

The mystery of
CHRIST
and the
CHURCH

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WITH PETER HAY AND DAVID BAKER

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Preface

The manifestation of the sons of God – An ode

I can believe to see, what He has already worked for me;
Manifest as a son on earth, through Christ revealed by me.
The fruit that I bear, Christ has already borne,
When in offering He died for me.
The Spirit now leads in the path pioneered;
I am the fruit that He bore.
The works that I do He has already done;
Christ manifest in me.
The whole Christ, His corporate body,
Every member a son;
In one Spirit baptised, sealed and revealed.
Part of His church, also His bride,
Bringing forth others, fruit for God.
Let this word burn as a fire in you;
Let faith rise up enabling your fruit.
Be born each day, as you rise to serve,
By water and Spirit, overcome through His word.
A table prepared in the presence of foes,
The Father's *agape* that perfects all my woes;
Released from my bondage to self and despair,
Made free in Christ, a son and an heir.

This ode is a distillation and unique expression of what the Holy Spirit is saying to the churches in this season. It was written under the unction of the Spirit as He directed my attention to the subject of the revealing of the sons of God in the time of the end. Rom 8:19. I registered both the urgency of His initiative, as well as the anointing of grace for our participation in the fulfilment of God's purposes in the earth. This grace is available to all those who have an ear to hear what the Lord, the Spirit, is presently saying to the churches. Rev 2:7.

Since I penned this ode, the Spirit has unfolded to us the details of its content. In particular, He has focused our attention on what the apostle Paul identified as the mystery concerning Christ and His bride, the church. Eph 5:32. The content arising from our fellowship as a presbytery in this word of present truth has been captured in this book and in its companion publication, *The Father will take His Seat*.

Through this message, the Spirit is calling every believer to be prepared for the approaching midnight hour when the Father will take His seat, ushering in the time of the end. As the apostle Peter directed us, we must consider what manner of persons we ought to be in holy conduct and godliness as this day approaches. 2Pe 3:11-12. The conduct and godliness to which we are being called as individuals, families, and churches is the expression that belongs to the bride of Christ.

The Holy Spirit is revealing the priesthood of Christ as He endeavours to sanctify and cleanse the church in order to present her to Himself as a glorious bride. Eph 5:25-27. Only those who hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches and avail themselves of the cleansing initiative of Christ, our great High Priest, will enter into the Father's house and participate in the *agape* marriage feast of the Lamb and His bride. Let us further consider this ministry of our great High Priest.

Jesus our great High Priest

Through His journey of glorification from the last Passover meal to Calvary, the Son of Man was crowned with glory and honour as our great High Priest. The wonderful implication of His glorification is that Jesus, our great High Priest, now lives *eternally*. His priesthood operates with power. He is able to sustain us *forever* by the capacity of His endless life. Heb 7:14-17,20-21,24-25.

Jesus was made a mortal Man so that He could suffer death and then be perfected and glorified. The apostle Paul explained that Jesus was made lower than the angels by the grace of God. Furthermore, by the grace of God, He was given the capacity to endure the eternal suffering and death that belonged to every person on account of their sin and iniquity. Heb 2:9-12,14-15.

What was the process that enabled Jesus Christ to become our Saviour and to redeem us from death? This process was first seen in the garden of Gethsemane.

Here, within the fellowship of Yahweh, Jesus was made a sin offering on our behalf by the Father. Then, through the power of God's Eternal Spirit, He offered Himself to God. Isa 53:10. Heb 9:14-15. Note that He was *made* a sin offering first, and then, as High Priest, *He offered Himself* to God.

When we read the report of Christ's intercessory prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, we are introduced to the process that produced our redemption. Paul, describing Christ's prayer in Gethsemane, wrote, 'As He also says in another place: "You are a *priest* forever according to the order of Melchizedek"; who, in the days of His flesh, *when He had offered up prayers and supplications [in the garden of Gethsemane]*, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered'. Heb 5:6-8.

Drawing from this statement, we see that Christ was called by God to be a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek *in the garden of Gethsemane*. Christ's work was to offer Himself without spot as a Lamb of God, for a sin offering, for all mankind. However, before He could offer Himself, He had to demonstrate that He, as God's Son, was fully obedient to God, His Father. He had to demonstrate, in His flesh, His willingness to become our Saviour and brother. Heb 2:11-13.

Jesus was tempted, through suffering, in all points as we are, yet He did not sin. Heb 4:15. He demonstrated perfect obedience as a Son, saying, '*Father*, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless *not My will, but Yours, be done*.' Luk 22:42. As a Son, an offering, and the High Priest, Jesus was then able to be the Author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. Heb 5:5-10.

The most holy place in the true temple of God was in Gethsemane. Here, the Father gave Christ the cup of sin, judgement and suffering to drink. In obedience to the Father, Christ drank the cup and was made sin on our behalf. He was made sin by the Father so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2Co 5:21. In relation to the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, this was 'giving-love' in action. Joh 3:16. The Son was built up in His capacity through prayer, and was sanctified in this fellowship to become our sin offering.

Christ was strengthened by Eternal Spirit to manifest, through offering, the grace that was given to Him by the Father. Heb 9:14. As He offered Himself by Eternal Spirit, He then demonstrated the power and judgement that was appropriate at each stage of His offering journey.

Our atonement, and the capacity to be born again as sons of God, was brought forth through the travail of Christ in the fellowship of prayer with God the Father. This travail gave to us redemption as Jesus began to sweat great clots of blood. The intercession that Christ offered to God as Son and High Priest, in the garden of Gethsemane, continues to avail on our behalf, and will do so for

all eternity. Jesus, as our great High Priest, lives forever to make intercession for us. From His intercession, His blood flowed from every pore in His body, falling as clots to the ground. It was, and still is, an eternal provision that avails for us, forever. Heb 7:25.

The shedding of Christ's blood was the fruit of His travailing prayer. His blood contains the life of God. This life was His life, for He testified, 'For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself.' Joh 5:26. His life, which is in His blood, is given to us as we join Him *in the fellowship of prayer*. Significantly, we are not recipients of His life through sacramental practices, such as the Eucharist. Rather, we receive His life in the fellowship of His prayer meeting with the Father, by the Holy Spirit. For this reason, Christ urges us to watch and pray with Him. Mat 26:41.

The blood of Christ was sprinkled upon the body of Christ, making Christ's body the altar of God in Gethsemane. Christ's body was also the mercy seat of God. Rom 3:25. He was the Priest, and the Altar, and the Offering of God. The body of Christ, as the altar of God, represents the dynamic connection between Christ as our great High Priest, and His work of multiplying the life of God that was in His blood through His intercessory offering.

Unlike the high priests under the Levitical Covenant, Christ did not need to offer up sacrifices for sin, each day, upon an altar. He did not even need an altar upon which to offer Himself. The apostle Paul declared that Christ offered once, for all, when He offered up Himself. Heb 7:27. His body was the altar from which He offered Himself.

A body prepared

Having outlined the priesthood of Christ, Paul then declared, 'We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.' Heb 13:10. Christ's body is the altar from which we eat. As Jesus Himself, said, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.' Joh 6:53-55.

Concerning this body, which is the altar from which we eat, Paul quoted the testimony of Jesus, recorded in King David's prophetic Psalm 40. He wrote, 'Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come - in the volume of the book it is written of Me - to do Your will, O God'.'" ' Heb 10:5-7.

From this passage, we understand that the Father prepared a physical body for Jesus. The Father's will would be fully accomplished in this body. Significantly, the body of Christ was the replacement for the whole economy of sacrifice and

offering in the Old Testament tabernacle and temple. This was replaced by the body of Christ because of the failure of the old temple to achieve the will of the Father through its administration of offerings. Heb 10:1-4.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus directly testified that He had come down from heaven to do the will of the Father who had sent Him; He had not come to do His own will. Joh 6:38. The capacity to fulfil God's will was not in His natural, physical capacities, even though He was fulfilling God's will in a physical body. It was, therefore, not dependent upon energy derived from natural food. Rather, earlier in His ministry, Jesus said that His food was to do the will of the Father who had sent Him. Joh 4:34. In this statement, He likened the resource from which He received the energy, or capacity, to do God's will, to food. He further explained that the life of the Father was in His food, testifying, 'As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.' Joh 6:57.

We see that, just as the Son lives because of the Father, it is necessary for us to feed on Him. This is because He is the source of our eternal life and the One who gives to us the capacity to do His will. Accordingly, we are to eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood. Joh 6:56. By this, Jesus meant that we are to hear, receive, and obey the words that He speaks. He speaks through the messengers whom He sends. His word gives to us the capacity to do God's will, for His words are Spirit and life. That is, His word contains the Eternal Spirit of God by which all things were created. Joh 6:63.

Jesus also made it clear that the words that He speaks are not His, but they belonged to the Father who sent Him. Joh 14:24. This word, when proclaimed to the Jews, brought a response of faith from Peter. By faith, Peter expressed his commitment to continue in the fellowship of Christ's word as a disciple. Joh 6:68. In contrast, Judas was offended by Christ's word. He no longer believed in Christ and began to follow the pathway of a traitor. Joh 6:64,70.

The temple of His body

Jesus spoke of His physical body as the temple of God. Amazingly, He said to the Jews, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up'. Joh 2:19. They thought that He was talking about destroying Herod's temple in Jerusalem. However, John was clear that Jesus was talking about the temple of His body. Joh 2:21-22. That is, Jesus' body was already the temple. The will of the Father was only being fulfilled by Him. If the Jews killed Him in an endeavour to destroy the temple of His body, He would raise it up again by the resurrection life of the Father.

This statement established a point of conflict, or divergence, between Christ and those who presumed to be righteous through their participation in the economy of the Old Covenant temple. In fact, the implication that their temple was not the temple of God at all, was one of the claims that the worthless witnesses brought

against Jesus in the court of Caiaphas. Interestingly, Mark noted in his Gospel that 'not even then did their testimony agree'. Mar 14:57-59.

Significantly, as the chief priests began to strike Jesus in the face, and beat His back with rods, the temple of His body was being destroyed, and they were being destroyed with Him. Mat 26:67-68. Isa 50:6. However, in this same wounding event, as Christ was being chastened with rods for our peace, a new temple – the temple of His body, comprising Jew and Gentile – was being established. Isa 53:5. Paul explained this point in his letter to the Ephesians, writing, 'For He Himself is our *peace*, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, *so as to create in Himself one new man* from the two, *thus making peace*, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity'. Eph 2:14-16.

The body that the Father prepared for Christ, in which His will is done, is now *corporate*. This corporate body is the temple that was built through His death and resurrection. Importantly, to be a part of the temple of His body, we must participate in each of the wounding events through which it was established. The *agape* meal is the provision of God for our participation in this fellowship of offering through which we are being built together as a heavenly temple. A person who fails to recognise this point, and who seeks to avoid fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ, is not discerning the body. They will inevitably become increasingly weak and sick, and will eventually lose their eternal sonship. 1Co 11:29-30.

Not only are we built into the corporate temple through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ, but we are also *justified*. Through His offering and suffering journey, Christ justified every son who has been sealed with the Holy Spirit. Eph 1:13. Eph 4:30. Through justification, He has worked all their works for them. They are able to fulfil the will of God that belongs to their sanctification as they are established as part of the temple of His body. Wonderfully, the apostle Paul declared that Jesus Christ was raised *because of this justification*. Rom 4:25. We will further discuss this amazing principle in Chapter 5.

The corporate temple focuses our attention on both the body of Christ and the bride of Christ. Let us first consider our membership of the body. Jesus used the imagery of the vine and the branches to explain the corporate body of Christ. The emphasis of the body is the individual members, who are branches of the vine. As Jesus declared, 'I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.' Joh 15:5. In this regard, our obedience as sons of God and members of the body (and branches on the vine) is addressed individually.

The bride of Christ, which is the church, is also a corporate expression that belongs to the temple. It particularly refers to local church congregations in a city or a region. Each local church is betrothed to Christ. It is dealt with by the Lord, as a community, for the purpose of their *corporate* sanctification, cleansing and presentation to Him as a chaste bride. We note, for example, the way that Paul addressed the church in Corinth, writing, 'For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have *betrothed* you [as a church] to one husband, that I may *present you as a chaste virgin to Christ*. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.' 2Co 11:2-3. It is remarkable that a whole church could be deceived by Satan and stray from the truth in the same way that Eve did.

The love of God for the church

What does the love of God for the church look like in this present age? It looks like the love of the prophet Hosea for his wife, Gomer, who was a harlot. We recall that Hosea was directed by the Lord to love Gomer just like the love of the Lord for the children of Israel. His love for her was to be the same as the Lord's love for Israel. Hos 3:1. This was true of all the prophets of the Lord. Their burden of love, which is the love of the Lord, was evident in the clarity and conviction of their message as they addressed Israel and Judah concerning their sin and also their recovery as they were established in obedience to the Lord.

The apostle Paul experienced this *same* burden of love for the churches that he established. As we have just noted, Paul said to the Corinthians that he was jealous over them with a godly jealousy for he, by the Holy Spirit, had betrothed them as a congregation to Christ, their husband. This godly jealousy was the expression of the jealous love of God. Accordingly, when necessary, Paul admonished churches because of their carnal responses to the word, and he exhorted them to follow in the way of salvation that is found only in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

This burden of love for the church is also carried in this present generation by messengers of Christ who are part of a presbytery. They, too, have betrothed us as congregations to Christ. Accordingly, their ministry among us is to present each congregation, or community of believers, to Christ as a chaste virgin. This requires our cleansing through the washing of the water of the Lord's word. As congregations, we are being delivered from our uncleanness through the ministry of the word, so that the Father can gather us to the *agape* wedding supper that He has prepared for Christ and His Bride, the church.

In order to be made ready for the wedding feast of the Lamb and His Bride, church congregations must respond to the word of Christ's messengers. The fruit of repentance and faith in response to this ministry is sanctification and purification in the households that comprise the congregations of the church.

This is because each house that belongs to the network of houses that comprise an 'elect lady' in a region, is a particular expression of the heavenly Jerusalem on earth.

The messengers speak by the Holy Spirit

Highlighting the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the church age, Jesus said, 'He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.' Joh 16:13. This does not mean that the Holy Spirit is simply in the background. It means that He does not promote or reveal Himself. Rather, He reveals Christ through the ministry of the messengers of Christ. This is because they speak by the Holy Spirit. As the apostle Peter noted, 'To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you *through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven* - things which angels desire to look into'. 1Pe 1:12.

The demeanour of the messengers in a presbytery should be the same as the Holy Spirit's demeanour. They do not reveal or promote themselves; they are revealing the face of Christ in the presbytery, by the Spirit. Their motive is the expression of love through their obedience. As they are among the people, their manner is gracious, yet they are faithful to preach, urge and beseech those in the church.

A congregation that is maturing spiritually will embrace the ministry of the Spirit; will receive the washing of the water by the word; and will avail themselves of the life of God in the blood of Christ through fellowship in His offering and sufferings. Their maturity enables them to set messengers apart for the work to which the Holy Spirit is sanctifying them. We see this principle exemplified in the church at Antioch. Referring to the whole church, Luke wrote, 'As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.' Act 13:2-3.

The importance of obedience

Because the messengers of Christ, proceeding from the fellowship of a presbytery, speak by the Holy Spirit, those who resist them and their message, resist the Holy Spirit. Act 7:51-52. Consequently, they are chastened and judged by Christ and by the Father. Importantly, the judgement seat of Christ is where we are all called to give an account for our response to the word ministered by the Holy Spirit.

Obedience is an amazing concept! It is the doorway of faith into the fellowship of Yahweh. However, we cannot obey God while we are in control. Faith obedience is an action of responsible freedom by the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

Obedience is not self-centred. Rather, it is an accountable response that we make to the word in the conviction of the Holy Spirit. It is for this reason that the Scriptures declare that we must all go to the judgement seat of Christ to give an account of ourselves to God. To this end, we are exhorted by Paul, who said, 'And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.' Heb 4:13. Only those who are obedient to the word of the Lord proclaimed by the Holy Spirit, through His messengers, will enter Christ's rest.

A collegial response to the word is compliance; it is not obedience by the Spirit. This is the response of one who considers themselves equal with the messenger and his word, and thereby the measure of what is true and applicable to them. The only response we can make to the conviction of the Spirit is a bankrupt response. Mat 5:3. The conviction of the Spirit enables accountability because this conviction is illumination. It enables us to come to the light.

Through prevenient grace, we obtain liberty for accountability. We are able to choose whether we will come to the throne to give an account in response to the word. It is at the throne of grace that we first obtain mercy, indicating our acknowledgement of our sin and judgement. However, we also obtain grace that binds us to Christ for our fellowship in His offering and suffering journey, which leads to salvation. Heb 4:16. With this in mind, we acknowledge that we come to the judgement seat of Christ every day.

The call to watch and pray

At the same time, we remember the command of Christ to His disciples - 'Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Mar. 14:38. The temptation that the Lord does not want us to fall into in the season ahead, is *unbelief*.

Unless an unbeliever finds repentance, they will progress to become an opposer of the word of present truth. This will lead to the betrayal of one's friends in Christ. In this regard, we note that Judas was the only one of the twelve who was not present at the prayer meeting of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Although the eleven disciples fell asleep for sorrow, the grace that they obtained in this prayer meeting was sufficient to keep them so that they were, later, able to follow Christ in the way of salvation that He had pioneered for them.

The pressure that is being placed on the church by the spirit of antichrist, which is in the world, is causing many to turn away from Christ and His messengers. Jesus warned that this would happen, saying, 'Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.' Mat 24:9-12.

THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

Through Christ's eternal priesthood, we are being given the power, in this present season, to overcome the world. We avail ourselves of this power as we participate, by the Holy Spirit, in the prayer meeting of the Father and the Son. In this prayer meeting, Christ travailed to bring forth the blood for our redemption, and established the pathway upon which we could be brought to glory as sons of God and sons of men in the image and likeness of God.

Chapter I

Understanding by the Spirit

The way of understanding

The apostle John emphasised the need for Christians to obtain true understanding, which only the Son can give. 1Jn 5:20. To do this, they must forsake foolishness. As Solomon advised, 'Forsake foolishness and live, and go in *the way of understanding.*' Pro 9:6. Evidently foolishness and understanding pertain to the nature of one's pilgrimage. This was exemplified by Cleopas and his friend as they journeyed to Emmaus following the death of Jesus.

As Cleopas and his friend journeyed away from Jerusalem, they conversed and reasoned with one another. Their conversation was not fellowship, even though they were Jesus' followers. We know this because the Lord asked them, '*What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?*' Luk 24:17. Their interaction was based upon their own appraisal of God's word, which had informed their expectations of Christ and what it meant to follow Him. The *fruit* of their carnal orientation to the gospel was sorrow, as was their departure from the relational context in which the New Jerusalem was being established by Jesus.

Jesus admonished the men, saying, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?' Luk 24:25-26. With this statement, Jesus identified the veil that lay over the eyes of their hearts. Their old gospels had, earlier, hindered their capacity to hear and receive what He had taught

concerning His impending suffering, death, and resurrection. This same veil prevented them from recognising Jesus following His resurrection. Luk 24:16.

Having confronted their foolishness and unbelief, Jesus then began to proclaim the gospel to them. Drawing from Moses and the prophetic Scriptures, He expounded to them the message of the cross. Luk 24:27. Although their hearts burned with conviction from the Holy Spirit as they heard the word, it was not until they participated in an *agape* meal with Jesus that they received illumination. Luk 24:30-31. As He broke the bread, their eyes were opened, and they were able to see the glorified Son of Man – the first Person to be made in the image and likeness of God.

To obtain understanding, we must begin by acknowledging that we are foolish and slow of heart to believe. Consider the testimony of Agur, who confessed, ‘Surely I am more stupid than any man, and do not have the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom nor have knowledge of the Holy One. Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His son’s name, if you know?’ Pro 30:2-4.

The amazing implication of Agur’s confession is that, like Cleopas and his friend, he was able to see Christ as the One who ascended and descended, and who established the beginning and the end of God’s Everlasting Covenant. Furthermore, he was able to testify that he was becoming a son of Jesus Christ, his Everlasting Father, by joining the pathway of glorification that Jesus had pioneered for him. Isa 9:6. Heb 5:8-9. On this pathway, a person obtains true understanding, which the apostle Paul described as ‘all riches of the full assurance of understanding’. Col 2:2. These riches are the treasure in heaven that a person receives as they follow Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. This treasure is being built into the heavenly body with which they will be clothed on the day of resurrection.

Without deliverance from our own understanding, our conduct as a Christian will be foolish. We will be unable to obey the word, even though we want to be obedient. Through his own testimony, the apostle Paul described the irrational behaviour of a Christian who does not live according to the understanding that the Son gives. He said, ‘For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing [when I live this way], *I do not understand*. For what I will to do [to be spiritual], that I do not practise; but what I hate [the responses that the spiritual Law condemns], that I do.’ Rom 7:14-15.

Our deliverance from foolishness to the way of understanding is impossible without the Holy Spirit. Unless we encounter and submit to the lordship of the Spirit, we will continue to pursue a religious expression that serves only to perpetuate our blindness to the gospel and its true implications for our life. To highlight the importance of this ‘conversion’, and to explain how the Holy

Spirit establishes us in 'the way of understanding', let me share my testimony with you.

A testimony of choice

In my late teens and early twenties, I was engaged in an evangelistic ministry to the Māori people in the north island of New Zealand. This ministry was accompanied by many signs and wonders as the anointing of the love of God broke every curse and demonic influence upon those who received our message. During this season of grace, many people were converted and were baptised into the name of Jesus.

Effecting this work, I would enter a village, leading a choir whom I had taught to sing in the Spirit. As they were singing, and I preached in the name of the Lord, the anointing of God's love brought prevenient grace to our hearers. By this grace, those with infirmities caused by curses that had been placed upon them by 'Tohungas' (Māori spiritualists) were healed. On account of this spiritual authority, and as I prevailed in various tests of power, I was viewed by the Māori community as a powerful tohunga, myself.

Not long after Lorraine and I were married, the Spirit spoke to me and explained that He was bringing this ministry to an end. He said that He would reveal to me the body of Christ and would establish my ministry as a member of the body. When it was clear that our time in New Zealand had come to its conclusion, we moved our young family to Melbourne.

At this stage, Lorraine and I had two infant sons - Jon and David. I was heavily engaged in preaching and teaching across our network of churches in Melbourne, but I did not receive any financial support for this work. Nevertheless, the Lord blessed me with fulltime employment as an engineer in a large firm, where I was expeditiously promoted, and was then recruited by another firm to an even more senior and lucrative position.

Working fulltime, and preaching five times a week, I became increasingly weary. I was also disgruntled by what I perceived to be my exploitation by the leaders of the church, who were unrelenting in their expectations of my engagement in preaching and teaching but were unwilling to provide any support or care for me or my family. My physical and emotional fatigue was compounded by the serious illness of our youngest son, David, who had been diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease. This form of lymphatic cancer is very painful, and my son's prospects for survival were limited.

During this time, I was directed by some of the senior leaders of the church to consider moving to Brisbane to pastor a small congregation there. Even though I personally knew that the Spirit was affirming this direction for my life and family, a move to Brisbane was quite unpalatable, for it was widely considered to be a 'pastor's graveyard'. My preference was to continue in my remunerative

employment and to preach in a lay, but less frequent, capacity among the churches in Melbourne.

In the crucible of this season, I had a life-changing encounter with the Holy Spirit while attending an annual church camp at Dickson's Creek. During the final session of the camp, I was sitting at the back of the large meeting tent, tending to David. Peter Morrow, a friend of mine from New Zealand, was preaching, and I was enjoying his message.

Towards the end of the session, Peter made an altar call, inviting those who wanted to return to Christ to come to the front of the tent. As a pastor with a proven ministry of signs and wonders, I did not consider this call to apply to me. While happily observing the responses of others, I clearly heard the Holy Spirit say to me, '*You go out.*'

I responded to the Spirit, saying, 'I am not a sinner! I am a leader in the church; I am preaching five times a week! If I go out, the people here will think that I am a sinner!' Yet, the Spirit was insistent, and His conviction upon me was considerable.

The Spirit was standing in front of me as 'the Lord'. 2Co 3:17. He conveyed to me an understanding with this request to go to the front, asking me to respond to Him by obeying what He bade me to do. Fundamentally, the Spirit was asking me to leave my own perspective on things and to draw near to Him in submission. This is what I should do *easily*; He was not asking a hard thing of me.

Through this conviction, the Spirit was shedding light into my heart, revealing my darkness. My darkness was believing that I was not a sinner. In this regard, we note the words of the apostle John, who said, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' 1Jn 1:8. When we view ourselves in this manner, we are lying, and do not practise the truth. *This is darkness.* 1Jn 1:6.

Unwilling to obey, and now further agitated by the conviction of the Spirit, I turned to leave the tent. As I began to walk out of the tent, the Spirit, by prevenient grace, helped me by pushing back all of my self-righteousness and the reactive emotions within me. I was left with one choice - would I accept Him as the Lord of my life, or not? I knew that if He was not Lord of all, then He was not Lord at all.

Having preached this myself, I knew that if I rejected the lordship of the Spirit, and walked out of the tent, I would never again return to a church. It was clear to me that the Spirit was absolute in His resistance of me if I did not obey Him as my Lord. This understanding was quite a shock to me.

Under the relief provided by prevenient grace, I began, in my spirit, to 'bleat' like a lamb. I said to the Spirit, 'I don't want to leave; I choose not to go.' I turned back from the door of the tent and made my way to the front.

As I was standing at the front of the tent, the Spirit then said to me, 'Kneel down in the sawdust.' Again, I said to the Spirit, 'I don't want to kneel. Everyone will think I am a sinner!' At this point, the intensity of the Spirit's conviction was even more extreme as He repeated the understanding that He had already conveyed to me; that is, to forsake my own perspective and to submit to His lordship in obedience.

I went to leave a second time, making my way down the aisle towards the door of the tent. I noted that the choir was beginning their final rendition of the ministry song that accompanied the altar call. Realising that my opportunity to respond was coming to an end, I turned around and bleated again, 'I don't want to go.'

Making this confession, I was choosing to kneel in obedience to the direction of the Holy Spirit. However, I found that I was *unable to obey*. It was as though I had no knees! They simply did not work. Describing this phenomenon, the apostle Paul himself testified, saying, 'For to will [to obey] is present with me, but how to perform what is good [be obedient] I do not find.' Rom 7:18. Like Paul, I had the will to obey, but I could not find the capacity within myself to do what the Spirit was asking of me.

I confessed to the Lord that I wanted to kneel, but I was unable to be obedient. At this point, I was becoming bankrupt in spirit. Mat 5:3. In this state, I made the weakest, muted bleat, saying, '*Help me!*' In an instant, the Holy Spirit intervened. He touched my nose, causing the rupture of blood vessels in both nostrils. Blood ran straight down onto my white shirt.

Looking at my shirt, and seeing the flourishing crimson stain, I endeavoured to cover my nose and chest with my hands. As I bent over to conceal my sullied shirt, I buckled over and dropped onto my knees, where my head fell straight into the sawdust! The Spirit had helped me!

As my head hit the dust, it was emptied of all the agitation, torment, anger, grief, argument, and projection with which it had been filled. I forgot about my nose, my fears, and my concerns about the thoughts of others, *as I came to peace*. The mind chatter, and its accompanying emotion, were now gone; they had been emptied into the sea of God's forgetfulness. My darkness had been emptied by the light of simple obedience to the lordship of the Spirit.

My encounter with the Lord, the Spirit, at Dickson's Creek was the beginning of a life of obedience as I began to enter the kingdom of heaven. Having been delivered from the darkness associated with my own will, my religious projections, and my misappropriation of God's word, the Lord was now working in me to will and to do His good pleasure. Php 2:13. Accordingly, I resigned from

my place of employment, much to the disbelief of my superiors, and moved my family to Brisbane.

Maturing from carnality to obedience

Through this dramatic event, I began to obtain an understanding that I had not previously possessed, even though I had grown up in a Christian household and had been engaged in a season of ministry marked by notable signs and wonders. I learned that we do not understand what we are doing *when we are carnal*.

To be 'carnal' means that we are motivated by our other law. We endeavour to take hold of the Law, which is God's word, for the purpose of obtaining life through its fulfilment. We do this because we perceive this to be good for us. Although we want to be spiritual, our emotive reactions in life, as we endeavour to fulfil the word in our own strength, demonstrate that we are carnal. We are doing the works of the flesh that we hate! Gal 5:19-21.

The emotions of sin, which belong to the works of the flesh, are provoked within us because the Holy Spirit is frustrating our carnal endeavours to have life. Noting this implication of the Spirit within us, Paul wrote, 'For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you *do not do the things that you wish*'. Gal 5:17. This is a source of turmoil within our mind.

This carnal way of living is self-righteous; it is governed by the view that we have of ourselves. In general, as evangelical Christians, our self-righteousness is the measure and motivation for our actions. When the Holy Spirit calls us to make a simple, obedient response in humility to His directive, we measure His directive against our self-righteous perspective.

Our perspective is the self-assured 'rightness' of our own culture as a Christian. It is informed by what we know, how we have lived, and how we believe our actions will be viewed by others. This was exemplified in my response to the Spirit when He first directed me to go to the front of the tent. I said to Him, 'I am not a sinner! I am a leader in the church; I am preaching five times a week! If I go out, the people here will think that I am a sinner!' We refuse to obey what the Spirit is directing us to do in order to preserve our self-image, or projection.

The Holy Spirit makes Himself known to us as Lord when He confronts us, asking us to humble ourselves in relation to some specific matter. For me, this was to go to the front of the tent and to kneel in the sawdust in obedience to His command. What He asks us to do conflicts with the self-righteous view that we have of ourselves. We are concerned about how we will be perceived by others if we obey what the Holy Spirit is requesting of us.

The emotions of sin are aroused within us as a consequence of this conflict between our carnal, self-righteous perspective and the direction that the Spirit is

giving to us. These emotions hinder our obedience. Thankfully, even though we are resisting the Holy Spirit, He, through prevenient grace, disempowers our reactions, making us aware of the eternal consequences of our actions if we continue to pursue the culture of self-righteousness. At this point, as I have recounted, the reasonings that were controlling my mind were replaced with only one consideration. This was the issue of *choice*. Under the conviction of the Spirit, we are left with the choice as to whether or not we will accept His lordship in our life.

As will be the case for many of us who have grown up in Christian homes, I was born again of the divine nature when I was begotten by my mother. I was trained in the culture of evangelical holiness from a child, and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit before I was ten years old. Serving the Lord was part of our culture as a family. This was a generally commendable heritage that necessarily promoted the obedience that God requires of children. Eph 6:1-3.

However, as Paul himself testified, 'When I was a child, I spoke as a child, *I understood as a child*, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.' 1Co 13:11-12. While compliance is appropriate for a child, in order for them to mature as a son of God, they must move beyond compliance to obedience *through the capacity of the Holy Spirit*. Unless this happens, our compliance can become part of our self-image and self-righteousness as a Christian.

Many of us do not realise that, because of the way in which we have been raised in Christian homes, it is sin that motivates us, through the other law in our heart, to presume that a culture of religious compliance is righteousness. This is darkness. As I have testified, the Holy Spirit was confronting me on this point, asking me to choose Him as my Lord and to obey His command, over and against my own self-righteous, religious disposition. Under the influence of the Spirit's conviction, everything in me chose Him as my Lord, and chose obedience as my culture. Every believer needs to make this same choice.

Having chosen the lordship of the Spirit, and obtained a will for obedience, the next lesson we must learn is that we are unable to obey. Returning to my testimony, it became apparent that, even though I had chosen to obey the Lord and to kneel in the sawdust, I found that I had no capacity to obey Him. *I was unable to comply*; it was no longer an option. It was not even a possibility, because it was based in self-righteousness, which was being compromised by the direction that the Spirit was giving to me.

This was an amazing understanding that I received. I willed to obey the Holy Spirit, but how to obey Him I could not find. As the capacity for compliance was dying in me, this understanding left me bankrupt in spirit. This made a significant and lasting breach upon my self-righteous image of myself. When we

are brought to the point of being bankrupt in spirit, we recognise our need for help, and we ask the Holy Spirit to help us. He leads us in a way that we do not want to go, which involves the chastening of the Lord. Joh 21:18. Through chastening, we are established in the peace that passes understanding, which then guards our heart and mind. Isa 53:5. Php 4:7.

Count all things loss

To walk by the Spirit *in the way of understanding*, we must sell everything that was formerly of value to us. This was the direction that Jesus gave to the rich young ruler, saying, 'If you want to be perfect [i.e. a mature spiritual person], go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.' Mat 19:21. 'Treasure in heaven' is the full riches of understanding that a person attains as they, by the Holy Spirit, journey with Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

What we value most are the things which we believe give validity to our self-righteousness. These may include our experiences; our education; our vocation; our relational connections; our possessions; our religious heritage; former exploits; and the affirmation of others. Paul described these as being the things that give us confidence in the flesh. This confidence is our self-righteousness, which informs our perspective on life as well as our expectations of the gospel. Php 3:4-5.

Unless we are delivered from our self-righteous perspective, we will be unable to receive or believe the gospel of salvation that invites our participation in Christ's offering and suffering. Instead, we will be disposed to the gospel in two ways. Describing these two orientations to the word of God, Paul explained, 'For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.' 1Co 1:22-24.

A person whose self-righteous perspective is galvanised by a gospel of signs and wonders is unable to receive and believe the word of the cross. This is because it conflicts with their expectations of themselves and of their life. Believing for the supernatural provision of God, they are unable to hear the word that would otherwise grant to them faith for their participation, by grace, in Christ's offering and sufferings. They are unable to see the real provision for their life because they are seeking their own empowerment rather than the kingdom of God. Often, their reception of the messenger depends upon the demonstration of power. Through association with those who exhibit proven grace, they seek empowerment for the expression of their own religious projections.

Likewise, a person who seeks the validation of their self-righteous perspective through knowledge or wisdom is unable to receive and believe the word of the cross. They assess the messengers and their message against their own

comprehension of the word. Their obedience is dependent upon the rationality of the word, and therefore upon the capacity of a messenger to communicate its logic. People who maintain this carnal orientation to the word are disposed to follow those whose qualifications and knowledge exceed their own, and whose religious comportment conveys adequate authority.

Our Helper, the Holy Spirit

Mercifully, in grace, and through the Holy Spirit, God continues to send His word to us through the preaching of messengers. He does this to deliver us from our carnal orientations to the word, and to give us direction for our lives. The Holy Spirit is our Helper who enables us to walk in obedience to the word that is proclaimed to us. Joh 14:26. Joh 16:13.

When the word comes, the Spirit also 'helps us in our infirmities'. Rom 8:26. Our 'infirmities' are our struggles with our choices and decisions. These choices and decisions become infirmities because sin in us motivates our other law to strongly desire to do something or to take something that will, in the end, only hurt and destroy us. The Holy Spirit disempowers the motivation of sin that lusts within us, so that we are able to hear the voice of what is born of God within us. This typically happens as we hear God's messengers who preach the word of God to us by the Holy Spirit. 1Pe 1:12.

We have been born from above as sons of God. The motivation of God's life within us desires to do the will of God, and to overcome sin and the world. As the apostle John explained, 'Whatever is born of God overcomes the world.' 1Jn 5:4. Under this convicting action, the Holy Spirit then calls us to obedience. He asks us to obey His voice as He leads us in the way of truth, which is the reality of how we can live a successful Christian life. Joh 16:13.

The Holy Spirit does not force us to walk in the way of truth. Rather, He helps us because, in our own strength - that is, by the strength of our own flesh - we are not able to obey the Holy Spirit. All we have to do is to ask Him to help us. He then gives to us the power to live an overcoming Christian life.

We build ourselves up each day by praying in the Spirit. As we do this, the evil lusts within us, which provoke us to go astray, are neutralised. Jude, the brother of Jesus, encouraged us to this prayer, writing, 'But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life'. Jud 1:20-21.

Our focus in the New Covenant

The new focus that the Spirit is bringing to this generation is the need to be *worthy*, which means *blameless*. He wants us to be worthy to partake of the *agape* wedding supper of Christ and His bride. Luk 14:16-24. This meal will be

the Father's initiative when He takes His seat to rule the world in the end of the age.

What is this *agape* meal to which the Spirit is directing our attention? It is our participation in the life of Christ that sustains us as members of His body. The life of Christ, symbolised as His body and blood, is the Spirit of Christ, which we received through new birth. Gal 4:6-7. It is also His own resurrection life that He makes available to us, to become our life, as we fellowship together and serve one another as an expression of our love for each other. Php 3:7-11.

When we are rightly connected to Christ's offering journey, the Father joins us to the fellowship of Christ's body, the church. In the fellowship of His offering, the Son multiplies His life and gives it to us so that it becomes our life. We multiply this life as we serve one another by offering. Offering is the work, or expression, of love, which is poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit. Rom 5:5. The Father gathers the fruit of Christ's life, which is multiplied as we serve one another by love, and places it in our heavenly body. On the day of resurrection, it becomes part of our eternal glory.

The point that we must understand is that eternal life is accrued only through participation in the *agape* supper of Christ and His bride. In the parable of the great supper, Jesus noted the excuses of those who failed to participate in this *agape* feast, even though they already had an invitation, or the right, to the meal. Their alternative priorities, through which they spurned their access to this fellowship of life, included lifestyle pursuits; vocational pursuits; extended family cultures; and romantic relationships.

These people failed to participate in the *agape* feast of the Father because they did not count these other pursuits as loss for the excellence of gaining Christ and being found in Him. Php 3:7-11. Consequently, they have no access to the life and glory that is necessary for obtaining a resurrection body. They are like the one-talent man who buried his talent in the ground. They are not known by the Lord on the day of judgement.

This is not what the Father predestined for us. Thankfully, we are being introduced to the lordship of the Spirit. He has dedicated Himself to our sonship, leading us in the way of truth. This is the pathway of salvation that Christ pioneered for us as He offered Himself by the capacity of Eternal Spirit. On this pathway, we are being delivered from the carnal propensities that cause us to stray from obedience to God's will; and we are being enabled to fulfil a will that is not our own. This is the way of understanding that belongs to the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Chapter 2

A bride for the Son

Elohim's covenant initiative

In this season, the Lord is restoring to us an understanding of the gospel of God. According to the apostle Paul, the gospel of God reveals how Jesus Christ was begotten of the Father before the heavens and earth were created; how He came in the flesh; His offering journey from the last Passover to Calvary; and His resurrection from the dead. Rom 1:1-4.

In summary, the gospel of God details the process by which the Son was established as the first Man who was made in the image and likeness of God. This was purposed by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in Their own fellowship, before the beginning of the creation. In fact, it was the reason for the creation of the heavens and the earth. Revealing this covenant initiative, Moses wrote, "Then God [*Elohim*] said, "Let Us make man in *Our* image, according to *Our* likeness". Gen 1:26.

It is significant that we were predestined to be made in the image and likeness of *Elohim* - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Accordingly, the Scriptures identified three distinct initiatives through which *Elohim's* purpose for us is achieved. These three covenant actions, by which each Person is revealed by the other two, include, 'My Covenant', which belongs to the Father; 'the Everlasting Covenant', which belongs to the Son; and 'the New Covenant' of the Holy Spirit.

My Covenant

'My Covenant' is the Covenant revealing God the Father. Through the offering of Yahweh, the Father was manifest as the inexhaustible source of the life of God and the 'architect' of the whole of creation. Eph 3:9. Jas 1:17-18. To bring this to pass, the Holy Spirit emptied Himself to become the Helper of the Father and the Son by empowering and sanctifying Their unique offerings with Eternal Spirit. As the Helper, the Holy Spirit also revealed the Father and the Son by becoming the life of the Father through which Yahweh Son would be begotten as the Son of God.

Then, by Eternal Spirit, Yahweh Son laid down His glory as the expression of all sonship, into the hands of the Father. He emptied Himself to the Father's bosom so that He could be begotten by the Father as the Son of God. Php 2:5-8.

By Eternal Spirit, the Father emptied His glory as Father and Word to Yahweh Son when He declared, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.' Heb 1:5. Through this declaration, the Son was begotten of the Father, by the Holy Spirit. Heb 3:7. The Father's glory was then to be proclaimed and known *only* through the Son of God as the Word and Seed of the Father. Joh 1:18.

Significantly, when Yahweh Son was begotten of the Father as the Son of God, *before, the Father's house* was established. The apostle Paul identified the Father's house as the third heaven. 2Co 12:2. It is distinct from the second heaven, which is the abode of the angels, and from the first heaven, which describes the physical universe in which the earth is set. This is the heavens that we are able to see as we gaze into the sky and beyond.

Significantly, the Son *received a heavenly body* when He was begotten through the word of the Father. His body was the first mansion in the Father's house. This was notable, for in Their fellowship, outside of time and space, Yahweh Father, Yahweh Son, and Yahweh Holy Spirit are Spirits. In this context of Their fellowship, They do not need bodies. The heavenly body of the Son of God was *new* in the Godhead.

The scriptural references to 'My Covenant' draw our attention to the initiative of the Father to bring forth a multitude of sons. For example, God said to Abram, 'As for Me, behold, *My Covenant* is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.' Gen 17:4-5.

The establishment and expression of the natural creation as the context for the bringing forth of many sons, is also captured in 'My Covenant'. Demonstrating this emphasis, God said to Noah, 'But I will establish *My Covenant* with you; and you shall go into the ark - you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh you shall bring two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female.' Gen 6:18-19.

In this regard, we note that the apostle Paul was particularly discussing the implications of 'My Covenant' when he wrote, 'For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.' Rom 8:19-21.

The Everlasting Covenant

When Yahweh Son was begotten as the Son of God, a beginning was established! Joh 1:1-2. This was the beginning of the Everlasting Covenant. From this beginning, the Son further emptied Himself to reveal the Father. He emptied all the way to the death of the cross. Php 2:8. The declaration, 'It is finished!', marked the end of this particular aspect of Yahweh *Elohim's* initiative to make man in Their image and likeness. Joh 19:30. Jesus Christ was then *manifest* as the New Creation when He was declared, by the Father, 'to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness', on the morning of His resurrection. Rom 1:4.

Through the Everlasting Covenant, the Son was revealed as the Beginning and the End of a new creation. Accordingly, He described Himself as 'the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, *the Beginning of the creation of God*'. Rev 3:14. He further identified Himself as 'the Alpha and the Omega, *the Beginning and the End*'. Rev 1:8,11. Rev 21:6. Rev 22:13.

From the beginning, the Son of God revealed the Father, by the Spirit, through the work of creation. Joh 1:3. The first creative work of the Son, according to the word of the Father, was the establishment of a void, or space, within Yahweh *Elohim*. Remember, there is no space outside of Yahweh, nor room for any other identities within Himself. The void was created within Themselves as the context in which the creation would be brought into existence.

In the void, the Son first created the second heaven, including the angels. He then created the earth as the context for the natural creation, into which the sons of men would be born and then brought to glory with Him. Moses summarised this initial creative work, writing, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.' Gen 1:1-2.

Although this was the beginning of creation, it was not the first day of creation. Moses explained that the first day of creation was when God said, 'Let there be light.' Gen 1:3-5. Significantly, on the sixth day of creation, Yahweh *Elohim* formed the body of man from the dust and then breathed into him the breath of lives, and man became a living soul. Gen 1:26. Gen 2:7.

Adam was *not* made complete in the image and likeness of God on the day of his creation. Gen 1:27. We know this because the apostle Paul explained that Adam was 'a *type* of Him who was to come'. Rom 5:14. A 'type' is a figure or representation of something else. This means that Adam was not the substance of a man in the image and likeness of God. The One who was to come, of whom Adam was a type, is Jesus Christ, the resurrected and glorified Son of Man.

The Son of God emptied Himself to become flesh as the Son of Abraham and the Son of David, when He was born of the virgin Mary. He laid aside His heavenly body, which remained in the house of the Father in heaven, to take on a mortal body, and was brought to the womb of Mary as the Seed of the Father, by the Holy Spirit. Through this process, He was made like us - having a physical, corruptible body and a human soul and spirit. Heb 2:17. Having a corruptible body did not mean that Jesus had a propensity to sin and could die. It meant that the energy to sustain His physical body came from the corruption, or breaking down, of food in His stomach. 1Co 6:13. His body was like Adam's body before Adam sinned and began to die.

From the last Passover, Christ emptied Himself to the death of the cross, *for our sake*. Emphasising this point, Paul said, 'For He [the Father] made Him who knew no sin to be sin *for us*, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.' 2Co 5:21. Jesus was made sin in the garden of Gethsemane when the Father made every person, who had been lost to God through Adam's transgression, a member of Christ's corporate body. We all were given to the Son for judgement or mercy.

As Christ drank the cup of God's wrath upon the whole world, He began to 'taste', with us, the sufferings of mortality because of our sin. Luk 22:42. The physical trauma that Jesus endured in any one of His seven wounds would have been sufficient to kill Him. However, He was strengthened with Eternal Spirit, from the Holy Spirit, for this offering. Heb 9:14. Furthermore, as His blood was being shed in each wounding event, His mortal body was being preserved and healed. This was the evidence of *anastasis*, or resurrection life, at work in His mortal body. This was the life of God the Father in His blood, bringing Him back from the death associated with mortality. Heb 13:20-21.

In each wound that Jesus suffered, something of the fallen, old man was destroyed, and something of the new man was established, or created. Following Christ's seventh wound, these two dimensions of His one offering were complete. Sin and death had been judged and destroyed forever, and everlasting righteousness had been fulfilled. Significantly, His physical body had been changed through the power of *anastasis*. It was now manifest as a perfect, incorruptible, and immortal body!

By 'incorruptible', we mean that Jesus' physical body was no longer sustained by energy drawn from natural food or drink. We know this to be the case because

Jesus' heart had stopped beating when, in the seventh wound, His heart literally broke because of the reproaches that had separated Him from the Father. Blood, carrying nutrients and oxygen, was no longer being pumped around His body. His body was now only sustained by the Spirit and life of God, through the word of the Father, ministered by the Holy Spirit. His body was immortal, meaning that it could no longer die. The incorruptibility and immortality of Jesus' body is the reason why it did not experience decay as it lay in the tomb for three days and three nights.

The Son declared His offering journey 'finished', and then committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father. Joh 19:30. Luk 23:46. The Father drew Him out of His physical, immortal body, which was hanging on the cross, and brought Him to His throne. Importantly, we were all drawn out of the waters of God's judgement and were received into the bosom of the Father, with Christ.

Christ remained in the bosom of the Father, in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, while His physical body rested in the tomb for three days and three nights. After three days and three nights, the Father declared, a second time, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You'. Heb 5:5. By the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Son returned to His incorruptible, immortal body, which was also then clothed with His heavenly, glorified body, received again from the Father. *It was now a spiritual body*. His body was as much spiritual as it was physical.

Importantly, when Christ stepped into His body, He was a new Man. However, He was also the Head of one corporate body. He made everyone who responds with repentance and faith to the word of the cross to be a member of that body. Only this body has resurrection life. The implication is that we can only have resurrection, eternal life, if we are part of Christ, the last Adam.

Why is this aspect of God's covenant initiative described as an 'Everlasting Covenant' if it had a beginning and an end? One would assume that 'everlasting' means that something has a beginning but no end. The point to understand is that, through His offering journey from the beginning, Jesus authored and finished the works of righteousness that belong to every individual son and member of His body. There is no expression of life and righteousness outside of Christ's finished offering, forever.

The Covenant of the Spirit

Following His resurrection and manifestation as the last Adam and the first Man made in the image and likeness of God, Jesus Christ began to minister to His followers. On the day of His resurrection, He appeared to the eleven disciples, and to those who were with them, including Cleopas and his friend. Jesus breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' Joh 20:22. By this means, they were born of the Father to see the kingdom. 1Pe 1:23.

Through new birth, the identity of a believer was begotten of the Father; they received their name as a son of God and became partakers of the divine nature. As sons of God, they were now in Christ and He was in them. They received a heavenly body, which He had prepared for them when He went to the Father. This heavenly body was hidden in the Father. They were now members of Christ's body, and were also being established as part of His bride.

All of this happened as Christ ministered to His followers – first to the eleven; then to the seventy-two; and then to more than 500 believers who had previously been identified as worthy houses of peace. 1Co 15:4-6. However, earlier, Jesus had said to His disciples, 'It is to your *advantage* that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.' Joh 16:7.

Why was it an 'advantage' for Christ to ascend to His throne? The answer is in the meaning of the Greek word which is translated 'advantage'. This word literally means, 'suitable for achieving a particular end'. Jesus was highlighting that there was still a third covenant that belonged to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit's initiative to make man in Their image and likeness. *This is the New Covenant of the Spirit.*

It is important to recognise that while Jesus remained with His followers, they did not have a participation in bringing to birth other sons of God as part of the bride of Christ. Sons of God were being brought forth only through Christ Himself. Furthermore, Christ was the only observable new Man. That is, the believers, among whom Christ ministered, had not yet joined the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, nor were they revealing His glory as members of His body.

Our participation in these two fundamental aspects of the mystery of God is only possible by the Holy Spirit. Speaking of the work of the Spirit, Jesus explained, 'He [the Holy Spirit] will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.' Joh 16:14-15. Furthermore, Jesus said to His disciples that when they were baptised with the Holy Spirit, they would receive power to be His witnesses, as members of His body, in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Act 1:4-8.

The New Covenant of the Spirit was manifest on the Day of Pentecost, ten days after Christ ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father. About 120 disciples were baptised with the Holy Spirit. Having been filled with the Holy Spirit, they began speaking with other tongues as He gave them utterance. Act 2:1-4.

Wonderfully, the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the bride of Christ, came down out of heaven and was *established on the earth*. Rev 21:2. Through the ministry

of Peter and his fellow disciples, the gospel of God was proclaimed, and about 3000 souls were born from above of the Father. Act 2:40-41. Evidently, by the Spirit, the corporate bride of Christ had now been made a helper comparable to Him. She was now the mother of all who were being begotten of God. Gal 4:26.

The significant point to note is that the Holy Spirit was given to each person as a Helper, that He may abide with us forever. Joh 14:16-17. In this regard, each of our bodies has become a temple of the Holy Spirit. 1Co 6:18. However, He has dedicated Himself, as our Helper, to our sanctification as a son of God, as a member of Christ's body, and as a part of the bride of Christ. In other words, without the Holy Spirit, we are unable to express our sonship, reveal the Son as a member of His body, or be joined to the expression of the bride of Christ, the church, in all the world. We see that He is our Helper on account of our weaknesses; but He is also the Helper of the bride of Christ, enabling her to be a helper comparable to Jesus. Let us further consider this amazing point.

The mystery of Christ and His church

We noted earlier that the first man, Adam, was a type of Christ. Rom 5:14. The Man who was to come, of whom Adam was a type, is Jesus Christ. With this understanding in mind, we recognise that when the Lord God determined together, saying, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him', the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were, principally, referring to *the creation of a helper for Jesus Christ*. Gen 2:18-19. As was the case for the first man, the formation of a bride, as a vessel of multiplication, was necessary for the work of bringing forth and nurturing sons of God.

The formation of the woman from the rib of Adam foreshadowed the establishment of the bride of Christ, the church, on the cross. Gen 2:21-22. We recall that after Jesus had committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father, and was received to the throne of the Father, a spear was thrust into His side. Luk 23:46. The water, blood, and Spirit that were caused to flow from His side, constituted the 'rib' from which the bride of Christ was formed. Joh 19:34. Zec 12:10.

Concerning His bride, the church, Jesus declared, 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' Gen 2:23. This highlights a key point. A person is established as part of the corporate *bride of Christ* through the ministry of water, blood and Spirit, because they have been made 'bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh' as members of His corporate *body*. 1Jn 5:8.

The corporate body of Christ was established through the seven wounds of His offering journey. It was particularly manifest in the third wound, when Jesus was chastened with rods for our peace, in the court of Caiaphas. Mat 26:67-68. Isa 53:5. The apostle Paul emphasised this understanding in his letter to the Ephesians, writing, 'For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has

broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, *so as to create in Himself one new man from the two* [Jews and Gentiles], thus making peace.’ Eph 2:14-15.

Having described the creation of the woman to be the wife of Adam as ‘bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh’, Moses explained that it was *for this reason* that ‘a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh’. Gen 2:24. Significantly, the Son of God left the Father’s house for this purpose! He left the Father’s house in heaven and became a Man, in order to be joined in one flesh with a multitude of sons and daughters of men who would comprise His church.

The apostle Paul quoted the explanation of marriage that Moses gave in the book of Genesis, to highlight that our membership of the body of Christ is fundamental to our citizenship of the bride city, the heavenly Jerusalem. Specifically, he said, ‘*For we are members of His body*, of His flesh and of His bones. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be *joined to his wife*, and the two shall become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.’ Eph 5:30-32.

The mystery of Christ and His church is not another term for the mystery of God. The mystery of God refers to the process of becoming sons of God. We are first made sons by adoption, which gives us the right to be born of the divine nature. Joh 1:12. Paul highlighted these two dimensions of sonship in his letter to the Romans, writing, ‘For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received *the Spirit of adoption* by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ [of the divine nature through new birth], if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.’ Rom 8:15-17. We will develop this point further in Chapter 4.

Beyond the mystery of God, the mystery of Christ and the church is a whole focus that we have not yet understood, nor adequately proclaimed. When we are born again and baptised into Christ, we are established in a church which is part of the bride of Christ. The bride of Christ is the New Jerusalem that was first manifest as coming down out of heaven on the Day of Pentecost.

As individuals and families in lampstand churches, we are *already* married to Christ, even though we are not yet perfect. Significantly, we are not waiting for a future wedding between Christ and His church, for the marriage of the Lamb and His bride happened on the day of His offering on the cross. This understanding is very different from our historical theologies concerning ‘the bride’, which have asserted that her marriage to Christ is entirely an eschatological event.

Through Christ's cleansing and purifying initiative toward His wife, she is being made a helper who is comparable to Him. We are made comparable, as part of the bride city, as we receive Christ who is coming among His churches in a spirit of judgement and burning. Isa 4:4. Paul described this initiative as the love of Christ for His church. Specifically, he wrote, 'Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish'. Eph 5:25-27.

The deception of Satan

Satan recognised the true meaning and significance of the Lord God's initiative to make a helper comparable to Adam. Gen 2:18. He understood that the children brought forth from Adam and the woman would become the corporate bride of the Son. For this reason, Satan sought to get between Adam and the woman, and bring them both into bondage to sin. He did this so that their children would belong to him.

The serpent made his move just before the woman's capacity to bear children was established. In the timing that belonged to God's immutable plan, the woman's womb was to be opened through a word laid down to her by Adam, in fellowship with Yahweh at the tree of life. Satan pre-empted this key step, in the process of mankind being made in the image and likeness of God, by endeavouring to deceive Eve with the possibility of becoming 'like God'. By this means, Satan presented godlikeness, sourced from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, as a substitute for comparability. As we know well, Satan said to Eve, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and *you will be like God*, knowing good and evil.' Gen 3:4-5.

Of course, Satan's proposition was a lie. The truth is that God's purpose was always for mankind to be made in the image and likeness of God. Gen 1:26. However, this would come to pass in the timing that belonged to His immutable purpose for mankind. Godlikeness, with respect to discerning between good and evil, was to be a capacity *that belonged to comparability*. We note, in this regard, Paul's lament for his readers, who should have been established in the priestly order of Melchizedek, but who were still immature, or carnal, needing milk and not solid food. He said, 'For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are *of full age*, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to *discern both good and evil*.' Heb 5:13-14.

We know that a carnal, immature person lives by their knowledge of good and evil. This is a capacity that has been drawn from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In contrast, a mature, spiritual son of God is able to discern between good and evil because they have been established in the culture of

offering that belongs to the fellowship of the *agape* meal at the tree of life. Evidently, the issue for man is not just the capacity to discern between good and evil, but rather, it is the tree from which he draws this capacity.

Despite the whole of mankind being lost to God through Adam's disobedience, Adam and Eve were redeemed through the shedding of the blood of a lamb. Later, the whole of mankind was recovered to their predestination as sons in the image and likeness of God, in Abraham. The Son of God would proceed from the Father's house to become the Son of Abraham, and of David, in the likeness of men. He did this to be joined to a bride, who would also spring from Abraham and Sarah.

We see that the Son committed Himself to a bride comprised of a multitude of identities who had *already* gone astray. They had forsaken their predestination, desiring instead to be the source of their own destiny and expression. Their union with the spirit of the world was evident through the projections and idols that they crafted for themselves, in the likeness of their image, for which they lusted. In this regard, the Son married a harlot. She was in need of redemption and cleansing, even after He married her! Of course, this was typified by Hosea who, under the direction of the Lord, took for himself a wife of harlotry. Hos 1:2-3.

On account of the union between Christ and the harlot woman, the Father turned His face from Christ. We know this because, having fully redeemed His bride following His seventh wound, the Son cried to the Father, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' Mat 27:46. Although the Father had turned from the Son with respect to this union with a harlot bride, we know that the Father was completely engaged in the offering that achieved her redemption. As Paul declared, God the Father was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. 2Co 5:19.

The father and mother of the bride

In the book of Romans, we are directed by the apostle Paul to consider what Abraham, the father of faith, found when he received and walked in the light of the gospel of God that was preached to him, beforehand, by the Scriptures. Rom 4:1. Gal 3:8. We learn that Abraham found faith to receive his predestination, and to join the offering journey of Christ through which this predestination would be attained. Rom 4:3.

This happened when the word of the Lord came to Abraham, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield [of faith], your exceedingly great reward.' By this faith, Abraham believed for his predestination, which was proclaimed to him when the Lord said, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them ... so shall your descendants be.' Gen 15:1,5. The Lord then directed Abraham to make offering, figuratively inviting him to join the fellowship of His offering on the cross. This encounter revealed that the

fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings was the means by which Abraham and his children would obtain the inheritance that was promised to him. Gen 15:8-21.

The faith that Abraham received became the substance of the hope of sonship. Heb 11:1. Paul told us that, by this faith, Abraham was illuminated to, and waited patiently for, the city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Heb 11:10. That is, he, with his wife, Sarah, confessed, by faith, that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, for they believed for their citizenship in the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city that God had prepared for them. Heb 11:16.

However, even more than this, Abraham and Sarah found grace and faith, through a remnant of the Spirit, to become the father and mother of a daughter, the bride city, called 'the New Jerusalem'. The New Jerusalem would be a nation that would come through Jesus Christ, Abraham's Son after the flesh. This nation would come from Christ, the last Adam, and would possess, through the Spirit, the capacity to multiply life as His bride.

Abraham and Sarah obtained a remnant of the Spirit, and were established on the pathway of salvation that Christ had pioneered for them, when *El Shaddai*, the Almighty God, appeared to Abraham, commanding him, 'Walk before Me and be blameless'. Gen 17:1. We recognise that Isaac, who was brought forth after this encounter with *El Shaddai*, was the first child born of this bride city, for he was born according to the Spirit. Gal 4:28-29.

Importantly, this remnant of the Spirit, which enabled Abraham and Sarah to walk blamelessly, is the seal that entitles every family to a plot in the New Jerusalem. A believing household consolidates their entry to, and citizenship of, the heavenly city by walking in the way of blamelessness. They are able to do this by the remnant of Eternal Spirit that they have received from the Holy Spirit. Blamelessness means that they carry in their body the dying and living of the Lord Jesus Christ as they embrace their fellowship in His descending and ascending offering journey. This way of walking is fundamental to being established, and made comparable, as part of the wife of the Lamb.

The Lord, through the prophet Isaiah, identified Abraham and Sarah as the father and mother of the bride of Christ, declaring, 'Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the Lord: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug. *Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you;* for I called him alone, and blessed him and increased him. *For the Lord will comfort Zion* [the mountain upon which the heavenly Jerusalem is built], He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.' Isa 51:1-3.

Two marriage covenants

The apostle Paul drew our attention to the marriage of Christ and His bride in his letter to the Romans. He wrote, 'For the woman [speaking of the bride of Christ] who has a husband is bound by the Law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the Law of her husband.' Rom 7:2. Paul then explained, 'You also have become dead to the Law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another - to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.' Rom 7:4.

In these statements, Paul nominated two marriage covenants between Christ and His bride, the church. The first marriage covenant is the Law Covenant, which Paul described as 'the oldness of the letter'. He described the second marriage covenant as 'the newness of the Spirit. Rom 7:6.

Speaking of the old marriage covenant, Stephen described the Israelites who were delivered out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses, as '*the church in the wilderness*'. Act 7:38. As the church, the nation of Israel was married to Christ through the Law Covenant that was made on Mount Sinai. This Covenant was made with the children of Israel in response to their assertion, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do'. Exo 19:8. It was a covenant made with the flesh.

This marriage proved to be a failure on account of the weakness of the flesh. Even before Moses had descended Mount Sinai with the Law Covenant that God had made with the children of Israel, they were unfaithful to Him, worshipping a golden calf. The establishment and worship of this idol was a religious exercise. The image had been fashioned by Aaron using offerings of gold from the people. Following its construction, Aaron proclaimed, 'Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord [Yahweh]'. Exo 32:5. The people rose early, applying themselves to the sacraments of burnt offerings and peace offerings. They engaged in the sacrament of the communion, 'sitting down to eat and drink'; and they pursued the lusts of flesh, 'rising up to play'. Exo 32:6.

This propensity to idolatry plagued Israel for the whole of their marriage to the Lord. Lamenting their unfaithfulness, the Lord Himself declared, ' "Surely, *as a wife treacherously departs from her husband*, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel," says the Lord. A voice was heard on the desolate heights, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel. For they have perverted their way; they have forgotten the Lord their God.' Jer 3:20-21.

The Lord, through the prophet Jeremiah, addressed the promise of a new covenant to His unfaithful bride. He declared to her, ' "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "when I will make a *new covenant* with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah - not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My Covenant [made at Sinai] which they broke, *though I was a husband to them*," says the Lord. "But this is the Covenant that I will make with

the house of Israel after those days,” says the Lord: “I will put My Law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother,” saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” says the Lord. “For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” ’ Jer 31:31-34.

Significantly, it is the Holy Spirit who bears witness to this new covenant. The apostle Paul noted this seminal point in his letter to the Hebrews, writing, ‘But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, “This is the Covenant that I will make with them after those days,” says the Lord: “I will put My Laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them”.’ Heb 10:15-16. Moreover, the apostle John explained that the Holy Spirit was given to us as an anointing from the Holy One. By Him, we know all things. 1Jn 2:20. Furthermore, this anointing teaches us all things so that ‘no more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, “Know the Lord”.’ 1Jn 2:27. Jer 31:34. Those who receive this anointing, and are taught by it, abide in Christ. 1Jn 2:27. This anointing is the Holy Spirit by whom we are *sealed*. 2Co 1:21-22. We will develop this point further in Chapter 4.

We note that the two covenants identified by the Lord, through the prophet Jeremiah, were symbolised in the Scriptures by the two wives of Abraham. Gal 4:22-31. Hagar, whom Paul described as a bondwoman, symbolised the marriage covenant of Israel, the church in the wilderness, with Christ at Mount Sinai. The children of this union are in bondage, with Hagar, to the law of sin and death. Gal 4:25.

In contrast, Sarah is likened to ‘the Jerusalem from above’. She symbolised marriage to Christ according to the Covenant of the Spirit. Gal 4:26. The children of the Jerusalem from above are delivered from the bondage of corruption that defines life according to the flesh, and are established in the glorious liberty of sonship. Rom 8:21. They are delivered to liberty as they are led by the Spirit on the pathway of salvation that Christ pioneered for them through His offering and sufferings.

The end of an old marriage

Returning to Paul’s explanation of being married to Christ as part of the Jerusalem from above, we recall that if the husband dies, his wife is released from the law of her husband and is free to marry another man. Rom 7:2-3. The Old Covenant was brought to an end when Jesus took the Law out of the way, and nailed it with Himself to the cross, where He died. Col 2:14.

As we noted earlier, the body of Christ, the one new man, was formed as He endured the third wounding event of His offering journey. This is when He was chastened with rods, for our peace. Mat 26:27-28. Isa 50:6. Isa 53:5. The new man was fully established, and manifest on the cross, following the seventh wound.

After this, Christ committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father and was received to the throne of the Father. A spear was thrust into the side of Christ, causing blood, water, and a spirit of grace and supplication to flow from His side. These elements constituted the 'rib' from which the Father formed the bride of Christ. The prophet Zechariah described these elements, flowing from Christ's side, as 'a fountain for sin and uncleanness'. Zec 13:1. The apostle John observed this fountain as being the river of life that flowed from the throne of God and the Lamb, in the midst of the bride city. Rev 22:1-2.

To be married to Christ as part of His bride, we must become 'dead to the Law through the body of Christ'. Rom 7:4. That is, having been born from above to see the kingdom, we must be baptised into the death of Christ, where we can be joined to the process of chastening through which we are delivered from our misappropriation of the Law which is the basis of all relational enmity. This is because the Law is used, by those who are carnal, to judge, accuse, or excuse others, and to justify themselves. Relational disharmony and disconnection are the unavoidable outcomes of relating to one another on this basis. Note that our establishment as a member of the one body of Christ precedes our identification as the true Israel of God, the bride.

Having been born of the Father, baptised into Christ, and sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, we are led by the Spirit on the pathway of salvation that Christ pioneered specifically for us through His offering and suffering journey. By this means, we are able to walk before the Lord blamelessly, as did our father, Abraham, and our mother, Sarah. In this fellowship, the Spirit, the water, and the blood are active in our lives and households, bringing life and cleansing, and enabling us to mature as spiritual sons. 1Jn 5:6-8.

As we walk by the Spirit in this manner, we are being delivered from our other law and from the old gospels that deceptively promote self-righteousness and self-justification as a way to life. As this deliverance is happening, we are able to serve one another in the newness of the Spirit. Rom 7:6. We are children of the freewoman! And we are maturing to be part of the freewoman! Having obtained this liberty, we serve one another through *agape* love. Gal 5:13. That is, we are worthy to partake of the *agape* wedding supper of Christ and His bride. Luk 14:16-24.

In summary, the waypoints of sanctification, through which the bride becomes dead to the Law and is then able to be married to Christ, are summed up in baptism. Through baptism into the death of Christ, we are delivered from an old covenant and are established in the New Covenant of the Spirit.

Adulterers and adulteresses

Although Christ has taken the Law Covenant out of the way, and nullified the old marriage covenant through His death, we can rebuild what should have been destroyed through our fellowship in Christ's death as a member of His body. As Paul noted, 'For if I *build again those things which I destroyed*, I make myself a transgressor. For I, through the Law, died to the Law that I might live to God.' Gal 2:18-19. We do this when we spurn the Spirit and the way that He is leading us, and set our mind on the flesh, endeavouring to be acceptable through our religious and sacramental practices.

Noting that the Galatian church had indeed re-established the observance of carnal commandments as the way to life, Paul exclaimed, 'O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain - if indeed it was in vain?' Gal 3:1-4.

If we return to walking according to the principles of the flesh, the basis of our connection to Christ is an old covenant. We are of the motherhood of Hagar, having been entangled again with a yoke of bondage to the law of sin and death. Gal 4:25. Gal 5:1. Rom 7:23. Unless we find repentance, and are restored to faith by the Spirit, we are at risk of being cast out of the kingdom. Gal 4:30.

Significantly, we become 'adulteresses' when we begin in the Spirit, but then revert to walking according to the flesh by seeking acceptance and assurance through the sacramental observance of ordinances through which we believe we can be justified before the Lord. Rom 7:3. As the children of Hagar, we are no different from the Israelites at Mount Sinai. Our religious activities are idolatrous, and we inevitably fall into sin through the pursuit of pleasure. James described this 'spirit of the world', writing, 'Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?' Jas 4:4-5.

We are being delivered from our adulterous ways as we receive the word of Christ, proclaimed by the Holy Spirit through the presbytery. As we will consider in Chapter 4, this ministry is fundamental to a church being made comparable to Christ as His bride. Jesus likened the preparation of His bride, for the *agape* wedding celebration in the Father's house, to 'five wise and five foolish virgins'. This is not simply referring to ten different churches. Rather, it is drawing our attention to the polarising effect of Christ's initiative toward His lampstand

church to present her to Himself as a glorious bride that is holy and without blemish, not having spot or wrinkle. Eph 5:26-27.

The 'five wise virgins' represent churches, households, and individuals who are walking blamelessly by the Spirit. They are receiving the word of present truth, proclaimed by the Holy Spirit, through Christ's messengers. This word is washing them and is defining for them, the pathway of life. As they walk by the Spirit in the light of the word, they are led in the pathway that Christ pioneered for them through His offering and suffering journey. Significantly, they are being established as members of Christ's body, and of His bride, as they are delivered from their adulterous propensities to carnality and are established in the way of obedience that belongs to submission to the headship of Christ.

Chapter 3

Betrayal and the redemption of the bride

On the night He was betrayed

Prior to Christ's return at the end of the age, many believers will be deceived by false messengers and alternative gospels. Mat 24:4-5. They will be offended by the gospel of God and its cultural implications for their lives. Resisting the Holy Spirit through unbelief and disobedience to the word of present truth, they will betray and hate one another. This betrayal, which will occur within churches and Christian families, will be the fruit of lawlessness as their love grows cold. Mat 24:10-12.

Amazingly, individuals, families and churches who respond with repentance and faith to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and who embrace their fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ, will be washed, purified and made adequate for their service and citizenship in the heavenly Jerusalem. As part of a restored remnant bride, they will participate in the proclamation of the gospel of sonship in all the world as witnesses to all nations. Mat 24:13-14. Christ will be publicly portrayed as crucified among their hearers as they are joined to the sufferings that were caused by Christ's betrayal. Gal 3:1.

The betrayal of the Lord was a key aspect of His offering and suffering journey. Emphasising its significance, the apostle Paul wrote, 'For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread'. 1Co 11:23. Why did the Lord reveal to Paul that He

took bread and the cup of the New Covenant on the night that He was betrayed? Why did he not nominate this as the night that Christ's offering and suffering journey commenced? Clearly, betrayal was central to this journey and its outcomes.

Before we consider further these implications of Christ's betrayal, it is helpful to understand the progressive nature of betrayal at a personal level. This was exemplified in the life of Judas, where we observe four key responses leading to the condemnation of Jesus. These responses include unbelief, opposition, betrayal, and treachery.

Unbeliever

The first stage in Judas' betrayal of Jesus was *unbelief*. This became apparent when Jesus taught His disciples that, in order to have eternal life, a believer needed to eat His flesh and drink His blood. Joh 6:53. At the conclusion of this message, many of His followers, including His disciples, were offended at His teaching. Joh 6:61. Their offence revealed their fleshly orientation to Christ and His message. We know this because Jesus responded, saying, 'It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. *But there are some of you who do not believe.*' Joh 6:63-64. Significantly, the apostle John noted that Jesus was speaking about Judas, who did not believe this particular message and who would later betray Jesus. Joh 6:64.

The words of Jesus confounded the prevailing knowledge, understanding, theology and expectations of all of His disciples, yet they were not all unbelievers. When many had departed from Jesus on account of His invitation to eat His flesh and drink His blood, He asked His disciples, 'Do you also want to go away?' Joh 6:67. However, Peter responded, saying, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. *Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*' Joh 6:68-69.

Although Peter was offended by the word, and initially complained, he did not deny that it was the truth. Joh 6:61. This is because he believed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. In the church age, a believer is a person who has this same orientation to the presbytery. The Thessalonian Christians exemplified this disposition. They were commended by Paul, who said, 'When you received the word of God which *you heard from us*, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in *you who believe.*' 1Th 2:13. Peter's simple confession revealed that he was a believer. 2Co 4:13. It demonstrated the faith that Jesus later prayed would not fail in the day of trial. Luk 22:31-32.

Becoming a satan through unbelief

Following Peter's confession of faith, Jesus said to the disciples, 'Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you *is a devil?*' Joh 6:70. John noted that Jesus was speaking specifically about Judas Iscariot, who would later betray Him. Jesus was

not saying that Judas had been possessed by Satan. The word 'devil' literally means, 'an accuser, a slanderer'.

In Psalm 109, King David described those who had spoken against him, as 'satans', or devils. For example, he wrote, 'Do not keep silent, O God of my praise! For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful have opened against me; they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause. In return for my love they are my accusers [lit: satans], but I give myself to prayer. Thus they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.' Psa 109:1-5.

A person becomes a satan when the spirit of the world enters them, causing them to become a son of disobedience. They are of their father, the devil. Joh 8:44. Their assessments of the word, the presbytery, and their brethren, which they presume to make on the basis of their personal relationship with God, reveal this to be so. Rev 12:10. In the church, their expression has a distinctly religious hue that can be quite adamant in its assertions.

It was evident that Peter had become a satan when he responded to Christ's declaration concerning His forthcoming offering and suffering journey. Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him, declaring, 'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!' Mat 16:22. Jesus rebuked Peter, saying, '*Get behind Me, Satan!* You are an offence to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.' Mat 16:23. Note that Jesus did not rebuke an evil spirit in Peter; He identified Peter himself as Satan. Jesus could address Peter in this manner because Peter had received faith and believed that Jesus was the Christ. Jesus was not able to speak to Judas in this way, even though he, too, was a devil. This is because Judas did not believe that Jesus was the Son proceeding from the Father. Consequently, he viewed himself as a colleague of Jesus, whose interpretations of the Scriptures were equal, or even superior, to Christ's.

A person who has become a satan is different from a person who is possessed by an evil spirit. Such possession usually manifests as multiple personalities on account of multiple unclean spirits. Jesus noted this principle in His description of a person who was delivered from an unclean spirit that returned with seven other spirits more wicked than himself. Mat 12:43-45.

Collegiality is unbelief

Like Satan himself, a person who has become a devil presumes upon the right to judge the word, and to judge those by whom it is delivered. They make this judgement on the basis of their interpretation of the Law, which is the word of God. In so doing, they set themselves as the measure of what is true, making themselves equal to Christ and His messengers. This is the carnal conduct of *collegiality*.

A person who has a collegial bearing towards the word, the presbytery, and their brethren in Christ, is an unbeliever, even though they may claim to believe in

God or even agree with certain expressions and applications of the word. Through their response to the word, the messenger is either rejected or patronised. The associated actions that they take are not obedience; rather, they are compliance. They comply because the word that they have heard appears to align with their private interpretation of the Scriptures. 2Pe 1:20. Although they may disagree with the word, an unbeliever in the church may also patronisingly attribute the perceived errors in the word to misinterpretations, misstatements, and the explicable frailties of human messengers. Such a hearer is like Judas. They are unable to be discipled or fathered by the presbytery, which is the face of Christ in the church.

Those who are disobedient to the word, stumble on the way of holiness. They are then dislocated in their allegiance to Christ and His messengers and become lame in relation to their sanctification. Consequently, they cease to proceed in their most holy faith. They stumble at the word when it calls for obedience, claiming another view in the name of collegial fellowship. This is the basis for betrayal within a church. Unless they are illuminated by the Spirit, and are granted repentance, they will become an opposer.

Opposer

Unwilling to relinquish his presumed right to be the measure of the truth, Judas progressed from being an unbeliever to become an *opposer* of Christ. This was acutely manifest in the worthy house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. During the meal, Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. John recorded that the house was filled with the fragrance of this anointing oil. Joh 12:1-3. Upon witnessing this action of worship, Judas Iscariot said, 'Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?' Joh 12:5. John noted that Judas did not say this because he cared for the poor, 'but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it'. Joh 12:6.

Unbelief has progressed to opposition when a person begins to speak against the administration of worship and offering in the church. In their conversations with others, an opposer signals their misgivings about particular decisions or directions taken by the presbytery. They propose alternatives, which they believe better service the church and its mandate. These suggestions are not an expression of offering by which others are revealed. Rather, they represent initiatives through which an opposer's own projections may be expressed and validated. They presume that their conversations and reflections are fellowship, but, in reality, they are the basis of factions in the church which war against the *agape* fellowship of the Lord's table. In this regard, an opposer exalts themselves 'above all that is called God or that is worshipped'. 2Th 2:4.

Paul instructed Timothy on how to interact with those who manifest this oppositional spirit. He warned Timothy to avoid foolish and ignorant disputes because they generate strife. He then said, 'A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility *correcting those*

who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.' 2Ti 2:23-26. Overseers in the church should maintain the demeanour of the Spirit in their interactions with an opposer. They should remain gracious, yet faithful to the culture of sanctification established by the word.

Judas did not come to his senses, even though Jesus gently responded to his opposition with correction, saying, 'Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always.' Joh 12:7-8. Clearly, Judas did not give heed to this correction, but became increasingly indignant. In a similar situation, after witnessing a woman pour fragrant oil from an alabaster flask upon the head of Jesus, Judas went to the chief priests and asked them, 'What are you willing to give me if I deliver [lit: betray] Him to you?' Mat 26:6-16.

Betrayer

In response to Judas' query, the chief priests counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. From that time, Judas sought opportunity to betray Jesus. Mat 26:15-16. The word 'betray' literally means, 'to deliver, or commend, a person or thing to be kept by another'. For example, the apostle Luke used the Greek word for 'betray' in his account of the deliverance of Paul and his companions into the custody of the centurion, Julius. He wrote, 'And when it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they delivered [lit: betrayed] Paul and some other prisoners to one named Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment'. Act 27:1. The point to note is that a person can only betray someone if they have the authority or capacity to deliver them into the custody of another.

As we will consider in more detail later in this chapter, Judas had the authority and opportunity to betray Jesus into the hands of the Jews because of his appointment as an apostolic minister, a shepherd, and the keeper of the money box. In fact, he had been predestined by God as Christ's representative for the purpose of delivering Him into the hands of the chief priests. By this, we mean that Judas was supposed to deliver Jesus to the Jews, but he should have done so as Christ's ambassador. However, because of his unbelief, his self-righteousness, and his unresolved thieving, Judas was manifest as a traitor, rather than as Christ's vassal.

Judas betrayed Jesus into the hands of the Jewish council with a kiss. This was not feigned affection. Judas considered himself to be the friend of Jesus. He did not believe that he was condemning his friend to death through this action. We know this because, later, when it became apparent that Jesus was going to die, Judas was deeply remorseful. Mat 27:3. What is clear is that the friendship that Judas extended to Jesus was not the friendship that Jesus extended to him. Jesus said that true friendship involved laying down one's life for another. Judas was endeavouring to find his own life by using Jesus for empowerment and self-verification.

Towards the end of His earthly ministry, 'Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day'. Mat 16:21. Moreover, He directly confronted the religious presumption of the Jews and their leaders, provoking them to anger. From Judas' perspective, the teachings of Jesus and His engagement with the Jews were counterproductive; they were hindering His manifestation as the Messiah. Judas took it upon himself to connect Jesus with the Jewish council. He presumed that Jesus would make Himself known to them through the demonstration of a fitting sign. By association, Judas would be empowered to rule and judge the restored nation.

Of course, Judas was completely deceived. He was, in fact, an enemy of Christ. His kiss was deceitful because the actions that he was taking in the name of friendship were sourced from the darkness of his own understanding and perspective. Pro 27:6. We see that betrayal is not, in the first instance, the actions that a brother or sister takes to cause injury. Rather, it is the initiative that a person presumes, through their carnal, self-righteous belief, to be in the best interest of themselves, the messengers, the church, and their families. Their actions, while perhaps well-meaning, deliver the messengers and their brethren into the hands of those who hate them.

Significantly, with respect to the thirty pieces of silver, the Greek text that is translated 'counted out to him' literally means 'made covenant with him'. This transaction signified a relationship that Judas had established with this group, who were of the spirit of the world. This new friendship resulted in the demise of the One whom he also professed to love. This is a fundamental implication of betrayal, particularly in families when Christian parents accommodate a rebellious child. In doing so, they discriminate against their believing children who are 'of God'. The apostle James noted this unavoidable implication of conflicting relational obligations, writing, 'Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God'. Jas 4:4.

Traitor

Judas' betrayal of Jesus was exposed as treachery when Jesus was condemned to death by the chief priests. His self-sourced endeavours, whether he wanted it or not, resulted in the bloodshed of the Messenger of the Covenant. As Matthew recorded, 'Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!" ' Mat 27:3-4.

Having missed the prayer meeting of Gethsemane, Judas found no grace for repentance or for deliverance from his self-righteousness. In fact, he demonstrated the ultimate expression of self-righteousness by passing judgement on himself. 'He threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself'. Mat 27:5. This was the final and

ultimate expression of self-righteousness. Judas judged himself to be a worthless life, deserving only of death. His suicide was an acute and irredeemable outcome of the covenant that he had made with death, through betrayal.

Zechariah's prophecy concerning the shepherds

Judas' betrayal of Jesus into the hands of the Jewish council was prophesied by Zechariah. Central to this prophetic message was Zechariah's account of his interaction with three worthless shepherds. Because of their treatment of the sheep, they were denounced by the Lord, who said that 'their owners slaughter them and feel no guilt; those who sell them say, "Blessed be the Lord, for I am rich"; and their shepherds do not pity them.' Zec 11:5. These shepherds represented three ruling establishments that had misappropriated the authority granted to them by God through covenants – the Jewish council; the Idumeans (descending from Esau and Ishmael); and the kings of the world.

The covenant initiative of the Lord towards the shepherds and the sheep was signified by two staffs. A staff represents the authority and care of a shepherd. In this instance, it signified the initiative of Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd, towards all people. Concerning these staffs, Zechariah said, 'I took for myself two staffs: the one I called Beauty [meaning, 'grace'], and the other I called Bonds [meaning, 'unity']; and I fed the flock.' Zec 11:7. It is apparent that these staffs were the basis of the Covenants that the great Shepherd had made with the shepherds and the sheep, because Zechariah said, 'And I took my staff, Beauty [meaning, 'grace'], and cut it in two, *that I might break the covenant which I had made with all the peoples* [of the world].' Zec 11:10.

Zechariah cut the other staff, called 'Bonds', indicating the dissolution of the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. Zec 11:14. Drawing from the prophet Jeremiah, Paul described the breaking of the staff called 'Bonds' as the removal, and later the recovery, of branches from the root of the Green Olive Tree. Rom 11:16-24. Jer 11:14-16. He likened the fullness of the Gentiles, or Ephraim, to branches from a wild olive which were grafted into the fatness of the olive tree following the death and resurrection of Jesus. Judah was identified as the natural branches of the olive tree which were broken off and then regrafted into the fatness of the olive tree. The fatness of the olive tree symbolises the fatherhood of Abraham.

When the brotherhood was broken between Judah and Israel, they became two different branches. God dealt with the two nations differently. Paul's point was that the recovery of the two branches would establish the true Israel of God in the time of the end. Highlighting this reality, we note that the Lord addressed the Green Olive Tree as His bride, identifying the nation as 'My beloved'. Jer 11:15-16.

The payment to break all covenants

Christ could not be betrayed unless it was proclaimed and authorised by the Scriptures. Mat 26:54. Mar 14:49. Joh 17:12. This is a key point. Prior to His betrayal by Judas, no-one was able to lay a hand on Jesus, even though the Jewish leaders were already determined to kill Him. John noted this, writing, 'Therefore they sought to take Him; but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come'. Joh 7:30. However, when Judas betrayed Jesus into the hands of the cohort in Gethsemane, He said to them, 'Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me. *But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.*' Mat 26:55-56.

Prophetically declaring the state of the Lord's relationship with the leaders and peoples of the world prior to His crucifixion, Zechariah said, 'My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me.' Zec 11:8. The Lord, acting through His ambassador, Zechariah, gave the worthless shepherds the opportunity to dissolve their covenant relationship with Him. With this prospect in view, Zechariah said to the shepherds, 'If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages; and if not, refrain.' In response, they weighed out thirty pieces of silver. Zec 11:12.

Thirty pieces of silver was the value of a deceased male or female slave who had been gored by an ox. Exo 21:32. This was the value that the shepherds placed on their relationship with the Lord. It, therefore, represented *the cost to end their covenant* relationship with the great Shepherd of the sheep.

Christ's representative

Zechariah's request for wages, at the behest of the Lord, foreshadowed *Christ's own request* for His wages to be paid to *His representative*. Christ's representative was Judas. Judas had been commissioned by Jesus as an apostolic minister and as a shepherd of the Lord's flock. Mat 19:28. He had also been appointed by Jesus as the keeper of the money box, and was, therefore, the one who should have received the Lord's wages. Joh 13:29.

Interestingly, when Judas departed the last Passover, Jesus directed him, saying, 'What you do, do quickly.' Joh 13:27. This ought to have been Judas' work of collecting Christ's wages. He needed to do it quickly in order to return in time for the prayer meeting in Gethsemane. As we will see, through the misappropriation of his authority, Judas obtained the wages for himself as he betrayed Jesus into the hands of the Jewish leaders. In the course of making this transaction, he missed the prayer meeting in Gethsemane.

The appointments by which Judas was established as an ambassador of Christ, were according to his predestination. Yet, Judas was 'a devil'. Joh 6:64. He was a devil because of *unbelief*. As we considered earlier, he did not believe that eternal life was dependent upon eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood. Joh 6:64,70-71. Moreover, he *opposed* the preparations that Mary and another woman made for Christ's sufferings, death and burial. In this regard, he rejected

the notion that Christ would suffer and die and establish a pathway of salvation upon which he was to follow later. Mat 17:22-23. And, although Judas was appointed by Christ as a shepherd, he did not care for the flock. We recall that Judas was indignant that the oil with which Mary anointed Jesus had not been sold so that the proceeds could be given to the poor. However, his indignation was not because of his care for 'the poor of the flock', but because he was a thief who was stealing from the money box. Joh 12:5-6.

Like Zechariah, Judas did not ask for a particular sum of money from the chief priests. Rather, he asked them what they were willing to give to him to deliver Jesus into their hands. Note the record of this interaction in Matthew's Gospel: 'Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "*What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?*" And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.' Mat 26:14-16.

Judas had been predestined to participate in the breaking of the Covenant between Jesus and the worthless shepherds. However, this ought to have been as the Lord's ambassador, in the same manner as Zechariah. As the representative of Christ, Judas should have approached the Jews to proclaim the arrival of 'the Man whose name is the BRANCH', prophesied by Zechariah. Zec 6:12. He should have directed them to retrieve the dual crown that Zechariah had crafted, which had been kept in trust for the appearance of the King-Priest, Melchizedek. In the event of their rejection of Christ, Judas was to receive from them the wages that they would give to break their covenant with the Lord. Judas would have given the thirty pieces of silver to Christ, who would then, by one means or another, have been delivered into the hands of the Jews.

Instead, Judas misappropriated his authority in the deluded attempt to cultivate a relationship between Jesus and the Jewish council that benefited him culturally and financially. He did this because he was a devil, on account of his unbelief and his opposition to the way of offering expressed by Christ. According to his own interpretation of the Scriptures, the introduction of Jesus to the chief priests was necessary for Christ's appointment as the Melchizedek King-Priest; for the recovery of natural Israel; and for the attainment of his own rulership within this restored nation-state. Acting on the basis of his self-righteous understanding, Judas went from being the Lord's ambassador to being a traitor.

As we considered earlier, Judas betrayed Jesus by delivering Him into the hands of the chief priests. Significantly, it is only possible for someone to betray a person if they have the authority or capacity to deliver them to another. To this end, it is significant that the chief priests paid Judas, what Zechariah described as, '*that princely price*' of thirty pieces of silver. Zec 11:13. Thirty pieces of silver was not a princely sum because it was a generous amount or worthy of royalty. It was a princely price because it was obtained through the exercise of misappropriated authority from the kingdom to which Judas belonged.

Judas possessed authority from heaven to receive the princely sum, which was designated for the annulment of the Covenants between the Lord and the peoples of the earth, because he had been appointed to rule Israel from a heavenly throne. Mat 19:28. This God-given authority was noted by Jesus in His interaction with Pilate, the representative of the kings of the world. He said to Pilate, 'You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you [Judas, and then the chief priests] has the greater sin.' Joh 19:11. The apostle Peter also acknowledged the authority that belonged to Judas, saying, 'Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry.' Act 1:16-17.

Judas received the thirty pieces of silver and betrayed, or delivered, Jesus into the hands of the Jewish leaders. However, instead of acknowledging who He was and crowning Him as Melchizedek with the dual crown that Zechariah had prepared for His coming, the chief priests and scribes received Him from Judas for the purpose of shedding His blood and, thereby, ending their covenant relationship with Him. As we noted earlier, the thirty pieces of silver was the value of a dying slave. Jesus was the Father's slave, and this sum of money became the price of blood. The Covenants were annulled by the shedding of Christ's blood.

The precious blood of Jesus

The precious blood of Jesus was first shed in Gethsemane. This blood was not shed as a consequence of betrayal. The Son was not betrayed by the Father. This was the blood of atonement that was brought forth through the fellowship of prayer between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Through this offering, the Godhead was torn and bleeding. Christ's blood gave us redemption into the fellowship of Yahweh. Col 1:14. Rev 5:9.

At the conclusion of this prayer meeting, Judas came to the garden and betrayed Jesus into the hands of the Jews with a kiss. As Judas and the cohort approached the garden, Jesus Himself said, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, *the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners*. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.' Mar 14:41-42. This is when the Shepherd of the sheep began to be struck. The blood that was shed, through the wounds that Christ then received, was the consequence of His betrayal into the hands of the three loathsome shepherds - the Jewish leaders; the descendants of Esau and Ishmael; and the kings of the world.

From this point, as He was being struck, every grouping of sheep under the authority of these shepherds was being scattered according to the word of the Lord in the book of Zechariah. The prophet declared, ' "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the Man who is My Companion", says the Lord of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered".' Zec 13:7. Jesus warned

the disciples that this would happen. Mat 26:31. They were the first group to be scattered as a consequence of the betrayal by one from their midst. Mat 26:56.

Each wounding event was an implication of, and a participation in, betrayal for the princely sum of thirty pieces of silver. Significantly, as Jesus encountered each worthless shepherding authority, they were unable to establish His guilt or justify His abuse. His sufferings at their hands, and then His deliverance from one ruling authority to another, was truly a progressive betrayal by the whole of mankind through the shedding of innocent blood.

We note, in particular, that when the Jewish leaders betrayed Christ, their King, they betrayed the Jewish nation itself. Zechariah, foreshadowing this implication of their betrayal, noted that when he broke the Covenants with the worthless shepherds, 'The poor of the flock, who were watching me, knew that it was the word of the Lord'. Zec 11:11. Significantly, the Lord replaced these worthless shepherds with a new shepherding administration, whom Paul identified as ascension-gift overseers. To this end, he charged the leaders of the Ephesian church, writing, 'Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood'. Act 20:28.

At each site - in the court of Caiaphas; before Herod; and before Pilate - a specific covenant was broken as those who laid hands on Jesus chose, instead, to make a covenant with death. Isa 28:14-15. However, through these wounds, Jesus' blood was shed for the redemption and recovery of everyone who was now under eternal judgement. Every person now had the opportunity to turn, and to be connected to the Lord in a new way.

In this regard, the shedding of Christ's blood under the hands of those who participated in His betrayal, revealed the two-edged sword that was being applied to the great Shepherd. On the one side of this covenantal breach, every person was being judged for their participation in the betrayal of Christ. The former covenants that the Lord had with the people were being annulled, and they were being eternally forgotten by God, in judgement.

However, the blood that Christ shed on account of betrayal was also the fruit of a *circumcision*. Accordingly, as all former covenants were being annulled through the shedding of Christ's blood on account of betrayal for thirty pieces of silver, every person was being given the opportunity to join the fellowship of this circumcision. In the course of His offering journey, Christ's blood was speaking and granting faith to those who, by a spirit of grace and supplication, would look on Him whom they had betrayed through their sinful, self-righteous actions. They could be born again and established, through the circumcision of Christ, *as children of Abraham!*

Redemption by the blood

The thirty pieces of silver, which was paid by the Jewish authorities for the deliverance of Jesus into their hands, was equivalent to the sum that Hosea paid to redeem Gomer from her slavery to the one with whom she had committed adultery. Hos 3:1-2. Hosea was directed by the Lord to love his unfaithful wife with the same love that the Lord has for the children of Israel. In this regard, Hosea's action foreshadowed the redemption of Christ's bride through His offering on the cross.

Thirty pieces of silver was the cost to the Lord for the annulment of His old marriage covenant with Israel, the church in the wilderness. As we have considered in Chapter 2, this marriage was consecrated when the Law Covenant was made with the flesh at Mount Sinai. Israel was bound by the law of this covenant while her husband lived. This meant that if she committed adultery, she would be condemned to death. Exo 20:14. Lev 20:10.

Israel committed adultery through the pursuit of idols. Her idolatry marked her union with the spirit of the world. Like Gomer, she was brought into bondage to the law of sin through her religious idolatry. The implication of this slavery was her condemnation as an adulteress. By betrayal, for the princely sum of thirty pieces of silver, her husband was delivered to death. Through the shedding of His blood, He redeemed her back from her bondage to sin and death. She was able to be married to Him by a new covenant established in His blood. 1Pe 1:18-19.

It is important to understand that the thirty pieces of silver were not paid to anyone. It was the sum for which Jesus was delivered to death. Furthermore, the shedding of His blood was not a price that was paid to anyone. It was the cost to God to bring back a great multitude of sons and daughters of men from the dead through the resurrection life that was in the Son of Man's blood. Only those who would be sprinkled by this blood, by embracing their participation in His offering and sufferings, were brought back from the dead with Him.

A covenant of blood

The death of Christ as the husband of the bride was not only for the purpose of annulling a fruitless old marriage covenant; the Father came to kill Christ because the Covenant of circumcision that had been delivered to Abraham had not been honoured by the children of Israel. Their circumcision was not a commitment to walk blamelessly by the Spirit. Rather, it indicated their confidence to keep the Law through the exercise of their flesh. God's intention to kill Moses, because his children were uncircumcised, foreshadowed Christ's death for this same reason.

Moses was a type of Christ. He said himself, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.' Deu 18:15. Moses married a Midianite named Zipporah, and they had a son whom Moses named 'Gershom'. Zipporah was unwilling to allow Moses to

circumcise their son. By failing to circumcise Gershom, Moses had not observed the Covenant that the Lord had made with Abraham. Evidently, Moses and Zipporah were not one Spirit; nor were they walking blamelessly by the Spirit. Even though the Law Covenant had not yet been given, their marriage was not of the Spirit, but of the flesh. Consequently, they were not of the family of Abraham and Sarah.

The apostle Stephen highlighted that the unrepentant Jews were the fruit of an unfaithful marriage covenant. Israel, the Lord's bride, had been unwilling to allow her children to be circumcised with the circumcision that had been delivered to Abraham prior to the Law. Their circumcision, according to the Law, was not according to faith. He said to them, 'You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! *You always resist the Holy Spirit*; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, *of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.*' Act 7:51-53.

As Moses made his way to Egypt to deliver them from their bondage, the Lord met him and sought to kill him. Clearly, as we have already noted, the issue was the failure to circumcise his son. This must have been an initiative that Moses had sought to take, and had spoken about with Zipporah, for she knew the reason why Moses was at death's door. The Scripture recorded, 'Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses' feet, and said, "Surely you are a husband of blood to me!" So He let him go. Then she said, "You are a husband of blood!" - because of the circumcision.' Exo 4:25-26.

In contrast to Moses, Christ, who had come to deliver His people from their slavery to the ruler of this world, *did die* on account of the uncircumcised children brought forth from His marriage covenant with the church in the wilderness. However, His death was the circumcision that had been given to Abraham as an Everlasting Covenant. Gen 17:1-14.

Christ's circumcision produced the blood that established a new covenant with His bride. Jesus called this 'the New Covenant in My blood'. Specifically, He said, 'This cup is the New Covenant in My blood, which is shed for you. But behold, the hand of My betrayer is with Me on the table. And truly the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!' Luk 22:20-22. Through this death, and the shedding of blood because of betrayal, Jesus established the pathway of blamelessness upon which His bride could be sanctified and cleansed from her adulteries and her children could be legitimate.

A remnant established

Returning to the example of Hosea, we note that the adulteries of the Lord's bride were a betrayal. Even more than this, they were *treachery*! As the Lord Himself declared, 'Surely, as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel.' Jer 3:20.

Her unfaithfulness was treachery because her redemption from slavery to sin and death, which she had chosen, cost the Lord His life. In this regard, she was not redeemed by gold or thirty pieces of silver, but by the precious blood of Jesus Christ! 1Pe 1:18-19.

In the account of Gomer's redemption by Hosea, we read, 'And I said to her, "You shall stay with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man - so, too, will I be toward you." For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim. Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.' Hos 3:3-5.

We recall that Gomer symbolised Ephraim, the ten northern tribes of the nation of Israel. Having received Gomer back to his house, she was preserved by Hosea from her harlotry for she was neither able to be joined to another man, nor was she able to be joined to him. In relation to His bride, Ephraim, the Lord preserved her by scattering her so that she was no longer a nation who could commit harlotry through idolatry. However, 'in the latter days', meaning 'in the time of the end', this great company would be received back to the Lord as His bride and would again be fruitful as a mother.

If Ephraim is being reserved for recovery in the time of the end, what was the composition of the bride of Christ who was formed from His 'rib' and then manifest as coming down out of heaven on the Day of Pentecost? Paul, through the prophetic Scriptures, described the bride of Christ as *a remnant church*. Significantly, the apostle John identified those who were a part of the bride of Christ as 'the elect', addressing his second epistle to 'the elect lady and her children'. 2Jn 1:1.

In his discussion about the Jews, Paul also referred to the bride of Christ as those who had the election. He wrote, 'Concerning the gospel they [the Jews] are enemies for your sake, but concerning the *election* they are beloved for the sake of the fathers [Abraham, Isaac and Jacob]. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.' Rom 11:28-29. Just prior to this statement, Paul identified this elect company as a remnant in the church age, writing, 'Even so then, *at this present time* there is a *remnant* according to *the election of grace*'. Rom 11:5.

Isaiah described this remnant as being very small, proclaiming, 'Unless the Lord of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah [totally decimated and lost].' Isa 1:9. The question is, what happened to the rest of the nation? Their hearts were hardened by the word of Isaiah, who was sent to proclaim to them, 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed.' Isa 6:9-10. In other words, they no longer had any capacity

for illumination that could give them understanding of God's purpose for their lives. Without this understanding, they were unable to believe and then receive grace.

Earlier in his letter to the Romans, Paul established that the elect were the children of Jacob. In this regard, he explained, 'And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated".' Rom 9:10-13.

The implication of this identification is that the remnant church, who are the elect, are drawn from *all* nations and, through faith, become the tribes of the true Israel of God. As the remnant church, they are typified by Jacob's family who returned to Bethel. Gen 35:6-15. This is the place where Jacob had previously witnessed angels ascending and descending on a ladder between heaven and earth. The stone upon which he had laid his head was set as a pillar, and he poured oil onto it. He named that place Bethel, meaning 'house of God'. Gen 28:18-19.

In the same chapter, Paul further developed this point. He explained that God made known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy. Rom 9:23. The vessels of mercy are the children of Jacob (Israel), for he had confessed before the Lord that he was not worthy of all the mercies that he had been shown by Him. Gen 32:10. Significantly, Paul described these vessels, belonging to Israel, as Jews and Gentiles! Rom 9:23-24. He then quoted the words of the Lord through the prophet Hosea, who said, 'I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, "You are not My people", there they shall be called sons of the living God.' Rom 9:25-26. Hos 2:23. Hos 1:10.

We see that the elect are the children of Israel who receive their calling as a son of God and are established as part of the remnant church, the bride of Christ. They are the remnant of the true Israel of God, drawn from both Jew and Gentile. This point was reiterated by Paul, who then quoted the prophet Isaiah, writing, 'Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, *the remnant will be saved*. For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth.' Rom 9:27-28. The remnant are those who are being built on Christ.

The remnant church is the seven churches that Jesus addressed by letter in the book of Revelation. These churches are described as seven unclean daughters of Zion, to whom Christ is coming in a spirit of judgement and burning to wash away her filth, and to sanctify her that He might present her to Himself as a glorious church. Isa 4:1,4. Eph 5:26-27. Importantly, Paul warned that if we did not continue in the goodness of God (meaning, in the mercy and illumination

shown by God to Jacob from Bethel), we would suffer the same fate as Ephraim and Judah. That is, as wild branches that had been grafted into the fatness of the root of the olive tree, we would be removed. We would no longer be heirs of the promise that was made to Abraham and his children. Rom 11:20-22.

For this reason, Paul exhorted us to not be haughty, but to fear. Furthermore, he said, 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.' Rom 12:1-2. Our fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ is the evidence of our continuation in the goodness of God.

Water, blood and Spirit

A remnant church was established on the Day of Pentecost, comprised of representatives from every nation, tongue and people. Those who belong to this remnant church are committed to the process of being made comparable to Christ through the ministry of water, blood and Spirit. These were the elements that comprised the rib that was taken from Christ. These are the elements that are now active in the church to cleanse every believing household as they continue in the way of blamelessness.

The apostle John highlighted this cleansing and purifying work among the unclean daughters of Zion, declaring, 'For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.' 1Jn 5:7-8.

In this passage, John identified the order by which the grace of life is ministered to every person for their participation in the New Covenant - the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. The elements of Spirit, the water, and the blood, bear witness in our lives as we are established in the order of headship. It is first *the Spirit* who is Lord of the church age. He is the One who ministers the *water of the word* of present truth, through which we are washed. The word is the light of life in which we are to walk. As we walk in the light, we have a participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, where His life, which is in *His blood*, is becoming our life as we are being delivered from our carnality. This is the implication of the Covenant of blood between Christ and His church.

Corrupt shepherds in the church age

The dissolution of the Covenants between the Lord and all people, through the shedding of Christ's blood, was typified by Zechariah when he broke the staffs called 'Beauty' and 'Bonds'. Zechariah was later directed by the Lord to take for himself the implements of a foolish shepherd. Zec 11:15. This action symbolised the establishment of a shepherding order in the church following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These shepherds would rule in the church by the

same fallen principles as the worthless shepherds who betrayed Jesus in the course of His offering journey.

Specifically, the Lord said, 'For indeed I will raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for those who are cut off, nor seek the young, nor heal those that are broken, nor feed those that still stand. But he will eat the flesh of the fat and tear their hooves in pieces. Woe to the worthless shepherd, who leaves the flock! A sword shall be against his arm and against his right eye; his arm shall completely wither, and his right eye shall be totally blinded.' Zec 11:16-17.

In this prophecy, the Lord was referring to shepherds in the church age who would not care for the sheep, but who would exploit them for their own gain. These leaders began to emerge even while the apostles were still ministering. The apostle Paul warned the overseers in the Ephesian church concerning the advent of these worthless shepherds, declaring, 'For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.' Act 20:29-30.

Even before the death of Paul, these fraudulent shepherds arose in the church and began to draw away the sheep. 2Ti 1:15. They forsook first love as the basis for fellowship in presbyteries, replacing it with a form of church governance that formalised a distinction between a clergy class and the laity of the church. Rev 2:4. Significantly, the power of the clergy was consolidated through the celebration of the Eucharist, replacing the *agape* meal, or love feast, as the cultural foundation of the church. The early church fathers taught that a believer could only receive the benefits of Christ's life if they partook of bread and wine that was blessed to them by an ordained minister. Through this blessing, they asserted that the elements of the Eucharist became the body and blood of Jesus Christ to the congregant.

These and other gospel propositions, formalised by church theologians across the centuries, have been a *betrayal* of Christ and His sheep. It is not insignificant that the greatest of these abominable heresies pertains to the elements of the *agape* meal. We recall that the antecedent to Judas' betrayal of Jesus was his unbelief and misunderstanding of the command to eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood.

Why did the Lord allow corrupt shepherds to arise in the church, and alternative gospels to proliferate? Helpfully, in his discussion about corrupting influences upon the fellowship of the *agape* meal, Paul explained that this was for the purpose of manifesting those who were *approved*. To this end, he wrote, 'For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, that those who are *approved* may be recognised among you.' 1Co 11:18-19. James taught that those who were approved by their commitment to first love,

under the sufferings associated with betrayal, would receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Jas 1:12.

The Lord Himself addressed the worthless shepherds of the church age through Ezekiel. He said to the prophet, 'Son of man, prophesy against *the shepherds of Israel.*' Eze 34:2. Of course, by the time Ezekiel had been called as a prophet, the nation of Israel did not exist. The northern ten tribes had been scattered throughout the whole world, and the nation of Judah had been taken captive by the Babylonians. This prophetic message pertained to Israel, the remnant church established by Christ following His resurrection.

Among a number of key initiatives towards the shepherds and sheep of the church age, the Lord promised to deliver those who had an ear to hear His word. He declared, 'As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day.' Eze 34:12. This deliverance happens through a sheep's fellowship in the offering and sufferings of the great Shepherd. Eze 34:13-16. Psa 23.

Betrayal in the church

As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, Jesus warned that, in the period of time just prior to the Father taking His seat, many will be offended by the gospel of sonship and will betray one another. This betrayal will be a notable cause of suffering within the church, as lawlessness, or iniquity, abounds and the love of many people who belonged to churches grows cold. Mat 24:10-12.

The example of Judas revealed that this betrayal is only possible because of the misappropriation of authority that belongs to a believer who has been born of God and raised to sit with Christ in heavenly places. Like Judas, they are supposed to be ambassadors of Christ. 2Co 5:20. However, because of *unbelief*, particularly pertaining to the conduct of the *agape* meal, they will deliver believers into the hands of those who are opposed to the gospel of God. This will happen as they, for the purpose of their own verification, take initiatives on the basis of their own understandings of the establishment and ministry of the church in the time of the end.

In this regard, betrayal in the church will not necessarily be the outcome of malevolent measures taken against the brethren. Rather, they may be the inadvertent consequences of self-righteous congregants who, through their assessments, accusations, and opposition to the messengers of Christ, reveal themselves to be satans in the midst of the church.

Paul urged us to note those who cause divisions and offences through their opposition - be it overt or surreptitious - to the word that is proclaimed from the fellowship of a presbytery. Specifically, he wrote, 'Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus

Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.’ Rom 16:17-18.

Equally important is our humble and simple response to the word of the messengers, which is enabled by the Holy Spirit. By the faith that we receive through this word, we are to present ourselves for fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. In this fellowship, we are being delivered from the carnal propensity to walk according to our own understanding. Furthermore, we are enabled to fulfil the will of God through our obedience. This is how we are preserved from becoming betrayers ourselves. As Paul further declared, ‘I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.’ Rom 16:19-20.

We overcome those who are satans in the midst of the church as we, through their persecution, are joined to each wounding event that Christ suffered. This is where Christ’s blood, by which Satan is overcome, was shed. We overcome them by the word of our testimony. This means that we remain faithful to, and patient in, the sanctification that is part of our name, despite their judgements, accusations, and contentions. Finally, we overcome these satans because we lay down our life to the death of the cross. This is a fundamental implication of our ongoing participation in the *agape* meal that Christ established for us at the last Passover, and in the prayer meeting in Gethsemane that He invites us to join by the Holy Spirit. Psa 109:4.

Betrayal in families

Jesus also warned that, in the days prior to the time of the end, betrayal would be a factor within nuclear and extended families. He said, ‘Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.’ Mar 13:12-13.

An acute example of this betrayal in families is when a parent, or parents, embrace and accommodate children who have rejected the word of God, thereby spurning their sonship. The unbelief that gives rise to betrayal, and eventually to treachery, pertains to their understanding of the love of God. These parents believe that the unconditional love that they have for their children is God’s love. However, Jesus identified this false teaching as a feature of the doctrine of Jezebel. Rev 2:20-23. In the exercise of this fallen love, faithless parents discriminate against their believing children, betraying them into a family setting in which their obedience to the word is maligned and despised by their unbelieving siblings.

Parents can also betray their children when they fail to raise them in the culture of the word that is proclaimed by the Spirit to the churches. In this regard, through their rejection of this word, in preference for their own understanding of the Scriptures, parents deliver their children to a culture that questions the word and the presbytery. Consequently, the children are denied access to the

fellowship of the presbytery, which is the fellowship of the Father and the Son. 1Jn 1:3. These households can become a fortress that is set outside of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Of course, Jesus noted that, in the last days, children would rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to shame. These are children from Christian homes who will accountably reject the word proclaimed by the Spirit in lampstand churches. They will choose, instead, the lie that they can be who they want to be, which is promoted by the spirit of the world. As they seek assistance from worldly agencies for their deliverance from what they consider to be the repressive structures of their family and the church, their parents will be betrayed into the hands of the authorities. These parents will be considered abusers because of their commitment to sanctification in their households.

Give more earnest heed

It is important that we are not presumptuous regarding our own righteousness or susceptibility to betrayal. The truth is that unless we submit to the lordship of the Spirit, and persevere in our fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings, *to the end*, we will draw back to perdition, as Judas did.

A case in point, is a man called Demas. Paul, just prior to his death, wrote to Timothy, lamenting, 'Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica'. 2Ti 4:10. Prior to this, Demas had been described by Paul as a *fellow worker* with Mark, Aristarchus and Luke. Phm 1:24. In particular, he travelled with Luke as companions of Paul. Col 4:14. It appears that the spirit of the world, to which Demas had turned, was the alternative church administration that had arisen over and against the teaching of Paul.

It is confronting to read about a man who could turn in this manner, having suffered so many things with Paul, and having participated in the proclamation of the word from the fellowship of the presbytery. This was a great grief to Paul; it was a notable betrayal. For this reason, we must give more earnest heed to the things that we are hearing, lest we drift away from walking according to the Spirit in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Heb 2:1. If we will walk worthy of our calling, presenting ourselves for fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings by the mercies of God, then we will surely be part of a restored remnant bride, and will participate in the proclamation of the gospel of sonship to the ends of the earth.

Chapter 4

The bride made comparable

The bride of Christ is the church

In Chapter 2, we explained that when the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him', the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were principally referring to the creation of a helper for Jesus Christ. Gen 2:18. Evidently, a marriage was necessary for the fulfilment of Their covenant plan.

We also understand that Christ has *already* married a woman. The marriage of Christ and His bride is not a future event. The apostle Paul made this seminal point in his letter to the Ephesians, writing, 'Husbands, love your *wives*, just as Christ also loved the *church* and gave Himself for her'. Eph 5:25. The wife of the Lamb is the church. She was identified by the apostle John as being a heavenly city, called the New Jerusalem, which has been established on Zion, the spiritual mountain of the Lord. Rev 21:9-10. Heb 12:22.

Christ was married to His bride on the day of His crucifixion. In the same way that Adam's wife was formed from a rib that was taken from his side, the bride of Christ was formed by God from the elements of water, blood and Spirit, which flowed from the side of Jesus after He was pierced with a soldier's spear.

Gen 2:21-22. Joh 19:34. Zec 12:10. Zec 13:1. Those who have been born from above and been made members of the body of Christ are established in the bride as they continue to receive the ministry of the Spirit, the washing of water by the word of the Father, and the sprinkling of Christ's blood. 1Jn 5:8.

Informed by the prophetic writings and example of Hosea, the apostle Peter identified the church, the wife of Christ, as being a company of believers who were once not a people but who had become the people of God. 1Pe 2:10. Hos 2:23. Peter further described them as 'a chosen [meaning 'elect'] generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people'. 1Pe 2:9. From this statement, we recognise that the church is *the true Israel of God*. Gal 6:16.

Since the Day of Pentecost, when the New Jerusalem was first manifest as coming down out of heaven, the Israel of God has been a body of people composed of Jews and Gentiles who are making their calling and election sure. 2Pe 1:10-11. It has been a remnant church drawn from the twelve tribes of Jacob, which have been scattered among the nations. In the time of the end, this remnant will become an innumerable company when 'the fullness of the Gentiles', symbolised in the Scriptures as Ephraim, as well as a third of the Jewish nation, are fully restored as part of Christ's bride.

Presently, the remnant church is composed of believers in Christian households who are being built on Christ. They are hearers who have come to Christ, the living Stone, who is 'elect and precious'. This stone was laid in Zion, the mountain of the Lord. Having come to Christ, they are being built together upon Him as a spiritual house, or temple. 1Pe 2:4-6. As we considered in the Preface, the temple of Christ's body is a key reference point for understanding our participation in the covenant life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is, in fact, the interpretative key to Bible prophecy in the book of Revelation. Accordingly, it provides a reference point for where we are now, and defines the waypoints of our pilgrimage as churches in the season to come.

The temple, or tabernacle, is in heaven. Heb 8:5. Heb 9:11. It is the place where the Son of God is presently seated on His throne. Significantly, the lampstand of the true temple is before the throne. The lampstand is the piece of temple furniture that represents the church. Rev1:20. The *fullness* of the church age is depicted as *seven* lampstands. These lampstands are seen in every place as a local church in a region. This is important to understand, because it helps us to recognise the work of the bride on the earth, as a helper comparable to Jesus Christ.

A helper comparable to Christ

What does it mean for a wife to be a helper who is 'comparable' to her husband? Comparability is a relational capacity that belongs to the fellowship of headship. It is established, and then expressed, by offering, through the capacity of Eternal Spirit. In this regard, comparability is necessary for, and demonstrated by, a person who is joined to the fellowship of headship. It is essential to the order by which the life and grace of God are ministered and multiplied through offering.

The first expression of the bride's comparability is as a vessel of multiplication. As 'bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh', the bride is proceeding from Christ,

her Head. 1Co 11:8-10. She reveals Him through the proclamation of the gospel of God. As the vessel of weakness, she does this through offering, by the capacity of Eternal Spirit from the Holy Spirit. 1Pe 3:7. This ministry of the Spirit is the manifestation of the light of lampstand churches in the world. Rev 4:5. Those who hear this message may obtain faith by which they are born from above of the Father. Rom 10:17. Then, as they are born of water and the Spirit, they are themselves able to be brought to glory as citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. Joh 3:3-5.

The bringing forth of sons of God is not only an implication of the public declaration of the gospel. It should also be the fruit of families who belong to a lampstand church. We note, therefore, that the fellowship of first love within a family, and from house to house, is also fundamental to the expression of the bride of Christ, the New Jerusalem. A covenant family is the place where children are born, and receive the divine nature as sons and daughters of God. 1Co 7:14. Furthermore, through evangelism from house to house, believing households are a primary context in which hearers may be born again as sons and daughters of God. In this context, they are delivered from the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of the Son. Col 1:12-13.

Becoming citizens of the New Jerusalem

Through the ministry of the gospel, a hearer receives faith. This faith belongs to God. It is the same faith that Abraham received when the Word of the Lord came to him in a vision, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield [of faith], your exceedingly great reward.' Gen 15:1. By this faith, Abraham was illuminated to see that his children, who would be as numerous as the dust of the earth, would be brought to glory as the stars of heaven. Gen 13:16. Gen 15:5-6. They would become the citizens of the New Jerusalem, the bride of Christ.

Because a hearer obtains faith by receiving Christ, who is the Word, they become children of Abraham by adoption. Gal 3:7. This adoption gives to them the right to become a son of God. The apostle John highlighted this waypoint of salvation, writing, 'But as many as received Him [speaking of Christ, the Word and Seed of the Father], to them He gave *the right* to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God'. Joh 1:12-13.

Enabled by faith to believe for the promise of the Spirit, the believer is born of the divine nature as they receive the Holy Spirit. Gal 3:14. Joh 20:22. 2Pe 1:4. They are born to *see* the kingdom of God. Joh 3:3. However, at this point, they have not yet received a new heart and a new spirit. Rather, they have received faith to be connected to the New Covenant of the Holy Spirit.

A believer joins the New Covenant of the Spirit through baptism in water and by the Spirit. By this means, a son of God is immersed into, and enabled for, their fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Their new heart and new

spirit are progressively attained through a believer's ongoing fellowship in the seven wounding events that belong to Christ's offering and suffering journey. This is the pathway of salvation that He pioneered for them. Heb 5:9.

In the book of Ezekiel, the Lord outlined this implication of journeying with Him on the pathway of His offering and sufferings. He said, 'I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgements and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.' Eze 36:26-28. A person joins this journey through baptism in water and with the Spirit and, by this means, is established as part of the true Israel of God. Joh 3:5.

The 'adopted man'

Importantly, the adoption is not only a waypoint of salvation. It defines a whole pilgrimage through which a person is progressively glorified as a son of God and as a son of man. Although the adoption gives a person the right to become a son of God through new birth, they must continue in the adoption after they have been born again, in order to be saved. New birth, in and of itself, is not sufficient for salvation. Establishing this point, Paul wrote, 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.' Rom 8:14-17.

We see that the 'adopted man' refers to a person who has *chosen* their predestination. They were predestined by the Father to adoption as a son by Jesus Christ. They were to become a son of Christ, the Everlasting Father. Paul explained this point, writing, 'Just as He [God the Father] chose us in Him [Jesus Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons *by Jesus Christ to Himself* [i.e. to become His sons], according to the good pleasure of His [the Father's] will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.' Eph 1:4-6.

In His prayerful discourse to the Father on the Mount of Olives, Jesus outlined what He had given to those whom the Father had given to Him. In this regard, He prayed, 'I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.' Joh 17:6. The elements that are fundamental to receiving the treasure promised in the adoption include the word, the name, the glory, and the love of God. It is necessary to lay hold of these elements in order to obtain the treasures

of resurrection life, incorruptibility, and immortality, which are promised in the adoption.

These treasures are obtained only through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Emphasising this point, we note that there is no resurrection life apart from immersion into Christ's death. As Paul so blatantly proclaimed, 'Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.' Rom 6:4. For this reason, we can view baptism as '*an adoption contract*', entitling us to the resurrection life of Christ that belongs to the predestination of the adoption.

Those who receive the adoption through Jesus Christ will be raised on the last day. This is, in fact, the fulfilment of the adoption! Paul encouraged the Romans with this understanding, saying, 'For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, *eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.*' Rom 8:22-23. In this passage, Paul specifically connected the adoption to receiving an immortal, incorruptible body, which is then clothed with a heavenly body from the Father. Together, they form a spiritual body. A believer receives their spiritual body on the day of resurrection. This is what 'the redemption of our body' means.

The adoption is particularly manifest in the third wound of Christ. What was created in Adam, and then given to Abraham, *was recreated in Christ* when He was beaten with rods for our peace. Mat 26:67-68. Isa 53:5. In this process, we are given His life and nature, which is the divine nature, and are made a corporate new man. It is in this corporate context that Christ is crafting a new creation. Eph 2:14-17. This is a progressive process which involves regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit as men who are sons of Abraham. The significance of this point to our citizenship of the bride city is apparent. The bride is taken from the corporate body, which is also manifest in this wound. Accordingly, a person is not part of an elect lady (or church) if they are not continuing in the adoption.

It is important to acknowledge the distinction between new birth and the process of the adoption. That which is born of God does not sin, but is to grow to maturity and fruitfulness. On this point, it is notable that the apostle John said, 'Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practise righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.' 1Jn 3:9-10.

However, John was equally clear that a person who says that they have no sin deceives themselves and the truth is not in them. 1Jn 1:8. This highlights our need to be joined to the process that belongs to the adoption. In this process,

the old man, which does sin, is being removed from us; and we are being regenerated and renewed as a spiritual identity. We are receiving a new heart and a new spirit.

The viability of our sonship, which does not sin, but must mature, is contingent on our regeneration and renewing as adopted sons in the fellowship of Christ's offering and suffering journey. In this regard, the condition of our heart, which is the ground that is being regenerated and renewed, needs attention. If the stones of our other law and the thorns that belong to our desire for other things are not removed from us through the circumcision of Christ, then the seed of our sonship, which does not sin, can die. When this happens, our eternal sonship is lost.

Sealed with the Holy Spirit

The Father and the Son have given the dispensation of the church age to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is essential to the bride's capacity to be a helper comparable to Christ. He is also the One who enables each individual's citizenship as part of the remnant church. In this regard, our citizenship requires the seal of the Holy Spirit. In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul explained that those who are born of God are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. He wrote, 'In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, *you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise*, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory'. Eph 1:13-14.

The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our eternal inheritance as a citizen of the New Jerusalem. When we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, we receive the title, or deed, to a residence in the holy city! It is as though a down payment has been made, guaranteeing our citizenship.

For a married couple, the seal of the Holy Spirit is a remnant of the Spirit. Mal 2:15. In this regard, on the day of their wedding, when they ask for, and receive, a remnant of the Spirit, they obtain a 'plot' in the New Jerusalem. Their house has become part of the bride city so that the children who are born in their house are endowed with the divine nature, and are the godly seed whom the Father desires.

Living epistles

Highlighting a further implication of being sealed with the Spirit, we recognise that a seal is a device, such as a signet ring or cylinder, which is engraved with the owner's name or identifying motif. The seal is applied to a document, usually through an impression made on molten wax. The seal authenticates the authorship of the document, guaranteeing that its content belongs to the one by whom it has been sealed.

Having been born of God, and baptised into Christ, we are 'epistles' of Christ, ministered by His messengers. These letters, or documents, are not written with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God. They are not written on tablets of stone, but on tablets of flesh; that is, of the heart. 2Co 3:3. We are made epistles of Christ and are sealed by the Holy Spirit as we journey with Him in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. We know this, for the Lord said, 'I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; *I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.* I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgements and do them.' Eze 36:26-27.

The seal of the Holy Spirit is set on our heart. Son 8:6. It is the authentication of what has been written on our heart, identifying our name and life as belonging to God. Importantly, this seal is not simply an identifier; it is full of power! Once opened as a book, we are able to be read by others as a living epistle. This epistle is read and known by all men as a testimony and a witness. Jesus said that we are baptised with the Spirit for this very purpose. Act 1:4-8. This is an aspect of our work as part of a helper who is being made comparable to Christ.

Significantly, as living epistles, sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, we are revealing the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In this regard, we are the book of life, the tree of life, and the river of life to others. These expressions belong to those who have received the Covenant of the Father, the Covenant of the Son, and the Covenant of the Holy Spirit, which we outlined in Chapter 2.

We specifically reveal the Father as epistles of Christ for, through this expression, we are a book of life to those with whom we interact. As we noted earlier, Paul described those who received the gospel of God the Father, which he preached to them, as 'our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men'. 2Co 3:2.

The Son, who is the Tree of Life, is specifically revealed through our communication of the word of faith that we have received, and that is in our heart and in our mouth. Rom 10:6-8. Describing this expression, King Solomon proclaimed, 'A wholesome tongue is a tree of life.' Pro 15:4. Furthermore, he taught, 'The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise.' Pro 11:30.

Concerning the revelation of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said that out of our heart would flow rivers of living water. Recording this declaration, the apostle John wrote, 'On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, *out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.*" *But this He spoke concerning the Spirit*, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.' Joh 7:37-39.

The light of the world

As those who are sealed with the Holy Spirit, our expression of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit can be summarised as being the light of the world. This is possible only as we are joined in one Spirit with our brethren in Christ. 1Co 12:13. That is, we must be part of a lampstand church. Jesus was unequivocal on this point, proclaiming, '*You are the light of the world*. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a *lampstand*, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.' Mat 5:14-16. Notably, in this statement, Jesus associated our connection to a lampstand church with citizenship of the New Jerusalem, a city set on a hill called Zion.

We are the light of the world, shining before men as part of a lampstand church when what is true in God is true in us. This is how we can be a book of life, a tree of life, and the river of life. Establishing this point, John wrote, 'Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.' 1Jn 2:7-8.

From John's statement, we recognise that the old commandment and the new commandment are the same commandment. The old commandment is the word from the beginning, revealing the *agape* love that belongs to Their fellowship. John described this as 'light'.

The new commandment is that the nature and fellowship of Yahweh is true in us. That is, we are joined to Their fellowship by receiving the word from the beginning - 'God is light and in Him is no darkness at all'. 1Jn 1:5. By receiving and obeying this word, we are joined to the fellowship of the body, which is the fellowship of the Father and the Son, by the Holy Spirit. 1Jn 1:1-3. Concerning the new commandment, John then exhorted us, saying, 'Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you [as a new commandment], you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us - eternal life.' 1Jn 2:24-25.

Importantly, and helpfully, the Holy Spirit teaches the word from the beginning as the new commandment. This is the New Covenant of the Spirit operating in our lives. The darkness of our own perspective is passing away because the word from the beginning (proclaimed through the gospel of God), which is true in Them, is true in us.

This light of life is the word from the beginning. It is how They live, which is Their love, Their faith, and Their hope. It is evident that the new commandment

is active within us when our perspective is changing. We are delivered from the darkness of our own way and perspective as illumination concerning the gospel of God takes hold of our lives and we are connected to the word from the beginning. As we obey this commandment, we abide in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in us.

Made ready for the Father's agape meal

Although Christ is married to the church, Paul was clear that she is in need of cleansing and sanctification. To this end, having identified the church as the bride of Christ, he then explained that Jesus gave Himself for her 'that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish'. Eph 5:26-27.

The presentation of the bride, by the Son, will happen at the *agape* wedding supper that the Father will initiate after He takes His seat to rule the world in the end of the age. The *agape* meal that the Father is preparing for the church will be the *exanastasis* life of Christ, which will enable us to hunger no more, thirst no more, and will protect us from heat and storm. This *agape* is a total provision, made available to us in our mortality, protecting us from Babylon and from Antichrist in the end of this age. We particularly note this protection when the Lord makes a distinction between those in the holy place, and those in the outer court which is to be trampled underfoot for forty-two months. Rev 11:1-3.

This protection is promised to those who belong to the bride of Christ; who have been counted worthy to participate in the wedding feast of the Lamb and His wife. The Lord has promised this protection to the daughter of Abraham and Sarah, saying, 'For the Lord will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.' Isa 51:3. Zion is the city that Abraham and Sarah looked for, which has foundations, and whose builder and maker is God. Heb 11:10. And even though they had faith for their residency of this city, it is comprised of all of their children! Isa 51:1-2.

The polarising effect of the word

The bride is sanctified and washed by the Son through the ministry of His word, by the Spirit. This word is proclaimed from the presbyteries that are in His right hand. Jesus used the parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins to describe the polarising effect of this ministry upon the seven churches. Mat 25:1-13.

Jesus taught that the door to the wedding feast hosted by the Father was opened to the five wise virgins. In contrast, the door was shut to the five foolish virgins because they did not have sufficient oil in their vessels. Their supply of oil was depleted because they had not obtained oil from those who sold it. The 'oil'

refers to 'the word of grace' that is ministered by the Holy Spirit through the ascension gift-graced ministers within presbyteries. The five foolish virgins are individuals, families and whole churches who do not respond with repentance and faith to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. They are unwilling to 'sell', or to count as rubbish, their own self-righteous perspective so that they can receive, instead, a gospel that joins them to a cleansing and sanctifying process. The polarising effect of the word that they spurn appoints them to their place outside of the Father's house.

The wise virgins refer to individuals, families and churches who have responded to the initiative of Christ as He comes among the churches in a spirit of judgement and burning, through the ministry of the Spirit. Isa 4:4. As they walk by the Spirit, in obedience to this word, they are joined to the process of cleansing and sanctification which Christ established through His offering and suffering journey. Even now, they shine the light of life that is obtained through their fellowship in this pilgrimage. However, they are made comparable to Christ for the proclamation of the gospel *in the time of the end*, and for the nurture of those who are born of God and come into the city during this time of great ingathering. To be 'comparable' means that they have oil in their lamps and in their vessels. Like the wise virgins, they will be able to maintain the light of their testimony in this present season. Furthermore, as they purchase the word that is presently being proclaimed by the ascension gift messengers of Christ, they will have sufficient grace from the Spirit to persevere until the end of the age.

The elect lady made comparable

Reiterating what we stated in the Preface, Christ first addresses the bride as corporate entities, or 'elect ladies'. In this regard, we note that entire churches can be cleansed, and entire churches can be taken away, on the basis of their corporate response to the initiative of the Spirit. For example, Jesus warned the presbytery of Ephesus, saying, 'Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and *remove your lampstand from its place* [which is before Me, in the temple].' Rev 2:5.

How does an 'elect lady', who is made up of individuals and families, respond corporately to what the Spirit is saying to the churches? Helpfully, the apostle Paul answered this query, writing, 'And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching'. Heb 10:24-25.

Clearly, we each have an accountability to encourage one another to participate in the *agape* meal that Jesus established prior to the commencement of His offering journey. As we partake of this meal through our response to the word, we are nourished for our fellowship - as individuals, families and churches - in the offering and sufferings of Christ. By this means, we are being sanctified and

cleansed, and are being made comparable to Christ. Our works as Christ's helper are not only expressed through the proclamation of the word, which is necessary for bringing sons of God to birth; they also include the capacity to nurture to maturity those who are immature on account of carnality.

The Scriptures liken churches that are being made comparable to Christ to a wise, virtuous woman. In the book of Proverbs, King Lemuel asked, 'Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain.' Pro 31:10-11. A church that exhibits these characteristics is being established in the *agape* meal of her husband, and is a place of protection for her children.

The process of comparability

As we noted earlier, comparability is a relational capacity that belongs to the fellowship of headship. It is established, and then expressed, by offering, through the capacity of Eternal Spirit. Eternal Spirit, from the Holy Spirit, enables a person to make offering according to their sanctification. Offering in this manner is essential to comparability. Hence, comparability is only possible by the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of sanctification. 1Pe 1:2. Sanctification by the Spirit within the order of headship means that Christ does not usurp the place of the Father; the man does not usurp the place of Christ in relation to his household; and the woman does not usurp the role of the man in relation to Christ. 1Co 11:3.

With this in mind, we note some key factors identified by Peter, which affect the comparability of the church. He wrote, 'Therefore, *to you who believe, He is precious*; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone," and "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." *They stumble, being disobedient to the word*, to which they also were appointed.' 1Pe 2:7-8. Clearly, obedience to the word of Christ, which is possible only by the Holy Spirit, is foundational to our comparability as part of the bride of Christ. Obedience to Christ is equivalent to being built on Christ, the living Stone; that is, being built into His temple. Disobedience to the headship that comes from Him as the Chief Cornerstone appoints a person to judgement and wrath.

Peter then proceeded to highlight that the obedience of those who belong to the New Jerusalem is very practical, and pertains to the conduct of individuals and households. In this regard, the expression of the bride is not only corporate, but is equally manifest by the fellowship of first love within a family and from house to house. Accordingly, an individual, a couple, and a household who belong to the bride city will live by the Spirit. That is, they will be submitted to the lordship of the Spirit. Of course, we must understand what this means, practically, and how the Spirit is our Helper so that we can be a helper to Christ.

A man's restoration to comparability

A man, by the Holy Spirit, submits to the lordship of Christ. As head of his home, he is to be obedient to Christ. This means that he is obedient to the word of the messengers who proceed from the fellowship of a presbytery. Paul described this spiritual orientation to the messengers of Christ, writing, 'You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first. And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, *but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.*' Gal 4:13-14. We see that by receiving Christ's messengers and their message, a man is submitted to the headship of Christ. He is enabled by the Holy Spirit to be obedient to the word, which builds him and his family into the temple of God.

The departure of the Galatians from walking by the Spirit to living according to an old covenant was not only evident in their observance of religious customs and conditions; it was also demonstrated by the way in which they heard and received Paul and his message. Having begun in the Spirit, where they would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to Paul, the Galatians were now measuring the word and those by whom it was proclaimed. To this end, Paul asked them, 'Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth [by the Spirit of truth]?' Gal 4:15-16.

A man defaults in relation to the order of headship when he turns to the face of his wife for direction for his life and for the life of his household. Gen 3:17. However, he equally scorns the lordship of the Spirit and the order of headship if he presumes to take the place of the gift of Christ in the presbytery. He does this when he expresses himself in his home as an alternative authority to the presbytery by reinterpreting the word for the household or by promoting a different word. In short, he does not keep faith with what Christ is saying by the Spirit to the church, thus undermining his family's obedience to what they are hearing the Spirit say. By doing this, he has established in his house his own 'high place', and brings himself and his household under judgement.

A woman's restoration to comparability

A Christian woman finds comparability through obedience to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit enables her to be obedient to her husband in all things. She receives grace from the Spirit for this obedience, whether or not her husband is obedient to the word. Peter exhorted believing women to this conduct, writing, 'Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.' 1Pe 3:1-2.

The apostle Peter described the submission and obedience of a wife as her 'chaste conduct', which is accompanied by the fear of the Lord. A godly woman's chaste conduct is the fruit of her fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ as she overcomes the temptation of Satan. It exemplifies the very conduct

that should belong to the bride of Christ. 2Co 11:2-3. Her chaste conduct is accompanied by the fear of the Lord because of her submission to the lordship of the Spirit. She has received the anointing of the sevenfold Spirit of God, which includes the fear of the Lord. Isa 11:2.

If a husband does not obey the word, his godly wife is not to take the place of her husband within the family. However, this does not mean that a wife must obey her husband if he asks her to leave the body of Christ, or the temple. Paul gave clear instructions in this regard, writing, 'And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise, your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.' 1Co 7:13-15.

Continuing to describe a woman who is part of the bride of Christ, Peter declared, 'Do not let your adornment be merely outward - arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel - rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.' 1Pe 3:3-6.

When a Christian woman subverts her husband in the pursuit of what she perceives to be good for herself and for her family, she spurns the Holy Spirit and rejects the fellowship of headship. Her contrary conduct within his house indicates that she is not making her election sure as part of the bride of Christ. Her incessant prayers, her reflections and testimonies, and her works of service cannot compensate for her rejection of the Spirit. These are religious works of the flesh that produce for her the passions of sin which are aroused within her because of unfulfilled desire.

The need for illumination

The apostle Paul was clear that the marriage of Christ and the church is a mystery. Eph 5:32. This means that it cannot be understood naturally. It also means that a person's native engagement in the church is not the participation that belongs to citizenship of the heavenly city. We can only know this mystery when it is illuminated to us through the conviction of the Spirit. True illumination through conviction leads to repentance and faith. That is, we will forsake our former expectations of the church and of our engagement within it; and we will embrace the process that Christ Himself has established to sanctify and cleanse us as congregations, as families, and as individuals.

THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

If we are not illuminated to the mystery of Christ and the church, our Christian conduct in our houses and in the church will be carnal. It cannot be anything other than a ministry of condemnation. However, as we are submitted to the lordship of the Spirit and are, thereby, established in the order of headship, we are being made comparable to Christ as part of His bride. Our expression, or ministry, in our houses, from house to house, and to the community, will be of the New Covenant. This is the work to which we are all being called as part of lampstand churches.

Chapter 5

Deliverance from the maze of carnality

The need for maturity

Let's begin by reminding ourselves of a key premise of this publication. That is, the church, the bride of Christ, is to be a helper comparable to Him in His work of bringing forth and nurturing sons of God who are spiritual. Essential to this work is the capacity to pastor those who are babes in Christ so that they come to maturity as sons who bear the fruit of sanctification. Rom 6:22. As we considered in Chapter 4, this is a work that belongs to a whole congregation. It is also the work of each Christian household who is part of a lampstand church.

It is for this reason that the apostle Paul introduced his explanation of carnality in Romans chapter 7, by addressing his readers as those who should be the bride of Christ. He wrote, 'Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the Law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another - to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God'. Rom 7:4. In order to bear fruit to God as part of the bride of Christ, we need to be delivered from our own self-righteous conduct. Rom 7:6. This is only possible through our *daily participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ*.

Paul explained that a person remains immature, or like a babe, in Christ, on account of *carnality*. He wrote, 'I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ'. 1Co 3:1. A carnal believer is a

person who has been born of God, but who sets their mind on the flesh. That is, they choose to pursue life through the works of the flesh, having begun in the Spirit. Paul noted that a person who sets his mind in this way has become bewitched by Satan and has returned to the weak and beggarly way of life that belongs to the spirit of the world. Gal 3:1-4. Gal 4:9.

The ministry through which a person is delivered from their carnality, to grow as a spiritual son of God, is described as 'the pure milk of the word'. 1Pe 2:2. This is the ministry of the bride of Christ, the 'mother' of us all. Gal 4:26. The apostle Peter exhorted us to receive this spiritual grace, writing, 'Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking [which are the fruits of carnality], as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word [ministered by the Lamb's wife], that you may grow [or mature] thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious'. 1Pe 2:1-3. A person is only able to participate in the ministry of the pure milk of the word if they are themselves joined to the process through which they are coming to maturity.

The elements of the maze

We can liken the carnal condition to a maze from which a person is unable to deliver themselves through their own strength. A maze is a useful metaphor for the life of a carnal Christian, for it speaks to the nature and implications of their pilgrimage. For example, a carnal Christian perpetually labours to be acceptable, but never progresses to the simple obedience that characterises spiritual maturity. Furthermore, they are always striving to enter the kingdom, but their failure to obtain rest, both spiritually and emotionally, indicates that this entry eludes them. Heb 4:1-2. Their situation appears to be hopeless. Acknowledging this predicament, Paul himself lamented, 'O wretched man that I am! *Who will deliver me from this body of death?*' Rom 7:24. The maze of carnality has several elements that impede a person's attainment of eternal life. Let us now overview these elements.

The Royal Law

The Law, which is God's word, communicates His will and reveals the culture of His fellowship. It promises life to those who keep it. This is very appealing to the carnal man, for they view the life that is promised in the word as a resource that can be used to verify and sustain their self-righteous, religious projections. This is covetousness, and it is contrary to the Royal Law. Exo 20:17. Rom 7:7. As a person seeks to obtain life by keeping the Law in their own strength, the Law proclaims their condemnation when they inevitably fall short of its expectations. Highlighting this point, James said, 'Whoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet stumble in one point [i.e. covetousness], he is guilty of all.' Jas 2:10.

Although the Law is killing a carnal Christian, there is nothing wrong with the Law. The word of God is perfect! Psa 19:7. The New Covenant does not deliver a believer from the obligations of the Law. Rather, it connects them to the Law *in a*

new way. They are to fulfil the Law by walking after the Spirit. Rom 8:4. The Spirit leads a believer in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. On this pathway, their heart of stone, which motivates them to covet life, is removed, and they are given a new heart and a new spirit. Eze 36:26-28. Moreover, the Holy Spirit writes the Law on their new heart so that it is their new motive for life. Heb 10:15-18. Jer 31:33. For a person who walks this way, the word of God is Spirit and life. Joh 6:63.

The law of sin

In the carnal condition, a Christian is brought back into bondage to the law of sin. Rom 7:23. The law of sin describes the way of living that belongs to fallen mankind who have been disconnected from the life of God. His life is only found in fellowship with Him. Consequently, those who are slaves of sin compete with each other for the limited resource of life. When living by this principle, their desire for life is a self-centred and covetous pursuit, motivated by the fear of death. Although they are born of the Father, the way in which they live is no different from the way of 'mere men'; it is of the spirit of the world. 1Co 3:3

Coveting life is the most fundamental expression of the law of sin, giving rise to all manner of sinful and destructive actions. James explained this point, writing, 'Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war'. Jas 4:1-2.

In bondage to the law of sin, a carnal Christian pursues religion. This is motivated by condemnation associated with their shame. Their condemnation may include a feeling of lostness because they do not know, or have not embraced, who the Father has named them to be. Through religion, they seek for *transcendence* above their sinful condition, believing to have life through acceptance by God and by others. However, this form of conduct is inevitably accompanied by, and informed by, comparison, envy, competition, divisions and complaint, indicating their bondage to the law of sin. 1Co 3:3.

The other law

The other law was established within the hearts of all mankind when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in an endeavour to become the source of their own destiny and expression. Our own law, which was fathered in us when Adam and Eve heeded and acted on the lie of Satan, is 'other than' the Law of love. This is because it is completely self-centred. The Law of love describes a culture of offering whereby life is laid down to reveal another. In contrast, a person's other law motivates all kinds of expression that are for the purpose of their own verification and their assurance of life.

Living by their other law, a person endeavours to craft an expression for themselves on the basis of their knowledge of good and evil. This is the basis of

their self-righteousness. They seek for validation of their self-righteous position through the acknowledgement, acceptance and affirmation of others. Without deliverance from their other law, they are brought into bondage to the law of sin and death. Rom 7:23.

The law of my mind

The mind is a faculty of the soul. By the law of the mind, a person endeavours to know and to express themselves according to the information that they collect and process through the natural senses that belong to their biological body. They understand themselves, and view others within their physical and social environments, through reason. This becomes, for them, the basis of truth.

The law of the mind can be in conflict with a person's other law. Rom 7:23. In these instances, a person comprehends and agrees with the word, concluding that it is indeed the way to life. However, motivated by their other law, their self-righteous endeavours to have life by keeping the Law through their religious practices bring them under its judgement. This outcome is contrary to the deductions that they make through the reasoning that belongs to the law of their mind.

Often, a person who is governed by this law is plagued by pernicious mind chatter and emotional distress as the mind finds itself in conflict with the dictates of the conscience. The conscience is a faculty of one's spirit, through which they are able to know themselves, without reason. This is because, for a son of God, their conscience bears witness in the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth. Rom 9:1. Joh 14:17. However, the mind set on the flesh, rather than on the Spirit, usurps the conscience. Accordingly, through cognitive appraisal, the carnal person accuses or excuses themselves, presuming to be the arbiter of truth. Rom 2:15.

The lusts of the flesh

The lusts of the flesh refer to one's desire for, and engagement in, anything that competes with God's will for their life. Jesus likened these things to thorns that grow up and choke the seed. Mar 4:18-19. A person who lives by the desires of the flesh is governed by the insatiable appetites of the flesh. These may include lifestyle pursuits, money, properties, vocational success, power, sex, food, wine, and so on. These appetites drive the person's behaviour in a similar way to that of the instincts of animals. Hence, the Scriptures liken people who live by the desires of the flesh to 'brute beasts'. 2Pe 2:12-14. Jud 1:10.

Paul noted that these people have a disagreeable influence upon others in the church, writing, 'For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly [lit: appetite], and whose glory is in their shame - who set their mind on earthly things.' Php 3:18-19.

The desire of the mind

Through appraisal and the rationalisation of information collected through experience, education, comparison, and even imagination, a person determines, or constructs, an ideal life for themselves. This is the desire of their mind and is the means by which they believe their life will have meaning. Living this way describes a 'soulish' person who is unable to receive the things of the Spirit, for they are foolishness to him. 1Co 2:13-14.

In the Scriptures, the epitome of a 'soulish' person is the 'scorner', or 'scoffer'. In this regard, Solomon noted, 'A proud and haughty man - "Scoffer" [equally, scorner] is his name; he acts with arrogant pride'. Pro 21:24. A person who is carnally minded presumes to be the measure of what is true on the basis of knowledge, experience, and rational thought, often expressed through thesis and argument. This is the basis of their authority within relational settings, including the family, house to house fellowship, and the church.

Knowing and expressing oneself through the capacity of the mind is darkness. It is inconsistent with the culture of the bride city. 1Pe 2:9-10. This darkness is acutely manifest when the word is proclaimed and a person then assesses what does or does not apply to them. In doing so, they quell the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Note that the Spirit does not insert Himself into the conversation or chatter of one's mind. Rather, He comes to bring conviction to their spirit. As Paul noted, 'The Spirit Himself bears witness *with our spirit* that we are children of God'. Rom 8:16.

Living by the Spirit does not mean that believers are mindless. Quite the opposite! Through the conviction of the Spirit, our identity as a son of God is verified as we acknowledge and turn from our sin. No longer seeking identity verification through reason, we are able to be obedient to a form of doctrine to which the Spirit delivers us. Rom 6:17. This doctrine is the word proclaimed from the fellowship of a presbytery. 1Jn 1:1-3. Having been set free from slavery to our own way and perspective, we are able to be a slave of righteousness. Rom 6:18. Importantly, we present our members, including the faculty of our mind, as slaves of righteousness for sanctification. Rom 6:19. Accordingly, we employ our mind for the service of fulfilling our obedience. This is what it means to be spiritually minded, and this leads to life and peace. Rom 8:6.

Deliverance from the maze by the Spirit

The result of these assorted influences upon the carnal Christian is confusion and irrational conduct. Noting this implication of the maze of carnality, Paul said, 'For *what I am doing, I do not understand*. For what I will to do, that I do not practise; but what I hate, that I do.' Rom 7:15. This confusion and its concomitant practices are the fruit of the moral weakness of the flesh. A carnal Christian's irrationality is further compounded by the emotions of sin which are

aroused because of their inability to deliver themselves from their fallen condition. Rom 7:5.

A person's self-righteousness causes their heart to condemn them as they hopelessly endeavour to negotiate their way out of the maze. Under condemnation, the *fear of death* then motivates their religion, confession and prayer. These fear-driven practices are foundational to the conduct of the carnal Christian; they are dead works. However, these are the practices that are advanced by old gospels which are peddled by those who belong to the synagogue of Satan within the church.

The carnal Christian engages in these self-righteous practices in pursuit of *serenity*. They are seeking relief from the sorrow, or emotions of sin, that accompanies their carnal condition. This sorrow includes disappointment; resentment; anger; frustration; heartache; condemnation; resignation; dissatisfaction; disinterest; anxiety; and emotional fragility. Desiring relief from sorrow that is caused by the Fall, they confuse serenity with the peace of God. The quest for serenity through good works, or even through prayer, is the practice of deluded religion; it does not achieve the peace of God. It is, in fact, the same motivation that belongs to other religions such as Buddhism or Hinduism. The true peace, which passes understanding and guards a person's heart and mind, can only be found in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Php 4:7. Eph 2:14-16.

Another irrational, but common, form of conduct which may be employed in the pursuit of serenity is the confession of sins to a counsellor under the condition of confidentiality. This practice is a self-righteous action that does not lead to justification or to life. Rather, it leads to condemnation and further corruption. These confessions are the self-assuring exercise of a person who is often ignorant of the true impact of their sin upon others. This activity is not motivated by love.

A person who is exercising faith by the love that the Holy Spirit pours into their heart applies themselves to the fellowship of *agape*. It is in this context that they make proper confession, because they seek relational recovery with those whom they have sinned against. With this in view, James directed us, saying, 'Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.' Jas 5:16.

Receiving the fear of the Lord

Those who pursue these forms of conduct in the vain hope of finding relief from the emotions associated with the fear of death find no relief, because they do not fear God. The fear of the Lord is not the fruit of self-righteousness. The fear of the Lord belongs to the Eternal Spirit of God with which Christ was anointed, enabling Him to be the Father's Melchizedek King-Priest on earth.

Marking the commencement of His earthly ministry, Jesus confessed, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me.' Luk 4:18. Isa 61:1. The Spirit of the Lord is the sevenfold Spirit of God, and it includes the fear of the Lord. As Isaiah prophesied, 'There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. 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.

We receive the Spirit of the Lord, including the fear of the Lord, which is necessary for our deliverance from the motivation of the fear of death, *from Christ*. It is the anointing that is upon Him. It flows from Christ to us if we hold fast to Christ the Head as a member of His body. Psa 133:1-2. Col 2:19. Clearly, a person's submission to the order of headship in the church, and in their family, is necessary for obtaining Eternal Spirit and the fear of the Lord. 1Co 11:3.

Returning to Paul's question, 'Who will deliver me from this body of death?', we could likewise ask, 'How can we be delivered from the maze?' The answer is, of course, through the Law of the Spirit of life that is in Christ Jesus. Rom 7:25. Rom 8:2. This Law is administered by the Holy Spirit, *who is Lord*. As Paul noted, 'Now the Spirit is Lord; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty [or deliverance from the maze]'. 2Co 3:17.

We are illuminated to our sin through the conviction that the Spirit brings to our conscience and mind, enabling us to find repentance, and to turn from carnality to the Covenant of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables our obedience and manifests our righteousness. Rom 8:1-2. Those who are obedient through the capacity of the Spirit are sons of God and have entered the kingdom of God. That is, they have been born of water and the Spirit. Joh 3:5. Evidently, they have found deliverance from the aimless and fruitless pilgrimage that belongs to the carnal maze.

Deliverance from sin through justification

Individuals and families who are encumbered by besetting sin must make a project of their deliverance from this slavery. Such a project may entail, for example, a season of regular prayer and fasting; the employment of supervision software; the removal of unhelpful devices or activities; and regular fellowship regarding one's progress. In this regard, a person, or family, must apply themselves with all diligence to the works that belong to the process of sanctification. 2Pe 1:5.

The question is: 'How can a person initiate such a project without it being a carnal endeavour that only serves to compound their condemnation?' The answer is 'by faith, through the Spirit'. Significantly, it is by this means that we obtain our justification.

As we considered in Chapter 4, a believer first receives faith when Christ breathes on them and they receive the Holy Spirit, and are born of the divine nature. They are born to see the kingdom of God. Joh 3:3. However, at this point, they have not yet received a new heart and a new spirit. Rather, they have received faith to be connected to the New Covenant of the Holy Spirit. Through baptism in water and by the Spirit, a son of God is immersed into, and enabled for, their fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Their new heart and new spirit are progressively attained through the believer's ongoing fellowship in the seven wounding events that belong to Christ's offering and sufferings. Eze 36:26-28.

Fellowship in the finished offering of Christ is the implication of one's *justification*, which they obtain by faith. This is a tremendous point! A person's justification is that, through Christ's offering journey, He has finished everything to do with their particular life and works as a son of God, forever. The Holy Spirit joins them to Christ, where they are set as a member of the body according to the will of the Father. 1Co 12:13,18. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit enables their fellowship in Christ's offering. By this means, as a branch of Christ, the Vine, they are able to bring forth, or express, the fruit that He has already accomplished for them, forever. As Jesus declared, 'I am the Vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.' Joh 15:5.

Justification leads to sanctification

When we accept justification, we can walk in *sanctification*. Sanctification becomes our eternal life. Rom 6:22. Justification is the sanctification that Christ has already accomplished for us, in which we are to walk for eternity. This means that justification is not an action that gives deliverance from God's judgement on the basis of Christ's substitutionary work. This is the view that is advanced by many traditional theologies. Yet, the Scriptures are clear - justification is the whole work of sonship that Christ has already accomplished for us. This is why Paul described Christ as 'Just', and 'the Justifier' of the one who has faith in Him. Rom 3:26.

Justification is the first implication of receiving faith, because a person needs faith to join the fellowship of Christ's offering journey. In this fellowship, they are being born of water and of the Spirit to enter the kingdom; they are receiving reconciliation and are at peace with God. As Paul explained, 'Therefore, having been *justified by faith*, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Rom 5:1. They are no longer an enemy of God; they are now part of a kingdom of priests to their God and Father.

It is important to recognise that, as those who are justified, peace with God is *through* Jesus Christ. This means that justification is available to us only as we are joined to the seven wounding events through which Christ accomplished our

justification. This was Paul's point when he wrote, 'We have access by faith into this grace in which we stand [equally, are appointed to abide], and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope'. Rom 5:2-4.

We see that faith grants us *access to grace* for life as we abide in Christ as a member of His body according to the appointment of the Father. 1Co 12:18. The evidence that we have entered this grace is that we *glory in the tribulations of Christ*. Glorifying in this manner means that the fruit that Jesus bore for us through His offering and sufferings is becoming ours as we journey with Him. The point to note is that our capacity to express the righteousness of God, which is glory, is only possible through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ.

Our *character is changed* as we persevere in this fellowship. This is because our other law is being removed from us, and our carnal motivations are being replaced with the virtues of Christ. As we are ceasing from sin, and we are fulfilling the works of obedience that Jesus learned and finished for us, the hope of attaining our sonship is being realised; it is not being disappointed. Rom 5:5.

Most significantly, Paul emphasised that this *hope is realised* because the motivation of *love is poured into our heart* by the Holy Spirit. Rom 5:5. This love activates our faith. Gal 5:6. As we stated earlier, this is our faith through which we obtain justification. That is, it is faith to join the journey that Christ has already accomplished for us. In the fellowship of this offering, which is a daily and ongoing reality for us, we are demonstrating, or fulfilling, the works that He finished for us. Jas 2:14-26. The Holy Spirit leads us in this journey so that we enter the rest that belongs to those who have ceased from the fruitless pursuit of their own way and are participating in a finished, fruitful work.

For those who seek deliverance from besetting sin, the works of faith to which they apply themselves, by the Spirit, produce the fruit of sanctification, the end of which is eternal life. Rom 6:22. The apostle Peter exhorted his readers to this application, writing, 'But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, *add to your faith virtue* [or, moral excellence], to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love'. 2Pe 1:5-7.

Peter continued by saying that if we do these things, we will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. 2Pe 1:8. Notably, Paul testified that he had to suffer the loss of all things, and to count them as dung, in order to obtain this knowledge, and to be found in Christ without righteousness of his own. Php 3:7-9. Peter further exhorted his readers, saying, 'Be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things, you will never

stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' 2Pe 1:5-8.

We build ourselves up in our most holy faith by praying in the Holy Spirit. Jud 1:20. As we set, or apply, our mind in this way, we not only obtain faith to choose the pathway of sanctification, but we are also enabled by the Spirit to journey with Christ on the pathway of sanctification. A fundamental implication of this fellowship is *chastening*.

Embracing chastening

Earlier in this chapter we noted that a carnal believer will employ various religious techniques to alleviate the spiritual, emotional, and physical distresses that inevitably beset them. 1Co 11:29-30. These practices may include anxiously petitioning the Lord in prayer for relief from their anguish; engaging in confidential confession with a counsellor; and executing a battery of good works. This form of conduct is a quest for serenity, which they confuse with the peace of God.

However, the peace of God is obtained only as a person sets their mind on the Spirit. Rom 8:5-6. A spiritually minded person is led by the Spirit in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Peace is the fruit of chastening that belongs to this fellowship. This is particularly evident in the third, fourth and fifth wounds that Christ experienced in the course of His offering journey. The peace produced by Christ through these sufferings guards our hearts and minds. Php 4:7.

He is our peace

Describing the third wound of Christ, Matthew wrote, 'They spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him [lit: beat Him with rods], and said, "Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?" ' Mat 26:67-68. This was Matthew's account of the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy, 'I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.' Isa 50:6.

When Jesus was beaten with rods, 'the chastisement *for our peace* was upon Him'. Isa 53:5. Helpfully, Paul addressed the implication of this wound in his letter to the Ephesians. He explained, 'For He Himself is our *peace*, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, *so as to create in Himself one new man* from the two, *thus making peace*, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.' Eph 2:14-16.

The misappropriation of the Law is the basis of all enmity. This is because the Law is used by those who are carnal to judge, accuse, or excuse others, and to justify themselves. Envy is also a fruit of the misappropriation of the Law.

Relational disharmony and disconnection are the unavoidable outcomes of relating to one another on this basis. We feel the pain associated with this wound when people make judgements and comments about us or our loved ones, which we view as unfair, ill-informed, or simply malicious. When this happens, we may sometimes feel as though we ourselves have actually been hit!

As we receive the sufferings that are caused by the judgements of others as a participation with Christ in His chastening, we are delivered from our own propensity to misappropriate the Law and to judge others. We cease from being the victim of other people's assessments because we cease from assessing them and ourselves. Consequently, as much as it depends on us, we are able to live at peace with our accusers. Rom 12:18-21. However, if we do not set our mind on the Spirit when we experience these wounds, we will react against our brethren. The resulting breach in relationship means that we will be unable to participate in the *agape* meal in a worthy manner.

The peaceable fruit of righteousness

In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul drew attention to the chastening effect of *scourging*. This chastening initiative belongs to the fatherhood of God, for Paul said, 'My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and *scourges every son whom He receives.*' Heb 12:5-6.

Under the direction of Pilate, Jesus was scourged in the Praetorium. Joh 19:1. Commonly referred to as 'the cat o' nine tails', the whip that was used to scourge Jesus was a terrible instrument comprised of nine strands of leather, each set with four or five pieces of sharp bone or metal. A full beating of thirty-nine stripes would bring an individual to the brink of death, having caused approximately 1600 wounds to their back.

The scourging that Jesus received was for the sake of our healing. Isa 53:5. It is particularly for the healing of our identity frailties which are exposed under the many and varied sufferings that are associated with time and chance. The natural man and the carnal man aberrate and deviate as a compensation for these frailties and fractures of their spirit. These pursuits are at odds with the works of obedience that were prepared for them by God. They are sin.

As we, by faith, receive and embrace our fellowship with Christ in this aspect of suffering, we obtain and express the fruit that Jesus produced when He was scourged. Highlighting this point, Paul wrote, 'Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields *the peaceable fruit of righteousness* to those who have been trained by it'. Heb 12:11.

However, if we draw back from Christ in unbelief when we experience the judgement and chastening that belong to this wound, we have no connection

with Him, nor with the consolation of the Spirit that would otherwise sustain us. 2Co 1:3-5. As Paul reminded the Hebrews, 'Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.' Heb 10:38. Christ's soul has no pleasure in a person who draws back from fellowship in this aspect of chastening, because nothing of His suffering work is then effective for them or in them. The sufferings that belong to these people are the harbinger of their eternal judgement.

Those who, by faith, embrace their fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ, including the scourging that belongs to the chastening of the Father, are able to make straight paths for their feet. That is, by the capacity of the Spirit, they are able to apply themselves to the project of their deliverance from besetting sin. Having exhorted his readers to embrace their scourging from the Father, in fellowship with Christ, Paul then said, '*Therefore* strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.' Heb 12:12-13.

King of Righteousness and King of Peace

The crown of thorns that was thrust on Christ's head, and the reed that was placed in His right hand and was then used to strike Him and to drive the thorns into His skull, was the fifth wounding event of Christ's offering and suffering journey.

Mankind was cursed by God because Adam heeded the voice of his wife instead of obeying the word of God proceeding to him through the order of headship. He embraced an alternative wisdom to that which is found in fellowship with Yahweh at the tree of life. Adam's rejection of Christ as his Head was the basis for all misappropriation and abuse of authority and power by mankind. The Lord God said that because man had rejected the order of authority that belongs to fellowship with Him, the ground would be cursed. Specifically, it would bring forth *thorns and thistles*. Gen 3:17-18.

Through this wounding event, Christ was crowned with thorns, bearing the curse of sin resulting from Adam's rejection of the order of headship. As the soldiers injured Him in this way, the authority of the kingdoms of the world was stripped from them and given to Christ. Moreover, He judged and destroyed every authority that sets itself against God. Accordingly, He became the Head of all the nations. Psa 18:43. He was crowned as Melchizedek. Significantly, His name means *King of Righteousness* and *King of Peace*. Heb 7:2. Through the power of *anastasis*, Christ established headship as the order of authority that belongs to the new man.

The thorns and thistles refer to the challenging relational interactions we experience in the context of our sonship works. These may occur in our marriage, in our interactions with our children, in the church, in our workplace, and in the broader community. They may be caused by the misuse of authority

by others against us or by others' rejection of the authority that we believe belongs to us.

When we embrace these 'prickly' relational circumstances as a fellowship in the chastening that Christ endured, we are progressively delivered from our own propensity to misappropriate authority. Furthermore, we are restored to the fellowship and order of headship. Consequently, we are able to receive wisdom from above, through which we are endowed with the grace of life. We receive authority and capacity from the Spirit to minister this same grace to others. We note, in this regard, the instruction of Solomon, who wrote, 'Wisdom [from above] is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. Exalt [or submit to] her, and she will promote you; she will bring you honour, when you embrace her. She will place on your head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory she will deliver to you.' Pro 4:7-9.

Renouncing the ministry of condemnation

Even before his death, the apostle Paul lamented that the entire Gentile church had turned away from him and from his gospel. 2Ti 1:15. This departure from the culture of *agape* was formalised by the early church fathers who rejected the Holy Spirit as the New Covenant, replacing the command to walk after the Spirit, with ascetic ordinances and regulations. Paul noted the ministry of this alternative and carnal gospel, writing, 'These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion [lit: will worship], false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh'. Col 2:23.

The early church leaders formalised the carnal gospel, presenting it as the truth. They promoted ascetism as the means by which so-called Christians could be made holy through *transcendence*, thereby denying the power of the Spirit and the cross. 'Transcendence' refers to the quality of excellence that surpasses some objects below it, as human nature transcends the irrational creation. Their self-righteous pursuits even led to the promotion of martyrdom as necessary for entry into heaven. The reinforcement of the carnal gospel substantiated the power of church leaders, generating an entire economy driven by condemnation and self-righteous endeavours.

As we have already considered in this chapter, these carnal pursuits including the confession of sins to a leadership figure in the church, and the granting of absolution - are driven by the fear of death. They do not belong to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Concerning the Spirit, Jesus said, 'And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement.' Joh 16:8. The conviction of the Spirit endows us with grace, which enables us both to see and to own our sin, and to seek repentance. The Spirit helps us to be accountable for our sin, and He joins us to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings through which we are not only delivered from our sin, but also

are able to fulfil the will of God and to become the righteousness of God in Christ. 2Co 5:21.

Dealing with tares and chaff

Jesus likened the distinction between carnal believers and spiritual believers in the church to the difference between tares and wheat growing in a field. In this parable, Jesus identified the tares as 'sons of the wicked one'. Mat 13:38. These are people in churches who are carnally minded, believing in the acceptability of their self-righteous conduct. Describing their end, Jesus said, 'Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practise lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire.' Mat 13:40-41.

John the Baptist spoke similarly of the judgement that will happen at the end of the age. Explaining the role of the Son of Man, John said to the Pharisees and Sadducees who had come to him for baptism, 'His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.' Mat 3:12.

Significantly, the winnowing fan is in the hand of the Son of Man. It is an instrument that belongs to the ministry of the stars, or presbyteries, in His right hand. Rev 1:20. Just prior to the time of the end, a division will be made between the wheat and the chaff through the ministry of the Spirit as the word is proclaimed from presbyteries who have been restored to Christ's hand. These *aggelos* messengers are given by Christ to lampstand churches, where the word will polarise hearers to a complete end. Those who have matured by walking after the Spirit will be gathered into the Father's house. In contrast, those who have spurned the ministry of the Spirit and remain carnal, will be cast out and appointed their lot in the lake of fire.

In contrast to tares, chaff describes the material that is necessary for bringing forth fruit from a seed. This material is separated from the wheat and is discarded following harvest. Describing this process, Jesus said, 'The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.' Mar 4:26-29.

The identification of these stages of a seed's maturation to fruitfulness - blade; head; full grain in the head; harvest; and winnowing - indicates that there is a process, or progression, to attaining the sonship that is promised in the gospel. Each stage of this process requires a measure of faith, revealing that obtaining the fruit of eternal sonship, which means becoming the righteousness of God in

Christ, happens 'from faith to faith'. Rom 1:16-17. A person's attainment of each measure of faith is demonstrated by believing and obeying the word. 2Co 4:13.

Each stage is necessary in order to grow to fruitfulness, but a person can stall in this process. They stall when they fail to continue to walk by the Spirit in the light of the proceeding word of God. They remain a carnal Christian, failing to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit through fellowship in Christ. They have the appearance of a plant, but no fruit of life that comes through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Often, in their carnality, they grow increasingly corrupt.

In light of Jesus' reflections on the tares, and John's comments regarding chaff, we note that, in the time of harvest, the distinction between chaff and tares is of little moment, for both are burned with eternal fire. King Solomon arrived at this same conclusion, explaining that for every purpose and for every cause, and for every person, there is a time and a season. Ecc 3:1. This includes time for a plant - be it wheat or a tare - to grow, and a time for harvest, at which point a separation is made between wheat and tares, and between grain and chaff. Ecc 3:2.

Elders and overseers in the church should know the times and seasons that belong to certain matters. In this regard, Jesus warned His disciples not to pull out tares from a congregation before harvest, lest wheat be unnecessarily uprooted with the tares. Instead, His servants are to let both grow together until the harvest, when the Lord Himself, through His word, will initiate the separation. Mat 13:29-30.

However, at the same time, elders and overseers must not ingratiate themselves to those whose conversation and conduct is at odds with the *agape* meal lest, at the Master's coming, they are found to be evil servants, beating their fellow servants, and eating and drinking with the drunkards. Mat 24:48-49. Their end will be the same as those who are tares and chaff, having been appointed their portion with the hypocrites. Mat 24:51.