

BEHOLD THE LAMB

David Baker, Presbytery Word for week commencing Sunday 22 December 2024
Transcription of recording, slightly edited

What I would like to do today is to continue in the theme of becoming worthy houses. We could probably title this 'Behold the Lamb'. I want to stay in this theme of worthy houses and highlight that it is the *Lamb* who is worthy, and the Lamb is the provision then for your house to also become worthy.

I have reflected on this a number of times, and said this a number of times, and hopefully this point is continuing to distil upon you and rest on your spirit - in one sense be etched into your spirit. We are in a profound season of visitation and the Holy Spirit is certainly impressing upon us in this season the need for marriage reformation and the need to become worthy houses.

In many respects, this season of visitation began in 2019. You will remember that is when Vic and Lorraine began to share their testimony with us concerning their marriage. The Lord was really beginning to highlight to all of us that He was calling us like He did to Abraham and Sarah saying, 'Walk before me and be blameless.' Walk in the light of the word that has been proclaimed to us.

Then we had the COVID season, of course, where the Lord very practically confined us to our houses. He confined us to our house, He stopped the whole world, didn't He? I like saying it this way - that He stopped the whole world; stopped everything in its tracks; cleared a lot of the distractions so that He had the opportunity to speak to His people in every place about the need to become worthy houses. Could we summarise it like that?

We know there were a lot of lessons we were learning through that season. The first lesson was that the word that is proclaimed by the presbytery is proclaimed directly to every household. You will remember that livestream season where the Lord removed every opportunity for the word to be

reinterpreted or anything in any local place; and the word was proclaimed directly to our houses. That was Christ knocking on the door of every house, and the word was proclaimed directly to every man, woman and child. Then we were given the opportunity to respond to that word in a fellowship among our local brethren. This is what the Lord was really emphasising to us in that season. We were beginning to learn a new culture.

The Lord was also emphasising the need to turn or repent from all of our sacramental practices to embrace the fellowship of the *agape* meal, and we know that fellowship is to be expressed both publicly and from house to house. That is what we see in the fellowship of the early church in Jerusalem. They would gather to Solomon's portico to hear the word publicly proclaimed but then they would go and they would discuss that word in their houses and in a fellowship from house to house - respond to the word; fellowship in the word concerning its implication; its applications; testify concerning the word; pray for one another; be hospitable to one another. There was a whole fellowship there that was established as a culture - public and house to house.

That is what the Lord has been calling us to. I trust that we are learning this culture. We still have a fair way to go in terms of house-to-house fellowship. I think we are only beginning to learn what house-to-house fellowship looks like. The cornerstone of house-to-house fellowship is worthy houses, because we are talking about the fellowship of worthy house to worthy house. This becomes then a network of worthy houses that is suitable to gather the harvest in the end of the age.

I am raising the question here as we begin. I could put it as a question: What has changed

in terms of your house over this past season? As I am saying, the season of visitation has been a number of years now. You will remember during the COVID season (in terms of the world), the whole world was desperate to get back to normal as quickly as possible. Hopefully, for you in your house (and I am sure this is the case), that it has not reverted to what was normal in terms of the culture prior to that season, but that there has been something completely new established for you, and you are continuing to change as you walk in the light of present truth.

Our testimony is not all things continue as they have from the beginning. Our testimony is the Lord is doing a regenerative work in our lives and in our homes, and there is change coming. I want to continue to consider this subject of worthy houses and again ask a question as we begin: When you hear that term 'worthy house', what do you immediately think about?

This is my key point for the morning. When you hear that term 'worthy house', what do you immediately think about? I am sure if you are like me, you will immediately think about the culture of your house. Now that term, 'worthy house' leads me to immediately think that way. Of course, we do need to go there, but my key point today is that that is step two - not step one.

Can we put behind that, that when we hear that term 'worthy house', we need to behold the *Lamb* who is worthy, and then believe that the Lamb who is worthy is the provision for your house to become worthy? If you are immediately thinking about the culture of your house, it is very easy to go away and try to implement a whole heap of changes that may simply be in the flesh or just a carnal initiative. The Lord wants us to lift our eyes and to behold the Lamb who is worthy.

Now in the same way, when we hear the term the 'order of headship' or the 'fellowship of headship'; we know the order is a

fellowship. The fellowship of headship is a fellowship of offering. How often do we immediately think (now I think this is our innate response), how often do we immediately think about the relationship that we have with our spouse? Now is that true? We have this default response that whenever we hear the term headship, we are inclined to immediately think about the relationship that we have with our spouse.

Men, when you hear that term, do you immediately think about the relationship that you have with your wife? Women, when you hear that term, do you immediately think about the relationship that you have with your husband? Now the Lord is coming to us in this season and saying we need to lift up our eyes. Now playing with the term 'eyes' there (actually for every man, every woman), meet Jesus Christ eye to eye and recognise that He is the Head of your house.

When we use that term headship, we need to be immediately thinking about our relationship to *Christ* who is the Head of our house. The face of Christ (and I am loving this point in this season), the face of Christ is the only face that is a mirror for you. No one else's face is a *mirror*. You cannot look into anyone else's face (including your spouse) and see a reflection by the Holy Spirit of who God has named you to be. You cannot see the glory of your sonship and the nature of your sanctification and your obedience in anyone else's face apart from Christ.

We need to look into the face of Christ and then receive that reflection and confess that He is Lord. For men, we need to be looking into the face of Christ so that we know who we are. Then we are receiving capacity from Him to be able to love our wives and lay down our life for her. There is no capacity to express love without firstly meeting Christ and receiving the power of His lordship from Him. Now equally for wives, if a woman has not met Christ, she will not know how to

love her husband by walking in submission to him as an expression of her obedience to Christ. I am just making the point here. We need to be beholding Christ first.

Now equally, concerning 'worthy house', can we just lift up our eyes today and say we firstly need to behold *Christ* who is the Lamb and He is the provision for your house? I am thinking about a number of things, so we will read some verses here today and I will paint the picture; but it is a very simple point I am making. You remember the ministry of John the Baptist. We might read these verses as we begin.

John the Baptist was the greatest of all the Old Testament prophets. We will go to John chapter 1 and verse 26. Now we know John came in the spirit and power of Elijah. He came to prepare the way for Christ who is the source of the Elijah ministry. When he is preaching and baptising, the Pharisees sent messengers to him, and they are asking him, 'Are you the Christ? Are you Elijah? Are you the prophet?' And he says, 'No' to all of those designations. He says, 'I am the voice of the one crying in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord.' He is fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah in that regard.

In John 1 verses 25 to 27, they are asking him, 'Then, well, why do you baptise?' Now John says, 'John answered them, saying, "I baptise with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. [Verse 27] It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.'" He is saying, 'I am not worthy to be the least of His slaves, untying His sandal strap.' We are just picking up this beginning of what is the first confession. It is 'I am not worthy'. What was the first confession of John the Baptist? 'I am not worthy. At the same time, I have received a mandate from Christ, and I am fulfilling a ministry to prepare the way for Him. This is the nature of my obedience. I am full of faith.

I am fully secure; but at the same time, I am proclaiming I am not worthy.'

We can think of the centurion too where he is saying, 'I am not worthy.' He is saying to Jesus, 'I am not worthy for you to come under my roof.' But at the same time, he is confessing his faith and saying, 'Just say the word and I know my servant will be healed.' We have to hold these two things together. We are confessing that we are not worthy, but at the same time, we are confessing our *faith* in relation to Christ and His ministry toward our house.

John says in John 1 verse 29, 'The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! [This is where I am going today - Behold! Can we lift up our eyes and behold] the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! [Verse 30] This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.'" Now that is an amazing statement. John the Baptist was six months older than Jesus, but he is saying, 'He predated me.' This is Yahweh the Son who emptied Himself and was begotten as the Son of God. Then He came as the Son of God into the flesh of man in the womb of the virgin Mary. 'He is before me, but *I* am preparing the way before *Him*. I have come to announce His coming, but He is preeminent. He is before me; He pre-existed me.'

Verse 35: 'Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"' This is the beginning of the gospel, and this is a major focus of the Elijah ministry, which is to proclaim, 'Behold the Lamb of God!' It is the work of the Elijah ministry to announce the coming of the Lamb of God, then also as the Bridegroom. We will look at that in the season ahead, because remember the church is described as the *Lamb's* wife. The Bridegroom is Christ the Lamb.

Now let us go to Revelation 5 verse 1. We will go right to the end of the matter, then we will go right back to the beginning of the matter. We will go back to Genesis. We will go to Revelation 5 verse 1 here. The apostle John here is describing the throne room of the Father after the Father has taken His seat (placed His throne on the top of Mount Zion and taken His seat). The whole administration that belongs to Christ is reorientated in terms of being *in* and *around* the throne of the Father.

John says, 'And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne [we know that is the Father] a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.' The scroll is the will of God that is specifically relevant for the time of the end. We know the Father's will has already been accomplished by Jesus Christ on the cross, but we are still awaiting its fulfillment in the end of the age (or the manifestation of its fulfillment). We know there are two sides to this. It is written on both sides. It is for salvation and for judgement. This extends all the way to the new heavens and the new earth. We have the Father with a scroll, sealed with seven seals. This is the will of God with a very specific application to the end of the age, but let us think very personally concerning you and your family. The will of God is for your sanctification as a son of God. The will of God is for the sanctification of *your* family. The will of God is for the sanctification of *your* marriage. There is a fulfillment of the will of God in relation to *you*.

Now how is this going to be loosed? When we say 'loosed', we mean: How will the fulfillment be loosed and how will you see it? How will you see the fulfillment of what Christ has already accomplished for you? This is the big question. There is a scroll containing the will of God for you and for your marriage and for your house. Remember that the Father's will is specifically focused towards sons of God and families.

Now I am just loving this statement in the book of Jeremiah. I will quote this on the way through because this statement is really settling on me in this season. This statement that He is the God of all the families. This has a major application in terms of the time of the end. We will quote this again. This is Jeremiah 30 verse 23. It says here, 'Behold [Now again, we are needing to behold something] ... Behold, the whirlwind of the Lord goes forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind; it will fall violently on the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of the Lord will not return until He has done it, and until He has performed the intents of His heart. In the latter days you will consider it.' Or in the latter days you will understand it perfectly, because this scroll, which is written on both sides will be opened. It will be loosed and the whole world will see it.

One side of the scroll is judgement. Once Christ begins to open the seals, we see the judgement of God - firstly upon the unclean daughters of Zion, but then also on the world. In quarter measure, those judgements begin to be manifest in the earth. You have that side of the scroll.

Then we go to Jeremiah 31 verse 1. The chapter distinction is not helpful here. It is just one package. It says here, "At the same time... [I am just picking up the other side of the scroll; this is being loosed. We have judgement on one side of the scroll, but then we have also salvation on the other side of the scroll - specifically salvation in relation to families. It is saying here] ... At the same time," [this is in the time of the end; the Father has taken His seat; Christ is loosing the seals on the scroll] says the Lord, "I will be the God of all the families of Israel, [meaning the families of the true Israel of God], and they shall be My people."

The way of escape (and we will not get to this today), but the way of escape in relation to the great tribulation which is ahead of us is to be worthy houses who belong to Mount

Zion - sanctified, cleansed houses belonging to Mount Zion. We are not then escaping through the judgement. The families then that belong to Mount Zion have an evangelistic ministry during the time of the end.

This is the whole focus for the wise virgins with their double portion of oil. They will be shining like the Son in the kingdom of their Father. There is an evangelistic ministry to harvest the nations. That is the city set on a hill. We can just pull all of these themes together and say, 'What is the city?' Now we know we are talking about the bride city, the heavenly Jerusalem on the top of Mount Zion, but what is a city? A city is not made up of skyscrapers and bridges. That might be some of the infrastructure that supports the work of a city, but in the end, you do not have a city without all of the houses. It is a dwelling place for families. That is what the bride city is. It is all of the families; it is all of the houses that belong to Mount Zion. That city will be like a city set on a hill. That is the light to the nations.

'At the same time, I will be the God of all the families.' 'We bow our knee.' This is what Paul says, 'We bow our knee.' This is what the Lord is asking of us in the season that we are in. We are bowing our knee before the Father, from whom every family receives its name. He is the God of all the families. We are staying here in Revelation chapter 5, helping to paint the picture here, hopefully.

You have the Father with a scroll in His hand. Verse 2: 'Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, [now this will be Michael, having stood up again, he proclaims] "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?"'

I am applying this personally here. We know we are looking here at the Father's will as it is fulfilled in the end of the age. But think personally; think about your marriage; think about your family. There is a question. Michael could stand up and ask the question

here: 'Who is worthy to bring this about, to see this accomplished?' This question echoes then through the whole present heavens and earth. 'Who is worthy?'

Verse 3: 'And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth [now The Amplified adds there, that is in Hades - so the place of the dead or in hell] was able to open the scroll or to look at it.' The whole present heavens and earth is searched. I love the picture of this. Heaven is searched; no one who has died in faith; of all of the saints of old, no one is worthy to loose this scroll. Then on earth, among all of the living, the whole world is searched; every person; no one is worthy. Then all those who have died in hell. Now this is not a great surprise - no one is worthy; but it is searched as well. The whole present heavens and earth are all searched. No one is worthy. This is a good starting point. We have really got to let this settle on us.

Verse 4: 'So 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 [so there is illumination here coming], in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, 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. [Verse 7] Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. [Verse 8] Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures, [that is the ascension gift overseers - the apostolic administration of Christ] and the 24 elders fell down before the Lamb [that is the whole worldwide presbytery, which will have 24 courses or divisions once the Father has taken His seat] ... fell down before the Lamb, [this is before the *Lamb* now], each having a

harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song [this is worshipping], saying, “You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nations [We know that this is Jew and Gentile here. This is the true Israel of God because it is out of every tribe, every tongue, every people, every nation. Verse 10] and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.”

We see here the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham. Remember, after Abraham had won the battle over the four Assyrian kings who had defeated the five kings in the plain, he comes back; he meets Melchisedek (that is Christ), and Christ prophesies to him, ‘You will be the possessor of heaven and earth.’ Abraham is thinking, ‘Oh well, I am the possessor of the Promised Land.’ And Christ says, ‘That is nothing, Abraham. You are going to be the possessor of *heaven*.’ From that point forward Abraham just dwells in the Promised Land like a pilgrim or an exile or an alien. He dwells in tents with Isaac and Jacob, and he is not that interested finally in the Promised Land, because he was looking for a city - a heavenly city ‘whose builder and maker is God’, because Christ has said to him, ‘You will be the possessor of *heaven*. I am preparing a heavenly city for you, Abraham.’ That is where his eyes were.

He is believing that his family (his household) can be part of that heavenly city. Then Christ said, ‘You will be the possessor of heaven and also earth’ because this mountain, (the heavenly city on the top of Mount Zion), in the time of the end, will fill the whole earth. This administration here of firstfruits gathered around the throne of the Father is proclaiming, ‘Worthy is the Lamb!’ Now the time has come for the saints, in fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, to also possess the earth and bring in a harvest

of at least 50 percent of the nations into the kingdom of God.

Verse 11: ‘Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne [the angels are there too], the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was 10,000 times 10,000 and thousands of thousands [Verse 12], saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honour and glory and blessing.”

Is this beginning to settle on you here today? The Lord is calling you to be a worthy house; but the moment we say that, He is saying, ‘Can you lift up your eyes and behold the Lamb who is worthy? He is the provision for your house.’

Let us go back to the very beginning. This is Genesis chapter 3 verse 7. This is the Fall. I am picking my way through here to make a very simple point. It says here, ‘Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked.’ This is talking about Adam and his wife. ‘The eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked.’ That is the only new knowledge they received. When they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, this was their complete alienation now from the life of God - their complete vulnerability. So they became afraid. The fear of death became their fundamental motivation here, right from the beginning, right from the point of the Fall, and it motivated them to sow fig leaves together to cover the shame of their nakedness. ‘They sowed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.’

They sowed fig leaves together in a misguided attempt to cover the shame of their nakedness. The fig leaves, as we have been considering, represented the image or projection that they had created as a couple for their own marriage and household. Now, you note they did it together. They actually worked on these garments together. This was a joint effort between Adam and his wife. I

am saying 'his wife' because she is not named Eve yet - but we all know who we are talking about. It was a joint effort to make these fig leaves a covering, a projection for their house, for their marriage and for their house.

Adam and Eve pretended that they belonged to a fig tree (and we know the fruit of the fig tree is worthy houses), but they did not have a worthy house. Of course, the fig leaves that they used had no capacity to hide the fallen relational dynamics in their marriage when the Lord came looking for fellowship. The Lord is looking for fruit in this season. The Lord is looking for fruit. We have been in a season of visitation, and we are now in a season of harvest (or approaching a season of harvest), when the Lord is looking for fruit. He is coming and He is looking under the leaves to see if there are any early figs on the tree.

The early figs in the springtime are not yet mature; they are not yet fully grown. We are not saying the Lord is necessarily looking for fully mature or fully grown early figs yet; but He is looking for the early figs growing on the tree. In this present season, it is important that we allow the Lord to expose the fallen relational dynamics in our house, rather than trying to maintain a good religious image and be like a fig tree with green leaves and no fruit. Verse 8: 'They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.'

We could say very colloquially, they hid themselves among the trees. They have already created the projection, and then hiding among the trees is another step - getting busy with the cares of this world - the cares of this life. Remember that the trees of the garden were prophetic types of all of the nations.

Verse 9: 'Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him [now this is a tremendous mercy because the Lord is looking for them

and He is saying to Adam specifically], "Where are you?" He [Adam] said, "I heard Your voice in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself." Now let us come down to verse 20. 'And Adam called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all living. Also for Adam and his wife, the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.'

Now there is a massive point here. I want to compare the two things. Concerning the provision of the lamb, this was according to God's prophetic timetable. This was not simply in response to the Fall, because the lamb is taken in the twilight on the tenth day and then kept for four days to be sacrificed in the twilight of the fourteenth day in terms of God's prophetic timetable, which is revealed by the timetable of the Passover lamb. That is a major subject in its own right. The Lord was always coming at this time to make a provision for their house and connect them to the faith of Christ as their *Lamb* - the provision for their house. Then connected to that provision, there was a grace coming to them as a couple and then to the woman to be named Eve and become the mother of all living; but just before that, we have the Fall.

Now the Fall did not affect the timing of any of this, but Satan got into the marriage just before this. You have then, on the one hand, Adam and his wife sowing fig leaves together to put forward a projection. Now I do not know what they thought they were going to achieve with that (as if they were going to fool the Lord), but you have them putting forward a projection. Then also, in the fellowship of the same discussion, the Lord picks all of this up and then sacrifices a lamb to connect them, as I said, to the faith of Christ. 'This is your provision to become a worthy house. You are now a fallen, dysfunctional house, but there is a provision for you to become a worthy house.'

Now that is what He revealed to them on the *day* they fell; and this is still what He is saying to us today. There is a provision for you (regardless of the dysfunction), for you to become a worthy house as long as you will receive it.

Exodus chapter 12 verse 1 to 11: This is the Passover lamb now in Egypt. 'Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying, "This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household.'" He is saying this to the nation of Israel here. 'Take it on the tenth of the month, because that is what the Father did on the tenth prophetic day in His overarching timetable for this present heavens and earth.' This is connecting back to Genesis chapter 3 here.

Moses is saying this now to the nation of Israel. We note here it was the *word* that was proclaimed by Moses to the nation which established this fellowship for them. There is a messenger word coming and it was calling every house to be obedient to that word that was proclaimed. Their obedience then to take a lamb for their house (which was connecting them to the provision of Christ), that obedience was their provision and their protection when the judgement was coming upon Egypt. 'Speak to all the congregation of Israel saying on the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. [Verse 4] And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to each man's need you shall make your count for the lamb.'

I am sure you have the reality of three generations in a house here, all partaking of a lamb. If there were not a lot of people (three

generations), then it would stretch to the neighbour. The point is there is a house-to-house fellowship happening here. If there happened to be a prodigal son off partying in Egypt on the night that the Lord passes through and smites every firstborn, they are not protected by the blood on the doorpost and the lintel of that house. Everyone has to be connected to where God the Father has placed them in relation to their family.

Verse 5: 'Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. [Verse 6] Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. [There is a massive point there concerning the Father's prophetic timetable. Verse 7] They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it.'

The protection here was the blood on the doorpost and the lintel, and then eating the lamb in the house. Let us say it very practically. It was the fellowship of the *agape* in that house. That is what the Lord is wanting to establish; and that became the provision and the protection for every household. This is a very simple point. This is a central theme in the Scriptures - the provision of the Passover lamb.

Verse 11: 'And thus you shall eat it: [Let us think a bit devotionally here] with a belt on your waist.' You have to have a belt on. Now that is the belt of truth. We have to be eating this meal girded with truth. That is the way Paul described it to the Ephesians. He says, 'Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth'. Eph 6:14. It has to be in response to the conviction of the Holy Spirit that is coming to us as the word is proclaimed, and we are responding to that with open-hearted sincerity and truth. There is an honest fellowship happening here and we are then girded by the sanctification of the Spirit in relation to our walk. It is a great illustration

when Paul is going down to Jerusalem. In every place he went, the Holy Spirit was testifying that chains awaited him. You remember the prophet took Paul's belt and he said, 'Whoever owns this belt, you are going to be bound by the Jews when you get down to Jerusalem'. Act 21. You wonder, why did Paul keep going down there? Then why was he so willing to submit himself to the imposition of all of the Judaisers once he was down there? The point was, he was not being bound by them. He was actually bound by the Holy Spirit Himself in terms of walking in the nature of his sanctification. The Lord was doing a big work through all of that. He was shutting the temple down. He was invoking judgement on the whole city of Jerusalem and all of the legalistic Christians down there who were insisting on keeping the sacrifices. He was doing that on the one hand, while, on the other hand, He is delivering Paul to Rome to continue his ministry there. He is not being bound by anyone in that respect. He is bound by the Holy Spirit in relation to his own sanctification as a messenger.

We all have to know what our sanctification is and know that we are bound by (or girded with) the belt of truth. Then having our feet shod. This is of course, with the preparation of the gospel of peace - not just with the gospel of peace - but the *preparation* of the gospel of peace.

What is the Lord doing in our houses and in our families which is preparing us to be able to share with others as a testimony? Finally, we have this third point - 'with their staff in their hand'. I am thinking a bit devotionally here this morning. You will eat it with a belt on your waist; your sandals on your feet (The Lord is doing a work in our houses to prepare us for the days ahead), and your staff in your hand. Now this is particularly relevant for men in your house. Do you have a staff in your hand, which is the authority that belongs to you in relation to your house

when you are properly connected to the word that is being proclaimed to you by Christ? When you are walking in obedience to that, you do have authority over serpents and scorpions in your *house*. You can, when you are walking in obedience to Christ and the word that is proclaimed to you by the messengers of Christ, you can compel the unclean spirits to depart.

Now you think of Moses down there in the court of Pharaoh. He has his staff in his hand. When he threw his staff on the ground, it turns into a snake. All of the magicians, they throw their staffs on the ground, and they all turned into snakes. Whose snake (or staff) wins? Moses'. His rod gobbles up all of the other snakes and then he grabs it by the tail again and it turns back into a rod. There was an authority there as Moses was obedient to the mandate that had been given to him by Christ. Then he is proclaiming a word to the whole nation. Every man in his house, as he heard that word and was obedient to that word, there was a mandate that he had in relation to his house to compel all of the unclean spirits to depart the house.

The Lord is wanting us to eat the Passover (or participate in the fellowship of the Passover), the *agape* meal in our houses with our waist girded with truth and with our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace and a staff in our hand. They are also eating it with haste. It says here (you have a belt, you have sandals, and you have a staff), 'So you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover'.

Again, asking some questions: Are you receiving the word concerning *your* house with the urgency of the Spirit in terms of responding to it? There is an imperative in the season and the Spirit is urging us to appropriate this with some haste. Not being anxious, not being anxious, not having to gobble the lamb down and get indigestion. There is plenty of time, but it is in the time of our visitation, and it is in the day when

He is proclaiming the word to us. Sometimes the season of visitation may not be as long as what we think. You think of Lot's sons-in-law: how long was the season of visitation for them? it was only the one night, because the angels dragged Lot, his wife, and the two daughters out the very next morning. They could not think, 'Oh, there are plenty more days to come.' They think, 'We can just respond whenever we like. We will just laugh and joke. This sense of imperative is a bit overstated.' But the season of visitation is not always as long as what we may think.

Now for every household in Egypt, the season of their visitation in relation to this word was basically that *day*, because the destroying angel was coming through at midnight - the midnight hour, when judgement comes.

We are approaching the midnight hour when the Lord's judgement will be manifest in the world. Are we eating the Passover (so to speak), with some haste - a sense of urgency in terms of seeing its application in our lives? The man who builds his house on the sand, in the end (I like the way Luke says it in his gospel), is the man who heard the word and did nothing. He did not know that the flood was coming, and it took his house away. Maybe he was intending to put down a few more foundations or reinforcements. He did not realise when the storm was coming.

Luke chapter 10 verse 1: 'After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few [He is looking for worthy houses who will become firstfruits houses, who will become the labourers in the harvest field to gather the nations]; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest [Christ Himself is the Lord of the harvest], to send out labourers into every house [and Christ needs to be the Head of

every house. If we want to be a labourer in the harvest field, Christ has to be the Head of our house] Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves."

Now I have often thought about this. Let us muse on this a little bit. What was Jesus talking about? Now we know He is talking about them going out in weakness and their obedience will be their protection. I think I have often thought of this as they are going as lambs and there are all of these wolves lurking by the roadside, waiting to pounce and take their leg off or something. It is not that at all.

What He is saying is, 'I am sending you out as messengers, and you are you are bringing a fellowship with you. You are following the Lamb wherever He goes. You are going before the face of the Lamb. You are going out as lambs. You are bringing the provision of the Lamb to a house who is willing to receive it so that house can become worthy and receive a blessing of peace. You are going out with that fellowship, and it is the fellowship of the *agape*, which is the provision and protection for every house. You are bringing that provision to houses in amongst a whole lot of other messengers who are not going out as lambs. They are going out as wolves dressed in lambs' clothing; but they are going out to devour, because every house is a resource to them in relation to their own ministry.

There are a whole lot of other things happening, and Ezekiel is very big on this - on the nature of the wolfish behaviour of messengers. There are false gospels being proclaimed. There is another mode of ministry, and it is all wolfish. Jesus said (this is Matthew 7 verse 15 to 16), 'Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.' Now how does he say you will know them? This is a fantastic point, because this has been the downfall of the charismatic movement with all of these messengers with

ministry grace or claiming to have ministry grace and words of knowledge and gifts of healing and all of these things. You know why the whole movement ended up being full of corruption and immorality in all of these things? These messengers did not have a worthy house.

This is what the Lord is really emphasising to us in this season. Every person must have a worthy house. It is a worthy house that is the foundation of a presbytery, because if a man does not know how in his own house, how can he look after the household of God? This is fundamental to everything. The whole fellowship of the church - worthy houses. He says, 'How do you know a wolf in lamb's clothing? You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?' You see how He is tying all of these themes together? It has to be a worthy house.

Now Christ then, the Lamb, is the Shepherd. This is what the shepherding administration looks like. The 144,000 then, as worthy firstfruits houses, are following the Lamb wherever He goes. I might leave that there. I will finish with this verse in Isaiah chapter 4. There is a lot more to be said on all of that.

Isaiah 4 verse 2 says, 'In that day the Branch of the Lord [now this is talking about all of these families then - worthy firstfruits houses], in that day the Branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious; and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and appealing for those of Israel, [this is the true Israel of God], who have escaped. [We are looking at the wise virgins here who will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father and bring in the great multitude from every tribe, nation, people and tongue.] And it shall come to pass that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem, [this is the city set on a hill], will be called holy - everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem. When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and purged the blood

of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgement and by the spirit of burning. [This is what Christ is doing in this season. He is walking among us with eyes like a flame of fire, knocking on the door of every house saying, 'I want to cleanse you. I want to sanctify you. I want to prepare you'], then the Lord will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion [That is every *house*, every dwelling place, every house], and above her assemblies [so every congregation then, house-to-house fellowship], a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a covering. And there will be a tabernacle for shade [We are talking about the Father's tabernacle here. He spreads His tabernacle over every house that belongs to Mount Zion] ... There will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge and for a shelter from storm and rain.'

Now can we make a very simple point as we close? The Father's tabernacle is not a force field. We are not talking about some kind of iron dome. It is not a force field. It is not mysterious. We are talking about a house. We are talking about a family connected to, or submitted. We can say husband and wife, submitted to the lordship of Christ, and then built together upon the Rock, which is the chosen and precious Cornerstone in Mount Zion. We have a couple built together on the Rock with a remnant of the Spirit and then connected to the grace of life which is flowing to that couple and their house that comes from the Father through Christ and by the Holy Spirit. We are talking about a real, relational connection to the Father who is the God of all families. We will leave it there for today.