

Dead in sin and under judgement

The first and foremost message of the gospel is that God predestined us to be His sons. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit planned together to create a multitude of sons who would be born of Their life, and who would live forever in relationship with Them. This is His *Everlasting Covenant* purpose for us. The Son created the present heavens and earth as the place in which every person, named in Himself, would come into being through the 'first man', Adam. God's plan was that the sons and daughters of men would be born of God's own life and joined to the corporate body of Christ. Finally, we would receive an immortal body consisting of the substance of Christ's own body in the resurrection.

However, from the moment that Adam and Eve disobeyed the word of God, the whole of mankind was separated from the fellowship and life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They condemned themselves to live by the principle of their own self-centred law in a vain attempt to sustain their mortal lives. The exercise of this law in their lives made them slaves of sin. We read in the book of Romans, 'Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned'.

Following the fall, God established offering as the means of recovering Adam and Eve and their offspring to relationship with Himself. However, as we follow the early generations that arose from Adam, we note that very few people maintained their walk with the Lord. And so, mankind *degenerated* to a state of great wickedness. The Scriptures record that 'every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually'.

References:

Gen 1:26-28

Gen 3:16-19

Rom 5:12,18-19

Rom 7:14

Eph 2:1-3

Gen 6:5

Further Study:

Galatians 3

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 25

Sin and wickedness

It is helpful to understand the distinction between sin and wickedness. Sin is 'missing the mark' of God's word concerning our lives and who He made us to be. It is the outcome of wanting to fulfil the will of God in our own way. The penalty for sin is death. However, God is able to recover us from the state of sin and death. In this regard, we recall the words of Paul, who explained that 'where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord'.

In contrast, wickedness, or iniquity, describes the condition of a person who has set themselves against the way of the Lord. Their mind is set on the flesh and they have become lawless. Consequently, they are hostile to God and His people. Ultimately, this describes the spirit of antichrist. Jesus warned that in the last days of the church age the love of many would grow cold because of lawlessness, or iniquity. It will be like it was in the days of Noah.

In Noah's generation, the Lord repented of having made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart on account of their wickedness. He declared, 'I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them'. God determined to destroy every living creature on earth, saying, 'I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish'.

References:

Rom 5:20-21 Luk 17:26
Rom 8:7 Psa 5:4
Mat 24:12 Pro 10:2

Further Study:

Genesis 6

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 26

Noah found grace

In the midst of the great wickedness on earth, Noah found *grace* in the eyes of the Lord. Paul explained that, by faith, Noah condemned the world by preparing an ark in obedience to the word of the Lord. Noah and his family were saved from the universal judgement of God, and Noah became an heir of righteousness. We note that the apostle Peter described the ark of deliverance as a picture, or type, of baptism. Specifically, he explained that 'baptism now saves you – not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience – through the resurrection of Jesus Christ'. Peter was saying that deliverance from the condemnation of this world through baptism is not just for cleansing and forgiveness; it will also result in a fundamental change in the way a person lives.

We are all descendants of Noah, and survived the destruction of every living thing because of his faith. However, it is important to understand that God's judgement in the days of Noah was on the whole of the creation, including those who were born after the flood. God had proclaimed *the end of all flesh*. Even though mankind has had a reprieve because of the faith of Noah, they are still under judgement and condemnation because of sin. They are dead to God and alienated from His life because of their wicked works. Since the flood, only those who live by faith and are introduced to the grace that Noah found, can be saved from the destruction of this present creation. In the New Covenant, grace for life is only available within the fellowship of the body of Christ as we live by the faith of the Son of God.

References:

Gen 6:8, 13 Joh 3:18
Heb 11:7 Gal 2:20
1Pe 3:21 Act 4:12

Further Study: Ephesians 2

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 27

Mercy to those who are afar off

Although mankind is the enemy of God and under His judgement, Paul taught that while we were enemies, Christ died for us so that we could be reconciled to God. Through Christ's offering 'once for all' and the shedding of His blood on our behalf, we were justified, or made righteous, in the sight of God. This was the work that Christ accomplished in His mortality as the Son of Man. Through this 'one act of righteousness, there resulted justification of life to all men'.

It is obvious that there are many people who do not know God, or live in a manner that would reflect the justification of life that resulted from Christ's offering. This is because a person must receive this justification by faith. How do they do this? To those who are afar off from Him, the Father sends people to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. These 'messengers' are simply bearing witness to Jesus and His offering for us on the cross. Jesus said that His disciples would receive power from the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses to the whole world. Every disciple of Christ is able to bear witness to the life and love of Christ that was manifest when He offered Himself on the cross for the sake of mankind.

When a person receives the testimony, or witness, of a disciple, Christ introduces Himself to them. He meets them and proclaims the good news of their salvation to them. He does this in a particular way. Referring to His death on the cross, Jesus said that 'if I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to Myself'. Every person's first interaction with Christ is at the cross. He meets them there as their Lord and Saviour, who has triumphed over the sin and death to which they are in bondage.

References:

Rom 6:10 Act 1:8
Rom 10:15 Joh 14:21-23
1Co 1:23 Joh 12:32

Further Study: Romans 5**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 28

The work of the Father

When a person is willing to hear and receive the word of God through the testimony of a believer, a spirit of grace and supplication from God the Father begins to be poured out upon them by the Holy Spirit. Grace enables a person to believe in the Son of God. A spirit of supplication enables them to recognise their sinful condition and cry out to the Father for forgiveness. The Father forgives and receives them on the merits of Christ's blood that was shed for all of mankind. On account of Christ's blood, they are reconciled to God and made acceptable in His sight. This is what it means to be 'justified' before God.

However, much more than this, as the word of God is being received, a person's 'inner man' is being regenerated, or made alive, by the washing of the water of the word and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. Paul declared, 'But when the kindness of God our Saviour and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit'.

Regeneration gives us a new heart and a new spirit so that we can receive and believe the word. It is also cleansing our bodies from the filth of our fallen behaviour. Renewing by the Holy Spirit is addressing the dystrophy of our identity that has been caused by our sin. Through this process, we are restored to the human identity that the Father had predestined for us. This is God's initiative toward us for our refreshing and healing. This is the impact of the Spirit of the Father within us. We are strengthened with the power of the Spirit of the Father so that the seed of God's life that comes to us in the word is able to take root within us.

References:

Zec 12:10

Tit 3:4-5

Eze 36:25-26

Psa 107:20

Eph 3:17

Luk 8:11

Further Study:

John 6:43-71

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 29

Born as a son of God

The apostle Peter explained that we were born again of an *incorruptible* seed through the living and enduring word of God. Notably, Peter distinguished between that seed and the *corruptible* seed that was planted in the womb of our mother when we were conceived. This corruptible seed contained our identity, or soul. Regeneration by the water of the word recovers this identity.

Jesus explained that the incorruptible seed is *the word of God the Father*. Further to this, we know that the Seed is Christ Himself. The Father strengthens us in the inner man so that Christ can dwell in our heart by faith. This is an amazing point. The Son is the sum of all sonship. This means that there is no sonship that can be expressed apart from Him. However, when Yahweh Son emptied Himself and was begotten by the Father as the Son of God, He was no longer expressing His own identity as Yahweh Son. He was now revealing the Father. Likewise, when the Son emptied Himself to be sent into our heart, the sonship that we manifest is according to the unique name that the Father prepared for us. At this point, we behold a new creation! We cry out, 'Abba Father', as a newly born son of God.

Now, the Spirit of the Father and the Son are dwelling within us. Jesus said, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our *abode* with him'. We also receive the Holy Spirit. Jesus explained, 'I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He *abides* with you and will be in you'.

References:

Gal 4:6

Eph 3:16-17

Luk 8:11

Joh 14:16-17, 23

Further Study:

1 Peter 1

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 2

A certain firstfruits

When we are born as a son of God, the life that we receive is eternal life. It is the life of our unique sonship that God the Father predestined for each one of us before the heavens and the earth were created. The seed of this life is, therefore, *specific* to the name and identity of each son of God. When it is received by a person, the life becomes their possession and they are born as a *unique* son of God.

The writings of the apostle James bring to our attention the uniqueness of each person's sonship. James explained that it was the exercise of the Father's will to birth us from above by the word of truth. This is the word that proceeds from His mouth. The Father wanted each one of us to be a *certain firstfruits* among His creatures. James was explaining that each person who is born of God is a new creation son of God, with particular capacities for the expression of His life. One son of God is not the same as any other son of God; each one is to be a certain kind of firstfruit.

The capacities for the expression of God's life that are contained in the seed of our new creation sonship are far beyond our natural abilities, and even beyond our natural comprehension. Paul reminded us that 'eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him'. It will only be in the new heavens and new earth that the full extent of our sonship capacities will be known and exercised. Affirming the point, Paul wrote, 'Now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known'.

References:

Mat 4:4 1Co 13:12
Jas 1:18 Eph 2:10
1Co 2:9 Rom 14:4

Further Study:

1 John 3

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 3

The carnal Christian

According to Jesus, the initial response of a believer to the word of God gives them the capacity to see, by illumination, the kingdom of God and their place in it as a son of God. They are born of the seed of God's divine nature, yet they are still carnal. This means that they still have another law within their flesh. Paul called this law a principle of evil that is within us. It is an innate and subconscious desire within a person to have and express life 'their own way'. As a consequence of the fall of mankind, every person is born with this propensity within them. It is from the basis of this law that we seek to satisfy the desires of our flesh and of our eyes, and become lifted up in pride.

With the best of intentions, a carnal Christian will set out to live acceptably to God by doing what they think is pleasing to Him. They will attempt to fulfil what they perceive to be the will of God through the enthusiastic exercise of their unique sonship and, by this means, they believe that they will be able to keep the law of God. This is because they recognise that God's law defines the cultural standards of His kingdom, which they have been born to see. They set about living by these standards because they think that this is how they will inherit the kingdom of God. However, this is not possible.

In the parable of the sower and the seed, Jesus likened the various expressions of carnality to 'stony ground' and 'thorny ground'. We understand from this parable that unless this fleshly propensity is removed from us, we will fail to bring forth fruit to God. At best, we will be a Christian who is weak in faith. At worst, we will lose our salvation.

References:

Joh 3:3

Rom 7:21

1Jn 2:16

Luk 8:13-14

Rom 8:6-7

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 3**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 4

Under judgement

When a Christian tries to use their own resource and strength to fulfil the will of God, they only find that various sinful passions begin to be aroused within them. For example, they may begin to compare themselves with others and become envious of their capacities or ministry expression. They may become frustrated because their efforts are not being adequately acknowledged. The trials and tribulations which they experience because of the word, may cause them to become weary and discontented with the Christian life. The failure of their initiatives may result in outbursts of anger. Paul called these responses 'the deeds of the flesh'.

According to the law that the carnal Christian is trying to fulfil, their fleshly deeds are sin. On account of their sin, they come under the judgement and condemnation of the law. The wages or penalty for sin is death. Instead of finding life through their well-meaning endeavours, they are losing it under the condemnation of the law.

Paul explained that although these ones have delighted in the law of God in their regenerated and renewed 'inner man', and want to be righteous, they are prisoners to the law of sin in their bodies. This is because their flesh is self-centred and they can only do the deeds of the flesh. These deeds are inherently contrary to the law of God, which is love from a pure heart. It is a body of death, rather than a body that is receiving the blessing of life. In this body, they are unable to do the good works that God prepared for them to do that are according to His will. Until they are delivered from this principle within them, they are slaves to sin, and remain under the judgement of the law.

References:

Rom 7:5, 13-14, 22-24
Gal 5:19
Rom 6:23
Mat 16:25

Further Study:

1 Timothy 1

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 5

Many are weak and sick

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul noted that there were many who are weak, sick, and who even die, because they live their lives and judge themselves from the basis of their own law, and it brings them under the judgement of God. However, they have been born of imperishable seed, and if they will continue to believe in the Son and receive His word, they will enter heaven when they die. In the meantime, their lives on this earth will be beset with sickness and weakness. They will become weary in their Christian pilgrimage, and may become depressed because their sonship aspirations and expectations are not being realised. Whether they acknowledge it or not, their Christian experience will be fruitless and miserable. Explaining this point by using his own life as an example, Paul arrived at the exasperated conclusion, 'O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?'

This is not how God intended His sons to live. Jesus died as the Pioneer of our salvation so that we can be delivered from this way of living. He established a fellowship through which the body of sin is removed from us. Through baptism in water and the Holy Spirit, we are joined to a fellowship with Christ, through which our carnal propensities are removed from us and we are instructed in the way of sonship. Peter taught that 'baptism now saves us – not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience'. A person with a good conscience has had their evil heart sprinkled with the blood of Jesus. Consequently, they are no longer motivated to serve God according to their own way. They are able to serve the living God as priests.

References:

Exo 15:26 Heb 10:22
Rom 7:24 Heb 9:14
1Pe 3:21 Heb 12:22

Further Study:

1 Corinthians 11

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 6

Saved by His life

In his letter to the Romans, Paul explained that reconciliation, justification and being born to see the kingdom are necessary, but not sufficient, for salvation and participation in the kingdom of God. We need to share and participate in Christ's life! Paul declared, 'If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life'.

The life of Christ could be summarised as the elements of His body and His blood. Jesus said, 'Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, *you have no life in yourselves*. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood *abides in Me, and I in him*.' The life of the Son is who He is. He is the sum and full expression of all sonship, and this was revealed through His priesthood and offering. Baptism joins us to the fellowship of Christ's priesthood and offering. We then partake of the communion elements each week, in faith for our ongoing participation in these dimensions of His life.

A new believer's faith for baptism will not come through convincing theological propositions. Neither does baptism into a denomination or doctrinal tradition grant us entry into the kingdom of God. It is the Holy Spirit who enables and convinces a person to come into Christ. Of course, a new believer can be encouraged toward baptism, as the multitude were on the Day of Pentecost. However, the believer's urgency to be baptised, and their understanding of its implications for their life, is a consequence of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

References:

Rom 5:10 Joh 14:19
Joh 6:53-56 Joh 11:25-26
Act 2:38 Col 3:3-4

Further Study:

Hebrews 7

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 9

Sanctification by the Spirit

We read in the book of James that the Father brought us forth by the word of truth so that we would *become* a certain firstfruits of His creation. As we have already stated, if we attempt to fulfil what we perceive as God's will through the pursuit of our unique sonship, we will come under the law and its condemnation. This happens because we are still carnal. As a consequence, our Christian lives will be wretched and unfruitful. This highlights the point that we are not firstfruits simply because we have been born from above or have a unique sonship to express. And we do not arrive at firstfruits as an inevitable consequence of time. This is one of the primary lessons of the parable of the sower and the seed.

The principle of firstfruits highlights the necessity for Christians to bring forth fruit. In the first instance, this is speaking of the fruit of righteousness. However, Jesus explained that the fruit is also *eternal life*. He said, 'Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal'. To bear this fruit is to receive the hope of the resurrection to immortality as a son of God. The question is, how do we bear the fruit of righteousness, leading to eternal life?

Like James, Paul taught that the Father has chosen us to become firstfruits Christians. However, Paul provided us with some further detail regarding how this happens. He explained that it is through the purifying or sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. Having been born from above of the seed of God's life, our spirits then begin to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit. He convinces us to believe in Jesus Christ *as the revelation and manifestation of true sonship*. We believe that we can receive our eternal sonship in Christ and from Christ.

References:

Jas 1:18

Rom 15:16

Jas 3:18

1Pe 1:2

Joh 4:36

Further Study:

 2 Thessalonians 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 10

Baptism

Having been sanctified and empowered to believe in the Son by the Holy Spirit, a person will want to come into Christ through baptism. We recall the enthusiasm of the Ethiopian eunuch who received the word of Philip and immediately desired to be baptised. Philip said to him that if he believed with all his heart, he could be baptised. The point Philip was making was that if the Ethiopian had been 'born from above', he could be baptised. The eunuch answered Philip, saying, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God'. In other words, he believed that Jesus was the sum of all sonship and he desired, as Paul later did, to be found in Him, not having a righteousness of his own that was derived through the law, but that which comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

The privilege of participation in Christ's own life can only be accessed through baptism. The confession of the believer who has received this sanctification and illumination by the Holy Spirit, is that they want more than just the seed of their own life. They want to participate in the life of Christ. By receiving the life of His sonship and participating in the revelation of His glory, we bear the fruit of righteousness in Him, and will receive the full reward of our own sonship in the new heavens and earth.

Jesus invited all those who were weary and heavy-laden from their vain attempts to live acceptably to God through the exercise of their own law, to come to Him and find rest. To take Christ's yoke upon us is to receive the New Covenant that He made available as a participation, or fellowship, in His death, burial and resurrection. By this means, we are delivered from living by the principles of the law that only result in weariness and wretchedness, and we find a fellowship of life that results in rest and peace.

References:

Act 8:36-37
Php 3:9
Mat 11:28-30

1Pe 3:21
1Co 12:13
Gal 3:27

Further Study:

Colossians 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 11

Learning from Christ

When we come to Christ to become a disciple and take His yoke upon us, we begin to learn from Him. We learn to reveal the Father by doing the works of Christ's sonship. Paul said that by this means we 'gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ'. Christ's glory is the expression of His sonship. He is the sum and full expression of all sonship. As we learn sonship from Christ by doing the works of His sonship as a member of His body, we are being brought to glory as sons of God. When He appears again at the end of the age, we will be like Him.

It is amazing to consider how Christ has invited us into a fellowship with Him. This is, in fact, the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to join us to the fellowship of the Trinity. This fellowship is in the body of Christ. 'For *in Him* dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.' Furthermore, 'by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit'. We are baptised by one Spirit into the body of Christ so that we can be included in Their fellowship by receiving our sonship from the source of all sonship, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. This is the fellowship of the life of Christ in the New Covenant.

To understand the nature of this covenant and our participation in it, we must first consider the offering of the Son of God, through which the will of God was done and the righteousness of the law was fulfilled. We have been invited to join the fellowship of this offering.

References:

Mat 11:28-30 Col 2:9
2Th 2:14 1Co 12:13
1Jn 3:2

Further Study:

John 17

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 12

A body prepared

The Son of God was born into this fallen and condemned world that had been made even more sinful with the advent of the Law Covenant. The testimony of Jesus to the Father was, “Sacrifice and offering You have not desired, *but a body you have prepared for Me*; in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have taken no pleasure”. Then I said, “Behold, I have come (in the scroll of the book it is written of Me) *to do Your will, O God*.” What did Christ mean by this?

The most obvious point to note from this passage of Scripture is that the Son of God received a body from the Father through which the will of God could be fulfilled. The fulfilment of God’s will was in contrast to the sacrifices and offerings of the Old Covenant, which were ineffective in this regard. What this old, Law Covenant could not achieve, in terms of dealing with the flesh so that a person could fulfil God’s will, God achieved by sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. This happened when Christ was born of a woman. ‘Incarnation’ is the theological term that is used to describe the mortal body of the Son of God. This was the first phase of the body that had been prepared for the Son.

Paul described Jesus as a Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. This priesthood did not operate by the same principles as the old Levitical priesthood. Through His priesthood and offering, Christ’s mortal body was changed into an immortal body. This was the nature of His body when He rose from the dead after three days and three nights in the tomb. Importantly, when Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father with this body, He was made the immortal Head of His corporate body on earth. This was the second phase of the body that was prepared for Christ.

References:

Rom 7:13 Rom 8:3
Mat 18:11 Gal 3:21
Heb 10:5-7 Heb 7:19

Further Study:

Acts 13

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 13

The Pioneer of our salvation

In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul said that Jesus Christ did not appoint Himself to be our great High Priest. The Father appointed Him by the word of the oath. He swore, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'. The order of Melchizedek is the priesthood that belongs to the New Covenant. It is the priesthood that functions according to the *power of an endless, or indestructible, life*. It was by this means that Christ was able to bring His mortal flesh to immortality. This is what Paul meant when he said that our Saviour Christ Jesus 'abolished death and brought life and immortality to light'.

The process of the cross which brought life and immortality to light according to the Father's will, is the pathway of salvation. Paul explained, 'It was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father.'

Jesus authored, or pioneered, the pathway through which the sons of men could be brought to life and immortality. This is, in fact, the inheritance that God had prepared for the sons of God before the foundation of the world. To obtain this inheritance, we must be joined to the body of Christ. His body was, and is, the only one in which the will of God could be done on earth and in heaven. Moreover, it was the only body in which the law could be fulfilled. If we are to fulfil the will of God and bear the fruit of righteousness, we must join the fellowship which He has invited us to join, in the body of His mortality and His immortality.

References:

Heb 5:6
Heb 7:16
2Ti 1:10

Heb 2:10-11
Mat 5:17

Further Study: 2 Timothy 1

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 16

God with us

The will of God was being accomplished in Christ's mortal body from the moment of His conception in the womb of Mary. This was where God the Son, who had been begotten by the Father as the Son of God, came into the world as the Son of Man. Concerning this event, an angel of the Lord spoke to Joseph and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Now all this took place to fulfil what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel", which translated means, "*God with us*".

Jesus' ministry on earth commenced when He was about thirty years old. Concerning this ministry, He testified, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favourable year of the Lord.' This He did throughout the region of Judea. The blind received sight, the lame were healed, the lepers were cleansed, the deaf received their capacity to hear, and the poor had the gospel preached to them. Jesus said of His ministry that a person was blessed if they did not take offence at Him.

When the Son of God came in the flesh, He was establishing a point of fellowship 'with us'. This fellowship would culminate in an invitation to journey 'with Him' on the pathway of sanctification that He would establish through His passion, from Gethsemane to Calvary.

References:

Mat 1:20-23 Mat 11:5-6
Luk 3:23 Isa 8:8
Luk 4:18-19 Isa 9:6-7

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 5

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 17

His blood poured out

At the last supper, Jesus gave the bread and the wine to His disciples as the elements of the New Covenant. He explained to them that the bread was His flesh and the wine was His blood that they were to partake of in remembrance of Him. Paul explained further that the bread and wine were a sharing, or participation, in the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Eating and drinking these elements would grant them access to the New Covenant that He was going to establish through the shedding of His blood on the cross.

The cross of Christ is where He fulfilled the Father's will. Christ poured out Himself to death in the garden of Gethsemane, saying to Peter, James and John, 'My *soul* is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me'. Having poured out Himself, Jesus was numbered with us, the transgressors. Christ gave Himself as an offering for our sins so that He might rescue us from the judgement of God that is already upon the wickedness of this present age. Paul explained that Christ gave Himself this way according to the will of God. He received this will when He prayed to the Father, 'If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will'.

As Christ suffered in the mortality of His flesh, His blood was poured out for us. Yahweh Himself taught that the life, or soul, of a person is in their blood. The life of a person is not the blood; *it is in the blood*. The same was so for the Son of God. His own sonship life was carried in His blood. He gave His life for us, and to us, when it was shed as a direct result of His offering and sufferings from the garden of Gethsemane through to Calvary.

References:

Psa 22:14

2Ti 2:5-6

Mat 26:38

Isa 53:12

Gal 1:4

Lev 17:11, 14

Further Study:

1 John 5

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 18

Three elements of blood

The New Testament writers highlighted three aspects of Christ's blood that are necessary for our full redemption as sons of God. Christ's blood was shed for us when He offered Himself 'once for all'. Firstly, the blood of Christ was the treasure that redeemed, or ransomed, us from the power of sin and death. It was the coinage that gave life to men and women who were otherwise dead because of sin. On account of this vicarious work, we received the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation, and the right to be born again and to receive the divine nature.

Secondly, the blood of Jesus is a washing, cleansing agent that we have access to when we join the fellowship of His sufferings. Christ's blood purges the garments of our priesthood so that we can join the fellowship of Christ's priesthood, and then offer ourselves as a living sacrifice that is holy and acceptable to God. We join the fellowship of Christ's priesthood through baptism, communion, and by the Holy Spirit.

Thirdly, the blood of Christ was given to us on the altar as Christ suffered in Gethsemane and finally died on the cross. This was His work of atonement for us. Yahweh said that the life in the blood is given to us on the altar to make atonement for our souls. The life of the Son is eternal life! His life is transferred to us, giving us power to live as sons of God. Furthermore, as we eat His flesh and drink His blood, Christ joins us to His sonship, making us living participators in the expression of His corporate sonship. Jesus promised that if we would partake of His flesh and blood, He would raise us up on the last day. He was saying that we would receive a resurrection body just like His.

References:

1Pe 3:18

1Pe 1:18-19

Eph 2:1

Lev 17:11

Rev 7:14-15

Joh 6:54

Further Study:

1 John 1

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 19

The fruit of Christ's offering

Jesus died the death of sin in Gethsemane and was brought back from this death by the Spirit of the Father, the shedding of His own blood, and the power of Eternal Spirit. Then, on the cross, having triumphed over death and sin, Christ declared, 'It is finished!' He had fulfilled the will of the Father and completed the full work of redemption. As we noted earlier, through this one act of righteousness, 'there resulted justification of life to all men'.

Jesus then cried out with a loud voice, 'Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit'. The Spirit of the Son was then received by the Father into His bosom, where He remained while His buried body rested in the tomb for three days and three nights. The apostle Peter declared that Christ 'was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay'. His body was preserved by the Spirit of the Father in the tomb, where it rested in hope of the resurrection.

Speaking of His offering, Jesus said, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.' Isaiah prophesied regarding the multiplication of life as the outcome of Christ's offering, saying, 'It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.'

When Jesus went to the bosom of the Father, He brought a great multitude of sons with Him. He reconciled us all to God through His offering. This multitude included all the men and women of faith who had died prior to His death.

References:

Joh 19:30

Act 2:31

Rom 5:18

Joh 12:23-24

Luk 23:46

Further Study:

Isaiah 53

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 20

In the Father's house

When the Old Testament saints died, they were kept by faith in what was called 'the bosom of Abraham'. Those who did not demonstrate the faith of Abraham were kept in Hades. These two realities were identified by Jesus in His account of Lazarus and the rich man. When Christ died, all the men and women of faith under the Old Covenant were transferred to the bosom of the Father as sons of God. Christ's blood had ransomed them, as well as us, to God. Their faith had joined them to Abraham, to whom the promise of sonship was made, and their faith was then imputed to them as righteousness.

Before He died, Jesus had said to His disciples, 'Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way where I am going.' Jesus was speaking here of preparing a place for each one of us in the bosom of the Father.

Christ's personal journey from Gethsemane to Calvary pioneered a pathway that we could journey upon *with Him*, all the way to being hidden with Him in the bosom of the Father. When we are baptised into Christ, we are hidden with Christ in God. Our sonship is with Him in heaven, while we, who are the members of His body on earth, are on a journey through 'the wilderness' of the world. This is a journey that is both 'with Him' in the fellowship of His mortality, and 'in Him' as a member of His corporate body.

References:

Luk 16:22-24 Col 3:3
1Pe 3:18 Mat 7:14
Joh 14:1-4 Joh 17:24

Further Study:

1 Peter 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 23

His immortal body

After three days and three nights, the Spirit of Christ returned to His body which had been kept from corruption by the Father. When He rose from the dead, His body was flesh, but He did not live by the principle of blood, for Christ's blood had been poured out to give us life. He now lived by the power of Eternal Spirit. It was now an immortal body. However, it was not mystical. It was substantial. Significantly, Jesus said to His disciples, 'See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have'. To Thomas He said, 'Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing'. He then said, 'Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed'. Jesus was making the point that our belief is in the Son who has an immortal body.

When the Son ascended into heaven, the Father seated Him at His right hand in heavenly places and made Him the immortal Head over His corporate body. Through His passion from Gethsemane to Calvary, Christ was creating in Himself a corporate body from the 'soil' of the flesh of Jew and Gentile. When they became members of His physical corporate body, they would be able to participate in the fulfilment of the will of God. Saying it another way, the Son's mortal body was the temple of Yahweh, just as our own body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Through the cross, the temple of His body was expanded to include us as living stones. We are now the flesh and bones, joints and ligaments of the expanded temple of His body, of which He is the immortal Head and Capstone.

References:

Joh 20:27, 29 1Co 6:19
Eph 1:22-23 1Pe 2:4-5
Eph 2:14-16 Col 1:18

Further Study:

Luke 24

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 24

The fellowship of the New Covenant

The New Covenant is the promise of receiving the divine nature as a personal and eternal possession. We are recipients of, and participators in, the New Covenant, through *regeneration*, new birth from an incorruptible seed, *baptism*, by eating and drinking the elements of the *communion*, and by receiving the *Holy Spirit*. These five aspects of covenant life connect us to a fellowship in Christ's mortality and His immortality. Through our fellowship with Christ in relation to these two aspects of His body, we are made adequate to fulfil the will of God, and we are assured of receiving the promise of eternal life.

It is important to understand the implications of our fellowship with Christ in His mortality and His immortality. This is because, together, they communicate the nature and details of *our* Christian pilgrimage on this earth. This journey, which was pioneered by Christ through His offering on the cross, culminates in our possession of an immortal body, just like the one Christ received when He rose from the dead after three days and three nights in the tomb. This body belongs to our eternal inheritance as a son of God in the new heavens and earth.

Receiving this inheritance depends upon coming into Christ and journeying 'with' Christ in the fellowship of His death and sufferings, which He experienced in His mortal body. It depends, *equally*, upon being found 'in Him' as part of the corporate body of Christ, of which He is the immortal Head. These two expressions, 'with Him' and 'in Him', were specifically used by Paul in relation to baptism into the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, Paul taught that 'if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection'. Likewise, he taught that we must be baptised into Christ so that we are found 'in Him'.

References:

Luk 24:6-7 Rom 6:5
Rom 8:23-24 Php 3:8-9
1Co 15:51-53

Further Study: Acts 5:12-42

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 25

With Him and in Him

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul explained that we have ‘been buried *with Him* in baptism, in which you were also raised up *with Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead’. This being our experience, we are made complete *in Him*. ‘For *in Him* all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and *in Him* you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and *in Him* you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.’

From these passages, we can see that ‘with Him’ and ‘in Him’ both describe what it means to be baptised into the *death, burial and resurrection* of Christ. Having come into Christ through baptism, we are joined to the fellowship of His death and suffering that He experienced in His mortal body from Gethsemane to Calvary. ‘Buried with Christ’ refers to the reality of our personal sonship being hidden with Him in the bosom of the Father. ‘Raised and seated with Him in heavenly places’ in Him, is the reality of being a member of His corporate body.

The fellowship of His death, burial and resurrection is to be our *daily reality*. In this regard, they are not independent steps that we simply experience in sequence and then move past. Each aspect of baptism is dependent upon the others. For example, our capacity to effectively minister as a member of the corporate body of Christ will be hindered if our sonship does not remain hidden with Christ in the bosom of the Father. This is because our priority for service will be the expression of our own sonship, rather than the expression of Christ’s sonship as a member of His body. The only way that we can be delivered from this propensity is through the chastening of the Lord that we experience in the fellowship of Christ’s death and sufferings.

References:

Col 2:9-12 Eph 1:20
Eph 2:6 Heb 12:2
Col 3:1 Rom 8:16-17

Further Study:

Romans 6

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 26

The circumcision of Christ

When we are baptised into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are joined to the circumcision of Christ as members of His body. The circumcision of Christ is the religious 'rite' of the New Covenant that a person must receive if they are to lay hold of the promise of receiving the divine nature as an eternal possession. What do we mean by a 'rite'? We recall that circumcision was the sign and condition of the Everlasting Covenant that God made with Abraham. Likewise, the circumcision of Christ is the sign and the condition of the New Covenant.

We can think of circumcision as an operation that cuts, from our body, something that is causing us harm. This could be, for example, a cancerous tumour that, if not dealt with, will cause our death. This picture from the 'natural' helps us to understand circumcision in relation to our sonship. The circumcision of Christ is the process that the Son, the Father and the Holy Spirit planned, so that we could be delivered from the other law within us that brings us into bondage to the law of sin and death.

The circumcision of Christ describes the death and suffering that He experienced in seven stages from Gethsemane to Calvary. To receive His circumcision, we must be joined to Christ's death as an event that belongs to history. We are to die with Him and journey with Him all the way to the bosom of the Father. Fellowship connects us to all the events and outcomes of Christ's passion that He experienced in the body of His mortality. In this regard, there is no spiritual 'time machine' that takes us back to Gethsemane. Neither is our journey 'with Him' a mystical experience. Paul is clear that the New Covenant is a *koinonia*, or fellowship, that we join through baptism, communion, and the Holy Spirit.

References:

Col 2:11 2Co 3:6
Gen 17:11, 14 Php 3:3
Deu 30:6

Further Study:

Romans 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 27