

"The Making of the Messiah."

Introduction

We find in Matthews Gospel the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, part of which reads – ***"Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations."*** (Matt. 1:16-17 NAU.) The full significance of the timing of these events is probably lost on most believers, but we do know that God is working to a carefully prepared plan with regard to His creation. Just how precise this plan is, we will probably not discover until that day, of which Paul says – ***"then I shall know just as I also am known."*** (1 Cor. 13:12 NKJ.)

Meanwhile we must concern ourselves with issues more pertinent to our generation: where do healing of the body and soul, and all the blessings of the 'New Covenant,' come from? The Holy Scriptures makes it quite clear; they all proceed, and are derived from the perfect holy life, and the atoning death of the Lord Jesus – God's Messiah. Christ's death reveals to us the amazing grace and riches of God's mercy and His great love towards us. (Eph.2:4-10.) Through His death, Jesus fulfilled all the redemptive types and prophecies in the Old Testament; blessed be His Name!

In undertaking this particular subject, we are aware that there are reiterations of some of the truths previously stated in the study entitled ***"By His Stripes, Or By His Bruise"***, but we are convinced of the necessity of exploring this matter in great depth because of its importance to the Church in our generation. Perhaps this is why in this, more than in any other study we have produced, we commend the reader to emulate the Bereans, who – ***"received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so."*** (Acts 17:11 NKJ.)

As we said in previous studies - "we have nothing to fear from a frequent re-examination of our beliefs in the light of Scripture, for one of two things will happen: either those beliefs will be reinforced – giving us greater confidence – or they will be exposed as a weak link in our theology. If the latter is the case, then it is surely better to find out about it now, rather than when we are called to – ***"give an account of ourselves to God."*** (See Rom 14:12.)"

Bill Rodway

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Chapter 1. 'God's Provision for Our Redemption – The Messiah.'

For many followers of Christ, the story of the Messiah begins, for all practical purposes, with His baptism by John in the Jordan, and the onset of His public ministry. However, to begin there is to miss some of the most significant details concerning His role as the promised Messiah, and the importance of these to the Church that was to be founded on the truths, which He declared. Perhaps the first inkling of these 'hidden depths,' lie in the opening public statement, which He made concerning God's purpose in sending Him.

The Amplified Version's account of this, reads as follows: ***"The Spirit of the Lord [is] upon Me, because He has anointed Me [the Anointed One, the Messiah] to preach the good news (the Gospel) to the poor; He has sent Me to announce release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to send forth as delivered those who are oppressed [who are downtrodden, bruised, crushed, and broken down by calamity], to proclaim the accepted and acceptable year of the Lord [the day when salvation and the free favours of God profusely abound.]"*** (Luke 4:18-19 AMP.)

This, of course, He quoted from the prophecy of Isaiah, chapter sixty-one, and the first two verses. Clearly, the whole breadth of the Messianic ministry is contained within this statement: however, what is not immediately apparent from these verses is the lifelong training that went into preparing Jesus for this role. Even to begin appreciating this, we must look elsewhere in Scripture, and perhaps particularly to something that Isaiah said earlier, in those well-known verses in the fifty-third chapter of his book.

However, even here, we must be careful not to let preconceived ideas blind us to the full truth of God's word: ***"He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; he was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed."*** (Isa. 53:3-5 NKJ.)

For instance, on the basis of the King James Version's translation of Isaiah 53:5, ***"By His stripes we are healed,"*** and other translations like the New American Standard reading, ***"by His scourging we are healed,"*** many good Christians confidently affirm that we are healed through the vicious scourging that Jesus received. In some people's minds, other versions that translate this phrase as - ***"by His wounds we are healed,"*** confirm this view. While the commentaries of some distinguished Christian scholars on this verse, which come to a similar conclusion, further reinforce the idea. However, the truth behind this Scripture is much more awe-inspiring, and astonishing, and more horrifying, than Christ's scourging, as shockingly gruesome as that was.

The Scriptures reveal that the vicious and horrendous bruising of Jesus referred to here, encompasses and embraces the whole of His agonizing and extraordinary earthly life, and not just the events around His death. [Vines Expository Dictionary, states that - ***"by His stripes we are healed"*** (1Peter 2:24) - is not

referring to Christ's scourging. He writes - "**'Stripe,' (molops), "a bruise, or a wound from a stripe,"** as used here by Peter, is taken from the Septuagint (Greek) translation of Isaiah 53:5. In the original, this literally means "**by whose bruise,**" and is not referring to Christ's scourging, but is used figuratively of the stroke of divine judgment administered vicariously to Him on the cross." When Isaiah says - "**And with His stripes**" - the word used for "**stripes,**" in the Hebrew, is "**chaburah,**" and it is in the singular, and literally means, "**A bruise,**" the result of a blow on the skin.

Vine is stating the absolute truth when he says that Peter is speaking of the complete vicarious atonement of Jesus: for healing of our body, soul and spirit spring from Christ's sacrificial lifestyle, and the precious shed blood of His cross. Jesus was viciously tested, tempted and tried, throughout His life - by Satan, evil men and circumstances, but in spite of all this evil pressure against Him, He lived a sinless life. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for sin - the spotless Lamb of God. The important thing to understand from this is that it is not the scourging of Jesus, but the precious atoning blood of Jesus that brings us healing of spirit, soul, and body.

Dr. Barnes says in his 'Notes' - "**'chaburah'** - is not a flesh wound; it does not draw blood; but the blood and other humours are collected under the skin." The scourging, which Jesus received, mangled His flesh, and produced many dozens of deep bleeding wounds in His flesh, terrible wounds that even reached and exposed Christ's bones. Therefore, we can see that by the use of "**chaburah,**" Isaiah is speaking of something deeper than this blood-spattered scourging. The inner bruising that the kind and gentle soul of Jesus suffered during this dreadful beating was even worse than the mangling of His flesh. He was "**despised and rejected,**" even by those, whom He came to save the inner bruising and pain of this was immense. (See Luke.19:41-44.)

The argument - that the bruising in Isaiah 53:5 is referring to the whole of Christ's life, and not just in His scourging and the events around His atoning death - is strengthened by reference to the preceding verse. In Isaiah 53:4, the Hebrew word for the King James Version, "**sorrows,**" is "**mak'ob,**" which can speak both of the physical and mental pain. The commentary by the eminent Hebrew scholars Keil and Delitzsch on "**mak'ob,**" is very enlightening. They state that - "He was "**mak'obowt 'iysh,**" - a man of sorrow of heart in all its forms, that is - a man whose chief distinction was that His life was one of constant painful endurance." This comment on "**mak'ob**" reflects the enormous painful pressures, inflicted on Jesus during the whole of His life.

Then, in verse five, Isaiah's Hebrew word for "**bruised,**" is "**daka,**" which means, more accurately - "**to be broken in pieces, to be utterly shattered and crushed**" by calamities and trials. (See Job 6:9 & Ps.72:4.) In purchasing our redemption, Jesus was under such a weight of sorrows that He was broken in pieces, utterly shattered and crushed to the earth. The Jews, like Job's "friends," mistakenly looked upon Jesus as "**one stricken and smitten by God.**" They looked upon Christ's sufferings as the punishment for His own sins. However, the truth was the very opposite of this.

Jesus took upon Himself the fellowship of our sufferings - the sufferings which we deserved to bare - and not only took them away, (See Matt.8:17), but carried them in Himself, in order that He might deliver us from them. When Jesus took upon Himself the suffering that we would or should bear, and endured it with and for us, in our place, this is what we call 'substitution.' Jesus took upon Himself the sicknesses and sorrows of the world; and taking them upon Himself, He bore them away.

However, it is also important to note that in both Isaiah 53:5 and 1Peter 2:24, the context in each verse is about forgiveness of sins and healing of the soul, not healing of the body. This we see in the following translations of these two Scriptures. Taking Isaiah first - "**But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.**" (Isa.53:5 KJV & ASV.) Alternatively, - "**But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with His stripes we are healed.**" (RSV.) Then in Peter's epistle - "**Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.**" (1Pet.2:24 KJV.) "**He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.**" (1Pet.2:24 NAS.) "**Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - by whose stripes you were healed.**" (1Pet.2:24 NKJ.)

Nevertheless, according to Isaiah, God's promise of physical healing is an emphatic "SURELY," and "VERILY," not a doubtful "maybe." (Isaiah 53:4.) Here God deals with healing of the body in an unambiguous, very direct and powerful way. "**Surely,**" is "**aken,**" which means, surely, truly, verily, indeed; it carries a very strong assertive force. Therefore, we read - "**SURELY he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted.**" (Isa.53:4. NIV), and - "**VERILY He hath borne our diseases and our pains: He hath laden them upon Himself; but we regarded Him as one stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.**" (Keil & Delitzsch.) Then, by way of confirmation, Jesus informs us in the account of the healing of the paralysed man (See Matt.9:1-8, Mark 2:1-12, & Luke 5:17-26) that healing of the body should be an expected accompaniment to healing of the soul and forgiveness.

In Isaiah, the word for "**carried,**" in the King James Version (Isa. 53:4), is the Hebrew, "**cabal**" - which means to carry or bear a heavy burden. Jesus lifted and bore away the heavy burden of our mental and physical pain and sickness. Jesus not only took our physical diseases, and bore them away; He also took and bore away our mental pain and grief. We have an accurate translation of Isaiah's words in Matthews Gospel,

where the King James Version reads: ***“That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.”*** (Matt. 8:17.) The ***“New American Standard Update”*** Version, reads – ***“This was to fulfil what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: ‘HE HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES AND CARRIED AWAY OUR DISEASES.’”***

The Hebrew ***“choliy,”*** translated, as ***“griefs”*** in the King James Version (Isaiah 53:4), is better translated as - ***“infirmities”*** ***“astheneias”*** in Matthew’s Gospel. (Matt.8:17.) For ***“choliy,”*** means - sickness, disease and affliction; it is not referring to sins, but to physical suffering. Matthew uses the quotation from Isaiah, to prove that the healing ministry of Jesus fulfilled this prophecy. The Hebrew ***“nasa”*** – ***“bore”*** or ***“took”*** carries the double thought that Jesus not only took our sicknesses on Himself; He also, in doing so, took and carried them away.

Similarly, Matthew translates the Hebrew ***“mak’ob”*** with the Greek ***“nosos”*** (Matt.8:17), which means properly - sickness, or disease; he also uses this word in other places in his Gospel (See Matt.4:23-24 & 9:35), but it can also be used of the mental and physical pains, sorrows, and trials of life. Isaiah states that Jesus has taken upon Himself, and carried away, our physical and mental pains. He was afflicted for our physical and mental pains, and - through His atoning death - removed them from us.

Our Great High Priest subjected Himself to the most severe physical and mental pressure and pain for our sakes, not just to be a sympathetic Saviour, but a delivering Saviour as well. The use of the word ***“surely,”*** confirms this promise of healing, because in the original ***“aken,”*** it carries a very strong emphatic and assertive force, which is not immediately apparent from the English. In this way, God Himself reveals the very emphatic nature of His promise of physical healing. We know that healing of the soul is more important than healing of the body, but here God puts a ***“surely”*** on healing of the body: He obviously knew how the Jews and the Church would neglect and fail to take hold of this ***“charism”*** of Divine grace.

Good news as this is, there is still more to come; for we read - ***“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.”*** (Isa.53:5 KJV & ASV.) ***“Wounded,”*** is ***“chalal,”*** which literally means - to pierce, to bore through, to perforate, hence - to wound, even fatally. (See 1Sam.31:3. 1Chron.10:3.) The word gives a prophetically accurate picture of the physical sufferings of Jesus, the promised Messiah, whose hands, feet, and side would be pierced. (See Ps.22:16.) This word speaks of a painful and lethal piercing and wounding of the body, and not just mental pain. However, it can also speak of the desecration and violation of a person.

In addition, this phrase – ***“he was wounded for our transgressions,”*** is a striking parallel to the passage in Romans, where we read - ***“Who was delivered for (“dia”) our offences.”*** (Rom.4:25 & See 2Cor.5:21, Heb.9:28 & 1Pet.2v24.) The Hebrew preposition ***“for,”*** (***“min”***) – here, is equivalent to the Greek ***“dia,”*** which means ***“through,”*** or ***“on account of,”*** and it underlines the real reason why Jesus suffered and died. Our transgressions killed Him - not the Jews, nor the Romans!

Then, we also read in Isaiah - ***“the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.”*** (Isa.53:5.) Here ***“chastisement,”*** is ***“muwcar,”*** which means discipline, chastening or correction. In the Greek Septuagint it is translated as, ***“paideia,”*** which literally means – ***“the training of, and correction, by a parent of a child for their good.”*** (See also Heb.12:5-11.) Jesus was not guilty of any sins for deserving of punishment, but He bore the chastisement that was rightfully ours. He did this so that we could be reconciled, and be at peace with God our Father. (See Rom.5:1-2 & Eph.2:14-17.) The death of Jesus brought about the redemption of those who, in God’s amazing and wonderful foreknowledge, were to become His beloved children. (See Heb.2:14.)

Another important element is the phrase - ***“we are healed”***: a literal translation would be - ***“it is healed to us,”*** or ***“healing has happened to us.”*** ***“Healed,”*** is ***“rapha,”*** which literally means - ***“to mend by stitching,”*** and figuratively ***‘to cure, to heal,’*** or ***‘to make healthy’***: this may imply both divine or medical healing, as well as the healing of national hurts and of personal distress. Therefore we see that it means, to heal, to make healthy, both spiritually and physically. (See Ps.41:4, Isa.53:4 & Jer.8:22.) Consequently the removal of the appalling and horrendous burden of our sin is represented as an act of healing. David writes - ***“I said, O Lord, be merciful unto me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee.”*** (Ps.41:4.) In another psalm, David rejoices that the merciful grace of God heals both our souls and our bodies - ***“Who forgiveth all thine, iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.”*** (Ps.103:3.)

Adam’s sin brought sickness, disease and death to the human race. Sin is a disease that results in the death of our souls, and Jesus provided the cure for this disease by the sufferings He bravely ***“endured.”*** (Heb.12:2-3.) The Lord Jesus purchased both forgiveness for our sins for us, and healing for our souls and bodies, by His atoning death. We were sick to death because of our sins, but Jesus, the sinless one, by His suffering and death, brought us both spiritual and physical healing. So, really, ***“the joy that was set before Him,”*** (Heb.12:2), was not the joy of receiving exalted position and adulation in Heaven, but rather the joy of redeeming us, and bringing salvation and healing, and the joy of opening Heaven to all who would believe in Him.

When we read that Jesus - ***“bore our sins”*** (1Peter.2:24); ***“bore,”*** is taken from ***“anaphero,”*** - ***“to carry or bring up.”*** This is a common verb used for bringing a sacrifice to the altar. (See Isa.53:12 with Deut.21:23.) Jesus was the perfect sin offering (Heb.9:28 & 1Cor.11:24) - ***“when he had by Himself purged our sins.”*** (See Heb.1:3.) Jesus did not make expiation for our sins by offering a sacrifice; He Himself was the sacrifice. (Is.53:4 & 12.) Jesus did not take upon Himself the sins of people to become a

sinner Himself; instead, He bore the judgement of God that our sins deserved. (See 2Cor.5:21.) Dr. Barnes states - "He was treated as if He had been a sinner, in order that we might be treated as if we had not sinned."

"In His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24), - though perfectly innocent, Jesus suffered the horrific sufferings of execution by crucifixion, just like the most wicked criminal, in our place. **"On the tree"** **"xulon,"** - meaning, literally **"on the wood,"** that is, **"the cross,"** which is translated elsewhere as **"tree"** (See Acts.5:30, 10:39, 13:29 & Gal.3:13). In the Galatian epistle (Gal.3:13), Paul quotes from Deuteronomy (Deut.21:22-23), to show how Jesus suffered the penalty laid down by the Law. Peter continues by saying - **"That we, being dead to sins"** - the atoning sacrifice of Jesus enables us to become dead to sin, and alive to God.

The phrase **"being dead to sins,"** is, literally, **"to be absent from sins,"** - **"that we might live unto righteousness."** In other words - through the death and High Priestly ministry of Jesus, with assurance, we can, actively live a new and beautiful life with God and other people. (See Rom.6:1-23. {**NB** vs.20}, and 1Pet.2:2 & 10.) The atoning death of Jesus demands that we, **"should live unto righteousness,"** and enjoy the reality of a beautiful life lived in righteousness and holiness. (See Rom.6:11 & Gal.2:20.)

Chapter 2. 'Jesus – Man Of Sorrows.'

In their minds, many Christians have limited the sufferings of Jesus to the last few hours of His life; however, this is very far from the truth. The Scriptures reveal that Jesus suffered a lifetime of great hardships, opposition, suffering and spiritual conflict: in addition, the anticipation of this suffering began before the very foundation of the world. (See Titus.1:2 & Rev.13:8.)

Only God the Father, the Holy Spirit and Jesus Himself, can fully know the terrible trials, heartbreak and anguish that the Lord has endured for us. While the good angels stand amazed at the sufferings and great sacrificial divine love of Jesus for us, even they cannot fully comprehend the degree of suffering that the Trinity has endured on our behalf. The aim of this study is to be illuminating, not controversial: to bring believers in to a closer relationship with our wonderful Lord, by helping them to understand what He endured for us. The realisation of the sufferings of the Trinity for us, will give us a true realisation of the value that 'They' place on us.

The truth is that Jesus experienced dreadful and relentless conflict and bruising all of His life. Unfortunately, by confining the sufferings of Jesus to the last few days and hours of His life, believers have missed the significance of the tremendous conflicts, bruising and pain He had to endure in His daily life at Nazareth and during His ministry. Isaiah reveals something of this, when he writes - **"He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities."** (Isa. 53:11 KJV.) However this verse means much more than is conveyed by the King James Version. Today's English Version gives a very enlightening translation of this verse, when it says - **"After a life of suffering, He will again have joy; He will know that He did not suffer in vain. My devoted servant, with whom I am pleased, will bear the punishment of many and for His sake I will forgive them."**

Isaiah said - **"He shall see of the travail of His soul,"** but **"travail,"** **"amal,"** does not refer to travail as in childbirth, but to the drudgery, hard labour and tough grind of a worker, which produces exhaustion, sorrow, grief and suffering. However the salvation of all those who would believe in Him, was going to make all this drudgery and hardship worthwhile. The Hebrew for **"shall be satisfied,"** really means, **'to be saturated,'** or **'to be abundantly satisfied and full.'** God has built the foundations of His eternal kingdom on the impregnable and indestructible platform of the amazing sacrificial love of Jesus, so that when the Hebrew epistle spoke of - **"the joy that was set before Him"** (Heb. 12:2), it referred to His joy in redeeming us and making us partakers of the kingdom of Heaven.

It is in a similar fashion that Paul says - that getting His converts into heaven was His joy and crown. He said in his letters - **"As also you have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as you also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus."** (2 Cor.1:14.) Paul repeated this to the Thessalonians - **"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy."** (1 Thess.2:19-20.) Then, yet again, he said to the Philippians - **"Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."** (Phil.4:1.)

So we see that the word **"amal,"** translated in Isaiah as - **"travail,"** speaks of a lifetime of arduous and exhausting labour and toil, which produces sorrow, grief, trouble and trials. It is a dark word, which speaks of burdensome and protracted toil: **a lifetime** of toil, trials and trouble, not a short period of problems and difficulties. Throughout His life, Jesus suffered a lifelong trial of unrelenting bruising and hurt. Similarly, when Dr. Barnes writes about - **"bruised"** (Isa .53:5), he says - "The word used here, **"daka,"** means properly to be broken to pieces, to be bruised, to be crushed. (See Job.6:9 & Ps.72:4.) Applied to the mind, it means to break down or crush by calamities and trials; and, by the use of this word here, the intention is to convey the most severe inward and outward suffering. The Septuagint translates it as - **"He was rendered languid,"** or **"feeble."** The same idea occurs in the Syriac translation, where the meaning is, that **'He was under such a weight of sorrows on account of our sins, that He was, as it were, crushed to the earth.'**"

The Amplified Bible gives a most enlightening translation of a psalm, which in turn presents an amazing prophetic insight into Christ's life at Nazareth - **"Because for Your sake I have borne taunt and reproach;**

confusion and shame have covered my face. I have become a stranger to my brethren, and an alien to my mother's children. (See John.7:3-5.) For zeal for Your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches and insults of those who reproach and insult You have fallen upon me. (See John.2:17 & Rom.15:3.) When I wept and humbled myself with fasting, I was jeered at and humiliated; when I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword (an object of scorn) to them. They who sit in [the city's] gate talk about me, and I am the song of the drunkards. But as for me, my prayer is to You, O Lord. At an acceptable and opportune time, O God, in the multitude of Your mercy and the abundance of Your loving-kindness hear me, and in the truth and faithfulness of Your salvation answer me. Rescue me out of the mire, and let me not sink; let me be delivered from those who hate me and from out of the deep waters. Let not the floodwaters overflow and overwhelm me, neither let the deep swallow me up nor the [dug] pit [with water perhaps in the bottom] close its mouth over me. Hear and answer me, O Lord, for Your loving-kindness is sweet and comforting; according to Your plenteous tender mercy and steadfast love turn to me. Hide not Your face from Your servant, for I am in distress; O answer me speedily! Draw close to me and redeem me; ransom and set me free because of my enemies [lest they glory in my prolonged distress]! You know my reproach and my shame and my dishonour; my adversaries are all before You [fully known to You]. Insults and reproach have broken my heart; I am full of heaviness and I am distressingly sick. I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall [poisonous and bitter] for my food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar (a soured wine) to drink. (See Matt.27:34 & 48.)" (Psalm.69:7-21 AMP.)

Satan attacked Jesus in a major way during all of His life at Nazareth. Jesus did not just meet Satan in the wilderness; he tempted and tried Jesus on an almost daily basis at Nazareth through circumstances, His family, and evil and foolish people. At Nazareth Jesus experienced the worst trials of faith that any human being has known, but through communion with God His Father, Jesus had tens of thousands of victories over the trials of life, and over Satan's temptations. Just as Satan had demanded the opportunity to test Job to the very utmost, so he also demanded the opportunity to test God's Only Begotten Son in the same way. Jesus was tempted by circumstances, people and Satan, in all points just as we are, only much more severely than we are, indeed, to the very limits of human endurance.

When Jesus told Peter that Satan had demanded the opportunity to sift him as wheat (see Luke.22:31-34); Jesus had already been there, experienced that, and fully knew the awful horror that it entailed. We know from Luke - that Satan's attacks on Jesus were not limited to the forty days and nights of temptation in the wilderness (Luke 4:13): Satan had other seasons of attack on Jesus, both before, and after His horrific trial in the wilderness. From Hebrews we learn that our Saviour's conflicts with evil and His victories over it mean that He totally understands our problems, and is entirely sympathetic to our needs. (Heb.2:17-18 & 4:14-16.) We will not know until we get to heaven the full extent of what Jesus suffered for us during His earthly life, in order to be our perfectly sympathetic Saviour and Great High Priest.

What many Christians do not realise, is that Jesus also experienced great rejection and a heartbreaking fight of faith in His own family home. Certainly Jesus experienced some good early years with His family, and then it appears, things went sadly wrong. So, we read in Luke - ***"So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him."*** (Luke 2:39-40 NKJ.)

Then, after Christ's visit to the temple at the age of twelve, we read - ***"And He said to them, 'Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?' But they did not understand the statement, which He spoke to them. Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men."*** (Luke 2:49-52 NKJ.) However, whatever favour Jesus initially had with people, seemed to quickly dissipate, both among His family and among most of the people in Nazareth, for - like people elsewhere - they loved darkness more than light, because their deeds were evil. (See John 3:19.) The 'Light of the world,' exposed their sinful darkness by His godly actions, and His life of love and prayer.

We know that Jesus did not preach to the people of Nazareth until His first sermon there, which prompted them to try to kill Him. God the Father, knew how they would reject anything that Jesus had to say, so God hid the marvellous knowledge of Jesus away until He started His ministry. (See Isa. 49:1-2.) Christ's life at Nazareth was not a preaching time, but a time of preparation for Jesus, in readiness for His earthly ministry - the Cross - and His ministry as our Great High Priest. (See Isa. 50:3-7.) The fact that Mary ***"kept all these things in her heart,"*** indicates that she felt unable to repeat openly the wonderful things that she had experienced, and gives us a glimpse in to the rejection that she and Jesus must have suffered at Nazareth.

In spite of all the problems at Nazareth, Luke tells us that Jesus ***"increased in wisdom and stature."*** Here, ***"increased,"*** literally means - ***'to cut and beat a passage forward,' 'to drive forward,' or 'to advance, and make progress,'*** it may also mean - ***'to grow.'*** In the case of Jesus, it informs us that Jesus actively and vigorously kept cutting His way forward, as through a forest or jungle. Like the true spiritual pioneer of faith that He was, Jesus resolutely hacked and cut His way through the spiritually dark jungle of Nazareth, and went forward with God His Father.

Throughout His life as a child, youth and man, Jesus was totally committed to God's plan to save and bless us. No praise, which we can give is sufficient to thank Him for the terrible trials that He faced and overcame for our sakes. He is, beyond doubt, truly worthy of all the praise that we can give Him. Jesus also kept growing in **"stature"** (See Luke.12:25), and in **"wisdom,"** which is far more than knowledge. Jesus matured physically, intellectually and spiritually, and victoriously overcame the gross spiritual darkness of Nazareth. Blessed be His Name!

Nevertheless, we know that His brothers and sisters treated Jesus like a stranger and an alien. (Ps.69:8.) We can well assume that it was because of Christ's holiness and dedicated prayer life. His four brothers, [and at least three sisters] were severely hostile to Jesus, despised and rejected Him, and treated Him like a stranger and an alien, verbally reproaching and criticising Him. (See also Mark 3:21 & John 7:5.) John assures us that this was because of Christ's dedicated life of fasting and prayer, and holy living: He was consumed by His zeal for God's house and children. (See John 2:13-17.) We must remember that the temple had yet to be built when David wrote this psalm, and scholars tell us that the word **"house"** here can, and does mean the household and family of God. His constraining love for us impelled Jesus forward.

We also read in Mark's account how Christ's family said that Jesus was insane when He upset the religious hierarchy. (Mark 3:21.) Then, this same religious hierarchy, accused Jesus of being possessed by, and doing His works through Beelzebub (Mark 3:22). It seems that when His family heard of this, they came to take Him home: indeed the religious leaders may well have instructed them to do so. Therefore His four half-brothers came to lay hold of Jesus, and compel Him to come home. The Greek words used, mean literally - **"those from the side of Him"**: this undoubtedly refers to the family of Jesus, as it does in the Septuagint, as Mark expressly mentions, **"His mother and brothers."** (Mark 3:31.) What a sad day for Jesus when His family thought that He was insane (**"exeste"**), literally - **"beside Himself."**

We read in John - how His brethren did not believe in Him (John 7:5), so after His resurrection Jesus appeared to James, restored and revolutionised him, and he then became a pillar and leader in the Church. Jude also recognised the divine Lordship of Jesus and wrote the short powerful epistle that God has preserved for us, for the edification of the Church. (See James 1:1 & Jude Vs.1.) We also know that Jesus was bitterly criticised, and sceptically rejected by most of the people in Nazareth. For even though morally honest and sincere people at Nazareth admired Jesus in His early years, later things soon began to go wrong.

We read in Luke that Jesus found favour during His early years at Nazareth with the decent people who lived there: they could not help but appreciate this helpful, gracious, loving and God-blessed boy. (Luke 2:40 & 52.) However we also read how the elders, who sat in the gate of the town, spoke against Jesus and criticised Him. (Ps 69:12.) We are told five times in this psalm that Jesus was taunted, reproached and spoken against (Ps.69:7, 9-10, 12, & 19-20), and the Hebrew of verse 20 makes it very clear that this reproach broke His heart and made Him physically ill.

Spiritual conflict caused by evil people and angels, inflicted considerable stress, both mentally and physically, upon Jesus. We further read in this psalm that Jesus did look for people who could help, strengthen and comfort Him, but no-one was in the right spiritual condition to do so. (Ps.69:20-21.) Life at Nazareth was extremely hard for our dear Lord Jesus: even His mother Mary was unable to give the kind of sympathy or spiritual help that He needed. Imagine the heartache Jesus felt because of the reproach He suffered at Nazareth and during His ministry. Everyone, including the apostolic band, failed to understand - let alone be able to help Jesus with the great inner pain and suffering that this reproach and rejection caused Him. Mary of Bethany may have partially perceived it, but no one else did. This was why God sent Moses and Elijah to talk with Him and help Him and prepare Him for His "exodus" (Luke 9:30-31), on the mount of transfiguration.

Verse twelve of the psalm, tells us that drunkards made up and sang vile and disgusting songs about Jesus. These drunkards, aided by the Prince of darkness, evidently made up these offensive songs about Christ's birth, and His mother's apparent immorality and unfaithfulness. Like the Jewish leaders later on, almost everyone at Nazareth taunted Jesus about His birth, and said that He was born of fornication. Others slandered Jesus behind His back, and said that Joseph had to marry Mary because she was pregnant before they were married. The Holy Lamb of God patiently endured this false accusation, and violent speaking against Him by sinners. (See Heb.12:3.) They mocked and derided His wonderful and miraculous birth. Even His brothers and sisters sided with the critics against Jesus, and refused to believe in Him. This must have been a very severe trial for Joseph, Mary and Jesus.

These slanderers even believed themselves justified in their attitude, because we read in Scripture - **"One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the congregation of the Lord; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the congregation of the Lord."** (Deut.23:2 NKJ). Christ's critics surely used this Scripture to attack Him, for Jesus had to live all His life with the accusation that Israel's religious leaders later hurled at Jesus - **"We be not born of fornication."** (John 4:41 KJV.) They pointed the finger at Jesus and accused Him of being the product of fornication, when He said that they were seeking to kill Him, and that the Devil was their father: **"Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, 'we be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.'"** (See John 4:40-44 KJV.)

The prohibitions relating to illegitimacy that are laid down by God in Deuteronomy (Deut.23:2), shed considerable light on Psalm sixty-nine - **"You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonour; my adversaries are all before You."** (Ps.69:19 NKJ.) **"You know how they talk about me, and how they so shamefully dishonour me. You see them all and know what each has said."** (Ps.69:19 TLB.) The Amplified Bible gives an accurate translation of the Hebrew text, and informs us that the verbal criticisms of

Jesus made Him physically ill. ***“You know my reproach and my shame and my dishonour; my adversaries are all before You [fully known to You]. Insults and reproach have broken my heart; I am full of heaviness and I am distressingly sick. I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none.”*** (Ps.69:19-20 AMP.)

Then, when Jesus preached His first sermon at Nazareth, the inhabitants of Nazareth tried to kill Him. The Gospel of Luke tells us that the people of Nazareth marvelled at the beautiful and gracious words that Jesus spoke to them, and then after His sermon they exploded in a frenzy of murderous rage, and tried to throw Him over a cliff and kill Him. (See Luke 4:22-30.) Jesus knew that the listeners were going to try to kill Him when He finished His sermon, but He still spoke to them with the utmost kindness, gentleness and grace. They were gentle words, which revealed and communicated the beautiful, caring personality of Jesus, but they still rejected both Him and His message, and tried to kill Him. The people of Nazareth may have thought that Jesus was a good carpenter, but still they treated Him with contempt and rejected His ministry. They left Jesus in no doubt that His own hometown people both despised and rejected Him, and this had to be an emotionally bruising experience.

Jesus was bruised in developing His prophetic and High Priestly ministry: we read in Hebrews – ***“though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered”*** (Heb. 5:8 NKJ) - Nazareth was the anvil on which that obedience was forged. Jesus had dreadful fights of faith in prayer at Nazareth, while God prepared Him for His apostolic and High Priestly ministries; in fact, His whole ministry was the product of His prayer life at Nazareth. It is one thing to have a private prophetic prayer ministry; it is quite another to have a ministry that brings deliverance and healing to all the people that come to you for help. In the parable on prayer in Luke’s Gospel (Luke 11:9-13), Jesus was not just giving us instructions on how to seek God, how to pray through, and keep on knocking for answers to prayer; He was giving us an insight into His own dedicated prayer life at Nazareth.

Jesus knew that He had to be fully empowered so that everybody that He prayed for and ministered to was healed. Christ’s mighty ministry did not just drop upon Him from heaven; it came about because of His intense seeking after His heavenly Father for very many years, indeed, for the whole of His life, from childhood onwards. Some would object to this and say that Christ’s ministry did drop on Him at Jordan: however, this was really just the final anointing on a marvellously prepared vessel.

Christ’s visit to the temple at the age of twelve reveals His resolute and dedicated preparation for His ministry, for we read that Jesus said to Mary and Joseph, ***“Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business? But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.”*** (Luke 2:49-50 NKJ) This reveals that by twelve, and probably for years before this, Jesus was on His own in finding out and doing the will of His heavenly Father. Even His godly mother Mary did not understand the divine calling that was on His young life, nor what Jesus meant when He said, ***“Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business.”*** This makes the victorious and sinless life of Jesus even more remarkable. All the odds were stacked against Him, and He still won through, to develop a perfect prophetic power ministry, through which He healed all who later came to Him.

In John’s Gospel we read - ***“Then Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.’”*** (John 5:19-20 NKJ.) Jesus had continual visions about what the Father wanted Him to pray for and do: it was part of His everyday prayer life in Nazareth. We can be sure that Jesus received direction in His prayer life, in the same way that Paul tells us in his letters how he received direction through visions. (1Cor.5:1-5 & Col.2:1-5.)

The dedication and prayer life of Jesus is very breathtaking; at the age of twelve, His spiritual maturity and His understanding of the Scriptures amazed and astonished the learned Scribes and Biblical teachers in the Temple at Jerusalem. However we need to do more than just stand in awe of the dedicated all-out prayer life, the systematic and meticulous study of the Scriptures, and practical daily life of love of the wonderful boy and man, Jesus: He is our example, and we claim to be His followers!

It is important for us to recognise that, to obtain the qualifications to become our Great High Priest, Jesus experienced a truly demanding, exceptional and excruciating testing and bruising of His body, soul and spirit. Jesus was tempted and tried in all points in order to become our sympathetic and understanding Great High Priest. (See Heb.2:17-18 & 4:14-16.) Jesus had the intolerable pressure of going through all the difficulties and trials of life that we experience, so that He could totally sympathise with us in all our temptations, and so that, without any doubt, we might know that He fully understands all our problems. Jesus was even more greatly tested than Job; He was tempted in all points as we are, but without sin. He had the most extreme and painful tests of anyone, in all areas of life and character, but was victorious in them all.

Our problem is that in viewing these things from a safe distance, without experiencing all that Jesus endured; we tend to react against similar experiences in our own life as though God has been unjust in allowing them to happen to us. Yet we hear no such complaint from the Lord, although He was undeserving of such testing, since He was the spotless Lamb of God. We are too quick to blame God or the devil for our misfortunes, and too slow to recognise the learning opportunities that will allow us to empathise with others who are suffering. The apostle Paul gives us some insight into this matter, when he speaks of – ***“the fellowship of His sufferings.”*** (Phil. 3:10 NKJ.)

It is all there, in the small print of the New Covenant we have signed on to, but like most people, we only register the blessings that will accrue to us, and not the responsibilities that are associated with membership of His Church. If we are – ***“predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son”*** (Rom. 8:29 NKJ); it seems reasonable that we will also be called to face both the furnace and the anvil, which God used to fashion and form the One who is our Lord and Saviour. Why else would Jesus say – ***“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake”*** (Matt. 5:11 NKJ) - unless it is to be a part of the forging process? He chose to travel this road, and we are in the process of being made like Him.

Chapter 3. ‘Jesus Trained For His Ministry In Nazareth.’

Christ’s training at Nazareth for His ministry placed huge demands on Him, and set the pattern for the rest of His life. We know this to be true even though the Scriptures have little to say about this period of His life; we know it, because no public ministry can succeed without a solid foundation of prayer and waiting upon God. This was true in the case of Jesus, every bit as much as it was of the ministries of all the prophets that had preceded Him, and as it would be of all the apostles and saints who followed in His path.

The Jewish nation had turned away from God: Jesus himself said that they were not just bad, ***“kakos,”*** they were gripped by an evil, ***“poneros”*** - that was not content until they had corrupted others down to the same level of evil as themselves. (See Matt.16:4, Luke11:26 & 29, John 8:44.) Satan’s name is ***“Ho Poneros,”*** the one who is not content until he has corrupted others to his own terrible levels of depravity and corruption. (See Matt.13:19 & 1John 5:18.) With few exceptions, Israel’s religious leaders were part of Satan’s corruption: when Jesus started His ministry, He exposed their corruption, and said that they had seen and hated both Him and God the Father for it. (John 15:20-25.)

The spiritual condition of God’s people was truly appalling: Jesus set about remedying this in the following ways. For instance, Jesus had to know, and understand, the purpose and importance of John the Baptist’s ministry. Therefore it is incongruous to believe that the One who said – ***“I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours*** (John 17:9 NKJ), would not have prayed for the man who would reveal Him to Israel as – ***“The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”*** (John 1:29 NKJ.) Remember that John, who recorded that incident, also said – ***“there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”*** (John 21:25 NKJ.) Therefore, just because we cannot find chapter and verse for something in the life of Jesus, does not mean that it did not happen. However, this is not licence to create ‘incidents’ in the life of Jesus that are not compatible with the revealed truth.

We have to ask ourselves the question – “Given who He was, with the knowledge of God’s plan and purpose He had studied in the Scriptures, is it logical that Jesus would have prayed for John the Baptist?” What is the reason for believing that Jesus, the young intercessor, prayed for John the Baptist’s ministry? There is every reason to believe that Jesus watched in vision the developing ministry of John and prayed for him: just as Paul would later pray the Colossians and other Christians through, by prophetic prayer vision ministry. (See Col.2:1-5.) If Paul could, in vision, see Christians a great distance away at Laodicea, and other places, and, by prevailing prayer affect the lives of those believers, many of whom he had never met; we can be quite sure that Jesus had an even more powerful ministry in prayer. As He said – ***“Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him.”*** (John 13:16 NKJ)

It was necessary that during the years at Nazareth, Jesus should develop a perfect prophetic ministry - before He started His public ministry. Now we know that the essential source, and foundation, of any prophetic ministry must be a well-developed ministry of intercession. Christ’s ministry did not suddenly drop on Him from Heaven at Jordan; He had 30 years of diligent prayer of the highest quality, and blood, sweat, tears and costly effort, and it was all done out of perfect love for us. When we see Jesus praying ***“with strong cryings and tears”*** in Gethsemane, (Heb.5:7), we realise that we are looking at the prayer warrior supreme, beyond all other prayer warriors.

Jesus gave us instructions on how to pray, and pray through to victory. (Luke 11:1-13.) When Jesus told the story of the man obtaining bread for his friend, He was revealing to us His own steadfast determination and persistence in prayer to obtain the ministry He needed to give bread to the world. In this story, Jesus said - ***“I tell you, although he will not get up and supply him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his shameless persistence and insistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.”*** (Luke 11:8 AMP.) Obviously, Jesus was the most determined and sacrificial of all prayer warriors, and it cost Him very dear at Nazareth, and brought Him rejection and criticism from His own family, and all the other townspeople.

Jesus had to set His face like a flint at Nazareth, as well as during the time of His public ministry and Passion. We read in Isaiah - ***“I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be***

confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." (Isa. 50:3-7 KJV.)

"Set," is **"suwm"**, which means, to put, to set, to fix, to establish, to ordain and to make. Isaiah uses it in the bad sense, of people hardening themselves against God (Isaiah 48:4), but Ezekiel uses it of God's strengthening grace, against severe wicked opposition - **"But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted. Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house."** (Ezek. 3:7-9 KJV.)

Here, **"set,"** describes the courageous resolution that Jesus would display, when they hurled an avalanche of opposition, contempt, scorn and abuse at Him. (Isa.50:7.) It also infers something of the great physical pain and suffering that evil men inflicted upon Him. This prophecy must have given great comfort to Jesus in the frightful opposition that came against Him at Nazareth, as He prepared for His early apostolic ministry and His High-Priestly ministry.

We see an actual fulfilment of Jesus setting His face like a flint in Luke's Gospel - **"Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."** (Luke 9:51 NKJ.) Jesus resolutely **"set His face to go to Jerusalem"**: in this verse, **"set"** is the Greek word **"sterizo"** - 'to set fast'; it literally means, 'to turn resolutely in a certain direction.' However, our dear Lord Jesus also had to set His face with flinty determination at Nazareth as He prepared for His ministry - it was anything but easy for Him; indeed, the pressures and difficulties at Nazareth, tried Him, and tested His strength of mind and resolve, to the very uttermost.

There can be little doubt that God developed Christ's ministries in the stress and trials of daily living, and the hardship of real poverty. Jesus went through the whole range of human trial and temptation on a deeper level than anyone else, to have the perfect qualifications of a sympathetic apostolic earthly ministry, and a compassionate High-Priestly, heavenly ministry. When Paul declared that Jesus - **"though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich"** (2 Cor. 8:9 NKJ), the word he used, which is translated here as **"poor,"** would be more aptly translated as - **"the total poverty of a penniless beggar."**

Jesus became completely destitute so that we **"might become rich,"** - rich with Heaven's blessings: those who trust in material riches end up with emptiness in their souls. (Luke 1:53.) Paul warns us that we can have a distorted perspective of our true spiritual condition (1Cor.4:8), and Jesus solemnly warns us that we can be spiritually penniless when we think that we are rich (Rev.3:17-19), and can be completely deceived by the possession of worldly riches and financial prosperity.

The Father trained Jesus in matters of commerce and day-to-day finance, through running the family business, and the hard work of providing for Mary's large family. When Joseph died, Jesus took over the family business and had to provide for His mother Mary, His four brothers and at least three sisters. (See Matt.13:53-58 & Mark.6:1-6.) Jesus experienced all the stresses that come in a family business in a poor society. Like everyone else in His line of work, Jesus encountered greedy and grasping people who were unwilling to pay their bills, and people who were never satisfied, no matter how good the work was. He would have met people who demanded immediate completion of their work, regardless of the needs of anyone else, or of the workload on Jesus. He was not protected from any of life's harshness just because of who He was!

We can be confident that the devil made certain that selfish and dishonest people put enormous pressure upon Jesus. Jesus was truly tempted in all points like any Christian worker or businessman, so it is certain that Satan tried and succeeded in making sure that Jesus knew what it was like to be very short of money. We can only conjecture as to whether or not God performed miracles to provide for Jesus and His family, at this time, but somewhere over the years Mary saw enough for her to say - **"Whatever He says unto you, do it."** (John 2:5.) This was all invaluable education for Christ's future apostolic and High Priestly ministry: He understands our problems, because He has experienced them, but at a more difficult and painful level than any of us can conceive.

At the same time, God the Father trained Jesus to examine and reject the false traditions of that day. True spiritual strength is required to reject incorrect, albeit orthodox, doctrines, but Jesus did not openly show His rejection of these false traditions until His public ministry started. [Good advice for all young students of the Bible!] However we should not underestimate the trial of living under constantly taught false tradition. Most people usually capitulate, and follow the teaching of their religious leaders; Jesus did not do this for, even at twelve, His perception of truth was clear! His knowledge of the Scriptures was accurate and precise, because He was full of truth and grace. (See John.1:14.)

Obviously then, God the Father used this time in Nazareth to train Jesus in prophetic prayer ministry, and in development of spiritual gifts. The training that the Father gave Jesus was not an easy thing (Isaiah 49:1-2 & 50:3-7); it was a daily affair, and very demanding. The work that Jesus had to do, made this severe preparation necessary: He had to be at the peak of spiritual power, to be able to heal all that came to Him - not to mention His being **'tried and tempted in all the points we are'**; so that He could become the perfectly sympathetic High Priest.

This was also when God the Father rooted and grounded Jesus in a vital experience of the truth of the Scriptures. Jesus meditated upon and filled His mind with the Scriptures; He answered Satan, **"Man shall not**

live by bread alone, but by every word of God." (Luke 4:4.) Jesus had done this for almost thirty years, and so He used the sword of the Spirit, God's Word, to defeat Satan. Jesus proved by experience the truth of Scripture, and lived it; He was - **"full of truth."** (John 1:14.) If we want to conquer Satan, we will have to love God's Word as Jesus did, and study it as diligently as He did. A correct knowledge of God's Word will save us from, error, folly, fanaticism and defeat.

It is vital that we understand how Jesus fully partook of our humanity, and victoriously overcame all areas of temptation. For this to have any validity, we must accept that God ordained that Jesus should also experience freewill in this matter. To argue otherwise - by saying that because of His divinity, He could not have sinned - is to denigrate the victory that He won over sin. Should that be the case, then we could not truthfully say that He - **"was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."** (Heb. 4:15 NKJ.) The victory lay in the fact that - given the same freedom of choice as the rest of humanity - Jesus chose to do the will of His Father in heaven: not occasionally like the rest of us, but every single time!

We must remember that Jesus overcame all the pressures, temptations and difficulties of life at Nazareth, while possessing the limitations, weakness, and weariness of a human body. Jesus went determinedly and doggedly forward through all the difficulties, temptations, and vicious opposition that came against Him, and prepared diligently in prayer, study, and practical caring love for the great mission that lay before Him. No praise can be too high for our Saviour's dedicated love, courage and fortitude. So why did God hide Christ's superb prophetic ministry from people? For the Scriptures tell us that, God the Father, hid most of Christ's perfect revelation prophetic ministry from people, both before and during His public ministry.

We read in Isaiah - **"Listen, O coastlands, to Me, and take heed, you peoples from afar! The LORD has called Me from the womb; from the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name. And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, and made Me a polished shaft; in His quiver He has hidden Me."** (Isa. 49:1-2 NKJ.) The sharp sword was a correct and mighty use of the Scriptures: the polished shaft meant that Jesus was completely obedient to God the Father, and only went where God told Him, therefore He always hit the target at which God aimed Him.

We also read in Isaiah - **"I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. He awakens Me morning by morning, he awakens My ear to hear as the learned. The Lord GOD has opened My ear; and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away. I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting. For the Lord GOD will help Me; therefore I will not be disgraced; therefore I have set My face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed."** (Isa. 50:3-7 NKJ.)

This remarkable Scripture again states how God the Father educated Jesus on a daily basis, and prepared Him for His earthly ministry and His heavenly High Priestly ministry. The task ahead of Jesus was incredibly difficult, the odds against Him were enormous, the training therefore was exceedingly demanding. Just how completely successful God was in hiding away our Lord's remarkable knowledge of Scripture, His supreme prophetic ministry, and His unequalled manifestation of spiritual gifts from the people at Nazareth is seen in their totally astonished, critical, and murderous reaction to His ministry when it started. (See Luke 4:20-30.) On Christ's second visit to Nazareth, most of the people there were still just as critical and sceptical about the source of His ministry, as we see from the bitter rejection of Him, revealed by their impenetrable unbelief and their malicious and cutting words - **"Whence hath this fellow, these things?"** (See Mark 6:1-6 KJV.)

God the Father secretly developed the ministry of Jesus in the environment of home and work life. Paul makes it quite clear that **"God's will"** does not just involve those in a full-time ministry, or just our church lives, God's will involves our daily home relationships and work lives, because this is where most of the lives of believers are lived. (See Col.3.) Paul states that we are serving the Lord, when we do all our daily duties heartily, and as unto the Lord, and we will receive the reward of the inheritance for it. Our Lord Jesus gave us the perfect example; He lived the Sermon on the Mount at Nazareth, before He preached it. His life of perfect love and service at Nazareth was the foundation of His spiritual power and ministry in public. Again, this is a warning to young Christians, if we cannot get it right at home, we will never succeed in a public ministry, at least, not in the power of God.

The Father and the Holy Spirit developed the ministry of Jesus in secret, in both His home and work environment. This was in sharp contrast to John the Baptist, who spent his years of preparation in the wilderness. Jesus was very aware of the problems of this life, and He showed sympathetic gentleness with needy and sinful people, which was much kinder and more considerate than John's thundering on about the broken Law of God. According to Matthew, Jesus said - **"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John."** (See Matt.11:13 & Luke 16:16.) Then John says - **"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."** (John 1:17.) As John said - **"the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."** (John 1:14 NKJ.)

The absence of any detailed information concerning this period in the life of Jesus, supports the idea that God hid Jesus until His prophetic prayer ministry was fully developed and perfected. In fact, God hid Jesus away, until He was fully equipped, in knowledge and truth, and with the practical experience to match. This is

when the Father taught the Son the highest levels of the operation of all the power and revelation gifts, which were necessary to accomplish His ministry. This training in the operation of the spiritual gifts took place in private (See Matt. 6:6), as Jesus exercised the greatest 'prayer ministry' there has ever been. Even Jesus had to grow in wisdom, knowledge and spiritual strength, and be put to the test at the hands of the Devil in the wilderness; He knew He was being humbled, proved and tested according to the divine pattern – ***“To humble thee, to prove thee, to know what is in thine heart.”*** (Deut.8:2.)

Jesus was secluded until He had the perfect prayer life and revelation ministry, which were the essential foundations for His public ministry. (See Ps.69:7-11.) There is good reason to believe that Jesus manifested revelation and power gifts in private, before He manifested them in public. Mary's words to Jesus at the marriage feast in Cana suggest that she had seen many miracles of provision done by Jesus; unless this was so, then what we read in John's Gospel does not make sense. We read – ***“And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, ‘They have no wine.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.’ His mother said to the servants, ‘Whatever He says to you, do it.’”*** (John 2:3-5 NKJ.)

Obviously no one else knew about these miracles but Jesus and Mary: Jesus had obviously told Mary that no one else was to know about them. It is clear from the narrative that the incidents of feeding the multitudes (See Matt. 14:21 & 15:38), were not the first miracles of provision that Jesus had performed. These other 'miracles' were obviously just known to Jesus and Mary, so that **the first public sign** miracle (***“semeion”***) in Cana, was the turning of the water to wine. (John 2:11.) We read that the second sign miracle in Cana was the healing of the nobleman's son. (John 4:54.) However we also read that Jesus had done many more sign miracles in Jerusalem before the healing of the nobleman's son, and ***“many believed in His name when they saw the signs (“semeia”), which He did.”*** (John 2:23.)

During these formative years, God also protected Jesus from the jealousy, envy and hostility of worldly people, including religious leaders. From Scripture, we know that familiarity bred both contempt and angry rejection of Jesus in the people of Nazareth, and that this erupted as soon as His public ministry began, to such an extent that they attempted to murder Him after His first sermon. (Luke 4:28-30.) As soon as His ministry became public, He began to encounter the bitter jealousy and murderous envy of Israel's religious leaders. Therefore one other reason God hid Jesus away, was to prevent the jealousy and envy of these religious leaders being provoked, even before He started to preach.

Just as Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery because of their jealousy and envy; even so Israel's religious leaders - for the very same reason - would murder Jesus. Even Pilate knew why the Jews wanted to kill Jesus – ***“For he knew that through envy they had delivered him up.”*** (Matt.27:18.) An early manifestation of the fullness of Christ's prophetic revelation ministry would have caused even more hatred and opposition from Israel's religious leaders: however His tender healing ministry was reserved for broken and needy people and genuine seekers, not evil opponents.

As we will see, Jesus continually had the critical thoughts and evil and murderous plans of His enemies revealed to Him, and sometimes, as the Father directed Him, exposed and answered the evil in their hearts. (See Matt.9:4 & 22:18.) These remarkable revelations of their hearts failed to bring them to repentance, and they continually made plans to kill Jesus. He came to His people as, ***“Messiah; the Son of Joseph”*** – 'the suffering Servant,' and they did not recognise Him, but - like Joseph - Jesus also would suffer great persecution because of jealousy and envy.

Important though these reasons may be for God hiding Jesus away from public attention, the prime reason for this seclusion is more to do with God's timetable than to any action of the enemy. Jesus was hidden away until the fullness of time, for we read in the Galatian letter – ***“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”*** (Gal. 4:4-5 NKJ.) With our finite minds, we do not always realise just how precise God's schedule is for dealing with His human creation. Everything in the life of Jesus was in the fullness of God's perfect timing. (See John 2:4, 7:6-8 & 17:1.)

As Solomon said – ***“It is the glory of God to conceal a matter”*** (Prov. 25:2 NKJ), and this is consistent with His plan for the end of this age, for, according to Jesus – ***“of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.”*** (Matt. 24:36 NKJ.) Just as surely as this conclusion of events has a set time in the mind of God; we may be sure, so does every other step in the unfolding of His divine plan for humankind. Therefore every phase in the life and times of Jesus was according to that divine timetable.

Therefore we see Jesus hidden away, until the time came for the revelation of the fullness of His love. Jesus was full of sympathy and grace as well as truth - this was the result of God's love operating through Him every day, in practical, and heart-felt, caring love. (Heb.2:17-18.) God the Father initiated the ministry of Jesus when He was ready for it, and Jesus was seen to be full of truth as well as grace. (See Luke 2:40, 52 & John.1:14.) The lesson is clear for all of us: the premature appointment of immature leaders is not wise, nor is it of God. So Paul says to Timothy, concerning such appointments – ***“not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.”*** (1 Tim. 3:6 NKJ.) [Here, ***“novice”*** is taken from ***“neophutos”***, meaning - a young convert or ***“neophyte”***.]

So, if we are asked 'Why did Jesus conceal much of His perfect revelation ministry?' we know that the answer is that it was obviously a command of God the Father, because we read in Isaiah – ***“Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, my Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; he***

will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench; he will bring forth justice for truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged, till He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands shall wait for His law. ...Who is blind but My servant, or deaf as My messenger whom I send? Who is blind as he who is perfect, and blind as the LORD'S servant? Seeing many things, but you do not observe; opening the ears, but he does not hear. The LORD is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; he will exalt the law and make it honourable. (Isa.42:1-4 & 19-21.)

Jesus came to heal the broken reeds and smoking fax of humanity, not expose and criticise broken and needy people; He came to save and to heal. He knew and felt their sins and needs, but He acted as if He was blind and deaf to them. (See Isa.42:19-21.) We see from our Lord's example that there is a real need to hide most of what God reveals to us about people; God respects the desire for secrecy in people's hearts. God is a perfect gentleman, He does not want to expose and humiliate people in public. Needs that He does reveal are usually for prayer not proclamation.

Was this low-key approach deliberate - so that people would not tremble before Him as they did before Moses and Samuel? We read in Exodus - ***"Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled."*** (Exod.19:16.) We also read of Samuel - ***"So Samuel did what the LORD said, and went to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, 'Do you come peaceably?'"*** (1Sam.16:4 NKJ.) People can get very nervous and frightened when confronted by genuine prophetic ministry.

The Father and Jesus wanted all who felt condemned to be able to come freely to Him, and so this wonderful 'revelatory insight' into men's hearts that Jesus had, was usually hidden from the public. The manifestations of divine power in the Lord's ministry consisted mainly in the large number of mercy gifts of physical healing, and, on a few occasions, the operation of workings of miracles of provision. Among the latter, was the turning of the water to wine, the feeding of the multitudes and the miraculous fish catches.

Jesus chose to conceal the full extent of His revelation ministry, even in His healing ministry. He did not call out the illnesses of sick people, or tell them in front of others what their problem was. Jesus was so full of the power of God that such revelations were not necessary; He did not feel the need to impress the audience. In addition, He knew that such revelations could well have frightened the sinful and timid, and stopped them from coming to Him, and, except when He was dealing with religious leaders, He was ever the gentle Jesus.

Chapter 4. 'On The Job Training.'

In Hebrews we read - ***"though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."*** (Heb. 5:8-9 NKJ.) As we have already indicated, this was a lifelong process, not something confined to His Passion, nor even the hard days in Nazareth. His emergence into the public arena simply marked a new phase in His sufferings.

We have seen before in Psalm sixty-nine, how Jesus was badly bruised emotionally, by the violent verbal abuse of His enemies (Ps.69:19-21), which is why He is able to identify with us, when we come under such attacks. Back in the Hebrew epistle, we read - ***"Looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted."*** (Heb.12:2-3 RSV.)

The vast majority of Israel's religious leaders used every kind of lie, insinuation, and vicious verbal abuse, to attack and ravage the gentle and kind soul of Jesus. Murder was in their hearts, and they planned to kill Jesus, as soon as it became possible. (Luke 22:2.) They enlisted plausible people to ask Jesus trick questions, in order to accuse Him to Pilate, and so get Jesus executed for treason. Israel's religious leaders knew the merciful and forgiving nature of Jesus, and looked upon the case of the women taken in adultery (John 8:3-8), as another good opportunity for them to accuse Jesus of breaking God's Law.

Let us probe a little deeper into these verses in Hebrews - ***"looking to,"*** is derived from ***"aphorao,"*** which means - ***"to look away to,"*** or, ***"to look away from one thing to concentrate on another."*** We should not just look to Jesus, but also actively and continuously look into all the glorious splendour and majesty of His inner being and Godhead. Fix your eyes into all that Jesus is; He is our goal. Imitate Moses, who ***"accounted the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he kept on looking away to the recompense of reward."*** (Heb.11:26.)

The reward of Moses, and for us, is to know the fullness of Jesus. We should ceaselessly and perpetually look away to Jesus the Author and Pioneer of faith (see Heb.2:10), and the Perfecter - 'one who brings to the goal.' Jesus will assuredly bring our faith and our characters to the goal of conformity to His image. (Rom.8:29.) Christ's life of suffering, and the sufferings of His atoning death, has made Jesus the perfect Saviour and High Priest. (Heb.5:5-10.) Jesus has fully earned and merited the position that God the Father has given to Him, and so He is worthy of all the praise that we can give.

The King James Version reads - ***“For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”*** (Heb.12:3), whereas, the New King James translates this as - ***“For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.”*** ***“Consider”*** is a derivative of ***“analogizomai,”*** which means, ***‘to reckon up,’ ‘to count up,’ ‘to compare,’ ‘to weigh,’*** or ***‘to consider’***; in the New Testament it used only here in this verse. [This verb may also include the idea of meditation.] Meditating on, knowing, and understanding Jesus is the key to all our problems - the cure for all our doubts, fears and uncertainty.

So, consider the astounding, steadfast and brave endurance of Jesus in the midst of vicious opposition. When we read - ***“he endured”*** (Heb.12:2) this is derived from ***“hupomeno”*** – ***‘to patiently endure,’*** or ***‘to steadfastly and bravely endure.’*** Jesus despised the shame and disgrace, of ***“the death of the Cross”*** (Phil.2:8), the most shameful and discreditable of deaths. In Gethsemane He briefly shrank from the suffering ahead, but love for us drove Him forward, and He submitted to the Father’s will. At the immeasurable cost of personal suffering, anguish and grief, He brought about our salvation: His glorious sacrificial victory made Jesus a co-partner of His Father’s throne, and justly so. ***“Hath sat down,”*** is ***“kekathiken,”*** and the use of the perfect tense informs us that He still sits at the right hand of the Father, and has all authority and power. (See Heb.1:3, Eph.1:20-23 & Matt.28:18-20.)

Whereas in verse two of the twelfth chapter of Hebrews ***“hupomeno”*** speaks of Jesus bravely enduring the Cross; verse three, uses it to speak of our Lord’s equally brave endurance of the vicious verbal attacks spoken against Him by His enemies. The King James Version’s - ***“gainsaying,”*** is from ***“antilogos,”*** which can mean ***‘speaking against,’ ‘controversy,’ ‘dispute,’ ‘contradiction,’*** and ***‘opposition’***. In opposing Jesus, Christ’s enemies became enemies of their own souls. However, ***“antilogia”*** is also used positively, concerning the fact that God’s Word and oath, ends all possibilities of strife and contradiction. (Heb.6:16-17.)

Christ’s, steadfast example, under extreme opposition, slander and persecution, should strengthen us against ever becoming - ***“weary, and discouraged in [our own] souls”*** (Heb. 12:3 NKJ), in the temptations, trials and conflicts of life. ***“Faint,”*** is from ***“ekluo”*** – ***‘to release,’ ‘to loosen out’;*** or, in the passive tense – ***‘to be tired out and enfeebled’*** – that is, ***‘to become extremely weary, to faint from exhaustion.’*** Here in Heb.12:3, as in Heb.12:5, it particularly applies to the soul.

In Psalm 22, we see the amazing prophetic accuracy of the events concerning the crucifixion of Jesus. It gives us a clear insight into how the vicious verbal attacks on Jesus affected Him. In the Gospels, generally speaking, we see the outward acts of Jesus, whereas in the Psalms and Isaiah, we see the inner pain and conflicts of Jesus. We see how Israel’s religious leaders baited, reviled, and mocked Jesus in the most terrible and blasphemous manner.

We read in The Amplified Bible – ***“All who see me laugh at me and mock me; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, [Matt 27:43.] ‘He trusted and rolled himself on the Lord, that He would deliver him. Let Him deliver him, seeing that He delights in him!’ [Matt 27:39,43, Mark 15:29-30 & Luke 23:35.] Yet You are He Who took me out of the womb; You made me hope and trust when I was on my mother’s breasts. I was cast upon You from my very birth; from my mother’s womb You have been my God. Be not far from me, for trouble is near and there is none to help. Many [foes like] bulls have surrounded me; strong bulls of Bashan have hedged me in. [Ezek 39:18.] Against me they opened their mouths wide, like a ravening and roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax; it is softened [with anguish] and melted down within me. My strength is dried up like a fragment of clay pottery; [with thirst] my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and You have brought me into the dust of death. [John 19:28.] For [like a pack of] dogs they have encompassed me; a company of evildoers has encircled me, they pierced my hands and my feet. [Isa 53:7; John 19:37.] I can count all my bones; [the evildoers] gaze at me. [Luke 23:27,35.] They part my clothing among them and cast lots for my raiment (a long, shirt like garment, a seamless under tunic). [John 19:23,24.] But be not far from me, O Lord; O my Help, hasten to aid me! Deliver my life from the sword, my dear life [my only one] from the power of the dog [the agent of execution]. (Ps.22:7-20 AMP.)***

After the precise and accurate description of the awful scenes around the cross, and the inner and outward suffering of our dear Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit takes us to the scene in Heaven. All the massed angelic choirs sing for joy at our Saviour’s glorious victory, and Jesus rejoices before the Father with all those dearly loved saints that He has redeemed and brought out of the darkness of Hades into His Father’s kingdom. (Rev.12:9-11.) What a day of rejoicing that was, and that rejoicing continues today when sinners repent. (Luke 15:7 & 10.) So, we see that Jesus has won a glorious victory, and in Heaven His brethren will give Him the praise that He truly deserves!

Next in our study of the Making of the Messiah, we need to consider how the persecution and murder of Jesus were due to the envy of Israel’s religious leaders. Pilate knew that Israel’s religious leaders had delivered Jesus up out of envy. (See Matt.27:17-18 & Mark.15:9-10.) Envy, is even more destructive and malignant than jealousy, which simply casts hostile grudging looks - ***“envy,”*** has arrived at the stage of hostile and even murderous acts. It is grief at other people’s good fortune, it is not just the pain because they do not possess the other person’s good fortune or blessing, but the bitterness that the other person does. It is not so

much the desire for what another person has; it is the desire to take away from them what they have, or prevent them from possessing it.

"Jealousy," may properly speak of noble ambition, and a desire for something good, as well as a covetous evil desire: whereas - **"envy,"** can only ever speak of a bitter and evil ill will. It is not just grief over an enemy's good fortune; it can even be anger at a friend's good fortune. The Jews went beyond **"jealously"** to the active hatred of the more malignant **"envy."** Although Satan obviously inspired these leaders, the Scriptures do not say that he actually possessed them, in the sense that he did with Judas. Nevertheless, the jealousy and envy in their hearts drove them to oppose and murder Jesus, and fulfil Satan's desires. (See Mark.2:5-7, 16 & 23-24; 3:1-2; 15:10 & Matt.27:18.)

Whatever agents' Satan sought to use in his attacks upon the Messiah, we know that Satan badly bruised Jesus by his direct attacks against Him, both in the wilderness and throughout His ministry. Satan wanted Job and Peter to be put into his hands to test them (See Job.1:6-22, 2:1-8 & Luke.22:31-34), the fact that the very same thing happened to Jesus is proved by His temptation in the wilderness, and by the account in Hebrews, which states that Jesus was tempted in all points like ourselves. (Heb.4:15.) Knowing what he did, Satan obviously demanded the opportunity to make many all out attacks on Jesus, tempting and trying Him to the very limit.

Satan had said of Job that if God removed the hedge of protection He had put around Job, he would curse God to His face, and Satan asked for the opportunity to prove it. However, his malignant and malicious attacks on Job failed to turn him from the God he loved. Similarly we know that God removed the hedge about Jesus, and gave Satan the opportunity to tempt and test Jesus. Satan set about it with ferocious and evil enthusiasm, and tried to corrupt the pure soul of Jesus, but Jesus was totally victorious over his evil strategies and vicious temptations. Satan completely failed to corrupt our dear Lord Jesus.

That there were many other attacks by Satan on Jesus, besides the temptation in the wilderness, is clearly revealed in Luke's Gospel - **"And when the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from him for a season."** (Luke 4:13 KJV.) **"Season,"** is **"Kairos,"** it means - 'the time when things are brought to crisis,' 'a decisive epoch in time,' an 'opportune, convenient, or seasonable time.' Here it refers to the timing of Satan's strategic attacks on Jesus, but it can also refer to the timing of God's strategic plans, epochs and events in the world. (See Matt.11:25, 26:18; Mark 1:15; Luke.19:44, 21:24; Rom.5:6; 1Tim.2:6 & Rev.11:18.)

The New King James Version reads, - **"Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time."** (Luke 4:13 NKJ.) In - **"had ended every temptation,"** **"had ended,"** is the verb (**"suntelesas,"**) -and means "to bring to one end together"; and so, "concluded completely." When Satan had tried every kind of temptation, he gave up all his attempts at seducing Jesus. **"Every temptation":** Satan's primary attack was on Christ's relationship and standing with God the Father, to divert Him from the best way to fulfil His mission.

Jesus **"was in all points tempted like as we are."** (Heb.4:15.) For forty days and nights Satan strove with all his craft and cunning to entrap, seduce and defeat Jesus, but his evil desires and plans were in all points defeated. Make no mistake: this was no mere intellectual dispute; it was a cataclysmic and devastating spiritual confrontation, so physically and mentally debilitating that, afterwards, Jesus needed an angelic ministry to sustain and renew His body, soul, mind and spirit. (See Mark 1:12-13.)

We read in Luke that Jesus was tempted throughout all of the forty days (Luke 4:2): there were also the three major temptations at the end of His forty days in the wilderness. We can only conjecture about what this entailed, but because of the previous biblical record, this probably included terrifying dreams and visions in the night, similar to those that Job experienced at the hands of the Devil. Poor Job felt that God was afflicting him and giving him these terrible nightmares and visions in the night, when it was really Satan. We read in Job - **"When I say, 'My bed will comfort me, my couch will ease my complaint,' then You frighten me with dreams and terrify me with visions, so that my soul chooses strangling and death rather than my body and pains."** (Job.7:13-15.)

Jesus knew that Satan was putting Him to this fearsome test, but the temptation in the wilderness was so severe that angels had to physically sustain and renew Him; just as an angel had to strengthen Him in the devastating experience He suffered in the garden of Gethsemane. (See Mark 1:13 & Luke 22:43.) In the wilderness Satan was trying to seduce and trip Jesus up, and put paid to His ministry before it started. In Gethsemane Satan tried to make Jesus turn-back from the agony and horror of the Cross and Hades, and so frustrate God's plans to save humankind. The first man, Adam, failed miserably; the last Adam, Jesus, triumphed gloriously and, against all the odds, won through and purchased our salvation with His own precious shed blood. (See 1Cor.15:45-49.) Blessed be His Name!

Satan made many more crafty and vicious indirect attacks on Jesus, using whatever people he controlled; he even used Peter to try to sidetrack Jesus from His mission. (See Mark 8:33, Matt.4:10, 16:23 & Luke.4:8.) He used Israel's religious leaders on many occasions to attack and oppose Jesus, by malicious slander and devious schemes to kill Him. (See Luke 22:1-6, John 5:18, 7:1 & 8:39-40.) Jesus said - **"When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."** (Luke 22:53.) **"The power of darkness":** all the massed might of the evil angelic powers came against Jesus in full force as the time came for Him to make atonement for sin, but He overcame all their malicious, brutal and sadistic opposition, and conquered and subjugated them. (See Heb.2:14-15.) Blessed be His wonderful Name!

Paul reveals the hosts of evil that waged war against Jesus, and which we fight against, in his Ephesian letter - ***“For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*** (Eph.6:12 RSV.) There can be no doubt whatever that Paul is speaking here of the different ranks and orders of evil spirits. Jesus resisted and stood against these hosts of evil that attacked Him, and took up all the armour of God and totally defeated them, and through His armour, presence and grace we can do the same.

“Against Principalities,” refers to the chief rulers over the nations, evil angels of the first rank and order in their kingdom. ***“Against Powers,”*** these evil angels act with delegated authority from the principalities. ***“Against the rulers of the darkness of this world”*** – these are the rulers and emperors of the darkness of this present age. ***“Kosmokratoras”*** - the evil lords of this present world, the princes of this age. The Devil and his evil angels are the real powers behind the world’s kingdoms. ***“Against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places,”*** is referring to the evil beings in the heavenly places that are full of ***‘corrupting evil.’*** They are different orders of evil spirits; angels who did not keep their first estate, who fell from the heavenly places; whom Satan employs to hinder the spread of the Gospel and to destroy men’s souls, and we strive against them and resist their evil plans.

If this were not enough, Jesus also experienced testing and bruising temptations from the flesh. Paul had to beat his body under, restrain it and keep it under control. We read in the first of his Corinthian letters - ***“Well, I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air; but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.”*** (1Cor.9:26-27 RSV) The living Bible translates verse twenty-seven as - ***“Like an athlete I punish my body, treating it roughly, training it to do what it should, not what it wants to. Otherwise I fear that after enlisting others for the race, I myself might be declared unfit and ordered to stand aside.”***

Satan certainly made use of the human side of Jesus in the wilderness, when Jesus became very hungry after fasting for forty days. Scripture refers to Jesus, as - ***“the man Christ Jesus*** - and He, ***“was tempted in all points just as we are, yet without sin.”*** (See 1Tim.2:5 & Heb.4:15.) Jesus never gave way to temptations from the flesh; He was totally victorious even though it is impossible to think of a more bruising and trying experience than a face-to-face all out attack by Satan for forty days and nights in the wilderness. The conflict was so ruthless, relentless, vicious and destructive, that it physically and mentally totally exhausted Jesus, to such an extent, that angels had to come to Jesus and physically strengthen Him. In the same way that an angel had to strengthen Him in the garden of Gethsemane, when He was under such spiritual and physical pressure that He could well have died without this angelic ministry. (See Mark 1:12-13 & Luke 22:43.)

Interestingly enough, Satan even tried to rob Jesus of His spiritual power, by an attack on His faith. When John saw the Holy Spirit as a dove rest upon Jesus in unlimited power, he testified that Jesus was God’s Lamb, and only begotten Son, and Israel’s promised Messiah. (See John.1:15-19, 29-36 & 3:27-36.) The Father’s voice confirmed John’s witness, for all to hear - ***“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*** (See Matt.3:11-17.) Yet Satan challenged the witness of the Father and Spirit, and cast doubt on Christ’s blessed and holy experiences. What evil effrontery! Satan will try to challenge and cast doubt on our lovely God-given experiences and gifts: we must resist him and rejoice in what God has given to us, for God’s word and promises to us are always true and reliable.

Satan tried by to undermine and destroy Christ’s faith in God’s Word, so he will certainly try to destroy our faith in the promises, power and love of God. ***“Has God said,”*** still comes from Satan’s lips (See Gen.3:6. with Rev.12:9), as he still denies the reliability of God’s Word and the reality of His promises to us, including the promise of the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures, which confirm that Christ’s experience was from God, confirm that ours is too, and that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are for today, and are the heritage of the children of God. (See Acts 2:38-39.)

Christ had lived a life of perfect holiness and purity for 30 years, and Satan knew it; yet he dismisses and casts doubt on Christ’s beautiful life of perfect love and devotion to His Father, with his lying and sarcastic, ***“If.”*** Satan tried to bring Jesus to a place of dejection and despair by his evil insinuations, and he will try to give us feelings of guilt and despair by casting aspersions on our character and work for God. Satan will try to dismiss all our acts of love and devotion to God: however the Scriptures assure us that ***“God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love.”*** (Heb.6:10.) Nagging, condemning destructive attacks upon our minds come from Satan - ***“The Accuser”*** - not from God. (Rev.12:9-12.) We must not accept Satan’s lies about us, only recognise and confess what the Scriptures say – that we are in Christ. (Matt.7:7-11; Luke 11:9-13; John 3:16, 15:9, 17:23 & Eph.1:3.)

Jesus understands and cares for us, and so His discipline springs out of His great love for us. (Heb.4:14-16.) Remember that we - ***“are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God - and righteousness and sanctification and redemption”*** - in other words: all we need. His strengthening grace is more than sufficient for us. (See 1Cor.1:30-31 & Phil.4:13, 19.) Let praise and worship take the place of your heaviness and despair, draw near to God in praise and prayer - ***“resist the devil and he will flee from you.”*** (James.4:7-9.) God is love; He appreciates all our love and work for Him.

Satan fiercely attacked the Sonship and deity of Jesus. (N.B. Rom.8:14-17 & 1John 3:1-2.) Jesus created Satan, and Satan knew it, yet he tried, by lies and insinuations, to attack Christ’s Deity and Sonship, so he will certainly attack our sonship. We must always resist Satan’s attack on our position in Christ (James.4:5-

7), not giving place to him for an instant. We make our stand on those Scriptures - ***"Beloved, now are we the sons of God."*** (1John 3:1-2), and - ***"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."*** (See Rom 8:16-17 NKJ.)

Again, just as he attacks us, Satan attempted to undermine Christ's faith in God's provision and love for Him. Satan was in effect saying to Christ, "You say that you acted on the revealed will of God, and look where it got you - into a wilderness with no provision: what a good God you serve." Satan loves to imply that God has failed us or does not love us, because God has not miraculously intervened in our circumstances, but it is a lie: we are always on our Father's heart. God may allow Satan to test our faith, by difficult circumstances, temptation and trials, but He will never leave us or forsake us. (See Heb.13:5-8 & 1Pet.1:3-9.) See how much more reliable is our heavenly Father's, abundant affection, unceasing care and unfailing love, than that which can be provided by the closest of earthly ties. (Luke 11:13.)

Another area of attack, with which we will be familiar, was the one Satan made on the reality of Christ's spiritual gifts. In the wilderness, he taunted Christ by saying, in effect - "You have not had one miracle! What, and you claim to be God's Son. What an imagination you have! If you truly are the Son of God, and really filled with the Spirit, where are the miracles? If you have received the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts, why are you having such a bad time?" Jesus knew that God's power and gifts are for use under the guidance of God's wisdom and in God's time and will.

We cannot demand great manifestations of God's power according to our will: it is - ***"He [who] gives them to each one, just as He determines."*** (See 1 Cor. 12:11 NIV.) The lack of powerful gifts after the baptism in the Spirit can be a real temptation to disbelieve the whole experience. However the Spirit usually gives gifts of revelation and power to mature believers, and in particular to godly ministries in Christ's Church. (John 5:19 & 30.)

Satan will try us, as he tried our Lord, and we must answer him as Jesus did. Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy, which says that God allows His children to be tested, and qualified by adversity, and that He is always with us in our temptations and trials. (See Deut.8:3.) Jesus knew that the God, who looked after the Israelites in the wilderness for forty years, would look after Him, and God will look after us; He is always with us. (See 1Pet.1:4-7 & 5:7.) Let us answer Satan with ***"It is written"***: God's truth stands forever sure and He will never fail us, or forsake us. (Heb.13:5-8.)

Then Satan also tried to get Jesus to misinterpret the Scriptures in a self-willed, presumptuous and fanatical way. When Satan quoted from Psalm ninety-one, he omitted some important words (Ps.91:11-12), as can be seen by a comparison with Luke and Matthew's accounts. (Luke 4:10-11 & Matt.4:6.) Satan omitted the words ***"in all thy ways,"*** that is - the ways of Christ, directed by God. By misquoting these verses from the psalm, Satan suggests that Jesus therefore had Scriptural authority for a daring act of faith. Satan was in effect saying, "This is one of the words out of the mouth of God, why not put it to the test? If you are God's Son and He has given you authority and power, then, prove it to me and everybody." Christ completely rejected the temptation to misinterpret the Scripture, and to put His Father to the test by going ahead on His own.

Jesus knew that the promises of God were only valid in the context in which they are set, and in conjunction with the whole tenor of Christian truth. We can only expect great manifestations of spiritual gifts, in accordance with the will and purpose of God. (John 5:19 & 30.) Jesus quoted Moses - ***"Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted Him in Massah,"*** (Deut.6:16) and from the incident in Exodus, where Israel put God to the test (Exod.17:1-7), our Lord inferred that those who embark upon presumptuous enterprises, without the guidance of God, put God to the test. To doubt the guiding and providing hand of God is to repeat the sin of the children of Israel at Massah and Meribah. Those who usurp the Holy Spirit's position in the Church, and run it as they feel, have committed this sin of pride, self-will and presumption.

Satan will try to incite us to indulge in presumptuous and fanatical enterprises, and try to get us to misuse spiritual gifts; he will come to us 'with a Bible under his arm and a text in his mouth.' He attacks every revival with misinterpretations and perversions of the Scriptures: we have to make sure that any supposed 'manifestations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit' are according to the Scriptural pattern. Remember that any such manifestation can be from God, or they may be from a deceiving spirit, or even from the flesh. If we want to pervert or dodge the truth, Satan will certainly find us a Scripture to back us up, even though this will involve wresting a text out of its context, and wilfully ignoring other Scriptures upon the subject. The perils of pride, self-will, presumption and fanaticism are very great and lead to "great transgression." Let us follow the example of Jesus, and resist Satan's attacks upon us and our dependence upon God. (Ps.19:13.)

Satan even tried to get Jesus to use spiritual gifts in a spectacular way to win popularity. Therefore we may be sure that Satan will tempt us to use spiritual gifts in a spectacular way to win the support, praise and admiration of the people. Satan fell through the sins of pride, covetousness and love of praise and position; he tries to make His creator fall into the same sins that had caused his own downfall and doom. (See Ezek.28:17 & Is.14:12-14.) Satan challenged Christ to do an outstanding sign before the people. (Mark 15:30 & Luke 23:9.) Jesus resisted this appeal to pride and love of praise; He had come to die, not to lead Israel to victory over Rome. He had come to save people from their sins, not to receive empty adulation. If Christ had followed Satan's suggestion, it would have been a complete denial of His mission, and would have been a rejection of His Father's Word, love, provision and guidance.

Satan will tempt us to use the power of God and His spiritual gifts in a proud and spectacular manner. There can be a desire to show people that God has called us and used us, and this is wrong. We can tell people what God has accomplished through us, but only if we do it in humility to God's glory, and in order to help people's faith, as Paul and Barnabas did. (Acts.14:27.) Satan's servants, like Simon the sorcerer, may boast that they are a great one, but servants of the meek and lowly Christ must be genuinely humble. **"Let another man praise thee and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips."** (Prov.27:2.) Satan puffs up his servants: God humbles His, and measures their greatness by their humility. (Matt.18:1-5.)

Satan will tempt us to use spiritual gifts in a spectacular way to win position and prestige. God has not given us His spiritual gifts to increase our prestige and position; He has given them to us to glorify His Name and meet people's needs. Jesus entirely resisted the temptation to use the power of God in a way that would win over the influential over to His side, and win a position amongst them. In effect, Satan was saying to Christ - "Cast yourself down at the Temple before the elders of Israel. Seek the help and patronage of the influential. To do the work that you want to do, you need the people with money, power and authority behind you." Many have compromised both truth and experience by throwing themselves down at the Temple of worldly and religious prestige. By seeking the praise of men, or by fighting for position in their church, they have offended God, and lost His power.

Those who seek the praise of men, inevitably find that they compromise the truth because of the fear of man. (John 12:42-43.) Christ fearlessly preached against traditions that made void the Word of God, and exposed hypocrisy and sham. It cost Him His life, but He pleased the Father. These religious leaders opposed Christ, and in the end murdered Him. He threatened their power structure and they could not tolerate this. The test of the spiritual greatness of any Christian leaders is their willingness to step down from position and humbly serve others. (John 13:1-17; Matt.20:20-28 & Phil.2:1-11.) Christ humbled the religious leaders of His day by showing His preference for the prayerful, spiritual, consecrated and sincere ordinary working people, as leaders in His work; He can and does do the same today, when religious leaders lack spirituality and sincerity.

Satan even tried to get Jesus to exchange His Father's blessing and His cross, for the defiled glory and power of the world. Satan showed Jesus all the glory of the world's kingdoms, and in effect said, "Why fight me? You can have all these without a fight if you will go my way, accept my standards and worship me. Don't take up your cross; exchange your life of dedication to God, for the world's pleasures, power and wealth."

The temptation to fill our lives with worldly things and to judge our lives by worldly standards comes to every Christian. We need to realise, as Jesus did, that God owns all things, and that our allegiance should be to Him alone. (Deut.6:13-15.) A curse, not glory, comes upon all those who forsake God for the broad and easy way. (Matt.7:13-14. with Deut.28:15-68.) Satan's offer of his filthy and corrupt kingdoms was certainly no bargain, because they are destined for destruction at Christ's return: the world belongs to Jesus and the Father, not Satan - he is a usurper.

There was a strong implication from Satan that if Christ did not follow his advice, He would experience the most sustained and vicious opposition from these kingdoms, which were under Satan's control. Indeed, Jesus did have to face the most vicious and ruthless slander, hatred, envy, malice and persecution from the followers of Satan, and we will experience the same if we are going to do God's will and glorify Him through the manifestation of His spiritual gifts.

When we think that materialism, worldly standards and compromise have more to offer us than serving God, we are getting very close to bowing down, serving and worshipping Satan. Let us follow Jesus' example: He refused to sell His heavenly anointing and call for the things of the world, or compromise truth because of the fear of man, or the hatred and opposition of the kingdoms of the world. Nothing deterred Him from the mission that the Father had sent Him to do.

Christ refused to use the glory of the world to supplement or replace the power of God; He chose people, who were without worldly power or influence, to be the leaders of His Church. (1Cor.1:26-31.) The further we get away from God the more we rely upon human resources. However universities, culture, music, art and literature, good as these can be, cannot replace dependence upon God and His power. We are in real spiritual danger when we rely upon what we can do, and feel that we can manage on our own. We praise God for Christian scholars, and we would be lost without them, but our first need is for men with truly apostolic ministry. (Matt.9:35-38.) Paul was an outstanding scholar, but he gloried in his limitations not his abilities, so that the power of Christ would rest upon him.

Modern evangelism, even that which is based on the most eloquent human oratory, is still only a poor substitute for the power and miracles seen in the early Church. Churches that allow worldly glory and human ability to replace God's power become empty husks, which disillusion those who are broken in heart, weary, sick and sinful, for they cannot meet the needs of people, who are seeking and longing for a loving fellowship, where they can find God and His healing, peace and blessing. Jesus knew that only God could meet the needs of the world, and that human endeavour and worldly glory would always fail.

Satan tried to get Jesus to build a worldly or religious empire around Himself (John 6:15); Christ refused, because His kingdom was not of this world; He lived just to glorify the Father and do His will. (See John 4:34, 5:30, 6:38-39, 12:28, 17:1,4,5 & 10, 18:33-37, 21:19 & Heb.10:5-7.) Someone has said, "How often has ambition conquered those, who have conquered nearly all else." If our only motive for desiring the gifts of the Holy Spirit is to build our personal or denominational kingdom, then we desire them for the very worst of reasons. We are not here to build our kingdoms, or our bank balance, by misusing Christ's gifts; we

are to follow the example of the Holy Spirit, and use His gifts for the sole purpose of exalting Jesus and glorifying God. (John.16:12-15, 14:12-14.)

Our emphasis should be on Jesus - the Messiah - God incarnate, not on ourselves, or our church; He is the only one we are to serve and worship. To Him be all the glory!

Reference is made to various Bible translations used in these studies, and for the reader's convenience, these are identified as follows: -

The Authorised Version = KJV; New King James Version = NKJ;

New International Version = NIV; The Living Bible = TLB;

The Amplified Bible = AMP; Revised Standard Version = RSV;

American Standard Version = ASV; New American Standard = NAS;

New American Standard Update = NAU; Today's English Version = TEV

The Message Version = TMV.

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