pulled out by 'the roots' because the general population, in their respective nations, will desire to follow antichrist. Dan 7:8. It is possible that these leaders may simply be replaced by popular vote in their own nations. The outcome of this period of transition will be ten powerful rulers in the world who will all be loyal to antichrist. In the book of Revelation, the kingdom of antichrist is depicted as a beast with seven heads and ten horns. However, in contrast to the great red dragon, the crowns will be on the ten horns, rather than on the seven heads. Rev 13:1.

The apostle John saw the crowns on the ten horns because the ten rulers will receive authority to reign with antichrist for one hour. Rev 17:12. During this one hour, the ten rulers will be united in mind and purpose. They will give their power and authority to the beast. Rev 17:13. Furthermore, God will use the ten kings as an instrument of judgement in His hand to destroy the administration of Babylon and make it desolate. We know that the administration of Babylon will have already fallen in the world before this time. However, the economic system, that belongs to the administration of Babylon, will not be completely removed until the ten rulers give their kingdom to antichrist. Rev 17:16-17. Antichrist will replace the economic system of Babylon with his own economic system. Rev 13:16-17.

War with the saints

The *second dimension* of warfare, when antichrist emerges in the world, will be directed toward the sons of God who belong to the Father's kingdom. Speaking about the rise of antichrist, the prophet Daniel said to the angel, 'I was watching; and the same horn [antichrist] was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgement was made in favour of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.' Dan 7:21-22. The angel answered this part of Daniel's question by saying, concerning antichrist, 'He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then they shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.' Dan 7:25.

It is important that we understand the meaning of this statement because it has been the subject of much confusion. The important questions are: What does it mean that antichrist will prevail against the saints? And what will be given into the hand of antichrist for 3 ½ years? In relation to these questions, we need to understand the clear distinction between the temple of God in the heavenly places and the outer court that is on the earth. We read in the book of Revelation that antichrist will 'open his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, *and those who dwell in heaven*'. Rev 13:6. This refers to all the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem who reside under the shadow of the Father's tabernacle on Mount Zion.

When the Father takes His seat in the middle of the heavenly Jerusalem, the administration of His throne will be extended to the earth through the administration of the twenty-four thrones. During the opening of the seals, the power of the rulers of the seventh world kingdom will be shattered. Rev 2:27. Following the opening of the sixth seal, the mountain of the Lord's house will be established above all the nations. Isa 2:2-4. As we have already stated, the major agenda in the world will be the Father's *agape* meal. This will be the fulfilment of the promise to the presbytery in Thyatira, 'And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations.' Rev 2:26.

When antichrist revives the seventh world kingdom, it will be *the power over the nations* that belongs to Christ's overseers that will be the subject of his assault. Significantly, this refers to power over the nations *of the world*. It does not refer to power over the true Israel of God which populates the heavenly Jerusalem! Antichrist will make war against the saints, and overcome them, by seizing the main agenda in the world. In relation to this conflict, Christ's overseers will not resist antichrist, nor

wage any kind of warfare against him. Rather, led by the world-wide presbytery, the church will withdraw from the nations of the world to be protected and nourished by the Lord in the wilderness for 3 ½ years. Rev 12:6,14.

It is important to remember that after the blowing of the sixth trumpet, the door will be closed to the temple of God in the heavenly places. The apostle John recorded, 'I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.' Rev 11:1-2. This means that antichrist, and the demonic host from the bottomless pit, will have no access to the heavenly places. Rev 9:1-4. Antichrist will be given authority over the nations that belong to the world for 3 ½ years, but he will have no authority over the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Returning to the angel's explanation to Daniel, regarding his prophetic dream, we know that it is *not the saints* who will be given into the hand of antichrist for 3 ½ years. Dan 7:25. Some modern translations of this verse suggest that the saints are given into the hand of antichrist, but this is only an assumption that has been inserted to improve the sentence structure, or it is the imposition of another theological framework. The word 'saints', or 'they', is not in the original language. It is possible that this statement refers to 'times and law'. Prior to his reign, antichrist will intend to change times and law. A specific extension of time, and a limited capacity to change laws, will be given to antichrist by God for 3 ½ years.

In relation to the extension of time, Daniel said, 'As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.' Dan 7:12. When Daniel said, 'the rest of the beasts', he was referring to the beast like a lion, the beast like a bear, and the beast like a leopard. The apostle John described the kingdom of antichrist by saying, 'The beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion.' Rev 13:2. This means that the fundamental culture of antichrist's kingdom will be Greek, the administrative structure of the kingdom will be Persian, and the voice of the kingdom will be Babylonian. Like Nebuchadnezzar, antichrist will demand that all men worship his new image of 'man'.

The judgement of antichrist

Most significantly, the prophet Daniel also saw the judgement of antichrist and his kingdom. After seeing the vision of the Ancient of Days taking His

seat to judge the world, Daniel continued, 'I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame'. Dan 7:11. Antichrist will speak pompous words against the Father when he presumes to create a new image of man. The angel explained to Daniel, concerning the judgement of antichrist, 'The court shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it forever.' Dan 7:26.

When the Father takes His seat, the temple of God on the top of Mount Zion will also become a court of judgement. Dan 7:10. During the time of the end, this court will continue to sit as it progressively passes judgement upon every enemy of Christ. In this regard, the court will be 'in session' well before the emergence of antichrist in the world. In the time of the end, the court that belongs to the Father will progressively pass sentence upon Satan, the rulers of the seventh world kingdom, and the administration of Babylon. The court will also sit to pass judgement upon antichrist in the one hour that precedes his 3 ½-year reign. The outpouring of the seven vials, in that one hour, will be the full manifestation of the wrath of God upon antichrist and his kingdom. Rev 15:1.

Antichrist will use the 3 ½ years of his reign to gather the kings of the earth, along with their armies, for the battle of Armageddon. Rev 16:14,16. At the end of his reign, Jesus Christ will physically return to defeat antichrist and his armies. Rev 19:11,19. Christ will seize antichrist, and his false prophet, and throw them alive into the lake of fire. Rev 19:20. The apostle Paul said that Christ will consume antichrist with the breath of His mouth and destroy him with the brightness of His coming. 2Th 2:8. He will then slay every other person who belongs to the kingdom of antichrist with the sword that proceeds from His mouth. Rev 19:21.

This brings us to the conclusion of Daniel's vision. The angel declared, 'Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.' Dan 7:27. When the Father takes His seat, the saints will *receive the kingdom*. They will progressively *take possession* of the kingdom as each enemy is progressively brought into subjection under the feet of Christ. This will include antichrist. We know that the last enemy to be destroyed will be death itself. 1Co 15:26. The most succinct summary of the entire prophetic vision is, 'The saints of the Most High shall *receive* the kingdom, and *possess* the kingdom forever, even forever and ever'. Dan 7:18.

Chapter 3

The Ancient of Days and the Son of Man

In our previous chapter, we began to consider Daniel's prophetic dream which is recorded in Chapter 7 of the book of Daniel. We noted that Daniel's single dream contained four visions. We then considered the two portions of the dream which focus on the world kingdoms, including the rise of Antichrist and his final judgement. In this chapter, we will focus on the *other two visions* in Daniel's prophetic dream. Daniel was given a profound revelation of the time when the Father will take His seat. Dan 7:9-10. He was also shown the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven, to be presented before the throne of the Father. Dan 7:13-14. These two prophetic visions identify the two major events that will happen at the beginning of the time of the end.

In Daniel's dream, as soon as he saw the emergence of the little horn, with eyes like a man and a mouth speaking pompous words, that portion of his dream came to an end without a resolution. Dan 7:8. The Lord evidently wanted to show him something else before showing him the judgement of the little horn. In this regard, we can compare Daniel's prophetic dream to the structure of the book of Revelation. John saw multiple visions that belonged to the one revelation. At the beginning of a new vision, the

apostle John was often taken back, in the Spirit, to a major waypoint so that he could see the same period of time from a different perspective. Rev 7:1. Rev 14:1.

The Ancient of Days

Daniel described his vision of the Father taking His seat by saying, 'I kept looking until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, its wheels were a burning fire.' Dan 7:9. The Ancient of Days is God the Father. We know that the Ancient of Days is not the Son because, in the subsequent vision, Daniel saw the Son of Man being presented to the Ancient of Days. The name 'Ancient of Days' is used only in the book of Daniel, but the meaning of the name as it applies specifically to the Father is expanded in the book of Revelation. The Father is often called 'the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!' Rev 4:8.

The Covenant of the Father is outside of time and eternity. In the fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim*, the Father is the source and architect of the entire creation. As the Lord of the heavens and the earth, He is completely sovereign over the times and seasons that belong to His creation. Mat 11:25. Dan 2:21. Act 1:7. We read in the book of Revelation that 'whenever the living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to Him who sits on the throne [the Father], who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created".' Rev 4:9-11.

The prophet Daniel's vision of the Ancient of Days seated upon His throne is a direct parallel to John's vision of the Father seated upon His throne. The apostle John began his description of the Father's throne room by saying, 'Immediately, I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and *One sat on the throne* ... around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.' Rev 4:2-4. It is significant that both John and Daniel saw twenty-four thrones around the throne of the Father. The twenty-four thrones belong to the world-wide presbytery that will shepherd the entire kingdom of God in the time of the end.

The throne room of the Father is the third heaven. 2Co 12:2. The *third heaven* is distinct from the *second heaven* which belongs to the angels, and from the *first heaven* which belongs to the natural universe. In the Scriptures, the third heaven is also called 'the sides of the north'. Psa 48:2. Isa 14:13. It is the top of Mount Zion. When we talk about the Father *taking His seat*, we know that His throne is not a physical seat. When the Father takes His seat, it is not a physical movement. Nor are we implying that the Father is presently standing up or is wandering around heaven. The Father is Spirit. The throne of the Father is the seat of His intrinsic authority. When the Father takes His seat, it means that He will express the authority of His kingship from the top of Mount Zion to all of the inhabitants in the New Jerusalem, and to the world.

The Father will be seated as the sovereign King upon His throne to judge the heavens and the earth. There are many prophetic Scriptures that describe the time when the Father will take His seat to judge the world. For example, the psalmist proclaimed, 'Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous all around Him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people. "Gather My saints together to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice". Let the heavens declare His righteousness, for God Himself is Judge. Selah.' Psa 50:2-6.

It is notable that a fire will 'devour before' the Father and it will be 'very tempestuous' around Him. Psa 50:3. When the Father takes His seat, it will initiate the great and terrible day of the Lord. Joe 2:11. We are reminded that the day of the Lord burns like a furnace. Mal 4:1. The fire is more than the outcome of God's judgement. It is the outcome of His Presence! In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul declared that the Father is a consuming fire. Speaking to those who dwell in the heavenly Jerusalem, he said, 'Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God [the Father] with reverence and godly fear. For our God *is a consuming fire*.' Heb 12:28-29.

When we consider that the Father is a consuming fire, and that He will take His seat in the middle of the heavenly Jerusalem, we understand why the prophet Isaiah declared, 'The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" ' The prophet Daniel described the throne of the Father by saying, 'His throne was *a fiery flame*, its wheels *a burning fire*; a *fiery stream* issued and came forth from before Him.' Dan 7:9-10. The Father's Presence will be the fire of His judgement upon those who have rejected the fellowship of Christ's

offering and His cleansing initiative toward them. However, for those who have embraced their fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings, the very same fire will be the light of the Father's fellowship. Isa 10:17. The apostle John declared, 'God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all.' 1Jn 1:5.

The administration of the Father's throne

During the church age, Jesus Christ is presently seated on His own throne at the right hand of God. He is seated at the right hand of the Father as our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Heb 8:1. The throne of the Son is the throne of grace in the most holy place of the true temple on the top of Mount Zion. The administration of the Son's throne is presently extended to earth through the seven stars in His right hand. The seven stars belong to *the administration of the lampstand* in the true temple. The grace that is ministered by the seven stars in the right hand of Christ enables His lampstand churches to reveal the glory of His name on earth. The members of Christ's lampstand churches are His witnesses, by the Spirit, in all nations. Act 1:8.

In the time of the end, the Father will also be seated on His throne on the top of Mount Zion in the third heaven. At that time, Jesus Christ will shift His entire administration to be 'in and around' the Father's throne. Rev 4. The administration of the Father's throne will be extended to the earth through the twenty-four thrones. The twenty-four thrones belong to *the administration of the table of shewbread* in the true temple. The grace that will be ministered by the world-wide presbytery, with its twenty-four divisions, or courses, will enable the firstfruits of the true Israel of God to reveal the glory of the Father's name on earth in the time of the end.

Jesus referred to this revelation of the Father's glory in the parable of the wheat and the tares. Speaking about the time when the Father takes His seat to establish His kingdom on earth, Jesus said, '*Then* the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.' Mat 13:43. It is remarkable to consider that there will be a manifestation of the sons of God, in firstfruits measure, in the time of the end. We know that our name as a son of God is presently hidden with Christ in the bosom of the Father. Col 3:3. Our preoccupation during the church age is to reveal Christ as the members of His lampstand churches. However, when the Father takes His seat, our focus will shift to the revelation of the Father as the citizens of His kingdom.

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul declared that the whole creation is groaning and eagerly waiting for the manifestation of the sons

of God. Rom 8:19. The manifestation of the sons of God, in *immortality*, will not happen until Christ's physical return and the day of resurrection. In this regard, we presently 'groan within ourselves, by the Spirit, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body'. Rom 8:23. However, prior to the day of resurrection, there will be a manifestation of the sons of God, in *mortality*, when the Father takes His seat. The resurrection life that the Father will supply in His *agape* meal in the time of the end will enable a great company of sons of God to reveal Him to the world while still in their mortal bodies.

The overcomers from Christ's lampstand churches will be sanctified and sealed to reveal the Father in the time of the end when *the name of the Father* is inscribed upon their foreheads. The name of the Father is the seal of the living God. The 144 000 will receive this seal as the firstfruits of the true Israel of God, prior to the opening of the seals. The apostle John declared, 'Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.' Rev 14:1. The 144 000 will reveal the Father as they proclaim the gospel of the Father's kingdom as a testimony in all nations. Mat 24:14.

The 144 000 will be the evangelists who will bring in the great multitude from every tribe, nation, people, and tongue. Rev 7:9. The great multitude who come into the kingdom of God in the time of the end will also receive their inheritance in the New Jerusalem. The fellowship of the New Jerusalem will reach to the ends of the earth. The great multitude will join the wedding feast that the Father has prepared for Christ and the church as the fulfilment of the true Feast of Tabernacles. Significantly, the Father Himself will dwell among this great multitude and will spread His tabernacle over them. Rev 7:15. Isa 4:5-6. The tabernacle of God will be with men. Rev 21:3. God Himself will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Rev 7:17.

The Son of Man coming with clouds

The prophet Daniel described his vision of the Son of Man coming with clouds by saying, 'I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him.' Dan 7:13. The Ancient of Days is the Father. Jesus Christ is the Son of Man. He became the glorified Son of Man on His offering journey from the last supper to the cross. On the day of His resurrection, Jesus Christ was the full revelation of Man in the image and likeness of God. Gen 1:26. 2Co 3:18. 2Co 4:4. Rom 8:29.

THE FATHER WILL TAKE HIS SEAT

As we have already considered, when Jesus Christ ascended from the Mount of Olives, He did not sit down upon the Father's throne. Rather, He sat down *on His own throne* at the right hand of the Father. The Father said to Him, 'Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool.' Psa 110:1. We read in the book of Hebrews that Christ 'sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward, until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet'. Heb 10:12-13. Jesus Christ is presently seated at the right hand of the Father, *waiting for the time* when the Father will take His seat. When the Father takes His seat as the Ancient of Days, Jesus Christ will stand up from His throne to be presented before Him. Dan 7:13.

Significantly, when Jesus Christ is presented before the Ancient of Days, He will be accompanied by the clouds of heaven. 'The clouds of heaven' are Christ's witnesses. In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul encouraged us all by saying, 'Since we are surrounded by so great *a cloud of witnesses*, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.' Heb 12:1-2.

We know that there is already a great cloud of witnesses in heaven who have died in faith and have received the glory of their heavenly body. Heb 11. However, we are also surrounded by a great cloud of *living witnesses* on the earth. The living witnesses of Christ are those who reveal Him, by the Spirit, as the members of His body and His bride. Immediately before His ascension to take His seat at the right hand of God, Jesus said to His disciples, 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be *My witnesses* both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.' Act 1:8.

The living witnesses of Christ on earth are called 'the clouds of heaven' because *our citizenship* is in heaven. Php 3:20. When we are born as a son of God, the glory of our sonship is immediately hidden with Christ in God, even though we still reside in our physical body on earth. Col 3:3. Furthermore, when we are baptised into Christ, the Father places us in the fellowship of the body of Christ where He chooses. 1Co 12:18. We become the mortal members, on earth, of the immortal body of Christ, which is in heaven. As individual members of the body of Christ, we reveal His name and glory by the power of the Spirit. 2Co 4:6.

Also, the Father places us within the community of the church as the bride of Christ on earth. Eph 3:14-15. Rev 21:10. The bride of Christ comprises

believing families who belong to a local congregation, in a city or communicable area, within the fellowship of a lampstand church. Each congregation within a lampstand church should be a local manifestation of the bride of Christ. 2Co 11:2. 2Jn 1:1. 1Pe 5:13. In this regard, there is an *individual* dimension as well as a *corporate* dimension to being a witness of Christ. We are witnesses of Christ as individual members of His body. 1Co 12:27. However, we are also part of a corporate witness of Christ as those who belong to the community of the bride of Christ in a local congregation. Mat 5:14.

The first phase of His coming – to His churches

The coming of Christ ‘with the clouds of heaven’ is an important scriptural theme in the book of Daniel, in the teaching of Jesus, in the writings of the apostle Paul, and in the book of Revelation. Dan 7:13. Mar 13:26. Mar 14:62. Rev 1:7. The Scriptures identify *four distinct phases* when Jesus Christ comes with the clouds of heaven; that is, with ‘the clouds’ of His witnesses.

The *first phase* of Christ’s coming with clouds is during the church age. Jesus Christ is presently seated at the right hand of God in the middle of His lampstand churches. Rev 1:12-13. He is *coming to His lampstand churches* through the ministry of the presbyteries, which are likened to stars, in His right hand. In the court of Caiaphas, Jesus referred to the first phase of His coming. Speaking about the ministry of His messengers during the church age, he said to the high priest, ‘You will see the Son of Man *sitting* at the right hand of the Power [Father], and *coming* with the clouds of heaven.’ Mat 14:62. We know that Jesus was talking about the church age, because He described Himself as being *seated* at the right hand of God.

It is important to recognise that Jesus Christ is not presently coming with clouds to the world so that all the tribes of the earth will mourn. Rev 1:7. Rather, during the church age, He is *coming to His lampstand churches through the word* that is proclaimed by the messengers in His right hand. 2Co 13:1. Gal 4:14. In this phase of His coming, He is *seen only* by those who turn to the lordship of the Holy Spirit in response to the word of God that is proclaimed to them. When a person turns to the Holy Spirit, the veil that has covered their eyes is removed and they can meet Christ face to face. 2Co 3:16-17. Looking into the face of Christ as into a mirror, a person can see, by the Spirit, the true condition of their own heart, and the glory of their sonship. 2Co 3:18.

In our day, Jesus Christ is walking among His lampstand churches with 'eyes like a flame of fire' and 'feet like burnished bronze'. Rev 2:18. He is coming to wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and to purge relational bloodshed from the heavenly Jerusalem by the spirit of judgement and burning. Isa 4:4. This means that Christ is coming with eyes like a flame of fire to address the uncleanness in every family and congregation who belong to the heavenly Jerusalem. It is only those families and congregations who receive and embrace the cleansing initiative of Christ who will *remain in the heavenly Jerusalem* and will be ready for the time when the Father takes His seat. Isa 4:3.

The second phase of His coming – to the Father

The *second phase* of Christ's coming with clouds will happen when the Father takes His seat to initiate the time of the end. When the Father takes His seat, Jesus Christ will stand up from His throne, and will then *come to the Father* with the clouds of heaven. Dan 7:9. He will be accompanied by all the overcomers from lampstand churches who have learned to walk blamelessly with Him in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. Rev 3:5. During this phase of His coming, Jesus Christ will move His entire administration to the throne of the Father. This will be a major transition! In the time of the end, the administration of Christ will be 'in and around' the Father's throne. Rev 4.

The prophet Daniel described the outcome of Christ's coming to the Father by saying, 'Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.' Dan 7:14. When the Father takes His seat, the time will come for Christ to rule in the midst of His enemies. Psa 110:2. His enemies will be made to be a footstool for His feet. Psa 110:1. The Father will give the throne of David to Jesus Christ and His overseers. Jer 33:17. 'The throne of David' is the twenty-four thrones that are around the throne of the Father. Rev 3:21. Rev 4:4.

When Jesus Christ is presented before the Ancient of Days, with the clouds of heaven, He will *confess the name* of each of His witnesses before the Father. Speaking about His cloud of witnesses, Jesus said, 'Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.' Mat 10:32-33. Likewise, Jesus said to the presbytery and lampstand church in Sardis, 'He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book

of Life; but I will *confess his name before My Father* and before His angels [messengers].’ Rev 3:5.

This is an important point. Jesus Christ will confess the name of every overcomer to the Father *before* the Father instructs Christ to place the seal of the living God upon the forehead of each overcomer. Rev 7:2. ‘The seal of the living God’ is the name of the Father. Rev 14:1. The name of the Father will be inscribed upon the foreheads of the 144 000 as the firstfruits of the true Israel of God. Rev 14:1,4. The 144 000 will be sealed as the servants of God before Jesus Christ begins to open the seven seals upon the scroll. Rev 7:1-4. The scroll with the seven seals contains the full revelation of the Father’s will in relation to both salvation and judgement, in the time of the end. Rev 5:1-7.

The prophet Daniel saw the Son of Man receive dominion and glory and a kingdom from the Father. Dan 7:14. The scroll with the seven seals includes the authority for Christ to establish the Father’s kingdom on the earth. When the Father gives the scroll to Christ as the Lamb of God, His ascension-gift overseers, and the world-wide presbytery on the twenty-four thrones, will bow down to worship Him. Rev 5:8. They will all sing a new song before the Lamb, saying, ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and *we shall reign on the earth.*’ Rev 5:9-10.

The third phase of His coming – to the world

The *third phase* of Christ’s coming with clouds will commence when He opens the first seal upon the scroll. The apostle John recorded, ‘I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, “Come and see”. And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.’ Rev 6:1-2. When the first seal is opened, the 144 000 will be sent to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of God as a testimony in all nations. Mat 24:14. They will shatter the power of the seventh world kingdom as they bring a great multitude from every tribe, nation, people, and tongue into the kingdom of God.

During this phase of Christ’s coming with clouds, He will be seen by a great multitude in all nations. We read in the book of Revelation, ‘Behold, He is coming with clouds and *every eye will see Him*, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is

to be. Amen.’ Rev 1:7. The great multitude who come into the kingdom of God during the opening of the seals will include the regathering of the remnant of Ephraim as part of the fullness of the nations. Gen 48:19. Rom 11:25. It will also include the salvation of at least one third of the Jewish nation at the opening of the sixth seal. Zec 13:9. Speaking specifically about the sixth seal, Jesus said, ‘Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.’ Mat 13:26.

The fourth phase of His coming – the resurrection

The *fourth phase* of Christ’s coming with clouds will happen when He *physically returns* to earth at the end of the age. We are reminded that when Christ physically ascended from the Mount of Olives, a cloud received Him out of the sight of the disciples. Act 1:9. Christ was welcomed into the third heaven by every son of God who had already died in faith and received their heavenly body. While the disciples continued to look up in astonishment, two men said to them, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.’ Act 1:11.

The two witnesses of Christ were talking about Christ’s *physical second coming* with clouds. When Jesus Christ physically returns, He will be accompanied by a great cloud of heavenly witnesses. This cloud of witnesses will include all those who have died in the fellowship of Christ’s offering and sufferings – both before the cross and after the cross. In his letter to the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul said, ‘I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God *will bring with Him* those who have fallen asleep [physically died] in Jesus.’ 1Th 4:13-14.

On the day of resurrection, Jesus Christ will physically descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. 1Th 4:16. By the proclamation of His word, He will recreate, from the dust of the ground, a physical body for every son of God who has died in Him. Joh 6:40,44,54. Each resurrection body will be composed from the DNA of Christ’s resurrection body. As each son of God inhabits their incorruptible and immortal body from Christ, it will be clothed with the glory of their heavenly body that they have already received from the Father. 2Co 5:1. The union of the physical body from Christ, and the heavenly body from the Father, will form their spiritual body. 1Co 15:44.

On the same day of resurrection, the physical body that belongs to every son of God who is alive and remaining will be changed, or transformed, by the word of Christ. The apostle Paul declared, 'I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep [physically die], but we will all be changed - in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall all be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.' 1Co 15:51-53. After our physical body has been changed by the word of Christ, we will be clothed with the glory of our heavenly body from the Father, giving us a spiritual body that is suitable for the new heavens and the new earth. 1Co 15:50. 2Co 5:1-5.

Ready for His coming

Having identified the four phases of Christ's coming with clouds, we know that the focus in Daniel's prophetic vision was *the second phase* of His coming. That is, Daniel saw the Son of Man, accompanied by His witnesses, coming to be presented to the Father after the Father had taken His seat. Dan 7:13. During His earthly ministry, Jesus likened this phase of His coming to be like a thief in the night. Mat 24:43-44. We do not know the day or the hour when the Father will take His seat. Act 1:7. For this reason, the coming of the Son of Man to His lampstand churches for the purpose of taking all the overcomers with Him to the Father's throne, will also be at an hour that we do not expect.

This is an important point. When Jesus Christ stands up to move to the Father's throne, He will be accompanied only by those who are awake, watching, and ready for His coming. Mat 25:1-13. Jesus said to the disciples, 'Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming - in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning - lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping, and what I say to you, I say to all: watch!' Mar 13:37. The Holy Spirit enables us to obey Christ's command to watch and pray with Him by joining us to the fellowship of His prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. Mat 26:41. Rom 8:26.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus repeatedly emphasised the need for us to be ready for His coming at an hour that we do not expect. For example, speaking about the time when the Father will take His seat, Jesus said, 'But of that day and hour no-one knows, not even the angels of heaven, *but My Father only*. But as the days of Noah were so, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered

THE FATHER WILL TAKE HIS SEAT

the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.' Mat 24:36-39.

The ark was the place of safety for Noah and his family in the day of God's judgement upon the world. When the Father takes His seat to judge the world in the time of the end, the only place of safety for every son of God will be under the shadow of the Father's tabernacle on Mount Zion.

Isa 4:5-6. As sons of God who have been baptised into Christ, we know that we have already come to Mount Zion. Heb 12:22. However, we will not remain in Mount Zion unless we embrace the cleansing initiative of Christ toward our families in the season of His visitation. The cleansing initiative of Christ toward His lampstand churches will polarise all the inhabitants of Mount Zion before the Father takes His seat. Isa 4:4.

Speaking about the outcome of this polarisation, the prophet Isaiah declared, 'It shall come to pass that he who is *left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem* will be called holy - everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem.' Isa 4:3. When the Father takes His seat, He will spread His tabernacle over all the families who have been cleansed by Christ and remain in the heavenly Jerusalem. Isaiah continued, 'Then the Lord will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a covering.' Isa 4:5.

When we consider the polarising impact of God's word upon all the inhabitants of Mount Zion, we understand why Jesus said, 'Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.' Mat 24:40-43. Those who are not ready for the coming of the Son of Man when the Father takes His seat will be swept away, or taken away, in God's judgement upon the world. Mat 13:30. In contrast to this, every overcomer who remains in Mount Zion will accompany Christ into the wedding feast that the Father has prepared for Christ and His Bride in the time of the end. Mat 25:10.

Chapter 4

The throne of David

The prophet Isaiah declared concerning Jesus, 'For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders, and His name will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, *upon the throne of David and over his kingdom*, to order it and establish it with judgement and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.' Isa 9:6-7. 'The throne of David' is the authority to order and establish the administration that will shepherd the entire kingdom of God in the time of the end.

In a similar way, the angel Gabriel said to Mary concerning Jesus, 'He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and *the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David*; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.' Luk 1:32-33. Jesus Christ is the Son of David. As the Son of David, He will receive the throne of David, which is the authority to reign over the house of Jacob forever. As we have considered in other publications, 'the house of Jacob' is *the true Israel of God* that has come forth from the wellsprings of Judah through the offering of Jesus Christ. Isa 48:1.

The angel Gabriel proclaimed that God the Father *will give* the throne of David to Jesus Christ. In this chapter, we are asking an important question: 'When does Jesus Christ receive the throne of David from God the Father?' As the Son of David, Jesus Christ has already been declared to be the Son of God with power on the day of His resurrection. Rom 1:3-4. He is the first Man in the image and likeness of God. The Scriptures declare that 'David shall never lack *a man* to sit on the throne of the house of Israel'. Jer 33:17. Jesus Christ is *the Man* who will be seated upon the throne of David to order and establish the kingdom of God on the earth. However, He has not yet received this throne from the Father.

During the forty days after His resurrection, Jesus explained 'all things pertaining to the kingdom of God' to the disciples. Act 1:3. Immediately before His ascension from the Mount of Olives, the disciples asked Him, 'Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' Act 1:6. The disciples were effectively asking, 'Lord, will You at this time take your seat upon the throne of David?' Christ replied, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.' Act 1:7. It will be the Father's own sovereign initiative to take His seat, and then to *give the throne of David* to Jesus Christ and His overseers to establish the kingdom that belongs to the true Israel of God.

When Jesus Christ ascended from the Mount of Olives, He did not sit down on the throne of God the Father, nor on the throne of His father, David. Rather, He sat down *on His own throne* at the right hand of God. Notably, it was King David who prophetically declared, 'The LORD [the Father] said to *my Lord* [Christ], "Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool".' Psa 110:1. The throne of the Son is at the right hand of God in the third heaven at the top of Mount Zion. Seated on His own throne, as our great High Priest, the Son is *waiting until the time* when the Father will make His enemies to be a footstool for His feet. Heb 10:12-13.

When the Father takes His seat, He will give the throne of David to Jesus Christ and His overseers. Our key point in this chapter is that the throne of David *is the twenty-four thrones* that will be set around the Father's throne in the time of the end. The twenty-four thrones belong to one, world-wide presbytery with twenty-four courses, or divisions. This one presbytery will oversee the whole kingdom of God in the time of the end. Jesus said to the presbytery in Laodicea, 'To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down [*or will sit down*] with My Father on His throne.' Rev 3:21.

All things under His feet

In the time of the end, the Father will be seated as the King, on His own intrinsic throne. However, the rulership over His kingdom will be given to Jesus Christ and His overseers. When the Father takes His seat on Mount Zion, He will then send 'the rod of Christ's strength' out of Zion with the command to 'Rule in the midst of Your enemies!' Psa 110:2. This is the time when the enemies of Christ will become a footstool for His feet. The rod of Christ's strength is also called 'the rod of iron'. Psa 2:9. The rod of iron will belong to Jesus Christ and the presbytery ruling on the twenty-four thrones; and its power and authority will be revealed by the 144 000 as they proclaim the gospel of the kingdom in all nations. Rev 2:26-27. God will use the ministry of the 144 000 to shatter the power of the seventh world kingdom like a potter's vessel. Psa 2:8-9.

Speaking about the rulership of Jesus Christ in the time of the end, King David declared, 'He will *shatter* kings in the day of His wrath. He will judge among the nations, He will fill them with corpses, He will *shatter* the chief men over a broad country.' Psa 110:5-6. The kings who are described in Psalm 2, and the kings who are described in Psalm 110, are the rulers of the seventh world kingdom. Psa 2:1-3. As we considered in Chapter 1, they are the same kings who were depicted as the *ten toes* of the statue in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Daniel declared, 'In the days of *those kings*, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed.' Dan 2:44. Likewise, as we considered in Chapter 2, they are the same kings who were depicted as the *ten horns* on the great and terrible beast in Daniel's prophetic dream. Dan 7:24.

It is helpful to recognise that Psalm 110 is the interpretive key to understanding Paul's discussion in his letter to the Corinthians regarding the reign of Christ in the Father's kingdom. It is the Father who will put all things under the feet of Christ. Psa 110:1. The Father will take the rulership from the kings in the seventh world kingdom and will give it to Christ and His overseers. Psa 110:2. Having received this authority from the Father, Christ and His overseers will reign in the Father's kingdom until every enemy has been conquered. The last enemy that will be conquered by Christ in the time of the end will be death itself. Death will be swallowed up in victory when Christ physically returns on the day of resurrection. 1Co 15:54. Hell and death will then be cast into the lake of fire at the end of the millennial rest. Rev 20:14.

Paul explained to the Corinthians, 'Then comes *the end* when He [Christ] delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He [Christ] puts an end to all rule and all authority and *all* power. For He [Christ] must reign until He [Father] has put all enemies under His [Christ's] feet. The last enemy that

will be destroyed is death. For “He [Father] has put all things under His [Christ’s] feet.” But when he says “all things are put under Him”, it is evident that He [Father] who put all things under Him [Christ] is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him [Christ], then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him [Father] who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.’ 1Co 15:24-28.

Restating the point: when the Father takes His seat, He will put all things into subjection to Christ and His overseers. Christ will stand up and will move His administration to the Father’s throne. Christ will begin to reign, or rule, in heaven and on the earth through the administration of the twenty-four thrones. The heavens will be cleansed, and Christ will progressively conquer and vanquish every enemy on the earth. During the time of the end, He will shatter the power of the seventh world kingdom, judge the administration of Babylon that has ruled over all seven world kingdoms, and will cast Antichrist into the lake of fire. Once He has destroyed every enemy, including death itself, He will then deliver the entire kingdom to God the Father. It is the Father’s kingdom forever!

A footstool for His feet

When we consider the meaning of Christ’s enemies being ‘made a footstool for His feet’, it is important that we understand the distinction between the feet of Christ and His footstool. The footstool is *under His feet*. When the victorious commander of an army placed his foot upon the neck of a defeated commander, it signified that the battle had been won. We observe this principle in the Scriptures when the nation of Israel entered the promised land under the leadership of Joshua. Having defeated the armies of five Amorite kings in battle, Joshua ‘called for all the men of Israel, and said to the captains of the men of war who went with him, “Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings”.’ Jos 10:24.

Significantly, Jesus Christ has already conquered every enemy during His offering journey from the last supper to the cross! When Jesus Christ proclaimed, ‘It is finished!’, from the cross, He had already put an end to all rule and authority through His descending journey as the Father’s conquering Slave. Joh 19:30. This included the disempowerment of the religious leaders, the rulers of the world, Satan and all demonic principalities, and even death itself. We know that Christ has already destroyed death, because it was impossible for Him to be held by its power. Act 2:24. Death, as the last enemy of Christ, was fully destroyed when the heart of Christ was broken. After this seventh wound, the physical body of Christ was incorruptible and immortal while He still hung on the cross.

In the first case, we were all the enemies of Christ. The apostle Paul declared that Christ died for us while we were still His enemies. Rom 5:10. The Father made us all to be a footstool for the feet of Christ, through His descending journey to the cross. However, when the word of the cross is proclaimed to us, the prevenient grace of God gives us the opportunity to choose to *worship at His footstool*. Psa 99:5. We 'worship at His footstool' by bowing our knee before Christ and confessing that He is Lord. Php 2:10. As we have been considering in this season, it is possible to bow our knee before Christ only when we have turned to the lordship of the Holy Spirit and have asked for His help to bow our knee! 2Co 3:17. 1Co 12:3.

Once we have bowed our knee before Christ, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the Father is able to place us in the fellowship of the body of Christ in the place where He chooses. 1Co 12:18. As bondslaves of Jesus Christ, we become part of the administration of His feet on the earth. It is important to remember that the fellowship of the body of Christ connects and encompasses both heaven and earth. As the mortal members of Christ's immortal body in heaven, we have been raised to sit with Christ in heavenly places, while, at the same time, we are revealing Him as *the administration of His feet* on the earth. Act 1:8.

In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul proclaimed that the Father has already placed all things under the feet of Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand. Eph 1:17-23. However, in his letter to the Hebrews, Paul said that Christ sat down at the right hand of God and is still waiting for His enemies to be made a footstool for His feet. He said, 'This Man [the glorified Son of Man], after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, *from that time waiting* until His enemies are made His footstool.' Heb 10:12-13. There is no contradiction between the book of Ephesians and the book of Hebrews. Jesus Christ did personally conquer every enemy on His offering journey. He trampled the winepress alone. Isa 63:3.

The Father has already placed all things under the personal feet of Christ. However, *we do not yet see* all His enemies under His feet, because they have not yet been brought under *the administration of Christ's feet* on the earth. When the Father takes His seat, He will place all the enemies of Christ under the feet of Christ's administration. Speaking about the time when the Father will take His seat, the psalmist declared, 'The Lord Most High [the Father] is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth. He will subdue the peoples under us, *and the nations under our feet* ... sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! For God is the King of all the earth ... God reigns over the nations; God [the Father] sits on His holy throne.' Psa 47:3,6-8.

The house of David

In this season, we have been considering the composition of the true house of Jacob. In a similar way, we need to consider the composition of the true house of David. In this regard, there is an important distinction between the house of David and the house of Judah, even though we know that David belonged to the tribe of Judah. The descendants of the house of Judah are the Jews. The true Israel of God has come forth from the wellsprings of Judah through the offering of Jesus Christ. Isa 48:1. It includes both Jews and Gentiles *in the one body of Christ*. There has been a remnant of the Jewish nation within the fellowship of the body of Christ throughout the church age. In the time of the end, the Scripture reveals that one third of the Jewish nation will be saved. Zec 13:9.

In the natural, the house of David came from the house of Judah. However, through the offering of Christ, the house of David now comes from the true Israel of God and may be populated by both Jews and Gentiles. It is not the natural descendants of David who comprise the true house of David, any more than it is the natural descendants of Abraham who comprise the true Israel of God. Rom 9:7. This is an important point. The house of David is part of the new creation that was formed by Christ on His offering journey from the last supper to the cross. It is significant that the prophet Nathan told David that his house would be *made*, or *created*, by the Lord. Nathan said to David, 'The LORD tells you that *He will make you a house.*' 2Sa 7:11.

Speaking about the enduring nature of David's house, the prophet Nathan said to him, 'When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your Seed after you, who will be from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.' 2Sa 7:12-13. We know that this prophecy was not fulfilled by Solomon, because his kingdom did not endure forever. In fact, the kingdom of Israel was split in the days of Solomon's son, who was David's grandson. 1Ki 12. The promise to David was fulfilled only in Christ, who is the Seed of David.

Notably, the prophet Nathan continued to proclaim the word of God the Father concerning Christ as the Seed of David, 'I will be His Father, and He shall be My Son. If He commits iniquity, I will chasten Him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men.' 2Sa 7:14. It would be easy to disregard this verse on the basis that Jesus Christ did not commit iniquity. However, in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus Christ fully identified Himself with our sin and iniquity. He who knew no sin became sin for us. 2Co 5:21. Christ was made a sin offering on our behalf by the Father. Then, as our great High Priest, He offered Himself to God. Isa 53:10.

Heb 9:14-15. The chastening that He experienced on His offering journey was completely *for our sake*.

The Scriptures identify three dimensions of chastening that Jesus Christ experienced on His offering journey to the cross. In the court of Caiaphas, He was beaten with rods for *our peace*. Isa 53:5. As Christ endured this chastening with rods in the court of Caiaphas, He removed the enmity that existed between Jews and Gentiles, and He made one new man in Himself. The apostle Paul declared concerning this wounding event, 'For He Himself is *our peace*, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself *one new man* from the two, thus making peace.' Eph 2:14-15. 'The one new man' is the corporate body of Christ, which includes both Jews and Gentiles.

In the Praetorium, Jesus Christ was further chastened when He was scourged by the Roman soldiers. The blood that was shed when He was scourged by the soldiers was for *our healing*. Isa 53:5. When we submit ourselves to the Father's chastening in our lives, as our fellowship in Christ's scourging, it is the full provision for our individual healing as sons of God. Heb 12:13. Further to this, from a prophetic perspective, the Father's judgement upon the world in the time of the end will provide the opportunity for the nations to repent and to learn righteousness. Isa 26:9. The blood of Christ that flowed from His scourging was for the healing of the nations. The prophet Isaiah declared, 'So shall He sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; for what had not been told them they shall see, and what they had not heard they shall consider.' Isa 52:15.

The third dimension of Christ's chastening also occurred in the Praetorium. The soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and placed it upon His head. Mat 27:29. Having placed a rod in His hand as a mock scepter, the soldiers then beat Him on the head with the rod. Mat 27:30. They used the rod to drive the crown of thorns into His head. It is likely that the prophet Nathan was referring to this mock scepter, which was made by the Gentiles, when he said that the Son of David would be chastened with 'the rod of men'. Using this rod, the Gentile soldiers repeatedly struck the head and face of Christ with the blows of the sons of men. 2Sa 7:14. It is likely that the prophet Micah was also referring to this wounding event when he said, 'They will strike the judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek.' Mic 5:1.

The blood that was shed from the crown of thorns established *Christ's headship* over the true Israel of God, and His kingship over all the nations

of the world. The blood from this wounding event is the provision for every family to be reconnected to the headship of Christ. This is possible because Christ has established *a new house of David* to minister the grace of His headship to the church as the true Israel of God. In contrast to the worthless shepherds who do not care for the flock, the house of David comprises the faithful shepherds who feed and tend the Lord's flock which has been dispersed among the nations for the period of the church age. Zec 11:16-17.

From the sheepfold to the throne

In practical terms, the house of David includes all those who have been set apart by the Holy Spirit to be overseers within the fellowship of the body of Christ. The apostle Paul said to the overseers in Ephesus, 'Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.' Act 20:28. Likewise, the apostle Peter wrote to the overseers, 'Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd [Christ] appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.' 1Pe 5:2-4.

The order of twenty-four belongs to the house of David. During the church age, the overseers who belong to the order of twenty-four are not yet seated with Christ on the twenty-four thrones around the throne of the Father. Rev 3:21. Rather, the order of twenty-four is hidden within the fellowship of Christ's lampstand churches. The typology of the lampstand in the tabernacle of Moses supports this point. There were twenty-four knobs, or bulbs, that belonged to each lampstand. Exo 25:31-40. The grace of overseership is essential for the proper growth and formation of a lampstand church. Likewise, the grace of overseership is necessary within each presbytery.

We are reminded that David was, first and foremost, a humble shepherd who faithfully looked after the sheep. 1Sa 16:1-13. The Lord said to David, through Nathan the prophet, 'I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel.' 2Sa 7:8. During the church age, the elect have been scattered to the four winds in lampstand churches. In every place, the Lord has appointed overseers to shepherd His flock among the nations. Speaking about the house of David during the church age, the Lord declared through the prophet Jeremiah, 'I will give you shepherds according to My heart [i.e. like David] who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.' Jer 3:15.

The church age is 'the day of small things'. Zec 4:10. During the church age, the overseers who belong to the house of David must be faithful and obedient in what is least. Luk 16:10. When the Father takes His seat, Jesus Christ will take every overcoming presbyter from His lampstand churches with Him to the Father's throne. The overseers who have been faithful in what is least during the church age will be gathered from the sheepfolds in every nation to the throne room of the Father. Once the Father has taken His seat, the throne of Christ will be the twenty-four thrones. Rev 3:21. When the Father gives the throne of David to Christ and His overseers, the house of David will be enthroned on twenty-four thrones around the Father's throne. Rev 4:2-3. Dan 7:9.

There is an important distinction between the twenty-four thrones around the throne of the Father and the 144 000 who will stand before the throne of God. Rev 14:5. The twenty-four thrones are the administration of the throne of David that belongs to *the house of David*. The 144 000 belong to *the house of Jacob* as the firstfruits of the true Israel of God. Rev 14:3-4. The 144 000 comprise the walls and gates of the New Jerusalem. Rev 21:12-17. It will be the work of the 144 000 to evangelise the nations in the time of the end. Rev 6:1-2. We could liken the 144 000 to the vanguard of a great army who will overcome the seventh world kingdom. However, the battle will be directed by the overseers who belong to administration of the throne of David.

The throne of David will be established around the throne of the Father and *within the walls and gates* of the heavenly Jerusalem. Speaking about the administration of his throne in the middle of the heavenly Jerusalem, King David prophetically declared, 'Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem! Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together, where the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, to the testimony of Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord. For thrones are set there for judgement, the thrones of the house of David.' Psa 122:2-5.

In response to Nathan's prophecy concerning his house, King David went and sat before the Lord in the tent that he had pitched on Zion for the ark of the covenant. He said to the Lord, 'Who am I, O Lord God? *And what is my house* that You have brought me this far? And yet this was a small thing in Your sight, O Lord God; and You have also spoken of Your servant's house for a great while to come. Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?' 2Sa 7:19. This is literally translated 'for a time afar off'. David recognised that his own rulership over the nation of Israel was *a small thing* in the sight of the Lord when compared to the promise of the Lord concerning the rulership of His spiritual house over the true Israel of God in the time of the end.

The Scriptures record the last words of David as being the man who was 'raised up on high' when he was taken from the sheepfold to be placed upon the throne of Israel. 2Sa 3:1. He testified that God said to him, 'He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, like the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain.' 2Sa 23:3-4. David understood that this description *did not apply* to his natural household. However, at the same time, he knew that God had made an everlasting covenant with his spiritual house, through Christ, which would not be broken. He rejoiced, 'Although my [natural] house *is not so with God*, yet He has made with me *an everlasting covenant*, ordered in all things and secure. For this is all my salvation and all my desire; will He not make it increase?' 2Sa 23:5.

In the latter days you will consider it

The Lord described the beginning of birth pains to the prophet Jeremiah by saying, 'We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask now, and see, whether a man is in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale?' Jer 30:5-6. For the world, the beginning of birth pains is a harbinger of the judgement of God that will come upon the seventh world kingdom when the Father takes His seat. For the church, the beginning of birth pains is the indication that the time for the bride of Christ to bring forth a great multitude of sons of God from every nation is fast approaching. Rev 12:2.

We know that the birth pains commence before the time of the end. Mat 24:6-8. They will then continue, like active labor pains, during the opening of the seals in the time of the end. The Lord declared through Jeremiah, 'Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and *it is the time of Jacob's trouble*, but he shall be saved out of it.' Jer 30:7. The time of Jacob's trouble is relevant for the whole house of Jacob that has come forth from the wellsprings of Judah through the offering of Jesus Christ. Isa 48:1. It is a time of trouble for the true Israel of God, which includes both Jews and Gentiles. Daniel prophesied that when Michael stands up 'there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time'. Dan 12:1.

Jesus described this time of trouble as 'great tribulation'. He said, 'For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.' Mat 24:21. The period of great tribulation will commence when the second seal is opened. Peace will be taken from the earth, and the church will be hated

and persecuted by all nations. Rev 6:4. The opening of the fifth seal reveals that there will be a large company of martyrs during this period of persecution. Rev 6:9. The Lord will sovereignly intervene in the affairs of men and will bring this time of trouble to an end when the sixth seal is opened. Rev 6:12-17.

The day of the Lord's wrath and judgement upon the world is the time when the yoke of the nations will be broken from the neck of the house of Jacob as the true Israel of God. The Lord said, 'For it shall come to pass in that day ... that I will break his yoke from your neck, and will burst your bonds; foreigners will no more enslave them. But they shall serve the LORD their God, *and David their king*, whom I will raise up for them.' Jer 30:8-9. This is a significant statement. When the Lord said that the house of Jacob will serve 'David their king', He was talking about the time when the Father will give the throne of David to Jesus Christ and His overseers for the time of the end.

Notably, the overseers who belong to the house of David will come from the house of Jacob as the true Israel of God. Speaking about the end of Jacob's chastening as the elect scattered among the nations, the Lord said, 'Their nobles *shall be from among them*, and their governor shall come from their midst; then I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach Me; For who is this who pledged his heart to approach Me?' Jer 30:21. When the Father has taken His seat, the overseers who belong to the house of David will be seated with Christ on the twenty-four thrones around the Father's throne. Once the administration of David's throne has been established by Christ, God will begin to judge the nations of the world.

The prophet Jeremiah declared that the judgement of God will be manifested before the eyes of all in the time of the end. He said, 'The fierce anger of the Lord will not return until He has done it, and until He has performed the intents of His heart. *In the latter days you will consider it.*' Jer 30:24. Significantly, the time of the end will reveal God's sovereign judgement and His salvation to the ends of the earth. The Lord continued, '*At the same time ... I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people.*' Jer 31:1. It is significant that the Lord referred specifically to 'the families' of the true Israel of God, because it is all these families who comprise the bride of Christ at Mount Zion.

Interestingly, in relation to the bride of Christ, Jeremiah declared, 'For the Lord has created a new thing in the earth - a woman shall encompass [lit. surround] a man.' Jer 31:22. Since the beginning of the church age, the bride of Christ has functioned as the helper to Christ in the work of bringing forth and nurturing sons of God who are spiritual. In the time of

the end, the bride of Christ will be a place of refuge and protection for every son of God. However, more specifically, once the Father has taken His seat, and Christ has moved His administration to be in and around the throne of the Father, the glorified Son of Man will be revealed to be standing in the centre of the heavenly Jerusalem.

The certainty of God's promise to David

It is notable that Jeremiah lived and prophesied when the Jewish nation was conquered by the Babylonians, and the natural lineage of kings who sat upon the throne of David came to a complete end. When Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem, he killed all the sons of King Zedekiah 'before his eyes'. Jer 39:6. He also killed all the nobles of Judah. He then plucked out the eyes of King Zedekiah, bound him with bronze fetters and carried him off to Babylon. Jer 39:7. During this remarkable season of judgement upon the natural lineage of David and upon the Jewish nation, the Lord revealed to Jeremiah the *unbreakable nature* of His everlasting covenant with David.

Jeremiah was shut up in prison when the Lord said to him, 'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.' Jer 33:3. The Lord then described the future restoration and healing of the true Israel of God in the time of the end. He said, 'Behold, the days are coming ... that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. *In those days and at that time* I will cause to grow up to David a Branch of righteousness; He will execute judgement and righteousness in the earth. In those days, Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell safely. And this is the name by which she [the heavenly Jerusalem] will be called: "The Lord our righteousness".' Jer 33:14-16.

Significantly, the time when the Father will give the throne of David to Jesus Christ and His overseers is an integral part of the 'good things' that the Lord has promised to the true Israel of God. Jeremiah continued, 'For thus says the Lord: "David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel".' Jer 33:17. Once the throne of David has been established over all the families who belong to the true Israel of God, the name of the entire bride city will become 'The LORD our righteousness'. Jer 33:16. In the time of the end, the bride of Christ will be the full revelation of the righteousness of the Father on the earth. The bride will be clothed with the sun, which is the glory of God the Father. Rev 12:1. Mat 13:43.

Furthermore, the Lord said to Jeremiah, 'If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levites, the priests, My ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.' Jer 33:20-22. This is a remarkable passage. It emphasises the absolute certainty that the Father will take His seat, as well as the assurance that He will give the throne of David to Jesus Christ and His overseers for the time of the end!

In this passage, when the Lord said, 'the Levites who minister to Me', it is not a reference to the work of the Levites in the tabernacle of Moses or in the temple of Solomon. It is a reference to the ministry of the Levites in relation to the restoration of the tabernacle of David on Mount Zion. Act 15:16. King David established a type of this administration in his own day. He organised the Levites into twenty-four divisions. 1Ch 23:6-23. The Levites then served in four areas - they were overseers of the work of the house of the Lord, officers and judges, gatekeepers, and worship leaders. 1Ch 23:4-5. In relation to the time of the end, we are reminded that the Lord said through Isaiah the prophet, concerning the great multitude from every nation, 'I will also take some of them for priests and Levites.' Isa 66:21.

The Lord again confirmed *the certainty of His promise* to the house of David and to the house of Jacob by saying, 'If My covenant is not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth, then I will cast away the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, so that I will not take any of his [David's] descendants to be rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' Jer 33:25-26. As we have considered, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are the true Israel of God. When the Father takes His seat, the 144 000 will be sealed as the firstfruits of the true Israel of God. Rev 7:1-8. Rev 14:1-5. The 144 000 will become the evangelists who will gather the great multitude from every tribe, nation, people and tongue. Rev 14:6. Rev 7:9.

In summary, the true descendants of David are the shepherds who belong to the house of David. The house of David will be seated upon the twenty-four thrones that belong to the throne of David, when the Father takes His seat. Rev 4:2-4. The house of David includes overseers from every tribe, nation, people and tongue. The new song that the twenty-four elders sing when the Lamb takes the scroll from the hand of the Father confirms this to be the case. The twenty-four elders proclaim to the Lamb,

THE FATHER WILL TAKE HIS SEAT

'You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of *every tribe and tongue and people and nation*. And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.' Rev 5:9-10.

Chapter 5

The Elijah ministry

Over the past season, the Spirit has been drawing our attention to the parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins. Jesus used this parable to describe what the kingdom of heaven will be like when the Father takes His seat to initiate the wedding feast for Christ and His bride in the time of the end. Jesus said, '*Then* the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.'

Mat 25:1. The Bridegroom in this parable is Jesus Christ. It has often been assumed by commentators that the ten virgins are bridesmaids. However, we have come to understand that the ten virgins in this parable all belong to the corporate bride of Christ.

The 'ten virgins' represent the various households and congregations, within a lampstand church, who have been betrothed to Christ. The apostle Paul said to the Corinthian congregation, 'I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.' 2Co 11:2. The Corinthian congregation was part of the lampstand church in the region of Macedonia and Achaia. In a similar way, the apostle Paul declared that all the various congregations in the Roman lampstand church belonged to the corporate bride of Christ. He said, 'Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that *you may be married to another* - to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.' Rom 7:4.

We know that Jesus addressed the seven lampstand churches in Asia, through the apostle John, as the representatives of all lampstand churches for the church age. Rev 2-3. The seven lampstand churches all belonged to Mount Zion as part of the corporate bride of Christ. However, to the degree that they had embraced, or even tolerated, the various doctrines of Satan, the seven lampstand churches had become *the seven unclean daughters of Zion*. Isa 4:1. Jesus addressed each presbytery, and lampstand church, with eyes like a flame of fire. Rev 1:14. Rev 2:18. As His written admonition was proclaimed in each church, Jesus Christ Himself was walking among His lampstand churches, with a spirit of judgement and burning, to wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion. Isa 4:4.

We are reminded that Jesus concluded His admonition to each lampstand church, by saying, 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' Rev 2:7,11,17,29. Rev 3:6,13,22. Under the lordship of the Holy Spirit for the church age, the admonition of Christ to the seven churches has been proclaimed as a word of present truth by His messengers in each generation. The key point is that the proclamation of the word of present truth, by the Spirit, will have a *polarising impact* in every lampstand church. That is, in every lampstand church, some households will become wise and other households will become foolish. The first point of distinction, between the wise and foolish virgins, is that the wise have taken heed to what the Spirit is saying to the church in each season.

It is notable that Jesus did not refer to seven virgins in the parable, because that would imply that whole lampstand churches are either wise or foolish. Rather, Jesus used the typology of the temple of Solomon to highlight that the word will have a polarising impact in every lampstand church. We recall that the *one lampstand* in the tabernacle of Moses was *extrapolated* to ten lampstands in the temple of Solomon. Notably, there were five lampstands on the right side of the temple and five lampstands on the left side of the temple. When we consider the typology of Solomon's temple, the emphasis is not the *multiplication* of one lampstand to ten; it is the *extrapolation* of one lampstand to ten, for the purpose of showing that there will be a polarisation in every lampstand.

In this regard, the principle of the polarisation between wise and foolish virgins is applicable to each of the seven lampstand churches in the book of Revelation. This is an important point. Even though the presbytery in Philadelphia was commended by Jesus Christ, this does not mean that every household in the region of Philadelphia was automatically considered to be 'a wise virgin'. If a viable presbytery exists in a region, every family is accountable for their own obedience to the word of present

truth that is proclaimed to them by the presbytery of their lampstand church. The apostle Paul highlighted this point, when he said to the Corinthians, 'If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you'. 1Co 9:2.

On the other hand, even though Christ had no access to the presbytery in Laodicea, this did not mean that every household in the region of Laodicea was automatically consigned to be 'a foolish virgin'. If a viable presbytery does not exist in a region, a believing household must *actively look for a presbytery* which can proclaim the word of Christ to their family. It is possible for a single person or family, in a city, to be relationally obedient to a presbytery from another region. The Lord said, through the prophet Jeremiah, 'Return, O backsliding children ... for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.' Jer 3:14.

The key point is that every household and congregation is accountable for their own connection to the supply of oil from Christ's messengers. When the Father takes His seat, Jesus Christ will gather the wise virgins from *all seven lampstand churches*. He will integrate all the wise virgins into the *one lampstand* before the throne of the Father. The apostle John described the one lampstand before the Father's throne in the time of the end, by saying, 'Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God'. Rev 4:5. The prophet Isaiah also described this one lampstand, by saying, 'In that day the Branch of the Lord [the lampstand] will be beautiful and glorious; and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and appealing for those of Israel [the true Israel of God] who have escaped.' Isa 4:2.

The ministry of Elijah – the supply of oil

The notable difference between the wise and foolish virgins in the parable is that the wise virgins had oil in their lamps, and a supply of oil in their vessels. Mat 25:4. The wise virgins possessed *a double portion of oil*. However, the foolish virgins did not possess *a double portion of oil*. Significantly, the wise virgins counselled the foolish virgins to go to those who supplied oil so that they could buy oil for themselves. Mat 25:9. Their counsel was consistent with their own testimony. The wise virgins possessed a double portion of oil because they had already received it from the messengers of Christ. It is the ascension-gift messengers of Christ, within the fellowship of a presbytery, who supply the oil to every household and congregation in a lampstand church.

This supply of oil is essential for every family and congregation to be ready for the midnight hour. The midnight hour is the beginning of the day of the Lord. The great and terrible day of the Lord is the day of God's wrath and judgement upon the world. Both, the apostle Paul and the apostle Peter, said that the beginning of the day of the Lord will be like the coming of a thief in the middle of the night. 1Th 5:2. 2Pe 3:10. Jesus referred to the midnight hour as 'the hour of trial'. He said to the presbytery in Philadelphia, 'Because you have kept My command to persevere, I will also keep you from *the hour of trial* which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.' Rev 3:10.

This brings us to an important point. It is the *Elijah ministry* that supplies the oil necessary for every family and congregation to endure seasons of trial. During His earthly ministry, Jesus highlighted this point by drawing our attention to the ministry of Elijah toward a particular widow in the city of Zarephath. He said, 'I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.' Luk 4:25-26.

The ministry of Elijah to this one widow was notable because it highlighted the provision, which is supplied to every individual household, that maintains fellowship with the Lord's messengers. The woman's fellowship with the prophet Elijah resulted in an ongoing supply of bread and oil, which miraculously sustained her household for the duration of the famine that was in the land at that time. Furthermore, the ministry of Elijah brought resurrection life to her household. As we consider the purpose of 'the Elijah ministry', it will be helpful for us to recall some of the details of the account that is recorded in the book of Kings.

In the days of Elijah, there was a severe drought in the land of Israel. During this drought, the Lord instructed Elijah to go down to the city of Zarephath in the region of Sidon. 1Ki 17:9. When he came to the gate of the city, he saw a widow gathering sticks. He called to her and said, 'Please bring a little water in a cup, that I may drink.' 1Ki 17:10. In response to his request, the woman turned to get him a cup of water. In this regard, we recall that Jesus said to the disciples, 'He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. ... And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.' Mat 10:41-42.

As the woman went to fetch the water, Elijah called after her, 'Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.' 1Ki 17:11. In response to this additional request, the woman honestly explained her situation to the prophet. She did not have any bread. Furthermore, she only had a small amount of flour in a bin, and a small amount of oil in a jar. 1Ki 17:12. She was gathering the sticks to prepare a final meal for herself, and her son, before they died. Elijah then proclaimed a word of faith to her. He said, 'Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord God of Israel: "The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth".' 1Ki 17:13-14.

When the woman believed and obeyed the word of Elijah, the Lord's promise was fulfilled for her whole household. 1Ki 17:15-16. It is notable that Elijah did not invoke a miraculous blessing upon the woman and her household, and then move on to another place. Rather, he stayed in her home. It was the woman's ongoing fellowship with Elijah, as the Lord's messenger, which guaranteed the supply of the bread and the supply of oil for her household. In the same way, it is our ongoing fellowship with the Elijah ministry that ensures a continual supply of bread and oil for our households.

The 'bread' is the word of present truth that is ministered to us by Christ's overseers in each season. Jesus said, 'Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household to give them food in due season?' Mat 24:45. Significantly, the word of present truth is always accompanied by the oil of the Spirit. The 'anointing oil' is the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh, by the Holy Spirit, which enables us to participate in the fellowship of the body of Christ and the fellowship of Christ's offering. In this fellowship, we are being delivered from our carnality while, at the same time, we are receiving the grace of His resurrection life.

The outcome of our fellowship with the Elijah ministry, which joins us to the fellowship of Christ's death, is resurrection life! This became the testimony of the widow in Zarephath. While Elijah was still staying in her home, the woman's son became seriously ill and then died. 1Ki 17:17. We note that the presence of Elijah in the home did not prevent the child from dying. Initially, this was a source of consternation for the woman. 1Ki 17:18. However, it was the woman's fellowship with Elijah that joined her household to the offering of Christ so that resurrection life became her testimony.

Elijah laid the child on his own bed and prayed for him three times. 1Ki 17:19-21. The Lord heard the voice of Elijah and the child's soul returned to his physical body. 1Ki 17:22. After the boy had revived, the prophet gave him back to the mother, and declared, 'See, your son lives!' 1Ki 17:23. The woman responded in faith by saying, 'Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is the truth.' 1Ki 17:24. In the same way, the testimony of resurrection life in our household bears witness to the truth of the message that has been proclaimed to us.

The spirit and power of Elijah

The Scriptures recorded that the prophetic mantle of Elijah passed to Elisha. The prophet Elisha received a double portion of the anointing that belonged to Elijah. 2Ki 2:8-14. We observe that the outcome of Elisha's ministry was also the multiplication of oil and the fruit of resurrection life. In a similar manner to Elijah, the prophet Elisha ministered to a widow in her distress. The multiplication of oil for the widow's household, because of her fellowship with Elisha, delivered her from the hand of a creditor who was coming to take her two sons to be his slaves. 2Ki 4:1-7.

Further to this, the prophet Elisha regularly stayed with another woman and her husband in Shunem. 2Ki 4:8. This faithful couple made a room for Elisha, and furnished it for him with a bed, a table, and a chair. 2Ki 4:9-11. Each time that he stayed with the couple, the Shunammite woman looked after him and cared for his needs. When Elisha wanted to give something to the woman, in appreciation for all of her care, he discovered that she, and her husband, were unable to have children. 2Ki 4:13-14. The prophet Elisha proclaimed that she would have a son. 2Ki 4:15-16. When this word was fulfilled, it was the first manifestation of resurrection life in the household, because of her fellowship with Elisha. 2Ki 4:17.

Some years later, the same child suddenly became sick and died. 2Ki 4:18-20. The Shunammite woman immediately went to fetch Elisha. Even though she was in deep distress because of the loss of her child, she testified that it was 'well' with her household. 1Ki 4:22-23,26. She confessed her commitment to fellowship with the messenger by saying to Elisha, 'As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.' 2Ki 4:30. When Elisha returned to her household, he raised the child from the dead. 2Ki 4:32-37. This was a further manifestation of resurrection life in this believing household.

The Elijah ministry is the morning star

In our day, the Lord is raising up another great manifestation of the Elijah ministry. The Elijah ministry belongs to the ascension-gift ministry graces of Christ in the fellowship of a presbytery. Jesus referred to the Elijah ministry as 'the morning star'. He promised to give the morning star to the overseers in Thyatira who overcame the spirit of Jezebel in the church. Rev 2:28. The planet Venus is often called 'the morning star' because it appears as a bright light in the east of the night sky, before the sun rises. In this regard, the morning star is not a source of light. Rather, it reflects the light of the sun before the dawn of the new day. In the natural creation, the sun is the light of the world.

The apostle John described Jesus as 'the Light of the world'. He also likened John the Baptist to 'the morning star'. He said, 'There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light [Christ], that all through him might believe. He was not the Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.' Joh 1:6-9. John the Baptist was the greatest of all the prophets who ministered in the spirit and power of Elijah. However, the Elijah ministry, in our day, is far greater than the ministry of John the Baptist because it belongs to the corporate body of Christ. Mat 11:11.

The angel Gabriel declared to Zacharias, concerning John the Baptist, 'He will also go before Him [Christ] *in the spirit and power of Elijah*, "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children", and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.' Luk 1:17. This is an important verse because it identified the *three major points of focus* that belong to the Elijah ministry. John the Baptist was sent to prepare the Jewish nation for the coming of Christ. The ministry of John the Baptist to the Jewish nation, before the offering of Christ, was a harbinger of the Elijah ministry to all the unclean daughters of Zion, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.

Turning the hearts of the fathers to the children

'The great and terrible day of the Lord' is the day of God's wrath and judgement upon the world. The prophet Malachi declared, 'Behold the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up.' Mal 4:1. Significantly, the prophet Malachi also declared, 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the

hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.' Mal 4:5-6.

The *first focus* of the Elijah ministry is to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers. Luk 1:17. The outcome of the Elijah ministry in our day will be the restoration of fellowship in families, extended families, and from house to house in the church. Jesus referred to this dimension of the Elijah ministry as 'the restoration of all things'. Following His transfiguration on the mountain, the disciples asked Him, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' Mat 17:10. Jesus replied, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first [before the great and terrible day of the Lord] and will restore all things.' Mat 17:11.

Jesus continued to say to His disciples, 'But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know [or, recognise] him but did to him as they wished. Likewise, the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.' Mat 17:12. When Jesus said, 'Elijah *has come* already', He was talking about the ministry of John the Baptist. Mat 17:13. However, when Jesus said, 'Elijah *is coming*', He was evidently talking about *a future manifestation* of the Elijah ministry, for we note that John the Baptist did not restore all things. It is the work of the Elijah ministry in the church to 'restore all things'. Mat 17:11. Jesus was particularly referring to the recovery of first love and the restoration of the fellowship of the *agape* meal. The restoration of this fellowship will be among those who fear the Lord. Mal 3:16.

The Lord declared, through the prophet Malachi, that the restoration of *agape* fellowship in families must happen before He strikes the earth with a curse. Mal 4:6. When the Father takes His seat, and Jesus Christ begins to open the seals, the Lord will strike the earth with a curse. This will be His judgement upon the world. The apostle John declared, concerning the opening of the fourth seal, 'I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.' Rev 6:8.

The day of the Lord will burn like an oven and consume everything that is wood, hay, and stubble, in the church and in the world. Mal 4:1. However, for those who fear God, the sun of righteousness will arise with healing in its wings. Mal 4:2. 'The sun of righteousness' describes the ministry of Christ *and* the church, as the bride of Christ, in the day of the Lord. Jer 23:6. Jer 33:16. The name of the bride city will be 'The Lord our righteousness' because she will fully reveal the glory of Christ, who is the

Son of Man in the image and likeness of God. We recall that the bride of Christ will be clothed with the sun. Rev 12:1. As the comparable helper to Christ, the church will reveal to the world the glory of God the Father and His righteousness.

In the time of the end, the bride of Christ will be protected from the judgement of God upon the world under the shadow of the Father's tabernacle. The Father will spread His tabernacle over every family and congregation that has remained in the heavenly Jerusalem. Isa 4:5-6. More than this, the fellowship of the Father's *agape* meal, which He has prepared for Christ and the church, will become the context for the healing of the nations. Rev 22:2. Isa 52:15. When Malachi said that the 'sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings', he meant that healing will be ministered *right to the extremity* of this *agape* fellowship, in every nation. Mal 4:2.

Turning the disobedient to the wisdom of the just

The *second focus* of the Elijah ministry is to turn 'the disobedient to the wisdom of the just'. Luk 1:17. Jesus Christ is both the Just and the Justifier of the one who has faith in Him. Rom 3:26. The seven wounding events that Christ experienced on His offering journey, from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross, are the full revelation of the wisdom and power of God. 1Co 1:22-24. The messengers of Christ proclaim the word of the cross that ministers the faith that is necessary for us to embrace our unique participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

For those who believe the word that is proclaimed by the messengers of Christ, He is the chosen and precious Cornerstone of the heavenly Jerusalem. 1Pe 2:6. Our participation in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings is the context for our cleansing from all ungodliness and uncleanness. It is also the context in which we *learn the obedience* that He has already learned for us on His offering journey. However, for those who are disobedient to the word, that is proclaimed by the messengers of Christ, He becomes a stumbling stone and a rock of offence. 1Pe 2:7-8. The disobedient will not be cleansed from their ungodliness and uncleanness. The judgement of God will remove them from the heavenly Jerusalem.

In his first letter, the apostle Peter identified that *the order of headship* that God has established in the church, and in the family, is one of the major ways by which Christ becomes 'a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence'. He identified that there are men in the church who do not 'obey the word' that is publicly preached to them by Christ's messengers as the word of life for their household. 1Pe 1:25. 1Pe 2:8. 1Pe 3:1. If a man is

disobedient to the word, and yet claims to be the head of his household, it is a sin against Christ. Likewise, if a man looks to his wife for direction, and identity verification, rather than seeking fellowship with his brethren in the body of Christ, it is also a sin against Christ.

At the same time, Peter said that a believing wife must be submitted to her own husband, even if he is disobedient to the word. 1Pe 3:1. In such cases, he exhorted a woman to demonstrate the fear of God, by her own obedience, so that her husband may be won, without a word, by her chaste conduct. 1Pe 3:1-2. If a woman uses the perceived failure of her husband as a justification to usurp the order of headship in her family, it is a sin against Christ and her own husband. Likewise, if a woman presumes to minister to others at the Lord's table in the church, while living in disobedience to her husband at home, it is also a sin against Christ and her husband. 1Co 11:5.

The Lord sends His messengers, with the spirit and power of Elijah, to confront us concerning our ungodliness and our uncleanness. Rom 1:18. Every man and woman must make their own accountable response to the word that is preached to them. We are reminded that Elijah said to all the people who belonged to the nation of Israel in his day, 'How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.' 1Ki 18:21. The key point is that it is only those believers, from the unclean daughters of Zion, who respond to the cleansing initiative of Christ in the season of their visitation, who will remain in the heavenly Jerusalem for the time of the end.

When the Father takes His seat, it will only be 'a very small remnant' who are left in the heavenly Jerusalem. Isa 1:9. In the days of Elijah, the Lord described the remnant as being 'seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal'. Rom 11:3-4. Interestingly, Elijah himself was not aware of this remnant. However, the Lord knew those who belonged to Him as those who had departed from iniquity. 2Ti 2:19. As we approach the time of the end, the fruit of the Elijah ministry will be the 144 000. 144 000 is the symbolic number that describes the obedient remnant who have embraced the cleansing initiative of Christ to become the firstfruits of the true Israel of God. Rev 7:1-8. Rev 14:1-5.

To make ready a people prepared for the Lord

The *third focus* of the Elijah ministry is to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Specifically, this refers to the preparation of the bride of Christ for the coming of Christ as the Bridegroom. Ministering in the spirit and power of Elijah, John the Baptist described himself as 'the friend of

the bridegroom'. Joh 3:29. It is the work of the ascension-gift messengers of Christ, in the fellowship of a presbytery, to be 'the friend of the bridegroom' by preparing the bride so that she is ready to accompany Christ into the wedding feast.

When the Father takes His seat, it will initiate the beginning of the wedding feast that He has prepared for Christ and His Bride in the time of the end. The Elijah ministry is preparing the church for the wedding feast by supplying oil to every family and congregation that belongs to the bride of Christ. The parable of the wise and foolish virgins teaches us that every family must buy this oil for themselves by obeying the word that is proclaimed to them by Christ's messengers, and by embracing their own participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

When we consider the supply of oil by the Elijah ministry, it will be helpful to consider the distinction between the anointing oil and the pure oil for a lamp. The anointing oil was used by a prophet to anoint the head of a king or a priest for their service in the nation. As our great High Priest and our Shepherd-King, Jesus Christ was anointed with the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh, by the Holy Spirit, in the garden of Gethsemane, for His prayer and offering. However, remembering that 'Gethsemane' means 'oil press', the fruit of His prayer was also the pure oil that enabled Him to become the Light of the world. Jesus manifested the light of resurrection life at each wounding event on His offering journey.

The word that is proclaimed by Christ's messengers, by the Spirit, supplies the anointing oil that enables us to participate in the fellowship of the body of Christ and the fellowship of His offering. In relation to the anointing oil that flows to every member of the body of Christ in a fellowship, the psalmist proclaimed, 'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like *the precious oil* upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments.' Psa 133:1-2. The anointing oil is a wonderful provision! However, this anointing oil is not the same as the pure oil that enables us to manifest the light of life.

The pure oil, that is needed for our lamps, must be bought. The wise virgins admonished the foolish virgins to buy oil for themselves. Mat 25:9. The pure oil is purchased by *selling all* to learn the obedience that Christ has already learned for us on His offering journey. If the anointing oil enables our fellowship, the pure oil is the fruit of our fellowship. The pure oil is not received by invocation. It is the fruit of our obedience to the messengers of Christ and the fruit of our unique participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. This explains why the pure

oil is not a resource that can be shared among friends. It also explains why it takes time to purchase this oil.

Having believed the word that is proclaimed to us by the messengers of Christ, the oil that becomes the fuel source for the lamp in our family is the resurrection life of Christ that we are receiving in the fellowship of Christ's offering. The oil is the manifold grace of Christ's resurrection life. It is the grace of Christ's resurrection life that brings forth, in our life, the fruit of the nine virtues of blamelessness. 2Pe 1:5-8. When this oil is ignited by the Holy Spirit, in the fellowship of the *agape* meal, it becomes the light of our testimony within the community of the church as the bride of Christ. This testimony will be a unique manifestation of the light of the seven Spirits of God.

In the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, those who were wise had oil in their lamps *and* oil in their vessels. This meant that they had *a double portion* of oil. The burning oil in their lamps was being used to produce light as they waited for the return of the bridegroom. The vessel that belonged to each wise virgin was a jar, or a container, that was used to store additional oil. The nature and quality of the oil in their vessel was the same as the oil in their lamp. When required, the oil in their vessel could be used to replenish the oil in their lamp so that it continued to produce light. This highlights an important principle in relation to the supply of oil by the Elijah ministry.

The oil that is supplied by the messengers of Christ, in the fellowship of Christ's offering, is necessary for us to have light in our households and in the community of the church, now. However, more than this, the messengers of Christ are also supplying the oil that will be necessary for us to shine as a light, as part of the bride city, in the time of the end. This is the significance of the oil in the vessel. It is the oil that will be necessary for us to become part of the evangelistic ministry of the bride of Christ in the midnight hour. In practical terms, if we are not obtaining a testimony *now*, that we can share with our brethren in the fellowship of the *agape* meal, we will not have a testimony to share *in that hour* as an evangelistic ministry in the world.

In our present season, we need to take every opportunity to exhort one another, in our own congregations, to purchase oil. As we have said, the wise virgins could not share their oil with the foolish virgins, but they could exhort the foolish virgins to buy oil for themselves. The apostle Paul said, 'Let us *consider one another* in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of our ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but *exhorting one another*, and so much the more as you see the

Day approaching.’ Heb 10:24-25. Furthermore, as the Spirit leads, we need to consider how we may exhort our broader Christian friends and acquaintances, who we know have no connection to a presbytery that can supply the oil necessary for them in the days ahead.

The door will be shut

When the Father takes His seat, Jesus Christ will come as the Bridegroom to take the wise virgins with Him into the wedding feast. Mat 25:10. The wedding feast has been prepared by the Father, for Christ and His bride. Mat- 22:2. Rev 19:7. The wise virgins, who are ready for Christ’s coming, will be protected from the hour of trial, which is coming upon the whole world, under the shadow of the Father’s tabernacle. Rev 3:10. Further to this, as we have considered, the double portion of oil will enable the bride of Christ to shine like the sun in the Father’s kingdom during the time of the end. Mat 13:43.

In contrast to this, the foolish virgins, who have not purchased a double portion of oil from the Elijah ministry, will not be ready for the coming of Christ as the Bridegroom. Jesus said, ‘And while they [the foolish virgins] went to buy, the bridegroom and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding [feast]; and *the door was shut.*’ Mat 25:10. Having missed the season of their visitation, the door to the wedding feast will be shut for the foolish virgins. Jesus also taught, in the parable of the great banquet, that we must respond to the Father’s invitation to join the wedding feast when the invitation is extended to us. In that parable, the master declared, ‘I say to you that none of those men who were invited [and rejected my invitation] shall taste my supper.’ Luk 14:24.

On another occasion, Jesus said plainly to the disciples, ‘Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able once the Master of the house has risen up and *shut the door*, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, “Lord, Lord, open for us” and He will answer and say to you, “I do not know you, where you are from”, then you will begin to say, “We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets”.’ Luk 13:24-26. Remarkably, Jesus was describing a group of believers who had heard His word and joined the community of His table, but they had not obtained a testimony in the fellowship of His offering. For this reason, the Lord did not know them.

It is important to recognise that the principle of ‘the narrow door’ includes the reality that we must enter through the door *while the door is open*. When the Father takes His seat, the door will be *closed* to the unclean daughters of Zion who have rejected the Elijah ministry during the season

of their visitation. At the same time, when the Father takes His seat, the door will be *wide open* for a great multitude to join the wedding feast, from every tribe, nation, people, and tongue. Luk 13:29. Luk 14:23. Highlighting this principle of the 'open' and 'closed' doors, Jesus addressed the presbytery in Philadelphia as the One who 'opens and no one shuts' and the One who 'shuts and no one opens'. Rev 3:7.

Speak comfort to the heavenly Jerusalem

The prophet Isaiah described the Elijah ministry as the voice of one crying in the wilderness, to prepare the way of the Lord. Isa 40:3. All four Gospels highlighted that this prophetic statement was applicable to the ministry of John the Baptist. Mat 3:3. Mar 1:3. Luk 3:4. Joh 1:23. However, it is important to consider that this statement is equally applicable to the Elijah ministry that the Lord will raise up, before the great and terrible day of the Lord, in the end of the age. The Elijah ministry is the voice that cries out to the unclean daughters of Zion, in the wilderness of the people, just prior to the time when the saints will receive and possess the kingdom of God. Dan 7:18.

The messengers of Christ, who minister in the spirit and power of Elijah, proclaim that 'all flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but *the word of our God stands forever.*' Isa 40:6-8. The apostle Peter quoted this passage from the book of Isaiah, and then proclaimed, 'And this is the word which was preached to you.' 1Pe 1:24-25. The word that is proclaimed by the messengers who belong to the Elijah ministry is the gospel of God. This is the same gospel that was preached to Abraham. It is the gospel that is contained in all the prophetic Scriptures. And it is the gospel that was proclaimed by the apostle Paul to the Gentiles. Rom 1:1-4. Rom 16:25-26.

The gospel of God includes both the goodness and the severity of God. Rom 11:22. The severity of God includes His judgement upon the unclean daughters of Zion and the world. The Elijah ministry proclaims that 'the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up'. Mal 4:1. The primary focus of the Elijah ministry, before the Father takes His seat, is toward the unclean daughters of Zion. All those who receive and believe the gospel of God that is proclaimed to them will look upon Christ whom they have pierced and begin to mourn. Zec 12:10-14. Jesus said, 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.' Mat 5:4.

This brings us to a wonderful point. The Father Himself commands His messengers, who belong to the Elijah ministry, to speak comfort to the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem who respond to the conviction of the Spirit with godly sorrow. The fruit of godly sorrow will be their faith to participate in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, to be cleansed from their sin and iniquity. The Father said, 'Comfort, yes, comfort My people! ... Speak comfort to [the heavenly] Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the Lord's hand *double* for all her sins.' Isa 40:2.

Satan presently has access to the heavenly places because of the uncleanness of each family that belongs to the heavenly Jerusalem. The restoration of the Elijah ministry, as we approach the time of the end, is the Lord's cleansing initiative toward us. As we respond to this ministry, by embracing our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, we are being cleansed from our idolatry and sorcerous practices. The outcome of dealing with our uncleanness is that we overcome Satan so that he no longer has access to our families in the heavenly places. Rev 12:11. This is how our warfare comes to an end.

Furthermore, in fellowship with the messengers of Christ, we will receive the *double portion of oil* that is necessary for the midnight hour, which is the trial that is coming upon the whole world. The Father was referring to this double portion of oil that belongs to the bride of Christ, when He said, 'For she has received *double* for her sins'. Isa 40:2. This transaction is the outcome of offering transfer in the fellowship of Christ's offering. It is this double portion of oil that will enable the bride of Christ to shine like the sun in the Father's kingdom. Mat 13:43. Isaiah declared, 'The glory of the Lord [Yahweh] shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.' Isa 40:5.