

The Kingdom of God

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT

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Preface

One of the designations that Jesus gave to His disciples was '*labourers*'. It specifically relates to the work of tending the Father's vineyard, and to gathering His harvest. Mat 20:1-2. Luk 10:2. For example, Jesus said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest.' Mat 9:37-38.

Although ministry in the church and evangelism appear to be the primary focus of one's labour as a disciple, *this is not the case*. Paul was clear that our first labour is to *enter God's rest*. He wrote, 'For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. *Let us therefore be diligent [literally, 'let us labour'] to enter that rest*, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.' Heb 4:8-11.

In the Scriptures, the term 'rest' refers to an inheritance that is given by God. He called it 'My rest'. Psa 95:11. This inheritance is promised to those who receive God's initiative to establish them in His kingdom. 'The kingdom of God' is the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is revealed to us through the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom. We labour to enter this rest by receiving and walking in the light of the gospel of the kingdom. By receiving and walking in these commands, we are being discipled and are abiding in the name of the Father, the name of the Son, and the name of the Holy Spirit. Mat 28:18-20. This is the basis of our testimony and is essential to our labour for the sake of others so that they might enter this same rest.

Highlighting the significance of how we hear and respond to the word of present truth that is ministered in and from the presbytery, Paul said, '*For we who have believed do enter that rest*.' Heb 4:3. Believing is the fruit of faith which is received by hearing and receiving the commands of Christ the King. 2Co 4:13. Rom 10:17. Our relational obedience, through which the glory of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is revealed, *is the evidence of faith*. This is because faith is the substance of the glory that we hope for. Heb 11:1. Col 1:27.

The fellowship of the word

Our ministry as labourers is *the proceeding word*. This is *the word of faith*. It is not an endless pursuit of religious, mystical knowledge in order to discover ourselves through talk or through preaching. The word is substance both here and now. The word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Psa 119:105. If we are receiving the word in this manner, we will have fellowship with one another, for the apostle John said, 'If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.' 1Jn 1:7.

In fellowship, and from fellowship, we minister to one another and give counsel. Living in this way is the culture of rest that belongs to the kingdom of God. Giving and receiving in this fellowship is how we '*look diligently*' lest we fall short of the grace of God. The indication that a person is falling short of God's grace is a root of bitterness and discontent that springs up in their heart causing trouble and defilement. Heb 12:15. In the conversation of faith that belongs to fellowship in Christ, we look diligently at the word and its application for our lives; and we encourage one another so that each person in our community - be it in our marriage, our house, or in the local network of houses to which we belong - is appropriating the grace of God.

By this grace, children within our families are able to grow up into the same fellowship in which we are being established. This fellowship is necessary so that children who have been born with the divine nature can grow and mature as sons of God. By grace, they are able to bear the fruit of faith that belongs to the fellowship of the Spirit, and they are not limited by the thorny, familiar cultures that thrive in independent households. Those who receive the gospel are able to mature through repentance and faith as they reorient their priorities in life so that the kingdom of God is their focus.

The evidence that we are receiving the gospel of the kingdom and that we know the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is our focus on marriage, our house and our connection to the body of Christ. We are able to find proper and open connection with one another in these relational settings as we are coming to Christ to be built together on Him through obedience to His word. 1Pe 2:4,7.

Delivered from bondage

Our motivation for connection and relational engagement in our marriage, family and church is not the need to be serviced or affirmed. Our relationships are not encompassing, controlled or controlling. Rather, each person is able to meet in Spirit and in truth, and is never endeavouring to conquer another to satisfy their own wanton desires.

A woman is freed from wantonness as she acknowledges and forsakes her desire for control that is informed by romance and anxiety. The Lord identified

the basis of this fallen and native orientation to life, saying to the first woman, 'Your desire shall be for your husband.' Gen 3:16. It is the desire for others to 'be for her'. He further described its effect in a house and in the church as 'the spirit of Jezebel'. Admonishing the presbytery in Thyatira, He said, 'You allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality [through mixture] and eat things sacrificed to idols.' Rev 2:20.

A man is freed from wantonness as he acknowledges and forsakes his pursuits that compete with the labour that belongs to diligently entering rest. This is why Jesus said, 'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' Luk 18:24-25. This form of wantonness may be apparent in those who are colloquially described as 'workaholics', who prioritise work and business opportunities over the relational works that are associated with fellowship in the kingdom of God. It may also describe a man's pursuit of worldly, or fleshly, pleasures, where he confuses these experiences and opportunities with the blessing of God.

We are being delivered from the bondages that are associated with wantonness, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Gal 5:1. Rom 8:21. Our interactions with others are no longer for the purpose of identity verification, but are an opportunity to serve one another through love. Gal 5:13. This is because we are receiving our identity expression from the Son, who is the substance of our sonship.

We are no longer children who are trying, and struggling, to find fulfilment, being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. Eph 4:14. Rather, we are entering rest by entering the kingdom of God. This we do by receiving faith from the word. Rom 10:17. Our faith then becomes substantial as the expression of our Christian life from day to day. Accordingly, we do not seek fulfilment by any means other than by walking in the Spirit. Rom 8:14. This is 'the rest and refreshing' that belongs to those 'with stammering lips and another tongue', who are edifying themselves in their most holy faith by praying in the Holy Spirit. Isa 28:11-12. Jud 1:20.

Walking in the light

Those who are responding to the invitation to walk in the light of the word are coming out of darkness. They are sons of light and sons of the day. 1Th 5:5. In contrast, Jesus said that 'everyone practising evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed'. Joh 3:20. These people are not willing to walk openly with their brethren regarding the process of reformation and cleansing that is happening in their life, their marriage, or their house, because they are *ashamed*. Simply, this means that they love their projections rather than their sanctification. Our sanctification is ministered to

us by the Spirit through the proclamation of the word, and it is established in the fellowship of the body of Christ.

Jesus explained that people who are reticent to engage in a conversation in the light actually love the darkness, because their deeds are evil. Joh 3:19. That is, their expression is self-defined, proceeding from an evil heart of unbelief. Heb 3:12. They are deceived, thinking that their darkened perspective, sourced from the law of their mind is 'light'. This is a presumptuous and perilous condition that is manifested by their weariness and discontent, and by their inability to give and receive openly and easily in the light of the word. Mat 6:23. This inability to meet in the light will be apparent in the content of the conversations between a husband and a wife, as well as between couples from house to house and in the church.

Confession and testimony

Many people claim to walk in the light of the word; however, their engagement with the word, and the content of their conversation in *agape* settings, reveal otherwise. For example, some people often prioritise their own devotional focus or burden as they reflect with their spouse or friends. Others commentate on the word, communicating their own recollections of notable points, or their reflections on a point that they believe is relevant to their life. Often, these expressions are nominated as their testimony. However, this is not the speech that establishes fellowship.

Improving the focus and content of our conversations does not inevitably lead to fellowship in the light. The most basic foundation of fellowship is *confession*. Confession is the expression of the truth in the light of the word. It requires illumination, and is the fruit of our conviction of sin, righteousness and judgement as the word, by the Spirit, makes a breach upon our heart. Joh 16:8. Heb 4:12. In this regard, confession involves *giving an account*. Heb 4:13.

We are first directed by the Scriptures to confess our faults to one another. As James wrote, 'Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed'. Jas 5:16. Similarly, the apostle John taught, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' 1Jn 1:8-9. By directing us to confess our sins, James and John were not advocating confidential confession with a clergy figure. The expectation of confidentiality is, by definition, a desire to keep matters in the dark. However, they also were not suggesting that we engage in self-assessment and self-recrimination in relational settings.

Rather, we are to confess our faults to one another in the contexts in which our sin, which is illuminated to us by the word, has impacted upon those with whom we live. This will be an inevitable fruit of our application to the word and will have an expression in our marriage, our house and, in particular, in relational

settings in the church. In these contexts we are able to pray for one another, and can obtain healing and grace for our pilgrimage together in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. 1Jn 1:7.

Inasmuch as we are to confess our faults, we are also to confess our obedience, or righteousness. This is a 'good confession' that we share as those whom Christ has made to be kings and priests to God the Father. Rev 1:6. It is the expression of a believer who no longer belongs to the kingdom of darkness, but who has been delivered to the kingdom of light as a son of God. Col 1:13. Paul explained that Jesus made this very same confession before Pontius Pilate, writing, 'Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing'. 1Ti 6:12-14.

By confessing our faults to one another, and also making 'a good confession' through faith obedience, we are confessing Christ before men. This is because Christ is the substance of our repentance and of our obedience. Emphasising the importance of confession, Jesus Himself said, 'Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.' Mat 10:32-33. Jesus was not speaking only of the confession that we make before unbelievers; He was referring to our confession in all contexts of life, including in our marriage, our household, in the church and in the world.

Significantly, a person's testimony will always be preceded by confession. Without confession, our testimony will be little more than a commentary on the word of present truth or, as we have detailed in Chapter 5, the expression of the self-righteous 'despiser'. Act 13:40-41. Our testimony should be the fruit of faith that we have obtained as we have responded, with confession, to the illumination and conviction of the Spirit. Such a testimony overflows with life to others because it comes from our experience of fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. We join this fellowship by the faith that we receive as we 'confess with [our] mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in [our] heart that God has raised Him from the dead'. Rom 10:9.

An admonition

There are 'multitudes', even among us, who are in the valley of decision, choosing to receive or to reject the repentance and faith that Christ is offering to us in 'the house of Caiaphas'. Joe 3:14. Two apostles were in that house as Jesus was bruised for our iniquities and chastened for our peace. One proceeded from there mourning, and finding repentance and faith. The other found only self-defined penance. Thereafter, he defined his life and ministry as being

worthless, judging himself, and then executing himself by suicide. His 'mourning' was the self-indulgent attitude of a person who views themselves as being a victim, which only led to death.

Mourning for Christ our Firstborn with godly sorrow 'produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted'. 2Co 7:10. We mourn for the Son and for the inheritance that we have lost. And in the place where it was said, 'You are not My people', there we are called 'the sons of the living God'. Hos 1:10.

To the despisers who engage with the word through the law of their mind, the apostle Paul gave this warning: 'Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: "Behold, you despisers, marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, a work which you will by no means believe, though one were to declare it to you".' Act 13:40-41. From this passage of Scripture, the Spirit is saying today, 'You despisers, behold the word that is coming to you. Wonder at it, but find repentance, for the fearful and the unbelieving have no place in the kingdom of God.'

From now on, do not speak or pray from unbelief. 'All things are possible to him who believes.' Mar 9:23. That is, do not speak the assessments and judgements that come from your other law through the law of your mind. To the level of faith for sonship that you have attained, speak from there. 2Co 4:13. This is the expression that belongs to those who are growing to maturity as disciples.

Establishing this point, the apostle Paul testified, 'Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, *as many as are mature*, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, *to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule*, let us be of the same mind.' Php 3:13-16.

Pastoral teaching and ministry

The 'valley of decision', which we have just considered, is the 'valley of the shadow of death'. Psa 23:4. For the multitudes, *this is the place of choice*. Christ is sending messengers to proclaim His word, calling every hearer to come into the kingdom of God. Accompanying this call is the imperative upon a believer to choose obedience to Christ and His messengers.

In the parable of the marriage supper for the King's Son, Jesus highlighted that many of those who were called, or invited, to this feast, prioritised their own agendas over the claims of the Father and the Son. He said, 'But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused." And another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to

have me excused.” Still another said, “I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.” Luk 14:18-20.

The present word, which the Spirit is proclaiming to the churches through the ministry of messengers, is a challenge to everyone – to those who are already part of the kingdom of God; to those who have been called to serve as part of the presbytery; to those who are near; and to those who are afar off. Everyone is in the valley of decision on account of the word of present truth.

The call of the Lord that situates us in the valley of decision, is the word of sonship and the word concerning the bride of Christ. The word of sonship is the claim, or focus, of the Father. The word concerning the marriage of Christ and His church is the claim of the Son. Eph 5:25-27. Inherent in the word concerning the bride of Christ is the direction for sons of God to be established in the body of Christ. In the body, we are to learn to be a ‘member in particular’ in relation to our name as a son who is revealing Christ and not ourselves. This understanding belongs to the New Covenant of the Spirit, ‘which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets’. Eph 3:5.

For those who are proclaiming the gospel of God, the polarising effect of the word becomes a travail and a source of grief and pain. Messengers experience joy when their hearers receive and believe their message. 1Jn 1:4. However, there is sadness and pain when the word is refused, bringing their hearers under condemnation. As Jesus predicted, this travail and grief is coming into every household. We recall that Jesus said, ‘Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three.’ Luk 12:51-52.

Among those who are receiving the word, presbyters are ministering in the manner of a ‘nursing mother’. 1Th 2:7. They are feeding and instructing their hearers so that they grow from being spiritual babes to mature, fruitful sons of God. This is the work of the ‘pastor-teacher’, revealing the face of the eagle in the administration of Christ’s throne, and the work of evangelists, revealing the face of the ox. Eph 4:11-12.

Within the presbytery, the constraints of the Holy Spirit are being expressed as He guides each presbyter according to their name. He is restraining and directing each man, using, as reins, the circumstances that beset them. In relation to some matters, the Holy Spirit guides them through to something new, while other circumstances become a limit that He places upon them.

These reins are further expressed through the word of fellow presbyters who have, themselves, been admonished to teach, preach, exhort and rebuke within the presbytery. They are to continue to minister by the Spirit, and as an extension of Christ’s hand, with all long-suffering until those who choose not to participate, depart from the fellowship of the presbytery and the church.

They will choose another way, revealing 'the mystery of iniquity' that is already at work in the presbytery and in the church. 2Th 2:7. Prophesying concerning this time, the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy saying, 'Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, *do the work of an evangelist*, fulfill your ministry.' 2Ti 4:2-5.

The choices that people are making, as they respond to the word of present truth, are putting pressure on church and family relationships. The sanctification of a presbyter is put on trial when he is asked to accommodate behaviours within the church that are not Christian. If, by choice, he succumbs to the temptation of allowing such behaviours in the church, he comes under condemnation for his compromise. He is judged by Christ for allowing behaviours and attitudes that should have been reproved, rebuked, exhorted and dealt with in accordance with Paul's directions, who said, 'For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person".' 1Co 5:12-13.

This is the mandate given to presbyters. It becomes, for them, part of their travail as they are measured to the same rule - individually, in their marriage, and in their household. We note, in this regard, the Lord's warning to Ezekiel. The Lord said to the prophet that if a person with an idol in their heart comes to him and he hears and receives them, he would come under the same condemnation as the person with the idol. The Lord said that He will do this so that, through judgement, people will see and fear the Lord and He can take hold of them by the heart. Eze 14:9-11,5.

Chapter I

Receiving the word of faith

Believing through illumination

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul explained that 'if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved'. Rom 10:9. Gospels that are ignorant of, or fail to acknowledge, the need for a person to be born of God's divine nature and to be baptised in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit through discipleship, give rise to a form of 'believism' that can impede a hearer's entry into the kingdom of God. Christ Himself is addressing this alternative to the gospel of sonship that persists in the church.

The first point to note is that believing is not our agreement with, or even appreciation of, the word. Nor is it just a personal acknowledgement, or declaration, that Jesus is the Son of God, or that God is one. Jas 2:19. Believing is not only our personal relationship with Jesus, as important as this is to salvation. In fact, it is a deceived and damnable error to set our claim of personal relationship with Christ over, or separate from, being built on Him with others as part of the temple of His body. 1Pe 2:4-5. A person who truly knows Christ loves His word and the fellowship from which it proceeds. They will desire to be built on Christ, the Rock, as they let go of relational offenses which are the evidence of their disobedience to the proceeding word. 1Pe 2:7-8.

The apostle John was patently clear that *believing is discipleship*. He said, 'Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.' 1Jn 4:15. Equally fundamental is the reality that believing in Jesus is demonstrated by *obedience* to His word. This is the expression of a person who is spiritual and who is entering the rest that belongs to obtaining their eternal inheritance as a son of God and a member of the body of Christ.

We are believers if we are obedient to the word of present truth spoken by the Holy Spirit '*today*' through messengers in the right hand of Christ. As Paul explained, 'For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to *those who did not obey*?'

So we see that they could not enter in *because of unbelief.*' Heb 3:16-19. Significantly, believing is our obedience to the word of Christ, the King!

Believing is only possible through the illumination of our spirit by the Holy Spirit. Believing does not spring from the law of our mind as the fruit of reason. Accordingly, true obedience is not the outcome of the exercise of this law. It is not the works proceeding from the self-centred rationalisation of the implications of the word, even if we are in agreement with the word. Rom 7:15-16.

Faith is the illumination of our spirit to the kingship of Christ and the integrity of the Father and the Son from whom the word proceeds by the Holy Spirit. This establishes *trust* as being beyond the capacity for understanding with our mind. Emphasising this principle, Solomon said, 'Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.' Pro 3:5-6. When we trust in this manner, we do not stumble at the word through the disobedience that is informed by 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life'. 1Jn 2:16.

Faith is the substance and evidence of hope

The Scriptures teach us that 'faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen'. Heb 11:1. What is the hope that is revealed through the gospel of God? It is more than the resurrection; it is even more than everlasting life. Describing the Christian hope 'as a mystery that is now being made known to all peoples', the apostle Paul declared, 'To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: *which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*' Col 1:27.

We see that the wonderful hope, made known through the gospel, is for a believer to be progressively filled with, and a possessor of, the glory of God Himself! This is the hope that Abraham, our father, received. Significantly, Stephen declared that it was 'the God of glory' who appeared to Abraham and established him in this hope. Act 7:2-8. Abraham was illuminated to the hope of the glory of God when Christ said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.' Gen 15:1. The Lord then directed Abram, saying, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them ... So shall your descendants be.' Gen 15:5. Abraham believed the word of the King-Priest, recognising that he and his children would be filled with the glory of God, as stars shining forth the light of life. As he believed this hope, it was accounted to him for righteousness. Gen 15:6.

The word of faith is the means by which we obtain the hope of the glory of God. This faith comes by hearing and receiving God's word. His word is proclaimed as a command by Christ our Lord and King through the ministry of messengers who belong to the fellowship of a presbytery in His right hand. Rom 10:17. 1Th 2:13. Rom 6:17-18. We demonstrate that we have obtained faith through our

reverent obedience to Christ as we order our conversation and conduct aright in our houses and in the church. Psa 50:23. 2Co 4:13. That is, faith is the action of obedience to the command of a King.

The word of Christ our King pertains to our predestination as a son of God. It is completely focused on who we are to be in relation to the Father, to Himself, and to the Holy Spirit. To obtain and live by this faith, through which we are progressively brought to glory, we must forsake the projections that belong to our fallen desires. As we noted earlier, the obedience of faith requires us to trust the Lord and His messengers rather than lean on our own understanding. Pro 3:5-6. We can trust the Lord, for what He says, He will bring to pass. His word is immutable. Heb 6:17-18.

The apostle Paul summarised the process of obtaining the hope of glory through the obedience of faith, writing, 'For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, *these He also glorified*'. Rom 8:29-30.

The word of man's glorification in God

In Psalm 8, King David asked the question, 'What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honour.' Psa 8:4-5. Making this statement, David marvelled at the wonder of our predestination. According to God's covenant purpose, which was settled before the creation of the heavens and the earth, we were to be brought to glory as men who were made in the image and according to the likeness of God. Heb 2:10. Gen 1:26.

It was from this predestination that mankind fell, when Adam and his wife ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in an endeavour to become the source of their own life and destiny. Through one man's disobedience, sin and death entered the world. Death spread to all men, because all sinned. Rom 5:12.

Mercifully, the word of our predestination is ministered to us as the gospel of God. This is the word of our salvation. Even though we are lost to God and under condemnation as we eat the fruit of our own fallen ways, the word finds us. It comes to us as a word of deliverance. Those who receive, believe and accept the word, are born again to a living hope. This is the hope of our predestination, which has been fulfilled for us by Christ through His offering and suffering journey.

As miraculous and wonderful as new birth is, the parable of the sower and the seed teaches us that it is insufficient for salvation. Having been born of God,

we must be delivered from the stones of law and the thorny desires that compete with the divine life of which we have been born. Mat 13:20-22. Salvation is the fruit that is brought forth from the seed. We must, therefore, continue to receive and walk in the light of the word through which we find deliverance from carnality and can fulfil the obedience that the Father prepared for us, and Christ has finished for us. This is only possible by the capacity that we receive from the Holy Spirit as He leads us on the pathway of salvation.

The declaration of God's glory

God requires an adequate faith response from us when He brings His word of predestination to us. The word of faith that speaks to us through His messengers is a word that is alive and powerful. Heb 4:12. Even though it is spoken in weakness, it is, nevertheless, the word of the King. 1Co 2:1-5. It is an expression of His majesty as our Lord and King. The word comes to us with all the authority of a command. It carries within itself the power to accomplish what Christ is asking us to believe and to do.

Through Christ, who was the Word of the Father, God spoke the whole of creation into existence *by command*. Gen 1:3. Joh 1:1. Nothing existed before creation. Yet, since creation, all things that exist now respond to God as a thankful expression of His wisdom, beauty and power. Everything material and biological, integrated together, fulfil their created mandate by contributing to the expression of creation that gives glory to God. Celebrating this reality, King David declared, 'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.' Psa 19:1-4.

Wonderfully, God has promised that once we are established as part of His messenger- administration, the creation will herald our coming, in the same way that it declares the glory of God! He said, 'You shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.' Isa 55:12. This will happen once the Father has taken His seat; it is *the manifestation of the sons of God* in the time of the end.

God has drawn near to man and taken him out of creation. He has given to man ears to hear His word, and a heart that is able to respond to His word when He speaks to him. Pro 20:12. The Lord God did this when He breathed into the biological body of man and he became a living identity endowed with the dignity and accountability of *choice*. God has given to man more than we see in nature, for nature is only the *expression* of the glory of God. God has given to man the privilege and right to *share* His glory with Him, if we choose the offer that He has extended to us. This is the offer to become His children.

The word of God is the expression of who God is. The invisible things of God have been revealed in creation. Rom 1:20. However, eyes have not seen in creation, nor have ears heard (naturally, or through the dialogue of science), what God is now proclaiming to us through the Person of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is anointing the messengers whom Christ has chosen with illumination. Their work is to proclaim to mankind the mystery and majesty of God, which is '*Christ in you, the hope of [your] glory*'. Col 1:27. This is, albeit briefly, how the apostle Paul identified the means by which man would obtain the glory of God.

Christ, who is the Word of the Father in a believer's heart, will enable those who are born again of the Father's life to become kings and priests within the household of God. Rev 1:6. They will share the authority that Christ has been given as the King over all creation. Moreover, they share His reconciling, priestly work that harmonises everything in creation, leaving no room for sin to ever again undermine what God will continue to create in the new heavens and in the new earth.

In this age, when the word of God comes to a person, they have the choice as to whether they will receive and obey the word through the power that is intrinsic in it, or whether they will refuse the word, rejecting the right and authority of the claims of God in Christ as King over their life.

The sure mercies of David

Let us remind ourselves again that the word that is being sent to us from God the Father, through Christ our King, is the word of His Covenant that He has made with us. His Covenant is that He has come that we, who are dying, may have His life, and His life is resurrection life. Joh 10:10. Joh 4:14. We are then to share His glory as we join Him in His offering journey. We journey with Christ through our daily fellowship in His death, burial and resurrection.

Isaiah, speaking on behalf of the Father, said, 'Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you - the sure mercies of David.' Isa 55:2-3. The 'sure mercies of David' is Christ, our resurrection and life! We know this, because Isaiah then said, 'Indeed I [the Father] have given Him as a Witness [Messenger of the Covenant] to the people, a Leader [lit: 'Prince', referring to His kingship]] and Commander [Trailblazer all the way to Calvary] for the people.' Isa 55:4.

Confirming that the sure mercies of David is Christ, our resurrection and life, the apostle Paul preached to the Jews in Antioch Pisidia, saying, 'And we declare to you glad tidings - that promise which was made to the fathers. *God [the Father] has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus*. As it is also written in the second Psalm: "You are My Son, today I have begotten You". And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return

to corruption, He has spoken thus: “*I will give you the sure mercies of David*”.’ Act 13:32-34.

Christ our Witness, King and Trailblazer, then calls and ordains us to be His witnesses. Act 1:8. The sure mercies of David, given to Christ, are given to us. We are to be witnesses of the resurrection through our fellowship in His death, burial and resurrection. Commending us to this ministry, He says, ‘Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, and nations who do not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God [referring to the Father], and the Holy One of Israel [referring to the Son]; *for He has glorified you.*’ Isa 55:5.

The apostle Paul developed this theme in the book of Romans Chapter 10. He wrote, ‘For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, “The man who does those things shall live by them.” But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, “Do not say in your heart, “Who will ascend into heaven?” ’ (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, “Who will descend into the abyss?” ’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “*The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart*” (that is, the word of faith which we preach).’ Rom 10:4-8.

Messengers preach that *the word is near us*. There is no infinite gap between the Creator and the creature! The word that is in our mouth and heart, if we will receive, believe and accept it, is the same word that is in the mouth and heart of Christ’s messengers, which they preach. This word is the confession of our faith-obedience to Christ our Lord and King. Detailing this word, Paul wrote, ‘If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus [that is, ‘He is Lord and King’] and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved’. Rom 10:9. That is, you will receive resurrection life – the sure mercies given to David. In this verse, Paul was highlighting that receiving the word of the King is believing for resurrection life through fellowship in His death. By believing the word of Christ, and confessing Him as our Lord and King, we receive from Him a share in the sure mercies of David as our eternal salvation and glory.

The word of faith that is in our mouth and in our heart

The word of God that spoke creation into existence has been sent to you and me. When it is first proclaimed to an unbeliever, it speaks to them as a son of God. This may seem somewhat anomalous. Why would the gospel call, or address, an unbeliever as a son of God before they even know God? Providing the answer to this question, the apostle Paul said that when the gospel is proclaimed it ‘*calls those things which do not exist as though they did*’. Rom 4:17. That is, God speaks to a hearer as if they are already His child.

In his Gospel, the apostle John spoke of Christ coming into the world to dwell among us as the revelation of the glory of God the Father. Joh 1:14. Christ was the manifestation of who we are to become as sons of men and sons of God.

He was the full expression, in the flesh, of the divine nature. John then explained that out of Christ's fullness, or abundance, we have all received 'grace for grace'. Joh 1:16. That is, we have all had a share of His fullness, and were all supplied with one grace upon another, even before we responded to the gospel.

John further explained that Christ came to us as a people who belonged to Him, writing, 'He came to His own [referring to all people], and His own did not receive Him'. Joh 1:11. Likewise, Jesus Himself said that He comes to us personally to make Himself known to us, expressing His desire to come into our heart and life. Joh 14:21. He further promised, 'If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.' Rev 3:20. When we receive Christ, He gives to us the power and the right to become a son of God. This right is given to those who believe Him and call upon His name. Joh 1:12.

The word of God has now come to us in the Person of Christ. Christ, the Son of Man, descended from heaven and, through His offering work on the cross, descended into the abyss. He was raised from the dead and has ascended into heaven as the Son of Man. This work is finished! We can no longer ask Him to ascend into heaven or to descend into the abyss, for He now sends messengers to proclaim to us the word of faith. Rom 10:6-8. His word comes to us through preachers whom He sends to us from His presbyteries. Joh 13:20. Rom 10:14.

Paul called the gospel that Christ's messengers preach to us, 'the word of faith'. Rom 10:8. When we receive this word, it speaks righteousness into existence within us. This word then becomes the expression of our identity and life as a new creation. It is the word that we then speak from our mouth, revealing the true state of our heart as a son of God. It is the confession that we are now a son of God! Our speech is also the confession of our allegiance to Christ as Lord and King, as a citizen of His kingdom. It is an expression of faith-obedience and our willingness to obey His commands.

The faith that we receive by hearing the gospel that is preached to us by Christ's messengers has the power to accomplish the will of God in our life, and in the life of our hearers. It enables us to accomplish the works of righteousness that belong to our name as a son of God.

The word that is preached to us is the word of faith that is birthing us again as sons of God. It is breaking in upon our lives, our marriages, and families, to establish us in our predestination as part of God's family. Necessary for the accomplishment of this purpose, is our deliverance from condemnation. This condemnation, or judgement, is manifest in our lives as the fruit of living and walking according to our own desires as we endeavour to fulfil the lusts of our flesh.

The word of faith that is now in our mouth is producing the fruit of righteousness in our life, in our relationships, and in our hearers. This is the

fruit of peace. It is delivering us from our anxieties as we receive abundant life from Christ. The word of the Lord is sent to us continually, for the whole of our life and pilgrimage, while we live on this earth. Jesus said, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that [continually] proceeds from the mouth of God.' Mat 4:4. As a Christian, we now live by the proceeding word. This word is coming to us, continually, through the word of His messengers whom He sends to us from the presbytery.

Called to believe in tribulation

When the word of the Lord first comes to us, it comes to feed us and to give direction to our lives. For those who are new Christians, the word comes as 'the sincere milk of the word' that enables them to grow as Christians. As the apostle Peter instructed, saying, 'Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure [or sincere] milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' 1Pe 2:1-3. The word speaks to a new believer, personally, about their habits and culture, enabling repentance and change to come to their life. It does this as it is ministered 'precept upon precept', 'line upon line', 'here a little, there a little'. Isa 28:10.

For a Christian, the initial season of new birth is a time of reorientation for them. The new way of living that they have chosen, as they make Christ the Lord of their life, will have an impact upon their family and social relationships. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, said that their new orientation as Christians precipitated for them a season of persecution and affliction. He said, 'For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.' 1Th 1:5-6.

By instructing the Thessalonians with these words, Paul was reiterating the teaching of Jesus in the parable of the sower and the seed. We recall that in relation to the issue of stony ground, Jesus explained, 'But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. *For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.*' Mat 13:20-21.

Paul then spoke of his ministry among the Thessalonians, explaining that he, with his apostolic team, had been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. 1Th 2:4. Having this mandate, Paul, and his fellow presbyters, ministered among them as like a nursing mother. 1Th 2:5-9. Their ministry established the Thessalonians in sanctification, in their personal life and families, so that they became part of the community of the body of Christ.

The word of God often comes giving direction to us in what is, or will become, a difficult or confused situation. It comes calling us to believe God in the midst of the conflict and affliction that will arise between flesh and Spirit within our life, and our family, and social relationships. The word of the Lord becomes a trial in our life. This was the experience of all the heroes of faith. For example, the psalmist said of Joseph, 'Until the time that his word came to pass, *the word of the LORD tested him.*' Psa 105:19. Likewise, the word of the Lord became a trial of faith for Job through which he learnt how to overcome the devil. The word, through our circumstances, polarises us toward our sanctification, or it hardens us against its call for obedience so that we adapt the word to suit our own fleshly purpose or agenda.

The example of the Shunamite woman

The account of the Shunamite woman and the resurrection of her son vividly illustrates the importance and implications of receiving the word of faith from the Lord's messengers. The Scriptures record that when Elisha went to Shunem, a town situated in the plain of Megiddo, a notable woman persuaded him to come to her house to eat some food. 2Ki 4:8. Most commentators agree that this Shunamite woman was notable, or great, on account of her wealth. However, her notability was also attributable to her hospitality and spiritual sight as she recognised, distinguished and honoured Elisha as a holy messenger.

As often as he would pass through Shunem on his ministry circuit, Elisha would turn in at the Shunamite woman's house to eat. The woman entreated her husband to add a small upper room to their dwelling, fitted with a bed, a table and chair, and a lampstand, so that Elisha could stay with them. Evidently, they were a 'worthy house of peace' on account of *her* entreaty of, and care for, this messenger. Mat 10:11-14. Luk 10:5-7.

During one particular stay, Elisha directed his servant, Gehazi, to call for the woman and inquire what he could do for her on account of the hospitality that she had shown to him. The authenticity of this woman's hospitality and care was manifest as she asked for nothing in return, confessing that she was content to dwell among her own people. 2Ki 4:12-13. Clearly, she was not cleaving to the messenger with deceit or for advantage. In fact, it was Gehazi who observed that her husband was advanced in years and she did not have a son. 2Ki 4:14. Hearing this, Elisha personally addressed the woman, saying to her, 'About this time next year you shall embrace a son.' 2Ki 4:16.

The woman's response to the word of the messenger was, 'No, my lord. Man of God, do not lie to your maidservant!' 2Ki 4:16. Clearly, the Shunamite woman did not believe the word of the messenger proclaiming the miracle of resurrection life for sonship. It was beyond her understanding and sight. Nevertheless, the woman conceived and bore a son at the time appointed by Elisha. Significantly, this child was born according to the faith of the messenger;

he was not born according to the woman's faith, for she did not believe the word concerning her house, accusing him of lying.

When the boy was still young, he took ill while out in the field with his father. Later that day he died in the embrace of his mother. She put him in the upper room, on Elisha's bed, and shut the door. She then asked her husband to direct one of their servants to ready a donkey that she might 'run' to the man of God and return. 2Ki 4:20-22. It seems as though the woman's husband was unclear concerning the boy's condition (be it physical or spiritual), for he asked her, 'Why are you going to him today? It is neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath.' 2Ki 4:23. But the woman assured him, 'It is well.' 2Ki 4:23.

The man's ignorance of the boy's condition may have been the consequence of a vacancy in his headship. If this was the case, the Shunamite was not dissimilar from a woman who was married to a man who does not obey the word, as described by the apostle Peter. 1Pe 3:1. The Shunamite woman honoured her husband, as she did not lay blame upon him, nor demand that he take action on her behalf. As we will see, this is because the woman recognised *her* own culpability for the situation, which she attributed to her unbelief concerning the word of the messenger.

As the woman approached Mount Carmel, Elisha sent Gehazi to inquire of her. She responded, saying, 'It is well.' 2Ki 4:26. The woman made this statement because she was not fearful nor neurotic; she was not demanding an intervention. This was an expression of her chaste conduct accompanied by the fear of the Lord. 1Pe 3:2.

When she came before Elisha, the messenger, she caught him by the feet and said to him, 'Did I ask a son of my lord? Did I not say, "Do not deceive me"?' 2Ki 4:27-28. The Shunamite's response was the same as the woman who washed Christ's feet with her tears in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Luk 7:37-38. It was an action of repentance, as she reminded the messenger of the response that she had made when the word had *first* been proclaimed to her. She was confessing that the word had died in her house, and the promise had been consumed *because of her unbelief*.

This was now a *second time* opportunity for the woman to obtain and express faith for her predestination and for the predestination of her son. The child would not be healed through Elisha's faith; he would be healed through the faith of the woman. To this end, she would not leave Elisha, even though he sent Gehazi to raise the child. Significantly, the child was not recovered to life through the actions of Gehazi under the direction of Elisha. Rather, Elisha came to the house *with* the woman and ministered resurrection life to the child, delivering him back to his mother.

The first and second time

This account teaches us that when the Lord first proclaims a word of faith, He requires us to make an adequate response. The word that we first heard tries us, through tribulation, so that the faith that belonged to this 'first time' visitation is apprehended and adequately exercised. Psa 105:19. The difficulties that arise because of the word deliver us to a choice. Mat 13:21. In this 'second time' opportunity, we can continue in unbelief, leading to depression and bitterness, or we can accountably acknowledge, and turn from, our unbelief, and demonstrate faith through the works of repentance that belong to our obedience.

Many people in our congregations heard the word on lampstand churches when it was *first* proclaimed. However, the dysfunction and degeneration in many marriages and houses, including the rebellion and departure of children born in these houses, has revealed the lack of faith and their unbelief concerning this message, which belongs to the gospel of God.

The Lord is requiring an *adequate* response of faith as He comes among our congregations a *second time*. In order to avail ourselves of the faith that belongs to this word, let us receive the example of the Shunamite woman, and take account for our unbelief. The Lord can restore our sanctification, our marriages, and our houses, as we acknowledge our sin and turn in repentance to the obedience of faith to which He is calling us. Through faith, the resurrection life in the word can bring healing and recovery where the sin of our unbelief, and its accompanying works, has otherwise borne destruction and death.

Chapter 2

The manifestation of the King

Receiving Christ, the King

In our consideration of the steps of salvation, we have understood that the Son makes Himself known to a hearer who has been made alive from the death of sin. This happens as they delight in their deliverance from sin and death and are increasingly illuminated to the sonship that God has prepared for them. They love Christ and glorify God, which they demonstrate by keeping the commands of Christ ministered by His messengers. For this reason, the Father loves them, and Christ also loves them. Furthermore, Jesus Christ personally makes Himself known to them. Jesus outlined this initiative towards a hearer, saying, 'He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, *and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.*' Joh 14:21.

It is important for us to understand what it means to meet Christ when He manifests Himself to us, for this is essential to both *becoming* a believer and to *living* as a believer. The first point to note is that we can only know Christ through the way that He makes Himself known to us. When Christ makes Himself known to a hearer, and they truly meet Him, they *know Him as their Lord and King*. Unless we receive and respond to Christ in this way, *we are not a believer*.

The conditions of peace

Describing the nature of this interaction and the response that this encounter demands, Jesus said, 'Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.' Luk 14:31-33.

On account of the Fall, the whole of mankind became a kingdom of darkness under the rulership of Satan. Because of our sin, we became the enemies of God. Jesus Christ came into the world as the King of another kingdom, which is not of this world. Joh 18:33-37. We must all heed Jesus' instruction to send 'a delegation' to ask for 'the conditions of peace'. His 'conditions', which He makes

known to us through His messengers, are that we must become a slave of righteousness or we will die in our sins. Rom 6:16-18. This is, in fact, the implication of *the gospel of peace*, ministered through the Elijah ministry – all flesh is judged and perishing, but the word of the Lord, to which we are being delivered as slaves, endures forever. Rom 10:14-15. 1Pe 1:24-25. Isa 40:6-8.

A person who has truly met Christ recognises that *He is the King*. They relinquish their own conditions for life, and count all their own resources, capacities, qualifications and justifications, likened by Jesus to the 10 000 with which they initially approach Him, *as loss*. Php 3:7. They become poor in spirit and yield to Christ's commandments as slaves of righteousness. The most fundamental indicator of this encounter is that the hearer begins *to learn the fear of the Lord*. This is essential to becoming a believer.

Christ anointed as King

Christ is the Lion of Judah. He was revealed as the King, the Son of David, when He was anointed by the Holy Spirit with the oil of the seven Spirits of the Lord at His baptism. Mat 3:16. Luk 3:21-22. Joh 1:32-34. He received this anointing without measure, testifying, 'The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.' Luk 4:18-19. Joh 3:34.

After His baptism, Jesus commenced His earthly ministry as the suffering King-Priest and the Lamb of God. He did this as the Son of God and the Son of Man. Bearing witness to the commencement of this ministry, following Christ's anointing with the seven Spirits of God by the Holy Spirit, John the Baptist declared, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' Joh 1:29. Why was John the Baptist's identification of Jesus as the Lamb of God heralding Jesus' ministry as the King?

As the Lamb of God, Christ was the Lion of Judah. We know this because the apostle John recounted in the book of Revelation, 'I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, *the Lion of the tribe of Judah*, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood *a Lamb as though it had been slain*, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.' Rev 5:4-6.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus engaged various groups of people as the King. Christ's wrath was exercised towards these people as He confronted their disbelief and rebellion. For example, in response to Mary's weeping over Christ's failure to meet her expectations regarding the death of her brother, Lazarus,

John recorded that 'He groaned in the spirit and was troubled'. Joh 11:33. Numerous commentators agree that this is a poor translation of the Greek text, which actually communicates a sense of indignation, and even rage. For example, in his *Commentary for English Readers*, Ellicott suggested that the groaning of Jesus revealed a 'sharp admonition, in words of anger against a person, or in a physical shudder, answering to the intensity of the emotion'.

The Gospels recount four other occasions when Christ's majesty and wrath were manifest in this same manner. These included the rebuke of the disciples for their faithlessness and perversity, which were exposed by their inability to heal the boy who was oppressed by an evil spirit (Mar 9:14-27); rebuking those who were forbidding the children to come to Him (Mat 19:13-15); rebuking the Pharisees for the hardness of their hearts in relation to the healing of the man who had a withered hand (Mar 3:1-6); and driving out the traders and money changers from the temple who were impeding the access of the Gentiles to the house of prayer (Joh 2:13-17). In this chapter, we will consider each of these encounters in further detail.

The polarising word of the King

Significantly, the expression of Christ's wrath, as the Lamb of God and Lion of Judah, had a polarising effect on those who heard Him. For example, Mary and Martha began to fear Christ and believe for resurrection life in their household. Mary, in particular, demonstrated this faith by anointing Christ as the King, with very costly oil of spikenard. She did this for His burial, in faith for the resurrection life for which she now believed to receive and live by. Joh 12:1-7. In contrast, the Pharisees were provoked to wrath by the expression of Christ's fiery indignation towards them as they sought to test Him in the matter of healing a man's hand on the Sabbath. Luk 6:11. They 'went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him'. Mar 3:6.

Jesus spoke with authority as King. As hearers received Him, His word broke the power of the rebellion that was sown in the heart of men and women by Satan. In this way, He set them free to believe Him as Master and Lord, and to become obedient from the heart to His word. Rom 6:17. His word delivered them from the kingdom of darkness and brought them into the kingdom of the Son. Col 1:13. Christ did this by rebuking the demonic familiar spirits who were making the oppressed and the possessed people, sick in mind and body. Having broken the enslaving power of these spirits, He ministered faith for healing and for their participation in the life of His kingdom.

Christ journeyed as the King-Priest and Lamb of God all the way to His glorification as the first Man made in the image and likeness of God. After His ascension, forty days following His glorification, Jesus Christ sat down at the right hand of the Father in the heavens. As the first Man in the image and likeness of God, He is now the King-Priest upon His throne, ruling in the midst

of His lampstand churches through the messengers whom He sends, with His hand, to minister among His churches.

Let us now consider Jesus' encounters with various groups, as His kingship and majesty were manifest to them.

The King establishing a worthy house

Jesus sent the seventy-two before His face into every city and place where He was about to go. Their work was to find sons of peace; to heal the sick; and to declare, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'. Luk 10:1-12. After the seventy-two had returned, Jesus entered a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. She had a sister named Mary and a brother named Lazarus. As Jesus spoke in the house, Mary sat at His feet and heard His words. Mary was washed through her encounter with Christ. We know this because Jesus had earlier taught, 'You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.' Joh 15:3. He applied the water of the word to her feet, addressing the way in which she was to *walk* and *express* the gospel.

Jesus also washed Martha on this occasion. Martha was distracted with much serving, struggling under the burden of catering for such a large company of people. She approached Jesus, saying, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore, tell her to help me.' Luk 10:40. The Lord washed Martha with His word, saying to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.' Luk 10:41-42. In doing so, He washed her feet for her particular expression of the gospel from the house, through hospitality.

Luke did not record any of the conversations that occurred between Jesus and Lazarus when He first visited their household; however, Jesus evidently developed a close relationship with Lazarus. The apostle John noted that later, when Lazarus became sick, the two sisters immediately sent word to Jesus, saying, 'Lord, behold, *he whom You love* is sick.' Joh 11:3.

The point to note is that through this initial encounter, Jesus connected these 'sons of peace' to the command that *El Shaddai* gave to Abraham, when He said, 'I am Almighty God; *walk* before Me and be *blameless*.' Gen 17:1. Blamelessness refers to walking by faith, with Christ, in the fellowship of His death, burial and resurrection. This is the circumcision of Christ. Col 2:11-14.

We know that Christ's death, burial and resurrection was the focus of His message at this time. The apostle Matthew recorded that after Peter had confessed that Jesus was the Christ, He 'began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day'. Mat 16:21. Luk 9:18-22. Later, just prior to sending out the seventy-two, Jesus said to His disciples,

'Let these words sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men.' Luk 9:44. It was in the context of this word-focus that He explained, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.' Mat 16:24.

In the same way that Abraham and Sarah were commanded to walk blamelessly in order to be made 'exceedingly fruitful' and 'a mother of nations', Christ's initiative towards this worthy house was to establish it as a context of fruitfulness and multiplication through fellowship in His death and resurrection.

Jesus is the resurrection and the life

In His next interaction with the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus, Jesus ministered faith for their participation in His death and resurrection, typified by Abraham's offering of Isaac on Mount Moriah. They were to be joined to the faith that Abraham demonstrated when he offered up Isaac on Mount Moriah, 'concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense'. Heb 11:19. Through faith, Mary and Martha were to believe to receive Lazarus back from the dead and believe for Christ's resurrection, which He had *already* proclaimed to them.

Jesus provided them with the opportunity to receive and join this faith when He allowed Lazarus to die after hearing of his illness. Establishing this point, the apostle John recorded, 'When Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when He heard that he was sick, *He stayed two more days in the place where He was.*' Joh 11:4-6.

When Jesus arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had been dead for four days. Joh 11:17. As soon as Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet Him. It became apparent that Jesus had fallen short of Martha's expectations of Him when she said, 'Lord, *if You had been here*, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.' Joh 11:21-22.

Jesus responded by saying, 'Your brother will rise again'. Yet, Martha's response remained faithful to her former gospel understanding pertaining to the resurrection, saying, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day'. But Jesus said to her, '*I am the resurrection and the life*. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?' Joh 11:25-26.

Although Martha confessed that she believed, she went her way and *secretly* called her sister, saying, 'The Teacher has come and is calling for you'. Joh 11:28. Martha's actions were manipulative as she knew that Mary's expectations of Christ mirrored her own. Indeed, when Mary arrived at the place where Jesus had spoken with Martha, she fell down at His feet and said to Him,

'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.' Joh 11:32. These were the same words with which Martha had earlier addressed Christ.

When Jesus heard these words and witnessed her weeping, John recorded that 'He groaned in the spirit and was troubled'. Joh 11:33. As we noted earlier, this translation does not adequately reflect the nature of Christ's response. He was literally moved to indignation at her unbelief. As He then came to the tomb, Jesus made this same response to the Jews who said, 'Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?' Joh 11:37-38.

Even after Christ had declared that He was the resurrection and the life, Martha was reticent to move the stone away from the entrance of the tomb because of the likely stench that is associated with a corpse that was four days old. Christ's response to Martha indicated that their *unbelief* concerning resurrection life in mortality, and in relation to their house, *was the source of His indignation*. Their unbelief and the hardness of their hearts was getting in the way of resurrection life coming to their brother. He said to her, 'Did I not say to you that *if you would believe* you would see the glory of God?' Joh 11:40. Evidently, they were not yet believers!

Anointed for burial

Having received illumination through the fiery indignation of Christ, and having thereby witnessed the glory of God in the ministry of *exanastasis* to Lazarus, the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus obtained faith for the *anastasis* of Christ. They were now believers, even though they had previously received Jesus and loved Him.

Six days prior to the Passover, Jesus came from Ephraim to Bethany, where He lodged at the house of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Joh 12:1-2. At the meal table, Mary anointed Jesus' feet with very costly oil of spikenard, and wiped His feet with her hair. The value of this fragrant oil was 300 denarii - the equivalent of a year's wages.

Witnessing this expression of *agape* fellowship and worship, Judas vocalised his discontent, asking, 'Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?' Joh 12:5. Jesus responded to Judas' query, declaring, 'Let her alone; she has kept this *for the day of My burial*.' Joh 12:7. This was Mary's work of faith to honour Christ as King and her Head, for she understood that Christ was about to die and would rise again!

Significantly, John noted that when Mary anointed Christ in this manner, 'the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil'. Joh 12:3. There was an overflow to the house resulting from the acknowledgement of Christ's headship towards Mary.

Two days prior to the last Passover, Jesus dined at another house in Bethany. This house belonged to Simon the leper, who may have previously been healed

of his leprosy through the ministry of Jesus. Mat 26:1-2,6. During this meal, an unnamed woman came to Him with an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil which she poured upon His head as He sat at the table. Mat 26:6-7. The anointing oil ran down His beard and to the edge of His garment as it draped His feet. Psa 133:2. Through this woman's action, His anointing for burial at the hands of Mary was extended to His whole body.

It is likely that this woman was the wife of Simon. Supporting this view, we observe that, in contrast to the other women who washed and anointed Jesus' feet, she had the liberty to approach the table and to anoint Christ's head with oil. Again, Jesus explained that this woman had poured the fragrant oil on His body *for His burial*. Mat 26:12. Furthermore, Jesus declared, 'Wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world [proclaiming the resurrection], what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.' Mat 26:13.

These two women had a participation in the burial of Jesus. The fragrance of these anointings remained on Him right through to His resurrection, when He was presented to the Father as the Firstfruits of men in the image and likeness of God. For this reason, the participation of these women in the burial of Christ belongs to the proclamation of the gospel.

We know, of course, that after Jesus' body was taken down from the cross, it was anointed and wrapped for burial by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. Joh 19:38-42. Furthermore, after three days and nights, certain other women, including Mary Magdalene, came to the tomb bringing spices for burial. Luk 24:1-12. All these people were connected to the same work initiated by Mary and Simon the leper's wife.

It is notable that after He had risen from the dead, Jesus appeared to the women first. In this regard, the Bible teacher, W.W. Patterson, noted, 'They saw Him first, because they loved Him best'. Their commitment to anointing Christ revealed that they did not love Him best because Christ had met their expectations. Rather, they had been illuminated that He is the resurrection and the life. They were exercising faith for His resurrection, and to receive this resurrection in their lives and houses under His headship.

The ministry of godly women in houses

A woman can find deliverance from her carnal demands and expectations of the Man, Christ, concerning her life and house. This happens when the word confronts these expectations, illuminates to her the resurrection of Christ, and then ministers to her, and to her house, *exanastasis* from Christ. Like Mary, and Simon the leper's wife, a woman who has been illuminated in this manner will be submitted to the headship of Christ, recognising His kingship and priesthood. She will learn from Him her obedience, which includes how to be 'of her husband' as one who professes 'godliness, with good works'. 1Co 11:8. 1Ti 2:10.

Established in this order of headship under the Father in her marriage, and the Son in her house, she will be motivated and able to wash the feet of those in her house. She will also figuratively anoint them with the fragrant oil for their sanctified participation in the offering and suffering journey with Christ, through which God is glorified. This is a ministry of the seven Spirits of the Lord in the order of headship.

Anointed as Melchizedek King-Priest

On the day after His anointing by Mary, Jesus entered Jerusalem as the King, riding on a donkey. As John recounted, 'The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' The King of Israel!" Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt.'" Joh 12:12-15.

It is notable that the people who were with Christ when He called Lazarus out of his tomb, revealing that He is the resurrection and the life, bore witness of His kingship. Their testimony was the reason for the response of the multitude. Joh 12:17-18. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem as the King was the fulfilment of the prophetic word of Zechariah, who wrote, 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! [Symbolising the expression of an elect lady comprised of a network of worthy houses in a locality] *Behold, your King is coming to you*; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.' Zec 9:9.

The King and the demon-possessed boy

As we noted earlier, in the final year of His earthly ministry, Christ's focus shifted towards His impending offering journey from Gethsemane to Calvary. This was the content of His teaching. He said to His disciples, 'The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.' Luk 9:22. To all who were following Him, Jesus then said, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.' Luk 9:23.

Christ's final statement in relation to this command was, 'I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God.' Luk 9:27. Jesus was specifically referring to Peter, John and James whom He took with Him up on the mountain to pray. As He prayed, He was transfigured. The appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. Jesus spoke with Moses and Elijah about His impending decease in Jerusalem. Luk 9:28-31.

Significantly, although they witnessed Christ's glory and the glory of Moses and Elijah, the three disciples were *heavy with sleep*, indicating the weakness, or infirmity, of their flesh. Luk 9:32. Mat 26:41. Engagement in this conversation on the basis of their carnal reasoning affected their understanding of what was happening and the response that was required. This was demonstrated by their keenness to establish three tabernacles – one for Christ, one for Moses, and one for Elijah, marking a sacramental, religious and self-centred response to this manifestation of the kingdom of God. Luk 9:33.

The next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a man from the midst of the crowd implored Jesus to 'look on' his son, saying 'for he is my only child'. Luk 9:38. The father of the possessed child explained to Jesus, 'A spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out; it convulses him so that he foams at the mouth; and it departs from him with great difficulty, bruising him.' Luk 9:39. The demonic spirit was only able to do this through the misappropriation of authority. It may well have been a familiar spirit that was misappropriating the very authority that belonged to this man in his house on account of his iniquity, for we know that Jesus was 'bruised for our iniquities'. Isa 53:5.

When a family rejects the shepherding fatherhood of the presbytery in the right hand of Christ, their children wend their way through life and in the church in trouble, for they have no Shepherd, having been trained to take no heed to the Shepherd's voice. As the prophet Zechariah declared, 'For the idols speak delusion; the diviners envision lies, and tell false dreams; they comfort in vain. Therefore, the people wend their way like sheep; they are in trouble because there is no shepherd.' Zec 10:2. Christ the Shepherd is to them only a resource to support them as they are taught to rely on the law of their own mind. Because of this, they are Satan's prey. 1Pe 5:8-9.

Having requested the attention of the Lord, and detailed the oppressive effect of this spirit upon his son, the man then said, 'I implored Your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.' Luk 9:40. Jesus responded by saying, 'O faithless [lit: unbelieving] and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you?' Luk 9:41. Christ's statement was not an expression of impatience or exasperation. Rather, it was the word of a King rebuking a generation that was unbelieving. Their unbelief was the cause of their perversity as they did not know Christ's ways, and they continued to go astray in their hearts. Heb 3:10. Unbelief was the cause of stumbling for the disciples, and the reason for the inadequacy of their ministry. Mat 17:19-20. His wrath was kindled towards them, but this was, in the first instance, for the purpose of establishing them in faith.

Jesus also addressed the man himself. He said to the man, 'If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.' Mar 9:23. Having received this word, 'the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!'"'. Mar 9:24. Jesus then directed the man to bring the son to Him. As the father approached Christ, the demon threw the boy down and convulsed him. It was as if the demon spirit was endeavouring to *rebel* in the presence of Christ.

The King rebuked this insubordinate spirit, healed the child, and then gave him back to his father. Luk 9:42.

Rebuking an unclean spirit and commanding it to come out of a person is a kingly action. It addresses the demon's usurpation of the identity of a person through its illegitimate appropriation of authority. The demon has stolen an authority that does not belong to it. It is a thief that comes to steal and misappropriate authority in order to kill and destroy an identity. Joh 10:10. However, Jesus came to destroy the power of the devil which is misappropriated through our unbelief. He does this through His death, and by giving to us His resurrection life in the fellowship of His death.

Majesty and rebuke

Those who witnessed this miracle 'were all amazed at the majesty of God'. Luk 9:43. Christ's majesty was demonstrated through the rebuke of the unclean spirit. However, the rebuke of the demon was the *same* rebuke that Christ directed towards the disciples on account of their faithlessness and deviation from the way of the kingdom. He was addressing the hardness of heart that belongs to rebellion in relation to the word of present truth. Heb 3:7-8. As we noted earlier, Jesus had instructed the disciples in the way of the kingdom, and had revealed the kingdom to Peter, James and John on the mount of transfiguration. It was because of unbelief that the disciples were unable to cast out the unclean spirit.

The Lord's indignation was aroused against the disciples because their unbelief and perversity was impacting the child's predestination coming to pass. The boy's predestination was to be delivered from this oppression in order to join the network of worthy houses that belong to the true Israel of God. Christ, the King, through rebuke, was calling the disciples to faith as believers, so that the authority of His lordship could be properly exercised, and they could rebuke the unclean spirits that ensnared other individuals and houses.

Although everyone marvelled at the things which Jesus had done, He reaffirmed to His disciples the focus of His initiative as Melchizedek, the King-Priest. He said to them, 'Let these words sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men.' Luk 9:44. However, the disciples did not understand the words of Jesus and, instead, interpreted, through the law of their mind, what they had perceived as an occasion for empowerment and their own majesty. In this regard, Luke recorded, 'Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest'. Luk 9:46.

The apostle Peter was clear that disobedience to the word of Christ is the reason for stumbling and going astray. 1Pe 2:4,8. This faltering is evident when a person claims to know Christ but becomes estranged from the fellowship of the word through the exercise of the law of their mind. Instead of trusting in the Lord with all of their heart, they trust in their own understanding and become

the measure of the word and its expression in and from the presbytery. As it did for Peter, James and John, it gives rise to gospels and seemingly apt practices that are actually at odds with the culture of the kingdom. Deliverance from this condition is only possible as we meet Christ as the King of the dead and of the living. Rom 14:9.

The King and the Pharisees

Christ's majesty and indignation as the King was expressed towards the Pharisees when they endeavoured to test Him as to whether or not He would heal a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. When He entered the synagogue, the Pharisees *watched Him closely*. Mar 3:2. Luk 6:7. Presuming to be the measure of truth, they desired to find an accusation against Him. However, Jesus had come as the King to deliver them from their bondage to self-righteousness. This was an opportunity for their salvation.

Jesus said to the Pharisees, 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' Mar 3:4. This question brought into focus the issue that Jesus was endeavouring to address. Their sacramental application of the Law to themselves, and to others, was impeding the life and healing that Christ, the substance of the word, was desiring to minister to those who were infirmed. The question, therefore, provided the Pharisees with an opportunity to respond to Christ's fiery eyes with a confession of their fault, which could have led to their forgiveness.

However, the Pharisees *kept silent*. Mar 3:4. In this regard, they refused to send a delegation to Christ to ask for the conditions of peace. They trusted, instead, in the 10 000 reasons why they believed they were right. Christ looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts. Mar 3:5. He commanded the man to stretch out his withered hand, and it was restored as whole as his other hand. Instead of acknowledging and rejoicing in the majesty of Christ, the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him. Mar 3:6. Significantly, they were joining themselves to an alternative, counterfeit kingship. Their hard hearts only produced hatred and murder and brought them under the condemnation of the very Law they sought to uphold.

The King and the little children

A little while after Jesus had delivered the demoniac boy, and rebuked his father and the disciples for their unbelief, He had further cause to express His indignant displeasure at the disciples' contrary and deluded actions. On this occasion, people were endeavouring to bring their children to Christ that He might lay hands on them and pray for them. However, the disciples rebuked these parents, forbidding them to present their children to Him.

In his Gospel, Mark recounts that when Jesus looked with fiery eyes and saw what was happening, He was *greatly displeased*, meaning that He was moved to indignation. He said to the disciples, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.' Mar 10:14. He took the children up in His arms, laid His hands on them and blessed them. Mar 10:16.

In the first instance, Christ was indignant at the disciples for presuming to mediate the access of children, and indeed anyone, to Him. He was making a significant point to the disciples. The work of a messenger is to bring a hearer to Christ through the ministry of the word. They are not the arbiters, or mediators, of a hearer's access and response to Him. Everyone is to receive and respond to the word of Christ with the humility and simplicity of a little child. As Jesus said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.' Mar 10:15.

Likewise, parents must not presume to mediate a child's access to the word of Christ as it is ministered by His messengers. They proclaim the word from His hand, and He desires to take them in His hands through this ministry. Accordingly, a parent should be teaching their children to come to Christ by hearing and receiving the proceeding word, rather than reinterpreting the word for their children, or presuming to teach them another word.

The King in the house of prayer

On a visit to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Passover, Jesus was moved to wrath when He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. Joh 2:13-14. They had specifically set up their businesses in the court of the Gentiles, restricting the access of the Gentiles to this place of prayer.

Jesus went into a deep and very physical expression of rage because of this. He made a whip of cords and drove these vendors and their livestock out of the temple. Furthermore, He poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. He said to them. 'It is written, "My house is a house of prayer", but you have made it a "den of thieves".' Luk 19:46. When the disciples saw Christ's actions 'they remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up".' Joh 2:17.

The King's wrath is against every alternative and entrepreneurial agenda in the church that impacts upon a person's participation in the fellowship of Yahweh's intercession and travail. There must be no entrepreneuring of the word under the guise of offering. Rather, its ministry should invite a hearer into a fellowship with the presbytery, whose fellowship, by the Spirit, is with the Father and the Son. 1Jn 1:1-3. This is the principal context of prayer, which Jesus identified as 'the secret place'.

The throne in the cross

Following the last Passover, as He prayed on the Mount of Olives, Jesus said to the Father, 'I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.' Joh 17:4-5. Jesus had completed His earthly ministry and was now embarking on the next step of His journey as the *Alpha* and *Omega* of God's covenant purpose. Rev 22:13.

The next step in Christ's journey back to the Father was from the Mount of Olives to the garden of Gethsemane where the Father made Him to be our sin. 2Co 5:21. By drinking the cup of sin, given to Him by the Father, the Son was numbered with us, the transgressors, and was acquainted with the grief of our fallen, mortal condition. Luk 22:42. Isa 53:3,12. Heb 4:15. However, Christ, the Son of Man, was commencing His journey of glorification as Melchizedek, the King-Priest. Heb 5:5-6,9-10.

The final outcome of this process of glorification through His offering and suffering journey, was that He, as Yahweh Son, was *enthroned* in a spiritual body as the first Man made in the image and likeness of God. Accordingly, the four faces that belong to the administration of His throne were expressed as He offered Himself by the capacity of Eternal Spirit in seven wounding events. These four faces were expressed through the two elements of His one offering as the Lamb of God – that is, as the Scapegoat and as the Lord's goat.

Revealing the face of the Lion in the course of His offering journey, Jesus Christ was the King-Slave-Friend. As King, He conquered sin and death through His obedience to the commands of the Father as a suffering Slave, and He fulfilled all righteousness. When we receive and submit to Christ the King, we become a slave of righteousness. We, too, overcome sin and death as we walk with Him, and in Him, by keeping His commands. To those who present themselves in this manner, Jesus says, 'No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.' Joh 15:15.

Revealing the face of the Ox, Jesus Christ was the suffering High Priest who, through the capacity of Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God. Heb 9:14. For this reason, He is the Mediator of a New Covenant. As our great High Priest, He now priests to us a *participation* in His offering. In the fellowship of His offering, we are sprinkled with His blood. By this means, we are cleansed from an evil conscience, through which we would otherwise endeavour to know ourselves through the knowledge of good and evil, and are able to worship and serve God in Spirit and in truth.

Revealing the face of the Man, Jesus Christ was the Prophet-Restorer, spoken of by Moses, who said, 'The LORD your God will *raise up for you* [on the cross] a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. *Him you shall hear.*' Deu 18:15. The Law and the prophets were the full expression of God's word.

Through His offering journey, which culminated when He was lifted up from the earth on the cross, the word of the Law and the prophets was established in Him. Now the prophetic word of God, through which a hearer can be restored to their predestination, is only proclaimed from Christ as the word of the cross. It is proclaimed by the Spirit through the messenger administration described by the apostle John as 'star presbyteries' in the right hand of Christ. Rev 1:20.

Revealing the face of the Eagle, Jesus Christ was the Shepherd who was struck. Speaking of this element of His offering and suffering journey, Jesus said that when He was struck the sheep would be scattered to their *houses*. Mat 26:31. We know that everyone who witnessed Christ's death went to their houses beating their breasts, under the influence of grace and supplication, *mourning as for a Firstborn Son*. Luk 23:48. Zec 12:10. Jesus came again to gather them with His hand, or under His wings. Zec 13:7. Prophesying of this aspect of Christ's ministry, Moses declared, 'As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its young [new born sons], spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings, so the LORD alone led him [Israel, the covenant people], and there was no foreign god with him.' Deu 32:11-12.

Through the ministry of His word from His hand, Christ now gathers sons of God to the fellowship of His offering and suffering journey. They renew their strength as they learn from Him how to mount up with wings as eagles. Isa 40:31. That is, they learn how to live by resurrection, or 'mounting up', life, which Jesus demonstrated in the course of His seven wounding events. However, His wings are not only the ministry of resurrection life, but they are also the place of safety and security as He brings us to the Father. Exo 19:4.

In the place where it was said

Christ comes to us as the King through the word that is proclaimed by the Holy Spirit through His messengers. A messenger of Christ proclaims the gospel to an unbeliever, saying, 'You are not My people' on account of unbelief. Hos 1:9. This is the message to those who are outside of the church. It is *also* proclaimed to those who are in the church who may have drawn back in unbelief as they have succumbed to the anxieties, desires and pursuits that compete with their new-creation life, affecting their sight, which Jesus likened to thorns growing in the ground of our heart.

Of course, this is an affront to people whose gospel is imbued with believism, even though the way that they live and relate in the church is contrary to the culture of Christ. Holding fast to their believism, they assert that they are one of God's people, and in doing so say, 'We see'. Because a person claims to 'see', denying the word that is revealing otherwise, Jesus said that their 'sin remains'. Joh 9:41. That is, they find no deliverance from their sin and remain under condemnation.

In contrast, a person who receives the word with meekness, or poverty of spirit, is able to be illuminated by the Spirit and obtains faith to believe unto salvation. Salvation is the fruit of truly believing, as a hearer confesses with their mouth that Jesus is the Lord and King, and believe in their heart that God raised Him from the dead. Rom 10:9. What does this look like as distinct from believism?

The hearer receives the word of the cross from a messenger who declares, 'You are not My people'. Yielding to the Spirit of grace and supplication that accompanies the word, they recognise that they, with their 'old man', are co-crucified and co-cursed with Christ. Accordingly, they declare, 'You rightly say, I am not one of God's people'. Their old way of thinking is now nailed, with the Law, to the cross with Christ. Evidently, the word of the cross is beginning to sink down into their ears, as it did in the case of the repentant thief who was crucified with Christ on Calvary.

A person who has received this amazing illumination cries out to the King. They have become a God-fearer, addressing Christ, 'the Lord of glory', who is being crucified with them. 1Co 2:8. Significantly, He is to them 'the Lord of the dead'. Rom 14:9. This was the illumination and confession of the repentant thief.

A person who recognises Christ as the Lord of the dead, is acknowledging Christ's work as 'the Scapegoat'. They are not God's people because they are being taken out with the Scapegoat to the sea of God's forgetfulness. As soon as a person acknowledges this, they ask the Lord to *remember them*. Luk 23:42. A person can only ask this when they recognise the distinction between their death with Christ as the Scapegoat and His death as the 'Lord's goat'. The statement 'remember me' is a request for true *atonement* through fellowship in His death. Through His kind of dying, Christ was destroying death. By offering, He emptied to an endpoint all rebellion and unbelief, bringing sin and death into the place of forgetfulness where it has no more substance and power!

Remembrance becomes our reception of reconciliation as Christ replies, 'Today, you will be with Me in Paradise.' Luk 23:43. This is the place of first-love fellowship at the tree of life. Rev 2:7. Right there, in the place where they were not God's people, the Lord is saying, 'You are a son of the living God!' Hos 1:10. Christ has now become to us the 'Lord of the living'. Rom 14:9.

As a newborn believer, we continue to journey with Christ, the Lord's goat, as a member of His body. We are no longer cursed. Our confession is, 'I am crucified with Christ: *nevertheless I live*; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.' Gal 2:20. The life I now live is Christ. That is, the seed of my divine life as a son of God, from Him, now lives in me. As I live by His faith, my sufferings, which belong to fellowship in Him, have a limit.

We see that in the place where the word declares, 'You are not My people', there are two conversations happening. The unrepentant thief received no

illumination regarding Christ's lordship. Those who, like this man, maintain their believism, do not recognise that 'Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living'. Rom 14:9. The thief could have believed, for Christ had already demonstrated to the nation that He was the Prince, or King, of life, when He raised Lazarus from the dead. No doubt the thief had heard this account, for Christ had entered Jerusalem on a donkey's foal as the meek and lowly King of glory.

However, only those who are poor in spirit are able to receive the faith that belongs to believing and participating in the conversation and conduct of the kingdom. Like the father of the possessed boy, we need to ask the Lord to 'look on us'. The Lord Himself has said, 'But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.' Isa 66:2. This is the God-fearer who has acknowledged that they are co-crucified with Christ, have met their King, and are walking by His faith as son of God and citizen of His kingdom.

In summary, we note that the first word of the cross is, 'You are not My people'. This message is proclaimed with anger from the mouth of our King and Lord, as He reveals the need for us to suffer the rejection and pain that belongs to the awareness of being co-cursed with Christ. He implores us saying, 'Let this word sink down into your ears. You are a faithless and perverse generation or person. How long shall I continue to be with you and put up with you?' This is a rebuke that we must all hear.

Inherent in this message is an invitation with a condition. He says, 'If you desire to come after Me, you must deny yourself, take up your cross daily and follow Me. By offering, you must cease to save your life by demanding of Me that I save your life, which was the petition of the unrepentant thief who died with Me. Then you must lay your life down in offering and lose it for My sake. Then you will save it.' This is the second word of the cross, and it declares the conditions of peace that belong to citizenship of the kingdom of God. Responding in faith obedience to this command is how we obtain salvation.

As we are co-crucified with Christ, His word spoken in the place of His crucifixion - 'You are not My people' - is now, 'You are now My people. You belong to Me and to the Father. You are a citizen of My kingdom and I know you by name for I have remembered you who were lost to Me and forgotten by Me.' He asks us to remember the heights from where we have fallen, to repent and to do the first works of faith. Rev 2:5. This is the work of joining the fellowship of Christ's dying and living on the cross.

Receiving Christ, our Lord and King

Everyone must personally meet and acknowledge Christ as Lord and King. As we noted earlier, the mark of meeting and knowing Him in this way is learning the

fear of the Lord. We learn and demonstrate the fear of the Lord by embracing and obeying the commands of Christ that are proclaimed by His messengers.

It is the word of the King that produces, or births, His faith in us. Evidently, receiving, and responding to, Christ's indignation and majesty is foundational to truly believing beyond our own expectations of Him and the Christian life. Faith, enabling us to believe, is demonstrated by obedience in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. These are the works of faith. James, the brother of Jesus, emphasised the importance of these works, saying, 'I will show you my faith by my works', and 'faith without works is dead'. Jas 2:18,20.

The works of faith are the works that Christ has already accomplished for us. He did these works by faith as the King on the cross. As we meet Him as King, and acknowledge that we are crucified with Him, we receive His life and faith to do the works that He accomplished for us. Gal 2:20. This is what it means to be a slave of righteousness. Rom 6:16,18. We begin to add virtue to our faith, '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. This demonstrates that we are receiving the power, or strength, of *El Shaddai* to walk *blamelessly*.

Jesus said that if we live blamelessly as slaves of righteousness, He no longer calls us slaves but friends. Specifically, He said, 'No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.' Joh 15:15. More than this, we are found to be His bride, meeting Him now as Bridegroom, as well as the Lord and King of the church.

Chapter 3

The fellowship of headship

The necessity for Christian courtship

The gospel of God proclaims Yahweh-*Elohim's* covenant purpose to create and bring to glory a great multitude of sons of men who have been born again of Their divine life and made in Their image and likeness. This blessing was promised to Abraham and to all the *families* of the earth, in him. Evidently, the gospel of God has implications for every marriage and every house. For this reason, the gospel, declared through the word of present truth, should inform the process of courtship and the establishment of Christian households. Indeed, as we will consider in this chapter, the reformation necessary for a man and a woman to be joined in marriage according to the image intended by God, happens by the same process through which a person's identity is reborn as a new creation son of God.

The purpose of the courtship proposition and process is to support a couple as they endeavour to establish a marriage covenant that is fundamentally Christian in culture. With this purpose in view, it is necessary for the couple to understand the foundations of a godly marriage, and to commit themselves to the process through which a Christian marriage and house can be founded.

Such considerations do not only require an understanding of the principles of Christian courtship, but also sufficient self-knowledge, as well as an awareness and appreciation of the other person. A couple's application to personal maturity and to the culture of godliness in the season of courtship is essential, as the fundamental conditions of the marriage will be established during this time. It is as if 'cement' is being added to the relational dynamics of the couple. Because of this, the culture that is established in this season of courtship is very difficult to change once the couple has married.

Through the process of courtship, a Christian couple should be endeavouring to bond, or be yoked, by a remnant of the Spirit from the Father. The viability of a couple's bond depends upon each individual's conversion from walking after the flesh to walking according to the Spirit in the light of the gospel of God. To walk according to the Spirit is to walk blamelessly before the Lord, as a disciple, in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Gen 17:1.

Those who are counselling a couple in the course of their courtship should be looking for, fostering, and witnessing this blameless culture in each individual and in relation to the bond that they are establishing. Where this is not evident, a couple may espouse, or aspire to, a Christian marriage, but their bond will be formed through self-centred interests. This may be the yoking of two carnal Christians, or the 'unequal yoke' of a person who is spiritual with one who is carnal. 2Co 6:14-18. Of course, unless a counsellor has a testimony, themselves, of restoration to blamelessness in their marriage, they will promote a culture that reflects their own carnal, religious expectations of marriage.

The establishment of headship in a marriage

In the process of Christian courtship, a woman is figuratively formed from a rib taken from a man who has come to rest in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Foreshadowing this process, the Scriptures teach us, 'The LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.' Gen 2:21-22.

The man obtains the substance of his rib from Christ. *This rib belongs to the new creation*, the word of which was declared by God the Father when He proclaimed to the Son, *before*, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.' Heb 1:5. The Father's word declared 'the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure".' Isa 46:10. Everything that the Father declared was finished, as the third heaven was stretched out to become the seventeen prophetic days of His covenant purpose. This was His purpose to bring forth man in His image and likeness, into the new heavens and earth. The Son progressively revealed the Father by becoming the beginning, or '*Alpha*', of God's creation. He journeyed all the way from this beginning as the Seed and substance of the Father's word, to its full manifestation as the '*Omega*'. Testifying of this work, the Son Himself said, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.' Rev 22:13.

On Calvary, after Christ had committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father, and was received into the throne and bosom of the Father, His physical body was pierced with a soldier's spear. Water, blood and the Spirit of grace and supplication began to flow as a river from His side. Luk 23:46. Joh 19:34-37. Zec 12:10. This was the river of life flowing from the throne of the Father through the physical body of Christ. The word of the Father's finished work, from outside of time and eternity, was being revealed and ministered in time and space, now, and from then on, through the physical body of Christ. Heb 1:1-2. A person who received the word of Christ and His messengers, could now be born again as a new-creation son of God.

Significantly, the water, blood and Spirit that flowed from Christ's side as the river of life, and through which a person can be born again, was also the rib from which the Father formed a bride for Christ. In this one rib, we see the finished expression of *every* covenant marriage and house that is established in the image intended by God.

Headship describes the order of fellowship through which the *zoe* life of God is multiplied. The order of headship was established for this purpose through the offering of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, *before* the creation of the heavens and the earth. The headship capacity that, in the first instance, rules over the new creation, then proceeds to rule over the whole of creation as identities are brought forth through procreation in godly households.

This headship capacity was first given to the Son of Man when the Father brought Him forth from the dead, declaring a second time, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.' Act 13:30-33. When He was begotten from the dead as the first Man made in the image and likeness of God, His immortal, incorruptible physical body was clothed with His heavenly body, transforming it into a spiritual body. Moreover, the Father made Him to be the Head of His corporate body; the Head of the temple and of the church; and the Head of all principality and power. Col 1:18. Col 2:19. He is now Head over all things to the church. Eph 1:22-23.

The spiritual body of Christ became the throne for His identity as Yahweh Son when He received the seven Spirits of God. We know, of course, that Christ earlier received the seven Spirits of God as an anointing when He was baptised at the commencement of His earthly ministry. Mat 3:16. He received the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord upon His corruptible body, enabling Him to preach and demonstrate the coming kingdom of God in His flesh. Luk 16:16. As many as received Him, to them He gave *the right* to become a son of God, but they were not yet able to be born again through this ministry. Joh 1:12.

In the garden of Gethsemane, Christ was strengthened in His mortality by the *exanastasis* (resurrection) life of God to endure in seven wounding events as He was progressively glorified, becoming physically immortal when He, upon the cross, declared His offering work finished. Heb 9:14. Joh 19:30.

As we noted earlier, on the day of His resurrection, He was made fully spiritual while still remaining physically immortal and incorruptible. The spirituality of His spiritual body was the full manifestation of the sevenfold Spirit of God. Significantly, the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord was able to be ministered from Him through His word. To those who received Him and His message, He gave the right to become sons of God, and they were then *born again* of God's divine life. Joh 1:12 Joh 20:19-22.

Having ascended back to His own intrinsic throne at the right hand of the Father, the seven Spirits of God that reside in His body (i.e. the body of Christ)

are now ministered from His right hand, in which He now holds seven presbytery, or *aggelos*, stars. Rev 1:4,20. Rev 3:1. Those who receive and believe this message are born of God as new creation sons.

To establish a marriage in the image intended by God and, thereby, participate in the expression and fulfilment of His covenant purpose, the identity of the man and the identity of the woman must be *reformed*. This reformation is as complete and miraculous as new birth, because the rib, which is essential to a godly marriage covenant, belongs to the new creation. Through this process of reformation, the man is made to be the specific head of a particular woman. The woman, from the rib that the man obtains from Christ, is to be reformed as the particular helper proceeding from this man. She is to proceed from him to be the community of the word that is ministered to their house through the order of headship.

This process is as miraculous as the new birth. It is the reason why Agur, the son of Jakeh, described 'the way of a man with a virgin' as a *mystery*, being too wonderful for him, which he did not understand. Pro 30:18-19. Whenever something is identified in the Scriptures as 'a mystery', it cannot be understood without *illumination*. It belongs to the life and fellowship that we receive from God when we are born again. Because of this, the apostle Paul warned that a believer, when getting married, must not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever. 2Co 6:14-18. A believing man and a believing woman will, therefore, seek illumination regarding the process through which their identity is reformed for the purpose of making them one. In making this inquiry, they are not dissimilar from Nicodemus, who entreated Christ, asking Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old?' Joh 3:4.

The process of being made one

The covenant of marriage is the Father's holy institution which He loves. Mal 2:11. It belongs to His covenant purpose for mankind. The Father gave this covenant, including the physical capacity for procreation, so that a believing man and a believing woman could become one flesh and one Spirit and, thereby, bring forth godly offspring. As the prophet Malachi declared, 'But did He [the Father] not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring.' Mal 2:15.

Importantly, the remnant of the Spirit is the *Father's* instrument for making two individuals one flesh and of one Spirit. It is His expression of seven Spirits through the Holy Spirit in relation to marriage, even though it is ministered by Christ. To receive the sevenfold Spirit of God for a marriage and a house, a man and a woman are sent to Christ by the Father for the process of betrothal, and to receive from Him the capacity of the sevenfold Spirit of God, which is resident within Christ's body (i.e. the body of Christ). This is the source of counsel in the season of courtship.

The first implication of receiving the sevenfold Spirit of God is that the man and the woman are illuminated to, and made alive from, the death of fallen romantic agendas and impulses. We could say that they are born to see the kingdom of God and their participation in this kingdom as a married couple and as a house. Joh 3:3. This is the initial regenerative effect of the Father's Spirit, ministered through the gospel of God.

Having been made alive in this regard, the rib, which is an element of the new man, must be 'put on' by a Christian man in the courtship process. This is an application of the principle that Paul outlined in his letter to the Ephesians, writing, 'That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness'. Eph 4:22-24. At the same time, the woman is receiving this rib from the man through the initiative of Christ, so that she can be redefined in relation to the man. By this means, the rib becomes the substance of their relationship in the marriage. How does this happen?

Christ is the Creator of the body of Christ, for the Scriptures teach us that He '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, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity'. Eph 2:15-16. This is the corporate body of Christ.

In relation to marriage, Christ enables a man and a woman to put on the new man, signified as a rib, which is to become the fellowship, order and culture of their marriage and house. This is the new man that is renewed in knowledge according to the image of marriage designed by God the Father for this couple. They are being conformed to the image of the marriage of Christ and the church. Paul established this point, writing, 'For we are members of His body [of which He is the Head], of His flesh and of His bones [from which they obtain a rib]. "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.

As we have already noted, the man and the woman are able to receive this new-creation element, or rib, because they are putting off their former conduct (i.e. their old, fallen ways of relating) and are being renewed in the spirit of their mind through the regenerative work of the Father's Spirit. Eph 4:22-24. However, to *grow to maturity*, or fruitfulness, as the head of the woman, and then for the woman to become the community of the house proceeding from the man and the marriage, each person needs to *continue to be strengthened* by the Spirit of the Father. With this work in view, Paul said, 'For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, *to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man*, that Christ may

dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love'; and 'speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the Head - Christ.' Eph 3:14-17. Eph 4:15.

A couple who wants to grow to maturity by being strengthened in the inner man, recognises the need for the ongoing washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit. Tit 3:5. In this regard, they will hold fast to Christ, the Head of the body, 'from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God'. Col 2:19. They are nourished because they entreat and partake of the sincere milk of the word that they may grow thereby. 1Pe 2:2. This milk is the word of counsel from godly fatherhood within the body of Christ that is sought by the young couple in the season of their courtship.

As they walk in the light of this *courtship counsel*, they embrace the process through which they find deliverance from the other law in their relationship, and from the thorny romantic desires for pleasure that compete with the formation of a new-creation marriage covenant. Accordingly, they continue to lay aside 'all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and all evil speaking'. 1Pe 2:1. The outcome of this process is that the couple are being rooted and grounded in *agape* love. Their marriage covenant is becoming an expression of the love and fellowship of Yahweh.

The point that we are making is that the substance of the rib in Adam, from which the woman was made, typifies the substance and order of fellowship that a man and a woman receive from Christ, as members of His body, when they put on the new man in relation to their marriage. Headship then defines the order and fellowship of their marriage, their house, and then their family.

With this understanding in view, we recognise that Christ's prayer for the church is applicable to a marriage. On the Mount of Olives, just before He entered the garden of Gethsemane, He prayed, saying, 'I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.' Joh 17:20-23. This is a summary of what is happening in the process of a courtship.

The fundamentals of Christian marriage

A married couple are a procreating unit within a house, bringing forth fruit for God. In this regard, while obviously connected, it is important to distinguish the 'covenant of the marriage' from the 'covenant of a house'. In other words, a marriage in a house operates by two distinct expressions of headship. In the marriage, a man exercises headship towards his wife. In the house,

Christ's headship is exercised towards the man, the woman, and each child in relation to their works and expression as a son of God. This is because Christ accomplished the works of every day, which belong to the name and sonship of each person in a household.

The knowledge of these works is accessed through the order of headship so that the agenda of the house can be facilitated. This begins with the man lifting up holy hands in prayer and connecting to Christ. He does this in order to learn his works from Christ, as a husband and a head. 1Ti 2:8. He is learning this so that his wife can be 'of him'. 1Co 11:8.

A wife learns from Christ how to be 'of her husband'. By the Spirit, she is then able to do the works that belong to her name so that what is of the man comes through the woman as the community of the house. This is demonstrated in the agenda that is accomplished in the house, which is the work and expression of the house. Paul described this as a woman who professes 'godliness, with good works'. 1Ti 2:10.

The fruit of headship in the marriage and the house is that the house becomes an expression of the fellowship of Yahweh. It is from the man, through the woman, 'but all things are from God'. 1Co 11:12. However, any corruption of this order will cripple the expression of the ministry of Christ that should be flowing directly from His headship, through the man, and then further facilitated through the woman and the rest of the family. However, when the ministry of Christ is flowing in the house, it will then be expressed as an overflow of life towards others in the body of Christ, and as a witness in the world.

To 'find' or 'be found'

To highlight the importance of a couple's application to godliness in their marriage, consider the following statements made by the Bible scholar, Alfred Edersheim, in his book, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ*. Concerning the marriages of Jewish youths, Edersheim wrote:

'Some further details, gathered almost at random, will give glimpses of Jewish home life and of current views. It was by a not uncommon, though irreverent, mode of witticism, that two forms of the same verb, sounding almost alike, were made to express opposite experiences of marriage. It was common to ask a newly-married husband: " Maza or Moze? " — " findeth" or " found;" the first expression occurring in Prov. xviii. 22 [He that finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favour from the Lord], the second in Eccles. vii. 26 [I find more bitter than death a woman whose hands are nets and bands. He that pleases God escapes her]. A different sentiment is the following from the Talmud (Yeb. 62 b; Sank. 76 b), the similarity of which to Eph. v. 28 will be immediately recognised: "He that loveth his wife as his own body, honoureth her more than his own body, brings up his children in the right way, and leads

them in it to full age — of him the Scripture saith : "Thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace} (Job v. 24)." Of all qualities those most desired in woman were meekness, modesty, and shamefacedness.

This is a notable consideration for every man in relation to his marriage covenant. He must be able to reflect, with sobriety, as to whether he is married to a woman who is obtaining grace to proceed from him as a wife, or if he is being snared by a woman whose hands are like snares and nets.

Notably, Edersheim then said:

'Yet this direction of St. Paul (i Tim. ii. 12): " I suffer not a woman to usurp authority over the man " findeth some kind of parallel in the Rabbinical saying: "Whoever allows himself to be ruled by his wife, shall call out, and no one will make answer to him."

It is readily apparent when a man is ruled by his wife, particularly in the presbytery. As the Rabbinical saying conveys, such a man endeavours to initiate and speak in the church and in the presbytery, but his words are not received or acknowledged by others. He is unable to be met, and his house remains a fortress that cannot be addressed.

The fruit of the marriage

As we have already considered, bringing forth children is the fruit of a marriage. It is therefore helpful to consider headship in relation to children as an implication of the expression of headship within a marriage.

Headship reveals the authority of a person's name. When headship is expressed, a person is able to reveal another through offering as they lay down their life to an endpoint for them. Through this expression of headship, the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is being extended towards an individual, in a marriage, and then in a house.

Significantly, a child learns the authority of their own name, as an expression of headship, by revealing the authority of their father's name. They do this through obedience. Eph 6:1. A child learns to integrate socially by learning respect for the name (with its authority) of others. They cannot claim to be heard if they will not give time to listen to others. This is teaching the child 'social obedience'. Social obedience is essential to avoiding alienation from, or in, any group.

Where this is not understood, the problem of acceptance for any child becomes an issue. This will be the consequence of over-regulation or under-regulation by parents within the house. When not adequately negotiated in the rearing of a child, its dystrophying effect upon the identity of a child can become a life-sentence. That said, self-knowledge can be a help in breaking in on this stronghold or dystrophy, particularly when the individual is in their young adult years.

The key to obtaining grace for the discipline and instruction of children, through which they can grow to fruitful maturity in each season of life, is the order and fellowship of headship. As couples apply themselves to the proceeding word of the gospel, and its reforming implications for their marriage and their house, they are established as heirs together of the grace of life. 1Pe 3:7. This grace enables them to walk together blamelessly, and to instruct their children regarding this pathway. The Scriptures promise that if parents will teach their children how to journey with Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, when they are old, they will not depart from this 'way'. Pro 22:6.

Chapter 4

The covenant of marriage

As we approach the time when the Father will take His seat, initiating the time of the end, the Spirit is addressing lampstand churches with respect to each person's sanctification, the covenant of marriage, and the culture of households. The Lord is seeking the fruit that is brought forth through discipleship, as a son of God abides in the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This fruit is the evidence that a believer is being established as part of the bride city, the New Jerusalem.

Marriage, in particular, is God the Father's holy institution, which He loves. Mal 2:10-11. The prophet Malachi described the covenant of marriage as the covenant of the fathers. Mal 2:10. This statement highlights the investment of godly fathers and grandfathers, within a house and in the church, in the establishment of a courting couple's marriage covenant. Equally, it behoves a courting couple to seek for reflection and counsel from godly fatherhood as they embark upon a courtship and endeavour to establish their marriage covenant in the image intended by God. The alternative to this initiative towards courtship is for a couple to engage the counsel of an elder for the purpose of satisfying the perceived conditions necessary for arriving at a wedding day.

The counsel offered through the grace of fatherhood is not merely sound advice for the promotion of a happy, gratifying marriage. It should minister faith to the couple by which they can believe for marriage according to God's covenant purpose. By the faith received as they hear the word of Christ's messengers, each individual is able to present themselves to God the Father. Joh 14:6. They do this, believing to receive seven Spirits from the Father as a specific remnant of His Spirit.

By this remnant of the Father's Spirit, each person can be strengthened with might in their inner man. Eph 3:16. Strengthened in this manner, their identity is being fundamentally redefined in relation to the other. The man is being made to be the head of the woman. The woman is being made a helper comparable to him as one who proceeds from him. 1Co 11:12. By this means, they are being made one by the Father, having each received a remnant of His Spirit for this purpose. Mal 2:15.

The word of counsel that is offered to a courting couple is also the word that ministers grace through which a Christian couple's marriage can be *reformed*. In this regard, the matters that are fundamental to establishing a Christian marriage covenant in the season of bonding are the *same* issues that a married couple will need to consider if they desire to be established as a worthy, firstfruits house. We can liken the word of the Father that is received by a courting couple to a 'first-time' initiative towards them. As it did for Joseph, this word 'tries them' as they continue, by faith, to apply themselves to the word as a married couple. Psa 105:19. This is the 'second-time' implication of the word through which they are able to bring forth good fruit for the Father. Mal 2:15.

With this in view, there are several key considerations, or 'triggers', that every Christian courting couple, and every Christian married couple, must negotiate if they desire to participate in God's covenant purpose as part of His firstfruits company.

The law of my mind

The first consideration for every courting and married couple is the impact of the other law upon the establishment and expression of their marriage covenant. The alternative to establishing a bond or marriage covenant, by receiving a remnant of the Spirit from the Father, is a vow that is based on self-centredness. Such a covenant is established through the strength of the flesh, being empowered by romantic intention. This intention is the promise that each spouse makes to fulfil the other person's agenda.

While it is unlikely that a Christian couple would overtly endeavour to establish their marriage on the principles of the flesh, the reality of a vow that has been empowered by romantic intention is readily apparent when one fails to fulfil the agenda of the other. This perceived dereliction is viewed by the aggrieved spouse as a breach of promise and an 'integrative flaw' in their companion. That is, they view their partner as the reason for the 'disintegration' of their relational covenant. An adversarial judgement is made that provokes vengeance.

This emotive and self-justified response reveals that *covetousness* is the basis of their covenant. Envy becomes the power of vengeance because something else, or someone else, has replaced the person's claimed priority. In other words, they are envious of something, or someone, who appears to have become more important to their spouse than them. This perceived betrayal gives rise to vengeful wrath, reflecting the observations of Solomon, who said, 'Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, but who is able to stand before jealousy?' Pro 27:4.

A marriage based on covetousness is controlled by another law, which is 'the law of our mind'. 'The law of our mind' is self-centred. It operates on the basis of a person's desire for self-preservation and to find life through self-realisation by appropriating, as a right, what God and others have promised as their expression of love and care for them. This orientation to life and to others,

which belongs to 'the law of our mind', is the expression of 'another law' in a person's members. Rom 7:23.

The carnal man, through the other law, presumes to take hold of the Law of God, using it to justify their expectations and judgements of others, including their spouse. Highlighting the relationship between the law of our mind and the Law of God, Paul wrote, 'I agree with the Law that it is good'; and 'I delight in the Law of God according to the inner man'. Rom 7:16,22.

When it is misappropriated, the Law itself becomes the strength and power of God that energises the other law, giving rise to jealous fury. This was acutely demonstrated by the chief priests in the court of Caiaphas, who used the Law to justify the brutal beating of Christ. Mat 26:65-67. When the Law is misappropriated in this manner, it becomes a person's judge. They are dying on the cross under its wrath in the manner of the unrepentant thief. The unresolved relational ferment leads to identity dystrophy and bitterness, which is the foretaste of eternal torment.

The operation of another law is an implication of the fall of mankind and is an *infirmity* that affects every person. Satan fathered in our minds the lie that we could have life from the basis of self-centredness. He proposed that this would happen as an identity-verifying action if we set our minds on achieving the life that we desire through the energy and insight that comes from the knowledge of good and evil. Gen 3:4-6. This is what it means to be 'carnally minded'. Rom 8:6-8.

A marriage established on the principles of the flesh is in a *wretched condition*, being controlled by nets and bands. Solomon described such a relationship as 'more bitter than death'. Ecc 7:26. The *nets* of self-centred romantic projection, and the *bands* of a selfish covenant, provoke jealousy, or envy, and wrath. On account of the Fall, these dynamics are in every marriage. Couples who are walking blamelessly by the Spirit are embracing, and applying themselves to, the process through which the nets and bands that belong to a carnal bond are being removed. At the same time, they are each being strengthened in their inner man, by a remnant of the Father's Spirit, to bear the fruit that belongs to a 'one-Spirit' marriage covenant.

Bypassing the law of our mind

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul, after he introduces us to the gospel of which he was not ashamed, directs us on our pilgrimage of faith into the valley of the shadow of death. Rom 1:16. Rom 7:7-24. In this place of *wretchedness*, he teaches us to fear no evil, for the rod and staff of Christ, our good Shepherd, are still in His hand. Rom 7:24-25. Psa 23:4. Christ uses the rod and the staff for our deliverance and chastening. We are delivered from our carnality as He delivers us to the Holy Spirit, who leads us in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

The Holy Spirit has been given to us to bring us into the settled reality of living as sons of God by walking in the Spirit. Rom 8:4-6,14. The beginning point for walking in this manner is praying in the Spirit. When we pray in tongues, our spirit prays by and through the Holy Spirit, *bypassing the law of our mind* that provokes the emotions of sin and the lust for control that is resident in our flesh. 1Co 14:14. As the law of our mind is bypassed, we are able to be built up in faith. Explaining this point, Jude wrote, '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. It is by this mercy that we are able to present ourselves for fellowship in the process of reformation and salvation. Rom 12:1.

Of course, we can only be built up in faith if we first receive the faith that comes by hearing the word of God. Rom 10:17. We come to Christ and receive spiritual strength by receiving and eating the word as the bread of God that is sent to us from heaven. 1Pe 2:4-5,8. Joh 6:35. This word is Spirit and life to us. Joh 6:63.

Through the Spirit, we have access to the fellowship and dialogue that belongs to Yahweh. Moreover, our spirit is able to pray by faith, rather than by the anxious thoughts springing from the law of our mind. Describing this prayer, Paul said, 'Likewise the Spirit also helps in our *weaknesses* [equally 'infirmities']. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.' Rom 8:26.

There is a rest that has been made available to us, enabling our mind to cease from striving, which is the anxious drive for self-preservation because of the fear of death. The Holy Spirit opens our ear to hear from Christ concerning the works of offering for the day as the alternative to the cry of our lusts. Isa 50:4-7. These works of offering are motivated by the energy that belongs to the love of God, which is poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit. Rom 5:3-5. These are our works of offering as a man, husband, father, or as a woman, wife, mother.

Disempowering the other law

The Holy Spirit delivers us to rest because He enables us to journey with Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. In this fellowship, we are able to choose the redemption that Christ accomplished for every person on His offering and suffering journey. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us as an offering for sin. Gal 3:13. Choosing this redemption is choosing our participation in the process through which He accomplished our redemption so that we die to the Law and live to God. Gal 2:19. This, of course, is what it means to walk in our baptism. Gal 2:20.

When Pilate presented Christ to the Jews, crowned with thorns and arrayed in a purple robe, he said to them, 'Behold the Man'. Emotively charged by envy, the chief priests and officers shouted, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him!' Pilate responded by saying, 'You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him'.

However, the Jews declared, 'We have a Law, and according to *our Law* He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.' Joh 19:5-7. Through the exercise of their other law, they had misappropriated the Law of God. It was now 'their own Law' with which they were killing Christ.

In the garden of Gethsemane, Christ submitted to the Father and was placed under the other law of those who judged, abused and killed Him through their misuse of God's Law. He gave His back to those who struck Him and His cheeks to those who plucked out His beard. He did not hide His face from shame and spitting. Isa 50:6. By responding in this manner, Jesus demonstrated the response that we are to make to those who, through their other law, take hold of the Law to abuse us. Jesus said to His followers, 'To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.' Luk 6:29.

When Jesus was beaten in the court of Caiaphas, He turned the other cheek in *apology* to those who, through their other law, imposed the Law upon Him. He absorbed all the reviling and punishment that was directed towards Him on account of envy. This is how He took the Law out of the way and nailed it to His cross in Himself. He did it through the abuse directed toward Him as the Law was misused through the exercise of the other law.

To understand the nature of Christ's apology, we must recognise that He who knew no sin was made to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2Co 5:21. *He was made to be our sin*. Even though the Law of God was misappropriated by wicked men, it was *justly* being applied to Christ, our sin. This was the wrath of God, through the Law, on all unrighteousness. Rom 1:18. Christ's apology was not to the wicked men; *it was to the Father*, the One against whom we have all sinned by rejecting His word of predestination and endeavouring to name ourselves.

In this way, through His seven wounding events, Jesus was establishing the seven steps of mourning, or godly sorrow, which belong to repentance. 2Co 7:10-12. He was fulfilling, and finished, the repentance for every one of us. Inasmuch as Christ fulfilled our mourning and repentance, He also 'became for us wisdom from God - and righteousness and sanctification and redemption'. 1Co 1:30. That is, He became the substance of our righteousness, sanctification and redemption! Reiterating the point, we see that as the wrath of the Law was satisfied through the abuse that Christ suffered, it was taken out of wicked hands and nailed with Him on the cross. However, He did this through obedience, satisfying the righteousness of the Law for each of us.

Through the word of the cross, we are invited to receive the fruit of this finished work *as a gift*. Highlighting that repentance is a gift given to us from Christ's finished work, the apostle Peter declared, 'The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Saviour, *to give repentance* to Israel and forgiveness

of sins.' Act 5:30-31. Applying this principle, the apostle Paul wrote, 'And 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*'. 2Ti 2:24-25. Many other verses, likewise, describe repentance as a gift. However, as we have considered, this gift is received when we join the fellowship of Christ's travail through which He accomplished our redemption, fulfilled our repentance, and worked the works of our righteousness as sons of God.

The Law confirmed

The persecution and abuse of Christ culminated at Calvary as He was nailed to the cross and was lifted up from the earth. All the people fiercely reviled Him, including the two thieves who were crucified with Him. However, through their abuse, and the injuries that they had caused Him, the other law within them was being disempowered as the Law was taken out of their hands and nailed to the cross in Christ's physical body.

Significantly, Jesus explained that this was not the destruction of the Law, but rather its *fulfilment*, both in judgement and righteousness, saying, 'Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to *fulfill*.' Mat 5:17. The Law is then *confirmed*, or established, by our response to the word of the cross. Highlighting this point, Paul wrote, 'Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, *we establish the law.*' Rom 3:31.

The confirmation of the Law through our response to the word of the cross was exemplified by the two thieves who were crucified with Christ on the day that He died. Both these men were dying under the condemnation of the Law. Their self-centred misuse of the Law was flaunted as they reviled and mocked Christ. Mat 27:44. However, as Christ suffered this abuse, reviling not in return, these two men were being *delivered to a choice*. As their other law within them was being disempowered, one of the thieves began to receive illumination.

The repentant thief acknowledged that he was dying *justly* under the condemnation of the Law, which was now nailed to Christ. His death was satisfying the requirement of the Law. Once this man was executed, the Law had nothing more to say in relation to him, for the wages of sin is death. Rom 6:23. However, he recognised that Christ was dying *with* both thieves under the condemnation that belonged to their sin. Luk 23:40-41. Christ had made their death to be His death, which He was dying to sin by Eternal Spirit in obedience to the Father. Rom 6:10. Heb 9:14. As well as dying the death of every sinner, *Christ was dying another death*. This was the death that He died 'before' when He emptied to an endpoint to reveal the Father and multiply the life of Yahweh. Describing this death, Paul said, '*For the death that He died*, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.' Rom 6:10.

Now dead to the Law, through the action of the Law upon him, the illuminated thief was able to acknowledge that he was dying with Christ. More than this, *he was now dying Christ's death and was being made alive to God*. Hence, he asked Jesus, his King, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.' Luk 23:42. Jesus answered the thief, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.' Luk 23:43. In contrast, at the point of choice, the unrepentant thief continued to demand deliverance from the implications of his sin. Luk 23:39. The Law was also established through his response as he descended into eternal death and silence, finding no place of repentance.

The repentant thief's response exemplified the principle that Paul outlined when he said, 'I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.' Gal 2:19. If we are to obtain salvation, we too, must accept the reality that we are crucified under the Law, with Christ. Illuminated to this truth, we are able to receive the mercies of the Lord, new each day. Lam 3:22-23.

By mercy, we can present ourselves for participation in Christ's death and receive the repentance and faith that He authored and finished for us. Rom 12:1. Christ bore the full penalty of the Law against our sin, but in the fellowship of His sufferings, which are 'a light affliction' apportioned to us, *we cease from sin*. 2Co 4:17. 1Pe 4:1. In this fellowship, the judgement of the Law against us ends, because it is satisfied with our death. We are delivered to a process through which sin is taken away, and we are able to live by resurrection life in our mortal bodies as we change from glory to glory into the image of the Son. Php 3:10-11. 2Co 3:18.

Obtaining true reconciliation in the cross

Jesus directed those who desired to be His disciples to take up their cross and follow Him. Mat 16:24. He was saying that we are to respond to the misuse of the Law against us in the same manner as He did, including in the context of conflict in our marriages.

As we consider this principle, we see that Job was asked by Christ to make this same response when Christ joined him to His own sufferings from before the foundation of the world. In the same way that the Father was provoked to submit His Son to the violence expressed through the misuse of the Law by the other law of men, the Son was provoked to submit Job to the abuse of the accuser, Satan. Christ said to Satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, *although you incited [lit: provoked] Me against him, to destroy him without cause [i.e. a man who has caused Me no harm].*' Job 2:3 Job was being asked to take up his cross and follow Christ, and 'turn the other cheek'. He had to let go of his self-justification and anger and respond to where, and when, Christ suffered for him before creation.

After Christ declared His offering finished and committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father, He breathed His last. Luke recorded that 'the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned [to their houses]'. Luk 23:48. This is what happened to Peter when he looked at Christ who had turned the other cheek in response to Peter's iniquitous abuse and betrayal. The other law was broken in Peter, and he went to his house weeping with godly sorrow. On the Day of Pentecost, those whose other law and sin had also been breached were able to repent and to make a good confession.

Meeting one another in this way is how we find reconciliation in our marriages. In the face of accusation and perceived mistreatment, as disciples of Christ, we are to turn the other cheek in apology to those who, through their own law impose the Law upon us. As we do this with Christ, the other law is dying in us, and the one who is aggrieved is delivered to a choice. They can exact recompense and advance the expectations of trading in the marriage that brings them under judgement, or they can meet their adversary in the cross and find deliverance from their own exercise of the Law. The testimony of both the one who is grieved, and the one who is finding deliverance from the other law, is, 'I through the Law died to the Law [and other law] that I might live to God'. Gal 2:19.

A new marriage covenant

When Christ was nailed to the cross, and the Law was nailed to the cross in Him, it was the end of the Law working on its own to judge anyone who was not keeping it as a marriage covenant. In this regard, we note that the Law, given at Mount Sinai, was the marriage covenant between the Son of God and the children of Israel, whom Stephen described as 'the church in the wilderness'. Act 7:38. Noting this covenant, the Lord, through the prophet Jeremiah, remarked, '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 which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.' Jer 31:31-32.

The consequence of transgressing the Law is death. Of course, we know that people died *before* the Law was given by Moses. This was the fruit of Adam's disobedience and the 'infirmity' of the other law that was consequently established in every person's heart, bringing them into bondage to sin and death. Rom 5:12. Rom 7:23. We have developed this point further in Chapter 5.

The Law was given as a covenant to minister life and blessing to those who kept it and participated in the culture of offering prescribed by the Law. It was a tutor to bring them to Christ. Gal 3:24. The life ministered through the Law was not 'zoe', but rather blessing, healing, and health. As the Lord Himself said to His covenant people, 'If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do

what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. *For I am the LORD who heals you.*' Exo 15:26.

While men and women of faith obtained this blessing, as a nation, the culture of the children of Israel was to walk after the flesh. That is, through the exercise of their knowledge of good and evil, they took hold of God's Law for their own ends. This led only to religious idolatry and sorcery. Clearly, the Son of God had a fleshly marriage with Israel which did not produce good fruit.

Paul explained that this fleshly marriage covenant was ended when Jesus died on the cross. He wrote, 'For the woman [the church at Sinai] who has a husband [the Son of God] is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives [it is their marriage covenant]. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man [by going after idols], she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ [having died with Him], that you may be married to another - to Him who was raised from the dead [the glorified Son of Man], that we should bear fruit to God.' Rom 7:2-4.

A new marriage covenant between the Son of Man and the true Israel of God was established on Mount Calvary once Christ was brought back from the death of our sin. This new marriage covenant is 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus'. Rom 8:2. Having been born of the divine nature, we are now able to walk after the Spirit in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Instead of endeavouring to serve the Lord with our mind, which is fleshly and inevitably leads to serving the law of sin, we follow the Spirit. We are obedient from the heart to the word spoken by Christ through His messengers, which the Spirit brings to our remembrance. Rom 6:17. Joh 14:26. By this means the righteous requirements of the Law are fulfilled in us. Rom 8:4.

However, when we choose to walk after the flesh, through our knowledge of good and evil, we come under condemnation. Through the law of our mind, we add the power and fire of the Law of God to our endeavours to give us strength so that we can prove that we are right, others are wrong, and that God is with us. Rom 7:25. This becomes our new idolatry, which is evidenced by the accompanying emotions of sin. Rom 7:5. Misappropriating the word of God, through the law of our mind, we engage in our marriage, in our house, and in the church in an *unworthy manner* and come under the curse of the cross. As Paul explained, we become weak and sick, and may even lose our sonship. 1Co 11:27-30.

Thankfully, the Holy Spirit is at enmity with our carnal desires and endeavours. He does this so that we will find repentance and cease from doing the things that we wish to do according to our knowledge of good and evil. Gal 5:17.

Our repentance is not penance. That is, it is not a series of actions that we take to recover our failed religious projection. Rather, it is the demonstration of faith through the works of obedience and a change in our attitude to life and to others. The righteous man, who walks after the Spirit, is established in this culture of blamelessness in their marriage, in their house, and in the church.

Communication

The next key consideration for every couple is their *communication*. The Lord Himself has promised that 'to him who orders his conversation aright I will show the salvation of God'. Psa 50:23. Importantly, a couple's capacity to order their conversation within the fellowship of headship depends upon their deliverance from the principles of the flesh within their relationship, and the restoration of their marriage covenant through a remnant of the Spirit from the Father.

The beginning point for every couple is to recognise that their communication needs restoration. Their communication will not, by default, be the conversation of faith that belongs to the fellowship of Yahweh. Of course, the inadequacy of communication in some marriages is obvious on account of a couple's lack of personal engagement with each other. However, the action and frequency of speaking to one another does not indicate the efficacy of their communication. It is the nature and content of their communication that reveals whether, or not, it is of faith.

We note, in this regard, that many couples rarely speak to one another about their own marriage covenant and their reformation in the light of the word. They do not devotionally testify to each other, nor are they able to hear from the other. Instead, the focus of their communication is on the pragmatics associated with the household, the cares of this world, and the pursuit of their needs and desires. A common conversation of leadership couples who have not applied themselves to the process of marriage reformation is commentary on the problems and pastoral issues of others, and the threat that they feel from others whom they fear do not accept them. These couples are unwise in these assessments and presumptions.

The reticence to ask

A fundamental communicative flaw in most marriages is the unwillingness of a spouse, particularly a wife, to ask, or make a request, in relation to a need. Rather than asking, a woman will hint or comment in relation to a matter with the expectation that her husband will register the need and respond with due care. The reticence to ask of her husband is an implication of the romantic expectations associated with a self-centred marriage covenant. Her desire is for her husband to be aware of her needs, or the needs of the house, and to act accordingly. She views this as a measure of his love for her and of the integrity

of their relationship. His failure to act, or the need to ask, is because his focus is elsewhere, provoking the jealous response we considered earlier.

The primary illustration of this dynamic in a marriage is provided by the 'marriage' of Christ and the Israelites, following their exodus from Egypt. Stephen described this company as 'the church in the wilderness', and the prophets identified them as an adulterous wife. Act 7:38. Amo 3:1-3. Hos 2:2. We know that during the course of their journey from Egypt to the promised land, the Israelites grumbled and complained incessantly. However, there is not a single record of a *request* that was made to God in relation to their needs. We see that the hints and suggestions, presented as an alternative to asking, are a form of complaint and discontent.

James, the brother of Jesus, noted this principle, writing, 'Where do wars and fights come from among you [including in your marriages]? 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. *Yet you do not have because you do not ask.* You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.' Jas 4:1-3. Of course, James' statement reveals that some people do ask of others and of the Lord, but the basis of these requests are the desires of the flesh.

The Lord wants us to make requests of Him, and we need to be able to make requests of others in our marriage and house. In fact, the reformation of our marriages and houses requires this engagement. However, we must ask according to the faith that we receive from hearing the word. In this regard, we are asking for what belongs to our sonship and to abiding in God. As James wrote, 'If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, *with no doubting*, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.' Jas 1:5-8. Individually, and as couples, we are to make requests through prayer, lifting up sanctified hands without wrath or doubting. 1Ti 2:8.

The Lord Himself has said, ' "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know." For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the *houses* of this city and the *houses* of the kings of Judah, which have been pulled down to fortify against the siege mounds and the sword: they come to fight with the Chaldeans, but only to fill their places with the dead bodies of men whom I will slay in My anger and My fury, all for whose wickedness I have hidden My face from this city. Behold, I will bring it health and healing; *I will heal them and reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth.* And I will cause the captives of Judah and the captives of Israel to return, and will rebuild those places as at the first. I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their

iniquities by which they have sinned and by which they have transgressed against Me.' Jer 33:3-8.

Trust

In order to embrace the process, through which a couple are able to find deliverance from walking after the flesh and to establish their marriage covenant in the Spirit, each individual needs to trust in the Lord and to trust each other. This is fundamental to obtaining the faith of God that is necessary for participating in a new conversation together as an expression of the fellowship of Yahweh. As King David noted, 'As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the LORD is proven; *He is a shield [of faith] to all who trust in Him.*' 2Sa 22:31.

Describing the implications of trusting in the Lord, King Solomon said, 'Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.' Pro 3:5-6. Living by the sight of our own eyes and the understanding of our own heart, rather than by the word of Christ preached by the Holy Spirit through His messengers, demonstrates a lack of trust, even though we may claim to trust the Lord.

Many couples claim to trust one another. However, the tenuous nature of their trust, which is not trust at all, is readily manifest when their expectations of life and of the other are placed under pressure or under threat. Their lack of confidence in their spouse, and indeed the Lord, and their need to take control of the situation, reveals their lack of trust. The failure of trust under pressure, or in peril, highlights that the primary impediments to trust are the *fear of death* and the need for *control*.

A person's fear of death and their need for control are firstly the implications of living by another law, which is expressed through the anxious thoughts that belong to the law of their mind. However, the drive for control and for self-preservation that indicate an inability to trust can be amplified by a person's history. For example, a person may have difficulty trusting another because their trust has been previously betrayed. Others may be unable to trust because of the mistakes someone close to them has made, reinforcing in their own mind the need to be in control of their circumstances.

A person's lack of trust and their need for control will be evident in a number of ways. They may, for example, need compelling evidence or justification to believe a word and join an initiative. In this regard, they judge a word, or direction, by the law of their mind, viewing with suspicion and caution what does not accord with their own understanding. They will not participate without sufficient reason. Alternatively, they wholeheartedly support what already accords with their understanding and sight. Others wait to see how a matter unfolds before committing to fellowship to avoid identification with failure or

relational mess. Some people are relationally reserved, fearing an alternative agenda at work, or that they will be maligned if they engage the conversation.

This way of living is at odds with worship in Spirit and truth, and undermines the first-love fellowship that should be foundational to a Christian marriage covenant. It also demonstrates that a person does not trust God. In this regard, we note that a woman who trusts God will be submissive to her husband. As Peter explained, '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 3:5-6.

The beginning of trust is to meet Christ as Lord and King. This is true for a wife and for a husband. We must submit to Christ, and kiss Him, lest He be angry and we perish in the way. The psalmist explained that this was the response of a person who was putting their trust in the Lord. Psa 2:12. They trust the King because He is the One who, through death, conquered sin and death and destroyed Satan who has the power of death. Heb 2:14. Significantly, on His conquering, offering journey, He released 'those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage [and unable to trust]'. Heb 2:15. When He comes as a King, He says to us, 'Fear not. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward'. Gen 15:1.

Having received Christ as our shield of faith, we are able to believe the word of His messengers and are identified as children of Abraham. Believing in this manner is the evidence that we have added virtue to our faith. 2Pe 1:5. This virtue, or moral excellence under pressure, is demonstrated by our initiative to receive the light of the knowledge of the glory of our sonship from Christ's face through the ministry of His messengers. It is as if we are anointing the face of Christ with oil, desiring Him to shine this knowledge upon us, demonstrating that we are no longer leaning on our own understanding.

Importantly, Christ gives aid to the children of Abraham. This aid is resurrection life, and it ministers healing to the identities of those who have been injured by the betrayal of trust and the mistakes of others. This healing enables them to continue to trust the Lord and to trust their brethren - in their marriage, in their house, and in the church.

Do you see this woman?

After Jesus had recounted the parable of the creditors, He said to Simon the Pharisee, 'Do you see this woman?' Luk 7:44. Jesus was directing Simon's attention to the woman who had washed His feet with her tears; who had wiped His feet with the hair of her head; who had kissed His feet; and who had anointed Him with fragrant oil. Her actions demonstrated that she had received a word of faith from Christ and had been strengthened with might, through the Spirit, in the inner man. Eph 3:16.

This woman, along with the other women in the Scriptures who were delivered to faith through repentance, exemplified the responses of every woman who desires to be established in godliness, and in particular, the response of Christian wives to their husbands. More broadly, they illustrate the responses of everyone who is being established as part of the bride of Christ. Let us specifically consider the responses of the woman who was forgiven much because she loved much. Luk 7:47.

Her first action was to wash Jesus' feet with the water of her tears. These tears came from 'eyes that see'. She was illuminated to something that Simon the Pharisee had been unable to see; hence, Jesus' question, 'Do you see this woman?' That which the woman had seen caused her to believe, and to reap with repentance and joy. As the psalmist declared, 'Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.' Psa 126:5-6. The woman washed Jesus' feet in *preparation* for His journey as the Lamb of God and Lion of Judah. On this journey, which would culminate in being lifted up on Mount Calvary, *the gospel of peace* would be revealed and proclaimed to the whole earth. Eph 6:15. Joh 12:31-33.

With her hair, the woman wiped Christ's feet dry. This was an aspect of preparation for His service and fellowship. We know this because Jesus Himself also dried the disciples' feet after He washed them at the last Passover. Joh 13:5. What is the significance of the woman's hair? Paul explained that a woman's hair is a *glory to her*, 'for her hair is given to her *for a covering*'. 1Co 11:15. This woman was submitting to His authority and headship as one whose head was covered. With the glory of this covering, symbolised by her hair, she was preparing Christ for His service and expression. By this means, she was acknowledging that she was *made for Him*, and was able to *proceed from Him as the glory of Man*. 1Co 11:7-9. This response is typical of those who truly belong to the church, the bride of Christ, as worthy houses.

Why did the woman kiss Christ's feet? To her, His feet were *beautiful*. Kissing His feet was the action of a woman who was testifying, 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!" [as a King]' Isa 52:7. These were the feet of a Messenger who had brought to her the gospel of peace. She had received the word of sonship that Christ had spoken to her when He ministered to the multitudes. This word was proclaimed to the woman by the King. She was kissing the King, 'lest He be angry' and she 'perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little'. Psa 2:12. She was obtaining blessing as one who was beginning to put her '*trust in Him*'. Psa 2:12.

The woman anointed Christ's feet with fragrant oil because she had seen that the anointing made His face to shine towards her. As Moses declared, 'The LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His

countenance upon you, and give you peace.’ Num 6:25-26. Likewise, the psalmist said, ‘God be merciful to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us.’ Psa 67:1. The woman saw that Christ’s walk of faith as her sin bearer – that is, as the Lamb of God – was established by *virtue*. In the Scriptures, virtue is likened to *oil* that is applied on the face in order to make it *shine*. Psa 104:15. The woman understood that Christ was chosen to be offered to God, and that His journey was through death. He did this to destroy death and him who has the power of death through sin – that is, the devil. Heb 2:14.

With this in view, the woman anointed Christ for His journey to the place of rest after His works, warfare and offering were finished. Jesus testified of burial as a place of rest, saying, ‘Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; *My flesh also will rest in hope*. For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.’ Psa 16:9-10. Christ’s burial is a place where there is no corruption. It is a place of fragrance! Clearly, the oil diffuses the fragrance of hope. In this regard, the house of Simon was, by the woman’s faith, filled with this fragrance of hope.

Through this encounter with Christ, her Lord and King, the woman received the word that her sins, which were many, were forgiven. Luk 7:47-48. She would be born again and become a son of God after Christ was raised from the dead.

Earlier, the woman had heard and understood the gospel of the kingdom that had been preached to her. Having received illumination and believed this message, she had sought for Christ, like the Shulamite woman in the Song of Songs. Son 5:6. She had sought for Christ, found Him and was joined to Him. She then pressed into the kingdom of heaven, taking it by violence. Mat 11:12. This she did in the house of Simon the Pharisee.

Simon the Pharisee

When Simon the Pharisee invited Jesus to his house, he did not receive Him as King. This is apparent because Simon made no confession of faith towards Christ’s lordship. Christ’s word as King had the authority to command respect. Such respect would have been demonstrated by bowing at Christ’s feet with the attitude of a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. Of course, this was the very response that the repentant woman made in his house.

A person who is poor in spirit has an *attitude* that is willing to repent and to believe the word of Christ as an obedient action or work. This kind of person sees the necessity for humility when they stand before God. They, therefore, humble themselves under His mighty hand, from which the five-fold ministry graces of Christ are expressed. 1Pe 5:6. Eph 4:11-12. While Simon had the opportunity to bow before the Lord Himself, the centurion, Cornelius, exemplified this very attitude when he met the apostle Peter, who had been sent to him and his house as a messenger. Luke recorded, ‘As Peter was coming in,

Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshipped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man." ' Act 10:25-26.

Rather than receiving Him as King, Simon had invited Jesus to his house to ascertain whether or not He was a prophet. We know that Simon was testing the Lord in this manner, for he said to himself, 'This Man, *if He were a prophet*, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner'. Luk 7:39. No doubt, it had been Simon's intention to test Christ with questions during the meal.

As part of an exclusive, instructive group within Jewish society, it is likely that Simon the Pharisee was a rabbi. He saw himself on an equal footing with Jesus when it came to interpreting the Law. In this regard, he was not dissimilar to the elders of Israel who came before the prophet Ezekiel, of whom the Lord said, 'Everyone of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him who comes, according to the multitude of his idols, that I may seize the house of Israel by their heart, because they are all estranged from Me by their idols.' Eze 14:4-5.

Jesus addressed Simon with the kind of question that the general Jewish populus might ask of a Pharisee. That is, He answered Simon's query with a scenario and a question, saying, 'Tell Me, therefore, which of them [i.e. the one who was forgiven little or much] will love him more?' Luk 7:42. After Simon had adequately answered Christ's question, Jesus then spoke directly to him about the attitude that he must have if he was to enter Christ's kingdom. This attitude was being demonstrated by the woman who was worshipping Jesus and kneeling at His feet.

Jesus came to dine with Simon because he loved Christ 'a little'. Luk 7:47. A little love was sufficient to bring this leader 'out' to Jesus. In this regard, Simon was like the children of Israel whom the Lord brought out of Egypt to meet Him at Mount Sinai. As the prophet Ezekiel said, 'Therefore I made them *go out* of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them My statutes and showed them My judgements [the commands of the King], which, if a man does, *he shall live by them*.' Eze 20:10-11. However, the children of Israel did not go 'into' the promised land because they would not obey the word of the Lord and His messengers, as the fruit of repentance - *they did not love much*.

Jesus received Simon by entering his house. He did this to upgrade Simon's love from 'a little' by bringing a word, or command, to him. This was a word of faith that would enable Simon to increase in love and faith and become a citizen of Christ's kingdom. However, it appears that Simon refused this word, which could have been Spirit and life to him, enabling him to be 'strengthened with might through the Spirit in the inner man'. Eph 3:16.

The covenant of marriage

Just as the woman had been strengthened with might in the inner man, every man must, likewise, be strengthened. Jesus explained to Simon that the evidence of receiving this strength is the response of one who loves much, demonstrated by humility, repentance, washing one another's feet, and kissing and anointing the Messenger of the Covenant when He comes. This is particularly important for those who teach and preach the word. Unless our love is exalted through this ministry toward our marriage and household, and toward the presbytery and the church, we will fail to enter His 'rest'.

Chapter 5

Not despising the Lord and ourselves

The profile of the scorner

Addressing the Jews at Antioch in Pisidia, the apostle Paul said, 'Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: 'Behold, you *despisers*, marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, a work which you will by no means believe, though one were to declare it to you.'

Act 13:40-41. A 'despiser' is a person who claims to be a believer, but who, on account of their self-righteousness, is unable to receive the commands of Christ that are proclaimed by His messengers. Consequently, they are unable to lay hold of the faith that comes by hearing the word and, for this reason, they 'will by no means believe'.

Elsewhere in the Scriptures, the despiser is described as a scorner or a mocker. For example, King Solomon wrote, 'A scoffer [equally, 'scorner'] seeks wisdom and does not find it, but knowledge is easy to him who understands'. Pro 14:6. The scorner assumes the liberty to judge Christ's messengers, their word, and its implications, on account of their presumed competence, expertise, experience or gift. They may, or may not be, malicious in their retort, but through their judgements place themselves in a position of superiority.

Jesus drew attention to this demeanour, or attitude, when He contrasted the prayers of a Pharisee and a tax collector. Luke recorded this lesson in his Gospel, writing, 'He spoke this parable to some who *trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others*: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men - extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess'." ' Luk 18:9-12.

Those who despise others and, through their presumptive judgements despise the word, ultimately *despise themselves*. They progressively become weary and depressed, particularly when their own righteousness, or their perceptions, are not validated by others. They can become a vengeful victim of others or of their circumstances.

This principle was acutely manifest by Judas, who rejected and despised Christ's teaching concerning His death, burial and resurrection. 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. When it was apparent that Jesus would die on account of Judas' betrayal, Judas committed suicide as the ultimate expression of self-righteousness. This was the action of a man who despised himself.

Despising and the law of our mind

Depression associated with despising oneself belongs to *unbelief*. As we read earlier, 'Behold, you despisers ... you will by no means believe'. Act 13:40-41. The scorner *does not believe*. This is because they trust in their own understanding of the word and its rationalisation through the law of their mind. That is, *despising belongs to the other law*. It follows that the weariness and depression that results from despising oneself is *not* bankruptcy of spirit; and it does not belong to the kingdom of heaven. Mat 5:3. As we will consider a bit later in this chapter, it is, in fact, an evil that is present with us. Rom 7:21.

Deliverance from this wearisome and self-destructive way of living requires us to heed the instruction of Paul in his letter to the Hebrews. He explained that people become depressed, or discouraged in their soul, because they forget the exhortation that addresses them as a son of God: 'My son, *do not despise* the chastening of the LORD, nor be *discouraged* [or depressed] when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.' Heb 12:5-6.

Those who receive this exhortation first acknowledge that their weariness is because they despise the chastening of the Lord as they engage with the word through the law of their mind. They cease from despising the chastening of the Lord, by taking Christ's yoke upon them to learn from Him. In this regard, Jesus directed His followers, saying, 'Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden [or depressed on account of carnality], and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.' Mat 11:28-30.

Hiding our face from Christ

Christ did not despise others, nor Himself. Rather, He was Himself despised. Establishing this point, the prophet Isaiah declared, 'He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.' Isa 53:3.

We hide our faces from Christ, and therefore despise Him through the presumption that belongs to being a *zealot*. A zealot is a person who covets the Law and the life that is promised to those who keep the Law. Our zealotry is revealed by our use of the Law to judge ourselves and to judge others. We find definition and self-validation through these judgements. In so doing, we reject the light of the knowledge of our sanctification that shines from the face of Christ.

Paul was clear that exercising these judgements brings us under the condemnation of the Law. Rom 2:1. As we have just considered, hiding our faces from Christ through our judgements of ourselves and others demonstrates that we despise Him. Significantly, Paul explained that, by despising Christ, we also 'despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God *leads to repentance*'. Rom 2:4. We forego the gift of repentance that Christ finished for us and desires to give to us in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

The process of healing

Depression associated with despising is *anger*. It is an expression of anger on account of unfulfilled expectations sourced from the law of our mind. The Scriptures refer to these unfulfilled expectations as 'hope deferred'. Anger resulting from our thwarted expectations leads to the dystrophy or sickness of a person's spirit. Detailing these principles, Solomon wrote, 'Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes [or true hope is realised], it is a tree of life'. Pro 13:12. Furthermore, he observed, 'The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness, but who can bear a broken spirit?' Pro 18:14.

A person who has a broken spirit can only find healing and recovery through the sevenfold Spirit of God given from the Father. This grace is ministered to a son of God as they receive and walk in the word of the Father that is ministered by Christ's messengers. Joh 13:20. As a messenger himself, Paul prayed for his hearers to receive this ministry, testifying, 'For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.' Eph 3:14-17.

Our 'inner man' refers to our *spirit and soul*. A hearer's inner man is healed and strengthened through the ministry of the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord from the Father because they are being delivered from living according to the other law as it is expressed through the law of their mind. This deliverance from the other law, which brings us into bondage to sin, is through Jesus Christ, who revealed the Father. Highlighting this point, Matthew recounted, 'When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which

was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: “He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses”.’ Mat 8:16-17.

Describing the implications of our participation in this fellowship, the apostle Peter wrote, ‘For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, *that you should follow His steps*: “Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth”; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him [the Father] who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - by whose stripes *you were healed*.’ 1Pe 2:21-24. The fellowship of these stripes began in the house of Caiaphas. This is where Jesus turned His other cheek as He was bruised for our iniquities, and where Peter found deliverance from his zealotry.

It is important to note that Peter directed us to follow in the steps of Christ who pioneered the pathway of our salvation. This is how we avail ourselves of the atonement that Christ accomplished for mankind when He took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses. That is, we are to participate in the seven atoning events of Christ’s offering and suffering journey by walking with Him, by the capacity of the Spirit, on the pathway of salvation that He pioneered for us.

Applying this principle, Peter explained that, when Christ was reviled, He did not revile in return. When He suffered, He did not threaten but, rather, committed Himself to the Father who judges righteously. Likewise, this is to be the way in which a believing husband relates in his marriage and in his house as he ‘lifts up holy hands without wrath’ (or, without reviling or threatening) and doubting. 1Ti 2:8. It is also to be the way in which a believing wife relates in her marriage and house so that, even if her husband does not obey the word, he, *without a word* (or, without reviling or threatening) may be won by the chaste conduct of his wife. 1Pe 3:1.

The recovery of Peter

Peter was able to give this instruction because he had learned this principle from Christ in the court of Caiaphas. In this encounter, Peter received the *gift of faith* from the Father, which was given to him by Christ. Jas 1:17. The faith that Peter received from the Father was in answer to Christ’s prayer for him. Earlier, at the last Passover meal, the Lord had said to Peter, ‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed [to the Father] for you, that your faith [received from Him] should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.’ Luk 22:31-32.

Peter had claimed that he would die the death of a zealot for Christ, saying to Him, ‘Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.’ Luk 22:33. Even after Jesus prophesied concerning Peter’s denial, Peter’s response was, ‘Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!’ Mat 26:35. His zealous, and seemingly noble, avowal was contrary to the word of the Lord to the disciples.

Jesus had said that when He was struck, they would be scattered, meaning that they were to return to their houses. Peter's zeal was in fact iniquity; it was not the expression that belonged to his obedience.

Christ's face was marred 'more than any man's' as He was beaten and bruised for our iniquity and self-righteous zeal. Isa 52:14. Isa 53:5. Each of Peter's denials corresponded with a blow to Christ's face. As Christ 'turned the other cheek' in apology to the Father, with each blow, the Law was being taken out of Peter's hands, and his other law was being disempowered.

When the rooster crowed, Peter met Jesus eye to eye and was illuminated to see the wickedness and failure of his zealotry. However, he also received, as a gift, the repentance that Jesus had finished for him and the faith to walk in the sanctified obedience that Jesus had *become* for Him. 1Co 1:30. He then understood what Judas failed to see or to believe – that the wicked in hell are eternally unrepentant. This is because they have rejected the gift of repentance and redemption that Christ *became* for them. Consequently, they are locked up in their own unrepentance, corruption and self-righteousness, upon which the fire of God's judgement burns with increasing wrath. Describing this state of torment in the lake of fire under the eternal judgement of God, the prophet Isaiah said, 'Their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched.' Isa 66:24.

The ministry of the word

When Moses led the people out of Egypt and through the wilderness to the promised land, the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light. Exo 13:21-22. This continued after they erected the tabernacle according to the pattern that Moses had received from the Lord. Num 9:15-23. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night was where the throne of the Son was enshrined above the people. This was the order of the throne that was witnessed by the prophet Ezekiel. Eze 1:4-26. Exo 14:19.

In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses described the ministry of the Son from His throne. He wrote, 'The LORD came from Sinai, and dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of saints; from His right hand came a fiery law for them. Yes, *He loves the people; all His saints are in Your hand; they sit down at Your feet; everyone receives Your words.* Moses commanded a law for us, a heritage of the congregation of Jacob. And He was King in Jeshurun, when the leaders of the people were gathered, all the tribes of Israel together.' Deu 33:2-5.

When Moses said that the Lord came with 'ten thousands of His saints', he was referring to the cloud that journeyed with those who were called to be the Father's firstborn people. The word was proclaimed to them as a fiery law that proceeded from the right hand of the Lord. The prophet Habakkuk described this ministry of the word, declaring, 'His brightness was like the light; He had

rays flashing from His hand, and there His power was hidden.’ Hab 3:4. Elsewhere, King David likened these flashing rays to fiery arrows that scattered the enemies of the Lord. 2Sa 22:14-15. Psa 7:13.

The nation that was delivered out of Egypt, journeyed to Mount Sinai to be *married* to Christ, the Son of God, who was enthroned above the pillar of cloud and fire. The Law was the covenant of their marriage. Describing this marriage, the Lord said, ‘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 which they broke, *though I was a husband to them*, says the LORD.’ Jer 31:31-32.

At this point in God’s unfolding covenant purpose, the people were not yet able to be temples for the Holy Spirit. This means that they did not yet possess the seven Spirits of the Lord. Rather, the Holy Spirit was an anointing upon them, enabling them to hear and to receive the word of the Lord spoken through the disposition of angels. Act 7:53. In the same way that the Angel of the Lord ministered the word of God at the gate of Eden prior to the great flood, the Angel of the Lord spoke the word to Moses. Exo 3:2. Moses then proclaimed this word to the children of Israel.

As we read, Moses declared that the Lord ‘loved the people’ and that ‘His saints were in His hand; they sat down at the Lord’s feet and received His word’. Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, demonstrated how we sit at the Lord’s feet. Luke recorded that Mary ‘sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word’. Luk 10:39. Jesus said, ‘Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.’ Luk 10:39,42. However, as we considered in Chapter 3, this was only the beginning of *receiving the word*. She then needed to become a *believer*.

Later, after she had met Christ as King, and had received faith to believe for resurrection life in her house, ‘Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.’ Joh 12:3. This was a woman whose testimony was, ‘How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns!” ’ Isa 52:7. Through Jesus’ word, as she anointed His feet, she was a participant in the fellowship of His death, burial and resurrection. The fragrance of this testimony, or proclamation, filled the whole house.

The infirmity of the flesh

As a result of ‘the other law’, our human *infirmity* is to misappropriate the word of God. We do not understand why we do this, for what we will to do, we do not practice. Instead, we find ourselves doing the things that we hate. Rom 7:15. This sickness, or infirmity, was established in us when man ate from the tree of

the knowledge of good and evil. On account of one man's disobedience, we were all born with the motive to misappropriate the word for our own ends, which brings us into bondage to the law of sin and death. Rom 5:12. Rom 7:23. Apart from deliverance through the cross, every person walks, or lives, 'according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience'. Eph 2:2. They remain in bondage to Satan and this infirmity on account of *the fear of death*. Heb 2:14-15.

How do we misappropriate the word? We eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and add the Law to this knowledge. Instead of receiving the word from Christ's hand and sitting at His feet, we take hold of the word with the law of our mind in order to energise and justify our judgements of others and ourselves. This makes us captive to the law of sin. Paul explained, 'For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.' Rom 7:22-23.

Once we are brought into captivity to the law of sin in our members, Satan and the demons gain power over us, *using the power of the Law against us*. We start to curse each other in anger, wrath, and the emotions of sin. This is the world of iniquity that proceeds from out of our heart, through our tongue. It is sobering to consider that our tongue is set on fire by hell. As James observed, 'See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.' Jas 3:5-6.

By this means, *we make the Law of God another law within us*. It becomes 'our law'. We then use the Law to condemn others and ourselves. This was acutely demonstrated by the Jews when Pilate brought Jesus before them. They cried out, '*We have a Law, and according to our Law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.*' Joh 19:7.

The Law should remain in the hand of God. It should not be in our hands as those who presume to use the Law as mediators. There is only one Mediator between God and man - that is, the Man Jesus Christ. How then are we to respond to the word of the Lord? Providing the answer to this query, King David wrote, 'The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those who proclaimed it'. Psa 68:11. Mary exemplified this when she anointed Christ's feet for burial. We note, in this regard, that proclaiming the word of faith is not the same as using the Law for our self-centred ends. We proclaim the word through the obedience of faith.

When we misappropriate the Law, we come under its burning, destructive judgement. This was manifest in a severe manner when Nadab and Abihu presumed to offer profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them to offer. We know that 'fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD'. Lev 10:2. Describing the nature of this fire,

the Lord, through Moses, declared, 'For a fire is kindled in My anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell; it shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.' Deu 32:22.

This destructive judgement begins to impact upon our identity when we misappropriate the Law so that it becomes our other law. Sin then produces death within us through what is 'good' - that is, the Law - the commandments of which are holy and just. Rom 7:10-13. Having come under the judgement of the Law by taking hold of it and making it our other law, we find that evil is present with us; those who, through the law of our mind, 'will to do good'. Rom 7:21. This evil that is present with us is the *weariness* that belongs to depression and destruction when we misappropriate the Law, applying it to ourselves and to our relationships.

The 'energy' that feeds the other law comes from the power that is in God's Law, creating a strong reaction within us. Paul called this judgement 'the emotions, or passions, of sin', writing, 'For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death'. Rom 7:5. In this mode, we maintain our zealous rage and attitude that despises another based on self-righteousness. We claim to love the Law, or word of God; however, this is not true. We *covet* the Law. In so doing, we break the commandment, 'Thou shalt not covet', and come under its judgement, which is death. Rom 7:7. This is our most basic human infirmity.

The Law, which was against us, was taken out of the way when it was nailed to the cross through the sufferings that Christ endured at the hands of wicked men. Col 2:14. Act 2:23. Death is no longer the consequence of the Law. Rather, death is now the consequence of Christ's judgement, because He possesses 'the keys of hell and of death'. Rev 1:18. He obtained these keys when the fire of hell was lit by Christ on His offering journey, which culminated when He was lifted up on the cross at Calvary and great darkness covered the earth from the sixth to the ninth hour. This was the place where the justice and judgement of God were fully manifest and revealed.

During those three hours, Jesus suffered the judgement of everlasting burnings that belong to those who are forgotten by God, until the judgement and punishment of each of us were completed in Him. Heb 9:14. That is, He, through Eternal Spirit, endured an eternity of judgement and wrath - an ageless age of years, countless and interminable - which will never cease for those who refuse to repent and to receive the salvation of God. And yet, death could not hold Him. Act 2:24. He returned to the Father having learned and fulfilled the obedience that belongs to every person. These two dimensions of His one offering were typified by the two goats - the scapegoat and the Lord's goat - that were offered on the Day of Atonement under the Old Covenant.

Responding to the word of a messenger

In the course of his second missionary journey, the apostle Paul departed Athens for Corinth. He met Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth, residing and working with them as a tentmaker. Every Sabbath, Paul 'reasoned in the synagogue', persuading 'both Jews and Greeks'. Act 18:1-4. When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was 'compelled by the Spirit' to testify to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. Act 18:5. This was a word of present truth that Paul had been specifically directed to deliver to them.

When the Jews, who had initially been persuaded, opposed him and blasphemed, Paul shook his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.' Act 18:6. They were righteous until they heard, and then rejected, the word of present truth preached to them by Paul. On account of their rejection of the word of present truth, Paul was progressively cleansed of the requirement to give priority to the Jews in relation to the proclamation of the gospel. This priority had been established by Jesus Himself, who said, 'You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the *end of the earth*.' Act 1:8.

Earlier, at Antioch in Pisidia, Paul had also acknowledged this shift in priority. Specifically, he said to the Jews, 'It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us: "I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the *ends of the earth*".' Act 13:46-47. Having been set as a *light* to the Gentiles, Paul was established as a messenger who belonged to a presbytery in the right hand of Christ. That is, through Paul's ministry, a *fiery* word of present truth was proceeding from the right hand of Christ to the Jews first, and then to the Gentiles. Rom 1:16. Deu 33:2. Although Paul's hearers were righteous before the fiery word of present truth had been proclaimed to them, they then judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life through their rejection of this message.

The accountability of a watchman

By particularly testifying that he was 'clean' of the blood of the Jews in Corinth, Paul highlighted that he had been established in the right hand of Christ as a *watchman*. We know this because the Lord said to the prophet Ezekiel, 'Son of man, *I have made you a watchman* for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: When I say to the wicked, "You shall surely die," and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; *but his blood I will require at your hand*. Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul [i.e. you are clean regarding their blood].' Eze 3:17-19.

Of course, the work of a watchman is not limited to warning the wicked. Like Paul, they are to proclaim the word of present truth *to the righteous* so that these hearers can obtain their salvation as they walk in the light of the word. Detailing this mandate, the Lord said to Ezekiel, ‘Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand. Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul.’ Eze 3:20-21.

Paul’s interactions with the Jews in Corinth demonstrate that a righteous person turns from their righteousness to iniquity *by rejecting the word of present truth*. In so doing, they stumble at Christ and fail to be built on Him. The apostle Peter explained that this is the implication of disobedience to the proceeding word, writing, ‘They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed’. 1Pe 2:8.

Inasmuch as a watchman, or messenger, has a responsibility to proclaim the word of present truth to the righteous and to the wicked, and to warn them of God’s judgement upon their disobedience, they must not engage with, nor answer, those who seek their counsel while coming with an idol in their heart. A person, and in particular a presbyter, approaches Christ’s messengers in the presbytery and the church ‘with an idol in their heart’ when they seek affirmation or validation for their initiatives that deviate from the expression and implications of the word of present truth. They do this in order to maintain their religious or ministry projections.

The Lord warned Ezekiel of this alternative to fellowship in Spirit and truth when some of the elders of Israel came to him and sat before him. The Lord said to Ezekiel, ‘Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put before them that which causes them to stumble into iniquity. Should I let Myself be inquired of at all by them?’ Eze 14:3. Warning Ezekiel of the implications of answering these inquiries, the Lord said, ‘And if the prophet is induced to speak anything, I the LORD have induced that prophet, and I will stretch out My hand against him and destroy him from among My people Israel. And they shall bear their iniquity; the punishment of the prophet shall be the same as the punishment of the one who inquired.’ Eze 14:9-10.

Paul escaped this condemnation. By faithfully delivering the message that he had been given to proclaim as a watchman, he was relieved of the accountability for ‘the blood’ of his hearers. However, they came under the fiery judgement of the word that he had spoken. In this regard, ‘fiery coals’ were heaped on their heads as he fed them with the spiritual food and drink that is from heaven. Paul explained this point to the Christians in Rome, writing, ‘Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. Therefore, “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he

is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will *heap coals of fire on his head*.' Rom 12:19-20.

The order of headship

The heaping of fiery coals upon the head of a person who rejects the word of present truth that is proclaimed by a watchman highlights that their rebellion is in relation to the order of headship. We note, therefore, that receiving the word that ministers life and healing to a hearer requires their acknowledgement of the authority that belongs to the order of headship.

This was demonstrated by the centurion who entreated Jesus regarding the healing of his servant. He said to Christ, 'Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, "Go," and he goes; and to another, "Come," and he comes; and to my servant, "Do this," and he does it.' Mat 8:8-9. It is clear from this man's statement that he had previously heard Christ speak, and recognised that Jesus was the King who came to reveal the Father. Through the word proclaimed by Christ the King, the centurion had received faith, which he was now exercising in this interaction. Notably, Jesus said of this man, 'I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!' Mat 8:10.

This faith, which is *from the Father*, is both received and demonstrated because a person acknowledges and functions in the order and fellowship of headship. In this order of authority, they receive faith because they acknowledge that the Father has made Christ their Lord and Head. Accordingly, they are able to hear the word that is preached through the ministry graces of Christ. Rom 10:17. Eph 4:11-12. This is the word of Christ the King that is ' "near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved'. Rom 10:8-9.

Reiterating the point, it is the *Father* who has seated Christ in heavenly places, far above all principalities and power and might and dominion. Eph 1:20-21. He is 'the Head of all principality and power'. Col 2:10. The Father has also made Him the Head of the temple and the Head of the church. When we receive Christ in the way that the Father has made Him to be in relation to us, we are able to receive and to live by the faith of God that He gives to us. This is necessary for our salvation. Moreover, because He is the Head of all principality and power, if we remain submitted in the order of headship, principalities and powers have no access or influence in our life and house. Headship is the covering that is extended over every dwelling place of Mount Zion. Isa 4:5.

Importantly, if we are submitted to the headship and authority of Christ, we will engage with others in the way that the Father has made them to be in relation to us. For example, a wife who is receiving Christ as her Head and Lord will receive

her husband as her head, 'calling him lord'. This is the very point that the apostle Peter made when he wrote, 'For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who *trusted in God* [the Father] also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, *calling him lord*, whose daughters you are if you do good [meaning, are established in sonship] and are not afraid with any terror'. 1Pe 3:5-6.

We see that a woman's reception and expression of faith is contingent upon her participation in the order of headship. The way that she relates with her husband will demonstrate her submission to the lordship and kingship of Christ. A woman who stumbles at the call to proceed from her husband as the community of the word is stumbling at Christ. 1Pe 2:8. She is unable to be 'built on Him' and dishonours His headship in the church and in their house.

Likewise, a man who is submitted to the lordship and kingship of Christ his Head will present himself as a slave of righteousness in the fellowship of his brethren, having become obedient from the heart to the form of doctrine to which he has been delivered. Rom 6:17-18. In this fellowship, he receives grace to dwell with understanding - i.e. in a culture of offering - with his wife, giving honour to her as 'the vessel' of multiplication whom the Father has made her to be. This reorientation is necessary so that a man's fellowship in the intercession and travail of Yahweh is not hindered. 1Pe 3:7. However, if the man continues to look into the face of his wife, he will stumble at Christ. Bereft of faith, his confession will be, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come [to properly participate in the fellowship of the *agape* meal].' Luk 14:20.

Significantly, as a man gives himself as a slave of righteousness, Christ, through His messengers, says to him, 'Greater love has no-one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; *but I have called you friends*, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.' Joh 15:13-15.

A man who has become the friend of Christ is a friend of the presbytery, and is a friend of those in the presbytery. As we have just read, their love in this fellowship is 'greater love' than even their love for a woman. This expression of 'first love' was demonstrated by David and Jonathan who honoured and affirmed each other's sanctification. 1Sa 23:17. Reflecting on their bond of fellowship, David said, 'I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; you have been very pleasant to me; your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women.' 2Sa 1:26. The apostle John also testified of this love, identifying himself as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' and recounting that he leaned on Jesus' bosom at the last Passover meal. Joh 13:23.

The work of watchmen

Watchmen are appointed by the Lord and are set upon 'the walls' of the heavenly Jerusalem. He declared, 'I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day or night [looking for those upon whom their peace may rest]. You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent, and give Him no rest till He establishes and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.' Isa 62:6-7. They are the keepers, or overseers, of the walls. Son 5:7.

Every man who is sanctified to the work of a watchman must measure themselves to this call. They do this through *repentance*, and through *the conversation of faith* that comes by hearing and receiving the word of present truth that is laid down in the presbytery. Offering, through which life is multiplied, is the fruit of this orientation to the fellowship of the word. As the prophet Isaiah declared, 'Your watchmen shall lift up their voices, with their voices they shall sing together; for they shall see eye to eye when the LORD *brings back Zion.*' Isa 52:8.

A watchman does not firstly lift up their voice to proclaim the gospel. Rather, they lift up their voice for *understanding*. Pro 2:3. This is the response of a man who has been illuminated to the mystery of the stars in Christ's right hand and of the seven lampstands. Rev 1:20. They first see how far they have fallen from this fellowship, and then desire to be established in the culture of offering that belongs to the fellowship of Yahweh Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is 'understanding'. Pro 9:10.

The fruit of understanding is the fellowship of offering where watchmen see eye to eye, or according to their sanctification, having put off their projections and the gospels that were sourced from their own histories and reason. They are able to see eye to eye because they do not despise, nor judge, one another through the sight of 'an evil eye'. Rather, their eye is clear, or healthy, through the regenerative work of the word that brings understanding, and they are full of light. Mat 6:22-23. This restoration in the presbytery is necessary for the reformation and recovery of lampstand churches - i.e. the 'bringing back of Zion'.

The watchmen proclaim the word that establishes every hearer in the fellowship of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. This daily implication of discipleship is described in the Scriptures as 'mornings and evenings'. Detailing the message of watchmen, Isaiah said, 'The watchman said, "The morning comes, and also the night. If you will inquire, inquire; return! Come back!" ' Isa 21:12.

The adequacy of a watchman

Watchmen themselves must receive, respond to, and express the word of present truth that is ministered in the presbytery through the ascension-gift

graces of Christ. Their ministry will be unable to deliver their hearers to salvation if they endeavour to speak from the basis of their former gospels or from their own understanding. Apollos exemplified the response of a messenger who was able to receive such instruction. As Luke recorded in the book of Acts, 'This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.' Act 18:25-26.

Messengers, or watchmen, who remain unresponsive to the word of present truth that is proclaimed in their hearing will, inevitably, become ineffective and misaligned in relation to the work to which they have been called. Although they say that they 'see', they are deceived, and they fail to proclaim the fiery word that reveals God's judgement and the pathway of salvation. Reflecting on such watchmen, the prophet Isaiah said, 'His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yes, they are greedy dogs which never have enough. And they are shepherds who cannot understand [because they are scorers who do not lift up their voice for understanding]; they all look to their own way, every one for his own gain, from his own territory [or local congregation].' Isa 56:10-11.

Dealing with offence

A notable cause of despising others, leading to weariness and depression, is holding on to *offences*. In this regard, deliverance from offence is essential to our establishment as a worthy house and to our connection as part of the travelling bride of Christ. Addressing the subject of offences, Jesus said, 'Woe to the world because of offences! For offences must come, but woe to that man by whom the offence comes!' Mat 18:7.

Offences are the evidence of the mystery of iniquity at work in our heart, in our marriage, in our house, and in the church. Agur, the son of Jakeh, described *iniquity* as being one of four mysteries that are impossible to understand through reason, identifying it as 'the way of a serpent on a rock'. Pro 30:19.

We know, of course, that Christ is the Rock. The apostle Peter directed us to come to Christ, 'the Living Stone'. 1Pe 2:4. He then explained that, to those who believe, Christ is precious. However, to those who are disobedient, He is 'A stone of stumbling and a *rock of offence*.' They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.' 1Pe 2:8. We see that the mystery of iniquity is revealed by stumbling and offences because we are disobedient to the word of Christ the King, who has finished the works that belong to our obedience. Our disobedience is the manifestation of another law in our

members, which was fathered within us by Satan, the 'serpent of old'. Rom 7:23. Rev 12:9. This law is the desire to define our own destiny and expression, and is the basis of our expectations of life, of ourselves, and of others.

Job's deliverance from offence

In our publication, *The throne of God and the Lamb*, we considered the experience of Job, his three friends, and the young man, Elihu. The nature of the conversation within this 'presbytery', which can equally occur in a household, was informed by *the mystery of iniquity*. We noted that, although Job and his friends did state some helpful principles that were drawn from truth, this discussion was based on their own causal reasoning. It exemplified the principle of 'gainsaying'. The fruit of this conversation was relational impasse, weariness, and the multiplication of offences.

Notably, through this season of suffering, Job overcame the Devil. However, he was only able to do this because he met and received Christ as the King who addressed him with wrath and fiery indignation. For example, in response to Job's assessments of his situation, 'The LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: "Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me".' Job 38:1-3.

As Job responded to the initiative of Christ, the King-Priest, he feared the Lord. He found repentance and faith, enabling him to know, and to believe, the true nature of God's love. 1Jn 4:16. He testified, 'I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, "I will question you, and you shall answer Me." I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' Job 42:3-6.

It is helpful to note that the final word of the Lord's discourse to Job, as the only One who could legitimately 'gainsay', concerned the great serpent, Leviathan. Christ revealed to Job the principle of the serpent on the rock and instructed him regarding how to overcome Satan. He directed Job to 'remember the battle' and to desist from engaging with the serpent according to the principles of the flesh. Job 41:8. The only way of overcoming Satan was to join the King in the fellowship of His overcoming through the cross. To this end, the Lord declared, 'No-one is so fierce that he would dare stir him up. Who then is able to stand against Me? Who has preceded Me, that I should pay him? Everything under heaven is Mine.' Job 41:10-11.

Responding to offence

Jesus said, 'Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you [KJV - 'ought against you'], leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your

brother, and then come and offer your gift.' Mat 5:23-24. Of course, Jesus was not advocating a gainsaying conversation that is informed by the law of our mind. This approach to relational recovery in the presbytery, in the church, or in our households, is an expression of the other law and only produces the emotions of sin.

A brother who has ought against us is offended by something that we may have said or done. This may be a perceived or a real offence. However, if the Spirit brings to our remembrance, or attention, the offence, we must seek reconciliation in a spirit of fellowship. We note that Jesus did this with Judas. Judas was offended by the words of Christ, and was offended when Jesus was anointed for His burial by Mary and by the wife of Simon the leper. Yet, Jesus washed Judas' feet and implored him to join Him in the fellowship of prayer in Gethsemane. Joh 13:2-5,27.

If we fail to initiate reconciliation when we know that our brother is offended, *we* sin. Likewise, if the aggrieved brother *remains* offended, particularly if their expectations of reconciliation have not been met, *they* sin. The problem for either person is their refusal to reconcile with their brother. They are unwilling to walk together in the light of the word, where the blood of Jesus Christ is active to cleanse and to heal. 1Jn 1:7. For this reason, their sin remains.

The impact of offence is a relational breach in a house or in the church, which may be expressed passively or aggressively, depending upon a person's temperament. Unless delivered from offence, a person's tongue, and the other law that motivates it, become a fire manifesting the mystery of iniquity. The source of the fire of judgement, and its destructive result, comes from hell. As we read earlier, 'The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.' Jas 3:6.

We must all give heed to this matter, for the temptation of offence is common to all people. It is an *infirmity* that besets us all. *Meekness* is both the antidote for, and defence against, offence. The Holy Spirit enables meekness as He assists us in obtaining self-knowledge, and helps us to bypass the law of our mind. As we considered in Chapter 4, the law of our mind is bypassed by praying in the Holy Spirit. Prayer by the Holy Spirit is our access to the fellowship and dialogue that belongs to Yahweh. This is to be the culture of conversation and conduct that belongs in our marriage and in our house, and in the fellowship of the church.

Chapter 6

The first principles of an administration suitable for the fullness of the times

The call to return to first love

In 1975, when the Lord delivered to us the vision of lampstand churches, a number of leaders from various denominations and doctrinal traditions responded by committing to become part of a presbytery.

Although professing a commitment to multiple eldership and fellowship in one Spirit, very few of these men relinquished their former gospels. Accordingly, they were largely unresponsive to a word of present truth ministered by the Spirit through ascension-gift grace in the presbytery. Instead, they selectively engaged with the word as a resource to service their own ministry agendas. This was evidenced by the pervasive and persistent culture of collegiality within the presbytery, as leaders prioritised their local church programs and people. Their tenuous reception of the word of present truth was further manifest by dysfunction within the marriages and households of many leaders, as the word had little impact upon them, personally. Corruption, impropriety and personality disorders claimed a disproportionate number of men, necessitating their departure from the ministry.

It is sobering to recognise that the Spirit is *still* addressing those who have been called to serve in the presbytery in relation to many of these matters. The beginning of restoration to the heights of a man's calling as a son of God who has been set apart to shepherd Christ's church is to be delivered from their carnal, former gospels and receive and apply themselves to *the gospel of God*. This is not merely an application to the theology of the gospel of God, but, more importantly, to its cleansing and sanctifying work in their life, marriage and household.

Receiving and participating in this reforming work will be demonstrated by an easy and open testimony within the presbytery of the cleansing and processing effect of the word in a man's life, marriage and household. This countenance as

a *worthy house* will overflow as a *firstfruits* expression of 'first love' in the presbytery as they lay down their life to reveal others through offering. Such reformation and commitment to first love is necessary if a man is to be brought forth and caught up to the hand of Christ as part of a star, or *aggelos*, presbytery. As they then continue to walk in the light of present truth in a fellowship of first love with their brethren, they are to be caught up to the throne of the Father as part of an administration that is suitable for the fullness of the times.

Illumination through the gospel of God

The process of being caught up to the hand of Christ begins by receiving the gospel of God. A person must receive and understand God's covenant purpose in order to participate in all that He has prepared for those who love Him. God's covenant purpose for mankind is His intention to bring us to glory as sons of men who are born again as sons of God and made in the image and likeness of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Heb 2:10. Gen 1:26. In his first epistle, the apostle John signalled two realities necessary for obtaining this blessing, writing, 'Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God [which is necessary for salvation], God abides in him, and he in God'. 1Jn 4:15.

God abiding in us is the precious promise that we receive by accepting His initiative towards us. First, we are made alive from the death of sin. Then, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit come to dwell in our heart. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit, making our bodies a temple of the Holy Spirit. Sealed in this manner ratifies that we belong to God the Father and grants to us a heavenly body, which is a dwelling place in the heavenly Jerusalem. By receiving the unique seed of our sonship name and life from Christ, we are born again as a new-creation son of God. Christ brings us to Mount Zion and to the church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven. Heb 12:22.

At this point, God abides in us, and we belong to Him! However, this wonderful *birthright* is insufficient for salvation. *We must abide in God* to obtain the blessing of our salvation. 'Abiding in God' is much more than our association with a community of believers in a locality. Abiding in God is the implication of baptism into the name of the Father, the name of the Son and the name of the Holy Spirit. *It is a whole culture of living and walking* that needs to be learnt from Christ through the instruction given by His messengers in the presbytery and in the church. Mat 28:18-20.

Those in whom God abides, and who then abide in God, are *disciples*. They are made disciples because messengers baptise them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. They are being taught by these messengers to observe all things that Christ has commanded them. Mat 28:19-20. In order to baptise others, we must know and demonstrate these commands as disciples and friends ourselves. We must continue to live and walk

by the Spirit as disciples in the fellowship of the Father and the Son. 1Jn 1:1-4. The evidence of receiving this discipling initiative towards us is that our sanctification as a son of God is being proven, and we have a testimony of progressive reformation in our marriage and our household.

Marriage and household reformation of presbyters

The impact of the marriage covenant and the culture of the house of an elder or deacon, needs to be understood because the work of an elder and a deacon, even though initiated from the presbytery, is facilitated from their house. Noting this point, we are reminded of the admonition of the apostle Paul in his first letter to Timothy. He asked, 'If a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?' 1Ti 3:5. His wife must be 'reverent, not [a] slanderer[], temperate, faithful in all things'. 1Ti 3:11. 'Faithful in all things' means that the word of Christ, proceeding from the fellowship of the presbytery, is the culture that she is learning and fostering. Consequently, she is able to facilitate a welcoming and hospitable house as the context from which much of their work as a couple is done.

Where the covenant of a marriage and the culture of the house is not truly Christian - that is, established in the order of headship under the Father and under Christ - then the work of the ministry will be severely impeded. The promotion of the culture of first love towards other presbyters, and the work of the ministry, will become task related rather than fellowship based. This is because the fellowship of the Spirit is not *in* the house. It, therefore, cannot be communicated *beyond* the house.

Presbyters must first be found as worthy households who have grown up to become firstfruits households. Their authority and capacity to care for the flock as part of the fellowship of the presbytery is because of this new-creation reality; it is not because of some other qualification, appointment, anointing, or gift.

A household who is found 'worthy' will overflow with life through sanctified ministry and care towards other houses. This is because they have overcome the spirit of the world, which is under the rulership of Satan, in their own lives, in their marriage, in their household, and in the church. They have overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb through their fellowship in His seven wounding events; by the word of their testimony, as they are being established in the true expression of their name; and by not loving their lives to the death, through offering in their house and in the church. Rev 12:11.

Restoration to the fellowship of the presbytery

Presently, every person with 'an ear to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches' is being urged to return to Mount Zion and to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. This return is marked by reformation in houses and

marriages through repentance and faith-obedience in response to the proceeding word of Christ.

Such reformation belongs to, and is necessary for, a believer's participation in the intercession and travail of Yahweh's prayer fellowship, through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Notably, as a network of worthy houses, the focus of this travail is to bring forth a 'man child' - that is, a worldwide presbytery that is caught up to the Father and His throne, to rule all nations with a rod of iron in the time of the end. Rev 12:5. Rev 2:25-27.

As we have just considered, before the worldwide presbytery administration can be established, those whom the Father has set apart as star messengers, or illuminators, must first be restored to the fellowship of a presbytery in the right hand of Christ. The beginning of this restoration for *every* presbyter is illumination concerning the stars in Christ's right hand and lampstand churches. Jesus Himself described the seven stars in His right hand and the seven lampstands as a 'mystery'. Rev 1:20. This mystery can only be understood through illumination by the Spirit.

Notably, it is possible to serve the Lord in the work of the ministry for many years without receiving any illumination concerning how the fellowship of a presbytery works by offering. When Jesus addressed the presbytery in Ephesus, he commended them for their commitment to godly living, their ability to recognise false messengers, and their perseverance in relation to their ministry work. Rev 2:2-3. Nevertheless, Jesus rebuked them because they had left their first love. He said to the presbytery in Ephesus, 'I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 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 - unless you repent.' Rev 2:4-5.

First love is the *sanctified fellowship* of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in which They reveal each other by offering. When a man is truly illuminated to the culture of fellowship that distinguishes a lampstand presbytery, they will *first* be aware of how far they have personally fallen from first love. As we have been considering, they will first recognise the need for the restoration of their marriage and house to the culture of first love that belongs to the fellowship of Yahweh. Furthermore, they will recognise that their natural, or default, ministry motivation and expression falls utterly short of the high calling that belongs to first love in the fellowship of Yahweh on the heights of Mount Zion. This illumination delivers them to bankruptcy of spirit as they count their previous and presumed qualifications for ministry as 'rubbish'. Php 3:7-8. This bankruptcy is necessary for inheriting the blessing of fellowship in the heights of Zion. Mat 5:3.

When a man is bankrupt in spirit, he will acknowledge his incapacity for the work of the ministry without the fellowship of the presbytery, which is the fellowship of the Father and the Son. However, more than this, he will recognise

his incapacity to join and participate in the fellowship of the presbytery without the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables our fellowship *before* He becomes the Helper of our obedience in relation to the work of the ministry that proceeds from the fellowship of the presbytery.

In addition to this, having become bankrupt in spirit, a man will recognise the iniquity of his own independence, which is a manifestation of his pride. He will be illuminated to see that his default mode of independence is a violation of the fellowship of the presbytery, and a sin against the Father and the Son. Furthermore, he will be illuminated to see the impact that his independent approach to the work of the ministry, in his local congregation or church department, has had upon his brethren and the congregation.

Accordingly, the beginning of a messenger's restoration to first love in a presbytery, whose fellowship is with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is mourning, leading to repentance and faith. This faith is obtained by receiving, with meekness, the word that is ministered within the presbytery. It is expressed through a testimony of meeting Christ, leading to repentance and faith for sanctified participation in the presbytery. This faith is then demonstrated by laying down one's life to reveal others in the presbytery and in the church.

Speaking in the fellowship of the presbytery

Over the course of our history as a church movement, there have been many men who have presumed upon, or been engaged in, the presbytery without this illumination or response. For example, some men have pushed for identification with the presbytery to empower their own ministry aspirations. Others may have been brought into the presbytery to service a deaconing work that required attention or assistance and have assumed authority on the basis of this need and their expertise. Some have presumed upon ministry in the church through empowerment as part of an extended family. Others have found a place of expression on the basis of giftedness.

While many of these men may be called to serve as part of a presbytery, they remain fallen until they receive illumination concerning the heights of their predestination from which they have fallen, and make a good confession. Without this illumination, leading to repentance, they will invariably demonstrate an attitude of, 'I'll take it from here'. They are empowered by connection to the presbytery but do not 'lay back' to this fellowship as an expression of offering-obedience. This is because they trust in their own competence and sight, assuming that they know what is best for their locality or their department.

Often these men are also reticent to speak in the fellowship of the presbytery because of their perceptions of the presbytery's inadequacies. Although unwilling to speak in the presbytery, they often have a lot to say outside of the presbytery meeting. The implication of this demeanour and manner, is that they

distinguish themselves from their brethren whom they view as 'inferior' or 'fallen'. As we considered in Chapter 5, this is the bearing of the 'despiser' or 'scorner'. In doing so, they fail to recognise that Christ is numbered with a fallen presbytery. Christ is not ashamed to call us His brethren and has pioneered the pathway of our recovery to first love. Unless a presbyter recognises that they are part of a fallen star, they will forfeit the restoration and redemption that Christ has accomplished for them.

Of course, there are other reasons why a man will be restrained in his expression within the presbytery. For example, he may not have anything to say because the work of shepherding is beyond his sanctification. In this case, these ones need to measure themselves to the reality of their name and may not need to meet as part of the presbytery. Others may be limited in their conversation because their sanctification has been compromised and they require personal recovery. Others may be fearful of appearing inept, revealing shame and the maintenance of a projection to be the basic motivation for their engagement.

Presuming to minister in and from the presbytery without a testimony of repentance and faith for fellowship in the travail of the presbytery, demonstrates that a man is still a *novice*. 1Ti 3:6. Without illumination, a novice will be inclined to become puffed up with pride by using the presbytery as a source of empowerment to support his own ministry. If a man is empowered from the presbytery, he will then presume to speak outside the fellowship of the presbytery from *his own resources*. This demonstrates that he has fallen into the same condemnation as the devil.

Jesus identified the mode of Satan's ministry by saying, 'When he speaks a lie, he speaks from *his own resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it'. Joh 8:44. When the presbytery is viewed as a place of empowerment, rather than a fellowship of offering, it enables all the alternative doctrines, sourced from Satan, to flourish. These are the doctrines and deeds that Christ identified in His letters to the presbyteries of the seven lampstand churches, which must be overcome. Unless a man is restored through illumination, repentance and obedience, he will inevitably succumb to the tail of Satan that draws a third of the stars from the hand of Christ. Rev 12:4.

Christ's initiative to sanctify messengers

As we have already considered, the beginning point of restoration for every presbyter is illumination leading to bankruptcy of spirit. We remember that when the apostle John saw Christ, the anointed Son of Man and King, he fell at His feet as a dead man. However, Christ extended to John His right hand, saying 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore.' Rev 1:17-18. In this action, Jesus Christ ministered faith to John and joined him to the fellowship of His right hand.

He did this *before* He commanded John to write to the seven churches as an obedient messenger in His right hand. Rev 1:19.

When the apostle John saw Jesus Christ, and fell at His feet like a dead man, he had the same experience as the prophet Isaiah when He saw the Lord sitting on His throne on the top of Mount Zion. Isa 6:1. Isaiah heard the seraphim proclaim, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory'. Isa 6:3. It was the revelation of the *sanctified fellowship* of Yahweh-Elohim that caused Isaiah to declare, 'Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts'. Isa 6:5.

Despite his ministry grace as a prophet, Isaiah recognised how far he had fallen from the heights of the fellowship of Yahweh-Elohim. Notably, the seraphim took a burning coal from the altar and cleansed the lips of Isaiah. The coal from the altar joined Isaiah to the fellowship of Yahweh-Elohim's offering. In the New Covenant, it is the work of the apostolic administration of Christ to extend the fellowship of the right hand of Christ to every presbyter who has been illuminated to see how far they have fallen from the heights of Zion.

When the lips of Isaiah were cleansed, it enabled him to respond to the Lord's invitation for fellowship by saying, 'Here I am'. Isa 6:8. Likewise, the evidence that the lips of a presbyter have been cleansed, will be his willingness and faith to present himself for fellowship in the presbytery. The cleansing of his lips will first impact *the way that he speaks in the fellowship of the presbytery* before it changes the way that he proclaims the word as a messenger from the fellowship of the presbytery.

In this season, the fellowship of the presbytery in the right hand of Christ is being extended to all those who are poor in spirit and of a contrite heart, who tremble at God's word. Isa 66:2. These are hearers who are beginning to travail through godly sorrow. Let every man, therefore, heed the direction of the apostle Peter, who said, 'Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.' 1Pe 5:6-7.

Eldership and deaconing in the church

It is important for us all to be clear concerning the composition and nature of a presbytery. A presbytery is a fellowship of overseers, elders and deacons whose work is to care for the church in a region, overseeing its program and work. The pastoral care of a congregation is through the ministry of elders, and the facilitation of the work that needs to be accomplished is through the ability and supervision of deacons.

Eldership and deaconing are not *positions* in the church or in the presbytery. Rather, a man grows to eldership and in his capacity for the care of the church.

It is an expression of firstfruits and one's sanctification, having been established as a worthy house. 1Co 16:15-16. Similarly, a man, according to his sanctification, is commended to a deaconing work as one who is able to *lead* with all diligence. Rom 12:8. In this regard, he exemplifies the culture of offering as he, by love, serves, having a good testimony in the church and in the presbytery. Gal 5:13. Act 6:1-5.

The care of the church from the presbytery, through eldership and deaconing, is an extension of the ministry of Christ, the good Shepherd. This ministry is accomplished through the work of under-shepherds in the church. 1Pe 5:1-4. Ecc 12:11. Their work includes feeding, tending, leading, adjusting and protecting the flock. The sheep who belong to Christ's flock hear the shepherds. They maintain constant connection to the word and *the fellowship of hearing and responding*. 1Jn 1:1-4.

Faith for service

A person who is wanting to serve as a deacon offers himself to serve Christ and the church by submitting himself to the directives initiated by the presbytery. The overall program and work of the church is, at all times, initiated from the fellowship of the presbytery.

A person who is offering to serve must also have some sense of personal call in relation to the specific tasks that he will undertake. This sense of call is qualified by ability, for the Lord gives *talents* according to abilities. Mat 25:14-29. Talents do not refer to a person's giftedness. Rather, they are '*spheres of service*' that are given by Christ. Note that this is a qualification of our previous understanding of 'talents'.

Faith is activated by the elements of a call coming from Christ to the individual, and then through the presbytery, resulting in a personal conviction to respond and serve. Their attitude is qualified by sober judgement in relation to their ability. They exercise sober judgement, not thinking of themselves more highly than they should in relation to their capacity as a servant, recognising that their ability will be according to the measure of faith that the Lord has given to them. Rom 12:3.

The faith that is received from the Lord is demonstrated through relational obedience. This obedience is an expression of love, as faith works by love. Gal 5:6. Through obedience, the initiative is laid back to the fellowship of the presbytery. A man is not doing this to empower their program. Their motive is to reveal what the Spirit is saying in the fellowship of the presbytery. When this happens, others are revealed. The fruit of this expression of love is that life is multiplied and expressed through the fellowship of offering. If this does not happen, all that is being revealed is a person's self-centredness through their own program. This is what we mean by a collegial response.

The importance of cleansing in fellowship

To become efficient in the task, it is important to be a vessel of honour as one who serves in the house of God. In the same way that every person begins 'fallen', and must be illuminated to the fellowship of first love that belongs to their calling, every person begins as a vessel of dishonour. Paul explained that, 'if anyone cleanses himself from the latter [a vessel of dishonour], he will be a vessel for honour, *sanctified and useful* for the Master, *prepared for every good work*'. 2Ti 2:21. With this in view, every presbyter needs fellowship and counsel with overseers to find cleansing and adjustment so that the task that they have been given to do, and their oversight of others in relation to the task, is appropriate. This is to be, for all presbyters, *an ongoing reality*.

This issue of presbyters remaining 'clean' through fellowship and counsel in the presbytery is the point that Jesus was making when He said that we need to wash one another's feet. Joh 13:12-17. If this is not maintained within the presbytery, then there is no capacity for ongoing fellowship in the presbytery, even though a presbyter may continue to engage socially and administratively in his deaconing work.

Their engagement inevitably degenerates within the presbytery to relational sensitivity, fragility, and mistrust of the motives of others who endeavour to address them as a presbyter. Caution and reservation characterise all personal connection as they feel that partiality influences many of the decisions that are facilitated from the presbytery. The answer to this degeneration in one's conversation and conduct within and beyond the presbytery, is the need for a constant expression of repentance and faith, as their testimony of fellowship and life. This should be an easy communication of genuine humility and faith, as one who is *bankrupt in spirit*.

A good work

The apostle Paul said, 'This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop [or overseer], he desires a good work.' 1Ti 3:1. Paul then nominated the qualifications for both overseers and deacons. Significantly, he explained that the reason for these details was so that his readers would know how to conduct themselves in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. The highpoint of this conduct is the manifestation of the mystery of godliness. 1Ti 3:15-16.

We are all called to receive the gospel that is making known to us the mystery of God. A person who receives this message will be ordering their conversation and conduct aright, personally, in their marriage, and in their house. This response is basic to the conduct that belongs to the household of God. As we give ourselves in this way, we obtain the testimony that belongs to our sanctification, which overflows as an expression of love towards others through service. Gal 5:13.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

This application and service belongs to the intercession and travail of Christ's bride as she labours to bring forth a man child administration. In this season, the Spirit is calling us all to participate in this travail and to believe for our participation in the manifestation of an administration suitable for the fullness of the times.