

An abstract painting featuring a bright, glowing light source, possibly a sun or moon, partially obscured by soft, white, brushstreak-like clouds. The background is a mix of warm, golden-yellow, orange, and brown tones, with visible painterly textures and brushwork. The overall mood is serene and spiritual.

The promise of the Spirit

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WITH PETER HAY AND DAVID BAKER

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THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT

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October 2025

Scriptures are quoted from NKJV, KJV, NASB and LITV.

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Preface

The promise of the Spirit

The title and focus of this book is *The promise of the Spirit*. In contrast to the assumptions of many, the promise of the Spirit does not refer exclusively to baptism in the Holy Spirit, even though this immersion is essential to salvation. Act 1:4-8. Rather, it refers to the fulfilment of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit's covenant desire to make us in Their image and according to Their likeness. Gen 1:26.

In his letter to the Galatians, the apostle Paul explained that our redemption, which was accomplished by Christ through His death on the cross, delivered *the promise of the Spirit* to everyone who would receive and believe the gospel of God. Paul called this promise 'the blessing of Abraham'. Gal 3:13-14. Rom 1:1,16.

Abraham was illuminated to see the substance of this blessing when Christ, who is the Word, said to him, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them... *So shall your descendants be.*' Gen 15:5. Joh 1:1. By receiving the promise of the Spirit, Abraham, and all those who would become his children through faith in Christ, would be born of the light of God's divine life and would live in the fellowship of

Yahweh as citizens of a heavenly city. Heb 11:10,16. They would be 'light in the Lord'. Eph 5:8.

Significantly, Paul identified 'adoption' as the process through which the promise of the Spirit is fulfilled. He explained that the crucifixion of Christ, through which we receive the promise of the Spirit, delivered the adoption to us. He specifically wrote, 'When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons'. Gal 4:4-5.

We recognise that the promise of the Spirit is realised on the day of resurrection, because Paul called the fulfilment of the adoption 'the redemption of our body'. Rom 8:23. As we will consider further in Chapter 1, the redemption of our body delivers to us the substance of a *spiritual body*. On the day of our resurrection, when the final trumpet sounds, we will be made like the Son when He was manifest as the first Man in the image and likeness of God on the day of His resurrection. 1Th 4:16-17. 1Jn 3:2. This will be the culmination of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit's covenant initiative, which began *before* the creation of the present heavens and earth. Joh 1:1.

Bringing forth sons of God

To understand the process through which we are made in the image and likeness of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, it is helpful to identify some key principles.

God the Father is the source of the whole of creation. In fact, the seventeen prophetic days that delineate this present heavens and earth, reveal His initiative. The principle of life that belongs to this age is summarised by the statement that the Father made following the great flood. He declared, '*While the earth remains*, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease.' Gen 8:22. Notably, the Father is the source of every *identity*, and the source of every person's *name* as a son of God. Jas 1:17. Eph 3:14-15.

According to the word and design of the Father, the first man, Adam, was formed by the Son from the dust of the earth. Adam received his identity from the Father, through the Spirit, when the Lord God breathed the breath of life into his nostrils. Gen 2:7.

The Father then initiated to make a helper comparable to the man. Having caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, the Lord God removed a rib from his side. With this rib, the Lord God formed woman as another identity, and brought her to the man. After Adam and the woman had chosen each other, Adam testified, 'This is *now* bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' Gen 2:23. Moses explained that this revealed the principle of marriage, writing, '*Therefore* a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh'. Gen 2:24. Eph 5:31-32.

The Covenant of marriage is the Father's holy institution. Mal 2:11. He gave this Covenant, including the physical capacity for procreation, so that two individual identities could become one flesh and one Spirit and thereby bring forth *godly offspring*. Mal 2:15. According to the Father's design, this happens in two steps. First, from the union of a couple, through the process of procreation given by the Father, a new eternal identity is conceived and brought forth.

Second, whether they have been conceived in a covenant house or not, this identity needs to be 'adopted'. That is, through God's word, they need to be sealed with the Holy Spirit and be born again through the germination of the unique seed of their sonship name and life within their spirit. They then need to be immersed into the name of the Father, the name of the Son and the name of the Holy Spirit, in order to progressively mature and inherit their salvation as a person who is being made in the image and likeness of God. In a believing household, this happens from conception! Of course, as they grow and mature through each season of life, a child born in a covenant house must choose what God has chosen for them in order to inherit the blessing that they have received as a birthright.

The point to note is that the multiplication of sons of God is through a covenant between two individuals. They are brought forth according to the order of creation established by the Father. This will continue 'while the earth remains'. Gen 8:22. Importantly, sons of God are *not* the fruit of the marriage of Christ and His corporate bride, the church. She remains a *virgin bride* until the manifestation of the new heavens and earth. Let us consider this further.

The bride of Christ

When a person is born again, the Father baptises them into the Son by making them a member 'in particular' of Christ's corporate body.

1Co 12:13,18. Christ, the 'Last Adam', and the first Man made in the image and likeness of God, is the immortal Head of His corporate body.

After Christ's Spirit had been received into the bosom and throne of the Father, His immortal, incorruptible physical body, which was still hanging on the cross, was pierced with a soldier's spear. Luk 23:46. Joh 19:34-37. Water, blood and Spirit flowed from His side. These elements comprised the 'rib' from which the Father formed Christ's bride. In contrast to Adam's wife, the bride of Christ is, and will always be, *corporate*.

The bringing forth of godly seed is not the fruit of the marriage of Christ and His bride, even though the bride is composed of sons of God who belong to worthy houses. These are houses that are overcoming Satan and his power by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony, and by laying down their lives in offering to reveal others. Rev 12:11. This is the threefold implication of their daily fellowship in Christ's offering, travelling journey.

As we have detailed in the book, *The throne of God and the Lamb*, the present travail of the bride is to bring forth a *manchild*. Rev 12:1-5. The manchild is the worldwide presbytery that will be seated on the twenty-four thrones to rule the nations with a rod of iron. When the manchild is brought forth, it is caught up to God and His throne. We see that the focus of our travail as a bride company, is to see the emergence of a mature and fruitful presbytery that has power over the nations to proclaim the gospel of God and to establish the Father's kingdom on the earth.

It is notable that presbyteries who are being restored to first love, and who are labouring to understand of the gospel of God, *are also in travail*. They are travelling in prayer, asking the Father to give to their hearers, wisdom and understanding concerning the name of the Father, the name of the Son and the name of the Holy Spirit. Eph 3:14-15. In the spirit and power of Elijah, they are endeavouring to make this mystery clear so that their hearers in the church do not remain as foolish virgins, but obtain, as wise virgins, the wisdom and understanding that belongs to a double portion of oil. Having obtained this portion, they are worthy, and able, to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom as a testimony in all nations as part of the 144 000 firstfruits remnant.

The fruit of the bride's travail, as well as the travail of the presbyteries that are being restored to the right hand of Christ, is the emergence of an administration suitable for the fullness of the times. This is an administration for the proclamation of the gospel of sonship. Through the ministry of this word, the identities who are brought forth according to the order of creation, can be born again and established as part of the heavenly city.

Multiplication in the new heavens and earth

On the day of resurrection, a son of God, who has journeyed as a disciple on the pathway of salvation through immersion into the name of the Father, the name of the Son and the name of the Holy Spirit, will receive the promise of the Spirit. That is, they will receive a *spiritual body*, having come to maturity and been made in the image and likeness of God by the process of adoption. When this happens, as sons of God and sons of men, we will be fully revealed as the substance of the corporate bride of Christ, and also as the substance of a temple for the Holy Spirit.

While our physical body is adequate for bringing forth identities through procreation in this present age, this means of multiplication will be superseded by the spiritual body. Accordingly, in the new heavens and earth, the bringing forth of identities through the consummation of the marriage of Christ and His perfected bride will be a spiritual process that supersedes procreation. These sons of God will be brought forth in maturity and without travail.

As a temple of the Holy Spirit, our spiritual body will be the expression of the fullness of Yahweh Holy Spirit. Revealing the Person of the Spirit, the ever-increasing capacity of seven Spirits will flow from us as rivers of living water, enabling us to reveal the Father and the Son, in the same way that the Holy Spirit revealed the Father and the Son *before*, when Their Everlasting Covenant purpose was initiated. Through our participation in this fellowship of offering and worship as temples of the Holy Spirit, righteousness will increase forever and ever.

The nature and fruit of this offering culture in the new heavens and earth was observed and depicted by the apostle John in the book of Revelation. He wrote, 'And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more

curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: they need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.' Rev 22:1-5.

A living hope

The promise of the Spirit is the hope of the resurrection! Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, has risen from the dead and has entered the most holy place of fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He is the substance of our hope! He finished the journey and pioneered the unique pathway of salvation for each one of us so that we might obtain our predestination by being made in the image and likeness of God.

Celebrating this amazing truth, the apostle Peter declared, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to *a living hope* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.' 1Pe 1:3-4. This hope is the anchor of our soul, securing us in the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and assuring us of our salvation as we walk each day by the Spirit. Heb 6:19-20. 1Jn 3:18-21.

Even though the pathway of salvation is narrow and difficult, we do not need to be afraid or to lose heart. The Holy Spirit has been given to us as the Helper of our faith. Joh 14:16-17. He is the Spirit of adoption! Rom 8:15. Wonderfully, this faith, which we receive by hearing and believing the word of God, is the substance of the resurrection that we are hoping for. Heb 11:1. As we walk by faith, led and enabled by the Holy Spirit, we are fulfilling the works of sonship that Christ has already finished for us. We are doing this by the resurrection life that flows from His immortality to us in our mortality. Php 3:10-11. Every day, our hope is being progressively realised as we are changing from glory to glory into the image of the Son, by the Spirit of the Lord. 2Co 3:18.

Chapter I

An overview of the adoption

The Scriptures, in their entirety, detail God's covenant purpose for mankind. His intention for mankind is 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. Importantly, we are not merely biological beings who have been created by the Lord with some God-like qualities and unique capacities that set us apart from other animals, as many theologians have suggested.

The Lord God (Hebrew: Yahweh *Elohim*) is three Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – who live in the fellowship of one Spirit and one life. They are a community or *family*. Their fellowship is the kingdom of God. To be made in Their image and likeness is to live by Their one Spirit and life *as a part of Their family!* This is the high calling that God has for every person. Php 3:14. The process through which the Lord's purpose for us is accomplished is described by the apostle Paul as '*the adoption*'. Rom 8:23.

What is the adoption?

Writing to the Ephesian Christians, Paul explained that God the Father *predestined* us to adoption as His sons through Jesus Christ. Eph 1:5-6.

Obviously, adoption is fundamental to God's purpose and plan for mankind. It is, therefore, important for us to know what the adoption refers to, and how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit's purpose for us is accomplished through the process of adoption.

The Scriptures teach that the adoption, in its totality, refers to the redemption of the created human body with its spirit and soul. Highlighting this point, Paul said, 'We also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for *the adoption, the redemption of our body*.' Rom 8:23-25. The redemption of our body delivers to us the substance, or inheritance, of a *spiritual body*. This body is necessary for eternal life and fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the new heavens and earth, being as spiritual as it is physical, and as physical as it is spiritual.

The redemption of our body will happen on the day of resurrection, at the last trumpet, when our natural body, having been sown in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, 'is raised a spiritual body'. 1Co 15:44. Paul identified this culminating waypoint of the adoption when he wrote, 'Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed - in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, *and we shall be changed*.' 1Co 15:51-52.

A person will receive the *fulness* of the adoption on the day of resurrection if they have continued steadfastly and faithfully in the *process* of adoption. Col 1:23. The process of our adoption as sons of men who are born as sons of God, commences with our redemption from the curse of the Law through Christ's offering on the cross. We know this because Paul explained that 'when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, *that we might receive the adoption as sons*'. Gal 4:4-5.

After we have been reconciled to God, born from above, and baptised by the Father into Christ, we continue in the adoption by walking in 'the redemption that is in Christ Jesus'. Rom 3:24. This is our ongoing fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings as sons of Abraham and citizens of the New Jerusalem, the bride city. In this fellowship, we are partakers of Christ's substance. Participation in this journey is only possible by the capacity of seven Spirits, which we receive from the Holy Spirit after we have been made a temple of the Holy Spirit and then are baptised into the Holy Spirit.

As we noted earlier, the consummation of the adoption is when we receive the full substance of our inheritance as sons of God. This substance is brought forth from Christ as a resurrection spiritual body. It is important to recognise that this substance *is from Yahweh Son*, for He said, '*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*.' Joh 11:25-26.

On the day of resurrection, we are redeemed to immortality, and then to spirituality. That is, we receive from Christ our immortal, incorruptible body, which is made spiritual when it is clothed with our heavenly body, the substance of which is also from Christ. We will be like the Son of Man on the day of His resurrection when He was manifest as the first Man made in the image and likeness of God. 1Co 15:20. 1Jn 3:2. At this time, as sons of God, we will be fully revealed as the substance of the bride of Christ and also the substance of a temple for the Holy Spirit.

The creation and destiny of the first Adam

As we noted earlier, the adoption refers to the redemption of our body, soul and spirit as those who have been made in the image and likeness of God. This motive for our creation was declared *before* the creation of the heavens and the earth when the Father, Son and Holy Spirit agreed together, saying, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness'. Gen 1:26.

Adam and Eve, and all the children brought forth from them through procreation, are not the full manifestation of men in the image and likeness of God. We know this because the apostle Paul identified Adam as 'a *type* of Him [the Man] who was to come'. Rom 5:14. In other words, the 'first Adam' was not the substance of God's Eternal Covenant initiative. The Man who was to come, of whom Adam was a type, is Jesus Christ, the 'last Adam'. 1Co 15:45. Having come in the flesh and been made mortal, like us, in Gethsemane, Jesus Christ was manifest on the day of His resurrection as the first Man who had been made in the image and likeness of God. A person is progressively made like the glorified Son of Man as they journey each day with Christ, by the Spirit, on the pathway of salvation that He pioneered for them. Heb 5:9. 2Co 3:18. That said, the creation of natural man was a key step in the unfolding purpose of God.

The Father is the *source* of the whole of creation. He is the great Architect! The Son reveals the Father as the *substance* and expression of the creation, by the Spirit. For this reason, the apostle John said of

the Son, 'All things were made *through Him*, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.' Joh 1:3-4.

With this in view, we recognise that *Yahweh Father* is the source of all identities and names, for, 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.' Jas 1:17-18. *Yahweh Son* is the substance and expression of all sonship, for, through offering, He is the brightness of the Father's glory 'and the express image of His Person'. Heb 1:3. The realisation of this image in creation, as God's life becomes our life, is by *Yahweh Holy Spirit*, for 'the Spirit gives life'. 2Co 3:6.

The contributions of each Person of the Godhead were evident in the creation of the first Adam. The Father was the source of Adam's identity and name. The substance and expression of sonship in Adam was from *Yahweh Son*, and this was given to man by the Spirit when the Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. This substance, seen in Adam, and then drawn from Adam, is both male and female. As Moses explained, 'God [*Elohim Father, Son and Holy Spirit*] created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.' Gen 1:27.

We see that the offering fellowship of *Yahweh Elohim*, operating in a sanctified order whereby One is revealed by the Other, results in the multiplication of identities. These identities, brought forth through procreation, are to proceed to become families, who, as we will consider later in this chapter, are part of Abraham's family and who bring forth sons of God. These are children who are born as citizens of Zion, the New Jerusalem, the bride of Christ. The process through which this multiplication and glorification is accomplished reveals the name of the Father, the name of the Son, and the name of the Holy Spirit.

The *name of the Father* is revealed when identities are brought forth, are born again of incorruptible seed, and are established as sons of Abraham, in Christ. Gal 3:29. As they receive and embrace the discipline and instruction of the Lord, sons grow from immaturity to fruitful maturity. Emphasising this implication of embracing God's fatherhood toward us, Paul said, 'My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives... Now no chastening

seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.' Heb 12:5-6,11.

The *name of the Son* is revealed as the substance of the new creation. We eat and drink of this substance in faith for our daily participation in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, in the hope of the resurrection. Joh 6:54. This final expression of the adoption, drawn from the body of Christ, will be a corporate bride who is composed of those who have been raised with a spiritual body. This bride will then be able to bear sons of spiritual, immortal substance. That is, by the Spirit, Christ's bride will be the vessel of multiplication of new creation sons who are brought forth in maturity. Their identities and names are sourced from the Father, and the substance and expression of their sonship are from the Son, by the Holy Spirit.

The *name of the Holy Spirit* is revealed when we are made a temple for the Holy Spirit and are baptised in the Spirit. He gives to us the seven Spirits of the Lord, enabling us to participate in the prayer fellowship of Yahweh and to partake of the substance of Christ. On the day of resurrection, when we receive our spiritual body, which has been made perfect as the temple of the Holy Spirit, we will be a vessel for the full expression of the Holy Spirit. In the new heavens and earth, each person will be a temple of the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the throne of the Father and the Lamb, as the expression of the river of life that flows out from the offering life of Yahweh *Elohim*. Rev 22:1-5. Joh 7:37-39.

The promise of the adoption

We read earlier that Jesus was born of a woman, under the Law, in order to redeem those who were under the Law 'that we might receive the adoption as sons'. Gal 4:4-5. By making this statement in his letter to the Galatians, Paul was highlighting that the work of redemption, which was accomplished by Christ when He was crucified on the cross, *establishes a person in the adoption*.

Significantly, Paul had already explained that the crucifixion of Jesus had delivered to us *the promise of the Spirit*, which he identified as *the blessing of Abraham*. Specifically, he wrote, 'Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), that *the blessing of Abraham* might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive *the promise of the Spirit* through faith'. Gal 3:13-14.

We see that the adoption is the promise of the Spirit; it is the blessing of Abraham! Although the blessing of receiving the Spirit was promised to Abraham, it was only available to him and to his children after Christ had finished His offering journey at Calvary, had risen from the dead, and then had ascended to the right hand of the Father. This is because the Spirit is essential to every step in the process of adoption. It is for this reason that Jesus said, 'It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper [the Spirit] will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.' Joh 16:7. We will outline these steps of salvation, which belong to the adoption, in Chapter 2.

The promise made to Abraham

The promises of God were first made to Abram when the Lord said to him, 'Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and *in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*' Gen 12:1-3.

Later, after Abram had separated from Lot, the Lord said to him, 'I will make your descendants as the *dust of the earth*; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered.' Gen 13:16. With this statement, the Lord revealed that the sons of Adam, who had been condemned to eternal destruction through the flood, would be recovered, through the descendants of Noah, to their predestination as part of God's family, in Abram. Gen 6:13.

Not long after this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.' Gen 15:1. Christ, the Son, was saying to Abram that He would become Abram's Son. Moreover, He would be the substance of Abram's life and the life of all of Abram's children. Christ was foreshadowing the adoptive transfer that would happen on Mount Moriah if Abram walked by the faith of the Son of God. As Abram gave his son to the Father, the Father would give His Son to Abram. Christ would come in the flesh of Abram's son and, through Christ, all of Abram's children would receive the promise of the Spirit. Though they were 'the dust of the earth', the Lord said that Abram and his children would be as the stars of heaven, declaring, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them... *So shall your descendants be.*' Gen 15:5. The Lord was proclaiming that, through the cross, the sons of Abraham would receive

the Holy Spirit and then be born of God's divine nature. By this means, they would become 'light in the Lord'. Eph 5:8.

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, Yahweh appeared to him, revealing Himself as *El Shaddai*. Gen 17:1. The name *El Shaddai*, or 'God Almighty', means 'the Lord, the Covenant God, who possesses the power to realise His promises'. As *El Shaddai*, the Lord instructed Abram to walk before Him and be blameless by the capacity of the Spirit that He was giving to him and to his wife, Sarai. Gen 17:1-4. Walking in this manner meant that the life and culture of Abram was to be one of obedient faith. As Abram lived and walked before God in faith obedience, God said that He would confirm His Covenant with Abram, multiply him exceedingly, and make him a father of many nations.

Yahweh then changed Abram's name to 'Abraham', by giving to him a portion of His own name. This was the work of Christ, as I AM, ministered from the substance of His *resurrection*. Jesus Himself explained that I AM was called 'the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob', saying to some of the Sadducees, 'But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord [i.e. I AM, Yahweh *Elohim*] "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, *for all live to Him*.' Luk 20:37-38.

Significantly, Jesus identified Himself as I AM and the One who called Abraham and delivered to him the promised blessings, declaring to the Jews, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.' Joh 8:58. Just prior to this exchange, Jesus had said to the Jews, 'When you lift up the Son of Man, *then you will know that I AM*, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.' Joh 8:28. We see that what Jesus accomplished on the cross as I AM is what He promised to Abraham.

As part of this promise, Christ, figuratively, wrote His new name on Abram, which He brought forth through His travail on the cross as I AM. Abraham's new name, drawn from the substance brought forth through the resurrection of Christ, means 'father of a multitude'. Gen 17:5. In his letter to the Romans, Paul explained that while Abraham was having this conversation with Almighty God, he was strengthened in faith and gave glory to God by believing that what God promised He would perform. Abraham believed that God, through I AM, would give resurrection life to the dead, and call into existence those things which do not exist as though they did. Rom 4:17,20.

Believing in hope

By believing God's word, Abraham became a prophet. This is because *he believed in hope*, for the word of the hope declared something that was yet to come. Rom 4:18. The hope was that Abraham and his descendants would be made in the image and likeness of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This hope was realised when Jesus, Abraham's Son after the flesh, rose from the dead. 1Co 15:20. Through *anastasis*, Jesus Christ was manifest as the first Man made in the image and likeness of God.

Faith, received in the word of the hope, became the *substance* of Abraham's life. Rom 10:17. Heb 11:1. This was *exanastasis* life, which was exemplified when Abraham and Sarah, their bodies being as good as dead, were strengthened to conceive Isaac. Heb 11:11-12. Noting this implication of resurrection life, Paul wrote, 'And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.' Rom 4:19-21.

Exanastasis is resurrection life that is, by faith, drawn out from the *anastasis*, or finished work of Christ. It is drawn back from this finished work as substance that lifts a believer above the limits of their mortality while they still live in a mortal body. It speaks into existence those things which do not exist. Rom 4:17. This is what Abraham believed as he received the word of the hope and obtained the power of resurrection life from *El Shaddai*. Gen 17:1-8. Significantly, the prophetic word, drawing from the hope of the *anastasis*, does more than foretell history; it directs history.

The promise confirmed

The promises that God had made to Abraham were confirmed to him through his participation in offering on Mount Moriah. Notably, in the days of Jesus, this mountain was called 'Calvary'. Abraham was called by God to take Isaac up to the mountain of the Lord and, by offering, *join him to the blessing of God*. The provision and multiplication of the life of God that comes from the fellowship of Yahweh's offering is called, in Scripture, 'the blessing of God'. The blessing of God is the blessing of sonship.

Abraham was told to take his only son, whom he loved, and offer him up as a burnt offering on the mountain of the Lord. Gen 22:2. Isaac, who was probably a young adult at the time, willingly participated in this service of worship, recognising that he was to be the sacrifice that was offered on the altar. Gen 22:7-9. Importantly, this burnt offering was Abraham and Isaac's participation in the offering of Yahweh through which the covenant purpose of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is accomplished.

When Abraham bound Isaac and placed him on the altar, God the Father received Isaac from Abraham *as His son*. Abraham was then told by the Father not to slay his son, saying, 'Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since *you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.*' Gen 22:12. We see that, through offering, Abraham had given his son to the Father. Isaac now belonged to Him. Abraham released Isaac from the altar and stood him to one side. Abraham was then illuminated to see a ram caught by its horns in the thicket. The Son of God was, figuratively, given to Abraham as the Lamb of God to be His Son after the flesh. Abraham took the ram and offered it up instead of his son Isaac. Gen 22:13.

The burnt offering is symbolic of God's 'giving love', through which one reveals another. We could describe this as 'offering transfer'. Through offering transfer on Mount Moriah, the Father was revealed by Abraham when Abraham gave to Him Isaac to be His son. Abraham was revealed by the Father when the Father gave to him Christ to be his Son. Likewise, Christ was revealed by Isaac when Isaac gave himself to be bound and offered by Abraham, so that Christ could come in the flesh of Abraham. Isaac was revealed by Christ who offered Himself in his stead, revealing the sealing and sonship of Isaac.

This offering transfer prompted the word of the Father's oath, assuring Abraham of the *blessing of the adoption* that he had received as a hope when his name was changed from Abram to Abraham. The Father said to Abraham, 'By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son – blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed [now, Christ] all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.' Gen 22:16-18.

Through Christ's offering on the cross as the Son of Abraham, men are redeemed. The redemption that is in Christ delivers them to the

fatherhood of Abraham as they receive the message of the cross. They are redeemed to Abraham because he received from I AM the name that means 'father of many nations'. As sons of Abraham, through faith, they receive the Spirit of adoption from Christ, making them sons of the Father and heirs of the divine nature. That is, they receive the blessing of Abraham.

The Seed and substance of new creation

All the children who comprise the new nation, or kingdom, of humanity that belongs to God, come from the family of Abraham and Sarah. Accordingly, we are instructed by the prophet Isaiah, who said, 'Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the Lord: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you; for I called him alone, and blessed him and increased him.' Isa 51:1-2.

In this statement, we are first directed by Isaiah to look to Christ, the Rock, for we become the children of Abraham when we come into Christ. Explaining this point, Paul said, 'If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' Gal 3:29. This is because Jesus was the Seed and substance of the promise that was made to Abraham. In fact, Paul said, 'Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ.' Gal 3:16. Christ became *the Seed* of this new humanity when He came in the flesh, proceeding from Abraham and Sarah, and from David, when He was born of the virgin Mary.

Jesus' earthly ministry commenced when John the Baptist baptised Him in the Jordan River. At this time, the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus as a dove. Luk 3:22. This anointing of the Spirit consecrated His physical body as the temple in which the Father's will would be accomplished. Significantly, this anointing guaranteed His resurrection. Jesus Himself testified, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' Joh 2:19. Concerning this statement, the apostle John explained that Jesus was talking about 'the temple of His body' which had been sealed by the Spirit. Joh 2:21.

Testifying of this aspect of Christ's baptism, John the Baptist said, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptise with water said

to me, "Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, *this is He who baptises with the Holy Spirit.*" And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.' Joh 1:32-34. Through this aspect of His baptism, the Son of Man received the Holy Spirit 'without measure', so that after His death, burial and resurrection, He would be able to baptise the sons of Abraham into the Holy Spirit, establishing them in the adoption. Joh 3:34.

Christ's journey *from the Father*, which included His 3 ½-year earthly ministry, came to its conclusion at the last Passover meal. Noting this occasion, the apostle John wrote, 'Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, *He loved them to the end*'. Joh 13:1.

John then noted that after Jesus and the disciples had eaten the Passover meal, 'Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that *He had come from God and was going to God*, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself'. Joh 13:3-4. We know that Jesus then proceeded to wash the disciples' feet, saying to them, 'If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.' Joh 13:14-15. Clearly, washing one another's feet was essential to the *agape* meal and for our fellowship in Christ, for Jesus said that if we are not washed in this way, we have no part with Him, but if we do wash one another's feet, *we will be blessed*. Joh 13:8,17. That is, we will become sons of God and be established together in the fellowship of Yahweh.

The point to note is that Jesus had come to the hour when His journey, as the Seed of the new humanity from the Father, was ending. He was about to commence His journey back to the Father. As we have just read, John nominated the last Passover, which was the first *agape* meal of the New Covenant, as the beginning of Christ's journey to the Father. This is where Jesus gave to His disciples His flesh to eat and His blood to drink, as a participation in the offering of Yahweh, and directed them to wash one another's feet.

Concerning this hour, Jesus had earlier said, '*The hour* has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, *it produces much grain*.' Joh 12:23-24. As the Seed of the new

humanity, Jesus fell into the ground and died through seven travailing wounds as He journeyed from the last Passover to Calvary.

Significantly, just prior to His first wound in Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to the Father on the Mount of Olives saying, 'And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.' Joh 17:5. Jesus was asking to receive His glory as Yahweh Son for His participation in the offering of Yahweh that was manifest in Gethsemane. As the Son of Man, He would be progressively glorified as Yahweh Son through the seven wounding events of this offering journey.

The glorification of the Son of Man as Yahweh Son was the fulfilment of the Covenant that God made with David, saying, 'I will set up your Seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish His kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever. I will be His Father, and He shall be My Son. If He commits iniquity, I will chasten Him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from Him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. *Your throne shall be established forever.*' 2Sa 7:12-16.

Christ, as David's Son after the flesh, was *progressively* glorified as King-Priest in the order of Melchizedek on His offering and suffering journey. Heb 5:5-10. This was His glorification as Yahweh Son in the flesh. We know this because David prophesied concerning his Son and called Him 'Lord'. David declared, 'The Lord [*Yahweh*] said to *my Lord*, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool." '

Psa 110:1. We know that after Christ was raised from the dead and was manifest as the first Man in the image and likeness of God, He ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He is now seated. Eph 1:20.

Heb 10:12. Jesus and the apostles affirmed that David was identifying His Son after the flesh as Christ, Yahweh Son. Mat 22:44. Act 2:34. Heb 1:13.

Notably, it was King David who explained that the substance of our name from the Father, which was written in Christ, was brought forth through Christ's travail on the cross as He was crucified on Mount Calvary. He wrote, 'My frame [lit. *substance*] was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skilfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.' Psa 139:15-16.

In the three hours of darkness that covered the whole earth, as Jesus Christ hung on the cross and descended to the lowest parts of the earth, under the waters of judgement, He fulfilled the works that belong to our name. Isa 26:12. They were made substantial and then written in the book of life. This book is called, 'the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world'. Rev 13:8. As we noted earlier, Christ accomplished this work as I AM. Joh 8:28. Significantly, through these works, Jesus also prepared a heavenly body for every person.

At the conclusion of this travailing journey, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ' "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" ' Mat 27:46. He was saying that there was no longer any need for Him to remain separated from the Father. The redemption of mankind had been accomplished. Jesus was now, figuratively, knocking on the door of the Father's house and saying, 'Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given Me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells in Mount Zion.' Isa 8:18.

Christ's glorification as Yahweh Son was made complete, and manifest, when Jesus, the Son of Man, rose from the dead after His body rested in the tomb for three days and three nights. Through the resurrection, Jesus was the first Son of Abraham who had been made in the image and likeness of Yahweh Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Equally, having fallen into the ground and died as the Seed of this new humanity, He was now *the substance* of the new humanity as the Sheaf of firstfruits. 1Co 15:20-23. Significantly, *the substance* of this new humanity was proceeding as seed from Yahweh Son.

Receiving the promise of the Spirit

Following Christ's resurrection, the adoption is no longer just a promise. Now, through the ministry of the gospel of God, a hearer can receive the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of adoption, into their spirit. Rom 8:14-15. This is when they are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise and become a temple of the Holy Spirit. Eph 1:13. 1Co 6:19. They can be born again of the divine nature as the seed of their sonship, which was brought forth through the travail of Christ, is sown into their spirit and germinated by the Holy Spirit. 1Pe 1:23.

Once born of God, a believer is baptised by the Father into the Person of the Son. 1Co 12:13,18. Now Christ's, the believer becomes a son of Abraham and an heir of the promises made to Abraham. As Paul

explained, 'And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' Gal 3:29. That is, they have received the adoption, having been born of a living hope, which is for the hope of the redemption of their body on the day of resurrection. 1Pe 1:3-4. Receiving the Spirit as a son of Abraham is the first aspect of the adoption.

The second aspect of the adoption is growing and bearing fruit as a son of God, having been baptised by the Son into the name of the Father. It further involves partaking of Christ's substance through fellowship in His offering and sufferings. They do this as an individual member of Christ's body, and as part of His bride, the New Jerusalem. This participation requires the capacity of the seven Spirits of God, which a believer receives after the Son baptises them into the Person of the Holy Spirit.

As a believer walks by the Spirit in the light of the proceeding word of God, and are enabled by seven Spirits to participate in the intercession and travail of Yahweh's prayer fellowship, they are changing from glory to glory into the image of the Son. 2Co 3:18. This change is the fruit of regeneration and renewing as they participate in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Tit 3:4-7. Not only are they finding deliverance from sin and the other law, and are fulfilling the obedience that Christ finished for them, but they are able to bear fruit for God in their households. This fruitfulness belongs to their expression as part of the bride of Christ.

If a son of Abraham continues steadfastly and faithfully, by the Spirit, on the pathway of salvation that Christ pioneered for them, they will receive the redemption of their body on the day of resurrection. That is, they will receive the blessing of Abraham in full, as the process of their adoption is made complete. On that day, they will receive an immortal, incorruptible physical body from Christ, which will be clothed with their heavenly body from Christ, revealing their *spiritual body*. Let us further consider the substance of this body.

The heavenly body

A person receives a heavenly body when Christ breathes on them and writes on them the name of the Father and the name of the city of God, the New Jerusalem. Rev 3:12. The heavenly body is a dwelling place, or habitation, *in the New Jerusalem*. It is connected to their name and the expression of their glory as a son of God.

When Yahweh Son emptied Himself and was begotten by the Father as the Son of God, *before*, He was brought forth as the Seed of the Father with a heavenly body. In Him was written the sonship name of every identity who would be brought forth by God, whom James described as the 'Father of lights'. Jas 1:17.

Coming into the world, these names were in Christ, but their substance, as a heavenly body, had not yet been formed. Jesus explained to His disciples that, through His offering, He would prepare a dwelling place for them, saying, 'In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. *I go to prepare a place for you*. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; *that where I am, there you may be also*. And where I go you know, and the way you know.' Joh 14:2-4.

The substance of our heavenly body was formed, or prepared, by Christ in secret, in the lowest parts of the earth. As we considered earlier, this happened when He fulfilled all the works that belong to our name as a son of God 'in the lowest parts of the earth'. Psalms 139:15-16. Christ did this as the Son of Man who was progressively being glorified with the glory that He had before as Yahweh Son, as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary. He was able to fulfil the works of our name as a son of God for He, as Yahweh Son, is the substance and expression of all sonship.

The point for us to understand is that the heavenly body is drawn from the substance and image of *Yahweh Son*. This body is a dwelling place in the heavenly Jerusalem, the bride of Christ. The substance of this heavenly body, as a part of His bride, was made available when Christ's immortal, incorruptible body was pierced with the soldier's spear causing water, blood and Spirit to flow from His side. We recognise that these elements are the 'rib' from which the woman, drawn from the body of Christ, is formed. By the Spirit, as we maintain our fellowship in the travail of Christ, we are progressively being drawn from His substance. We are changing into His image as a son of God, and we are being sanctified and cleansed as part of His bride. Through this process, our heavenly body, which is hidden with Christ in God, is being progressively glorified.

An everlasting burnt offering

The inheritance of a spiritual body, which we receive when our immortal physical body is clothed with our heavenly body on the day of

resurrection, is necessary for eternal life in the fellowship of Yahweh as citizens of the new heavens and earth. The freedom or liberty of the new creation needs the spiritual resurrection body for its expression. For this reason, there were two elements of Christ's journey as an offering for sin, through which He glorified the Father as the Son of God, and was progressively glorified as the Son of Man with the glory that He had before as Yahweh Son. These two elements of the one sin offering were typified by the scapegoat and the Lord's goat.

On His journey from mortality to immortality, Christ, as the scapegoat, exhausted every alternative to the liberty and freedom that belongs to the expression of love as a son of God. In doing so, only what lives to God, symbolised as the Lord's goat, remained. Explaining this implication of Christ's offering as the Lamb of God, Paul wrote, '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.

As sin was taken out to 'forgetfulness' and exhausted, the Lord's goat was then left as an *everlasting burnt offering* of free choice, in which a son of God is able to express the seed of their name given to their identity by the Father. Because of Christ's offering as the Lamb of God, the Fall can never happen again, once we receive our spiritual body. As we participate in His offering now, our sin and its motives are taken out to forgetfulness, and we are progressively being brought forth of His substance, being free to live only to God.

Chapter 2

The steps of salvation

The work of Christ's messengers is to make known, by the Spirit, *the mystery of God*. That is, they are to declare the details of Yahweh's covenant purpose, which is to make men in the image and likeness of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Gen 1:26. The process through which this purpose is accomplished reveals the name of the Father, the name of the Son and the name of the Holy Spirit.

In Chapter 1, we understood that the accomplishment of Yahweh's covenant purpose for us is the fulfilment of our adoption as a son of God. This is when we receive, in full, the blessing that was promised to Abraham and to all those who, by faith, have become his children. Gen 22:18. Gal 3:7-9. The promised blessing is a spiritual body, which we receive on the day of resurrection, for eternal fellowship with Yahweh in 'the new heavens and earth'. The apostle John signalled two realities necessary for obtaining this blessing, writing, 'Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, *God abides in him*, and *he in God*'. 1Jn 4:15.

First, a person must receive God's initiative towards them. Through the ministry of the gospel, they are made accepted in Christ, the Beloved, where they have the opportunity to receive the adoption and then to be born again as a son of God. Eph 1:6. The outcome of this initiative

towards the hearer is that *God abides in them* and they belong to God as part of the company of the Firstborn, which is the church. Heb 12:23. By this means, they receive a birthright! This is the *right* to the blessing of being a partaker of the divine nature as a son of God, having a unique participation in the fellowship of Yahweh. Joh 1:12-13.

Second, a believer *must abide in God*. As they receive and walk in the light of the word that proceeds from Christ's messengers, they are established in the life and fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which is the kingdom of God, as a partaker of the divine nature. 2Pe 1:4. This is the true implication of baptism into the name of the Father, the name of the Son and the name of the Holy Spirit. This immersion is necessary for salvation and to progressively obtain the promised *blessing* of the adoption.

Jesus charged His messengers in every generation with the work of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that those who receive and believe their message can abide in God as He abides in them. Specifically, He said, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Mat 28:18-20.

In order to fulfil this commission, it is necessary to understand both the gospel of God and how to make disciples through baptism. As a presbytery, this has been the primary focus of our labour in the word of God. As we have searched out the mystery of God, the Spirit has been revealing to us the details of the gospel, 'precept upon precept', 'line upon line', 'here a little, there a little'. Isa 28:10. Like Paul, our testimony is that this ongoing focus 'is not tedious, but for you it is safe'. Php 3:1.

Let us now consider the details of the steps of salvation that the Spirit has illuminated to us in this season. This is necessary for our ongoing maturity as sons of God, and for our participation – as individuals, households and congregations – in the work of proclaiming the gospel to the world.

The gospel of God is proclaimed

Yahweh *Elohim's* covenant purpose is accomplished through the ministry of the word of God. This word, which is the gospel of God, proceeds from

the counsel, or fellowship, of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Rom 1:1 Eph 1:11. It is preached by the Holy Spirit through the ministry of Christ's messengers. 1Pe 1:12. These messengers belong to the fellowship of a presbytery. Their fellowship is with the Father and the Son. 1Jn 1:1-3.

The apostle John explained that every person who receives and walks in the light of this word *belongs to the fellowship of the presbytery*. 1Jn 1:3,7. They are overcoming Satan by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony, and by laying down their life in love to reveal others, because they walk worthy of the gospel and belong to 'worthy houses'. Rev 12:11. Consequently, they are emerging as 'firstfruits' of the kingdom as they are changing, individually and as households, through the washing of regeneration by the word. By the capacity of the Spirit, they proclaim the gospel as a testimony, publicly and from house to house, through their sanctified conversation and conduct. Col 3:17. 1Jn 3:18.

John described the content of the gospel of God as 'the commandments of Christ'. Joh 14:21. Christ said that His commandments were given to Him from the Father. Joh 12:49-50. They are the word of the Father concerning the predestination of each person as a son of God. To this end, these commandments declare the redemption of a hearer, and the hope of fulfilling their predestination by being born of God and brought to glory as a person who has been made in the image and likeness of God.

Prevenient grace

The proclamation of God's word is accompanied by grace and supplication from the Holy Spirit. Zec 12:10. This ministry of grace is 'prevenient', meaning that it is given by the Spirit to a hearer *before* they respond to the gospel. The prevenient grace of God draws back and neutralises any influence that may otherwise affect a hearer's capacity to receive the gospel as it is proclaimed to them. Tit 2:11. These influences may include, for example, sin and its consequences in their life, their personal history and traditions, lusts, bondages, addictions, hurts, anger, depression, protective reflexes, demonic oppression, and even their 'other law'.

A person is then enabled, by the Spirit, to receive the light of the gospel, even though, in and of themselves, they have no capacity to see, hear or receive the things of God. Noting this reality, Paul wrote, ' "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." But God has revealed

them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.' 1Co 2:9-10.

Looking on Christ

If a hearer does not resist the Spirit of grace and supplication, they will be illuminated by the gospel to see that they are dead in trespasses and sins, and are under the judgement of God. Importantly, they will recognise that Christ is with them, having died this death for them. Revealing this impact of the Spirit through the ministry of the gospel, the Lord said, 'And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced.' Zec 12:10.

This effect of prevenient grace upon a hearer was exemplified by the response of the repentant thief who was crucified with Christ on the day that He died. Under the influence of the Spirit of grace, this thief, who had earlier been reproaching Christ, began to see the reality of his predicament – he was rightly dying under the judgement of God. However, he also recognised that Christ was dying with him. Mat 27:44. He said to his fellow thief, 'Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.' Luk 23:40-41.

As a hearer 'looks upon Christ' in this manner, and begins to fear God, they are enabled by the Spirit of supplication to mourn with godly sorrow for Christ who died as an offering for their sin. Describing this response, the Lord said, through the prophet Zechariah, 'Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.' Zec 12:10-11.

Mourning with godly sorrow leads to repentance as the hearer lays hold of the faith that comes by hearing the gospel of God. 2Co 7:10. Heb 6:1. Rom 10:17. They are now able to respond to the offer that is being extended to them through the gospel, as they are asked, 'Do you want to be reconciled to God and become His son by being born again?' By faith, they can accept this reconciliation and can believe God's word concerning His purpose for them. 2Co 4:13. Rom 10:17. It is important to note that faith is, in fact, ministered to a hearer in relation to each element of their salvation so that 'the righteousness of God is revealed [in them] *from faith to faith*; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith" '. Rom 1:17.

The repentant thief demonstrated faith for reconciliation and relationship with the Lord when he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.' Luk 23:42. Responding to this man's request, Jesus said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.' Luk 23:43.

Made alive to God

In the season of prevenient grace, there will be notable changes in the life of the hearer as they keep the commands of Christ that are proclaimed to them by His messengers, both publicly and from house to house. The hearer will find deliverance from addictions; healing of past hurts; relief from spiritual torment; release from bondage to sin, and so on. These changes are the initial outcome of the regenerative capacity of the word of God. Tit 3:5. By regeneration, the hearer, who was formerly dead in trespasses and sins, is being made alive to God. Eph 2:1,4-5.

As miraculous and wonderful as this initial regenerative work is, being made alive is not the new birth; nor is it salvation. Rather, as a son of Adam who was lost to God on account of sin and iniquity, they are being recovered to their predestination as a son of God in Abraham. As a son of man, they are being upgraded from Adam, who was created from the dust, to the family of Abraham, who became the new father of all true believers. As we noted in Chapter 1, the Lord said to Abraham, 'I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth.' Gen 13:16.

The Son and the Father abide

Delighting in their deliverance from sin and death, and increasingly illuminated to the sonship that God has prepared for them, the hearer will love Christ and will glorify God. By keeping His commands, they demonstrate that they love Christ. For this reason, the Father loves them, and Christ also loves them. Furthermore, Jesus will personally make Himself *known* to them. Outlining this initiative towards a person who keeps His commands, Jesus said, '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.

The Father demonstrates His love for the hearer who loves Christ by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, *into their heart*. Note that the Person of the Son is sent into their heart *first*. This is when Jesus, in identity, makes Himself known to them. He comes to abide in the heart of the hearer.

When the Son comes into a person's heart, the Father also comes to abide in their heart, for the Son and the Father are one. Joh 14:10.

The Spirit dwells in the heart

Within the heart of the believer, the Son prays to the Father, asking Him to send the Holy Spirit to them. Joh14:16. Jesus described the Holy Spirit as 'another Helper' who is sent by the Father to be *with* the believer, and *in* them. Joh 14:15-17. These are two distinct implications of receiving the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is *with* a believer when He takes up residence with the Father and the Son in their heart. They now have the Spirit of the Father, the Spirit of the Son and the Holy Spirit abiding in their heart.

The Spirit's initiative within the hearer is to make them spiritual by freeing them from their bondage to the way of the flesh. Gal 5:17. The most fundamental expression of the Spirit's initiative to enable a believer to be spiritual is to convict them of sin, righteousness and judgement. Explaining this work of the Spirit, Jesus said, '*And when He has come*, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgement, because the ruler of this world is judged.' Joh 16:8-11.

The conviction of sin, righteousness and judgement

Through the *conviction of sin*, the Spirit is bringing to a hearer's attention their fleshly desire to define their own name and expression as an identity. This is what it means to be *unbelieving*. When a person lives by the sight of their own eyes and by the understanding of their own heart, they do not believe that Jesus has fulfilled the works that belong to their sonship, and that He is to be the substance of their life as a son of God. 1Jn 5:11-13. Unless they receive the conviction of sin, they will believe the lie that their own way is true and leads to life. 2Th 2:11. Instead of living as a son of God, they will live as a son of disobedience and thus remain under condemnation. Eph 2:2.

Through the *conviction of righteousness*, the Spirit is illuminating to a believer the pathway of salvation that Jesus pioneered for their regeneration and renewing as a son of God. Following His resurrection from the dead, and manifestation as the first Man made in the image and likeness of God, Christ, our great High Priest, ascended into heaven and

sat down at the right hand of the Father. Heb 10:12. He now priests to every son of God a daily participation in His offering and sufferings so that, as they walk in obedience to His word, they can be progressively made like Him. Heb 5:8-9. The Holy Spirit desires to lead sons of God on this path, and to enable their obedience to the word of the Son so that their spirit can be regenerated and they can progressively mature as a son of God.

Convicting of judgement, the Spirit affirms that a believer no longer needs to be afraid of death nor be subject to the accusations of Satan. Rev 12:10. The Spirit is convincing them to live by the love of God that He pours into their heart. Rom 5:5. By this love, they no longer judge themselves according to the knowledge of good or evil. Rather, they are compelled by love to judge that they died with Christ and that they are no longer to live for themselves, but for Christ who died for them and rose again. 2Co 5:14-15. The apostle John said that when a person lives in this way, the love of God is perfected in them so that they 'may have boldness in the day of judgement'. 1Jn 4:17.

In summary, when the Holy Spirit, who is *with* a believer, convicts them of sin, righteousness and judgement, He is fundamentally asking them, 'Do you want to be a son of God?' If a hearer does not resist the conviction of the Spirit, He gives to them the faith to believe for what is totally impossible and unthinkable; they are able to believe that they can be a son of God. They confess, by this faith, 'I want to be a son!'

Importantly, as the Spirit remains *with* a believer, He continues to bring this conviction to them as they journey on the pathway of salvation. This belongs to the Spirit's work as the Helper who leads a son of God into all truth. Rom 8:14. Joh 16:13.

A person can resist the conviction of the Holy Spirit and choose to live according to the flesh. In his address to the Jews, Stephen noted this response to the Spirit, saying to his hearers, 'You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always *resist the Holy Spirit*; as your fathers did, so do you.' Act 7:51. Even after a person has begun to walk by the Spirit, they can turn back to living according to the flesh. Gal 3:1-4. In doing so, they are at risk of losing their salvation, for Paul said, 'If you live according to the flesh you will die.' Rom 8:13.

Receiving the name of the Father and the name of the heavenly city

Summarising the next steps on the pathway of salvation, the apostle John recounted that when Jesus appeared to His disciples on the day of His resurrection, He 'breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit".' Joh 20:22.

Jesus 'breathes' on a believer *through the ministry of His word*. By breathing on them, Jesus writes the name of the Father upon them, indicating that they belong to the Father. He also writes on them the name of the city - the New Jerusalem - to which they now belong as part of the church of the Firstborn. We know this because Jesus Himself said to the church of Philadelphia, 'I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.' Rev 3:12. Note that writing the name of the Father and the name of the city of God on a believer is a separate step from Christ writing His new name upon them. As we will now consider, Christ writes His name upon a believer *after* they have been sealed by the Holy Spirit.

Sealed by the Spirit of adoption

After Christ has written the name of the Father and the name of the city of God on the believer, they receive the Holy Spirit *into their spirit*, making them a *temple* of the Holy Spirit. Joh 2:21-22. 1Co 6:19-20. The Spirit is now *in* them (in their spirit), as well as being *with* them (dwelling in their heart). Joh 14:16-17.

When the Holy Spirit comes into the spirit of a believer, He *seals* them, ratifying that they belong to God the Father, and granting them 'a title deed' to an inheritance, or dwelling place, in the heavenly city. *This dwelling place is a heavenly body*. It is their portion in the kingdom of heaven, revealed as the city of God, the New Jerusalem. It is the basis of their expression as a citizen of this heavenly city.

Even though an individual has been made a part of the church, and is now 'accepted in the Beloved', they are not yet proceeding from Christ as part of His bride. This happens after they have been immersed into the Person of Christ by the Father, and then embrace their participation in His travail. They can do this only by the capacity of the sevenfold Spirit of God. They receive this capacity after they have been baptised by the

Son into the Person of the Holy Spirit. This is not the same as being 'sealed' by the Spirit.

Paul summarised this amazing step of being sealed with the Spirit by writing, 'In Him [Christ] you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were *sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise*, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until *the redemption of the purchased possession*, to the praise of His glory'. Eph 1:13-14.

Note that the Holy Spirit seals 'the purchased possession', making them a temple of the Holy Spirit. The purchased possession *is the believer* as a mortal body, soul and spirit. Highlighting this point, Paul wrote, 'Or do you not know that *your [mortal] body* is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is in you*, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were *bought at a price*; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.' 1Co 6:19-20.

The body of a believer who has been sealed with the Holy Spirit is finally redeemed as an immortal, incorruptible, spiritual body in the resurrection. The fulfilment of the adoption is when the redemption of our body is realised. Rom 8:23. It is amazing to recognise that this redemption is already *guaranteed* for those who have received the Holy Spirit into their spirit, and who then continue to walk according to the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit comes into the spirit of a believer *as the Spirit of adoption*. By the capacity of the Spirit, the believer, as an identity, is able to cry out, 'Abba, Father'; 'You are my Father!' Identifying this wonderful aspect of the blessing that was promised to Abraham, the apostle Paul wrote, 'For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father".' Rom 8:15-16.

Born of incorruptible seed

In response to their confession that God is their Father and that they belong to Him, the Father sends forth the seed of the Spirit of Christ *into the believer's spirit*. This is not the Person of the Son; He continues to dwell in their heart. Rather, it is the unique *seed* of their name and life as a son of God, which Christ brought forth through His travailing journey from Gethsemane to Calvary.

We considered in Chapter 1 that, *before* the creation of ‘the heavens and the earth’, when Yahweh Son emptied Himself and was begotten by the Father as the Son of God, the sonship names of every person who would ever live were written in Him. When He rose from the dead, three days after He had finished His offering journey from Gethsemane to Calvary, these names were now individual ‘seeds’ in Christ, the one Sheaf of firstfruits. 1Co 15:20. Although the name in each seed is unique, every seed contains the life and Spirit of the first Seed, Christ. This is the divine life and nature of the Father, which He granted to the Son to have in Himself when the Father brought Him forth as the Son of God, *before*. Joh 5:26.

The seed is sown in the spirit

The incorruptible seed of the divine nature is sown in the believer’s *spirit* by the word of the Father proceeding from Christ through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The word itself is not the seed but, rather, the seed is carried by the word. Marking this distinction, the apostle Peter said that a person is born again, ‘not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, *through* the word of God which lives and abides forever’. 1Pe 1:23.

When this seed is planted in ‘the ground’ of a person’s *spirit*, it is germinated by the Holy Spirit and they are conceived as a son of God. They have been born anew of the divine nature, and have become a totally new creation. The new-creation life of a son of God was depicted by Jesus in His parable of the seed and the grounds as being a new ‘plant’! Mat 13:5,20. Although the divine nature of God is now the life of the believer, they are not God. Rather, they have become the offspring of God.

The apostle Paul explained this tremendous step on the pathway of salvation, writing, ‘And because you are sons [having been sealed by the Spirit of adoption], God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” Therefore you are no longer a slave but a [new-creation] son, and if a son, then an heir of God [His divine life] through Christ.’ Gal 4:6-7. Significantly, when this germination happens, Christ has become the believer’s life and the substance of their expression as an individual and unique son of God. Gal 2:20. This is why it is the Son who cries out, ‘Abba, Father!’, within them.

If Paul said that the Spirit of the Son, which is the seed of a person’s sonship, is sent into their *heart*, why are we saying that this seed is planted in their *spirit*? The heart is the meeting point of a person’s spirit,

soul and body. It is the very essence, or centre, of their being and expression. Together, the spirit and soul constitute the inner man, and they are indivisible. The spirit is a person's identity. It is who they are. The conscience is the particular faculty of the spirit through which a person is able to know themselves. 1Co 2:11. Who a person is, or wants to be, is expressed through the faculties of their soul. These faculties include their will, mind and emotions; and they influence how they behave, make decisions, communicate, and interpret their environment in and through their body.

The Scriptures describe the word of God as being sharper than any two-edged sword. When it is proclaimed, it makes a division between the spirit and the soul, revealing the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Heb 4:12. Although a person's spirit is part of their heart, this division means that the seed, carried by the word, is able to be planted specifically in their spirit. We know that it is planted there, because the spirit of a man, which is the innermost being of the heart, is identified by the Scriptures as *a lamp*. As Solomon explained, 'The *spirit* of a man is the *lamp* of the Lord, searching all the inner depths of his heart.' Pro 20:27. This lamp is lit when the seed of a person's sonship is germinated in their spirit by the Holy Spirit. This is when they are manifest as one of the stars, or lights, of heaven that Abraham witnessed! Gen 15:5-6.

Christ's name written on a son

Significantly, the sowing of incorruptible seed into the spirit of a believer *is when Jesus writes His new name upon them*. Rev 3:12. Jesus received His new name at the conclusion of His travailing journey when He rose from the dead as the Sheaf of firstfruits. Php 2:9. 1Co 15:20. When He writes His name on the spirit of a believer, they receive their new name as a son of God from Him. As we have already noted, although they are a unique son, Christ is their life.

We know that the writing of these names is associated with Christ breathing upon a believer, for the apostle Peter substantiated the point that we are born again of incorruptible seed through the word of God which lives and abides forever, by saying, 'All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but *the word of the Lord endures forever*.' 1Pe 1:24-25. Peter was quoting the prophet Isaiah, who said, 'The grass withers, the flower fades, because *the breath of the Lord blows upon it*.' Isa 40:7. In other

words, the breath of the Lord is the living and abiding word through which a person is born of incorruptible seed.

The polarising effect of the word

Peter's use of Isaiah's text to explain the process of new birth brings to our attention the polarising effect of the *word* that is ministered through the breath of the Lord. The ministry of the word through the breath of the Lord is the means by which a person is established as a new creation and is saved through regeneration. Tit 3:4-7. However, it is also the means by which God removes and judges the flesh of man. In this regard, we can see how the word proceeding from Christ's mouth as He breathes upon us all, is a two-edged sword! Rev 1:16. Rev 19:15. Heb 4:12-13.

The polarising effect of the word upon a hearer depends on *how* they receive the word, and whether it is mixed with faith when it is heard. Heb 4:2-3. For this reason, Jesus said, 'Take heed *how* you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him.' Luk 8:18.

This dual effect of the breath of the Lord was evident in the responses of the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus on Mount Calvary. As we considered earlier, one thief received illumination and capacity, through faith, to suffer with Christ. He obtained a testimony and entered heaven after he died. We know this because Jesus said to Him, 'Today you will be with Me in Paradise.' Luk 23:43. In contrast, the unrepentant thief became increasingly silent as he went out, with his sin, to everlasting burnings.

Receiving and responding with repentance and faith to this polarising word is fundamental to a believer obtaining a double portion of oil. This double portion, to which Jesus referred in the parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins, is necessary for entering 'rest'. 'Rest' signifies obtaining the blessing that was promised to Abraham and his children. Heb 4:1. Mat 25:1-13. Those who have received a double portion of oil have been 'taught knowledge' *and* 'understand the message' proclaimed by the Holy Spirit through the ministry of messengers in the right hand of Christ. The possession of the word of the gospel of sonship as both knowledge and understanding is demonstrated through *wisdom*, which is the culture and conduct of their lives.

Highlighting the necessity of God's word for obtaining a double portion of oil, and describing its polarising effect upon a hearer, Isaiah wrote, 'Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand

the message? [as disciples who obtain a double portion of oil]. Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little. For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people, to whom He said, "This is the rest with which You may cause the weary to rest," and, "This is the refreshing"; yet they would not hear. But the word of the Lord was to them, "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little," that they might go and fall backward, and be broken and snared and caught.' Isa 28:9-13.

Summary of the new birth

Before we continue our overview of the process through which a believer obtains their eternal salvation, let us summarise the steps that belong to the new birth.

- A person hears the gospel of God that is preached by the Holy Spirit through the ministry of Christ's messengers.
- Prevenient grace from the Spirit accompanies the word, drawing back every influence that may otherwise affect a hearer's capacity to receive the gospel. They are enabled by the Spirit to receive the light of the gospel.
- If the hearer does not resist the Spirit of grace, they will be illuminated by the gospel to see that they are dead in trespasses and sins and are under the judgement of God. However, they will also see that Christ is with them, having died this death for them.
- As the hearer 'looks upon Christ' in this manner, and begins to fear God, they are enabled by the Spirit of supplication to mourn with godly sorrow for Christ, who died as an offering for their sin. This mourning leads to repentance and faith. By faith, the hearer accepts the reconciliation that Christ accomplished for them and believes God's word concerning His purpose for their life.
- Through the regenerative capacity of the word, the hearer is made alive from being dead in trespasses and sins as they keep the commandments of Christ that are proclaimed to them. In so doing, they demonstrate that they love Christ.
- For this reason, the Father loves them, and Christ also loves them. The Father sends the Person of the Son to dwell in the heart of the

hearer. The Father also comes to abide in their heart, for the Son and the Father are one.

- The Son prays to the Father, asking Him to send the Holy Spirit to the hearer. The Holy Spirit is sent to dwell 'with' the hearer and 'in' the hearer.
- The Holy Spirit is 'with' a hearer when He takes up residence with the Father and the Son in their heart. The Spirit convicts the hearer of sin, righteousness and judgement. That is, they are being asked, 'Do you want to be a son of God?' If a hearer does not resist the conviction of the Spirit, He gives to them the faith to believe that they can be a son of God. They confess, by this faith, 'I want to be a son!'
- Jesus then breathes on a believer through the ministry of His word. By this means, He writes on them the name of the Father, indicating that they belong to the Father. He also writes on them the name of the city of God – the New Jerusalem – to which they now belong as part of the church of the Firstborn.
- The Holy Spirit is sent into the spirit of the believer, making them a temple of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit seals them, ratifying that they belong to God the Father, and granting to them 'a title deed' to a dwelling place in the heavenly city. This is their heavenly body. The Holy Spirit has come into the spirit of the believer as 'the Spirit of adoption'. As an identity, they are able to cry, 'Abba, Father'; 'You are my Father!'
- In response to this confession, the Father sends forth the seed of the Spirit of Christ into the believer's spirit. This is the unique seed of their name and life as a son of God, which multiplied from the one Seed, Christ, through His travailing journey from Gethsemane to Calvary. It is sown in their spirit, where it is germinated by the Holy Spirit, and they are born anew of the divine nature. This is the third implication of Christ breathing on the believer. It is when He writes His new name upon them.

The need to abide in God

At this point, a believer has received the Spirit in a firstfruits measure and has been born as a new-creation son of God by the seed of the divine nature ministered from Christ, the Sheaf of firstfruits. Nominating this point on the pathway of salvation, Paul wrote, 'Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of

Christ [through new birth], *he is not His.*' Rom 8:8-9. Although they are an individual son of God, they belong to Christ, the Sheaf of firstfruits.

At the conclusion of His offering and suffering journey, the Son confessed to the Father, 'Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells in Mount Zion.' Isa 8:18. The believer is brought by Christ 'to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God [the Father], the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven'. Heb 12:22-23. God abides in them and they belong to Him! However, this tremendous *birthright* is insufficient for salvation. *The believer must abide in God* to obtain the blessing of the adoption. 1Jn 4:13-16.

The apostle Peter highlighted these two fundamental implications of the gospel in his second epistle. First, he celebrated God's initiative towards us, writing, 'His divine power has *given to us* all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been *given to us* exceedingly great and precious promises'. 2Pe 1:3-4. Peter then explained that a believer receives everything that pertains to life and godliness so that they 'may be partakers of [or participants in] the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust'. 2Pe 1:4. In other words, we are to participate in the life and fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as sons of God who belong to the bride of Christ. This is what it means to abide in God and to be made complete in Christ. Col 2:9-10.

Made a disciple through baptism

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. As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, Jesus said to the apostles, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on Earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them *in* the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Mat 28:18-20.

We see that a person is baptised *into* the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as they are made a disciple and are taught the culture of Yahweh's fellowship. By definition, a disciple is a learner who walks, or conducts, themselves in a manner that is consistent with that of their teachers. They are established in, and equipped for, their participation in the life of

Yahweh's fellowship by receiving and obeying the word of Christ that is proclaimed by messengers proceeding from the fellowship of a presbytery. 1Jn 1:1-4. Heb 12:25-29.

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. We see that baptism is not a sacramental action of immersing a person in water, thereby identifying them as a believer or as a member of a church. Rather, *baptism is the process of discipleship*.

The first action of baptising involves messengers of Christ establishing a specific kind of relationship with those who hear and receive them. A messenger is a friend of Christ. Jesus said, 'You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.' Joh 15:14. Evidently, a messenger is, himself, a disciple and a slave of Christ. He belongs to Christ and, accordingly, his loyalty and commitment is to Christ. We note, for example, that Paul identified himself in this way as he introduced the gospel, saying, 'Paul, a *bondsman* of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures.' Rom 1:1-2.

Those who make disciples are joining their hearers to Christ by first joining these people to *themselves*. They are able to do this because they are, themselves, a disciple and a slave of Christ, and they belong to Him. We note that through his teaching, and the demonstration of the dying and living of Jesus Christ, Paul's hearers were *joined to him*. As Luke recorded in the book of Acts, 'Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, *explaining* and *demonstrating* that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ." And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, *joined Paul and Silas*.' Act 17:2-4.

Exemplifying this principle of baptism, we note that the whole nation of Israel was 'baptised [by God] *into Moses* in the cloud and in the sea'. 1Co 10:2. When the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea, Moses became to them more than just their deliverer – that is, the one who proclaimed their salvation and led them out of their slavery to Pharaoh; he was now their messenger and baptiser into Christ. His baptism was an immersion into the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In this regard, we can view Moses as being the 'type' of a presbytery. 1Co 10:11. God first baptises the hearer into the presbytery, as He baptised Israel into Moses. The presbytery's work, then, is to baptise their hearers, through discipleship, into the name of the Father, the name of the Son and the name of the Holy Spirit. Mat 28:19-20.

The Greek word *baptiso*, translated 'were baptised' in Paul's statement to the Corinthians, means 'to be identified with'. In the exodus from Egypt, the Israelites were identified with the work and purpose of their leader, Moses. Accordingly, this baptism included teaching and cultural training so that the nation was properly informed and connected to Yahweh as the family of God and as a kingdom of priests, both to God and then to the Gentile nations.

Likewise, in the New Covenant, messengers are to teach the implications of immersion in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. As disciples walk in the light of this word on the pathway of salvation that Christ pioneered for them, they are abiding in God and progressively being made in His image and likeness. Significantly, disciples are then able to participate in the work of proclaiming the gospel, through offering, by the capacity of seven Spirits from the Holy Spirit. Let us now briefly consider the focus of immersion into each Person of the Godhead.

Baptised into the Father

Having been born of God and brought to the city of God by Christ, the believer is then immersed by Christ into the name of the Father. Describing this action, Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through Me.' Joh 14:6. Christ brings the believer to the Father by joining them to Abraham so that he becomes their father and they belong to his family. Any child of Abraham is also a son of God the Father, and belongs to His family. Explaining this immersion into the name of the Father, by the Son, Paul said, 'And if you are Christ's, *then* you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' Gal 3:29.

As a believer walks by faith in obedience to the word of Christ's messengers that is ministered by the Spirit, they receive the discipline and instruction of the Father. Eph 6:4. Receiving this ministry, they walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham, being taught by him and by their heavenly Father. Rom 4:12. Gen 18:19. Joh 6:45. They grow up as a son, glorifying the Father by doing the works of obedience that Christ learned

and finished for them through the things which He suffered. 1Co 6:20.
Heb 5:8-9.

A fundamental message that belongs to immersion in the name of the Father is the exhortation that speaks to a believer as to a *son*. Summarising this exhortation, Paul wrote, ‘ “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.’ Heb 12:5-8.

Of course, the sufferings that are associated with chastening are painful. However, sons of God need to be reminded that through chastening they are growing to know the Father as they are being received by Him. Furthermore, they are bringing forth fruit unto eternal life, for to know the Father is eternal life! Joh 17:3. As Paul noted, ‘Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.’ Heb 12:11.

Baptised into the Son

Messengers of Christ are to explain to a son of God the need to be baptised into the Person of Christ. This is the initiative of the Father, who immerses a son of God into the Son and makes them a member in particular of the body of Christ. Outlining this dimension of baptism, Paul wrote, ‘For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit ... but now God [the Father] has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.’ 1Co 12:13,18.

Emphasising that it is the Father who immerses a son of God into the Person of the Son, Jesus said, ‘No-one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, “And they shall all be taught by God.” Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.’ Joh 6:44-45.

Significantly, coming to the Son through the initiative of the Father is the demonstration of a believer’s faith. Their faith is drawn from the hope of the resurrection. Evidently, the implication of baptism into the Son is that

the believer continues to receive, and to live by, the word of the Father that is proclaimed through the ministry of Christ's messengers.

Heb 12:25. Jesus identified this word as being a participation, or *fellowship*, in His body and blood as a member of His body.

As we will consider further in Chapter 4, the elements of Christ's flesh and His blood join a son of God to the altar, or context, of His offering and sufferings as a member of His body. Paul identified the failure to discern and embrace one's sanctified participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering as a member of His body as 'eating and drinking in an unworthy manner'. 1Co 11:27. He said that such conduct brings the believer under the judgement of God, explaining that 'for this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep'. 1Co 11:29-30. However, Jesus said that if a person 'eats His flesh and drinks His blood', He will 'raise him up at the last day'. Joh 6:54. That is, they will receive from Him the substance of a spiritual body. This is the hope of the resurrection.

A second implication of immersion into the Son and connection to His offering travail as a member of His body is that a believer is proceeding forth from the body as part of the corporate bride of Christ. In the fellowship of His travail, they are being sanctified and cleansed by the washing of the water of the word, which is bringing regeneration to their humanity and reformation to their households. Eph 5:25-27. Tit 3:5. Being established in the order and fellowship of headship, they are obtaining grace to minister the word of the covenant in and from their houses. This is the ministry of the Spirit through which sons of men can be born as sons of God. The sons of God brought forth from the bride of Christ refer to both natural children born in covenant houses and people in the world who are delivered out of the kingdom of darkness to be born as sons of light.

Baptised in the Holy Spirit

The Son baptises a son of God into the Person of the Holy Spirit. As John the Baptist declared, 'He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.' Mat 3:11. A believer who is immersed in the Holy Spirit receives from Him the power of the seven Spirits of God, enabling their participation in the fellowship of Yahweh's Covenant. This includes the capacity to participate in the intercession and travail of Yahweh's prayer and to be a witness of Christ to the world, as they journey with Him in the fellowship

of His offering and sufferings as a son of God and a member of His body. Let us consider further this participation in the Spirit.

Baptism into the Holy Spirit is indicated by the capacity to speak in tongues. Act 2:4. By the Spirit, a believer is able to join the intercession and travailing prayer of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Rom 8:26-27. In this prayer meeting, the Son consults with the Holy Spirit in relation to the needs of the believer. Christ inquires of the Spirit regarding how they are connecting to Him in obedience to the instructions that the Holy Spirit takes from Christ. The Spirit uses these instructions to lead them upon the pathway of their sanctification, enabling them to do the works that Christ has accomplished for them on His offering journey.

The Son, then, in prayer, reports to the Father about the believer's progress as His son. Rom 8:27. If the believer is obediently following the leading of the Holy Spirit, they are truly a son of God. God the Father is then *for* them, so who can be against them? Rom 8:31. The Father is freely giving to sons of God all things as they walk and live in this way. 2Pe 1:3. They then proceed to understand that nothing can separate them from the love of Christ as they journey with Him in the fellowship of His sufferings. Rom 8:35-39. These sufferings are part of their experience from Him who is I AM. As a believer is led by the Spirit in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, they are able to be more than a conqueror through Christ who loved them. Rom 8:37.

Significantly, the believer's capacity to journey with Christ and to fulfil the will of the Father in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings is the seven Spirits of God. This is the same strength that Jesus received from the Spirit, identified by Paul as 'Eternal Spirit'. Heb 9:14. The seven Spirits of God is the power to enable a person's journey on the pathway of salvation. Journeying with and in Christ, they are able to be His witness in the world. Explaining this implication of baptism by the Holy Spirit, Jesus said to His disciples, 'But 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. By the Spirit, they are able to pray and prophesy, and to testify, as a son of God.

In this regard, any Christian who has received the baptism of the Spirit is then able, as part of a community of believers, to be a co-worker with Christ. That is, through the seven Spirits of God, they are able to proclaim the gospel and to support those who are responding to the gospel, so that they are brought to birth as sons of God. Noting this implication of

baptism by the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' Joh 7:38. It is the seven Spirits of God that flows out of the innermost being of a son of God as a river of living water. This is the ministry of the word through which hearers can be born again and nourished as sons of God.

Baptism by water

If baptism is immersion in the name of the Father, the name of the Son and the name of the Holy Spirit *through discipleship*, what is the purpose of water baptism? Baptism by water is requested by a son of God *in faith for discipleship*. It marks their commitment to be taught the commands of Christ and to walk in the light of the word that is ministered by His messengers. Through discipleship, they are established on the pathway of salvation that Christ pioneered for them on His offering and suffering journey. Heb 5:8-9.

We see that the pathway of salvation is the pathway of discipleship in the community of a local church, under the instruction and care of a presbytery. For this reason, baptism by water happens under the hands of firstfruits messengers who are co-workers of Christ. 1Co 3:9. They are sent by Christ to make disciples of those who receive and believe their message. Mat 28:19-20. Rom 6:17-18.

After Christ's offering and suffering journey was finished and He rose from the dead as the first Man made in the image and likeness of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, He received 'the name which is above every name'. Php 2:9-11. Jesus called this entire process His 'baptism', saying to His disciples, 'You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with.' Mat 20:23. This is the one baptism through which the covenant purpose of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is accomplished in the life of a believer. Eph 4:5.

To be baptised 'in the name of Jesus', as believers were by the apostles in the New Testament, is *to embrace the pathway* that Jesus Christ specifically pioneered for the salvation of those who obey Him. Importantly, the efficacy of water baptism is *not* contingent upon the words spoken over the believer as they are being immersed in water. Such an orientation renders baptism merely a sacrament. Rather, as a believer is discipled by Christ's messengers, and thereby walks with Him and in Him on the pathway of salvation, they are immersed in the name of the Father, the name of the Son and the name of the Holy Spirit. By this means, they are progressively made in Their image.

To walk with Christ on the pathway of salvation is to embrace one's participation in the death, burial and resurrection of each travailing wound of His offering journey. As they embrace the daily implications of their baptism by water into the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, they are finding deliverance from the other law and are participating in the works that Christ has already fulfilled for them. This is the implication of the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit through which a person is *saved*. Tit 3:5.

This washing and renewing work continues in a person's life as they walk each day in the fellowship of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Their participation in this process, which includes the circumcision of their heart, delivers to them a new heart and a new spirit. Eze 36:25-27. The effect of regeneration is a *new heart*, from which 'thorns' and 'the stones' of the other law are being removed, and *a spirit that is made new* through new birth and growth to maturity.

As they embrace the process through which their carnality is being removed, and they walk in the word that they are hearing, the divine nature, which is planted in the soil of their spirit, continues to take root, grow and become the expression of their identity as a son of God. They are progressively changing from one degree of glory to another, into the image of the Son. 2Co 3:18. On the day of resurrection, which Jesus called 'the regeneration', they will receive the hope of the gospel, which is their spiritual body as part of the perfected bride of Christ and as a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 3

The ministry of God's word

The secret of the Lord

Yahweh *Elohim's* covenant purpose for mankind was described by the apostle Paul as a 'mystery'. He explained that this mystery is made known through the preaching of the gospel, writing, 'Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith - to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever.' Rom 16:25-27.

It is notable that Paul identified the mystery of God, revealed through the gospel, as a '*secret*'. Concerning this secret, King David declared, 'The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His Covenant.' Psa 25:14. 'The secret of the Lord' is the word of each person's predestination as a son of God and as a man in the image and likeness of God. This word, proclaiming our name and destiny as a son of God, is a great treasure. The Lord Himself said, 'I will give you the treasures of darkness and *hidden riches of secret places*, that you may know that I, the Lord, who call you by your name, am the God of Israel.' Isa 45:3.

Inasmuch as the secret of the Lord communicates the riches of our name and life as a son of God, it is equally the place where we abide in the

fellowship of Yahweh as part of the true Israel of God. In fact, we are unable to live as a son of God without abiding in this fellowship. The secret place is where we abide in the Father's house and participate, by the Spirit, in the intercession and travail of Their prayer fellowship. It is a place of safety and provision. To this end, the psalmist wrote, 'He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord [Yahweh], "He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust".' Psa 91:1-2.

The word of the Son

Christ Himself is the Word who makes the secret of the Lord known. John, the apostle, introduced his Gospel by identifying the Son as the Word, stating, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' Joh 1:1,14. Yahweh Son became the *substance* of the word of the Father when He was begotten as the Son of God. Heb 1:5.

As the Word, the Son is *the sum of the Scriptures*, which have been written down by the Lord's apostles and prophets. From His throne, the Son has communicated the word of the Covenant to the holy prophets through the angel, Gabriel. As the prophets wrote down what they were caused, by the Holy Spirit, to hear and see, their writings became the Scriptures. 1Pe 1:12. Verifying this principle, the Lord Himself said, 'Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless *He reveals His secret* to His servants the prophets.' Amo 3:7.

Further illustrating the order by which the Scriptures were written, we note the testimony of the apostle John in the book of Revelation. He opened his prophetic book, writing, 'The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God [the Father] gave Him to show His servants – things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.' Rev 1:1-3.

The ministry of the Spirit

Apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures are merely a book. However, the Scriptures speak to us through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Explaining this work, Jesus said, 'He [the Spirit] will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the

Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.' Joh 16:14-15. This statement reveals the means by which the word of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit's Everlasting Covenant proceeds to us from Their fellowship.

Christ, who is the substance of the Father's word, speaks to the church from the written Scriptures, by the Spirit. This implication of 'One' revealing 'Another' through offering is exemplified by the letters to the seven churches of Asia. As we noted earlier, the words of Jesus, written down by the apostle John in the book of Revelation, became the Scriptures. Rev 1:11,19. Rev 22:18-19. At the end of each letter, Jesus exhorted every person who belongs to His lampstand churches by saying to them, 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' Rev 2:7.

Clearly, the Holy Spirit is the agent through which Christ speaks to the church from the Scriptures. It is the Spirit who makes what is hidden, or invisible, known to us. Explaining this point, Paul said, 'No one knows the things of God *except the Spirit of God*. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.' 1Co 2:11-12.

In addition to enabling the revelation of the mystery of God, the Spirit also makes clear, from the prophetic Scriptures, what applies to a particular generation and time. With this in mind, it is apparent that the midnight hour of this present earth is upon us, for the Spirit continues to insist upon our consideration of Jesus' parable of the wise and foolish virgins. He is declaring, 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming'. Mat 25:6. We know that this is what the Spirit is saying, because of the present emphasis in the word calling for cultural reformation in our marriages and families. This is the appeal, through the 'Elijah ministry', for households who belong to the bride of Christ to be made worthy and to grow to firstfruits as part of network of worthy houses who are ready for the coming of the Bridegroom.

The Holy Spirit ministers the words of Christ, and makes known to us the prophetic Scriptures that apply to the times and seasons in which we live, through messengers who belong to the fellowship of a presbytery. Their work is to proclaim the gospel of God from the Scriptures as the word of present truth. 2Pe 1:12. Within the presbytery, Christ has given to some men ascension-gift grace to illuminate, from the Scriptures, what the Spirit is saying to the presbytery and the church. Eph 4:11-12. Importantly, these gifts are not for the purpose of laying another foundation by adding to, or reinterpreting, the writings of Paul and the other apostles. Rather, through their ministry, and then the ministry of

the presbytery, each hearer is able to build on the foundation that the apostles have laid. In this regard, ascension-gifted presbyters are to minister in the mode of Timothy and Titus.

Alternative gospels

Emphasising that the foundation of the gospel has already been laid by the apostles and prophets, Paul warned every messenger to take heed how they built on this foundation. He wrote, 'According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.' 1Co 3:10-11.

However, even while he was still alive, Paul observed a proliferation of alternative gospels. These were interpretations of the Scriptures, variously informed by Greek philosophy and Jewish traditions, that led to the espousal of unhelpful theologies and sacramental practices in the church. *These were appealing to many people.* For this reason, Paul exhorted all believers with the instruction, 'But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.' Gal 1:8. The apostle John was similarly emphatic, saying, 'If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his *evil deeds*.' 2Jn 1:10-11. Evidently, those who proclaim alternative gospels within the congregations to which we belong, are messengers of Satan who exemplify the spirit of antichrist in the church.

Applying ourselves to the word

Every time that the Lord speaks, it is straight from the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit. For this reason, Christ's messengers must be *spiritual*. That is, they must be able to receive the ministry of the Spirit in the fellowship of the presbytery and proclaim this word through testimony. This is essential to their sanctification and the efficacy of their ministry. Significantly, their qualification and capacity to proclaim the mystery of God is not their formal training, nor their natural capacities. Rather, it is the grace of God which is multiplied by offering in the fellowship of the Spirit. As they maintain their participation in this fellowship, they are preserved from the form of ministry that Paul described as 'peddling the word of God'. 2Co 2:17. They do not exceed what is written in the Scriptures, nor do they avoid passages of Scripture that challenge the carnal expectations and conduct of their hearers in order to appease them.

Everyone who receives the words of Christ, through the ministry of His messengers, are illuminated by the Spirit and joined to the fellowship of the presbytery. The presbytery's fellowship is with the Father and His Son. 1Jn 1:1-4. The prophetic word is confirmed in our hearts as we hear the message and *apply* ourselves to search out the Scriptures as a participation in the fellowship of the word. Act 17:11-12. Describing the importance of applying ourselves in this manner, Peter wrote, 'And so we [as a presbytery] have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved *by the Holy Spirit*.' 2Pe 1:19-21.

By applying ourselves to know and understand the proceeding word of God, we are eating the bread which comes down from heaven. Joh 6:51. This word will initially be sweet in our mouth, but then bitter in our belly as we walk in the light of the word and are processed by the word. Psa 105:19. We demonstrate that we are a believer and are fulfilling the works of God when we live this way! Joh 6:29. Wonderfully, through this process, we are being established in the fellowship of the presbytery, and the word is becoming the expression of our life. This is what it means to be a firstfruits household. 1Co 16:15. We are able to express this word as a testimony to others. Notably, 'firstfruits' is a fundamental qualification for eldership. 1Ti 3:2-7.

It is notable that the Lord equipped His prophets for their ministry by giving to them His word to eat. For example, the apostle John testified, 'Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, "Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth." So I went to the angel and said to him, "Give me the little book." And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth." Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings". ' Rev 10:8-11.

It is important to recognise that our appreciation of the word, and even our agreement with the word, is not eating the bread of heaven. Highlighting the distinction between one's appreciation of the word, and their application of the word through obedience, the Lord said to the prophet Ezekiel, 'They come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with

their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain.' Eze 33:31.

Learning morning by morning

Morning by morning, as we devote ourselves to prayer and to the word of present truth, the Holy Spirit enables us to know and understand how to walk with Christ as a disciple. He does this by bringing to our remembrance the word through which the secret of the Lord is made know to us. Describing this work of the 'Helper', Jesus said, 'But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.' Joh 14:26. This 'help' is not merely for our sake. It is equally for the purpose of equipping us to speak to those who are weary in, and beyond, our houses.

Jesus Himself received this same help from the Spirit during His earthly ministry. He testified, 'The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned [meaning 'disciple'], that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God has opened My ear; and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away. I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.' Isa 50:4-6.

We know that this was Jesus speaking. In the court of Caiaphas, He gave His back to those who beat Him with rods as He was chastened for our peace. He also gave His cheeks to those who plucked out His beard and spat in His face as He was bruised for our iniquity. Isa 53:5. It is amazing to consider that Jesus identified Himself as a disciple whose ear was opened by the Spirit to hear the word of the Father defining His obedience. He testified that He learnt this word, through the things which He suffered, so that He could speak a word in season to those who are weary.

A disciple who is receiving Christ's word by the Spirit, will embrace their participation in His offering and sufferings. They are maturing through chastening and are being established in their sanctification as they find deliverance from their iniquitous projections. Importantly, their communication with others, in and beyond their household, is not driven by their carnal judgements or reactions. Through their godly expression, in word and deed, they are able to minister *peace* to those who are weary and reveal to them the pathway that leads to life. This is a wonderful implication of living 'blamelessly in holiness', ready for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. 1Th 3:13.

The seven Spirits of the Lord

A believer's testimony of reformation and obedience is the evidence that they are receiving and believing the word of Christ. Such a testimony is fundamental to obtaining the blessing of 'rest' from weariness that belongs to salvation. Jud 1:5. Heb 3:18-19. Our testimony is known in the fellowship of the presbytery and the church by our conversation and conduct at the *agape* meal. It shines as light in and from the congregation of a lampstand church.

The light that shines from the fellowship of lampstand churches is the seven Spirits of God. This ministry is described as seven lamps of fire burning before the throne of the Father. Rev 4:5. To understand how the word of the Lord is proclaimed as light through this ministry, both now and in the time of the end, it is necessary to consider its depiction in the book of Revelation.

We recall that the apostle John was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day when he heard behind him a loud voice as of a trumpet, saying, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last.' Rev 1:11. When John turned to see the voice, he saw seven golden lampstands and in the midst of the lampstand, one like the Son of Man. He was looking at Christ who was clothed with a white priestly garment.

Describing what he saw, John identified seven attributes that belong to Christ's priesthood – '[1] His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and [2] His eyes like a flame of fire; [3] His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and [4] His voice as the sound of many waters; [5] He had in His right hand seven stars, [6] out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and [7] His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.' Rev 1:14-16.

Significantly, the seven attributes of Christ symbolise the ministry of the seven Spirits of the Lord which belong to Him and are then ministered by Him through the stars in His right hand. We recall that when Christ was baptised in the Jordan River by John the Baptist, the Spirit descended upon Him and anointed Him with the seven Spirits of the Lord. Joh 1:32. This is when He received the seven Spirits of the Lord from the Holy Spirit, *without measure*. Joh 3:34. The prophet Isaiah described the anointing of the seven Spirits of the Lord upon Christ by saying, 'There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. [1] *The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him*, the Spirit of [2] wisdom and [3] understanding, the Spirit of [4] counsel and [5] might, the Spirit of [6] knowledge and of the [7] fear of the Lord.' Isa 11:1-2.

We can directly align the seven attributes of Christ that are listed by the apostle John in the book of Revelation with the seven Spirits of the Lord that are nominated by the prophet Isaiah.

1. Christ's head and hair are white like wool because He is the Lamb of God who possesses *the Spirit of the Lord*. The apostle Paul explained that Christ was enabled by the capacity of 'Eternal Spirit', which is the one Spirit of the Lord, to offer Himself without spot to God. Heb 9:14. Furthermore, as the Lamb of God, Christ has been appointed and anointed by the Father to be the Head of the church and the judge of the world. Eph 1:22-23. Joh 5:22.
2. The eyes of Christ, which are like a flame of fire, reveal *the Spirit of wisdom*. It is notable that the four living creatures, whom John observed as being in the midst of the throne and around the throne, were described as being 'full of eyes'. Rev 4:6-8. They are full of eyes because they possess this same wisdom. The four living creatures symbolise the ascension-gift graces that Christ has given to the church. Those with this grace have received '*wisdom and insight*' in the mystery of God. Eph 1:8. Eph 3:4. Significantly, the mystery of God is the life and fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which Ezekiel observed as a '*raging fire engulfing itself*'. Eze 1:4.
3. The feet of Christ, which are like burnished brass, reveal *the Spirit of understanding*. The feet of Christ draw our attention to Christ's offering journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. The seven wounding events are the altar of the true temple. Christ's offering journey is called 'the way of understanding'. Pro 9:6. Pro 21:16. Isa 40:14. 1Pe 3:7. The substance of understanding is only found through participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.
4. The voice of Christ, which is like the sound of many waters, reveals *the Spirit of counsel*. Jesus identified the primary focus of His counsel when He addressed the Laodiceans. He said to them, '*I counsel you* to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see'. Rev 3:18. Furthermore, He said, 'I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears *My voice* [that is, receives My counsel] and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me'. Rev 3:20.
5. The right hand of Christ which holds the seven stars reveals *the Spirit of might*. Significantly, the apostle Peter described Christ's hand, which holds the seven stars, as 'mighty', writing, 'Humble yourselves under *the mighty hand* of God, that He may exalt you in

due time'. 1Pe 5:6. Celebrating this 'ministry of might' from the right hand of the Lord, the psalmist wrote, 'The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly'. Psalms 118:16.

6. The sharp two-edged sword which proceeds from the mouth of Christ reveals the *Spirit of knowledge*. The prophet Isaiah asked, 'Whom will he teach knowledge?' Isa 28:9. As we noted in Chapter 2, the word through which knowledge is taught has a polarising effect upon those who hear it. Those who respond to the word of Christ by coming to Him and receiving His yoke, *learn from Him* and find rest and refreshing for their soul. Isa 28:12. Mat 11:28-29. However, those who reject the same word will stumble backwards into judgement. Isa 28:13.
7. The face of Christ, which shines like the sun in its strength, reveals the *Spirit of the fear of the Lord*. The fear of the Lord is the outcome of seeing the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The fear of the Lord is our reverence and respect for who God is. We must not draw back from the Lord, nor refuse Him who speaks, when He comes to meet us face to face through the ministry of His word. Heb 10:39. Instead, we are to 'have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear'. Heb 12:28.

The ministry of seven stars

All seven elements of the seven Spirits of the Lord have been entrusted to the right hand of Christ. John the Baptist testified concerning Christ, 'For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. The Father loves the Son, and *has given all things into His hand*.' Joh 3:34-35. This is an important point. Christ ministered the seven Spirits of the Lord to the apostle John when He placed His right hand upon him. Rev 1:17.

Of the elements of His appearance that John observed, Christ specifically referred to the stars in His right hand, saying to John, 'The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels [*aggelos*] of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.' Rev 1:20. A star is an *aggelos* presbytery of a lampstand church.

The light that shines from the face of Christ, which is the light of the seven Spirits of the Lord, is revealed and ministered by the stars in the right hand of Christ. The prophet Habakkuk declared concerning the Lord, 'His brightness was like the light; He had rays [of light] flashing *from His hand*, and there [in His hand] His power was hidden.' Hab 3:4.

The apostle Paul was a messenger in the right hand of Christ, and testified that the preaching of Christ was the ministry of light from His face. Specifically, he said, 'For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' 2Co 4:5-6.

As we noted earlier, the right hand of Christ comprises the five ministry graces which reveal the four faces of His administration. That is, the four faces of Christ's administration are revealed by apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. Eph 4:11. The ministry graces of Christ are the gift of Christ to the church. As an apostolic administration in the right hand of Christ, they reveal the seven attributes of Christ as they minister the seven Spirits of the Lord to the church.

The ministry graces of Christ are one apostolic administration. However, the one apostolic administration in the right hand of Christ reveals a diversity of ministry in relation to the seven Spirits of the Lord. In this regard, we recognise that ascension-gift apostles possess the Spirit of the Lord for the purpose of revealing Christ by ministering the Spirit of the Lord to church. Ascension-gift prophets possess and minister the Spirit of wisdom and understanding. Ascension-gift evangelists possess and minister the Spirit of counsel and might. And ascension-gift teachers possess and minister the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

The fourfold ministry of an apostolic administration is resident in a star. A star is an *aggelos* presbytery ministering from the right hand of Christ to a lampstand church. The men who belong to a star are personally buried in the body, being established in the community of a local congregation as a firstfruits believer and household. However, as part of a star, they are to walk among the congregations that belong to a lampstand church, as well as walk between lampstand churches. As messengers who are revealing Christ, they minister the seven Spirits of God to lampstand churches, for the seven Spirits of God are upon Christ and resident within Him.

As they 'walk' within and between lampstand churches, the seven stars are carrying the seven Spirits of God. Jesus addressed the presbytery in Sardis as, 'the One who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars'. Rev 3:1. We recall that the apostle John saw Christ dressed in a white priestly garment. As we have considered, the seven symbolic attributes of His priesthood are the seven Spirits of God. Jesus promised that the overcomers in Sardis would *walk with Him* in white garments. Rev 3:4-5.

This means that they would also minister the seven Spirits of God to lampstand churches.

Importantly, the seven stars are not the seven Spirits of God. The sevenfold Spirit of God is manifest as the lamp light of a lampstand. The seven lamps of a lampstand symbolise the ministry of the light of the seven Spirits of God, illuminating the pathway upon which every hearer can be established in the fellowship of Yahweh as a son of God. As we considered earlier, John observed, 'Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God'. Rev 4:5.

Although the seven lamps are the seven Spirits of God, each lamp is not a specific aspect of the sevenfold Spirit of God. For example, the lamp that belongs to the Brisbane congregation is not exclusively expressing the Spirit of wisdom! Rather, the seven lamps represent the fullness of the expression of the one anointing of seven Spirits as light from one lampstand.

This light shines from a lampstand because those who belong to a star presbytery carry, through offering, the fellowship of the seven Spirits of the Lord with them as they move between, and function in, lamps. The light of a lamp is then reflected and focused by the petals of a congregation 'flower'. We see that one lamp in a local congregation can shine the light of all seven Spirits of God as they are connected to a lampstand through the ministry of a walking 'star'.

The sevenfold impact of the ministry of the seven Spirits of God

The seven Spirits of God are ministered through the proclamation of the gospel of sonship. Jesus identified the outcome of this ministry when He stood up in the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth. Reading from the book of Isaiah, He testified, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor [in spirit]; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, 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. Isa 61:1-3.

Those who belong to 'a star', which is an *aggelos* presbytery of a lampstand, bring the seven Spirits of God as 'the blessing of peace' to households. When it is received, the blessing of peace comprises all the outcomes which Jesus identified - including healing, deliverance, and illumination.

The blessing of peace is the ministry of *rest* and *refreshing*. Isaiah declared, 'Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to

understand the message? [two aspects of the seven Spirits of God] Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little [through the ministry of the word]. For with stammering lips and another tongue [as an expression of seven Spirits by the Holy Spirit] He will speak to this people, to whom He said, “*This is the rest with which You may cause the weary to rest,*” and, “*This is the refreshing*”.’ Isa 28:9-12.

Star messengers are sent by Christ in the mode of the seventy-two to find and establish lampstand churches. They are looking for worthy households in which reside ‘sons of peace’. A person is not a son of peace by default but rather is manifest as such by the way in which they receive the messengers. That is, they receive the messengers, and the seven Spirits of God that the messengers are bringing with them, as a ministry of the peace of God. This ministry of the peace of God reconciles a hearer to Christ, and then to God their Father. The peace of the messenger that rests upon the hearer as a fellowship connection *becomes their yoke to Christ*. They begin to learn from Christ, through the ministry of His messengers, and find rest for their souls and for their families.

As a hearer receives and continues in this yoke, the sevenfold anointing that rests upon them enables their understanding in relation to each element of lordship – of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit – causing them to become spiritual. A person demonstrates that they have become spiritual when they bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit as He worships and makes offering at the altar of their conscience as a son of God. This fruit is the manifestation of the peace of God within them. We could describe them as ‘nine fruits of peace in an individual son of God as a temple of the Holy Spirit’. Significantly, as sons of peace, they are motivated themselves to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace as part of the church, the bride of Christ.

In contrast to this, when the ministry of the seven Spirits of God by the seventy-two is rejected, it invokes the judgement of God. When Jesus read from the book of Isaiah in the synagogue, He stopped before reading the seventh outcome. The seventh outcome is the proclamation of the day of vengeance. Isa 61:2. Jesus said to the seventy-two, ‘Whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, “The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you”. But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day (the day of vengeance) for Sodom than for that city.’ Luk 10:10-12.

Chapter 4

Finding rest for our soul

The promise of rest

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 make them His people. For example, the land of Canaan was an inheritance that was given to the nation of Israel. It had been promised to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Lord said to the children of Israel, 'I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage [inheritance]: I am the Lord.' Exo 6:8.

The 'promised land' symbolised citizenship of an everlasting kingdom as a son of God. This inheritance will be obtained in full on the day of resurrection. At this time, having been made in the image and likeness of God through the process of adoption, the sons of God will receive a spiritual body and will live in fellowship with Yahweh, forever. This will be the consummation of the 'promise of the Spirit', identified by the apostle Paul as the 'blessing of Abraham'. Gal 3:13-14. The Lord described this promise to Abraham, saying to him, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them ... so shall your descendants be.' Gen 15:5.

Abraham recognised that the true inheritance that was promised to him and his children in Christ was eternal citizenship of a heavenly city. Significantly, the Scriptures describe this place of eternal abiding as 'Beulah land', meaning 'the land of marriage'. Isa 62:4. Abraham's understanding of this promise was highlighted by the apostle Paul who noted that Abraham dwelt in tents in the land of promise 'for he waited for the [bride] city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God'. Heb 11:10.

A key point to understand is that a person 'enters rest' by receiving the inheritance that was promised to Abraham and to his Seed, Christ. Gal 3:16. *This is what it means to be blessed.* The blessing is obtained through obedience to the word of God.

We know that the generation of Israelites who had been delivered from their slavery in Egypt failed to 'enter rest' because they hardened their hearts and were disobedient to God's word spoken by His messengers, Moses, Joshua and Caleb. They denied the word of God because they feared the giants in the land. Paul, quoting from Psalm 45, reminded his readers of this fact, writing, 'Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years". Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, "They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways." So I swore in My wrath, "They shall not enter My rest".' ' Heb 3:7-11.

Having been born of God, we enter His rest and progressively obtain the promised blessing by walking on the pathway of salvation that Christ pioneered for us. We walk on this path through obedience to the word of Christ that is proclaimed by His messengers. Heb 5:9. Paul described an obedient believer's progressive attainment of this blessing as 'partaking of Christ'. Writing to the Hebrews, he said, 'Exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become *partakers of Christ* if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.' Heb 3:13-14.

As we will consider in more detail later in this chapter, we partake of Christ by participating in the *agape* meal in a *worthy manner*. The implication of this participation in Christ's body and blood is our fellowship in His offering and sufferings as those who are being immersed in the name of the Father, the name of the Son and the name of the Holy Spirit *through discipleship*. Mat 28:18-20.

A person who is entering rest has ceased from their own works, which are informed by the sight of their own eyes and the understanding of their own heart. Heb 4:10. This is because they trust Christ and their brethren, having taken His yoke upon themselves. They bear the fruit of life and peace as they journey with Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. Rom 8:6. This fruit is manifest in their life and in their family, who are being restored as part of the bride city. Significantly, the Lord enables them to eat the *agape* meal as a citizen of the heavenly city, the bride of Christ, saying, 'If you are willing and obedient, *you shall eat the good of the land.*' Isa 1:19. In doing so, they are being delivered from bondage to fear. As the prophet Jeremiah declared, 'Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no-one shall make him afraid.' Jer 30:10.

Weariness

At times in our Christian pilgrimage, we can find ourselves feeling *weary*. Weariness is a sign that we are failing to enter God's rest. A key indicator of weariness is *stumbling*. Significantly, we are stumbling at Christ and His word. The apostle Peter noted that instead of being built on Christ as part of the wall of the bride city, He becomes to us 'a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence'. We stumble being disobedient to the word to which we were appointed. 1Pe 2:8.

Jesus' parable of the seed and grounds reveals two key impediments to entering rest, resulting in the weariness of *a son of God*. The first impediment is 'the stones' of law in our own heart. Paul described these stones as 'another law' in our person. Rom 7:23. This law is the source of our own righteousness. It is also the basis of the judgements that we make about ourselves, about others, and about the relevance of God's word to us. Notably, Jesus said that people who find no deliverance from the other law have 'no root in themselves'. He said that 'when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they *stumble*'. Mar 4:17.

A person who is receiving the word and is engaging in life through the prism of their other law is the measure of their own good and evil. In response to the word, their thoughts accuse or excuse them. Rom 2:15. This proclivity for self-assessment is marked by an inability or an unwillingness to testify of personal, marital or familial reformation in the light of the word. The stones of law within their heart impede their ability to be rooted and grounded in love. This is because their affections are contingent upon the affirmation that they receive from others, and are often informed by comparison. Paul said that those who are oriented in

this manner are not wise. 2Co 10:12. Their works are not conducted in 'the meekness of wisdom' which belongs to fellowship in the cross of Christ. Jas 3:13-14. For this reason, those likened to stony ground are easily offended and often feel victimised.

A second key impediment to entering rest, which causes weariness, includes the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things. Mar 4:19. These endeavours represent alternative yokes, or agendas, that are in competition with the works that belong to our sanctified obedience. Jesus likened these pursuits to 'thorns' that choke the word so that we become unfruitful in our expression as a son of God. Instead of bearing the fruits of the Spirit, which indicate blessing, we can become distracted and anxious and beset by the prickly passions of sin. Rom 7:5.

Stressing the fatiguing effect of these alternative agendas and interests upon a believer, Jesus said, 'But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be *weighed down* with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day [of God's judgement] come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole Earth.' Luk 21:34-35.

The impact of shame

The conversation and conduct that are characteristic of both stony ground and thorny ground are motivated by *shame*. Shame is the fruit of our failure to obtain the righteous life and expression that we desire for ourselves.

Shame was first manifest after Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Significantly, eating this fruit did not deliver to Adam and Eve a capacity or knowledge which they did not already possess in *agape* fellowship with Yahweh at the tree of life. Identifying the new knowledge that they did acquire through their disobedience, Moses wrote, 'Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and *they knew that they were naked*'. Gen 3:7. Their nakedness revealed the inadequacy of their self-definition and their vulnerability.

In response to the knowledge of their nakedness, Adam and Eve made themselves coverings by sewing fig leaves together, and they hid themselves from the fellowship of Yahweh. Gen 3:10. We know that these were actions motivated by shame, because Moses noted that, prior to the Fall, 'they were both naked, the man and his wife, *and were not ashamed*'. Gen 2:25. As a consequence of the Fall, covering oneself with figurative

fig leaves is the default initiative that every person who lives according to the flesh takes toward their life. These 'fig leaves' are projections used to cover the shame of our failing self-image.

Disappointment, discouragement, discontent and distrust when our good endeavours founder or are not affirmed by others indicate our shame. In this condition, we are being weighed down by our unfulfilled expectations and are vulnerable to the snare of sin. Although we may feel 'poorly' or 'low', this is not the bearing of a person who is 'poor in spirit'. As we will soon consider, 'poor in spirit' is the demeanour of a person who is accepting Christ's yoke and is learning from Him. In contrast, shame motivates us to recover ourselves through *penance*. These are the actions that we take to affirm our religious self-image and to assure ourselves of our acceptability before God. These actions, whether self-prescribed or defined in a pastoral encounter, are an attempt to obtain this acceptability on our own terms.

Penance is *not* repentance and, therefore, cannot lead to faith obedience and rest. The only answer is for us to turn again to the Lord and to embrace our participation in His offering and sufferings as a member of His body. With this in mind, Paul exhorted us, writing, 'Let us *lay aside every weight*, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, *despising the shame*, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.' Heb 12:1-2.

Forgetting the exhortation to sons

Unless we find deliverance from the way of shame, we will become increasingly weak and sick, and will fall spiritually asleep under the judgement of God. This is because we are unable to participate in the *agape* meal in a worthy manner, 'not discerning the Lord's body'. 1Co 11:29. This means that we cannot discriminate between the obedience that is defined by the word, and our self-righteous 'good'. In other words, we believe that what we see and understand about ourselves and our life is consistent with the word that is being proclaimed to us. This state of deception is evidenced by our lack of repentance and faith in response to the word.

Helpfully, the physical, emotional and spiritual fatigue that we feel when we live according to the flesh reveals our situation. For this reason, Paul exhorted us to examine ourselves and our condition, and to recognise that our weariness and discouragement, particularly in the midst

of suffering, is the evidence of God's judgement in our life. We are being judged in this manner because we have *forgotten* the exhortation that addresses us as sons: 'My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.' Heb 12:5-6.

Coming to Christ, the Shepherd and Overseer

Through the ministry of His word, the Lord comes to meet the weary in order to recover them to 'rest'. In this regard, we recall the invitation of Jesus, who said, 'Come to Me, all you *who labour and are heavy laden* [that is, are 'weary'], 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.

Jesus speaks these words to us as the Shepherd and Overseer of our soul. 1Pe 2:25. He is the Overseer of a royal priesthood, and the Overseer of His house, 'whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end'. Heb 3:6. As the great Shepherd of the sheep, Jesus calls each of us *by name*. Joh 10:2-5. We are led by the Shepherd as we turn from self-definition and, instead, respond in faith obedience to the word of our name. This word defines who we are in relation to Him and in relation to those who belong to His flock.

The first initiative of the Shepherd is to find us and to recover us to our sanctification. We recall that the disciples were scattered to their homes when Christ, the great Shepherd, was smitten. Our houses, in fact, are where we must respond to the word that is addressing our weariness, or stumbling, in relation to the word of the cross. Jesus Himself said, 'All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: "I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered". But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.' Mat 26:31-32.

It was on the shore of the Sea of Galilee that Jesus regathered the disciples and, in particular, called Peter to his sanctification as a shepherd of Christ's sheep. He explained that the Spirit would enable Peter to be yoked to Him, saying, 'When you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.' Joh 21:18. Later, because Peter had been yoked to Christ and had learned his sanctification from Him, he was able to direct the presbytery to this same work, writing, 'Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion

but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, *but being examples to the flock*; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away'. 1Pe 5:2-4.

Journeying with Christ

When Jesus says to us, 'Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me', He is inviting us to join His offering and suffering journey. Mat 11:29. Each wounding event in the course of His journey was a *travail* involving death, burial and resurrection. Through this travail, Christ *died to sin* as He laid down His life for us and fulfilled the works of obedience that belong to our sonship. Rom 6:10. Heb 5:8-9. Significantly, *Christ was being restored* at the end of each wound in preparation for the lesson and the multiplication of life that belonged to the next wound. Heb 12:2.

When Christ calls us to be yoked to Him, we are being delivered to a *choice*. This is the choice: 'Do you want to be a son?' The Holy Spirit who dwells *with us* brings this conviction to us. Joh 14:16-18. Joh 16:8. The response of those who are poor in spirit is, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!' Mar 9:24. This is the expression of a person who wants to be a son, but recognises their inadequacy for this calling.

In response to this request for help, the Spirit, who is our Helper, enables us to confess, 'Abba, Father'; 'You are my Father'. That is, we confess that we have a name and we have works to do in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings as a member of His body. We understand this because the Spirit, who is in us, bears witness with our spirit that we are a son of God. As a son, we are an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. We receive this inheritance as we are glorified with Him, as long as we suffer with Him in the fellowship of His travail. Rom 8:15-17. By the Spirit, we come boldly to the throne of grace where we obtain mercy and grace to bind, or yoke, us to Christ. Heb 4:16. We also receive the capacity of Eternal Spirit from the Holy Spirit to participate in the travail of Christ.

The fellowship of His death

The first implication of Christ's yoke is that we *embrace our fellowship in His death*. Christ's death has two elements, symbolised by the scapegoat and the Lord's goat, which were offered as part of one sin offering on the Day of Atonement under the Law Covenant. Lev 16:7-10.

'The scapegoat' represents the dimension of Christ's death in which sin is destroyed. In the distress and mess of life that belongs to our weariness

and discouragement, we accept our yoke to this aspect of Christ's death as we acknowledge that we are under God's judgement. As we judge ourselves this way, we are illuminated to see that Christ is dying with us under the condemnation that belongs to our sin. We begin to fear the Lord and to cease from being a victim of our circumstances. Judging ourselves this way, *we reckon ourselves dead to sin* as we acknowledge our self-righteous judgements and the pursuit of self-satisfaction that belongs to the thorns that are growing up in our life. Rom 6:11. In Christ's death, we can put these off. As we judge ourselves in this manner, our sufferings are commuted from judgement to chastening, which is bringing us to maturity as a son of the Father. 1Co 11:31-32. Heb 12:6-7.

'The Lord's goat' represents the death of emptying through which life is multiplied in the fellowship of Yahweh. This is the death that we die as the new creation, as we lay down our life, through offering, to reveal another. This expression of love is contrary to the motivation of the other law (which is self-centred) and the pursuit of the cares of this world, typified as 'thorns'. It is the expression of the seed life of which we are born. By the mercies of God, we are to present ourselves for this expression of love in the contexts of life in which the Father has placed us, including our families, the church, and the broader community. Rom 12:1-2.

The fellowship of His burial

'Burial' is the next implication of being yoked to Christ. This is the context in which we learn from Him the obedience that belongs to our sonship, and we find rest for our soul. Initially, the context of burial can feel extremely lonely and limiting. However, burial is the context in which we meet Christ, *personally*. We confess, 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death [the place of death and burial], I will fear no evil; *for You are with me*; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.' Psa 23:4.

The belly of the great fish, where the prophet Jonah found himself after he embraced his death with Christ under the judgement of God, provides a vivid picture of burial. In this place of burial, Jonah prayed, 'I went down to the moorings of the mountains; the earth with its bars closed behind me forever; yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord, my God.' Jon 2:6.

'The moorings of the mountains' refers to the lowest parts of the earth. It was here that Christ, as the substance of our sonship, fulfilled all the

works that belong to our name as a son of God. This happened on the cross during the three hours of great darkness, as He was manifest as 'I AM'. Joh 8:28. Mat 27:45. Illuminated to this great truth, King David testified, 'My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skilfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.' Psa 139:15-16.

The evidence that we have accepted our burial with Christ is that *we come to rest*. Even though our circumstances may be constraining and painful, we cease from striving for our own expression, and we accept the limits of our sanctification. We acknowledge that they have been defined by the Father and established by the Son. Abiding in these limits belongs to the blessing of our inheritance as a son of God. Our confession is, 'O Lord, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yes, I have a good inheritance.' Psa 16:5-6.

By this means, we are obtaining the testimony of Jesus, who confessed in relation to His burial, '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. You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures *forevermore*.' Psa 16:9-11. This is the confession of a person who is learning the paths of life from Christ through the word that proceeds from the presbytery in His right hand.

A person comes to rest because they have been illuminated to the hope of the resurrection. Christ is their 'living Hope'. 1Pe1:3-4. He is the One who has pioneered the pathway of their salvation and is the substance of their resurrection, spiritual body. He has now ascended to the right hand of the Father in the most holy place of Yahweh's fellowship. The Lord sets this hope as an anchor in their heart, securing them to Himself and to His finished work. As the apostle Paul declared, 'This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.' Heb 6:19-20.

When Christ becomes the Anchor of our soul, He secures us with Him in the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Anchored in this way, He remains committed to the accomplishment of His finished work in us even when we, at times, are faithless and stray from obedience.

In fact, the only way that we can be separated from the love of Christ is if we deny Him by choosing to cut ourselves off from Him and from the fellowship of the presbytery. Declaring this principle, Paul wrote, 'This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.' 2Ti 2:11-13.

Significantly, to be anchored to Christ, with the Father, in the fellowship of the Spirit, is to be secured in fellowship with our brethren. Evidently, burial is the place where we are being *rooted and grounded in love* with all the saints! Our fruitfulness as a son who has been born of God's life depends upon being established in the love of God through burial. Eph 3:17-19.

The fellowship of His resurrection

The apostle Paul declared that 'we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in *newness of life*'. Rom 6:4. The 'fruit' of Christ's death and burial is *resurrection life*. This is the capacity to fulfil the works of obedience that Christ learned for us through the things which He suffered. We can liken this life to the light of a new day in which we are to walk as we emerge from the 'evening' of our fellowship in His death and burial. We are being regenerated, and our soul is being restored. We are joined to this timeless reality of the cross because He is I AM. Joh 8:28.

The expectation of the righteous

The fellowship of Christ's travail is painful. As Paul observed, 'Now no *chastening* seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.' Heb 12:11. This can be a time of weeping that endures as though 'through the night'. However, joy comes 'in the morning'. Psa 30:5. This joy belongs to what is made *new*, which has been brought forth in our life and understanding.

The word of the messengers, which is a light to our path, reminds us that travail and restoration are to be a daily and lifelong reality for us. We note, in this regard, the words of Isaiah, who declared, '*The watchman said*, "The morning comes, and also the night. If you will inquire, inquire; Return! Come back!" ' Isa 21:12. As we have just considered, 'the night'

speaks of our fellowship in Christ's death and burial. 'The morning' is the light of a new day in which we walk by resurrection life.

As disciples, we are awakened each morning by the Spirit to hear the word of Christ as He teaches us our obedience as a son of the Father. Isa 50:4. We understand that walking in the light of this word, with Christ, is our fellowship in His death and burial. That is, our morning is followed by an evening. We are not rebellious but, in the fellowship of Christ's death, we embrace the chastening of the Lord for our peace. Moreover, we accept the blows to our reputation as fellowship in His bruising for our iniquity. Isa 50:5-6. Isa 53:5. As surely as morning follows evening, we receive the light of life for our obedience, as the dawning of a new day. This is our expectation as those who have taken Christ's yoke upon us.

The rest that we receive as we remain yoked to Christ marks the end of anxiety and of other emotions of sin that arise when we live according to the flesh. Rest belongs only to those who are properly yoked to Christ. *This yoke is the headship of Christ.* The Lord is calling every man to be yoked to Him. He is calling every woman to be yoked to Him. If we are being yoked to Christ in the order of headship, we will be properly yoked to each other in our marriage, in our family, and as a household to other households. We will be finding rest for our soul as we show forth the virtues of Him who called us out of darkness and into His marvellous light. 1Pe 2:9.

The testimony of those who are yoked to Christ is, 'The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He *makes me to lie down* in green pastures [find rest for my soul]; He leads me beside the still waters. He *restores my soul*; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.' Psa 23:1-3. This is the implication of walking with Christ in the fellowship of His travail. As King David then testified, 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil [because I fear the Lord]; for You are with me [as He was with the repentant thief]; Your [chastening] rod and Your staff, they comfort me.' Psa 23:4. Both elements of *rest* and *travail* meet in the Father's *agape* meal, which is the provision for our daily journey with Christ. Acknowledging this reality, King David further said, 'You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.' Psa 23:5-6.

Walking in this manner is the way that leads to life. Mat 7:14. It is the pathway of salvation upon which we are experiencing regeneration and

renewing, and are bringing forth the fruit of sonship. While this is necessary for each person's salvation, it is particularly important for those who preach and teach the word. The ministry of the word according to our sanctification is the fruit of our fellowship in Christ's travail. 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. This is a worthy house that is growing to firstfruits, which is the most foundational qualification for eldership.

The flesh and blood of Christ

Our fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ depends upon 'eating His flesh' and 'drinking His blood' in a 'worthy' manner. 1Co 11:27-30. Partaking of this meal is fundamental to receiving the substance of Christ's life as *exanastasis* in our mortal body 'today', and to obtaining the full inheritance of a spiritual body in the resurrection, or *anastasis*, at the last day. As Jesus Himself declared, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, *you have no life in you*. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will *raise him up at the last day*.' Joh 6:53-54.

Clearly, we must 'eat' Christ's flesh and 'drink' His blood. The question we need to answer is the very question that the Jews asked - 'How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?' Joh 6:52. We know that the food and drink that we are to consume is not the natural material that was brought forth from the womb of Mary, for this is when the Son *became our flesh*. Joh 1:14. Concerning this material, Jesus said, 'It is the Spirit who gives life; *the flesh profits nothing*. The words that I speak to you are Spirit, and they are life.' Joh 6:63.

To understand how we truly eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood, we need to ask for wisdom! Jas 1:5. This is necessary, for Paul wrote, '*I speak as to wise men*; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion [lit: fellowship, or participation] of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion [lit: fellowship, or participation] of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread. Observe Israel after the flesh: *Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?*' 1Co 10:15-18.

Christ's flesh is the bread which comes down from heaven. Joh 6:51. His blood is the cup which we drink. It is the fruit of the Vine. Joh 15:1-4. These elements, along with foot washing, belong to the *agape* meal,

which Jesus established as the first step of His journey back to the Father. Joh 13:3-5. Significantly, Paul explained that these elements of Christ's body and blood are a fellowship, or participation. More specifically, they join us to the altar, or context, of Yahweh's offering, through which Christ, the Seed, fell into the ground and died and rose again as the substance of the new humanity, having been made through this process in the image and likeness of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All three Persons of the Godhead were working together, by offering, to bring forth the new creation. We see that our ongoing participation in the *agape* meal is an implication of our baptism into the name of the Father, the name of the Son, and the name of the Holy Spirit, by which we are brought forth as new creation in the fellowship of Their offering. Mat 28:19-20.

When Christ rose from the dead, the one Seed had become a Sheaf of firstfruits full of seed for *sowing*, and also bread for *eating*! The Lord, through the prophet Isaiah, connected this 'seed' and 'bread' to the word of God, saying, 'For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. For 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. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.' Isa 55:10-13.

Earlier in this statement, Isaiah highlighted the reality that we eat bread by receiving the word of the Lord spoken by His messengers. This is fundamental to the way we live as covenant people today, and to receiving the resurrection at the last day. He said, 'Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? 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 the promise of the resurrection that will be given to us on the last day of this present age.

As we walk in the light of the word, which is seed for sowing and bread for eating, we have fellowship with the Lord and with each other, and we

are progressively manifest as new creation. The evidence of partaking of this bread and participating in the cup is that we show forth the substance of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Practically, we are changing from one degree of glory to another. Moreover, we are finding reformation in our marriages and households as part of the bride of Christ, who is proceeding from Christ.

Clearly, participation in the *agape* meal is fundamental to our fellowship in the offering of Yahweh through which we will obtain our spiritual body on the day of resurrection. It is for this reason that the apostle Paul exhorted us all, saying, 'And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.' Heb 10:24-25.

Declaring rest by the Spirit

We are able to participate in the Father's *agape* meal, and to journey with Christ in the fellowship of Yahweh's offering, *because* of baptism into the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives to us the capacity of seven Spirits, which is necessary for our participation in the intercession and travail of Yahweh's prayer fellowship. This is the context of rest and refreshing that we enter as those who are born of God and established in the community of Christ's bride, the New Jerusalem.

The rest that we have entered is expressed through the prayer language that we receive from the Holy Spirit. Paul described prayer by the capacity of the Spirit as 'groanings' that are too deep for comprehension. Rom 8:26. Through tongues, we have a participation in the intercession and travail of Yahweh's prayer fellowship. In this fellowship, we are 'edified', which means confirmed, built-up and restored. 1Co 14:4. In other words, we are refreshed and equipped to be led by the Spirit in the works of obedience that belong to our sanctification as sons of God in Christ. For this reason, Jude encouraged us to pray in the Holy Spirit, explaining that through prayer in the Spirit, we are able to build ourselves up in our most holy faith and keep ourselves in the love, or fellowship, of God. Jud 1:20-21.

Significantly, once established in this fellowship, we have a participation in the ministry of the gospel, through which others can receive the promise of the Spirit, and can enter the rest that belongs to their predestination as a son of God. Eph 1:3-6. By the Holy Spirit, in whom we have been immersed, the seven Spirits of God flow out of our hearts as

rivers of living water. Joh 7:38. This is the water of the word that brings healing and refreshing to those who receive it. Eze 47:7-12.

Prophesying of our participation in the ministry of rest and refreshing by the Spirit, Isaiah declared, ‘ “Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.” *For with stammering lips and another tongue* He will speak to this people, to whom He said, “This is the rest with which You may cause the weary to rest,” and, “This is the refreshing”.’ Isa 28:9-12.

We see that the gospel of God is proclaimed, ‘precept upon precept’ and ‘line upon line’, by those who are filled with the Spirit. They speak with stammering lips in the *weakness* of their fellowship in Christ’s travail and with other *tongues*. It is important to note that this word has a polarising effect upon every hearer. As Isaiah further proclaimed, ‘Yet they would not hear. But the word of the Lord was to them, “Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little,” that they might go and fall backward, and be broken and snared and caught.’ Isa 28:12-13.

The ministry of rest and refreshing by the Spirit, through the proclamation of the gospel of God from the bride city, was first manifest on the Day of Pentecost. On this day, 120 disciples were gathered with one accord in one place. Suddenly, there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing wind, and flames of fire rested upon them. They were filled with the Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Act 2:1-4.

Although uneducated and unable to comprehend the content of their own speech, the 120 disciples spoke of the wonderful works of God in the diversity of tongues belonging to ‘every nation under heaven’. Act 2:5-11. Marking the polarising effect of this ministry, some of those who heard the gospel spoken in their native tongue, asked, ‘Whatever could this mean?’ This marked their willingness to entreat and receive those who were speaking to them. Act 2:12. Others, however, were laughing and joking and ridiculing them, saying, ‘They are full of sweet wine and are drunk!’ Act 2:13.

We know that Peter, with the eleven apostles, then stood and declared the message of the cross to this multitude. Those with an ear to hear Peter’s message were cut to the heart. They responded to the conviction of the Spirit with repentance and faith, and about 3 000 souls were established

as disciples and fellow citizens of the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem. They were entering rest! Act 2:37-41.

Notably, the first implication of entering rest by being born again and being immersed into the name of the Father, the name of the Son and the name of the Holy Spirit through discipleship, was the hearers' participation in the four dimensions of the *agape* meal. As Luke noted in the book of Acts, 'Then those who gladly received his word were baptised; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.' Act 2:41-42.

The ministry of rest continues in and from the fellowship of the *agape* meal, by the Spirit. This rest can be proclaimed through tongues. Interestingly, Paul said that a person who speaks in tongues 'speaks mysteries'. 1Co 14:2. However, speaking in tongues only profits those who hear it, when it is ministered as a gift of prophecy accompanied by an interpretation from another. This is particularly for the benefit of an unbeliever, or an uninformed person. They are able to bear witness that God is among us when they hear the word in their own tongue, as happened on the Day of Pentecost, or when the secrets of their heart are revealed by the word. 1Co 14:23-25.

The ministry of spiritual gifts in the *agape* meal, publicly and from house to house, are a further expression of the rest and refreshing that belongs to our fellowship together in Yahweh. Paul explained that the manifestation of the Spirit through the exercise of the diversity of spiritual gifts is for *the profit of all*. 1Co 12:4-7. It is a ministry of blessing. These gifts may include words of wisdom, words of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, different kinds of tongues, and interpretation of tongues. 1Co 12:8-10. Importantly, 'one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills'. 1Co 12:11.

In this season, the Lord desires for us all to enter His rest through obedience to the word and fellowship, by the Spirit, in the offering of Yahweh. As we receive Christ's yoke upon us through a worthy participation in the *agape* meal, let us desire spiritual gifts that we might grow in our capacity for the ministry of rest and refreshing to others.

Chapter 5

The culture of godliness in the fellowship of prayer

Born of God and built on Christ

In the introduction to his first epistle, the apostle Peter described the motivation of a person who has been born again of the incorruptible seed of God's life. He said that we are motivated to believe, and then to obey, God's word, expecting that what God has promised to give us, He will do. 1Pe 1:13-19. This expectation becomes our hope and the substance of our faith. 1Pe 1:20-21. Heb 11:1. We are, by these qualities, defined as a *believer*. We demonstrate that we are a believer when we obey God's word by submitting to the Holy Spirit as He leads us and gives to us both the power and the desire to be an *obedient disciple of Christ*.

As children of God, the first command that we receive from the Father, through Christ, is that we are to purify our soul from carnality by obeying the truth through obedience to the Holy Spirit. We fulfil this obedience by joining, and then following, the Holy Spirit. This desire to be led by the Spirit has been birthed in us! Rom 8:14. As we walk by the Spirit as sons of God, we do not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. Gal 5:16. For this reason,

the apostle John declared that 'whatever is born of God overcomes the world'. 1Jn 5:4.

Everyone who is born of God, loves. 1Jn 4:7. This expression of God's divine nature is the reason why we follow the Spirit, whose love for God's people was described by Peter as 'sincere love of the brethren'. 1Pe 1:22. Notice that sincere love of the brethren is the Holy Spirit's love for God's people; it is not our determined or self-sourced expression of love for others. In order to love in this manner, we must join the *fellowship of the Spirit* where we grow as a son of God as we continue to receive this capacity from Him. Php 2:1-2. The apostle Paul emphasised this same point in his letter to the Romans. He wrote that 'hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us'. Rom 5:5. With this understanding in view, Peter directed us to 'love one another fervently with a pure heart'. 1Pe 1:22.

Peter further explained that a person who has a pure heart has laid aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and all evil speaking. This is, in fact, the inceptive response of a newborn Christian. 1Pe 2:1. Their priority is to feed on the *sincere milk of the word*, described by Paul as 'sound doctrine', and to grow as a son of God in Christ. 1Pe 2:2. 1Ti 1:10. Tit 2:1. Significantly, this is a motivation that is also native to a new-creation son of God, and an expression of their *sincere love* of the brethren which belongs to the fellowship of the Spirit. Evidently, feeding on the sincere milk of the word is a wholly relational reality that belongs to our fellowship in Christ, by the Spirit.

As we come to Christ, we are being built together as a spiritual house upon Him, our living foundation Stone. 1Pe 2:4. That is, we are living stones who are being built upon one another as a relationally-connected *community*. 1Pe 2:5. Each stone carries its own load in the house. However, each stone is dependent upon the others in the wall in order to maintain the structure and order of the house, for this house is the Lord's holy temple, the church. Peter then said that we, as a community, are also a holy priesthood whose work is to offer up spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 1Pe 2:5.

Having been established as part of a kingdom of priests, there is a Christian culture that we are to demonstrate in all of the contexts of life. This includes our attitude and conduct in the places of our employment or education. Detailing this expression, Peter said, 'Servants [employees; students], be submissive to your masters [employers; teachers] with

all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.' 1Pe 2:18-20.

The culture of Christian womanhood

Peter then highlighted that new-creation life should be evident in our families. In relation to this subject, his first point of address was to Christian wives, writing, 'Wives, *likewise*, be submissive to your own husbands'. 1Pe 3:1. Just prior to this statement, Peter had explained that Christ suffered for our sakes on His offering journey from Gethsemane to Calvary, *in obedience to the Father*. He said, '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 who judges righteously.' 1Pe 2:21-23.

By directing wives to *likewise* be submissive to their husband, they were to behave toward their husband in the same manner as Christ did to the Father! Importantly, this is a directive to *all* wives, 'that even if some [husbands] do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear'. 1Pe 3:1-2.

The apostle Paul also addressed the conduct of Christian women in their houses and in the church. Whether they are married or not, he said that their behaviour is to be proper, demonstrating that they are women who are professing godliness with, and through, good works. 1Ti 2:10. Significantly, Paul did not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man. This directive applied to a woman's conduct in the church, as well as to the conduct of a wife in her house. In the same way that Peter directed a wife to conduct herself 'without a word', Paul instructed women 'to be in silence'. 1Ti 2:12.

To 'be in silence' does not mean that a woman says nothing in the house; or that she is seen but not heard. Rather, it means that she should not usurp the God-given authority of her husband in the house by presuming to instruct him on what he should, or should not, be doing as a husband and a father. As Peter said, this applies whether the husband is being obedient to the word or not.

When a woman conducts herself in godliness, she has an excellent and essential expression which overflows in testimony to others. As King Solomon declared, 'She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness ... give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates.' Pro 31:26,31. This communication is not based on her perception of good and evil, which is sourced from her own law. Rather, it is the expression of the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is sourced from the incorruptible seed of God's divine life. 1Pe 3:4. 1Pe 1:23.

A Christian woman honours and promotes the order of grace in the church and in her household. By this means, she cultivates fruitfulness in the family through offering. With this profession of godliness in view, Paul instructed women who are maturing in their sonship, saying, 'The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behaviour, not slanderers, not given to much wine, *teachers of good things* - that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.' Tit 2:3-5.

The carnal expression of a woman in a marriage and a household was exemplified by Sarai's endeavour to obtain a child for herself by means of a surrogate. She instructed Abram, saying, 'See now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps *I shall obtain children by her.*' Gen 16:2. Abram doubted the Lord and His word by heeding the voice of Sarai. The fruit of this endeavour was a child who was born according to the flesh. Relational distress and disharmony flourished in the house. Gen 16:4,6.

There was a marked change in Sarah's expression in the house after she received a new name through *El Shaddai's* initiative towards Abraham, and they began to walk blamelessly together. Gen 17:1-16. Notably, it was Sarah who initiated the removal of the carnal culture from their house, personified by Ishmael and Hagar. She said to Abraham, 'Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac.' Gen 21:10. We know that this statement was very displeasing to Abraham; however, God said to him, 'Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, *listen to her voice*; for in Isaac your seed shall be called.' Gen 21:12. We also note that Sarah freed Isaac to go with his father, Abraham, to Moriah to participate in the fellowship of offering.

Women will find grace to be fruitful if they continue in faith, love and sanctification, with self-control. 1Ti 2:15. A woman is able to conduct herself in this manner, being clothed with the virtues of godliness and self-control, and being free from anxiety, *because of her faith*. 1Pe 3:6. It is interesting to note that Peter applied this principle particularly to a wife whose husband is disobedient in attitude toward the Father, and does not submit himself to Christ as the Head of his family. In this situation, if a woman conducts herself as a Christian, then Satan is unable to take advantage over her, or over her children, as they walk in faith with her. Her house remains an expression of the Christian community because of her faith and virtue, for she is not driven by anxiety and fear. 1Pe 3:6.

If this reality is true for a woman who has a disobedient and difficult husband, how much more should this principle apply to a woman who has a *believing* husband. We note, in this regard, a tendency of some women to take advantage of their husband's commitment to the word, presuming to instruct him under the guise of fellowship in the word. However, Peter and Paul were clear that *every Christian wife* should have the same self-controlled virtue that can demonstrate godliness with good works, without usurping the headship of her husband.

The culture of Christian manhood

Having addressed the culture of Christian womanhood and, in particular, the conduct of believing wives, Peter then attended to the conversation and conduct of believing husbands. He directed them, saying, 'Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honour to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.' 1Pe 3:7.

To 'dwell with understanding' does not mean that a man patronises his wife or compensates for her. Rather, it means that a husband gives himself to meet and relate to his wife *by offering*. We know this because Christ's offering journey is called, in the Scriptures, 'the way of understanding'. Prov 21:16. Isa 40:14. Offering is the action of love which is demonstrated by laying down one's life to reveal another. A man lays down his life in offering for his wife as the vessel of headship. How does a Christian man do this?

Describing the love that a man should have for his wife, Paul said, 'Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her ... husbands ought to love their own wives as their

own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no-one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.' Eph 5:25,28-29. A man nourishes his own person by receiving and eating the bread which comes down from heaven. Luk 4:4. The daily request for this bread is a key focus of a man's prayer. Mat 6:11. As the head of his wife, he then nourishes and cherishes her as they, together, devotionally consider the word of present truth and its implications for their marriage and their household. In so doing, the word of the Lord is established as the agenda of the house.

Oriented in this manner, a man honours his wife as 'the weaker vessel'. A woman's weakness is not referring to a physical inferiority to men but, rather, to her unique connection to *travail*. This association between weakness and the travail through which something is brought forth and multiplied, was exemplified by Jesus. As the apostle Paul noted, 'For though He was crucified in *weakness*, yet He lives by the power of God'. 2Co 13:4. Christ's crucifixion was the culminating event of His *travailing* journey from Gethsemane through which one Seed became a great multitude of seeds in one Sheaf of firstfruits. 1Co 15:20.

The apostle Paul instructed Timothy to teach men everywhere to take the initiative in prayer, both in the church as well as in their homes. They are to pray within the boundaries of their sanctification, surrendering their lives, and those for whom they care, to Christ. They are to deal with the issues that they confront in their households, and in the world, through prayer, without anger and disputing. 1Ti 2:8. This is the implication of their submission to the headship of Christ.

King David exemplified the prayer of a man who was forsaking wrath and doubting, and was submitting himself to the lordship of Christ in the midst of familial distress. In response to the rebellion of his son, Absalom, which was the fruit of his own sin, David prayed, 'Lord, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me. Many are they who say of me, "There is no help for him in God". But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head. I cried to the Lord with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill.' Psa 3:1-4.

Overcoming the spirit of disobedience

When a man or a woman defaults in relation to their sanctification, a *spirit of disobedience* gains traction in their life and in their family. This spirit was manifest when Eve brought the fruit of the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil to Adam. Perceiving it to be good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise, she ate the fruit and then presumed to minister this word to her husband. Gen 3:6-7. For Adam, the outcome of eating this fruit, as he looked into the face of his wife, was that he rose up and ruled over her in anger and dispute. Gen 3:16. This is an illustration of the influence that comes from Satan, who is 'the prince of the power of the air'. Furthermore, it illustrates how the spirit of disobedience works in those who are Satan's children, whom Paul called 'the sons of disobedience'. Eph 2:2.

In a family, a woman with this same attitude, or spirit, is driven by fear and anxiety. She believes that she needs to take control of her life and of her household. Through the three elements of the knowledge of good and evil – that is, what appears to be pleasing in her sight; what she believes is the food for the family; and her own wisdom – the woman determines to know all the details of her circumstances so that she can allay her anxiety and bring a resolution to every matter. She does this by feeding this information to her husband so that he will become the servant of her initiatives and of her motherhood in the household.

However, when her husband does not submit to her initiative or he reacts against it, she feels that she is not loved. From her perspective, the romantic ideal of their home has been compromised. The woman is not demonstrating faith, for the word that comes from her is sourced from the wrong tree. She has taken hold of this word because of fear and anxiety. The woman reacts as the victim of the circumstance, demonstrating that she does not trust the Lord or her husband. As a consequence, she withdraws to an independent and alienated position. Regrettably, this dynamic is apparent in many families. However, this is not 'the faith of Sarah'; nor is it the culture of the house of Abraham. Isa 51:2. It is not the way in which a Christian household lives.

A particular expression of the spirit of disobedience is the *spirit of Jezebel*. This spirit is manifest in a church when the wife of a leader who has usurped his authority in their house presumes to bring direction and give instruction in the church. Jesus rebuked the presbytery in Thyatira for allowing a woman called Jezebel to teach and seduce His servants through this unsanctified speech. Professing to be a prophetess, her alternative 'gospel' promoted the acceptability of mixture in families and in the church under the guise of Christian love. It was not 'the bread of sincerity and truth' belonging to the true Feast of Passover, but was

another food altogether; it was a message celebrating self-righteousness, sophistication and idolatry. Rev 2:20. 1Co 5:8-9.

Jezebel loved the projection of her own style of motherhood. Her self-image was not godliness; it belonged to the spirit of harlotry. Christ brought a word to her through His messengers and, in mercy, gave her time to repent. However, she did not repent. Under the judgement of Christ, she became physically sick. Many other disasters came upon her and upon those who maintained her same attitude and opinions. Finally, her children fell away from Christ and died under the judgement of God. Rev 2:20-23.

Jezebel was not a woman of faith. Her husband had also defaulted in relation to faith, and was culpable for the destructive effect of his wife's influence in his house and in the church. Faith comes only by hearing the word of God; and this word does not come from the woman. Rom 10:17. 1Ti 2:11-12. Faith is a *gift* that comes with the word of God through the order of headship, and it enables obedience. Faith gives to us the freedom to choose to believe the word of truth. Accompanying this choice is the capacity to see the will of God accomplished as we do the works that Christ has already finished for us through His offering and suffering journey.

The importance of prayer

At the present time, through the ministry of the Spirit, Christ is impressing upon us the importance of our participation in *prayer*. Prayer is the intercession and travail that belongs to the covenant fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim*. In short, *intercession* is the dialogue of prayer involving the expression, or communication, of one's name. *Travail* is the expression of 'giving-love' that proceeds from this discussion through the action of offering. These two dimensions of prayer, which are enabled by the Holy Spirit, are the means by which the covenant purpose of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is accomplished.

Our fellowship in the intercession and travail of Yahweh's prayer, which is possible only by the capacity that we receive from the Holy Spirit, is corporate *and* individual. Both of these contexts of prayer are necessary for our participation in the fulfilment of God's purpose and will for us as individuals, as households, and as communities of believers. For this reason, Paul exhorted his readers, saying, 'Rejoice always, *pray without ceasing*, in everything give thanks; *for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you*'. 1Th 5:16-18.

Prayer as a worthy house

Addressing a key focus of prayer for believing men and believing women, Paul wrote, 'I desire therefore that the men *pray everywhere* [or without ceasing], [by] lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; *in like manner also*, that the women [pray everywhere by] adorning themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women *professing godliness, with good works.*' 1Ti 2:8-10.

We see that a man proceeds from the intercession of prayer by the Spirit by lifting up holy, or sanctified, hands without wrath or doubting. This is his participation in the prayer travail of Yahweh. In the same way, a woman proceeds from the intercession of prayer by the Spirit through the expression of the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, professing godliness through good works. This is her participation in the prayer travail of Yahweh. The point to note is that we *pray everywhere* through our individual sanctification by the Spirit; by how we relate to one another in our households; and then by how we relate from house to house. *The travail of prayer is fundamental to, and demonstrated by, the culture and expression of a worthy house.*

To participate in this travail as a household, each person in the family must respond individually to the word of the cross. If they do not resist the Spirit of grace and supplication that accompanies this message, they are caused to look upon Christ whom they have pierced through their fallen, carnal, religious expression in the household. Each individual in a house is able to mourn and grieve for their impact upon Christ, as one mourns for a Firstborn Son.

Summarising the repentant response to the word of the cross as families and as individuals, the prophet Zechariah declared, 'And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. And the land shall mourn, every family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of Shimei by itself, and their wives by themselves; all the families

that remain, every family by itself, and their wives by themselves.’
Zec 12:10-14.

This ‘godly sorrow’ leads to repentance and to the expression of faith obedience that belongs to the household of Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth are blessed. 2Co 7:10. Gen 28:14. It is this repentance and faith that a man presents to his wife and family, and that a wife presents to her husband and family, as a foundational expression of fellowship in the travail of prayer. That is, repentance and faith are the basis of the conversation and conduct of prayer by the Spirit in a worthy house.

This reformed conversation and conduct will involve a man submitting himself to the lordship of Christ through obedience to the word of God that proceeds from the fellowship of the presbytery, and establishing offering as the cultural basis of his life and household. It will involve a woman submitting to her husband in the fear of the Lord and professing godliness with good works, without presuming to instruct her husband on the form of conduct she believes he must demonstrate to ensure the viability and security of their home. Families that fail to respond to the word in this manner inevitably become ‘a fortress’ wherein the word has little or no effect.

Prayer in the light of the prophetic word

The Holy Spirit is urging men and women to apply themselves to the cultural reformation of their marriages and households. As we have been considering, this reformation belongs to, and is necessary for, sanctified prayer. The Spirit is pressing us in this manner so that we will be counted worthy to escape the judgement of God that will come upon the whole Earth in the time of the end. With this in mind, we note that, having nominated the signs that signal the time of the end, Jesus said to His disciples, ‘*Watch* therefore, and *pray always* that you may be *counted worthy* to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.’ Luk 21:36.

As we mentioned in Chapter 3, the Holy Spirit is not only the source and capacity of our prayer; He also makes known to us the prophetic Scriptures that apply to the times and seasons in which we live. Accordingly, it is important that we register the Holy Spirit’s ongoing insistence upon our consideration of Jesus’ parable of the wise and foolish virgins. Clearly, the midnight hour is upon us, for we are presently hearing the Spirit’s declaration, ‘Behold, the Bridegroom

is coming.’ Mat 25:6. We know that this is what the Spirit is saying because of the present emphasis in the word that is calling for cultural reformation in our marriages and families. This is the appeal, through the ministry of Elijah, for households who belong to the bride of Christ to be made worthy and to grow to firstfruits as part of a network of worthy houses who are ready for the coming of the Bridegroom.

It is notable that all ten women in this parable were identified by Jesus as ‘virgins’. That is, they were believers who belonged to the virgin bride of Christ. The distinction between the wise and foolish virgins was evident in their responses to the word of the Elijah ministry calling them to be ready for the coming of the Bridegroom. Clearly, there was a group of believers who were foolish, being slow to respond to this prophetic ministry. In contrast, there was a group of believers who were responsive to this message, who applied themselves, through faithful prayer, to the reformation of their marriages and families, and who were therefore able to join this ministry.

We are counted worthy to escape the judgement of God in the time of the end because we are responding to what the Spirit is saying ‘Today’, with mourning, repentance and faith, as the Lord comes among the unclean daughters of Zion in a spirit of judgement and burning. Heb 3:7. Isa 4:1,4. Those who *apply themselves* to the intercession and travail of prayer that belongs to cultural reformation in their houses are coming every day, by the Spirit, to the throne of grace. This is the judgement seat of Christ. Here, they obtain mercy and grace to remain connected to Christ as they are led by the Spirit in the fellowship of Christ’s offering and sufferings. Heb 4:16. Coming to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and grace for fellowship in the travail of prayer does not happen by default. It is an action of faith taken by those who are walking according to the Spirit. This faithful obedience is characteristic of a wise virgin.

In this fellowship, priested to us from the throne by Christ, our great High Priest, we are being delivered from the delusion that is associated with eating our own food (our own gospels and interpretations of the word) and wearing our own apparel (our self-defined expression). Those who are not availing themselves of this deliverance remain deluded as they identify themselves as belonging to Christ (being called by His name) and presume that their reproach is taken away through His vicarious offering on the cross. They cannot be disciplined. This is manifest by their unwillingness to embrace their fellowship in the offering and sufferings

of Christ, particularly in relation to the sanctification and culture of their families. Isa 4:1.

Without deliverance from the presumption to eat their own food and to wear their own apparel, a person will be surprised when the Father takes His seat and they are unable to enter the wedding feast. As Jesus said, 'Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, "*Lord, Lord*, open to us!" But he answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, *I do not know you*".' Mat 25:11-12. We note the similarity of this account with Jesus' statement, 'Many will say to Me in that day, "*Lord, Lord*, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders *in Your name*?" [presuming to be called by His name as part of the virgin bride of Christ] And then I will declare to them, "*I never knew you*; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness"!' Mat 7:22-23.

Prayer travail of the bride

Households becoming worthy *through prayer* is *necessary* for their fellowship from house to house as part of the bride of Christ, and for obtaining a double portion of oil as part of a 'wise-virgin' company. Mat 25:6-8. This is important to recognise, for we are unable to meet in the fellowship of the Spirit without sanctification in our households, including in our marriages and extended families.

A local network of worthy houses, described in the Scriptures as an 'elect lady', will be praying together as part of a *travailing bride*. Rev 12:1-2. The bride of Christ is presently praying by the Spirit in this manner, travelling to bring forth a 'manchild'. Rev 12:2,5-6. This manchild is a presbytery composed of twenty-four thrones around the throne of the Father, and the 144 000 firstfruits remnant. Through this administration, the Father's will is accomplished on Earth, and the seventh world kingdom is judged. Rev 4:4-5. Mat 6:9-10.

The first phase of this 'manchild' is the restoration of a presbytery administration in this day, who have been established in one Spirit and one faith. This administration is suitable for the fullness of the times because it is restored to first love and has obtained an understanding of the mystery of God. It is able to effectively minister the word of grace to the body of Christ to equip every member for the work of the ministry of the gospel from a network of worthy houses. Eph 4:11-12. Through the proclamation of the mystery of God, this company of worthy houses are able to make disciples of '*all nations*'.

The ministry and prayer of the presbytery

In Chapter 3, we explained that the work of messengers who belong to the fellowship of a presbytery is to make known, by the Spirit, the mystery of God. That is, they are declaring the details of Yahweh's covenant purpose, which is to make men in the image and likeness of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the revelation of the name of the Father, the name of the Son and the name of the Holy Spirit. Jesus charged His disciples with this labour, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on Earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Mat 28:18-20.

Writing to the church in Ephesus, and with this commission in view, the apostle Paul outlined *the prayer focus of a presbytery*. Like Paul, every presbyter is to bow their knee in prayer, asking that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ would give to those whom they address, wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; *that is the mystery of God*. Eph 3:14. They are making this mystery clear, ministering in the spirit and power of Elijah, so that their hearers in the church do not remain foolish virgins, but obtain the wisdom and understanding that belongs to the expression of a double portion of oil as wise virgins.

This will require that every hearer is strengthened with might in their spirit and soul (their inner man) through the Holy Spirit, who empowers Christ's messengers with the seven Spirits of God for this ministry. The inner man of a hearer is strengthened for the purpose that Christ, who is the express image of the Father's Person (i.e. the One who reveals and gives the Father to us) may dwell in their heart through faith. By this means, they can be rooted and grounded in love so that they may see and apprehend the love of Christ that passes all knowledge, and that they may be filled with the fullness of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Eph 3:16-19. Once a person is filled in this manner, the fullness of God, which is the seven Spirits of God, is able to *overflow* from them as 'rivers of living water'! Joh 7:38-39.

The work of Christ's presbytery administration, which is presently seven stars in His right hand, and which will move to twenty-four thrones around the throne of the Father, is to give this knowledge and fellowship to the saints as *a double portion of oil*. Here is a key point.

THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT

The *first* portion of oil is receiving the initiative of God *towards us*. The *second* portion of oil is manifest when this ministry *flows from us*.

As a presbytery, we are presently receiving instruction from Christ, through the Spirit, concerning the steps of salvation. As we apply ourselves to this instruction, Christ, through the Spirit, is granting to us an understanding of the mystery of God, which is the revelation of the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of adoption.

As we noted earlier, the bride is to be in travail for the establishment of this ministry. Like Paul, as a presbytery, we are asking those who belong to 'elect ladies' to be '*praying always* [as worthy houses] with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit [intercession and travail], being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints - and for us [the presbytery], that utterance may be given to us that we may open our mouths boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel', and may be the administration that is suitable for the fullness of the times. Eph 1:10. Eph 6:18-19.