

THE END TIMES

Bible Report Quarterly

Spring 2007: Issue Number 40

The Messenger of the Covenant

“...the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.” — Malachi 3:1

Students of the Bible now living in the *end times* are witnessing the fulfillment of this prophecy as events unfold throughout the earth. So important is the subject of this prophecy that the Apostle Peter exclaimed that it was “spoken by the mouth of all His [God’s] holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts 3:19-21) All Christians, then, who sincerely love Christ’s appearing should earnestly study the prophecies to find in them a clear understanding and appreciation of God’s *messenger*, His *message* and His *covenant*. 2 Timothy 4:8; 2:15

THE MESSENGER

Jesus Christ, the anointed Messiah, is the *Lord* (Hebrew—*adon*—master) spoken of in this prophecy and is the “*messenger* [Hebrew—*malak*—ambassador] of the covenant.” He returns to his *temple*—to those who were spoken of by the Apostle Paul as “*the temple of God* [the faithful followers of God’s Son].” (1 Corinthians 3:16) The book of *Revelation* references this second advent of Christ and the message he would bring with him to his faithful followers in the last days. This message in *Revelation* was so precious and hidden, that it required a special servant, a *messenger* who was *worthy* to unlock its treasures of truth. *Revelation* 5:1-5 brings forth Jesus’ role as this worthy *messenger*:

“And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne [of Jehovah] a book written... sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?’ And no man in heaven, nor in earth... was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open

and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.”



The book sealed with seven seals represents the divine plan, known only to its author, Jehovah Himself, kept in His own power—his own hand—until someone should prove worthy to know it and become its executor as Jehovah’s honored representative. This symbolic picture in *Revelation* chapter 5 proceeds to show that, up to the time our Lord Jesus suffered for us at Calvary, no one had ever proven to be worthy to understand fully the merciful plan of God that was written in *the book*. “*Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood...*” (*Revelation* 5:9)

Indeed, Jesus was that *worthy Lamb slain*, “*the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.*” 1 Peter 3:18

A MESSENGER WORTHY OF HONOR

When our Lord Jesus had proven his loyalty to the heavenly Father by his obedience “*even unto the [ignominious] death of the cross,*” he thereby became worthy of every confidence and trust to *open the book* in his Father’s hand and understand its contents. Thus is pictured to us the high exaltation of the heavenly Father’s representative, the “*messenger [ambassador] of the covenant.*” Because of his humility, obedience and complete submission to the Father’s will, Jesus is proclaimed thenceforth the sharer of the Father’s throne, and, by the Father’s own decree, the proclamation

was made throughout the heavenly hosts, *“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.”* (Revelation 5:12) No wonder, then, the Scriptures declare that all men shall honor the exalted Son even as they honor the Father who thus highly exalted him: *“...being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* Philippians 2:8-11

Let us notice in this symbolic picture of Revelation 5 that the exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ to glory and honor and power and dominion does not imply that the Father and the Son are one in person, for both persons are recognized—the Father, as always, being given the first place in praise and honor. As our Lord Jesus himself proclaimed, *“I appoint unto you [my disciples] a Kingdom as my Father hath appointed unto me...”* (Luke 22:29) And again he says to his faithful followers, *“Him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.”* (Revelation 3:21) Yes, it is the Father’s throne but He was well pleased with His beloved Son and has rewarded him with this high honor of sharing in His throne. Just so, the faithful disciples of Christ are honored for their participation in Christ’s sufferings: *“For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.”* 2 Timothy 2:11-12

As a further evidence that the entire work of redemption is **of the Father** and **through the Son**, note the Apostle’s declaration, that God, *“...according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised him from the dead... set him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet...”* (Ephesians 1:19-22) The Scriptures indicate most clearly the very high exaltation given by the Father to His Son—the reward for Jesus’ faithful obedience in the sacrifice of himself on behalf of our sin-sick and dying race. The Scriptures neither imply that the Lord Jesus was the Father, nor that he has been exalted to take the Father’s place upon the heavenly throne. On the contrary, they expressly show the **heavenly Father as superior** in honor



and power, and who thus glorified and exalted His Son, setting him at His own right hand, sharing in His throne or dominion of the heavenly Kingdom. Indeed, the inspired Apostle Paul deemed it very proper to call attention to this fact when he said, speaking of the Millennial reign of Christ, *“He [Christ] must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet... And when all things shall be subdued under him [the Son], then shall the Son himself be subject unto Him [the Father]... that God [the Father] may be all in all.”* 1 Corinthians 15:25-28

THE TRUE UNITY OF THE MESSENGER AND THE AUTHOR OF THE COVENANT

As it has been illustrated, the *author* of the great plan of salvation is Jehovah, and Jesus Christ is Jehovah’s honored messenger of this covenant to bless the world of mankind. Having thus seen the relationship between the Father and His Son, a sharp distinction should be drawn between a confession of faith in a **trinity**, and a confession of faith in the true **unity** of the heavenly Father, Jehovah, and the heavenly Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. The

Bible, while showing the absolute *unity* (cooperation) between the Father and Son in the various steps of the great plan of salvation, most positively contradicts the thought that the Father and Son are one and the same being. As shown, the Father has glorified the Son and given him a name above all others except His own, making Christ His anointed representative in the exercise of *“all power in heaven and in earth.”* (Matthew 28:18) Note how the following scriptures fully acknowledge the mutual unity, love and respect Jesus had with his Father:

- *“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.”* 1 John 4:9
- *“I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.”* John 16:28
- *“I can of mine own self do nothing... I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.”* John 5:30
- *“...I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.”* John 14:28
- *“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”* 1 Timothy 2:5-6
- *“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”* John 3:17
- *“...whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.”* John 12:50
- *“...I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.”* John 20:17

These scriptures all consistently teach a distinction of person and glory and power between the heavenly Father and the heavenly Son; with a most absolute and profound unity of plan, will and purpose. Yes, the Son was worthy to be the executor of the great plan of Jehovah, because he had no will of his own, but renounced his own will that he might be filled with the Father's spirit and do His will in every particular. John 6:38, 39

But isn't the *trinity* one of the oldest doctrines extending back to the third century? Yes, we answer: the doctrine of the trinity had its small beginning and rise in the second and third centuries, but it was not received in any measure or degree during the first century, for this is clearly shown by the writings of the Apostles in the New Testament. Their teachings during the first century claim most emphatically that Christ was not his Father, Jehovah, but that he was the Son, the Messiah, soon to establish his Father's Kingdom and bless the world with peace, harmony and life.

Moreover, the very words *Father* and *Son* imply a difference, and contradict the thought of a oneness of being. The word *father* signifies *life-giver*, while the word *son* signifies the one who has *received life* from another. The heavenly Father received life from no one—He is the *fountain*, the source of life, not only to our Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, but through His Son the source of life to all others of His creatures.

THE MESSAGE OF THE COVENANT

At his return, the Messiah brings with him a special *message* for his disciples. "*The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.*" (Psalm 25:14) This *message* is what Jesus, when speaking of his return, termed, "*meat in due season.*" At the time of his second advent, then, we should expect truths about God's wonderful plan to unfold which had previously been understood only in part by the *temple class*, the Church. This message of truth would fortify and prepare Jesus' disciples for the activities surrounding his return. (Matthew 24:45) Thus fortified with this *meat in due season*, as associate messengers of the covenant, they would share with their Lord in carrying forth this message to others.

Going back to the book of Revelation we find a most beautiful illustration of this *message* to be brought by Messiah at his return. This message has been hidden from the casual reader and reserved in symbolic language known only to Christ and his faithful disciples living at the time of his return. "*The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave*

unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it [revealed it in signs and symbols]..." Revelation 1:1

The last three chapters of the book of Revelation conclude with this *message of the covenant* and detail God's merciful plan to redeem mankind from sin and its curse of death. This is the same message embodied in the original *covenant* (promise) made to Abraham: "*...in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed...*" (Genesis 22:18) Jesus, the anointed Messiah, is this promised *seed* of Abraham: "*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith... to thy seed, which is Christ.*" (Galatians 3:16) Jesus, the *promised seed*, came at his first advent to give his life a *ransom for all*—to satisfy justice for the death penalty upon Adam and his children. And the first work in the application of this *ransom* is the selection of a *little flock* of believers to *reign with Christ* upon his Father's throne. This faithful little flock are also considered a part of that *seed* spoken of in the Abrahamic covenant. "*And if ye be Christ's, then are ye*



Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29) Abraham's *seed*—Christ and his Church—will have the privilege of sharing in the work of the Messianic age. This work will bring about the completion of the covenant to Abraham which has promised a full and fair opportunity to everyone who has ever lived to partake of the blessings provided through their redeemer. "*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away... And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*" Revelation 21:1-4

And, thus, the words of *the book* that Jesus Christ was *worthy to open*, beginning with the story of Adam and Eve, conclude with the message that Christ and his bride shall bring life and refreshment to all families of the earth! "*And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*" Revelation 22:17