

# Yahweh *Elohim*, men and angels

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- Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord declared, 'Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons; and concerning the work of My hands, you command Me. I have made the earth, and created man on it. I - My hands - stretched out the heavens, and all their host I have commanded.' Isa 45:11-12.
- The Lord wants us to ask Him about the life and works that belong to the sons of God now, and in the new heavens and earth. In response, we are to lift up our voice for understanding regarding how we are to live and walk together as sons of God and members of the body of Christ. Obtaining this understanding involves learning the culture of fellowship with the Lord and with one another. It also requires us to recognise the works that belong to our predestination as sons of God, and also those works that do *not* belong to our mandate.

## The Everlasting Covenant

- Within Their own covenant fellowship, before the heavens and earth were created, Yahweh Father, Son and Holy Spirit determined together to create and to bring to glory a multitude of sons of God in Their image and according to Their likeness. Gen 1:26. The sons of God would be born of Their life and would become participants in Their fellowship. The Lord God called this His 'Everlasting Covenant'.
- Each Person of the Godhead laid down Their life, by Eternal Spirit, to bring Their covenant purpose to pass. The Son emptied Himself to become the Father's Son, and the Holy Spirit laid down His life to become the Helper of the Father and of the Son. Php 2:6-7. Joh 14:16. The Father laid down His life by giving to the Son the fullness of His own expression as Father. Heb 1:3. Joh 16:15.
- Yahweh Son became the full expression of the Father when He was begotten as the Son of God by the word of the Father, who said, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.' Heb 1:5. This birthing action was by the Holy Spirit. Heb 3:7. Having been begotten by the word of the Father as the Son of God, the Son later came into the world as the Son of Man when He was brought forth from the womb of the virgin Mary.
- When Yahweh Son was begotten by the Father as the Son of God, the beginning of the creation was established. Joh 1:2-3. This was the *first time* that the Father spoke to the Son, calling Him His Son, making Him His only begotten Son.
- The Son's work, from the bosom of the Father, was to reveal every attribute of the Father, and to make Him known. Joh 1:18. Angels, men, and the natural creation were all part of the expression of the fatherhood and creativity of God that has its source in the Father, and was given to the Son to facilitate.

## In the garden

- The first creative actions of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in the unfolding of Their Everlasting Covenant purpose, were the creation of the heavens. This was followed by the creation of the earth. Gen 1:1. The angels were created when the heavens were created. God created the angels perfect and complete for the works of service to which He appointed them. Eze 28:15.
- The angels were to work under the direction of the Son, who revealed the Father through the work of creating the earth and everything in it. That is, the angels supported the creative work of the Son, according to the specific mandate of the Father and the Son. Following the creation of man, the angels were *sent forth* by God to serve the heirs of salvation - i.e. the sons of God. Heb 1:14. Later in these notes we will discuss the nature and work of angels further.
- On the fifth and sixth days, God created all the living creatures of the sea and of the land. Gen 1:20-25. Also, on the sixth day, God made man in His image and likeness. Gen 1:26. As we have already considered, man's predestination was to be born of God and to participate, by offering, in the fellowship of Yahweh. In contrast to the angels, who were a servant order to Yahweh *Elohim*, our mandate was for *relationship* with God as His sons, having been made in His image and likeness.
- God planted a garden eastward in Eden. Gen 2:8. This was the Paradise of God. God then extended the rule of His throne, which had first been established in the heavens, to Paradise on earth. It would now be administered from the tree of life through Adam, to whom He had given dominion. By this means, His covenant initiative would be administered to the whole of His creation.
- Accordingly, Yahweh *Elohim* planted two trees in the midst of the garden - the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life. These two trees symbolise Yahweh *Elohim's* covenant expression in creating, and in multiplying, life. In this regard, the two trees, and their fruit, belong to Yahweh *Elohim*. The access of angels and mankind to the fruit of the trees reflects the mandate for which they were created.
- The initiative of Yahweh as the Creator was central to His Everlasting Covenant, and to His fellowship with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. This creative initiative was symbolised by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The knowledge of good and evil belongs *only* to God. It belongs to His own mandate as the Creator. The Lord said of Himself, 'I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the *light*, and create *darkness*: I make *peace*, and create *evil*: I the Lord do all these things.' Isa 45:6-7. As the servants of this creative initiative, the angels are sustained and equipped for their work by the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- The mandate to create never belonged to mankind. Their predestination was to *multiply* the life of God to the creation through offering in fellowship with Yahweh. The tree of life is the provision for this mandate. The fruit of the tree of life, which is the 'food' that belongs to Yahweh and to the sons of God, is light and life. In this regard, we note the words of the apostle Paul, who wrote, 'Walk as children [or sons] of light (for the fruit of the Spirit [equally, 'the fruit of light'] is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is *acceptable to the Lord*.' Eph 5:8-10.

- Adam and Eve partook of this spiritual fruit through their daily fellowship with Yahweh, in the Spirit, at the tree of life. Through their conversation with Yahweh, during this *agape* meal, Adam and Eve received grace and understanding regarding the works that were 'acceptable to the Lord' and pertained to their mandate.
- Adam's mandate was amazing. The Lord God placed man in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. Gen 2:15. 'To tend' means that Adam was to encourage, or cultivate, life in the garden, which then overflowed as life to the whole of creation. 'To keep' means that he was to guard, protect, and watch over the garden; he was to know the state of things within it. In other words, Adam was to be a 'watchman' in the garden.
- Further to this 'priestly' service, Adam was made ruler over all of the creation, and given dominion over the works of God's hands - all that He had created, including the angels. Establishing this point, King David declared, 'When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honour. *You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands*; you have put *all things* under his feet, all sheep and oxen - even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas.' Psa 8:3-8.
- Having been made in the image and likeness of God, Adam was crowned with glory and honour as a king-priest over the creation. Even though, in strength and power, he was physically inferior to the angels, the angels were set by God as servants to the works that belong to mankind's mandate to multiply the life of God to His creation. Heb 1:14. We note that this rulership has been promised to the sons of men, who are sons of God, in the new heavens and earth. Heb 2:5-8.
- Revealing the works of this mandate, Yahweh *Elohim*, the Creator, brought every living creature to Adam for him to 'name'. Gen 2:19. The wisdom to name the life and expression of each animal, in harmony with each other, was received by Adam in fellowship with Yahweh, each day, at the tree of life.
- Life was multiplied to the creation through the order of headship that was inherent in this fellowship. The Father is the source of all life. He laid down this creative and multiplying initiative to the Son. It was given to the Son by the Holy Spirit. It was then multiplied by the Son, through the Spirit, and given to Adam. Adam then named and directed where, in creation, this life was sent, as a word, to the creation. In this regard, Adam was a messenger! The word proclaiming the life and expression of God's creation was carried by the angels of God, who were servants to Adam. Heb 2:5.

### The implications of the fall of man

- Adam disobeyed God and ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, presuming upon a creative mandate that belongs to God alone. Adam and Eve were now driven to create names for themselves. Notably, Yahweh *Elohim* declared that the implication of eating this fruit was that Adam and Eve had become like one of Them, saying, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil.' Gen 3:22.
- Mankind was barred from the garden of Eden lest they eat from the tree of life and live forever. Their food was no longer the tree of life. It was now the produce of the cursed ground that Adam had been given to till. Gen 3:17.

- Even though mankind no longer had access to eat from the tree of life in the Paradise of God, Yahweh *Elohim* was still in the garden. They were able to have fellowship with Him as they made offering at the gate of Eden, at the feet of the two cherubim – Michael and Gabriel – who guarded the way to the tree of life. As they presented themselves for offering, according to the direction of Yahweh, the word of God pertaining to their name and offering was delivered to them through the institution, or disposition, of angels. Act 7:53.

## The angels

- The angels have identity as spirits, and they serve as ministers by the strength and power of the name of God that is in them. Exo 23:20-23. In this regard, we note the word of the Lord to Israel, ‘Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; *for My name is in Him.*’ Exo 23:20-21. Obedience to the word of the Angel of the Lord was the same as obedience to Yahweh.
- The nature and power of the name of God is expressed through the angels as ‘a flame of fire’. As Paul explained, ‘And of the angels He says: “Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire”.’ Heb 1:7.
- We observe also that the angels are described in the Scriptures as ‘holy ones’. For example, Daniel saw a vision of ‘a watcher, a holy one’ who came down from heaven to proclaim judgement upon Nebuchadnezzar. They said, ‘This decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.’ Dan 4:17. Later, he observed two ‘holy ones’ speaking to each other concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression that causes desolation. Dan 8:13.
- Interestingly, throughout the Scriptures, the angels are represented as spiritual animals within their domain. For example, the seraphim are described as fiery ‘serpents’. Furthermore, the armies of heaven are likened to horses of fire with chariots. 2Ki 6:16-17. Satan, the fallen cherub, is likened to a dragon and a lion.
- There is strong evidence in Scripture that the appearances of the Angels of the Lord are in fact pre-incarnate appearances of Christ, the Son of God. These are called, by theologians, ‘theophanies’. Things are said of the Angel of the Lord that go beyond the category of angels and are applicable only to Christ. For example, when the Angel of the Lord appeared to Hagar, ‘She called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, “Have I also here seen Him who sees me?” ’ Gen 16:13. Similarly, the Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. Moses recounted that ‘*when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush* and said, “Moses, Moses!” ’ Exo 3:2-4.

## Seraphim

- The first of the angelic order that we must understand is the seraphim. The seraphim are the first to express the knowledge of Him who is the Creator. The seraphim serve Yahweh *Elohim* in ‘the beauty of *holiness*’. That is, they proclaim the triple repetition

of His holiness that has been understood throughout the ages of the church to be connected with the revelation of Yahweh *Elohim* as a trinity.

- Revealing this service, the prophet Isaiah testified, 'I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood *seraphim*; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: "*Holy, holy, holy* is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.' Isa 6:1-4.
- Historically, this declaration, 'Holy, holy, holy', revealing Yahweh *Elohim* as a trinity, has been called 'the *trisaqion*'. It proclaims that there is no other attribute so essential to God as His holiness. It is for His holiness, more than anything else, that we, as His sons, worship Him.
- The *trisaqion* declares, '*Holy is the Father* who has created us and bidden us to worship Him in the beauty of holiness; *holy is the Son* who has redeemed us by His own blood, making us holy by joining us to His offering; *holy is the Spirit* who sanctifies us day by day, and makes us holy in deed and truth.'
- The word '*seraph*' means 'noble one' and 'fiery, burning serpent'. The seraphim burn with the revelation of Yahweh's holiness. Their burning implies their zeal. They are angels of light whose dazzling expression communicates their message that 'God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all'. 1Jn 1:5. They are referred to in the Scriptures as 'the stars of God'. Isa 14:13.
- Moses lifted up the seraph in the wilderness as a picture of the expression of Yahweh's holiness, and as a symbol of the redemption that is able to deliver a person from judgement because of iniquity, and because they need forgiveness for sin. Num 21:8-9. This *same deliverance* was ministered to the prophet Isaiah.
- In response to seeing the Lord sitting on a throne, and the train of His robe filling the temple, Isaiah confessed, 'Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.' Isa 6:5. One of the seraphim flew to Isaiah, having a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. He touched Isaiah's mouth with the coal and said, 'Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.' Isa 6:7.
- It is notable that the seraph did not presume to anoint the lips of Isaiah with the fire of his own expression. He used tongs to take the fire of Yahweh from the altar, to anoint the lips of Isaiah, which took away his iniquity and purged him of his sin. This ministry of the seraph to Isaiah sanctified him to his calling as a prophet. This happened so that Christ, the Lord of hosts, could call and then send Isaiah as His messenger to Judah. We recognise, therefore, that the seraphim were agents of atonement.
- Significantly, Christ said, 'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.' Joh 3:14-15. Through His offering journey, Christ has been lifted up on the cross, ministering redemption in place of the seraphim.

## *Cherubim*

- A second order of angels identified in the Scriptures are the cherubim. Whereas the seraphim are observed as standing above the throne, the cherubim are under the throne. Isa 6:2. Eze 1:26. Their position relative to the throne of God reveals the nature of their service. The work of *proclaiming* the word of the Lord belonged to the seraphim; however, the *facilitation* of the word of the Lord was the work of the cherubim.
- Ezekiel observed four cherubim under the throne of God. They each had four faces – the face of a man, the face of a lion, the face of an ox, and the face of an eagle. Eze 1:10. Furthermore, he observed a wheel beside each living creature, spanning heaven and earth. Eze 1:15-18. These characteristics of the cherubim reveal their mobility and their capacity to express the four faces of Yahweh's administration in the earth.

## *The angelic administration*

- The integration of these two angelic orders is most acutely depicted in Ezekiel's vision of the throne of Yahweh. He wrote, 'As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches [or lamps] going back and forth among the living creatures. The fire was bright, and out of the fire went lightning. And the living creatures ran back and forth, in appearance like a flash of lightning.' Eze 1:13-14.
- The living creatures are an integrated administration of seraphim and cherubim. We recognise that the altar of incense, represented by the burning coals of fire, is in the midst of the living creatures. The torches, or lamps, refer to the seven Spirits of God. Rev 4:5. These are the fullness, or 'seven', of eyes within the wheels, which go out into all the earth. Eze 1:18. Rev 5:6. The living ones – cherubim and seraphim – went wherever the Spirit wanted to go. Eze 1:12,20. The ministry of Yahweh's word by the seraphim was likened to lightning proceeding out from the fire. These symbolise flashes of illumination proceeding from the word of the Lord.
- As we will consider in the next section, when Satan, a cherub, presumed to exalt his throne above the stars of God, which are the seraphim, he was cast as a profane thing out of the mountain of God, and was destroyed 'from the midst of the fiery stones'. Isa 14:13. Eze 28:16. That is, he was removed from the administration that Ezekiel observed as 'living ones' whose 'appearance was like burning coals of fire'.
- The prophet Daniel observed the destructive influence of a little horn upon the angelic administration described by Ezekiel. Outlining the impact of this little horn, Daniel wrote, 'And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down *some of the host* and *some of the stars* to the ground, and trampled them. He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down.' Dan 8:10-11.

## *Satan's presumption*

- Lucifer, or Satan, was created as a cherub. Speaking of Satan, the Lord said, 'You were the anointed *cherub* who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, til iniquity was found in you.' Eze 28:14-15.

- Satan's iniquity was revealed when he said in his heart, 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' Isa 14:13-14.
- 'The stars of God' above whom Satan desired to exalt himself were the seraphim -the fiery, burning serpents above the throne of the Lord. Satan further coveted the inheritance that belongs to the sons of God, which was described as 'Mount Zion on the sides of the north'. Finally, he sought to 'ascend above the heights of the clouds' to be 'like the Most High' Himself.
- To achieve his presumptuous goal, Satan *transformed* his appearance to that of a seraph, or flying serpent. That is, he presented himself as 'an angel of light'. Paul revealed Satan's capacity to do this, saying, 'Satan himself *transforms himself into an angel of light.*' 2Co 11:14. In doing so, Satan positioned himself *in* the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as a fiery serpent, or seraph. By implication, he claimed ownership, or possession, of this knowledge, communicating as though he had a right to speak from there. By presuming to minister as a seraph, in whom God's name resided, Satan took the Lord's name in vain.
- Paul's comments regarding the fall of man that resulted from Eve's encounter with Satan at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil are significant. He explained, 'Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.' 1Ti 2:14. Eve was deceived by Satan, who had transformed himself into an angel of light, because her reference point for the word concerning her name and works should only have been her head, Adam. She was vulnerable to deception as she departed from this order of fellowship.
- In contrast, Paul was clear that Adam *was not deceived*. This is because he had been set over the angels and understood their mandate. He recognised that the word proceeding from the masquerading serpent was inconsistent with the word of a seraph. He knew that their work was to *proclaim and uphold the holiness of Yahweh*. However, the word of Satan commended Adam and Eve to a course of action that was outside of their sanctification.
- Adam drew back from his call to be a watcher in the garden of Eden. He had the sight to know that which belonged in the garden and that which did not. Adam's disobedience was his accountable and deliberate choice to reject God's order for his life, and to pursue the alternative expression that had been offered to him by his wife, from the lie of Satan.
- Satan, having fallen from his estate as a cherub, was confined by God to the form that he had assumed in order to deceive mankind. God said to him, 'Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.' Gen 3:14-15.
- Satan was not an angel of light; rather, he became the ruler of the kingdom of *darkness*. That is, he became the ruler of those in the world who reject God's word and choose, instead, to live according to the sight of their own eyes and the dictates of their own heart. They were now in bondage to him through the fear of death. Heb 2:14-15.

## The bread of heaven

- As a consequence of Adam's disobedience, Yahweh *Elohim* sent Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden lest they ate of the tree of life and lived forever in their fallen, iniquitous state. The fruit of the tree of life was no longer their food. Gen 3:22-24.
- From that time, through toil, mankind would eat the fruit that was brought forth from the ground, which Yahweh *Elohim* had cursed for their sake. Gen 3:17-19. This food would not sustain their mortal bodies, for every person would eventually die, and return to the dust from which they were taken. Nevertheless, this natural food would provide them with the energy that was necessary for the works that they would do 'under the sun'. Ecc 3:10.
- Later, Yahweh *Elohim* delivered the descendants of Abraham from their captivity in Egypt. The Lord God described the children of Israel as 'My son, My firstborn', and said to them, 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me *a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.*' Exo 4:22. Exo 19:4-6.
- During Israel's journey through the wilderness, the Lord upgraded the food with which God's covenant people were sustained, feeding them with manna. The psalmist Asaph described the manna as 'angels' food' and 'the bread from heaven'. He wrote, 'Yet He [Yahweh *Elohim*] had commanded the clouds above, and opened the doors of heaven, had rained down manna on them to eat, and given them of *the bread of heaven.* Men ate *angels' food*; He sent them food to the full.' Psa 78:23-25.
- Angel's food is the bread, or food, that belongs to Yahweh in heaven. It is the resource that enables the administrations of God's throne. This resource is the Spirit of life from the Father, which is in Christ Jesus. It is the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (symbolising the creative initiative of Yahweh *Elohim*); and also the fruit of the tree of life (symbolising the multiplication of His life through offering by one Spirit).
- In this regard, the nomination of manna as 'angel's food' did not indicate that the Israelites were fed with the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, with which angels are fed. Rather, it marked Yahweh's initiative to establish Israel in *relationship* with Him as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, *through His word.* This word was ministered to them through the disposition of angels; it was a tutor to lead them to Christ. Act 7:53. Gal 3:24.
- Concerning the provision of this food, Moses said to the children of Israel, 'He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone [food from the ground]; but man *lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.*' Deu 8:3.
- During His earthly ministry, Jesus explained to the Jews that God the Father gave the Israelites the bread from heaven. He identified Himself as being the bread from heaven who 'gives life to the world'. Joh 6:32-35. He exhorted them to *labour* for the food that endures to eternal life, by *doing the work* of the Father. This work is to '*believe in Him whom He sent.*' Joh 6:27-29.

- Earlier in His ministry, Jesus connected this work of believing, which is fundamental to receiving and eating the bread of heaven, with His impending sacrifice as an offering for sin. He said to Nicodemus, 'And as Moses lifted up the serpent [seraph] in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up [on the cross, as a sin offering], that whoever *believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*' Joh 3:14-15.
- Jesus was portrayed as a sin offering to the Jews and to the whole world when He was crucified on the cross. The seven elements of Christ's offering journey, culminating in Him being lifted up on the cross as a living sacrifice, show that the cross has become the tree of life, and Christ Himself is its fruit.
- Eating the fruit of the tree of life, which is the bread from heaven, begins with looking upon Jesus whom we have pierced, and believing for our participation in His offering and sufferings. Through fellowship in His offering, the atoning work which He finished for us is made effective in our life. Our iniquity is purged, our sins are forgiven, and His life is multiplied to us. Jesus described this participation as 'eating His flesh and drinking His blood', which He feeds to us in the *agape* meal.
- Jesus said that we 'eat His flesh' by coming to the fellowship of His body, and we 'drink His blood' by believing in Him. Joh 6:35. The implication of eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood, which is the food from heaven that He feeds to us from the tree of life, is that we have eternal life now, and that Christ Himself will raise us up at the last day. Joh 6:54. Practically, we abide in His body, and He abides in us, as we journey with Him each day in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. Joh 6:56.
- Under the Old Covenant, the priests were given a portion of the offerings that were made by fire - the grain offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering - to eat. Lev 6:16,18. Lev 6:26. Lev 7:6. For example, the Lord said, through Moses, 'The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it. In a holy place it shall be eaten, in the court of the tabernacle of meeting.' Lev 6:26.
- A portion of the peace offering was eaten by the one who made offering. The Lord declared, 'The flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day it is offered. He shall not leave any of it until morning.' Lev 7:15. If the sacrifice was a vow or a voluntary offering, it could be eaten the next day. However, if it was eaten any later, it became an abomination, and the person who made the offering was considered to be 'blood guilty'. Lev 7:16-18.
- The key point to recognise is that partaking of the sacrifices *connected* the eater to these offerings. We have a right to partake of the offerings for sin because Christ has *made us* a kingdom of priests to His God and Father. In doing so, we go forth with Him, bearing His reproach. Heb 13:13. By this means, we portray Christ as crucified among those whom we encounter. Gal 3:1.
- As those who are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, and are ourselves partakers of the fruit of the tree of life, we are able to minister this life to others. We note, for example, the words of the apostle John, who said, 'If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, *he will ask, and He will give him life* for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that.' 1Jn 5:16.

- Eating Christ's body and blood as a peace offering, through fellowship in the *agape* meal, marks our participation in the fulfilment of the Father's will, as a member of the body of Christ. Our fulfilment of the will of God, through fellowship in Christ's finished offering, is the reason why a son of God gives thanks in everything. In this regard, we note Paul's exhortation, 'Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.' 1Th 5:16-18.

## Two trees in the cross

- Earlier in these notes, we considered the atoning ministry of the seraphim. We observed that in response to Isaiah's confession of uncleanness, a seraph flew to him, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. The seraph touched Isaiah's lips with this coal, removing his iniquity from him, and purging his sin. Isa 6:6-7. The seraph had taken this coal from the *golden altar*. This was the altar upon which incense was offered, symbolising prayer in the holy place and in the holy of holies.
- The golden altar of the true temple was revealed when Jesus began to pray to the Father, by the Spirit, when the Father made Him an offering for sin, in the garden of Gethsemane. Luk 22:41-42. Concerning this event, Luke recorded in his Gospel, 'Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.' Luk 22:43-44.
- Through the offering of Yahweh, the angelic hosts were reordered. The atoning ministry of the seraphim was given to Christ, who had become flesh, born under the Law and made a little lower than the angels. Joh 1:14. Gal 4:4. Heb 2:7,9. He began to pray more earnestly, interceding for us as our great High Priest. Then His blood began to flow over the whole of His body for our atonement, forgiveness for sin, and deliverance from iniquity.
- This marked the commencement of Christ's offering journey, through which He progressively descended into the lower parts of the earth, and progressively ascended as a new creation, right up to the throne of the Father. Eph 4:9-10.
- In the course of this journey, Jesus was bringing the old creation to an end, and was establishing a new heavens and earth. He was also multiplying His life so that it would become the new creation life that belongs to the sons of God, which is the divine nature. Through this work, which culminated on the cross, we see the two aspects of Yahweh's Everlasting Covenant initiative - creation and the multiplication of life. In this regard, the cross was the expression of the two trees of Yahweh - the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Importantly, in the new heavens and earth, these two trees will forever continue to sustain the two dimensions of God's Covenant. Rev 21:5. Rev 22:1-3.
- Regarding His offering on the cross, Jesus said, 'And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.' Joh 12:32. By this, He meant that every person would be drawn to the cross and to its dual implications of judgement or life, which were established through His death. Joh 12:33. 2Co 5:14. We can liken each person's interface with the cross to the consumption of the fruit of the two trees that are revealed in the cross. Everyone will eat the fruit of one of these two trees.

- This principle is helpfully exemplified by the two thieves who were crucified with Christ on the day that He died. To one thief, the cross of Christ was the tree of life. The flesh of Christ was its fruit, giving to him eternal life as he participated with Christ in His offering. Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be *with Me in Paradise* [where he would forever have access to the tree of life].' Luk 23:43. Rev 2:7. To the other thief, the cross was the knowledge and expression of good and evil. This was for him the knowledge of judgement and death. His self-determined expression came to nothing as he was silenced and forever forgotten in the sea of God's forgetfulness.

### Brought into the world a second time

- The Father brought the Son into the world a *second time* when the Father raised Him from the dead at the conclusion of His offering journey on the cross. Paul quoted the passage from Psalm 2 - 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You' - to declare the resurrection of the Son from the dead. Act 13:26-35.
- When Christ was raised from the dead, He was the beginning of a *new creation*. The Father raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand. He put all things under the Son's feet and gave the Son to be Head over all things, to the church, which is His body. Eph 1:20-22.
- The apostle Paul further explained this point in his letter to the Colossians. Speaking of Christ, Paul wrote, '[The Son] is the Head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence.' Col 1:18. By this means, Paul established the point that he made in the book of Hebrews, that the Father now speaks to the whole of His creation only through the Son, *from His throne*.
- When the Son was raised from the dead with an incorruptible body and was brought into the world a second time, the Father said to Him, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Your kingdom.' Psa 45:6. Heb 1:8. He also said to the Son, 'Let all the angels of God worship Him.' Heb 1:6. By this word, the Father gave the angels to the Son to work in His administration, which is to reveal the Father.
- When Jesus ascended far above all the heavens, everyone who has been born of God and baptised into the fellowship of His body, has been raised and seated with Him in heavenly places, as part of a kingdom of priests. Eph 2:6. 1Pe 2:9. Rev 1:6. Significantly, we are again crowned with glory and honour, and will be set over the work of His hands in the new heavens and earth as we continue to journey, in this age, in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Heb 2:5-9.
- Significantly, the apostle Paul explained that when Jesus ascended far above all the heavens, He gave gifts to men - 'Some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ'. Eph 4:11-12. Paul was indicating that the four faces of the administration of the throne, carried by the cherubim prior to the New Covenant, are now in the body of Christ, and minister through the ascension-gift graces in the presbytery and in the church.

## The Son reveals the Father

- The initiative of the Father is expressed from His throne through Christ and His administration. Christ, the anointed and only begotten Son of the Father, is the full revelation and expression of all that the Father is. The Father gave to the Son the right to reveal His glory. The Son is 'the brightness of the Father's glory', and is the One who expresses the Father's Person. Heb 1:3.
- The book of Hebrews begins by proclaiming that God the Father, at various times and in various ways, spoke in times past by the prophets, but now in these last days, *speaks to us only through His Son*. Heb 1:1-2. Everything has been reordered in the fellowship of Yahweh so that angels do not act as separate agents of the Father or of the Spirit. It is now only from the Father, to the Son.

## The four faces

- When the Father takes His seat upon the throne in the time of the end, every expression of His identity, and everything born or created that comes from His fatherhood, will be revealed from His throne through the administration of Christ as the Lamb of God, who then stands to rule. Jesus will stand up from His throne at the right hand of God, as *the Lamb*. His throne is in the gap between the Father's throne and the twenty-four thrones belonging to the presbytery.
- The attributes of the Father's kingship and priesthood, and fatherhood, along with that which is begotten by Him, and made in His image and likeness, are revealed in the faces of the four living ones. Rev 4:6-8. The face of the lion designates the Father's kingship; the face of the ox, His priesthood; the face of the eagle, His fatherhood; and the face of the man, the sonship of those who have been created and born in His image and likeness.
- The four living ones initiate every action that proceeds from the throne to accomplish God's purpose, through the administration of Christ, for the end of this age; and then to bring forth the new heavens and earth into the age to come.
- We note also that through the reordering of the Son's administration, the *trisagion*, which formerly belonged to the seraphim, is sung by the ascension-gift leaders of the church. The apostle John observed, 'The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" Whenever the living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created".' Rev 4:8-11.
- These living ones, along with the twenty-four elders, have harps and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. Their song of rejoicing and confession is that they are redeemed men, taken as representatives out of every tribe, tongue and people, and made to be kings and priests to God the Father. They begin to reign upon the earth. Rev 5:8-10.