



# Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

PSA 23:3

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MAY 2019

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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# **RESTORING MY SOUL**

*A Five Day Devotional Guide*

**May 2019**

## **Contributing Authors**

Victor Hall

Peter Hay

David Baker

## **Compiled by**

David Baker

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## Lost to God

Through offering, and before the beginning of creation, Yahweh Son was begotten by the word of the Father, and became the Son and Seed of the Father. He received the Father's life, and the name of every son of God was written in Him. These names were discussed in the Everlasting Covenant dialogue of Yahweh Elohim.

On the sixth day of creation, the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of lives. By this means, man became a living soul. **Gen 2:7**. From Adam, through procreation, the identity of every person would come into being. Although all of the identities of mankind were in Adam, their names as sons of God were not given to Adam. These names had been given to the Son of God. As Paul summarised, 'The spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven.' **1Co 15:46-48**. Paul's point was that a person is first born in Adam as a living soul, or identity. To fulfil their predestination as a son of God, they must be born again through the incorruptible Seed of God, who is Christ. **Joh 3:3. 1Pe 1:23**.

When Adam sinned by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in an attempt to become the source of his own life and destiny, all the identities of mankind were lost to God. They were now dead in trespasses and sins. **Eph 2:1. Rom 5:12**. Having fallen from fellowship with Yahweh, the sons and daughters of men were no longer able to become the sons of God whom the Father had named them to be before the beginning of creation. Christ, the great Shepherd, came to seek and to save all those who were lost to God because of sin. **Luk 19:10**.

## To seek and to save

The 'sheep' of the Son's sheepfold were given to Him by the Father. **Joh 10:29**. They are the Father's sons and daughters. As Jesus prayed, 'You [the Father] have given Him [the Son] authority [as a Shepherd-King] over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as *You have given Him*!' **Joh 17:2**. This multitude was given to the Son before the creation of the heavens and the earth, when the Father predestined every person to adoption as a son of God in Christ. **Eph 1:5**.

In order to find and recover the lost sheep to their predestination as sons of God, the great Shepherd had to go where all the sheep were – to the death of sin. Christ the Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep when He was struck by the Father with the sword of reproach. **Zec 13:7. Psa 22:19-21**. The reproach that fell on Christ was, in fact, the human race's rejection of God as the Father of mankind. It was mankind's reproach of the Father that fell on Christ. **Psa 69:7**. Our sin is against the Father, who named us and prepared the works of our sonship. The Father laid the reproaches for these sins on the Son, when He made the Son an offering for sin. **Psa 69:7,9. Rom 15:3**.

As the sin offering, Christ joined us in the death of sin and separation from God, and found all the children who were lost to God the Father because of Adam's transgression. Through the shedding of His blood, the Shepherd was brought back from the death of sin by the Father. **Heb 13:20**. Significantly, all the lost sheep were brought back with Him from the death of sin, and were recovered to God. He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out of their captivity. **Joh 10:3**. He calls them by their name, which the Father predestined for them in Christ, before the beginning.

## Born of the Seed

When Christ was begotten as the Father's Firstborn, before the beginning, He received the incorruptible seed of the Father's life, which included all of the names of the sons of God. This was His *inheritance* as the Firstborn. The life and name of every son of God were given to Him as the Firstborn, and as the Shepherd-King of His flock. The apostle John highlighted this point when he wrote, 'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.' **Joh 1:4.**

When Christ came in the flesh, John explained that 'as many as *received Him*, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who *believe in His name*: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' **Joh 1:12-13.** To be born of God, a son of man needs to receive Christ, the Seed, and to believe in His name. This means that they need to be baptised into His name, and to continue to live by every word that proceeds from His mouth. When they do this, they abide in the Son, and the Son abides in them. **Joh 6:56.**

We see that a person is born of God when they receive Christ and come into Christ. This is because they receive the Father's life from Christ, the Seed, and are named as a son of God in Christ. Importantly, they are also called by name to be part of the flock of Christ as His sheep. This means that they are His disciple. Jesus said, 'My sheep *hear My voice*, and I know them, and they *follow Me*.' **Joh 10:27.**

Christ's sheep hear His voice because they have received the ear of a disciple. **Isa 50:4-5.** They follow Christ as His disciple by taking up their cross and journeying with Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. **Mat 16:24-25. Mar 8:34-35. Luk 9:23-24.**

## Joint heirs with Christ

Through new birth and baptism, sons of God become *joint heirs*, with Christ, of the Father's life. **Rom 8:16-17**. To be a joint heir with Christ means that we are not Christ's son, nor the Father's 'grandson'. We are a son of God with Christ, and in Christ. He is not ashamed to call us His brothers and sisters, and declared to the Father, 'Here am I and the children whom God has given to Me.' **Heb 2:11,13**.

A person can only be born of the Father and receive the inheritance of eternal life by receiving Christ, the Father's Seed, into their heart. This happens when they hear and believe the word that is preached by the Holy Spirit through the messengers whom Christ sends with the gospel of peace. **Rom 10:14-15**. **1Pe 1:12**. Having been born of the Seed, a believer then comes into Christ, the Seed, through baptism. Both aspects of the seed are necessary for birth as a son of God.

Christ does not birth sons of God. He is a participator in the fellowship of the Father's fatherhood. This is because, by Eternal Spirit, the Son received the life of God, and all the names of the sons of God, from the Father. The sons of God are birthed by receiving Christ and coming into Him. The Son reveals the Father as a participator in the fellowship of this birthing process. It is for this reason that one of Christ's names is 'Everlasting Father'. **Isa 9:6**. This does not mean that Christ is the father of the sons of God, but that the sons of God are born of the Father in and through the Son. Only in Christ is the seed of the Father's life made available to the many who were born of Adam. In Adam, all die, so, in Christ, all will be made alive. **1Co 15:22**.



## The doctrine of Christ

The apostle John wrote that anyone who does not abide in *the doctrine of Christ* does not have God, but that those who abide in the doctrine of Christ have both the Father and the Son. **2Jn 1:9**. There are many people in the Christian community who mistakenly believe that they can have salvation apart from being *in Christ*, and apart from maintaining a practical connection to others in His body. In this regard, they are no different from the Jews who believed Jesus, but would not accept that they were in bondage to sin, and that their salvation depended on abiding in His word and coming into Him. **Joh 8:31-32**.

They said to Him, 'We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, "You will be made free"?' **Joh 8:33**. Jesus said to them, 'If you were *Abraham's children*, you would do *the works of Abraham*.' **Joh 8:39**. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul said that if we belong to Christ, as those who abide in the doctrine of Christ, then we are Abraham's children. **Gal 3:29**. Through Christ's interaction with the Jews, we see that those who abide in Christ will do the works of Abraham. We must, therefore, give attention to understanding, and participating in, these works.

A person's salvation is dependent upon how they receive the doctrine of Christ that is proclaimed by His lampstand administration. The ministry of Christ's administration is in conflict with false messengers, who teach that a person can be saved and enter heaven on the basis of Christ's vicarious offering, alone. They claim that a person can avail themselves of the benefits of Christ's offering through the profession of some salvation formula, such as the sinner's prayer. By denying the necessity to come into Christ, they teach that righteousness can be demonstrated through a person's self-defined religious works. Such practices reveal that these false messengers, and their followers, deny that salvation is only found in the fellowship of Christ.

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FURTHER STUDY JOHN 8

## Christ's messenger administration

Within the Christian community, there are two levels of messengers who have been sent by Christ – the twelve and the seventy. These were established by Jesus during His earthly ministry. Their work was to proclaim the gospel of peace. The twelve were sent out in pairs to the lost sheep of the house of Israel to preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. **Mat 10:5-7**. Jesus sent the seventy in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to go. **Luk 10:1**. They were being sent as labourers into His harvest. **Luk 10:2**. Significantly, Jesus said that the seventy were being sent as lambs in the midst of wolves. **Luk 10:3**.

After Christ ascended back to His throne in heaven, He established His lampstand administration through the ministry of the apostle Paul. The messenger dimension of the twelve is now a star administration in the right hand of Christ. They are the overseers of the church, who have received ascension gift grace from Christ – some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some teachers – to feed and equip the members of Christ's body for the work of their ministry. **Eph 4:11-12**. This messenger dimension is represented by the numeric *four*.

The ministry of the seventy, within Christ's lampstand administration, is to focus the light of the gospel of grace that is ministered by the star messengers in Christ's hand. They have been sent out into the broader Christian community and into the world. In both of these contexts, they are lambs among wolves. This messenger dimension is represented by the numeric *seven*. Star messengers, and those who are part of the messenger administration represented by seven, bring the gospel of peace to worthy 'houses', or households, within the Christian community and in the world. Households that are worthy are willing to receive the word of Christ and to come into Him. **Act 10:1-2**.

## The synagogue of Satan

Christ's messenger administration within the church is in conflict with another administration in the church, which Jesus Himself called 'the synagogue of Satan'. **Rev 2:9. Rev 3:9.** The Scriptures identify the ministers of Satan's synagogue as thieves, wolves and vultures within the church, who seek to steal and devour Christ's sheep. They do this by ministering an alternative gospel to the word of the cross.

Jesus called the star messengers, which are the lamp presbyteries of His church, to protect His sheep by confronting these false messengers and their teachings. The apostle John demonstrated this mandate when he wrote to the church concerning the fallen ministry mode of Diotrephes. He said, 'I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the pre-eminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words.' **3Jn 1:9.**

Many people will be confronted by the thought that the synagogue of Satan is among Christ's church. Through His letters to the seven churches, Jesus highlighted the reality that many of those who assume positions of authority within religious organisations that are part of the broader Christian community, are ministers of Satan. They claim the right to rule the church from the basis of their theological training and episcopal aspirations, rather than by being sent by Christ as part of a messenger administration that He has appointed to His hand. In presumption, the ministers of Satan take hold of the Law of God and make it the basis of their own ministry vocation within the Christian community.

The various alternative gospels ministered from the synagogue of Satan include the doctrine of Balaam, the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, and the teaching of Jezebel. **Rev 2:14-15. Rev 2:20.** Those who minister these false gospels, and those who follow their teaching, will not be received into heaven, even though they claim to be Christian believers.

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**FURTHER STUDY 3 JOHN 1**

## Christ's ministry to His body

The body of Christ, among the denominations of the broader church, is sustained by the grace that is brought to worthy houses by Christ's messengers. Worthy houses have received the grace and peace of God, which is the salvation of God, from one, or both, of the messenger dimensions sent by Christ.

**Rom 1:7. 2Jn 1:1-3**

We are entering the final phase of history that the Scriptures call 'the time of the end'. **Dan 11:35**. The Lord is raising up His body and bride from among the denominations. It is the particular responsibility of the seven – sent as lambs among the wolves within the broader church – to seek worthy houses. In order for their ministry to be effective, they must remain connected to the star messenger administration. These are ascension gift overseers, who are given as a gift of Christ to the church. **Luk 12:42**. If the seven are disconnected from the star messengers, they are disconnected from God's grace. This makes them vulnerable to the wolves among whom they have been sent.

Through the ministry of Christ's messenger administration, worthy houses within the whole Christian community are able to be connected to Christ's sheepfold because Christ Himself has come to them through His messengers. **Joh 13:20**. In other words, through fellowship with elders and other firstfruit Christians, in Christ, they are part of Christ's sheepfold.

The seven are elders and firstfruit Christians who are able to lead others to Christ by ministering the peace of God to families, so that they are born again, and then mature from worthy houses to become firstfruit houses themselves. Households that are worthy are able to receive Christ as He comes through His lampstand church administration. The work of the seven is to go ahead of Christ to every place where He Himself is going to come. **Luk 10:1**. Through their ministry of peace to worthy houses, the seven open the door for Christ to come to these houses through the word of ascension gift overseers.

## Disciples of Christ

Christ taught the twelve and the seventy the content of the message that they were to bring to worthy houses in the Jewish community. This is the same content that is to be ministered by the four-seven administration of Christ's lampstand churches. The Jewish community is the equivalent of today's broader religious community. We see that the seven are firstly looking for worthy houses in this community. They know that they have found a worthy house when their peace rests upon the house. **Luk 10:5-6**. This means that the house receives the gospel of peace that is in the mouths of those who are part of the messenger dimension of the seven.

Those who continue in the word of Christ are true disciples of Christ. Those who are not Christ's disciples do not abide in His word. As Jesus said, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' **Joh 8:31-32**. This is the criterion for belonging to Melchizedek, the King-Priest.

The teaching administration that Christ established for making disciples was to continue throughout the church age. This is the true implication of the great commission – 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, *teaching them* to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' **Mat 28:18-20**.

Disciples are made through teaching; and sheep belong to Christ because they receive His word. They are sheep who hear the word of the Shepherd who addresses them by name. **Joh 10:26-27**. Only disciples are saved, because they obey the Shepherd and are protected from wolves and thieves in His sheepfold. This is the only way that a person, and their household, can be saved from damnation.

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**FURTHER STUDY JOHN 10**

## The Shepherd finds His sheep

The Gospel of John recounts Jesus' healing of a man who was born blind. **Joh 9:1.** Because Jesus had performed this miracle on the Sabbath, the man was brought before the Pharisees to give an account of his interaction with Jesus. **Joh 9:14.** Towards the end of his interrogation, the healed man declared, 'Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing.' **Joh 9:30-33.** The Pharisees responded by saying to him that he had been born entirely in sin. They then put him out of the synagogue. **Joh 9:34.**

When Jesus heard that the man had been put out of the synagogue, He went and found him, and said, 'Do you believe in the Son of God?' **Joh 9:35.** In response to Jesus, who revealed that He was the Son of God, the man confessed, 'Lord, I believe.' **Joh 9:36-38.** Evidently, he had received faith by hearing the word that Jesus had spoken to him. **2Co 4:13. Rom 10:17.** By faith, this new believer was able to worship in fellowship with the Lord. The point to note is that this man had been put out of the Jewish 'sheepfold'. However, Jesus came and found this 'sheep' and called him by name into His sheepfold.

Following this event, Jesus taught on 'the Shepherd and sheep', identifying four distinct phases of His work as the great Shepherd who had come to seek and to save the sheep who had been given to Him by the Father. Later, as He prayed to the Father on the Mount of Olives, Jesus restated this work, which was completed through His offering on the cross.

## He leads them out of the Old Covenant

In the first phase of His ministry as the good Shepherd, Jesus came to the Jewish sheepfold. The synagogues were the sheepfold of Israel. Jesus recognised their legitimacy by teaching in them during His ministry. When He saw the people in the synagogues, He was moved with compassion for them because they were 'weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd'. **Mat 9:35-36.**

The leaders of the synagogues were supposed to be the doorkeepers of the sheepfold of Israel. This responsibility belonged to priests and to scribes. **2Ch 23:4.** However, they had become corrupt, and illegitimate leaders had assumed authority and influence in synagogues on the basis of their theological training and knowledge. These were the Pharisees who had not been appointed by the Lord. Jesus referred to them as thieves and robbers who had 'climbed up' some other way. **Joh 10:1.**

The priests and scribes were the doorkeepers of the sheepfold. They were supposed to have been watching for the coming of the Man whose name was BRANCH, and should have opened the door to the good Shepherd. **Zec 6:12. Joh 10:3.** However, they were described by Jesus as 'hirelings' who had fled in the face of the influence and power of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Concerning His ministry to the sheep of the house of Israel, Jesus said, 'The sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.' **Joh 10:3-4.** Jesus was born under the Old Covenant, and was first coming to His own. He did not come to bring anybody into the Jewish sheepfold. He came to call His sheep by name, and *lead them out* of the Old Covenant and into a new covenant. **Heb 8:8-9.**

## Entry into the New Covenant

The second phase of Christ's ministry was to bring the sheep of the house of Israel into the New Covenant; that is, into the fellowship of Yahweh. Entry into this covenant was through the Passover Lamb. This is why Jesus described Himself, in the first instance, as 'the door of the sheep,' rather than as 'the door of the sheepfold.' **Joh 10:7**. Jesus had already identified Himself as the Passover Lamb for the Father's house, when He declared to the Jews, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.' **Joh 6:53-54**.

The Passover door is the blood-sprinkled way into the New Covenant. This was established at the first communion service. Jesus identified the bread as being His flesh, and gave it to His disciples as a participation in His body. **Luk 22:19**. **1Co 10:16-17**. He described the wine as 'the New Covenant in My blood,' which was shed for the many. **Luk 22:20**. **1Co 10:16**.

When Jesus said, 'All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them,' He did not mean that every king, priest, or elder under the Old Covenant was a thief and a robber. **Joh 10:8**. He was specifically referring to the leaders of the Jewish council, who had climbed up into the sheepfold of the Old Covenant through the exercise of their own will.

Jesus then said, 'I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.' **Joh 10:9**. To enter through the blood-sprinkled door is to come into the name that Christ has been given. In the fellowship of His name, a person abides in His words and is nourished and protected.



## The fellowship of Yahweh

The sheepfold of the New Covenant is the fellowship of Yahweh. This is the third phase of Christ's ministry as the great Shepherd. Jesus declared, 'I AM the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.' **Joh 10:14-15.** Jesus was saying that His sheep know and are known by Him, in the same way that the Father and Son know and are known by each Other. He was referring to the way of offering within the fellowship of Yahweh. **Joh 17:20-21.**

Significantly, Jesus was not praying only for the sheep of Israel. We note that He referred to all those who believe in Him through *their* word. Jesus was speaking about these other sheep, when He said, 'And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one Shepherd.' **Joh 10:16.** Jesus was referring, of course, to all the Gentiles who would receive His word and would come, by faith, into the fellowship of His name. Jews and Gentiles are to be one flock, with one Shepherd.

Describing the way of life in the fellowship of Yahweh, Jesus testified, 'My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No-one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.' **Joh 10:17-18.** In addition to revealing the culture of life within His sheepfold, Jesus was also emphasising the wonder, that the protection and nourishment of sheep is the resurrection life that is available to them in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

## Abraham and wayside ground

In the parable of the sower and the seed, Jesus taught that some of the seed that was sown by the sower fell on wayside ground. The birds came and devoured the seed. **Mat 13:4**. Explaining the meaning of this part of His parable, Jesus said, 'When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.' **Mat 13:19**.

Abraham, the father of all who believe, experienced the issue of wayside ground. Some two years after his encounter with Melchizedek, Abram remained childless. It appears that his hope of receiving God's promised blessing was being deferred and that his heart was becoming sick. **Pro 13:12**. However, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.' **Gen 15:1**. Through this word, Abram received the faith of the Son of God as a gift. **Eph 6:16. Eph 2:8**. The gift of faith gave Abram a participation in the dialogue, or fellowship, of Yahweh. **2Co 4:13. Rom 10:6-8**. He was strengthened to believe and to receive the covenant that Yahweh desired to make with him. **Rom 4:20**.

In this fellowship, the word of Yahweh addressed Abram's fleshly perspective regarding the way in which God's promised blessing would be obtained. **Gen 15:4**. The Lord then brought Abram outside, and said, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them ... so shall your descendants be.' **Gen 15:4-5**. As Abram received this word in the fellowship of Yahweh, he believed God, *even though he did not understand* how he would receive the blessing. **Gen 15:6,8**. We know this because the Scripture records, 'And he [Abram] believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.' **Gen 15:6**.

## Abram asked for understanding

The Lord said to Abram, 'I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it.' **Gen 15:7**. The Lord was reiterating what He had earlier promised to Abram at the terebinth tree of Shechem. **Gen 12:6-7**. Abram, who was fully engaged, by faith, in this discussion, asked, 'How shall I know that I will inherit it?' **Gen 15:7-8**. We see that Abram believed that the promised son would come from his own body, and that his sons would be born of God, but he did not understand how this would happen.

The apostle James wrote, 'If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.' **Jas 1:5-6**. Having received the shield of faith, Abram asked God how he would know that he would inherit the land in which his descendants would dwell. That is, in the fellowship of Yahweh, Abram lifted up his voice for understanding. **Pro 2:3**.

Abram's participation in the dialogue of Yahweh was the prayer of incense, which was possible by the faith that he received by the word of Yahweh. Because of this, the question that he asked was according to the will of God. It concerned his participation in the fulfilment of God's will. In response to Abram's question, God told him to present himself to God with an offering, so that he could be joined to Yahweh's offering. Through the fellowship of offering, he would receive the capacity of illumination.

Significantly, Abram chased away the vultures that came to steal his offering, before he had received understanding from Yahweh. **Gen 15:11**. We can liken these vultures to the birds of the air, spoken of by Christ in the parable of the sower and seed. The birds endeavour to devour the seed of the word from the heart of a person who is without understanding.

## Chasing away vultures

Vultures are identified in the Scriptures as unclean birds. The Lord said that they were to be regarded as an abomination. **Lev 11:13-19**. These unclean birds are often used to describe some kind of leader, or king, who endeavours to take the Lord's people captive. For example, King Nebuchadnezzar was likened to a great eagle with great wings, long pinions, and full of feathers of many colours. **Eze 17:3**. Concerning this ruler, who had been likened to an eagle, the Lord said, '[He] came to Lebanon and took from the cedar the highest branch. He cropped off its topmost young twig and carried it to a *land of trade*; he set it in a city of merchants.' **Eze 17:3-4**. The Lord was referring to the royalty of Judah, from the lineage of King David. The Lord continued, saying, 'Then he took *some of the seed* of the land [i.e. the Jewish nation] and planted it in a fertile field; he placed it by abundant waters and set it like a willow tree [in Babylon].' **Eze 17:5**.

In the church, vultures and other unclean birds represent people who presume leadership roles on the basis of self-defined ministry projections. They misappropriate the word of God to agendas other than God's covenant purpose. Their works, while religious, are not according to the gospel of sonship. Rather, they are motivated by their own other law. The word of God is used to give credibility and energy to their self-generated religious activities.

Those who are like unclean birds, second, or engage, others to their self-defined agendas. Through trading, they use others, including sons of God, as resources to accomplish their ministry goals. The wayside person allows Satan to take the word from them, by giving their loyalty to the religious agendas and fleshly gospels of 'vultures', who are ministers of the synagogue of Satan in the church. They do this because they believe that understanding and certainty can be found through the ministry of those who are like vultures. **2Co 11:20**.

## A covenant of peace

Although Abram was without understanding regarding the way in which his inheritance would be obtained, he recognised that the answer was in the offering of Yahweh. For this reason, he allowed no other agenda to corrupt and devour his participation in this fellowship. He was turning to the Lord by chasing away the vultures that sought to consume his offering. He was not feeding his offering to the birds. He had to keep the vultures from devouring the word while he did not understand it, so that understanding would come in the context of offering. **Gen 15:8-11**.

When the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep. Terror and great darkness came upon him. In type, this was the darkness that fell upon the whole land from 12pm to 3pm, while Christ was hanging on the cross. **Luk 23:44**. In the darkness, God made a personal covenant with Abraham. The first element of the covenant, which Abram received by the word in the fellowship of Yahweh, was the statement that his seed would inherit the land. **Gen 15:13-14**. More than this, God made a *covenant of peace* with Abraham, saying, 'Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age.' Gen 15:15. Having been justified by faith, Abram had peace with God through his participation in the fellowship of Yahweh. **Rom 5:1**.

At this point, Abram was redeemed by the Lord. From that point on, he lived and walked by the faith of the Son of God. Once the sun had gone down and it was dark, 'there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces'. **Gen 15:17**. The torch, or fire, was Yahweh's fellowship. It ignited Abram's offering, and enfolded it into the fire of Yahweh's offering. The lamp was the light of illumination concerning God's purpose and plan for Abram. This illumination was God's covenant word.

## The faith of Abraham

As believers who are following in the footsteps of the faith of Abraham, we must all negotiate the issue of wayside ground. We must all accept that we cannot understand, nor attain to, God's covenant purpose for our life through our own fleshly perspectives. At this point, we must apply ourselves to understanding by remaining in the fellowship of the offering and sufferings of Christ. The temptation is to allow other voices and agendas to minister an alternative wisdom, which is earthly, sensual and demonic, and to pursue a form of certainty through engagement in the religious agendas and practices of those who are like unclean birds. However, in the fellowship of Yahweh, love abounds so that we are able to discern between the fallen good of those who are of the synagogue of Satan, and the best, which is God's perfect plan for His sons. **Php 1:9-10.**

Paul specifically wrote to the Galatians about Abraham's participation, by faith, in the fellowship of Yahweh's offering. In his explanation, he addressed the implications of Abraham's experience for every son and daughter of God. This is because those who live by the same faith as Abraham are his children, and heirs of the blessing that God promised to Abraham. **Gal 3:7.** This blessing was described by the apostle Paul as 'the promise of the Spirit', which belongs to all the families who are in Christ, the Seed of Abraham. **Gal 3:13-14,16.** A person who has received the promise of the Spirit has been born as a son of God by receiving the Spirit of Christ. **Joh 3:5-6. Gal 4:6.**

When Christ dwells in a person's heart by faith, they are living by the faith of the Son of God, who loved them and gave Himself for them. **Gal 2:20.** This is the first stage of the gospel. The second stage of receiving the blessing of Abraham is to come into Christ. The blessing of Abraham is only available in Christ. **Gal 3:14. Gal 3:22.**

## The faith of the Son of God

Paul wrote, 'I through the Law died to the Law that I might live to God.' **Gal 2:19**. Paul was identifying a key implication of the cross of Christ. Through Christ's offering on the cross, He removed the Law as man's reference point for righteousness. Through this action, Jesus did not destroy the Law. Rather, the Law was nailed to the cross in Him. **Col 2:13-14**. We die to the Law in the fellowship of Christ's death. **Rom 7:6**. We cease from living according to our own fleshly efforts to fulfil the righteousness of the Law, and we live by the life and faith of the Son of God.

Paul testified, 'I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.' **Gal 2:20**. A person who has died to the Law in the fellowship of Christ's death lives by the faith of the Son of God, which they receive by hearing His word. This is the same faith that Abraham received when the word of Yahweh came to Him, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield [of faith], your exceedingly great reward.' **Gen 15:1**.

The Son of God was the shield of faith for Abraham because, by the faith of the Son, Abraham received a participation in the offering of Christ. The fellowship of Christ's offering is a shield from damnation because it is the means by which sin and the other law are dealt with in the life of a believer. Fellowship in this offering is also the means by which Christ becomes our exceedingly great reward. The precious life in His blood becomes our life through offering transfer in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

## Two elements of blessing

Paul identified two elements of blessing that were promised to Abraham. First, Yahweh promised that Abraham would have children from his own body. **Gen 15:4**. Importantly, only those children who received the gift of faith through the word of the gospel would receive the blessing of becoming a son of God. This was the distinction between Ishmael and Isaac, who were both from Abraham's own body. Paul associated Ishmael with everyone who endeavours to be righteous and to have life through their fleshly efforts to keep the Law. **Gal 4:23-25**. They are in bondage to sin and death. In contrast, Isaac, the child of promise, was born according to the Spirit. **Gal 4:28-29**. He obtained the blessing of Abraham through participation in the offering of the Lamb on Mount Moriah. **Gen 22:15-18**.

The second promise of God was that, through Abraham, the gospel of sonship would be proclaimed to all the nations of the earth. **Gen 22:18**. Those who received Abraham's message would also receive, as a gift, the faith that belongs to the Son of God. By this faith, they could believe God's word and join the fellowship of Yahweh's dialogue and offering as one who was righteous. That is, they would be justified by faith, in Christ. **Gal 2:16**. **Gal 3:24**.

Having been justified by faith, a believer is received by God as one of Abraham's sons. This is the basis of the adoption. Paul summarised this point in his letter to the Romans, 'For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.' **Rom 8:15-17**.



