On 17 May, I read a devotion by Oswald Chambers in My Utmost for His Highest, titled “His ascension and our access.” This short devotion took me on a journey that reminded me anew that God’s plans are all rolled out according to a very specific order. This journey took me from the transfiguration to Pentecost, the feasts of the Lord and ended with the ‘Year of Jubilee’.

In the devotion, Chambers comments on how the transfiguration was a watershed moment in Jesus’ life on earth, and that His ascension was the complete fulfilment of the transfiguration. I have never before connected the transfiguration to the ascension in this manner and decided to study these passages in the Bible myself.

Before the transfiguration, we read that Jesus went to the region of Caesarea Philippi (Matt 16:13), and it was here that Peter declared, for the first time, that Jesus is the Messiah (Matt 16:16). This verbal declaration kicked the whole process into motion that would ultimately take us to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

After Peter’s confession, Jesus tells His disciples for the first time that He needs to go to Jerusalem, to be killed, but that He will be raised to life on the third day (Matt 16:21). After this, the transfiguration took place and Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him to witness it (Matt 17:1-13). If Peter’s confession, that Jesus was the Messiah, had only taken place after the transfiguration, it would not have been nearly as significant, because most Jews would have confessed that Jesus must be the Messiah after witnessing the transfiguration. It would have been ‘sensory’ knowledge, not ‘revelation’ knowledge.

Looking back at it now, we see that Peter took a step, in faith, in front of all the other disciples, to confess that Jesus is the Messiah. This is the type of faith that we read about in Hebrews 11, that starts with the following words in the first verse: “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” When Peter made that confession, in faith, he opened the spiritual door that set events into motion that led to the most significant events of our faith.

After the transfiguration, Jesus began His journey from Caesarea Philippi, moving south, to Jerusalem, where He would be crucified, raised from the dead and ultimately ascend into heaven. When you take all these events into account, and you see how God meticulously worked it out that Jesus’ last supper would be the Passover meal, and that His crucifixion and resurrection would be during the Festival of Unleavened Bread, you can only stand in awe.

But, just to show that this was not a coincidence, God works everything out so that when the next festival comes, the Feast of Pentecost, it is exactly the day that the Holy Spirit is poured out. God surely has an order of how things should happen, and if we look at how prophecy has been fulfilled during the Festivals of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost, then surely it would be wise to see which festivals are yet to be fulfilled.

It is very striking to read the first two verses of Leviticus 23: “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ’These are my appointed festivals, the appointed festivals of the Lord, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies.’”

The Lord is very clear when He says these are His appointed festivals. They are not Jewish festivals, as many Christians believe. These festivals are clearly important in God’s order of events. He orchestrated it in such a way that when Jews commemorate the Passover, Christians simultaneously commemorate the ‘Last Supper’. When Jews commemorate the Festival of Unleavened Bread, Christians commemorate the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. When Jews
commemorate Shavuot/Pentecost, Christian commemorate Pentecost in remembrance of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

For Christians, it should, therefore, be important to look at the Lord’s other festivals as well, namely the Festival of Trumpets, Day of Atonement and the Festival of Tabernacles, because clearly, they are important to God. If the first sequence of festivals, the Spring festivals (northern hemisphere), all came into fulfilment during Jesus’ first coming, then surely it is not a leap to believe that the Fall (autumn) festivals will come into fulfilment during His second coming.

God clearly established a certain order of events, and the other sequence that relates to these is the Sabbath, the Sabbath year, and the Year of Jubilee, that is focused on rest and commitment to God. As I read these Scriptures it was amazing to see how many correlations there are between our current situation in the world, and the Year of Jubilee (Lev 25:8-55).

During a jubilee year:

- Debt was to be cancelled. Due to the financial hardships brought about by ‘lockdowns’ globally, we are currently experiencing leniency with regards to debt – some has been cancelled or frozen – which would have been unthinkable just a few months ago.
- Slaves were set free. Over the last few months, we have seen thousands, if not millions of migrant workers, globally, return to their homes.
- People were to return to their families. Due to the imposed ‘lockdowns’, families have been reunited with each other and got to spend quality time together.
- People were not supposed to work their lands. Due to ‘lockdowns’, people around the world had to stop working, like no other time in history.
- Because no work should be done, people who had more, had to support the poor. We have seen an outpouring of solidarity globally, as communities are drawing together to get through this time.

The Year of Jubilee is a celebration of God’s goodness and provision. It showed obedience and faith, by not sowing, and purely trusting that He will provide, while simultaneously showing that you are not chasing after ‘Mammon’. It was a year of testimony of who God was to you.

During these past five months, we have seen people rediscover God on an unprecedented scale. Online church service ‘attendance’ has skyrocketed. We have seen how people are turning to Christ for hope in the face of the coronavirus pandemic, and economic downturn. We have heard so many testimonies of people spending more time with God since work has not been all-consuming anymore.

Maybe God has used the coronavirus pandemic to declare a ‘Year of Jubilee’ for all creation: a year where people can rediscover Him, and see that He is still the same God, still following the same order He has set out since the beginning of time.