

The Anointing from God

BY
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“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me”

What could you possibly have in common with David, Samson, the Old Testament prophets, the apostles and even the Lord Jesus Himself? We read glowing accounts of these Bible personalities, and we wish we were like them. What set them apart from their contemporaries, and made them great achievers of all time? It's one word--the word 'anointing'! An anointed life makes all the difference!

In Isaiah 61, the prophet gives a prophecy of the anointed ministry of the Messiah in which He will proclaim the good news and work exploits of salvation. It's a prophecy set for fulfillment in the New Testament era, and Christ Himself applied the prophecy to Himself and His earthly ministry in Luke 4:18-19.

In the text in Isaiah 61, it's clear that the evidence of God's Spirit on the Messiah is the anointing received from God to preach and to do more. The scripture reads:

"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me; because the LORD hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

"To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

"To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

"And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations" (Isa. 61:1-4).

From the text it's to be concluded that when a person is Divinely anointed by means of God's Spirit he is enabled to do the following:

- A. Preach the good news to the "meek" (i.e. the humble/depressed in mind or circumstances, the needy, v. 1).
- B. Heal "the broken-hearted" (i.e. the crushed, v.1).
- C. Proclaim and give freedom to captives (captured slaves) and release prisoners bound in the dungeon (v.1).
- D. Proclaim a time of God's favour as well as the arrival of His vengeance (v.2).
- E. Comfort those that mourn in Zion by:
 - 1. Replacing their ashes of sorrow with a garland of beauty (v.3),
 - a) *Their mourning with "the oil of joy" (v.3), and*
 - b) *Their "spirit of heaviness" with "the garment of praise" (v.3).*
- F. The wonderful results of Divine anointing at work:
 - 1. The objects of the divinely anointed ministry of salvation will sprout into "trees of righteousness" planted by the Lord Himself for His own glory (v.3).
 - 2. The lives of the objects will be marked by regeneration and renewal with effects far into the future (v.4)!

What a world of good divine anointing brings! So, what is anointing, and what does it take to be anointed?

Definition of Anointing

At the basic level, the word 'anoint' or 'anointing' from the Hebrew '*mashach*' (pronounced 'maw-shakh') means "to rub with oil (usually olive oil), that is, to anoint". Used in a variety of different contexts, it occurs 70 times in the KJV with varying shades of meaning.

In the religious context, "Anointing usually means two things: it sets a person or thing apart as holy and consecrated, and it confers authority on a person who is anointed" (*Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, p. 33).

Candidates for Anointing

Traditionally, the three categories of people typically chosen for divine anointing are priests, kings and prophets. But there were 'non-human' candidates for anointing as well! As God established the Levitical priesthood by the hand of Moses, He instructed him:

"And for Aaron's sons thou shalt make coats, and thou shalt make for them girdles, and bonnets shalt thou make for them, for glory and for beauty.

"And thou shalt put them upon Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him; and shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto Me in the priest's office" (Ex. 28:40-41; cp Lev. 8:3-13; Num. 3:3, 35:25).

But Moses was by no means through with the anointing. God told him to anoint the altar and all the vessels of the tabernacle (Ex. 40:9-11; Lev. 8:10) and even the food offerings of the priests (Ex. 29:1-2; Lev. 2:4; 7:12). It appeared the move and service of God would never take place without anointing! How important anointing means to God!

If God was insistent on O.T. Tabernacle vessels being anointed, what about you "a holy temple in the Lord" in this NT time? (Eph. 2:21; 1 Cor. 3:16). If OT priests were anointed, what about you a NT priest of God? (1 Pet. 2:5, 9).

Don't toy with divine anointing! Without it, one could never be commissioned by God. The anointing comes with the Presence of God and the release of His power for the successful execution of the commission.

Notice what happened after the mass anointing of the priests, the tabernacle vessels and the food offerings:

"And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the people.

"And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces" (Lev. 9:23-24; cp v. 6).

Fast-forward to the time of monarchical rule in Israel, and no king was enthroned without being anointed. Saul was anointed (1 Sam. 10:1), so was David (1 Sam. 16:13; 2 Sam. 2:4) and Solomon (1 Kings 1:34) and all the others. Prophets were also anointed as in the case of Elisha (1 Kings 19:16).

The bit about David is highly interesting:

"Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah" (1 Sam. 16:13). Anointing imparts the Spirit of God, as seen in Isa. 61.

And what else do we learn about anointing from the anointing of Saul?

"To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the

Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me" (1 Sam. 9:16).
Anointing brings salvation, as also noted in Isa. 61.

But anointing also stirs enemies! "And when the Philistines heard that David was anointed king over all Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek David. And David heard of it, and went out against them" (1 Chron. 14:8).

Once you are anointed, expect these experiences. You will receive the Spirit of God, and you will be empowered to bring about God's salvation. But you will also make enemies because of the anointing on you! We read in 1 Pet. 4:14: "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified".

Yet God will always keep an eye on what has been anointed. On the way to his uncle Laban, Jacob anointed a pillar to memorialize his vow to God that if He ensured his well-being and success he would "give a tenth" to Him (Gen. 28:16-22). Several years later, God still remembered and drew Jacob's attention to it: "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto Me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred" (Gen. 31:13).

Receive the anointing then, and God's eyes will permanently be on you.

Ordinary People Made Heroes by Anointing

A study of David, the anointed, shows that He fulfilled virtually all the characteristics of 'the LORD'S anointed' as spelt out in Isa. 61.

Originally a shepherd boy, God "took him up from the flocks of sheep. He took him from following the ewes great with young, to be the shepherd of Jacob His servant, and Israel His inheritance" (Ps 78:70-71 *Brenton's English Septuagint*).

And David, the anointed, healed Saul, 'the brokenhearted', when he was tormented by an evil spirit (1 Sam. 16:15-23). He preached good news to Israel when Goliath taunted them and challenged them to a duel (1 Sam. 17:34-37; 45-47). He set Israel free from the constant harassment and aggression of the Philistines when he killed Goliath by a stone shot from a sling! (1 Sam. 17:49-54). David proclaimed the year of the LORD's favour and the vengeance of God when David with his mighty men "slew the Philistines; and the LORD saved them by a great deliverance" (1 Chron. 11:13-14). He comforted those that mourn in Zion when he installed himself in "the cave Abdullah... And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men" (1 Sam. 22:1-2).

It is remarkable that this band of disenchanting souls, plus others that joined them in the course of time, who couldn't even be counted on to help themselves, were groomed by David into a formidable army of professional warriors who won military victories and contributed to laying the foundation of the Davidic-Solomonic kingdom (see 1 Chron. 12). David, the anointed, gave meaning to their lives; the divine anointing on their master, caused them to become "trees of righteousness"

who helped " build the old wastes" and "repair ... the desolations of many generations" after the misrule and wasted years of Saul.

Cyrus, the anointed Gentile king, similarly fulfilled the characteristics of the Lord's anointed during his lifetime (Isa. 45:1). The product of a union between the daughter of Median King, Astyages and a Persian man, "Cyrus was reared by a shepherd after his grandfather, Astyages, ordered that he be killed. Apparently, Astyages had dreamed that Cyrus would one day succeed him as king before the reigning monarch's death. The officer charged with the execution instead carried the boy into the hills to the shepherds" (*Holman's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, p. 377, 2003).

As we understand it from scripture, the Lord God of Israel was on the side of Cyrus. Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord had prophesied beforehand of his rise to fame and power:

"Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut" (Isa. 45:1).

True to the prophecy, Cyrus eventually defeated his grandfather in battle and became the first king of the combined kingdom of Medio-Persia. Next, he conquered the Babylonian Empire in 539 BC and in that same year issued a decree granting freedom to the captives of Babylon, including the Jews.

In carrying out his mission as one anointed of God, Cyrus preached good news to the captives of Judah (2 Chron. 36:22-23), proclaimed liberty to them and set them free from bondage (Ezra 1:2-3). By so doing, he also proclaimed to the captives of Judah a time of release from captivity after having avenged their Babylonian enemies (Jer. 50:1-3, 51:1; Dan. 5:30). Finally, he comforted those that mourn in Zion and brought about the restoration of Judah (Isa. 44:28; Ezra 5:13-17). Anointed of God, Cyrus positively influenced the leaders of the Jews with his proclamation, making of them "trees of righteousness" commissioned by God to rebuild the nation: "Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all *them* whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which *is* in Jerusalem" (Ezra 1:5).

My beloved, do you see the characteristics of the Lord's anointed in your life? If God saw fit to anoint a Gentile king for His purposes, you are more than qualified. God's anointing is for you, or forget about being used by the Lord in any meaningful way.

God will use nothing except what He has anointed. He called Cyrus "My shepherd and My anointed" (Isa. 44:28; 45:1). What does God call you? Does He know you? Has He anointed you? Has He chosen you for a special purpose?

The answer should be yes! He says in Isaiah 43:7: "Even every one that is called by My name: for I have created him for My glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him". Again Jesus tells us in John 15:16: "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you".

Beloved, you are chosen, and the anointing is for you! The practical thing to do now is to identify what God has called you to do and then to ask for the anointing to do it as Elisha requested from Elijah (2 Kings 2:9).

The Greatest Hero ever was Anointed!

The Master whom we serve and follow is God's anointed par excellence! His life and ministry and indeed everything about Him were defined by heavenly anointing! He was anointed at conception when the Holy Ghost came upon Mary and the power of the Highest overshadowed her (Luke 1:35). At His baptism, the Holy Spirit descended on Him bodily like a dove and rested on Him (Matt. 3:16; Luke 3:22). After His 40-day fast during which He overcame the temptations of the devil, Luke reports that "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee" (Luke 4:14).

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was full of the divine Spirit of anointing while on earth as human. Of His immeasurable anointing power, John the Baptist testified: "For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him" (John 3:34).

With this immeasurable anointing power, Christ fulfilled exactly the description of the Lord's anointed given in Isa. 61. When He taught in the synagogue at Nazareth, His hometown, on the Sabbath day, He read from Isa. 61 and said to the congregation after He had handed the scroll back to the minister: "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:16-21). Remember, this happened just days after "Jesus returned [from the wilderness] in the power of Spirit into Galilee" where He taught in their synagogues and was "glorified of all" (Luke 4:14-15).

The congregation was visibly impacted by the scriptural exposition given by Christ but for their prejudice against Him. After the Lord closed the scroll and gave it to the synagogue attendant, He sat down at the reader's desk in the centre of the synagogue, and "the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him" from where they were seated round the synagogue. "And all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth" (vv. 20, 22). But then they began to say among themselves, "Is not this Joseph's son?" (v. 22b).

The order of service in the synagogue was fairly simple. First, there was prayer, and then the reading of definite portions of the Scriptures, followed by the exposition (explanation) of those portions read. On that Sabbath day in Nazareth, Jesus handled the last two, and the people were amazed at His words. But while they loved the exposition, it was unthinkable Jesus was the personality in the prophecy. How could Isaiah have prophesied of a common carpenter's son? "Is not this Joseph's son?" they asked.

Yet the sensible thing to do was not to have used the background of Jesus as a yardstick to evaluate Him, but to find out if the identifying features given of the Messianic figure in Isa. 61 were found in Him. So Jesus responded to their unbelief just the way it deserved: "And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (Matt. 13:58; also Mark 6:5).

And He made it clear the reason was not that He wasn't anointed to minister to their needs, but their lack of faith was to blame. After all, "No prophet is accepted in his own country", He remarked (Luke 4:24). And yet the irony of it all is that the townsfolk who despise and reject the prophet are mostly a bunch of sick, suffering people standing in need of divine help, but deny themselves of such help, only for outsiders to enjoy. This was the case with the prophets Elijah and Elisha, and surely the people of Nazareth had placed themselves in the shoes of the contemporaries of the two prophets (Luke 4:25-27).

The remarks were incisive, and the criticism biting. The already offended people were filled with rage. They drove Christ out of the town and even sought to hurt Him in the process. "But He passing through the midst of them went His way" (vv. 28-31).

The people of Nazareth rejected divine anointing in the Person of Jesus. Be careful you don't reject the anointing sent to bring you deliverance. But the more important question is, will you be able to recognize divine anointing if God sent one in your life? (See Luke 19:44).

The same Sabbath Nazareth rejected the anointing, the people of Capernaum embraced it. And Christ preached the good news with authority and wrought great works of deliverance there (Luke 4:31-35). So mighty was the power unleashed by Christ that the people "were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out" (Luke 4:36).

It turned out to be a marathon deliverance ministry of divine anointing. The Lord continued to heal and free people from demonic oppression way after sundown (on the Sabbath) apparently until daybreak, when "He departed and went into a desert place: and the people sought Him, and came unto Him, and stayed Him, that He should not depart from them" (Luke 4:43). Whereas Nazareth thrust out Jesus, the people of Capernaum sought to prevent Him from going away from them because of the anointing!

Will you side with Nazareth or Capernaum?

After a section of the Jews of Antioch in Pisidia rejected the gospel, Paul said to them, quoting Habakkuk 1:5: "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you" (Acts 13:41).

Whether or not the anointing will work in your life will depend your attitude. So watch what you say about a man you know to be anointed of God; guard against any hostile attitude towards him, and the blessings of anointing will keep flowing into your life.

In Capernaum, Christ made a clear statement with action, not with words that He was the prophesied One in Isa. 61--and with that even the devils were in agreement! As He cast them out, they cried out, "saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And He rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ" (v. 41; also vv. 34-35). That's it! The term "Christ" which the devils knew and feared is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word "Messiah" which means 'the Anointed One'. And this was the Anointed One invested with power and authority to undo their works of oppression. The name said it all, and Christ actualized it.

Brother, sister, let the Name of Christ be precious to you. It's not a name to take in vain, but One to invoke in the time of trouble and salvation will spring from it to you (Ex. 20:7; Ps. 50:15).

Now, when we analyze the two opposite experiences of the Anointed Master in Nazareth and Capernaum, we learn several vital lessons. First, we see that faith is essential for God's anointing power to do "mighty works". That's why the good news is preached to "the meek", not the proud full of unbelief!

As an anointed vessel of God, therefore, don't spend time on people who lack the basic requirement for receiving from God—faith (Jam. 1:5-7). Instead, focus on the group that offers the opportunity for greater impact by anointing! When the Jews in Antioch in Pisidia would not accept the Gospel, Paul and Barnabas said to them: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46).

Second, people must feel the impact of the good news on their souls. In both Nazareth and Capernaum, the people were impressed with the words spoken by Christ. While the citizens of Nazareth "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth", the people of Capernaum "were astonished at His doctrine: for His word was with power".

Preachers have not been called to preach with the "enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:4). The very words spoken must be born of and conveyed with anointing! The prophet Isaiah wrote prophetically of the Messiah:

"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" (Isa. 50:4).

The ASV renders the phrase "speak a word in season to him that is weary" as "sustain with words him that is weary". Thus it's God Himself who teaches the anointed preacher the very words he should say to sustain one who is spiritually weary. (See John 6:45). When the Pharisees and chief priests sent temple officers to arrest Jesus for teaching in the temple during the feast of Tabernacles, the officers reported back without Jesus, but with an explanation: "No one ever spoke like this Man!" (John 7:32, 45-46 *ESV*).

As a preacher, have you been blessed with this special grace of God to "speak a word in season to him that is weary [i.e. the brokenhearted]"? If not, the answer is anointing! By the anointing of God's Spirit, "one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:8).

How true the words of the prophet ring: "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because He has anointed Me to preach glad tidings". And sure, Jesus affirmed that the Father who anointed Him was also His teacher (John 7:15-17; 8:28).

The third thing we notice about the Lord's ministry in Nazareth and Capernaum is that where the reception or attitude is favourable, mighty deeds of healing and deliverance are sure to take place. This was the main difference between the two places. Like God's word, anointing will never go waste (see Isa. 55:10-12). One group rejected it, but another had been prepared to be blessed by it. The criticism and hostile attitude of the people of Nazareth did nothing to undermine Jesus' anointing.

Beloved, don't let anybody dampen your zeal by their criticism or discourage you from using your God-given talent. The anointing has come, and nothing they say or do can take it away. Use it!

The fourth lesson we learn is that demons acknowledge and submit to the power of divine anointing. As a matter of fact, the evil work of demons is one of the main reasons for the divine anointing. They are the spiritual oppressors from whom people are set free by the power of divine

anointing. We read in Ps 102 how God, in bringing restoration to Zion, "hath looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth; To hear the groaning of the prisoner; [and] to loose those that are appointed to death" (vv. 19-20).

Demons will only hold people captive as long as divine anointing has not made its presence felt. In Ephesus handkerchiefs from the anointed body of Paul healed people and drove away evil spirits, but seven unbelieving, un-anointed Jewish exorcists had the shock of their lives when the evil spirit they were trying to exorcise answered back: "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded" (Acts 19:11-16). Ordinarily, demons do not fear flesh and blood but will kowtow to the anointed of God. Divine anointing is your decisive edge over the devil and his demons (see Eph. 6:10-12; 2 Cor. 10:3-4).

The final thing we notice is that people experience relief and comfort when divine anointing is in action. In Isaiah's poetic language, "ashes" give way to "a garland of beauty", "mourning" to "the oil of joy", and "the spirit of heaviness" to "the garment of praise". Anointing brings the Presence of God where there is "fullness of joy", because at His right hand [of power] there are "pleasures forever" (Ps. 16:11).

If you desire to live and let others live in the Presence of the Lord where there is "fullness of joy", divine anointing is the path to take. That was why anointed King David prayed thus when he sinned with Bathsheba: "Cast me not away from Thy presence; And take not Thy holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation" (Ps 51:11-12).

When Philip, the evangelist, preached the gospel in Samaria under divine anointing, "there was much joy in the city" following the mass healings and exorcisms he performed in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 8:5-8). Beloved, anointing is the way to have "joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17). Only by anointing will you be able to positively and permanently affect the lives of people in affliction and lift heaviness from their souls. With anointing the source of the affliction will be rooted out!

Anointing, God's Testimony to the World

Anointing is also a means for God to showcase to the world those He has chosen. Again Jesus is our prime example. In affirming His mission from the Father, Christ told the Jews that "the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish--the very works that I do--testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me" (John 5:36 *NASU*). These were no ordinary "works" but "works" accomplished by means of divine anointing, in that they were supernatural "works". The apostle Peter, in his Pentecost-day sermon, made reference to this truth: "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know" (Acts 2:22 *NASU*).

It's needless to discuss how God "performed miracles and wonders and signs" through Jesus. The simple truth is that He anointed Him, as Peter points out in another sermon, this time to the household of Cornelius: "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38 *NASU*).

There! Acts 10:38 reveals another truth about divine anointing: God's Spirit comes on a person to anoint him with power and by means of that very anointing God comes to be with him! That's why Jesus promised His followers at His ascension: "BUT YE SHALL RECEIVE POWER, AFTER THE HOLY GHOST IS COME UPON YOU: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Here, the Holy Spirit is equated with DIVINE POWER, for God Himself is "Power" (Matt. 26:64) and so is His Spirit, the "power from on high" (Luke 24:49; cp Acts 1:4-5). In 1 Cor. 1:24, the apostle Paul describes Christ as "the Power and Wisdom of God".

Dear brother and sister, you need this power through the anointing of the Holy Ghost. It's a promise to claim now! "For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself" (Acts 2:39 *ESV*).

Because God still needs to attest to His ministers, He anoints them with His Holy Spirit to perform supernatural deeds as His testimony concerning them (Heb. 2:4). As a believer, where is your testimony from God that you are truly His?

Our Master Jesus was ever ready with His testimony from the Father. While John the Baptist was in prison, he sent two of his disciples to Jesus with a question: "Art thou He that should come? or look we for another? And in that same hour He [Jesus] cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind He gave sight" (Luke 7:19-21). The Lord's simple reply was, "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached" (v. 22). In other words, the evidence has been enacted before your eyes, so go tell John!

Divine anointing is that which provides evidence of our status as God's chosen people. During His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ did not resort to any far-fetched methods to prove Himself. The anointing, which brought real blessings into people's lives, did the talking. Everything He did was Spirit-inspired; the Spirit of God did indeed "rest upon Him" as foretold in prophecy:

"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

"And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD" (Isa. 11:1-2).

All Believers are Anointed

In so far as "by one Spirit" all true believers have been "baptized into one body" and "have been all made to drink into one Spirit", all true believers are anointed (1 Cor. 12:13). As we have already seen, the Spirit of God comes upon a person to anoint him or her. The presence of the Spirit is therefore the indication of anointing. And all believers have been made to drink into the Spirit, just as ancient Israel, after being baptized by Moses in the cloud and in the sea, "did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:1-4).

This was powerfully dramatized on the day of Pentecost when the disciples "were all together in one

place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4 *RV*).

Not a soul was left out. "They were **all** filled with the Holy Ghost." The bottom line is that every believer worth his salt has been anointed by God: "Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God" (2 Cor. 1:21 *NKJV*). And the hallmarks of the 'Lord's anointed' in Isa. 61 must not be absent.

In fact, 1 John 2:20 insists: "And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all the things" (*ASV*). In verse 27 we read: "And as for you, the anointing which ye received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you; but as His anointing teacheth you; concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, ye abide in Him".

This scripture should not be interpreted to mean that once a believer is anointed, he needs not be taught by a Bible teacher! What we need to understand is that it was made in the context of false teachings and false teachers "that would lead you astray" (see vv. 23-24, 26). The same Holy Spirit that gave the warning also gives the gift of teaching to some anointed people (1 Cor. 12:8, 28; Eph. 4:11). But because of the anointing once a Bible teacher teaches error, you will know at once, almost by instinct!

Anointed as Kings and Priests

Apart from being made to "drink into one Spirit" and so automatically anointed, New Testament believers as kings and priests of God are doubly qualified for anointing. Like the Old Testament kings and priests, New Testament kings and priests may not assume their spiritual duties without being anointed.

1 Peter 2:5 says believers "as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ". Surely, there is no way these "spiritual sacrifices" can be offered to God without anointing! In instructing Moses to anoint the sons of Aaron to become priests like their father, God spoke of the anointing as granting them "an everlasting priesthood":

"And thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office: and their anointing shall be to them for an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations" (Ex. 40:15). The plain sense of the text is that throughout their generations, each descendant of Aaron ought to be anointed to become a priest. So again the bottom line is, you are either anointed or you are no priest! It's therefore no surprise that as the New Testament priests of God "He that establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, *is God*" (2 Cor. 1:21 *Darby Bible*).

In Zechariah 4 we are confronted with this truth in a vision shown to the prophet:

"And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep.

“And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have seen, and, behold, a candlestick all of gold, with its bowl upon the top of it, and its seven lamps thereon; there are seven pipes to each of the lamps, which are upon the top thereof;

“And two olive-trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof.

“And I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord?

“Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these are? And I said, No, my lord.

“Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of Jehovah unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts.

“Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel *thou shalt become* a plain; and he shall bring forth the top stone with shoutings of Grace, grace, unto it.

“Moreover the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,

“The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me unto you.

“For who hath despised the day of small things? for these seven shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel; *these are* the eyes of Jehovah, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

“Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive-trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof?

“And I answered the second time, and said unto him, What are these two olive-branches, which are beside the two golden spouts, that empty the golden *oil* out of themselves?

“And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these are? And I said, No, my lord.

“Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth” (Zech. 4:1-14 ASV).

Zechariah was a priest and a prophet of the post-Babylonian captivity era (in which the Jews were taken as slaves to Babylon, 2 Kings 25:10-11; Jer. 29:10) and a contemporary of Nehemiah (Neh. 12:4, 12-16) and Haggai, the prophet. Together with the prophet Haggai, he “prophesied unto the Jews that *were* in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, *even* unto them. Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which *is* at Jerusalem: and with them *were* the prophets of God helping them” (Ezra 5:1-2).

In the face of stiff opposition from their enemies who had managed to have the Persian king Artaxerxes stop the Jews from rebuilding the temple (Ezra 4), the prophets Zechariah and Haggai (see Hag. 1:2-8) encouraged the Jewish returnees to rebuild “in the name of the God of Israel”. As a direct result of the prophetic ministry of the two prophets, Zerubbabel, the governor, and Jeshua, the high priest (Hag. 1:14), were stirred into action together with the rest of the people:

“And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished *it*, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia” (Ezra 6:14).

This was after the work had been stopped for some sixteen years (536 B.C. to 520 B.C.), and the people had grown quite weary of it, saying “the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD” (Hag. 1:2 ESV). Interestingly the Persian authorities (kings) the enemies instigated against the Jews were the very ones greatly used by God to help the Jews in the rebuilding effort (Ezra 6 and 7). And it was all because God promised that His anointing would be available for the work abundantly!

The vision seen by Zechariah—the fifth in a series of eight visions relating to the restoration of Judah and the glory of the Messianic era—reveals the divine grace that would be unleashed by the anointing from God for the successful completion of the rebuilding project.

The significance of the golden lampstand with its seven lamps supplied with oil from the bowl above it lies in the angel's answer to Zechariah: "This *is* the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" (v. 6). And it is correlated to the shouts of "Grace, grace to it" as the headstone is brought forth. In short, the golden lampstand with its seven lamps fed with oil from the oil container represents the Spirit of God bringing abundant grace!

But why did God show Zechariah the vision the way He did? Did God mean to convey an important message to us?

Wake up to the reality of divine anointing

Zechariah was woken up "like a man who is awakened out of his sleep" (v. 1) to be shown a vision of the availability and abundance of God's anointing power. The rebuilding of the temple was becoming a drudge, and the nation had but lost all hope and faith. But here he was—commissioned as a prophet to inspire the leaders and the people to build, and he needed to be convinced of the presence of God's anointing power for the work. The angel asked the prophet, "What do you see?" And he said he saw "a candlestick all of gold, with its bowl upon the top of it, and its seven lamps thereon; there are seven pipes to each of the lamps, which are upon the top thereof" (v. 2).

It's time we realized the presence of the anointing in our lives too. Until we wake up, Christ will not give us light (Eph. 5:14). Isaiah 60 calls on us to "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee" (vv. 1-2).

God's power is ever present, but all too often we become oblivious to this fact when pressures mount on us, and so need to be awakened to it. God's Spirit has gone nowhere, He remains among us: "according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not" (Hag. 2:5 *ESV*).

But what could be the meaning of the golden lampstand with its seven lamps and bowl of oil and forty-nine pipes?

The gold represents the glory of anointing

Not only is the lampstand "all of gold" (v.2), but also the oil for the anointing is gold-coloured! Anointing brings glory!

Since Old Testament times the divine presence has been associated with glory. Whenever the LORD appeared in the cloud, "the glory of the LORD" was said to have appeared (Ex. 16:10, 40:34-35; Num. 16:42; 1 Kings 8:10-11; cp Ex. 24:17, 33:22). At the Transfiguration a similar phenomenon occurred. When the Lord Jesus "was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light, ... a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold, a voice out of the cloud which said, This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him" (Matt. 17:2,5).

Because the Spirit that anoints is One of glory, the apostle Peter wrote: “If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you” (1 Pet. 4:14 *ESV*).

Halleluia! We have been made partakers of Yahweh’s glory because of the “golden oil” of anointing. What a reassuring word—“The Spirit of glory rests upon you!” If the Old Testament ministry of death (because disobedience abounded resulting in mass deaths, Heb. 3:16-18) was glorious, how much more the New Testament ministry of the Spirit! (2 Cor. 3:7-8). Himself the Spirit, Christ transforms us into His image from one degree of glory to another by His life-giving Spirit of freedom. We read that wonderful truth in 2 Cor.3:17-18:

“Now the Lord Himself is the Spirit. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with uncovered faces, behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord; and are transformed into the same likeness, from glory to glory, as by the Lord the Spirit” (*James Murdock New Testament*).

Through our spiritual union with the Messiah, who bears the exact glorious image of the Father (John 1:14; Heb. 1:3), we share in the Father’s “eternal glory” (1 Pet. 5:10). The anointing envelops us in the *Shekinah* Glory! God assures us in Isa. 4:5:

“And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence.”

The Presence of God indicated by the “cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night” (Ex. 13:21-22) is “the glory” that protects His people from harm: “And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain” (Isa. 4:6).

Christ, “the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:8), is that Tabernacle of protection and refuge. According to the Gospel of John, He as the Word “became flesh, and tabernacled [Grk ‘skenoo’] among us. And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of *the* Father, full of grace and of truth” (John 1:14 *Modern KJV*).

Christ is “the true Tabernacle” God built and not man (Heb.8:2). He who abides under His glory is protected (Ps 91). King David declared as he fled from Absalom’s revolt: “But you, O LORD, are a shield that surrounds me. You are my glory. You hold my head high” (Ps. 3:3 *God’s Word*).

But that’s a privilege solely enjoyed by the anointed, which is why we should be delighted to dwell in His Presence: “Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. For a day in Thy courts *is* better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good *thing* will he withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Ps. 84:9-11).

Looking for good things in life? Make yourself available for anointing by God’s Spirit of glory, and what you stand to receive from the LORD is “grace and glory”. No good thing will He withhold from you (Ps. 34:9-10; Luke 11:13; Matt. 6:33).

The seven lamps represents the completion anointing brings

In the Bible the number seven represents perfection or completeness. By the seven lamps, God denotes that He will complete and perfect the work begun with His Spirit. The work had been halted for a number of years, and what would re-start it and bring it to completion was nothing but the anointing from Him! The joy and glory was in the successful completion of the work—and that by His “seven Spirits” represented by the seven lamps (Rev. 4:5).

God’s promises always carry an assurance of fulfillment. He promised Jacob on his way to Laban at the place where he dreamed of the ladder whose top reached into heaven with the angels of God ascending and descending on it:

"Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you" (Gen. 28:15 *ESV*).

When He begins a work, He completes it (Phil. 1:6). Announcing the fall of the two most powerful empires (Babylon and Assyria) in the time of the prophet Isaiah, the LORD emphatically declared: “For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?” (Isa. 14:27).

Similarly, He said concerning the rise of Cyrus, “a ravenous bird from the east”, to deliver His people Israel:

“Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth My counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken *it*, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed *it*, I will also do *it*” (Isa. 46:10-11).

Beloved, what the Lord has said concerning you will come to pass no matter what. Balaam, the soothsayer, declared in an oracle after he failed to curse Israel after several attempts: “God *is* not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do *it*? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?” (Num. 23:19).

The bowl of oil and the 49 pipes represent the abundant supply of the Spirit (v. 2)

The original lampstand God instructed Moses to make for the Tabernacle had neither a bowl at the top nor 49 pipes (Hebrew ‘seven and seven’) supplying its lamps with oil. Those additions in the vision of Zechariah impress us with one point: God will bountifully supply His Spirit of grace!

First is the volume of the anointing. A bowl at the top (heaven) distributes the oil gurgling through 49 pipes, seven apiece to a lamp. The oil is so copious that seven pipes will not be enough, but forty-nine! The perfect anointing the Spirit of God brings has been multiplied by the perfect number seven! God is indeed “able to make all grace abound” to us (2 Cor. 9:8; cp 1 Pet. 5:10). His grace abounded to the apostles, in that He gave them “great power” and “great grace” (Acts 4:33). The same heavenly treat is yours, but you must ask for it as the apostles asked (Acts 4:29-31). The prophet says: “Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; *so* the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field” (Zech. 10:1).

Second is the speed of the anointing. Oil flowing through 49 pipes travels much faster than through seven or less. Zerubbabel and his workers were behind time, having been stopped from working more or less at the foundation level (Ezra 3:10, 4:1-5, 23-24). Hence the work needed a boost to successfully complete it on time. The answer was the massive oil of anointing rushing through the pipes from the bowl and flowing out through the two olive branches. What is more, the oil was tapped at source: the two olive trees on each side of the bowl. No further delay will be countenanced. There will be a direct supply of the Spirit.

God promises “a short work” on earth in relation to the salvation of the remnant of Israel (Rom. 9:28). Do you feel things are a bit late for you? The answer is not to rely on your personal strength or to keep running; God’s mercy is all you need (Rom. 9:16).

The unceasing supply of the Spirit

In the vision, Zechariah saw two olive trees on either side of the bowl of oil, and these represent the ready and unceasing supply of the Spirit.

The two olive trees, being the fountainhead of the golden oil of anointing, stand for the Source from which the Spirit is poured out on God’s people. That Source is God and Jesus Christ, His Son. God attributes to Himself the symbolic meaning of the olive trees when He states “by MY SPIRIT”. No other spirit is intended, but His own very Spirit. That’s why the angel, surprised that Zechariah was unable to establish such a connection, never answered his question, “What are these two olive-trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof?” (v. 11). What he answered was about “the olive-branches” (vv. 12-14). God by His own Spirit of grace will grant Zerubbabel and his people success in the work, as also prophesied by Haggai (Hag. 2:4-5).

Contrary to popular teaching that the Holy Spirit is a separate divine entity from the Father and the Son, the scriptural truth is that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son and proceeds from both. In John 14, Christ promised His disciples “another Comforter” or “helper” called “the Spirit of truth” whom the disciples already knew “because He lives with you and will be in you” (John 14:16-17 *God’s Word*). Who could this Spirit/Person be? “Another” yet known and already living *with* them but yet to be *in* them!

Christ clears up the mystery in the very next verse: “I will not leave you all alone [i.e. comfortless]. I will come back to you” (John 14:18). But this time He comes to them as “another” because He lives with them in a different form, not physically, as was previously the case. He now lives spiritually **WITHIN** them!

Because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son, both send them from the Father (John 14:26, 15:26, 16:7). Interestingly, on the day of Pentecost, even though Christ instructed the disciples to wait for “the promise of the Father” being the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4), Peter, in his sermon, attributed the act to Christ, saying “having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this which you now see and hear” (Acts 2:33 *MKJV*).

Meanwhile, Christ repeatedly spoke of His Father and Himself living in believers which is possible only by their indwelling us by their Spirit (John 14:21, 23). We are the temple of God simply because the Spirit of God dwells in us (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19). As the apostle Paul put it, believers have “become a fixed abode for God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22 *Weymouth New Testament*). Frequently called the

Spirit of God (1 Cor. 12:3), the Holy Spirit is also called “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom. 8:9) or “the Spirit of Jesus” (Acts 16:6-7 ASV and other versions). It’s this “Spirit of His Son” that the Father has sent into our hearts, as His adopted children, “crying, Abba Father” (Gal. 4:6). So we see that the giving of the Spirit is a collaborative effort between the Father and the Son who enjoy perfect unity (John 10:30) and have one Spirit. They are the Two Olive Trees Who anoint!

But why the golden lampstand?

The image of the golden lampstand takes us back to Exodus where God instructed Moses to “make a candlestick [or lampstand] of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same. And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side” (Ex. 25:31-32).

God further instructed the Israelites through Moses concerning the seven-branched golden lampstand:

“And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always. In the tabernacle of the congregation without the veil, which *is* before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the LORD: *it shall be* a statute for ever unto their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel” (Ex. 27:20-21; see also Ex. 25:37 and Lev. 24:1-4).

From the Tabernacle the seven branched golden lampstand made its way into Solomon’s Temple, though it wasn’t the actual one Moses made. Solomon made a set of ten golden lampstands which, with seven lamps each, all together had 70 lamps. These he placed five on the south side and five on the north side of the Holy Place before the Holy of Holies:

“So Solomon made all the vessels that were in the house of the LORD: the golden altar, the golden table for the bread of the Presence, the lampstands of pure gold, five on the south side and five on the north, before the inner sanctuary; the flowers, the lamps, and the tongs, of gold” (1 Kings 7:48-49 *ESV*).

However, not all the ten lampstands were lit at a time; only one seven-branched lampstand was lit at any given time in Solomon’s Temple (2 Chron. 13:11). But the significance of the ten lamps and 70 lamps is that an even greater light was readily available.

As believers, we have a firm promise from Christ that we will do “greater works” than He did “because I go unto My Father” (John 14:12). The post-ascension era is an era of “greater works”. We must never be in doubt as to the potential of God’s anointing power to do much more than our current experience of His power (Eph. 3:20). Only one lampstand was lit at a time, but nine lampstands could add to the light blazing forth from 70 lamps. Though not bereft of the light of God’s glory, the Old Testament prophets looked for the greater glory of the New Testament ministry of Christ (1 Pet. 1:10-11).

There is always a greater light in store for God’s people. Thus our destiny as the children of light (Eph. 5:8; Phil. 2:15; 1 Thess. 5:5) is to be transformed into the image of Christ “from glory to glory”. So expect greater glory! The hand of the LORD is not shortened (Isa. 59:1). If you feel as if you are

walking in darkness, a “great light” is about to shine on you (Isa. 9:2). The prophet asks: “Who *is* among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh *in* darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God” (Isa. 50:10).

But if the ten lampstands of Solomon depicted the greater glory of God, the golden lampstand Zechariah saw in his vision with its gold-coloured oil being channeled through 49 spouts depicted the bountiful supply of God’s Spirit of grace unlike we have ever known! As already noted, Zechariah’s seven-branched golden lampstand had peculiarities never associated with any lampstand on earth. Moses’ lampstand, which was the model for Solomon’s, simply had a shaft at the centre which branched into six parts, three on each side of it, which plus the middle stem made seven branches. But here in Zechariah’s vision is a seven-branched lampstand of pure gold with a bowl of oil at its top and seven pipes (from the bowl) to each of the seven lamps, making forty-seven pipes in all. The number of pipes is a disputed point in theology with opinion ranging from seven pipes through fourteen to forty nine. But the Hebrew wording “seven and seven” actually supports the idea of 49 pipes. Another detail we notice is that two olive trees stand on either side of the bowl of oil, being the source of the bowl’s fountain of golden olive oil, when with Moses’ lampstand priests supplied the lamps with oil every evening. And a further detail emerges: the two olive trees have two branches from which golden oil flows through two golden pipes (Zech. 4:12).

The picture is that of an unending supply of golden oil pouring into the bowl from the two olive trees and thence through the seven sets of seven pipes to the seven lamps, while the two olive branches empty golden oil out of themselves! The supply of the Spirit will be copious, and God’s anointed people, represented by “the two olive branches” will overflow with it. While imprisoned in the imperial court in Rome, Paul hinged his hope in the prayers of the saint and “the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:19).

Under the New Covenant, God promises not His Spirit to a select few, but promises to “pour out” His Spirit upon “all flesh” (Acts 2:17; Joel 2:32). It’s a bountiful supply of God’s Spirit of grace with no end in sight. Speaking in reference to the outpouring of His Spirit in great abundance after His ascension, Jesus cried out on the last great day of the feast of Tabernacles:

“If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believed on Him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet *given*; because Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:37-39; cp 4:13-14).

Now the question is, are you thirsty for the Spirit? Christ is ready to supply you with His Spirit in such great abundance that the Spirit will flow within you as “rivers of living water”. The invitation is still on. If you are spiritually dehydrated and almost at the point of death, come to Christ; He will turn your desert into a pool of water and your dry land into springs of water. He will not forsake you, but fill you with joy (Isa. 41:17-20). His promise remains true and firm:

“As for Me, this *is* My covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that *is* upon thee, and My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever” (Isa. 59:21).

Destined for greater glory and greater anointing by the Spirit, is it any wonder that the seven-branched golden lampstand (which symbolizes both) has come to represent believers as a whole?

This is the spiritual understanding of the golden lampstand Christ personally gives us in the book of Revelation. After revealing Himself to John, in His post-ascension glory, as walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, He explains the mystery of the seven lampstands to him:

“As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches” Rev. 1:12-13, 19 *ESV*).

And Christ who has “the seven Spirits of God” is no doubt the One who lights us by His Spirit (Rev. 3:1; John 8:12; cp 1 Cor. 15:45). So arise and Christ will you light up, for He baptizes with the Holy Ghost and fire and makes His ministers “flames of fire” (Matt. 3:11; Heb. 1:7)!

The two olive-branches represent the anointed people of God

In answer to Zechariah’s question about the meaning of the two olive-branches pouring out the golden oil the angel says, “These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth” (Zech. 4:12-14). *Young’s Literal Translation* renders it, “These *are* the two sons of the oil, who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth.’ *The Literal Translation of the Bible (LITV)* has a similar rendering: “These *are* the two sons of fresh oil who stand by the Lord of the whole earth”.

These “two anointed ones” or “two sons of fresh oil” primarily refers to Zerubbabel and Joshua, the representatives of the regal government (kingship) and the priesthood respectively. By virtue of their positions, both qualified for anointing in their own right. But they were also charged with the rebuilding of the temple and the nation, and God needed to bountifully supply them with His Spirit for the successful execution of the work, being undertaken amid formidable opposition.

The two branches are so abundantly supplied with oil that they overflow with it. God bountifully anoints His ministers so they will accomplish their mission without fail and overflow with spiritual blessings for His church. In 2 Cor. 12 Paul talks about “the abundance of visions” he had because of God’s great grace upon him (v. 7; cp 1 Cor. 15:10).

The “two sons of oil” stand by “the Lord of the whole earth” because they are His servants waiting on Him in the posture and demeanour of eastern servants attending their master (see 1 Kings 22:19). God’s servants are to serve Him in the power of the anointing (Acts 2:18). It’s the Spirit that makes us “competent ministers [servants]” of the New Covenant (2 Cor. 3:5-6). So then if you feel inadequate as a servant or handmaiden of the Lord, the answer lies in divine anointing.

That the olive-branches (or ears) were branches of the Two Olive Trees denotes the bonding between the branches and the Trees. But as the branch depends on the tree for survival and growth so it happens here. But that it springs from the tree shows that the branch derives its being (essence) from the tree. In John 15, Christ calls Himself “the True Vine” (v.1) and His disciples the branches: “He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing” (v. 5).

When the analogy (comparison) is with a human body, Holy Spirit-anointed believers are described as “members [parts] of the body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12:12-13; Rom. 12:4-5). We are of Christ, the Fountainhead of divine anointing, and we ought to be “enriched in Him” in everything, “in all utterance, and *in* all knowledge” so that we “come behind in no [spiritual] gift” as we wait for His reappearance (1 Cor. 1:4-7; cp Eph. 1:3).

In the light of N.T. truth, Zerubbabel, a descendant of David, and Joshua (though prefiguring in a sense the “two witnesses” of Rev. 11) foreshadowed the N.T. royal priesthood of believers required to “offer spiritual sacrifices to God” through Christ. That certainly takes anointing!

Our first sacrifice as the N.T. priests of God is the offering of our body to God in holy living and service (Rom. 12:1). And it’s the anointing that sets us apart, enabling us to separate ourselves from the world of sin (Rom. 12:2). The second sacrifice is “the sacrifice of praise to God” (Heb. 13:15) followed by the sacrifice of good works (Heb. 13:16). The fourth and final sacrifice is the sacrifice of our substance (Phil. 4:18).

In order to offer these sacrifices for them to be acceptable to God, anointing is a prerequisite. Each one of us is to minister according to the grace (ability) given him by God (1 Pet. 4:10-11). More so when we are equally engaged in a building project that requires anointing from start to finish! It’s the building of a “spiritual house” being ourselves, the building blocks, described as “living stones” fashioned after Christ, “the chief cornerstone” (1 Pet. 2:5-6). In Him “the Cornerstone” we have received “grace upon grace” (John 1:16). But much better, He Himself is the builder like Zerubbabel with the plummet in His hand. By the anointing, He will complete the building and “bear the glory” (Zech. 6:13). We read in Ephesians 2:

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner *stone*; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:19-22).

The Word to Zerubbabel

The gist of the divine message to Zerubbabel (vv. 4-10) is that, instead of human strength, anointing is the right way to go (v. 4, see 1 Sam. 2:9). And the benefits stand out:

- Anointing levels mountains of problems. Zerubbabel and Joshua, the high priest, faced strong opposition in the rebuilding of the temple, but God said what would melt away all opposition was the anointing, not their physical strength or effort. And the simple reason is that nothing is too hard for the Lord (Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:17, 27). Indeed, what is impossible with men is possible with God (Matt. 19:26).
- Anointing unleashes abundant grace from start to finish. Thus the word to Zerubbabel is that God’s grace will see the work through until “the headstone” or “top stone”, the temple’s most important last stone, is put in position (v. 7). According to the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, the cornerstone (or headstone) was understood in two ways: “(a) The foundation-stone upon which the structure rested (Job 38:6; Isa 28:16; Jer 51:26); or (b) The topmost or cap-stone, which linked the last tier together (Psa 118:22; Zec 4:7); in both cases it is an important or key-stone, and figurative of the Messiah, who is “the First

and the Last” (“Corner-Stone” ISBE e-Edition). Don’t be an also-ran; let God by His Spirit of anointing release grace into your life. The Lord, in talking about the necessary sacrifices those who wish to follow Him must make before they can become His disciples, drew an analogy with the cost estimate done before a building is commenced: “For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first *and* count the cost, whether he may have *enough* to finish it; lest perhaps, after he has laid the foundation and is not able to finish, all those seeing begin to mock him, This man began to build and was not able to finish” (Luke 14:28-30 *MKJV*). If you will not be ashamed or mocked by others, it will take the anointing. Once He opens the door no one is able to shut it (Rev. 3:7-8).

- Divine anointing completes what it begins. Hence “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it” (Zech. 4:9). The assurance came in an atmosphere of intense opposition to the work, but the Spirit of God would be stopped by no one, whether man or devil. When God by His Spirit begins a good work in you, He completes it (Php. 1:6). At the dedication of the Temple Solomon built, he blessed the LORD saying, “Blessed *be* the LORD, that hath given rest unto His people Israel, according to all that He promised: there hath not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised by the hand of Moses His servant” (1 Kings 8:56).
- Anointing vindicates God. When Zerubbabel begins and finishes the work, “Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you”, the angel says to Zechariah in the vision (v. 9 *ESV*). Whenever God gives a promise, His credibility and reputation are at stake, and He has His honour to defend. With regard to His promise to keep David’s dynasty forever, He said: “My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips. Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah” (Ps. 89:34-37, see also vv. 3-4). In Isaiah 45:23 He says: “I have sworn by Myself, the word is gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.” He is the “God who cannot lie” (Titus 1:2). So that Abraham will be convinced beyond a shadow of doubt that He will bless his descendants forever, God backed up His promise with an oath He swore by Himself, “since He had no one greater by whom to swear” (Heb. 6:13). And the ultimate purpose of it all was that “by [these] two unchangeable things [promise plus oath], in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us” (Heb. 6:18 *ESV*). So with faith expect God to make good all His promises in your life so He will prove Himself that He is God.
- The seemingly hopeless situation (the despised “day of small things”) is an occasion for the anointing power of God to be released in abundance. As the text indicates, although the rebuilding of the Temple had been written off, the seven eyes of the LORD will rejoice when they see the plummet [or plumb line] in the hand of Zerubbabel (v. 10). In Zechariah’s vision, the seven eyes are symbolized by the seven blazing lamps. But in Revelation, they are symbolized by the seven eyes of the Lamb that looked “as though it had been slain”. As the text itself explains, the “seven eyes” of the Lamb, “are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth” (Rev. 5:6 *ESV*). Christ, the Lamb of God, has the seven Spirits of God (Rev. 3:1), and they roam all over the earth to “to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward Him” (2 Chron. 16:9 *ESV*). Do you qualify? Is your heart blameless towards Him? If yes, the seven eyes (Spirits) of God are on you to give you strong support. In doing this, God will rejoice over you as He did over Zerubbabel (Isa. 62:5). So let others dismiss you with contempt, but the seven eyes will rejoice to prove them wrong—because of the anointing!

Anointed as Instruments of Holy Service

The point has already been made that, as a people in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, we are the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16), of which Christ Himself is the builder. But then we are not just the exterior of the temple or even the structure itself; we are also the altar, the Ark of the Covenant and all the other tools of holy service used in the temple/tabernacle. If all these were anointed by Moses before being put to use in the service of God, how much more we believers?

Yahweh instructed Moses:

"Take the finest spices: of liquid myrrh 500 shekels, and of sweet-smelling cinnamon half as much, that is, 250, and 250 of aromatic cane,

"and 500 of cassia, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil.

"And you shall make of these a sacred anointing oil blended as by the perfumer; it shall be a holy anointing oil.

"With it you shall anoint the tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony,

"and the table [for the bread of the Presence] and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense,

"and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils and the basin and its stand.

"You shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy. Whatever touches them will become holy" (Ex. 30:23-29 *ESV*, see also Ex. 40:9-11; Lev. 8:10-11; Num. 7:1).

As the spiritual equivalents of the holy vessels, it's obvious that we must be equally anointed before we can be used by the Lord.

Because all our body parts, represented in the O.T. by the vessels of the Tabernacle/Temple, must be put to holy use in the Lord, we have been warned in Rom. 6:13 to "Stop offering the parts of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness. Instead, offer yourselves to God as people who have been brought from death to life and the parts of your body as instruments of righteousness to God" (*International Standard Version, ISV*).

Of the contents of the temple the objects that stand out prominently are the altar of burnt offering, the Ark of the Covenant, the altar of incense, the table of shewbread and, of course, the seven-branched lampstand [or candlestick].

A Call to Sacrifice

The altar of burnt offering speaks to our Christian calling to sacrifice—the surrender of our will, body and life to God in total consecration to His will. The apostle Paul wrote:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:1-2).

Throughout Roman chapters 9 to 11, the apostle had been discussing the divine mercy at work in the salvation of Christians, especially Gentile believers, and uses that mercy as His ground of appeal to live for God in Rom. 12. Hence "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by [i.e. in view of] the mercies of God" (see 2 Cor. 5:14-15).

In the O.T. the cut pieces of the sacrificial animal were all burnt on the altar of burnt offering (Lev. 1:2-9). And the sacrifice had to be “without blemish” (that is holy) with the offerer having to “offer it of his own voluntary will” (Lev 1:3). Thus to offer ourselves whole on the altar of God demands that we separate ourselves from anything that defiles, which is why we must “not be conformed to this world, but continually be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you may be able to determine what God's will is—what is proper, pleasing, and perfect” (*ISV*).

The sacrifice of Christ, whereby He died in our place, has been described as “an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour” (Eph. 5:2). His sacrifice was whole and total (Heb. 10:4-10). The gospel of John reports that “six days before the Passover” Jesus, at a supper prepared for Him in Bethany, was anointed in the feet by disciple Mary with pure perfumed oil of great value. When Judas Iscariot complained that the perfume should have been sold and the proceeds given to the poor (seeking to help himself to it), Jesus said, “Let her alone. She has kept this for the day of My burial” (John 12:1-7 *MKJV*). The significance of the anointing by Mary lies in a pre-Passover ritual commanded by God for Israel.

Jesus, the Antitype of the Passover lamb, was anointed six days before the Passover in fulfillment of the fetching of the Paschal lamb on the tenth day of the month of Abib, in preparation for its killing on the evening of the 14th day of the month (Ex. 12:1-3, 6; Deut. 16:1, 6). That Jesus was anointed during supper (an evening meal) at Bethany “six days before the Passover” meant it was after sunset on the ninth of Abib which in Bible time is the beginning of the tenth day of Abib (see Gen. 1:5; Lev. 23:32) that Mary anointed Him—the very day the paschal lambs were separated from the herd and kept until killed in the evening of the fourteenth day. So just like the paschal lambs, “Christ, our Passover sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7), was separated and consecrated for sacrifice on the tenth day of Abib. Six days from the ninth of Abib when Jesus entered Bethany (before sunset) bring us to the evening of 14th Abib (and the start of 15th Abib) when the paschal lambs were slain.

Like Christ, our Example (1 Pet. 2:21), the sacrifice of our life to God cannot be done without anointing. As stated in Philippians 2:13: “It is God Himself whose power creates within you the desire to do His gracious will and also brings about the accomplishment of the desire” (*Weymouth New Testament WNT*).

Simply put, it's the anointing of the Holy Spirit that consecrates a person to God's will, enabling him or her to walk in His laws and statutes (Ez. 36:26-27, 11:19-20). Without the empowering gift of the Holy Spirit, no one can of his own effort or power obey God's law or live for Him in holiness and righteousness. This is because “the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:7-8). Thus it takes the Spirit to be a holy sacrifice to God, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14).

In what way are they the children of God? The Holy Spirit-anointed ones are the children of God in the sense that they share in His holy character (see Heb. 12:5-10).

The New Ark of the Covenant

Since God's character is found in His “holy, righteous and good law” (Rom. 7:12; Ps. 119:172), it's fitting that N.T. anointed believers are also comparable to God's Ark of the Covenant. The apostle Paul lists the contents of the Ark in Hebrews chapter 9: “the ark of the covenant [was] covered around on all sides with gold, in which *was* the golden pot having the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; and above it *the* cherubs of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat (about which now is not *enough time* to speak piece by piece)” (vv. 4-5 *LITV*).

By the time of Solomon's Temple, only the two tables of the law remained in the ark (2 Chron. 5:10), but the list Paul gives is the total number of items as originally put in the ark (Ex. 16:33 & Heb. 9:4; Ex. 25:16 & Deut. 10:1-5; Num. 17:10).

The Golden Spirit of Glory

Now, what do the contents of the Ark symbolize in the life of the anointed believer? Again, the gold represents the glory of God in the life of the believer. Christ says in Matt. 13:43: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43). Notice that the ark, made of acacia wood, was overlaid with pure gold inside and outside (Ex. 25:10-11, 30:3; 1 Kings 6:20). In a similar vein, although all mankind as the fallen sons and daughters of Adam have "come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), Christ comes into our lives as believers to bring us to glory (Heb. 2:10). And the glory to be revealed is beyond compare! (Rom. 8:18). The Spirit of God within is the same Spirit of glory that rests on us. We are flesh and blood ordinarily doomed to decay, but because of the anointing, we are overlaid with pure gold from heaven both inside and outside (2 Cor. 4:16; Col. 1:27; 1 Pet. 4:14). Just as an ordinary wooden 'box' or 'chest' (so 'ark' means in Hebrew) was overlaid with pure gold, so God gives you "grace and glory" as a person He has anointed with His Spirit (Ps. 84:9-11).

The True Manna of Life

The manna in "the golden pot" inside the ark stands for the Word of God hidden in the heart of the anointed believer (Ps. 119:11). Christ said to the Jews He fed five loaves of bread and two fish when they sought Him for more bread to eat: "I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:48-51).

Here, Christ revealed Himself as the Word of God (John 1:1-4, 14) which is superior to the manna eaten by the Israelites in the wilderness. The former gives eternal life; the latter sustains transient physical life! Ironically, when God gave Israel manna in the desert this was the lesson He wanted them to learn—that His Word which produced the manna was the true Sustainer of life (Deut. 8:3 & Ex. 16:4; Matt. 4:4). But some 1600 years later, the Israelites had still not got it. They said to the Lord after He told them not to "labour for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life" (John 6:27): "Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat" (v. 31). Let's not make the mistake of making the product more important than the producer!

The life-giving manna from heaven is what we should attach the greatest importance to. Hence "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). The heart that has Christ's word "in all its richness" (*GNB*) is never spiritually sterile; it teaches and admonishes and uplifts one another with psalms and spiritual songs, as we sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord. The "word" in question is not the letter of a written word; the words of Christ are "spirit and life" (John 6:63-64). This same word is "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17) which is "living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb. 4:12).

Thus the word is bound up with the Spirit of God, so it takes the anointing too to preserve it in the "golden pot" of our heart. The presence of the Spirit is required because "those who live according

to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:5 *ISV*). So then the failure of Israel to keep the word was because they lacked the Spirit, which 'circumcises' the carnal human heart to love and to do God's will (Deut. 29:4, 30:6; Ez. 36:26-27).

Jesus questioned the Jews of His day: "Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill Me?" (John 7:19). Hauled before the Sanhedrin on a false charge of blaspheming God, Moses and the temple (Acts 6:8-15), Stephen in his defence blasted the assembly of Jewish leaders: "You stiff-necked *people* and uncircumcised in hearts and in *your* ears! You constantly resist the Holy Spirit! As your fathers *did*, so also *do* you! Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand about the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become, *you* who received the law by directions of angels and have not observed *it!*" (Acts 7:51-53 *Lexham English Bible*).

Without the Spirit, we will only pay lip-service to the Word. We may even pride ourselves in it, but without the anointing of the Spirit we can't be a doer of it (Rom. 2:17-24; cp Jam. 1:22). That's why the Lord tells us in John 16:13: "When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come" (*ESV*). Indeed, "Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God" (John 8:47 *ESV*). If you will hear, your heart and ears will have to be circumcised by the Spirit of God (Php. 3:3).

God's Law on the Two Tablets of the Heart

In addition to the "manna" in the Ark were the two tablets of the law. These two tablets stand for the law of God written on the two tables of our heart and in our minds by the Spirit of God (Heb. 10:15-17; 2 Cor. 3:3). In the scripture in Hebrews 10, the text is plain that it's the Holy Spirit that announced putting His laws in the hearts and minds of His people—just as stated in 2 Cor. 3:3. But all along we know this promise to have been made by God through the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31-34). In the light of this, will it be justifiable to say that the Holy Spirit is different from the Father God or the Lord Jesus Christ? The simple truth is that God by His Spirit residing in Jeremiah prophesied of the time when He will put His laws in the hearts and minds of His people, and so it makes no difference whether we ascribe it to God or His Spirit, commonly called the Holy Spirit. (See 1 Cor. 12:4-6).

The point the apostle emphasizes in Hebrews chapter 8, though, is that God needed to adopt this new measure of writing His laws on the hearts and in the minds of His people to correct a weakness with the Old Covenant under which He wrote the law on tablets of stone. The shortcoming or weakness was that the people couldn't obey the law written on the tablets of stone:

"For if there had been nothing wrong with the first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.

"But God found fault with the people and said: 'The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

"It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to My covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord.

"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put My laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people.

"No longer will a man teach His neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest.

"For will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Heb. 8:7-12 *NIV*).

From the text, what we see is that the people's negative attitude towards the commandments of God, being the terms of His covenant with them, produced a negative reaction from God, namely "they did not continue in My covenant, and I did not care for them, says the LORD" (Heb. 8:9 *New American Standard Bible Update - NASU*). The solution was to write the same commandments originally inscribed on tables of stone on the fleshly tables of the human heart. Now note the new vivifying spirit that characterizes the covenant: "I will be their God, and they will be My people; all will know Me from the least of them to the greatest. For will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more". There has been a change from the negative to the positive by both parties!

The inscribing of God's law in our "inward parts", where it's His delight to find truth (Ps. 51:6), certainly brings a flood of blessing into our lives. By it, God becomes our God, and we truly become His people; by it we come to truly know Him, and He truly forgives us, no more to remember our sins because of the one perfect sacrifice of Christ (Heb. 10:12-18) and the obedient nature of our "new heart" (Ez. 36:26-27). The result is that no longer will the covenant have a weakness and so will endure forever, as "an everlasting covenant".

God foretold of this happy result through Jeremiah, the prophet:

"And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul" (Jer. 32:39-41).

Take note of the concluding phrase "with My whole heart and with My whole soul"! God is really in His element when we serve Him with an obedient heart (Deut. 5:29).

Meanwhile, Satan's "law of sin and death" previously written on the tables of our hearts (Jer. 17:1) is completely erased in favour of "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" by the action of the Holy Spirit (Rom.8:2; cp 7:15-25).

The King is on the Throne in Our Hearts

The New Covenant, whereby God has written His law in our hearts and minds, has made not only the Old Covenant obsolete (Heb. 8:13) but also the Ark which housed the tablets of law. Again, God prophesied through Jeremiah:

"And when you have multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, declares the LORD, they shall no more say, 'The ark of the covenant of the LORD'. It shall not come to mind or be remembered or missed; it shall not be made again. At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart" (Jer. 3:16-17 *ESV*).

After rebuking the nation for their unfaithfulness, God says He will send them faithful pastors (shepherds) "who will feed you with knowledge and understanding" (v.15). And this will happen at a time when they have "multiplied and increased in the land", a fact which places the prophecy in the Gospel Age (N.T. era) when the chosen nation of Israel will have been increased and extended "far unto the ends of the earth" (Isa. 26:15) through the preaching of the gospel in "all the world" (Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8). Since this is also the time when God's law is written in the hearts and minds of believers under the New Covenant, it stands to reason that the ark ceases to come to mind at the

same time as when the New Covenant is made with “the house of Israel and with the house of Judah”, which includes Gentile believers subsumed into “the commonwealth of Israel” through faith in Yeshua, the Jewish Messiah (Eph. 2:11-13; cp Rom. 9:4-5).

The physical ark has ceased to be remembered or missed because the Holy Spirit-anointed, commandment-keeping believer is now the Ark of the Covenant with all the blessings and privileges of the original ark.

Of all the holy objects in the tabernacle/temple, the place God chose to dwell, the locus of His presence, was the lid of the ark, called “the mercy seat”. It was also made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold, or was perhaps rather a plate of solid gold, measuring 2 1/2 cubits long and 1 1/2 broad (Ex. 25:17; Ex. 30:6; Ex. 31:7).

Stretched out over the place of the Divine Presence were the wings of two golden cherubim which faced each other towards the mercy seat from opposite ends of the ark (Ex. 25:18-20). As the holiest of the sacred objects in the tabernacle because it represented the throne of God, the ark was kept in the holiest section of the temple, “the holy of holies”, also called “the [inner] sanctuary” (Heb. 13:11) or “the oracle” (1 Kings 6:19,23; 2 Chron. 5:7) or “the most holy place” (1 Kings 7:50). But much more than His dwelling-place, the mercy seat was God’s chosen place for interacting with His people; that was its reason for being. The LORD told Moses: “And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which *are* upon the ark of the testimony, of all *things* which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel” (Ex. 25:22; see also Ex. 30:6; Num. 7:89).

The mercy seat was the place God chose to commune with His people because it effected *atonement*, that is reconciliation (or *at onement*) with God. The placatory element was the blood of the sin-offering sprinkled on the seat (the lid of the ark) (Lev. 16:14). His Presence might not be entered without the blood covering the people’s sin and invoking His mercy—and even with that only the high priest could do so once a year (Heb. 9:7). God warned Aaron through Moses:

“The LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat.

“But in this way Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with a bull from the herd for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.

“He shall put on the holy linen coat and shall have the linen undergarment on his body, and he shall tie the linen sash around his waist, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy garments. He shall bathe his body in water and then put them on.

“And he shall take from the congregation of the people of Israel two male goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering.

“Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering for himself and shall make atonement for himself and for his house” (Lev. 16:2-7 *ESV*).

God gave strict instructions concerning how Aaron must enter His Presence in the cloud above the mercy seat for two main reasons: The first was to avoid a repeat of the misfortune that befell the two oldest sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, when they “offered strange fire before the LORD” for which the LORD struck them dead that instant (Lev. 10:1-3; 16:1). The second was to impress on the priesthood the holiness of God and the need to approach Him with utmost reverence. Stripped to its bare bones, Aaron would not enter the holy of holies without:

- The blood-tokens of atonement
- His body washed

- His holy garments, befitting the Presence of a Holy God.

In the Epistle to the Hebrew Christians, we read that the blood of Jesus gives us the confidence to enter the Presence of God in the holiest place (Heb. 10:19). In verse 22, we are told that we must do so without the stain of sin, but “with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:22 *ESV*). By this, we put on the holy garments of righteousness and holiness manifested in love for one another and good works (Eph. 4:24; Heb. 10:24). How true the scripture in Heb. 12:14! “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord”.

If believers, in whose heart is God’s law (Isa. 51:7; cp 8:16), are now the ark of the covenant, it follows that the mercy seat, beneath which the law was kept (Ex. 40:20), is also now to be found in believers’ heart where God lives by His Spirit. The indwelling Spirit has made God’s “throne of grace” (the N.T. term for “the mercy seat”) much closer. We need not ascend to heaven to approach God on His throne; God is on His throne of grace in our hearts! It’s something to accept by faith (Eph. 3:17). The apostle Paul wrote concerning “the righteousness of faith”:

“But the righteousness which is based on faith speaks as follows: ‘DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN? (that is, to bring Christ down),
 “Or, WHO WILL ASCEND INTO THE ABYSS?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead.)
 “But what does it say? ‘THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART’—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching,
 “That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart the God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;
 “For with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses resulting in salvation” (Rom. 10:6-10 *NASU*).

The above scripture is a paraphrase of Deuteronomy chapter 30 where Moses prophesied of the day when God will circumcise the heart of His people to love Him with all their heart and with all their soul (vv. 6, 8). But where the original text meant “commandment”, Paul inserted “Christ” to indicate that “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth” (Rom. 10:4):

“For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach.
 “It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up to heaven for us to get it and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’
 “Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe?’
 “But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it” (Deut. 30:11-14 *NASU*).

But does Rom. 10:4 mean that “Christ is the end of the law” (which Deuteronomy 30 says is near in our mouth and heart) in the sense of its termination or abolition?

The Greek word translated “end” suggests otherwise. ‘*Telos*’ has a range of meanings which can be translated as ‘goal, purpose, the point aimed at, result, conclusion or end’. To determine which usage is meant calls for an examination of the context.

Although the overall thrust of Paul’s epistle to the Romans is that justification (God’s declaration of a person as righteous) for Jew and Gentile can only come through faith (Rom. 3:28-30), he is quick to point out that faith does not annul the law of God. He asks and then answers himself: “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law” (Rom. 3:31). Here, faith and

law are not at loggerheads. Where faith is exercised, obedience must result, for we uphold the law through faith in Christ. In other words, faith in Christ must logically lead to obedience (Rom. 1:5, 16:26).

Moreover, in Romans chapters 7 and 8, Paul makes a strong case for the spiritual and godly nature of the moral law against which the evil carnal nature of man is in rebellion (7:7-8, 12-16; 8:7), except for true believers “ who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 7:25-8:1-2). So then Christ did not bring about the abolition of the law, since He did not come to destroy the law or the prophets but to fulfill (Grk ‘pleroo’ i.e. ‘make replete, accomplish, fill up, fully preach, perfect’) them (Matt. 5:17). Instead, Christ is the *goal* of the law, *the point at which the law is aimed*, its *culmination*. Since this goal is righteousness (Ps. 119:172), what this means is that Christ brings about perfect obedience and thence perfect righteousness. This, the law could not do on its own because it was “weakened by the flesh” (Rom. 8:3). But this, God did by “sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: THAT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW MIGHT BE FULFILLED IN US, WHO WALK NOT AFTER THE FLESH, BUT AFTER THE SPIRIT” (vv. 3-4).

So, you see, the law really came into its own (Isa. 42:21) only after Christ broke the hold of sin on us, paid the penalty for our sins with His blood and empowered us to obey God. All along, the law anticipated this glorious dispensation when Christ would inaugurate the true worship (John 4:23-24) and give meaning to God’s law in the lives of people. Thus it’s to Christ the law ultimately points as the One through whom we attain true righteousness (see Rom. 1:16-17). Hence anyone trying to attain righteousness apart from Him, such as the unbelieving Jews, acts contrary to the true knowledge of salvation (Rom. 10:1-3). He is the goal of the law, not for unrighteousness, but for righteousness to everyone who believes.

And how do we attain that righteousness? By confessing the Lordship of Christ and the fact that God raised Him from the dead for our salvation. This belief is ultimately expressed through righteousness, since the resurrection of Christ means that we no longer continue in sin but “walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:1-4, 9-12). It’s this we affirm with our mouths as truly salvation from Christ, the Lord of our life, who lives in us. As the apostle John puts it, “Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself” (1 John 5:10).

However, this confession of salvation in Christ does not give us the licence to indulge in lawlessness or disobedience to God’s law. The foundation God has laid, being true believers, is authenticated (sealed) by the fact that Christ knows those who belong to Him and He knows them to be doers of righteousness, not lawlessness: “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2 Tim. 2:19).

So holiness is of great importance now that God is in our hearts on His throne. Should we defile ourselves, who are His temple, with fornication and other acts of uncleanness He will destroy us— just as He warned Aaron (1 Cor. 3:16-17, 6:13-20; 1 Thess. 4:7)—even though He is on His throne of grace within us! Remember what happened to Uzzah when he touched the ark of God when he was not supposed to? (See Num. 3:8, 38; Deut. 31:9; 1 Chron. 15:2). God, “who sits between the cherubim” on the mercy seat, struck him dead even though he touched it to prevent it from falling off the ox-driven cart.

The event is recorded in 2 Samuel 6 where David, after being anointed King over all Israel and after having captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites (2 Sam. 5:1-3, 6-9), organizes to have the ark brought from Gibeah to Jerusalem:

“Again, David gathered together all *the* chosen *men* of Israel, thirty thousand.

“And David arose, and went with all the people that *were* with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth *between* the cherubims.

“And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that *was* in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart.

“And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which *was* at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark.

“And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of *instruments made of* fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.

“And when they came to Nachon’s threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth *his hand* to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook *it*.

“And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for *his* error; and there he died by the ark of God.

“And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perezuzzah to this day.

“And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?

“So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obedom the Gittite.

“And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obedom the Gittite three months: and the LORD blessed Obedom, and all his household” (2 Sam. 6:1-11).

When God is treated with reverence, He blesses us, but curse or death is the consequence when He is dishonoured. Because He called us to “inherit a blessing” (1 Pet. 3:9), He Himself empowers us to live and do right.

“These Signs shall Follow You”

Among the items in the Ark of the Covenant was “Aaron’s rod that budded”. Early on in his ministry of deliverance to Israel, the LORD told Moses in reference to his shepherd’s staff: “And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs” (Ex. 4:17). This was after the LORD had made Moses throw the staff on the ground and it turned into a snake and made him turn it back into a staff by picking it up by the tail. As the LORD explained, this was the first of three supernatural signs to convince the Israelites that his mission to take them out of Egypt was divinely mandated (Ex. 4:1-9).

But apparently the “signs” in Ex. 4:17 are not signs meant for Israel (who initially required a sign, 1 Cor. 1:22) but rather for Pharaoh and the Egyptians. However, in the performance of those signs in the sight of Pharaoh and the Egyptians with the rod, it’s “Aaron’s rod” that is mentioned, not Moses’ rod. The probable explanation is that either Moses gave his staff to Aaron, his elder brother, after the latter became his spokesman (Ex. 4:10-16, 7:1) or the functions of Moses’ personal rod were turned over to Aaron’s personal rod in the performance of his spokesman role. The former is more probable, since God had already consecrated Moses’ rod as the ‘rod of signs and wonders’, and he took it along on his return journey to Egypt (from Midian) for such purpose (Ex.4:20-21). Moreover, at no time during the confrontation with Pharaoh did God ever designate a different rod belonging to Aaron as the rod for signs.

Yet only on very few occasions was “the rod of GOD” called “Moses’ rod’. Those few occasions took place during particularly challenging times in the history of the new nation of Israel. The first was at the Red Sea where God commanded Moses to “lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over

the sea”, and the sea miraculously parted allowing Israel to walk in the midst of it on dry ground. When the Egyptians pursued after Israel in the midst of the sea, Moses stretched the rod over the sea again, and the waters returned, drowning Pharaoh and his hosts (Ex. 14:16-29).

The second time Moses is said to have personally used the rod to work a miracle was at the Rock in Horeb where Israel complained of thirst. “And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel” (Ex. 17:5-6).

Soon war broke out with Amalek, and that was the third time Moses used “the rod of God”. “And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand [holding aloft the rod], that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed” (Ex. 17:9-11).

For the great number of times the rod was used in the performance of signs and wonders, however, the rod was used by Aaron, and so he came to be more associated with it. These were the signs and wonders done in the sight of Pharaoh and Egypt that culminated in the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. As Moses’ special assistant and spokesman, it was only appropriate that Aaron held the staff and performed with it before Pharaoh. God Himself give it due recognition, instructing Moses, each time a sign was to be performed: “Thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod and ...”

In the performance of the first sign before Pharaoh—a repeat performance of the rod into a snake miracle—such was the instruction, setting the pattern for all the others:

“When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast *it* before Pharaoh, *and* it shall become a serpent.

“And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent.

“Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.

“For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods” (Ex. 7:9-12).

At the very start of the contest, Moses and Aaron demonstrated that Satan’s power exercised by the sorcerers of Egypt was no match for God’s power, for “Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods”. How it would all pan out was a foregone conclusion, but the sorcerers of Egypt, led by Jannes and Jambres, with foolhardiness, put up a fierce challenge to a power greater than theirs only to recoil in humiliating defeat shortly after. Comparing them to false teachers who resist the true ministers of God, the apostle Paul wrote: “Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men” (2 Tim. 3:8-9 *ESV*).

When it came to turning the water bodies of Egypt into blood, the LORD spoke to Moses: “Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood;

and *that* there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in *vessels of wood*, and in *vessels of stone*.

“And Moses and Aaron did so, as the LORD commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that *were* in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that *were* in the river were turned to blood. And the fish that *was* in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt” (Ex. 7:19-20).

Ironically, the sorcerers of Egypt, instead of reversing the curse on the waters of Egypt, added to the curse with their enchantments (Ex. 7:22).

The next sign God commanded was to unleash a plague of frogs on the land of Egypt. Once again the LORD instructed Moses: “Say unto Aaron, Stretch forth thine hand with thy rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt. And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt” (Ex. 8:5-6).

The sorcerers of Egypt, determined to challenge the power of God, responded to this sign by also bringing up frogs on the land of Egypt (Ex. 8:7). But not surprisingly, they could not undo the plague. It took Moses to entreat the LORD, at the request of Pharaoh, for the frogs to die out of the land of Egypt (Ex. 8:8-13).

But Pharaoh still hardened his heart and would not let Israel go. It was ripe for another plague. “And the LORD said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice [or gnats] throughout all the land of Egypt.

“And they did so; for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man, and in beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

“And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not: so there were lice upon man, and upon beast” (Ex. 8:16-18).

At this point the challenge by the sorcerers crumbled; they could proceed no further. They had come to their wits’ end. They hastened to Pharaoh: “‘This is the finger of God [meaning we cannot fight Him]’. But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said” (EX. 8:19 *ESV*).

Every mouth shall confess and every knee shall bow to Christ as Lord of all (Php. 2:9-11). As an anointed child of God, don’t ever fear the devil. The devil, in his usual bullying style, will put up a challenge, but with faith and persistent prayer he will soon fall by the wayside panting! (See 1 Pet. 5:8-9; Jam. 4:7).

It was just the fourth sign and the third plague, and already Janes and Jambres were in retreat. Seven more were to come—only this time, the round of plagues was more or less directly unleashed by God without the agency of the rod in the hands of Aaron.

Soon the fourth plague (and fifth sign) broke out, a swarm of flies buzzing over all Egypt in every open space and upon all the people of the land except the Israelite enclave of Goshen. In His own words, God spared Goshen to “make a distinction between My people and your [i.e. Pharaoh’s] people” (Ex. 8:20-24).

Like Israel of old, "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:9). This is your destiny as a child of God; God the Almighty has destined us for salvation. So do not fear the fear of the unbelievers (Isa. 8:11-14). The Psalmist wrote: "You shall not fear the terror by night; nor because of the arrow *that* flies by day; *nor* for the plague *that* walks in darkness, of the destruction laying waste at noonday. A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes you shall look and see the reward of the wicked" (Ps. 91:5-8 *MKJV*).

The fifth plague upon Egypt was the death of all the livestock of the Egyptians, but not that of the Israelites (Ex. 9:1-7).

The sixth plague was an outbreak of boils and blains (an inflammatory pustule or blister) on the Egyptians (Ex.9:8-10). With this plague, the magicians could not even face Moses to so much as exchange words with him in Pharaoh's court, "because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians" (v. 11).

The devil will soon take cover because of the anointing on you! Yahweh-Nissi will give the enemy such a knockout, your dread will fall on them, and they won't be able to face you anymore. Rest assured, "the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Rom. 16:20).

Then came the seventh plague, and the LORD rained "a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now" (Ex. 9:18). God in His goodness told Moses to forewarn the Egyptians to lock in their livestock to forestall their being totally destroyed in the hailstorm. Those who feared God heeded the warning, but those who didn't pay heed lost all their livestock (vv. 19-21). After momentarily being out of action, the rod was back in action when "the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt. "And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt.

"So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.

"And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that *was* in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field" (vv. 22-25).

Note that this time God told Moses to use the rod personally to bring about the plague. "Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel *were*, was there no hail" (v. 26).

Surely, "the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment" (2 Pet. 2:9 *ESV*). While "the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayer", His "face ... is against those who do evil" (1 Pet. 3:12). Fear not, faithful child of God! He who watches over the sparrow will not let a hair of yours fall to the ground (Luke 12:6-7, 21:18).

But here was such devastating plague on Egypt, with even vegetation wiped out, that Pharaoh, for all his hardness of heart, sent for Moses and Aaron in panic and begged them to "Intreat the LORD (for *it is* enough) that there be no *more* mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer" (Ex. 9:28). Moses prayed for the plague of hail to stop, but as usual Pharaoh reneged on his promise to let Israel go (vv. 29-35).

The stage was set for the eighth plague. By this time the officials of Pharaoh were in agonizing despair and urged Pharaoh to let Israel go to when Moses announced that God was going to send an

unprecedented plague of locusts on Egypt, so numerous they will cover the face of the land and gobble up every greenery of the field (Ex. 10:3-5):

“Then Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How long shall this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not yet understand that Egypt is ruined?" (Ex. 10:7 *ESV*). Pharaoh, hardened in his heart against the LORD, would not listen. So God told Moses to bring the plague of locusts on Egypt by stretching his hand (apparently while holding the rod) “over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, *even* all that the hail hath left.

And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all *that* night; *and* when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts” (vv. 12-13).

The servants of Pharaoh pleaded with him to let Israel go because they couldn't stand the plagues any longer. It's a terrible thing, indeed, to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31). But Pharaoh learnt this rather too late. He stubbornly refused to let Israel go after hastily calling Moses and Aaron to ask for the withdrawal of the locusts in return for freedom for Israel (Ex. 10:15-20).

The ninth plague was inevitable—a plague of thick darkness in Egypt brought on by Moses stretching out his hand (presumably with the rod in his grip) toward heaven. The result was that, for three days, Egypt was enveloped in a thick blanket of darkness that could be felt! (Ex. 10:21-22). “They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings” (v. 23).

A distinction made again between God's people and Pharaoh's. The LORD has assured all those who fear Him that He has their names in His “book of remembrance” with a view to making them His treasured possession, “and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him” (Mal. 3:13-18 *ESV*). We await that great promise of His when the whole world will be engulfed in darkness except those on Mt Zion (Joel 2:32).

After the terror of the ninth plague, Pharaoh grudgingly agreed to let Israel go but on a condition: you may go, you and your little ones, but not with your cattle! When Moses protested, Pharaoh's heart was perhaps at its hardest, and he threatened Moses with death should he see his face again (Ex. 10:24-29).

The tenth and final plague was now at the door, and in the right dose to melt Pharaoh's stony heart: the death of all the firstborns of Egypt including Pharaoh's heir! And it was a plague God would execute Himself or rather by His special agent, “the destroyer” or ‘angel of death’:

“And Moses said, Thus saith the LORD, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: “And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that *is* behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts.

“And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more.

“But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel” (Ex. 11:4-7).

Israel would be spared and saved because they are the people of God protected and identified by the blood. This was the blood of the Paschal lambs slain on the fourteenth day of the month of Abib which was daubed on the doorposts of the children of Israel so that when the Lord passes through Egypt on His way to destroy the Egyptians and He sees the blood, “the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you” (Ex. 12:3-13, 22-23; see Ps. 78:49).

As believers we must be thankful that the blood of Yeshua, the Lamb of God, has saved us from God’s wrath (Rom. 5:9; cp 1:18; 1 Thess. 1:10; Rev. 11:18). We have been purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28)

True to His words, “it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that *was* in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for *there was* not a house where *there was* not one dead” (Ex. 12:29-30).

Now it had hit Pharaoh where it hurt! The grieving king ordered Israel out that very night: “Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as you have said. Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone!” (vv. 31-32 *ESV*).

In all God performed eleven signs in Egypt, of which 10 were plagues. Of the ten plagues six of them (the 1st plague of blood, 2nd plague of frogs, 3rd plague of lice, 7th plague of hail, 8th plague of locusts, 9th plague of darkness) were done with the “rod of God”. But the truly last plague lay just ahead—the drowning of Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red sea by the power of “the rod of God”!

After Korah, Dathan, and Abiram challenged the leadership of Moses and Aaron resulting in their destruction and that of their followers (Num. 16), God told Moses to instruct the heads of all the tribes of Israel to present a rod apiece before Him for Him to choose one:

“Speak unto the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a rod according to the house of *their* fathers, of all their princes according to the house of their fathers twelve rods: write thou every man's name upon his rod.

“And thou shalt write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi: for one rod *shall be* for the head of the house of their fathers.

“And thou shalt lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet with you.

“And it shall come to pass, *that* the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you” (Num. 17:2-5).

The outcome of the ‘balloting’ God carried out among the thirteen rods (representing twelve tribes plus Aaron’s priestly clan) was that Aaron’s rod was chosen, in that “The rod of Aaron for the house of Levi had budded, and put forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and bore ripe almonds” (vv. 6-8 *LITV*).

The miracle of Aaron’s rod not only budding but also producing flowers and ripened almond fruits *overnight* was meant to confirm (by supernatural means) the priesthood to Aaron and his house and thereby stop all murmuring against Aaron and Moses. Hence God commanded Moses to “Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt

quite take away their murmurings from Me, that they die not. And Moses did so: as the LORD commanded him, so did he" (vv. 10-11).

As the New Testament priests of God with Aaron's miracle rod inside us in the Ark of God within us, Aaron's rod that budded, flowered and fruited represents, for us, the power of God and the "fruit of the Spirit". The miracle aspect is for signs and wonders (Mark 16:17; Isa. 8:18); and the almond-fruit aspect is for spiritual fruitfulness. Christ tells us in John 15:16: "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain; that whatever you shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to you".

Take another look at the word "ask". Because we have been chosen to bear fruit, whatever we ask of the Father in Jesus' Name will be given to us. Just as Aaron was asked to "Take up" the rod for miracles to happen, so we must 'ask' for God to move in a mighty way. We are not to be idle handlers of "the rod of God", but an anointed people who stir the move of God "according to the power that works in us [the new Ark of God]" (Eph. 3:20).

However, in handling the rod, we had better be careful. We need to be always conscious of the One in whose Name we use the rod. One time Moses and Aaron used the rod they were not respectful enough, and the LORD was wroth with them—so wroth He forbade them to enter the Promised Land! The incident took place in Kadesh in the fortieth year after Israel came out of Egypt (see Num. 33:38) when the Israelites again complained of thirst:

"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

"Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.

"And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him.

"And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?

"And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts *also*.

"And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.

"This *is* the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the LORD, and he was sanctified in them" (Num. 20:7-13).

The LORD was displeased with Moses and Aaron because, although He told Moses to "take the rod", He specifically directed him to speak to the rock for it to produce water. Thus he was to speak to the rock with the rod in his hand, as it were, but not to strike the rock with the rod as he did, not once but twice! The instruction, this time, was markedly different from the one God gave him at the rock in Horeb, where God first gave the children of Israel water from a rock. He was told to strike with the rod then (Ex. 17:5-6), but not now!

But Moses' offence was actually in two parts. He not only failed to obey a specific instruction of God, but also "spoke unadvisedly with his lips" (Ps. 106:32-33) when he growled at the grumbling Israelites: "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" (Num. 20:10).

"Must we"! He and his brother took the credit, forgetting they were 'mere' instruments of God wielding His rod! This together with the unauthorized use of the rod—*as though God would only*

work when the rod is used to strike—constituted an affront to God. And the LORD gave His sentence: “Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them” (v. 12).

Reverence for God at all times is the watchword. By all means, use the rod; “stir up” His gift in you (2 Tim. 1:6), but revere Him. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8).

It’s the same with His anointing. A person needs to be anointed with His Spirit, which gives power to God’s people, before He can use “Aaron’s rod” (to manifest the power of God). If this was true in Paul’s life and ministry, what makes you think it won’t happen in your life once you receive the anointing?

He wrote: “... I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ” (Rom. 15:18-19).

Holy Angels Guard and Serve the Anointed

The last element of the Ark of God we take a look at “are the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat” (Heb. 9:5 *ESV*). At once “the golden cherubim of glory”, facing each other from opposite ends of the Ark, capture the awesome majesty and splendor of God on His throne—full of strength and power to save. The Psalmist eulogizes Him:

“Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth.

“Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up your might and come to save us!

“Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved!” (Ps. 80:1-3 *ESV*).

In Psalm 18, David spoke of the LORD as ‘riding on a cherub’ and flying on the wings of the wind on His way to save him when his cry reached Him in His heavenly temple (vv. 5-10). Since the Hebrew word *‘ruach’* translated as “wind” can also mean “spirit”, it can be said that God rode not on one cherub but on the wings of myriads of spirits, being His angels (Ps. 104:4). We read in Ps.68:17: “The chariots of God *are* twenty thousand, *even* thousands of angels: the Lord *is* among them, *as in* Sinai, in the holy *place*”. (See Deut. 33:2).

Thus the golden cherubim of glory were no doubt reminiscent of the heavenly throne of God itself surrounded by angelic beings of incredible form and magnificence. The Bible gives us a few glimpses of them, as in Isaiah’s vision of the Lord in His glory (Isa. 6:1-4; John 12:41), Ezekiel’s “visions of God” by the Chebar river (Ez. 1:1-28, 10:1-22) and John’s visions in Revelation (4:6-8).

Now, the truth of the matter is that now that we have the spiritual replica of the Ark of the Covenant inside us, the cherubim of glory are also with us overshadowing the throne of grace on which God sits in His majestic glory (see Ps. 99:1). It is pure grace, considering that God posted cherubim as sentries to guard the way to the Garden of Eden after man sinned! Some have suggested that the cherubim overshadowing the mercy seat were a representation of those cherubim God placed at Eden, together with “a flaming sword that turned every way”, to prevent sinful man from eating of the tree of life and living forever in depravity as a result.

If this is true, the good news is that the job description has since changed for the cherubim.

Anointed believers are a people who have obtained mercy from God (1 Pet. 2:10) and therefore no

longer face the sword of the cherubim. On the contrary, they are “ministering spirits” sent by God to serve us as “heirs of salvation” which is the tree of life (Heb. 1:14). They encamp around us, including our little ones, lest we trip over a stone (Ps. 34:7, 91:11-12; Matt. 18:10).

Obviously, as spirit beings we need to be anointed with the Spirit of God before we can have any meaningful interaction with them. Notice the anointed Paul’s experience when, together with other passengers, he encountered a disastrous hurricane on the high seas on a voyage to Italy:

“And when they had been long without food, then Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have set sail from Crete, and have gotten this injury and loss. (See vv. 9-10).

“And now I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of life among you, but *only* of the ship.

“For there stood by me this night an angel of the God whose I am, whom also I serve,

“saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must stand before Caesar: and lo, God hath granted thee all them that sail with thee.

“Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even so as it hath been spoken unto me.

“But we must be cast upon a certain island” (Acts 27:21-26 ASV).

Paul, the anointed, made the difference! When all hope was lost, an angel of God appeared to him in a night vision, assuring him, “Fear not, Paul”!

One evidence of the Holy Spirit-anointing on a person are the visions and dreams he sees, as God promised by Joel, the prophet (Acts 2:16-17). In these visions and dreams, God’s angels, who His messengers, are frequently featured bringing messages from His Majesty on high. The anointed life absolutely bridges the distance between us and heaven.

The Prayer of the Anointed, Perpetual Incense before God

If divine anointing shrinks the distance between us and God, it goes without saying that communication must be kept up without interruption. Prayer is our channel of communication with heaven. The golden altar of incense which God commanded Moses to make for the tabernacle represents the prayers of the saints. David says in Ps 141:2: “Let my prayer be set forth before thee *as* incense; *and* the lifting up of my hands *as* the evening sacrifice”.

These are the specifications God gave to Moses concerning the altar of incense:

"And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: *of* shittim wood shalt thou make it.

“A cubit *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; foursquare shall it be: and two cubits *shall be* the height thereof: the horns thereof *shall be* of the same.

“And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, the top thereof, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns thereof; and thou shalt make unto it a crown of gold round about.

“And two golden rings shalt thou make to it under the crown of it, by the two corners thereof, upon the two sides of it shalt thou make *it*; and they shall be for places for the staves to bear it withal.

“And thou shalt make the staves *of* shittim [acacia] wood, and overlay them with gold.

“And thou shalt put it before the vail that *is* by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that *is* over the testimony, where I will meet with thee.

“And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it.

“And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations.

“Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon.

“And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it *is* most holy unto the LORD” (Ex. 30:1-10).

We note several important details about the golden altar of incense. It was positioned in the holy place just before the veil (partitioning off the holy of holies) so as to face the mercy seat above the ark of the testimony where God met with His people (Ex. 40:5; 1 Kings 6:22). Because it was placed in the holy place in the closest relation to the ark, it is reckoned as part of the furniture of the holy of holies in Heb. 9:3-4.

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* explains the spiritual significance of the placement of the golden altar of incense: “The altar was in the middle between the table of showbread and the candlestick next to the holy of holies, at equal distances from the north and south walls; in other words, it occupied a spot on the outside of the great partition veil, but directly in front of the mercy seat, which was within that sacred enclosure; so that although the priest who ministered at this altar could not behold the mercy seat, he was to look towards it, and present his incense in that direction. This was a special arrangement, and it was designed to teach the important lesson that, though we cannot with the eye of sense, see the throne of grace, we must ‘direct our prayer to it and look up’ [[Psa 5:3](#)]”. Remember, this is where God sits in earnest expectation of our prayers (Heb. 4:16).

Moreover, the priests were to burn sweet incense on the altar every morning when they trimmed the lamps and every evening when they lit up the lamps as “a perpetual incense before the LORD”. This twin ritual of perpetual incense burning and continual burning of the lamp (Ex. 27:20-21; Lev. 24:2-4; 2 Chron. 13:11) teaches us New Testament believers to “pray without ceasing” while not putting out the Spirit’s fire (1 Thess. 5:17, 19).

Actually, there is interplay between the two. Certainly, while prayer is one of the ways by which we fan the flames of the Spirit of God, it takes the energizing power of the Spirit for effective prayers to be offered. To guard against the pernicious activities of ungodly men who have infiltrated God’s church with the sole aim of perverting the grace of God into a license for immorality, Jude urges us to “pray in the power of the Holy Spirit” (Jude 1:20 *GNB*). Similarly, as our last formidable weapon in our arsenal of spiritual weapons (2 Cor. 10:3-4) against satanic principalities and the wicked unseen evil spirits in high places (Eph. 6:12), the apostle Paul urges us to “pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit” (Eph. 6:18 *KJV*).

Otherwise, the spirit or mind is ready and willing, but the flesh is weak, as Christ said of His disciples in Gethsemane prior to the outpouring of the Spirit upon them on the day of Pentecost (Matt. 26:41; Mark 14:38).

Another sense in which we are said to pray in the Holy Ghost is when the Spirit helps us to pray as revealed in Romans 8:26-27:

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

“And He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God” (*ESV*).

The “weakness” which the Spirit overcomes for us in the course of prayer is that “we do not know how to pray as we should” (*ISV*), but the Spirit knows how to intercede for us according to the will of

God, who already knows our deepest feelings. And He does it with “groans that words cannot express” (*GNB*). These groans are not made by a Spirit far removed from us, but by the very Spirit of the Son of God crying in our hearts, “Abba, Father!” in affirmation of our status as the children of God (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:14-16).

Dear anointed prayerful child of God, each time you pray—which you ought to do “without ceasing”—you are not left to your own resources, nor are you left to pray in your own strength. The Spirit of Christ energizes you and helps you to pray as God wants you to so that your prayer requests might be granted: “And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us” (1 John 5:14).

Praying in the Holy Ghost is the way to pray “according to His will” which, in turn, gives us the absolute confidence that He will hear us!

But we must never forget the warning not to offer any “strange fire” on the golden altar of incense. Offering incense to God with “strange fire” is equivalent to praying to God in disobedience. Prov. 28:9 warns us: “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination” (*RV*). The rendering by the *Contemporary English Version (CEV)* is more pointed: “God cannot stand the prayers of anyone who disobeys His Law”. In Psalm 66:18, the Psalmist confesses: “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me*”.

So don’t pray to God in an attitude of defiance. That is, requesting His help while at the same time deliberately living in disobedience to His will. God does not listen to people who willfully disobey Him on a routine basis. This was the truth the man who Jesus healed of his congenital blindness pointed out to the Pharisees when they falsely accused Jesus of being a sinner because He healed the man on the Sabbath:

“Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth.

“Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. “If this man were not of God, He could do nothing” (John 9:31-33).

So no “strange fire”, but do believe in the atoning blood of Jesus as giving you right of entry into the Presence of God in the Most Holy Place for the offering of your prayers (Heb. 10:19-20). That’s why in the Old Testament, blood was sprinkled on the horns of the altar once a year by the high priest (Ex. 30:10; Lev. 16:18).

The all efficacy of the blood lies in the fact that not only does it give us entrée into the Presence of God but also truly removes our sins, a hindrance to our prayers to God (Heb. 9:12-14, 10:14; Lam. 3:44). 1 John 1:9 says: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”. This cleansing is done with the blood of His Son *Yeshua* (v. 7).

With all obstacles removed, God now accepts our prayer of incense, as it spirals up to His throne of glory in heaven even as the fire of the Spirit is lit in our hearts. We read in Rev. 8:3-4:

“And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

“And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand”.

Note that no partition separates the golden altar of incense from the throne of God. The golden altar stands right before the throne of God. Its spiritual significance for you?

Rest assured, your prayer faces no obstacle on its way to God now that Christ has torn the veil separating the holy place from the holy of holies with His death (Matt. 27:50-51).

Another dramatic connection yet between incense-burning on the golden altar and prayer is recorded in Luke 1 where the angel Gabriel informs Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, of his son's birth:

"And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense.
"And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense"
(Luke 1:10-11 *ESV*).

Prayer is considered a sweet-smelling incense before God because "The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright *is* His delight" (Prov. 15:8).

A fresh Word every Sabbath!

The last holy item we consider in the light of our New Testament spiritual status as instruments of holy service is the table of showbread kept in the holy place. God instructed Moses concerning this table:

"Thou shalt also make a table *of* shittim wood: two cubits *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof.

"And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and make thereto a crown of gold round about.

"And thou shalt make unto it a border of an hand breadth round about, and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about.

"And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that *are* on the four feet thereof.

"Over against the border shall the rings be for places of the staves to bear the table.

"And thou shalt make the staves *of* shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them.

"And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and spoons thereof, and covers thereof, and bowls thereof, to cover withal: *of* pure gold shalt thou make them.

"And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before Me always" (Ex. 25:23-30).

Smith's Bible Dictionary explains the function and significance of the table of showbread or Bread of His Presence:

"Every **Sabbath**, twelve newly baked loaves, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, were put on it in two rows, six in each, and sprinkled with incense, where they remained till the following **Sabbath**. Then they were replaced by twelve new ones, the incense was burned, and they were eaten by the priests in the Holy Place, out of which they might not be removed. [See Lev. 24:5-9; 1 Chron. 9:32, 23:29; 2 Chron. 13:10-11].

"The title, '*bread of the face*', seems to indicate that bread through which God is seen, that is, with the participation of which the seeing of God is bound up, or through the participation of which, man attains the sight of God, whence it follows, that we have not to think of bread merely as such as the means of nourishing the bodily life, but as spiritual food as a means of appropriating and retaining that life, which consists in seeing the face of God".

The Bread of the Presence obviously represents the Word of God spiritually partaken by the New Testament priests of God. But the bread was changed every Sabbath. “Twelve newly baked loaves” replaced the old bread laid the previous Sabbath which the priests ate.

The spiritual truth for us is that God gives His people a fresh word every Sabbath (Isa.50:4) having the same substance as the word previously given! The word is still the same old Word given in the beginning but with a fresh flavour—a deeper spiritual meaning! This way, we “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18).

Notice what the Apostle John says in 1 John 2:

“Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. “Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in Him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.” (vv. 7-8).

The commandment to love is old (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18), but in light of the greater spiritual illumination Christ brings, we need to understand and obey it in a new spiritual way which is that hatred is darkness and love is light, and that love does away with the tendency to willfully offend your brother or to be easily offended by others (1 John 2: 9-11).

To handle the showbread, let alone eat it, requires holiness. When David, on the run from Saul, sought help from Ahimelech, the high priest, in Nob, the priest agreed to give him some of the showbread but on condition that the people accompanying him were holy:

“And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is holy bread; if only the young men have kept themselves from women.

“ And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days; When I came out, the vessels of the young men were holy, though it was but a common journey; how much more then today shall their vessels be holy?

“So the priest gave him holy *bread*: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away” (1 Sam. 21:4-6 *RV*).

Similarly, God finds it a great offence for the wicked – who know His will but deliberately refuse to obey Him - to dabble with the holy Word of God: “But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or *that* thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest My words behind thee” (Ps 50:16-17; see also Isa. 48:1-2; Rom 2:17-24).

We are to worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24), not in disobedience. And preachers of the Word must especially take care in presenting the Gospel in its purity:

2 Cor. 2:17

“For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ” (cp 2 Cor. 4:2).

2 Tim 2:15

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”.

Anointing and Holiness go together. In fact, anointing combines the two in one. It's separation or consecration to a divine task. So then, the anointed must stay holy if the anointing will stay. This is a truth that should not be lost on any anointed believer. Our 'empowered' holiness is meant for service.

Expected Behaviours in the Holy Spirit-anointed Community of Believers

The Book of Acts is our rule book on the ethics of the Holy Spirit-led assembly of believers. The Acts of the Apostles presents a community of anointed believers in which roles are clearly defined and all things are done decently and in order. The immediate result was an atmosphere in which the Holy Spirit could work in all for the general good and steady progress of the work of the Lord. That atmosphere was shaped early on in the life of the Church right after the empowerment of Pentecost. The membership adhered to the teachings of the apostles which moulded their godly character and set the stage for the dynamic church we see in the Book of Acts:

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42).

This was how the lay anointed members of the Church (the *Ecclesia*) related to the full-time anointed ministers or apostles. They knew their place. The apostles were to teach, and the lay members were to obey and continue in those teachings.

The results were simply marvellous:

- There was love, unity and camaraderie among the brethren (Acts 2:44-46, 4:32).
- The believers were a praying church (Acts 2:42, 4:29-31).
- The apostles worked miracles and supernatural signs (Acts 2:43, 5:12).
- The church preached the Word with boldness and with signs following (Acts 4:31, 5:27-32).
- The word of God spread and a large number of people responded to it (Acts 6:7).

The church was fired with zeal. Each and everyone was an anointed instrument of God in the promotion of His work, just as all the holy objects used in the Old Testament worship were anointed. Is it any wonder then that believers like Peter and Paul emitted divine power from their bodies? (Acts 5:12-16, 19:11-12). The body of the anointed believer is not 'dead' but alive with the Spirit in this New Testament time of spiritual worship in truth (John 4:23-24). Hence Christ's counsel to the lukewarm church in Laodicea:

“So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth.
“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:
“I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see” (Rev.3:16-18).

The life of divine anointing is the way to go.

But one would say, 'but the lay anointed members were not seen to be actively used of the Spirit in line with the criteria set for the anointed in Isa. 61'. If so, how do the 'non-ministerial' members of the body of Christ demonstrate the anointed life since they must necessarily fulfill aspects of the characteristics of the Lord's anointed?

The answer is that such believers demonstrate the anointed life through the gifts of the Spirit which everybody has some! Although we have been made to drink into the same Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13), we do not have the same gifts (1 Cor. 12:11, 28-30). We been given different gifts by God's grace (Eph. 4:7-8), and these different gifts all show evidence of an anointed life! This is the issue the Apostle Paul addresses in Rom. 12 with first a passionate appeal to present ourselves as "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God":

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service.*
"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.
"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.
"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:
"So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.
"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith;
"Or ministry, *let us wait* on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;
"Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, *let him do it* with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.
"Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.
"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;
"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;
"Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;
"Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.
"Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.
"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.
"Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits" (Rom. 12:1-16).

The apostle presents a whole gamut of "gifts" or services which the anointed of the Lord, who have dedicated themselves as "a living sacrifice" to God in holiness, perform as allotted them by the grace of God. And he exhorts each and everyone not to exalt himself in his *mind* above his given position in grace since God has distributed to each individual "a measure of faith" with which to carry out his or her duties in the Lord. In other words, a person arrogates to himself a spiritual gift or position in vain—and only assumes what he is NOT—if he lacks the divine empowerment or the commensurate "measure of faith" to perform the task.

Therefore, while we are one body in Christ (though many in number), all of us do not have the same office or gift. On the contrary, we have different gifts, and each anointed individual fits in somewhere – from prophecy to showing mercy! And all must serve with sincerity, diligence and brotherly love and holy altruism.

The anointed lay believer cannot claim he or she sees no role assigned him or her on the list of gifts. If they have no clearly defined, special gift at all, they should realize God also assigns "gifts of helps" to some of the members of His body, and there are so many ways they can help in the edification of the body of Christ.

Now, what is the one thing the anointed of the Lord should dread doing? To quench the Spirit!

Christ Drew Continual Strength from the Father

Christ, despite all the advantages of His holy birth and super anointing, never neglected to keep the anointing up! He was a person of prayer, and at one time "spent the whole night in prayer to God" when He was about to choose the twelve (Luke 6:12-13 *NASU*). The all-night prayer to God proved a boon, as a large number of afflicted people rushed to Him for their healing, "for power went out from Him and healed them all" (vv. 17-19).

Earlier, we saw Jesus withdraw Himself into the wilderness to pray after a time spent performing miracles, including granting Peter a bumper catch of two shiploads after his initial zero catch! (Luke 5:16). The anointing needed to be maintained at its high level. We note the same pattern after Jesus fed five thousand people with only five loaves and two fish, no doubt a power-intensive miracle: "He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone" (Matt. 14:15-23).

Even if Jesus, to whom God did not give the Spirit by measure, prayed and fasted to draw continual strength from Above, what about you and me? We certainly ought not to cease to pray and to fast:

"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17).

"And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).

This is the Master's way, and this is the way to proceed as long as we remain anointed and seek continual refilling with the Holy Spirit. The anointing is forever. It's what establishes us in Christ and seals us for the day of redemption (2 Cor. 1:22-23; Eph. 4:30). Don't play with your valued position as an anointed believer in Christ. Live a holy life and never cease to pray and pray to keep the Spirit's fire burning always. Amen!

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