The pilgrimage of the more excellent way

VICTOR HALL
WITH PETER HAY AND DAVID BAKER

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Victor Hall
with Peter Hay and David Baker

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Section One

The pilgrimage of the more excellent way

- The psalmist declared, 'Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose heart is set on pilgrimage … they go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion'. Psa 84:5,7. The heart of a son of God is set on pilgrimage as they walk in the light of the word of present truth as a disciple of Christ. The pilgrimage of a disciple of Christ is from strength to strength, or from virtue to virtue, as they walk on the pathway that Christ has pioneered for them.

- Our pilgrimage in the light of the word of present truth is from 'faith to faith'. Rom 1:17. In the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, we are being transformed from one degree of glory to another. 2Co 3:18. We read in the book of Proverbs that 'the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day'. Pro 4:18. For a son of God, the perfect day is the end of their mortal pilgrimage when they inherit the glory of their heavenly body.

- As a man who had his heart set on pilgrimage, the apostle Paul testified, 'Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.' Php 3:12. Paul explained that there are levels of attainment as a disciple of Christ. Php 3:13-15. A maturing son of God will be satisfied at each stage of their journey; while at the same time, they will recognise the need to keep pressing on to the end of their pilgrimage.

- Earlier in his letter to the Philippians, the apostle Paul said, 'This I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and

all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent [lit. distinguish between the things that differ], that you may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.' Php 1:9-11. As we mature as sons of God, we grow in our capacity to distinguish between the good, the better, and the best.

The limitation of our sight

- When we first received the call to return to first love, just over fifty years ago, we responded to the word with repentance and faith to the degree that we could see what the Lord was saying to us. We know that there were also many people who clave to the word with deceit as a source of empowerment. The outcome of the first time of the word was a collegial presbytery and church mergers. However, in the middle of that dysfunction, there was also good fruit produced in the lives of those who had a heart that was set on pilgrimage.

- In the first time of the word, we endeavoured to do the will of God as we understood it. We walked in the light of what we believed to be 'good' at that time. However, as we reflect on the nature of our pilgrimage, we recognise that our obedience was flawed because our sight was limited. We still had a sacramental view of the communion because we did not understand the fellowship of the *agape* meal. Similarly, we did not have house-to-house fellowship as a lampstand church because we did not understand the importance of becoming worthy houses.

- We rejoice that the word of present truth has continued to bring illumination to us so that we can now walk in the light of what is 'better' as a presbytery and lampstand church. However, we recognise that we have not yet attained to what is the 'best'. The 'best' will be revealed in the time of the end by the one world-wide presbytery around the Father's throne, and the one lampstand administration before the Father's throne, that will proclaim the gospel of the kingdom as a testimony in all nations.

- In addition to the limitation of our sight, we also recognise that our eye has not been 'single' because of the mixed motivations in our heart. We are still carnal to the degree that we are motivated by self-interest. As we have been considering in this present season, our fundamental human infirmity is that we think that we understand our motives. However, we cannot see the carnal motivations that reside in our heart until they are revealed to us by the illumination and conviction of the Holy Spirit.

- When the word of present truth is proclaimed to us, it is the illumination and conviction of the Holy Spirit that enables us to turn to see Christ eye to eye. We recall that Peter met Christ eye to eye in the court of Caiaphas after He had been bruised for our iniquity. When Peter met Christ in this way, he was delivered from his religious zealotry. He began to mourn with godly sorrow that leads to repentance. This produced a new kind of zeal in his life as a disciple of Christ, which was the fruit of his repentance.

The chastening of Christ

- Our carnal motivations continue to be circumcised from our heart in the fellowship of Christ's seven wounding events for the duration of our earthly pilgrimage. The way of the cross is called 'the circumcision of Christ'. Col 2:11. In addition to the circumcision of Christ, we also have a participation in the chastening of Christ. In contrast to the circumcision of Christ, which is focused on the removal of the flesh, the chastening of Christ is focused on the new creation. The Father's chastening in our lives is focused on our maturity and sanctification as sons of God.

- In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul compared the chastening of a human father toward their son and the chastening of God the Father toward His sons. He said, 'Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they [human fathers] indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit [as sons of God], that we may be partakers of His holiness.' Heb 12:9-10.

- The fruit of the Father's chastening in our lives as sons of God is our growing awareness of our sanctification, which is accompanied by our growing capacity to discern the difference between the good, the better, and the best. Receiving understanding through chastening is an essential part of our pilgrimage as a disciple of Christ. Paul continued by saying that '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 [discipled] by it'. Heb 12:11.

- The word that proceeds from the mouth of God is the bread from heaven. The bread from heaven is the hidden manna which is the specific works that have been appointed by the Father for us to do. Jesus said to His disciples, 'I have food to eat of which you do not know … My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.' Joh 4:32-34. The proceeding word of God is the food that has the capacity and energy in it,

which enables us to do the works that Christ has already accomplished for us each day.

- The love of God is directed towards our sanctification and the revelation of our name. Every day, in response to the initiative of God's love towards us, we need to choose to make straight paths for our feet because our pilgrimage is from faith to faith, and we are being changed from glory to glory. Rom 1:17. 2Co 3:18. We need to distinguish between the good, the better, and the best. The pathway of sanctification is the more excellent way. As we continue to choose the more excellent way, we are progressively revealing the glory of the Father as sons of God. Paul said that the fruit of sonship that is produced in us, in the fellowship of Christ's offering, is to the glory and praise of God. Php 1:11.

- The more excellent way is a fellowship of offering *in which one reveals another*. We clearly see this principle of *one revealing another* when we consider the offering journey of Jesus, as the Son of Man, from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. On this journey, the Father progressively glorified Jesus, as the Son of Man, with His own intrinsic glory as Yahweh the Son. Joh 12:23. The Father's focus was the revelation of Yahweh the Son's name. At the same time, the Son's focus, as He offered Himself to the Father, for the purpose of bringing many sons to glory, was the revelation of the Father's name. Joh 12:28.

- As sons of God, who have been born of the Spirit, Jesus likened us to branches who are connected to Him as the root of the Vine. Joh 15:1. He said, 'Without Me you can do nothing'. Joh 15:5. When we do the works of our sonship each day, we are revealing Christ because He is the One who has learned our obedience and already completed our works. We do not reveal ourselves. However, as we reveal Christ, our name is seen because the works of our sonship belong to our name. Furthermore, the works of our sonship reveal the name and glory of the Father. Jesus said, 'By this *My Father is glorified*, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.' Joh 15:8.

The good, acceptable, and perfect will of God

- Evangelical theology seeks to exploit the mercy of the Father by limiting it to forgiveness from the judgement of the Law, without recognising that His mercy recovers us to our predestination as sons of God. The mercy of God has granted us a participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. The resurrection life of Christ that we are receiving in our mortal bodies enables us to present ourselves to God as 'a living sacrifice' each day. Rom 12:1. In the fellowship of the cross, we have been given a

participation in the circumcision of Christ, the chastening of Christ, and the travail of Christ which is birthing the divine nature in us.

- How do we walk as pilgrims on the more excellent way? We present ourselves to God as a living sacrifice each day so that we can prove what is the 'good and acceptable [well pleasing] and perfect will of God'. Rom 12:2. It is only as we continue to present ourselves for fellowship, which is our offering to God, that we can continue to walk on the pathway from the good to the better to the best. This is the only way that it can be achieved! At each point on the journey, we need to keep choosing the better, or more excellent way, so that we continue walking in the light of the word of present truth toward the best. The best is the perfect will of God.

Knowledge, wisdom, and understanding

- The book of Proverbs describes the progression from the good, to the better, to the best by describing how we receive knowledge, learn wisdom, and then find understanding. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Pro 1:7. The book of Proverbs describes the fool who despises the Lord's word, but they presume to seek the Lord when they are in a crisis. The Lord says, 'Then they will call on Me, but I will not answer; they will seek Me diligently, but they will not find Me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD.' Pro 1:28-29.

- Knowledge is the outcome of choosing the fear of the Lord. We demonstrate that we have received knowledge when we cease trying to be the source of our own name and works. We recognise the sovereignty of God in relation to our identity and sonship. When we possess this knowledge, we will present ourselves for discipleship by the presbytery so that we receive instruction in relation to our sanctification. The instruction that we receive regarding our sanctification is wisdom from above. It is the 'instruction of wisdom'. Pro 1:3.

- The instruction of wisdom enables us to discern the more excellent way on the pathway of our pilgrimage. Notably, the focus of our discipleship is to learn what it means to abide in the fellowship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This fellowship is the kingdom of God. As we learn the culture of the kingdom of God, we are gaining understanding. Understanding is the fellowship of Yahweh. The wise man explained that 'the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding'. Pro 9:10. Likewise, the apostle John declared that 'the Son of God has come to give us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.' 1Jn 5:20.

- We need to incline our ear to wisdom so that we can also apply our heart to gaining understanding. We demonstrate that we are gaining understanding as sons of God because we are growing in our capacity to participate in the fellowship of Yahweh. The fellowship of Yahweh is a fellowship of offering and worship. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit make offering, by the capacity of Eternal Spirit, for the purpose of revealing each Other and accomplishing Their covenant purpose. Offering is the expression of Their faith which works by love.

- The fruit of this fellowship of offering *is worship* because the name and sanctification of each Person in the Godhead is revealed and glorified. During his three-day and three-night journey to Mount Moriah, Abraham expressed faith for participation in the fellowship of Yahweh when he declared, 'The lad and I will go yonder *and worship*, and we will come back to you.' Gen 22:5. Abraham's participation in the fellowship of Yahweh on Mount Moriah demonstrated that he had *gained understanding*.

Seek first the kingdom of God

- When the messengers in the right hand of Christ proclaim the word of present truth to us, by the Holy Spirit, the kingdom of God is brought near to us. It is an invitation to join the fellowship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Speaking as a messenger of Christ, the apostle John declared, 'That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.' 1Jn 1:3.

- Jesus highlighted the imperative for every son of God to keep choosing this fellowship by saying, 'Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.' Mat 6:33. Jesus instructed us to seek first the kingdom of God because it is a choice. Seeking first the kingdom of God is the same as choosing the more excellent way. We seek first the kingdom of God by continually presenting ourselves for discipleship in the fellowship that belongs to the kingdom of God.

- The outcome of seeking first the kingdom of God is the blessing of peace upon our house. The blessing of peace demonstrates that we are learning to abide in the fellowship of Yahweh. The evidence of the blessing of peace upon our house will be an increasing capacity for fellowship in our marriage, in our family, in our extended family, and from house to house in our local congregation. Significantly, a house of peace has been delivered from the power of familiar spirits. Satan has no access to a house of peace. A house of peace cannot be cursed.

- When we are properly connected to the fellowship of the kingdom of God, then we will be receiving grace for the works of our sonship each day. The righteousness of God will be revealed by us from faith to faith. Rom 1:17. The righteousness of faith is expressed through the works of our name that belong to our sonship. In addition to the grace that is necessary for us to live as sons of God, the Lord will also supply what is necessary to meet our human needs as sons of men during our earthly pilgrimage in this present world. Jesus said, 'All these things will be added to you.' Mat 6:33.

- In relation to our pilgrimage as a disciple of Christ, we must continue to choose the more excellent way, all the way to the end of our pilgrimage. In this regard, the way that we finish the race is far more important than the way that we begin the race. Jesus declared, 'He who endures to the end shall be saved.' Mat 24:13. It is sobering to consider that King Solomon was the wisest man who has ever lived, and yet in his old age, the multitude of his wives turned his heart to the worship of idols. Despite the wisdom that he had demonstrated during his kingship, he did not proceed to gain understanding. Rather, he stumbled backwards into idolatry and died under the judgement of God. 1Ki 11:1-10.

- The apostle Paul recognised the possibility of losing his salvation if he did not keep walking as a disciple of Christ until the end of his life. He wrote to the Corinthians, 'I discipline my body and bring it into subjection [I keep presenting my body as a living sacrifice], lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified [castaway]'. 1Co 9:27. He proclaimed his faith to keep walking as a pilgrim on the more excellent way until his dying breath, by saying, 'I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind [the good] and reaching forward to those things which are ahead [the better], I press toward the goal of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus [the best].' Php 3:13-14.

Section Two

The significance of the second time

- The word regarding the restoration of a lampstand church was first delivered to us fifty years ago. During *the first time* of this word, it was received by many leaders from various denominations and doctrinal traditions who professed a faith for a presbytery and a city-wide communion. However, many of those same leaders maintained a collegial mode in the presbytery and an independent clergy mode among their own outreaches.
- Although many of the leaders recognised that there was ascension-gift grace in the presbytery, they were unwilling to let go of their former gospels and walk in the light of the word of present truth. They selectively received the word as a resource to service their own ministry agendas. Most notably, they did not personally respond to the word with repentance and faith. The lack of personal response by many of these leaders was demonstrated by the dysfunction within their own marriage and household.
- In the present season, the word regarding the restoration of a lampstand church is being proclaimed to us *a second time* because the time for its fulfilment is upon us. In contrast to the first time, when the word was initially proclaimed to leaders from various denominations, the word is now being proclaimed directly to every household. The Lord is sending His messengers to look for worthy houses. We will inherit the word on lampstand church *the second time* upon the foundation of worthy houses.

- The beginning of restoration for every individual and household is to receive the gospel of God that is proclaimed by the Holy Spirit through the messengers in the right hand of Christ. This is not merely an application to the theology of the gospel of God, but, more importantly, to its cleansing and sanctifying work in a person's life, marriage, and family. A household that is receiving the cleansing and sanctifying impact of the word is a worthy house and will become a house of peace.

- A house of peace is a household that has been joined to the fellowship of Yahweh, through the ministry of Christ's messengers. 1Jn 1:4. We are reminded that Jesus said to the twelve disciples, 'If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it'. Mat 10:13. A house of peace will be a place of fellowship. It is characterised by fellowship between husband and wife, fellowship between parents and children, fellowship with the presbytery, and fellowship with other houses in the church.

- In this season of the second time, the Lord is emphasising that a presbytery must grow from houses of peace. The apostle Paul said to Timothy, 'If anyone has not known how to lead his own house, how will he take care of an assembly of God?' 1Ti 3:5. LSV. This does not mean that a leader will have no problems in his own house. However, each leader should have an easy and open confession and testimony within the presbytery of the cleansing and processing effect of the word in his own life, marriage and household.

The time for its fulfilment is near

- It is important to understand that when the word is proclaimed a second time, it means that the time for its fulfilment is near. There are many examples of this principle in the Scripture. For example, the prophetic word regarding Joseph's rulership was not fulfilled during *the first time* of his life and ministry. Rather, he was sold by his brothers to slave traders who were on their way to Egypt. The first time of the word resulted in a phase of suffering for Joseph in Egypt which is a symbol of the world.

- The psalmist described the key lesson that we learn from Joseph when he said, 'Until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the Lord tested him'. Psa 105:19. This is an important principle. The word of the Lord always has a time that has been appointed for it to come to pass. The word that is proclaimed on the first time is not inherited until the second time. Furthermore, the period between the first and second time is *the trial of faith*.

- The trial of faith is the season of our fellowship in the sufferings of Christ in which the faith of the Son of God, which we receive through the word of faith, produces the virtue of Christ in our lives. The fruit of the trial of faith, which is the formation of Christ in our lives, is more precious than gold. 1Pe 1:6-7. In relation to the word on lampstand churches, the last fifty years have been a trial of faith where the word of the Lord has tried us for the purpose of *reforming our culture* so that it is consistent with the fellowship of Yahweh.

- Notably, it was the two prophetic dreams of Pharaoh that initiated the fulfilment of the second time for Joseph. When Joseph interpreted the dreams, he said, 'The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has shown Pharaoh *what He is about to do*.' Gen 41:25. Furthermore, he said, 'The dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God, and *God will shortly bring it to pass*.' Gen 41:32. This statement highlights the second time principle. That is, the one word of God is fulfilled by God in the second time.

- The Lord is now proclaiming the word on lampstand churches a second time because we presently live in the latter phase of the seventh world kingdom. We are fast approaching the time when the Father will take His seat to judge the seventh world kingdom and establish His kingdom on the earth. When the Father takes His seat, it will initiate all the events that belong to the time of the end. Christ is presently restoring the administration of presbyteries and lampstand churches in every nation because it is the only administration that is suitable for the fullness of times.

Faith for resurrection life

- When the word of God is proclaimed a second time, it is also the opportunity for restoration through faith for resurrection life. The account of the Shunamite woman is a good example of this principle. When Elisha first proclaimed to the woman that she would have a son, she did not believe him. 2Ki 4:16. She responded by saying to the messenger, 'No, my lord. Man of God, do not lie to your maidservant!' 2Ki 4:16. Nevertheless, the woman conceived and bore a son at the time appointed by Elisha.

- Significantly, this child was born according to the faith of the messenger. The child was not born according to the woman's faith, for she did not believe the word concerning her house. When the boy was still young, he became sick and died. 2Ki 4:20-22. The woman immediately recognised *her* own culpability for the situation, which she attributed to her unbelief concerning the word of the messenger.

- When she came before Elisha, the messenger, she caught him by the feet and said to him, 'Did I ask a son of my lord? Did I not say, "Do not deceive me"?' 2Ki 4:27-28. This was an action of repentance, as she reminded the messenger of the response that she had made when the word had *first* been proclaimed to her. She was confessing that the word had died in her house, and the promise had been lost *because of her unbelief*.

- The woman expressed faith for *a second time* in relation to the word that had been proclaimed to her household by clinging to the messenger in a new way. Her relationship with Elisha shifted from being *a benefactor* in the first time to *a disciple* in the second time. Notably, the child was not raised from the dead because of the faith of Elisha. It was *the faith of the woman* toward a new season of discipleship that enabled resurrection life to come to her household.

- Many people in our congregations heard the word on lampstand churches when it was *first* proclaimed. However, the dysfunction and degeneration in many marriages and houses, including the rebellion and departure of children born in these houses, has revealed their unbelief concerning this message. In this 'second time' opportunity, we can continue in unbelief, leading to depression and bitterness, or we can accountably acknowledge, and turn from, our unbelief, and demonstrate faith by presenting ourselves for discipleship.

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

Section Three

The fellowship of Christ's sufferings

- After the apostle Paul was converted and he was born again as a son of God, his perspective on life and on himself changed markedly. The good works, religious heritage and devout profile that he had formerly considered to be gain, were now counted as loss. Php 3:7. He testified that he counted all things as loss for the excellence of knowing Christ 'and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, [he] may attain to the resurrection from the dead'. Php 3:10-11.
- Paul had been illuminated to see that he could only receive and live by Christ's resurrection life each day as he was joined, by the Spirit, to the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. These sufferings belonged to the death that Christ died for mankind as an offering for sin. Paul understood that every other pursuit, expression or endorsement was rubbish, in comparison with the treasure of receiving and living by the resurrection life flowing to him from Christ's immortal headship. Php 3:8. His life and salvation depended upon his daily fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ, which was enabled by the Holy Spirit. This is a fundamental implication of baptism for a person who has been born again as a son of God and made a member of Christ's corporate body.

The circumcision of Christ

- Paul explained that a person who was baptised into Christ was also circumcised by '*the circumcision of Christ'*. The circumcision of Christ does not refer to physical circumcision. Rather, it belongs to the fellowship of

Christ's sufferings. It specifically refers to the process through which the motives of the flesh, which bring a believer into bondage to the law of sin, are progressively removed from their heart. Col 2:11-13. How does this happen?

- In the course of their life, a son of God will experience difficulties and distress. At times, this can provoke in them the emotions of sin, including, for example, anxiety, anger, jealousy, and so on. These emotions indicate that the person is living by the principle of the flesh; they are seeking to save their own life, or to preserve what they think is 'gain' to them.
- At this point, the Holy Spirit brings to their attention their fleshly condition and that they are under judgement for their sin. In the midst of their difficulty, they can, by the Spirit, put off this fleshly motive, which Paul called 'the body of the sins of the flesh'. Col 2:11. It can be removed, or cut, from them in the fellowship of Christ's death. Having ceased from pursuing their own gain, by putting off the body of sin, they are able to put on Christ and fulfil the obedience that He learnt for them and belongs to their sanctification as a new-creation son of God. Eph 4:22-24. Rom 13:14. Gal 3:27.

The chastening of the Lord

- The circumcision of Christ is one aspect of the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul identified *chastening* as another dimension of a believer's participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. In contrast to the circumcision of Christ, which involves the cutting off of the body of the sins of the flesh, chastening is the initiative of God the Father to bring a new-creation son of God to maturity. It has a training, or formative, purpose.
- To this end, Paul encouraged his readers, writing, '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. Pro 3:11-12. He further explained that without chastening a believer would not come to fruitful maturity as a son of God; they would be illegitimate. Heb 12:7-8.
- When a Christian is ignorant of, or forgets, this foundational truth, they can grow weary and discouraged when they experience sufferings in the course of their Christian pilgrimage. Heb 12:5. However, the Holy Spirit wants us to know the love of the Father and to embrace this aspect of our fellowship in Christ's sufferings.

- Of course, chastening is painful. However, when a believer endures chastening by faith, and by the capacity of the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord, they bear the fruit of sonship, which is righteousness. 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.

- The sufferings that belong to chastening can be a time of weeping that endures as though 'through the night'. 'The night' symbolises our connection to Christ's death and burial. However, joy comes 'in the morning'. Psa 30:5. 'The morning' symbolises the light of resurrection life. The joy that comes in the morning belongs to what is made *new*, which has been brought forth in our life and understanding.

- The word of Christ's messengers, which is a light to our path, reminds us that chastening and fruitfulness are to be a daily and lifelong reality for us. We note, in this regard, the words of Isaiah, who declared, '*The watchman [messenger] 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, burial and resurrection. 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 self-defined 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. We know how to speak to those around us who are weary on account of sin, because we are speaking according to our sanctification as a son of God.

- This is our expectation as those who have taken Christ's yoke upon us. The rest and refreshing 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 Christian man to be yoked to Him. He is calling every Christian 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 in the church. 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 a son of God who is 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 unto salvation. Tit 3:5. 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 offering and sufferings. As the psalmist declared, 'Those who sow in tears [in the fellowship of Christ's death and burial] shall reap in joy [with resurrection life]. 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.

Suffering for the sake of another

- The apostle Paul testified of another aspect of a believer's fellowship in Christ's sufferings, writing, 'I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God'. Col 1:24-25.

- Paul understood that, as a messenger of Christ, he was given a unique portion of sufferings that were for the purpose of ministering Christ's life

to another. Elsewhere, he explained that as death was working in him, life was being multiplied in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings and overflowing to those who received his message. 2Co 4:12.

- This is a fundamental reality for every person who belongs to Christ's messenger administration, so that the power of God could be directed towards their hearers. Emphasising this point, Paul wrote, 'For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you.' 2Co 13:4. In this season, the Spirit is asking every messenger whether they are willing to embrace this dimension of Christ's sufferings. It is essential for their participation in the ministry of the Spirit to the church and in the world.

Section Four

The travail of the church to bring forth the manchild

- The apostle John described *the travailing church* in our day by saying, 'Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.' Rev 12:1. We know that 'the woman' in Revelation Chapter 12 is not Mary, nor the nation of Israel, because she is seen to be *in heaven*. The woman in the heavenly places is 'the church'. The church is the virgin bride of Christ. 2Co 11:2.

- The virgin bride of Christ is already betrothed to Christ by covenant, but she has not yet been presented to Christ in all her glory. The consummation of the marriage between Christ and His corporate bride will not happen until the inauguration of 'the new heavens and the new earth'. It is important to recognise that travail belongs to this present age. There will be no procreation, time, travail, or growth from immaturity to maturity in the new heavens and new earth.

- The virgin church is presently in travail to bring forth sons of God, by the Holy Spirit, for the Father. The woman is 'clothed with the sun' because the church reveals the glory of the Father. In the first case, the church reveals the glory of the Father because it is composed of godly families who are the context for the multiplication of sons of God through a two-step process – procreation and then new birth. The evangelistic ministry of the church is also bringing forth sons of God, by the Holy Spirit, from out of the world.

- The church has been in travail to bring forth sons of God since the Day of Pentecost. However, the vision of the woman in Revelation Chapter 12 reveals that the church will experience *a specific and unique season of travail* during the reign of the seventh world kingdom. John continued, 'And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.' Rev 12:3. The seventh world kingdom is likened to a great red dragon because it is ruled by Satan, who is also called 'the serpent of old'. Rev 12:9.

The recovery of fallen stars

- The reign of the seventh world kingdom is the season of restoration for Christ's lampstand churches. Notably, during the phase of the restoration of lampstand churches, the tail of the dragon will cause one-third of the stars of heaven to fall to the earth. The stars of heaven are the presbyteries who are called to be in the right hand of Christ. Rev 1:20. John said concerning the dragon, 'His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her child as soon as it was born.' Rev 12:4.

- The mouth of the dragon that seeks to devour the manchild belongs to the spirit of antichrist in the world. However, the tail of the dragon comprises false messengers who proclaim false gospels in the church. The prophet Isaiah declared that 'the prophet who teaches lies, he is the tail'. Isa 9:15-16. When Jesus addressed the presbyteries of His lampstand churches, He identified the tail of the dragon as being those who promote the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, the doctrine of Balaam, the doctrine of Jezebel, and the doctrine that belongs to the synagogue of Satan. Rev 2:6. Rev 2:14-15. Rev 2:20. Rev 2:9. Rev 3:9.

- It is important to appreciate that all stars *begin fallen* and must be recovered to the right hand of Christ and to the fellowship of first love that belongs to *the heights of Zion*. Jesus said to the presbytery in Ephesus, 'I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place – unless you repent.' Rev 2:4-5. First love is the fellowship of Yahweh.

- Practically, the presbytery in Ephesus had lost their relational connection to the apostle Paul and the ascension gift ministry graces that comprise the right hand of Christ. In addition to this, they had ceased from walking

with Christ among all the congregations that belonged to their lampstand church. Many of the leaders had begun to function as the pastors of independent, local congregations. Jesus called the presbytery in Ephesus to a specific pathway of repentance and faith. This is the same pathway of recovery for every fallen star.

- Jesus concluded His admonition to the Ephesian presbytery by saying, 'To him who overcomes, I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.' Rev 2:7. The tree of life is Christ. He is the embodiment of the word of God. The fruit of the tree of life is the bread of life which comes down from heaven. Joh 6:48. The bread of life is proclaimed to us from the Scriptures, by the Holy Spirit, through the messengers of Christ as a word of present truth in each season. This word gives us the capacity for our obedience as sons of God.

The manchild with the rod of iron

- Notably, the presbyters in the right hand of Christ, who are learning to overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and by laying down their lives for their brethren in first love, are progressively attaining the reward of Christ. The reward of Christ is the promise to the overcomers in each lampstand church. Furthermore, the overcoming presbyters are *progressively maturing* as part of a manchild who will rule the nations with a rod of iron, once the Father takes His seat and Jesus Christ stands up from His throne at the right hand of God.

- Jesus specifically said to the presbytery in Thyatira, 'He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; *and he shall rule them with a rod of iron*, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father.' Rev 2:26-27. The rod of iron belongs to Christ, but He has promised to give it to the presbytery. The promise of Jesus to the presbytery in Thyatira connects directly to John's vision of the manchild in Revelation Chapter 12.

- John declared concerning the outcome of the church's travail, 'She bore a male child [lit. manchild] who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her child was caught up to God and His throne'. Rev 12:5. The manchild will be caught up to God and His throne when the Father places His own throne in the middle of the heavenly Jerusalem to initiate the fulfilment of His will in the time of the end. The manchild is the one worldwide presbytery who will be seated on twenty-four thrones around the throne of the Father.

- The manchild administration is described by the apostle John in Chapters 4 and 5 of the book of Revelation. John saw the Father seated on His own throne in the middle of the heavenly Jerusalem on the top of Mount Zion with twenty-four elders seated on thrones around His throne. Rev 4:2-4. The twenty-four elders represent one worldwide presbytery that will exercise the rulership of Christ over the nations in the time of the end. The twenty-four thrones belong to the administration of the throne of David. Luk 1:32. Act 2:29-30.

- When Jesus Christ stands up *in heaven* to rule in the middle of His enemies, the authority that belongs to the rod of iron will be expressed through the one, worldwide presbytery *on the earth.* When Christ receives the seven-sealed scroll from the Father, the entire presbytery around the throne of the Father will proclaim, 'You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; *and we shall reign on the earth.*' Rev 5:9-10.

The ministry of the 144 000

- When the apostle John saw the Lamb standing on the top of Mount Zion, he saw the 144 000 standing with Him. Rev 14:1. In the time of the end, the one world-wide presbytery around throne of the Father will exercise its authority over the nations through the ministry of the 144 000. The 144 000 will manifest the ministry of the seven Spirits of God and will shatter the power of the seventh world kingdom when they proclaim the gospel of the kingdom as a testimony in all nations. Mat 24:14. Rev 6:1-2.

- The 144 000 are the representatives of worthy households who have obtained a double portion of oil during the phase of the restoration of lampstand churches. This brings us to an important point. We are already in the season when the 144 000 are being sealed in preparation for the Father to take His seat, and in preparation for the Lamb to stand up from His throne to begin opening the seals. Christ will not stand up from His throne to open the seals until the number of the 144 000 has been completed. Rev 7:2-3.

- When the first seal is opened, the 144 000 will be sent by the world-wide presbytery to look for worthy houses in the same way in which Jesus sent the seventy-two disciples to look for worthy houses in His day. Luk 10:1-12. The ministry of the 144 000, as they find worthy houses, will overcome Satan and break the power of his rulership over the seventh world kingdom. We recall that when the seventy-two returned with joy

after their ministry, Jesus proclaimed, 'I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.' Luk 10:18.

- The household of Mary, Martha and Lazarus is an example of the kind of worthy house that will be found by the 144 000 as part of the great multitude from every nation. Luk 10:38-42. Joh 12:1-8. These worthy houses will be devoted to the fellowship of the word that is proclaimed by the presbytery around the throne of the Father; will be devoted to hospitality and the care of the saints; and they will possess the testimony of resurrection life in their households. The Father will spread His tabernacle over them, and the Lamb will shepherd them and lead them to 'the springs of the water of life'. Rev 7:17.

- The ministry of the 144 000 to look for worthy houses will begin at the opening of the first seal. The period that is described in the Scripture as 'the great tribulation' will begin at the opening of the second seal and conclude at the opening of the sixth seal. Mat 24:21. Dan 12:1. During this time of great tribulation, there will be a great multitude of worthy households who will wash their priestly garments and make them 'white in the blood of the Lamb'. Rev 7:9,14. Significantly, these worthy houses will then become the evangelists who will bring over half of the world's population into the kingdom of God during the seven years when the Father's *agape* meal is the main agenda in the world. Eze 39:7-9. Zec 14:16.

Section Five

An overview of the steps of salvation

- The central message of the gospel of God, proclaimed by the New Testament apostles, is that sons of men can be born again of God's divine life and live forever as sons of God in fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and with their brethren. 1Pe 1:23. 1Jn 1:1-3. This is the implication of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit's purpose for us when They said, 'Let *Us* make man in Our image, according to Our likeness'. Gen 1:26.

- The first man and woman's creation was not the fulfilment of this initiative. The apostle Paul explained that Adam was 'a *type* of Him who was to come'. Rom 5:14. Paul was speaking of Jesus Christ who became the substance of God's covenant purpose. He is God the Son who emptied Himself to be begotten as the Son of God before the beginning of creation. He then humbled Himself further to be born of the virgin Mary as the Son of Man. Php 2:5-7. Then, in the garden of Gethsemane, Christ was strengthened by the Spirit to drink the cup of sin given to Him by the Father, and was made like us in every way. Luk 22:42-44. Heb 9:14. Heb 2:17.

- This was the commencement of Christ's offering and suffering journey from Gethsemane to Calvary, involving seven wounding events. As Jesus made this journey, He pioneered, or authored, the pathway of salvation for every person who would ever be conceived. Heb 5:7-10. When He rose from the dead following His crucifixion, Jesus Christ was the substance, or full revelation, of who the Father, Son and Holy Spirit *planned us to be*. He was the *first* Man brought to glory in the image and likeness of God. 1Co 15:20-23. He had first been made like us, so that after His offering

was complete we could be born of His life and could follow Him on the path that He pioneered for us. We could be progressively made like Him. 2Co 3:18.

- The apostle John implored his readers to be illuminated to this great mystery, writing, 'Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that *we should be called the sons of God*: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, *now are we the sons of God*, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, *we shall be like Him*; for we shall see Him as He is.' 1Jn 3:1-2.

- Walking on the pathway of salvation that Jesus pioneered is the evidence that a person believes that Jesus, the Son of God, is Lord and that He was raised from the dead by the Father. Rom 10:9. Explaining this point, the apostle John said, 'Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.' 1Jn 4:15-16. God abides in a believer when they are born again of His life. Then, as a son of God, they abide in God when they are baptised into the name of the Father, the name of the Son and the name of the Holy Spirit *through discipleship*.

The process of new birth

1. A person hears the gospel of God that is preached by the Holy Spirit through the ministry of Christ's messengers. 1Pe 1:12. Joh 13:20. Their message is the word 'which was from the beginning', declaring a hearer's predestination to be brought to glory as a unique son of God in the image and likeness of God. 1Jn 1:1-3.

2. Prevenient grace from the Holy Spirit accompanies the word of the gospel, drawing back every influence that may otherwise affect a hearer's capacity to receive this message. Tit 2:11. They are enabled by the Holy Spirit to receive the light of the gospel.

3. If the hearer does not resist this 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. Eph 2:1-3. However, they will also see that *Christ is with them*, having died this death for them. Psa 23:4. The repentant thief who was crucified with Christ on the day that He died received this illumination. He confessed to the second 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.

4. 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. Zec 12:10. This mourning leads to repentance and faith. 2Co 7:10. Heb 6:1. By faith, the hearer accepts the reconciliation that Christ accomplished for them and believes God's word concerning His purpose for their life.

5. There are notable changes in the life of a hearer as they keep the commandments of Christ, which are proclaimed to them by His messengers. They will find deliverance from unclean spirits; healing of sicknesses attributable to sin; healing of past hurts; 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. While this is a wonderful step on the pathway of salvation, it is not the new birth; nor is it the fulfilment of their salvation.

6. By keeping the commands of Christ, the hearer demonstrates that they love Christ. For this reason, the Father loves them, and Christ also loves them. Joh 14:21. The Father sends the Person of the Son to dwell, or abide, in the heart of the hearer. Joh 14:23. The Father also comes to abide in their heart, for the Son and the Father are one. Joh 14:10. They have made Their home *with* them. Joh 14:23.

7. Within the heart of this hearer, the Son prays to the Father, asking Him to send the Holy Spirit to them. Joh 14:16. 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.

8. The Holy Spirit is '*with*' a hearer when He takes up residence with the Father and the Son in their heart. When the Spirit is *with* a hearer, He convicts them of sin, righteousness and judgement. Joh 16:8. 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 for what is totally impossible and unthinkable – that they can be a son of God. 1Co 2:9-12. They confess, by this faith, 'I want to be a son!'

   At this point the Father, Son and Holy Spirit now abide *with* the believer, in their heart. The believer has received the fullness of the Lord – that is, the sevenfold Spirit of God – *as an anointing*.

9. As He did to the disciples on the day of His resurrection, Jesus then breathes on a believer through the ministry of His word. Joh 20:22. 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. Rev 3:12.

10. Christ then says, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'. Joh 20:22. This is not baptism in the Holy Spirit. Rather, the Holy Spirit is sent into the *spirit* of the believer. The Holy Spirit is now '*in'* them, making them a temple of the Holy Spirit. 1Co 6:19. The Spirit seals the believer, ratifying that they belong to God the Father, and granting to them 'a title deed' to a dwelling place in the heavenly city. Eph 1:13-14. This is their heavenly body, with which they will be clothed on the day of resurrection. 2Co 5:2-3. The Holy Spirit has come into the spirit of the believer as 'the Spirit of adoption'. As a natural identity, they are able to cry, 'Abba, Father'; 'You are my Father!' Rom 8:15-16.

11. In response to this confession, the Father sends forth the incorruptible seed of the Spirit of Christ into the believer's spirit. Gal 4:6-7. This is the unique seed of their name and life as a son of God, which multiplied from the one Seed, Christ, through His offering, 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. 1Pe 1:23. 2Pe 1:2-4. New birth as a son of God is the third implication of Christ breathing on the believer. It is when He writes His new name upon them. Rev 3:12.

12. The divine nature is the seven Spirits of the Lord, which becomes the life of a son of God, enabling them to love, as God loves. Isa 11:2. Isa 61:1-3. They have been 'born of the Spirit'. Joh 3:5-8. Significantly, having partaken of this divine life, the Father makes them a particular member of Christ's corporate body. That is, they are immersed by one Spirit, which is the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord, into one body. 1Co 12:13. The Son is the immortal Head of the body, and sons of God are the mortal members of His body. The Father places them in a specific relational context in the body as He pleases. 1Co 12:18. They live by the life of the Son as it flows from His headship to each member of the body.

- The expression of God's love towards others is the evidence that a person has been born again as a son of God and made a member of the body of Christ. 1Jn 4:7-8. Christ's life, ministered as the sevenfold Spirit of God, has become their life and they live this life by the faith of the Son of God. Gal 2:20. By faith they are able to participate each day in the dying and living of Jesus Christ as a disciple, for faith is working by love within them. Rom 5:5. This faith is the motive for *baptism*.

Baptism and discipleship

- For a son of God who has been established in the body of Christ, baptism is not merely a sacrament marking their membership of a church movement or assuring them of salvation, as many people have presumed.

Rather, baptism is immersion into a process through which the covenant purpose of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is accomplished in the life of a believer. This means that they are being saved as they progressively grow to fruitful maturity as a son in whom God abides and who now abides in God. Baptism in water is the believer's request for, and identification with, this discipling process.

- Jesus explained the purpose of baptism when He 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 name of 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 fellowship of the LORD 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.

- 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. Rom 1:1-2.

- Those who make disciples are joining their hearers to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit by first joining these people to *themselves*. 1Jn 1:1-3. 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, the apostle Paul's hearers were *joined to him*. Act 17:2-4.

The name of the Father

- A son of God is immersed into the name of the Father by the Son. 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. Gal 3:29.

- The first message that disciples a believer into the Father is the exhortation, '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. Through chastening, sons of God are growing to know the Father as they are being received by Him. They are bringing forth the peaceable fruit of sonship unto eternal life, for to know the Father is eternal life. Joh 17:3. Heb 12:11.

- The instruction through which sons of God are discipled in the name of the Father also addresses every Christian *marriage*. This is because marriage is God the Father's holy institution which He loves**.** Mal 2:15. A Christian couple who are being immersed in the Father will receive the proceeding word that is necessary for the reformation of their marriage covenant into the image intended by the Father. They are obtaining a remnant of the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord from the Father for this purpose because He desires godly offspring from their union. Mal 2:15.

The name of the Son

- Baptism into the person of Christ is the initiative of the Father. Joh 6:44-45. The word discipling a son of God in relation to the Son, establishes their participation in the *agape* meal, or love feast, of the Father's house under Christ's headship. Jud 1:12.

- The Father made Jesus Christ to be the Head of His body and of His bride, the church. Receiving and walking in the word of God's messengers establishes every individual in their unique expression as a member of Christ's body and of His bride. In particular, this involves the reformation of their houses. Their households are being made *worthy* as they are established in, and are becoming an expression of the culture of Yahweh's fellowship. Moreover, they are growing in their capacity for house-to-house fellowship. The Scriptures describe a network of worthy houses as an elect lady. 2Jn 1:1. This is a church that is being cleansed and sanctified to be an expression of Christ's bride in their local setting.

The name of the Holy Spirit

- The Son baptises a son of God into the Person of the Holy Spirit. Mat 3:11. This immersion is indicated by the capacity to speak in tongues. Act 2:4. 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 the Father, Son and Holy Spirit's prayer fellowship. Rom 8:26.

- When a person is baptised into the Holy Spirit, they become one of Christ's witnesses in the church and to the world. Act 1:8. They are able to be a witness of Christ through immersion into the Holy Spirit because they are connected to the *administration of the Spirit*. That is, they are part of a lampstand administration that is ministering the light of seven Spirits of the Lord. Established in the fellowship of Yahweh by the Holy Spirit, a son of God is enabled by the Spirit to minister this light through the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit in the church. 1Co 12:4-11. Rom 12:6-8. Moreover, they bear this light in the world as they make a good confession and testify to others in word and deed through their fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings.

The fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings

- The Scriptures teach us that the word of God, bringing instruction to disciples, is a lamp to their feet and a light to their path. Psa 119: 105. The apostle John explained that when a person walks in the light of the word, they have fellowship with one another and the blood of Christ cleanses them from all sin. 1Jn 1:7. The blood of Christ is available to them where it was shed – that is, on Christ's offering and suffering journey.

- The implication of receiving instruction as a disciple is that they embrace their daily participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. They are walking on the pathway that He pioneered for them, which He priests to them as a fellowship, or participation, in His death, burial and resurrection. Heb 5:10. Heb 8:1-2. Jesus Himself said that anyone who wanted to come after Him on the pathway of salvation that He authored for them, was to deny themselves, take up their cross daily and follow Him. Luk 9:23-24.

- A disciple is able to follow Christ in this manner because they are strengthened with the same capacity that He received from the Holy Spirit to offer Himself. He was strengthened with Eternal Spirit, which is the seven Spirits of the Lord. Heb 9:14. Those who are baptised into the Holy Spirit receive this same capacity, enabling them to present themselves as living sacrifices in the fellowship of Christ's offering.

- As a son of God walks in the light of the word on this pathway, they are delivered from sin in the fellowship of Christ's death. However, in this fellowship they receive and live by His resurrection life, enabling them to fulfil the obedience that He learnt and finished for them. Php 3:10-11. Heb 5:8-9. By this means, they are changing from one degree of glory to another into the image of the Son. 2Co 3:18.

Section Six

The lesson of Job

- In his epistle, James, the Lord's brother, directed us to study the life of Job. The purpose of this focus is to understand how Christ relates to us, and His motivation towards us, as He processes our lives. James called this, 'the outcome of the Lord's dealings' or 'the end intended by the Lord'. He wrote, 'You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord – that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful'. Jas 5:11.

- In the first case, the experience of Job draws our attention to *the priesthood of Christ*. He is our merciful and faithful High Priest. The Lord revealed Himself to be a 'very compassionate' and merciful High Priest as the One who had fully identified with Job's sufferings. Job came to understand that the Lord was *with him* on the ash heap! In the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, Job received the grace that was necessary to endure his season of trial and to overcome the devil.

- The book of Job gives us a helpful insight into the way that the patriarchs lived and served God after the flood, and before God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldeans to become the father of a new humanity. It is likely that Job lived soon after the initial dispersion of the nations from the tower of Babel. Job was the head of his extended family and the representative of one of the seventy-two nations that descended from Noah.

- Job's three friends came from their own regions as the representatives of other extended families. In this regard, Job and his friends all belonged to the order of seventy-two among the Gentile nations. They belonged to a presbytery of elders or fathers, who ministered among the seventy-two

nations while many people still recognised the sovereignty of God in the affairs of men.

- In the days of Job, Satan had not regained access to the heavenly places. He roamed to and fro upon the earth looking for those whom he could condemn by accusation before God. Significantly, it was the Lord who brought Job to Satan's attention. Job 1:8. He did this *for multiple reasons*. Job was blameless in relation to his godly service, but he did not yet have a worthy house. He presumed that his own godly service could compensate for his wife and children. God wanted to address the issues in Job's house so that he could keep walking as a pilgrim on the more excellent way.

- In addition to this, God boasted about Job to the devil because he had been predestined, from before the foundation of the world, to become the man who would overcome Satan in his generation. From this perspective, it was the word of Job's predestination that precipitated the trial of faith in his life. God was fully assured that Job would overcome Satan because of the efficacy of Christ's priesthood and offering. Christ had already overcome Satan for him. Job only needed *to choose* to participate in Christ's overcoming.

- In this regard, God 'set Satan up' to be overcome. Satan tried to impugn Job's motives, and undermine the truth of God's word, by saying that Job only lived as a God-fearer because of God's protection and blessing upon his life. Satan only understands trading relationships. He believes that a man will be willing to trade everything that he has in exchange for his own life. God allowed Satan to test his supposition because He knew that Job would overcome the devil by receiving faith to embrace his participation in Christ's offering and sufferings.

- Job most certainly possessed faith for resurrection to immortality, which will be revealed when Jesus Christ physically returns at the end of the age. Job 19:23-27. However, during his season of trial, as he came to understand that Christ was *with him* in all his sufferings, he also received faith for *exanastasis.* The apostle Paul used the term *exanastasis* to describe the power of Christ's resurrection life that we receive in the fellowship of His sufferings, while we are still in our mortal body. Php 3:11.

The discussion between Job and his friends

- Each of Job's friends had their own unique appraisal of his situation, and they admonished Job in a manner that was consistent with their

own gospel. Job's friends all assumed that he was suffering because he had done something wrong. They tried to identify the root cause of his problem, so that they could also prescribe an appropriate remedy. At the same time, Job countered each of their statements with his own appraisal of the facts and his situation. He maintained his own self-righteous position and even asked for the opportunity to plead his case before the Lord. Job 13:3,18.

- Elihu was a younger man who spoke after he had observed the shortcomings of Job and his three friends. He claimed that his words were true because his spirit had been created from the breath of God, and he spoke from an upright heart and an impartial position. Job 33:3-4. Elihu did not reason from the basis of age or experience. He believed that his understanding had been given to him by God and was now resident within his own human spirit. We know his ministry was carnal because he was motivated by *the wrath of man,* which does not produce the righteousness of God. Jas 1:20.

- When we consider the way in which all these men spoke to one another – including Job, his friends, and Elihu – the entire discussion was characterised by the principle of 'gainsaying'. 'Gainsaying' means 'gaining an advantage by saying'. A person will employ the principle of 'gainsaying' for the purpose of defending their own integrity and reputation. Rather than receiving a word of correction, in a spirit of meekness, they will correct the facts in relation to the illustrations that have been used by others to communicate the point. Gainsaying is used to avoid humiliation and shame.

- In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul summarised the Lord's demeanour towards those who continue to 'gainsay', rather than humbling themselves under the mighty hand of God. He wrote, 'But to Israel he says, "All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary [lit. gainsaying] people" '. Rom 10:21. It is important to note that the Lord connects gainsaying with disobedience. When we believe that we are right in our own eyes, we will not be willing to listen to, and receive admonition from, our brethren. In the absence of fellowship, there is no opportunity for obedience.

The outcome of the Lord's dealings

- When the discussion around Job's situation had reached an inevitable impasse, Christ Himself spoke to him from the midst of the whirlwind. Job 38:1. He said, 'Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?' Job 38:2. He spoke to Job as the only One who is genuinely

able to 'gainsay' in relation to the truth of the facts by going all the way back to the creation of the heavens and the earth. The Lord asked Job, 'Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?' Job 38:4. The Lord finished His first admonition by inviting Job to 'gainsay' Him if he desired to continue to live by that mode. Job 40:2.

- In response to Christ's first admonition, Job turned from the mode of 'gainsaying'. He said, 'Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; yes, twice, but I will proceed no further.' Job 40:5. Notably, the Lord was not satisfied with Job's self-righteous resolution to draw back and to stop talking. He wanted Job to receive a confession of faith so that he could join a new conversation. In response to the Lord's second admonition, Job testified that he had met the Lord eye to eye. He had seen the deceitfulness of his own heart and learned the difference between self-righteousness and blamelessness.

- In addition to his fellowship in the circumcision of Christ that addressed his self-righteousness, Job also had a fellowship in the chastening of Christ. The fruit of the Lord's chastening in his life was that he acquired a double portion of oil as the type of 'a wise virgin'. Mat 25:4. As a minister of the Spirit, Job then had the capacity to pray for his friends. Job 42:8. The ministry of Job to his friends established a new ground of fellowship in the presbytery that was among the nations at that time.

- Furthermore, the outcome of Job's trial of faith was that he overcame Satan. The Lord's final admonition to Job was focused on the power of Satan, whom he referred to as 'Leviathan', and how he must be overcome. It is not possible to contend with Satan in the strength of our own flesh. The Lord gave Job the key to overcoming Satan when He said, 'Lay your hand on him; remember the battle – never do it again!' Job 41:8. We lay our hand on Satan by laying hold of our fellowship in the cross of Christ which is the place where Satan is disempowered and overcome by Christ.

Overcoming Satan

- The apostle John identified how Satan will be overcome by the 144 000 and the great multitude in the time of the end. He explained, 'And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.' Rev 12:11. The blood of the Lamb describes our participation in the seven wounding events that Christ experienced from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. Our participation in the seven wounding events of Christ delivers us from our victim mindset that keeps us in bondage to Satan.

- When the word of present truth is proclaimed to us, the illumination and conviction of the Holy Spirit, enables us to make a good confession of faith. Confession delivers us from the shame that keeps us in bondage to Satan because it motivates us to maintain a religious projection and hide ourselves from fellowship. A good confession in response to the word at the beginning of a season leads to a testimony at the end of a season. The word of our testimony is the fruit of the washing of regeneration in our life, marriage, and family.
- Finally, as sons of God, who have been born of God, we 'love not our lives to the death' because the love of God has been poured into our hearts, through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Rom 5:5. The love of God delivers us from the fear of death which keeps us in bondage to Satan and the law of sin. Perfect love casts out all fear. The love of God is the divine nature. It is the capacity for offering that belongs to the seven Spirits of God. We overcome Satan because we are motivated and enabled by the love of God to lay down our lives for one another.

Section Seven

The ministry of the seven Spirits of God

- The apostle John was praying in the Spirit 'on the Lord's Day' when he heard behind him 'a loud voice as of a trumpet'. Rev 1:10. When John turned to see the voice that was speaking to him, he saw One like the Son of Man seated on His throne in the middle of seven lampstand churches. Rev 1:12-13. Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God as the King of kings, our great High Priest, the Prophet, and the great Shepherd of the sheep.
- Notably, the apostle John described seven personal attributes of Christ by saying, 'His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.' Rev 1:14-16.
- These seven elements do not describe the actual, physical characteristics of Christ's resurrection body. Rather, in response to the word of Christ like a trumpet, the apostle John was illuminated to see, by the Holy Spirit, *seven symbolic attributes* that belong to Jesus Christ. The key point is that the seven symbolic attributes that belong to Christ demonstrate that *He possesses the seven Spirits of God* in His spiritual body.
- The apostle John was looking at the glorified Son of Man *revealing the seven Spirits of God* through His lampstand administration. Speaking about Jesus Christ as the Son of David, the prophet Isaiah declared, 'There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of

wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.' Isa 11:1-2.

- When the apostle John saw the seven attributes of Christ that reveal the seven Spirits of God, he immediately fell at the feet of Christ like a dead man. Rev 1:17. The impact of this revelation upon him caused him to become bankrupt in spirit. Notably, Jesus reached out and laid His right hand on John. In this action, He joined John to the fellowship *of His right hand*. He ministered the faith that was necessary for John to become a messenger *in His right hand* when He said, 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.' Rev 1:17.

- Jesus instructed John to 'write the things which you have seen [the Gospel of John], and the things which are [the letters of John], and the things which will take place after this [the book of Revelation]'. Rev 1:19. The book of Revelation is proclaimed by the Holy Spirit, through the messengers of Christ as a word of present truth, when the time for its fulfilment is near. Speaking to our generation, the apostle John wrote, '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 1:3.

The seven stars in the right hand of Christ

- Jesus explained to John, 'The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.' Rev 1:20. When we read Christ's admonition to each angel, we know that He was not addressing the angelic administration. He was evidently referring to leaders who comprise a presbytery that belong to a lampstand church. The word 'angel' means 'a messenger that brings good tidings'. A presbytery is *a corporate messenger* that has been called by God to proclaim the word of Christ, by the Holy Spirit, to a lampstand church.

- A man's qualification as a presbyter is not based on his capacity to preach or teach, his organisational capacity, his functional skills, or his family connections. The foundation of a presbytery is firstfruits brethren who have come from worthy houses within the fellowship of local congregations in a lampstand church. For example, the apostle Paul said to the Corinthians, 'I urge you, brethren – you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints – that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labours with us.' 1Co 16:15-16.

- Stephanas had a worthy, firstfruits house. He had evidently matured as an elder among the flock and had devoted himself to the work of deaconing.

An *elder* is an example to the flock. They are shepherds who live among the flock and pastorally care for the flock from the perspective of their own testimony. A *deacon* is a leader who promotes and facilitates the public and house-to-house fellowship of the church. There is an important distinction between the leadership of a deacon and the organisational capacity of someone who manages a church department or an aspect of the church program.

- The apostle Paul described a man who is both an elder and a deacon as *an overseer* who is worthy of double honour. He wrote to Timothy, 'Let the elders who take the lead well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those labouring in word and teaching'. 1Ti 5:17 LITV. In the fellowship of a presbytery, it is essential that every elder, deacon, and overseer is also connected to the ascension gift ministry graces of Christ that comprise His right hand. That is, a presbytery must be in the right hand of Christ.

- The apostle Paul described the five ministry graces of Christ by saying, 'He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.' Eph 4:11-12. The ministry graces of Christ comprise one apostolic administration that has been given as *the gift of Christ* to all His lampstand churches. It is the work of the apostolic administration in every generation to build upon the foundation that has already been laid by the apostle Paul.

- The apostle Paul said, 'I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.' 1Co 3:10. In relation to how we build upon the foundation, God has appointed an order of authority in the church. Paul wrote, 'God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles [accompanying the work of evangelists], then gifts of healings [and other gifts of the Spirit], helps [deacons], administrations [church departments], varieties of tongues'. 1Co 12:28.

The light of the seven Spirits of God

- On the day of His resurrection, Jesus Christ was revealed to be the first Man in the image and likeness of God. He is presently seated at the right hand of God. As we have already considered, He possesses the seven Sprits of God in His spiritual body. The glory of God, which is the light of the seven Spirits of God, shines from His face. The light that shines from the face of Christ is revealed, by the Holy Spirit, through the ministry of the seven stars in the right hand of Christ.

- When a presbytery is properly connected to the right hand of Christ, it will have the capacity to minister the seven Spirits of God to a lampstand church in a nation. The ministry of the seven Spirits of God from the right hand of Christ will also transcend national boundaries as messengers of Christ travel from nation to nation. We are reminded that Jesus addressed the presbytery in Sardis as the One who 'has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars'. Rev 3:1. Jesus promised that the overcomers in Sardis would *walk with Him* in white garments. Rev 3:4-5.

- A presbytery in the right hand of Christ is called to walk with Christ to minister the seven Spirits of God among all the local congregations that belong to their lampstand church. The worthy houses that belong to each congregation in a lampstand church are then called to reflect and focus the light of the seven Spirits of God from house to house, and into the broader community. The light of the seven Spirits of God, that shines from a multitude of worthy houses in a lampstand church, is *the light of the world*. Mat 5:14.

- The light of the seven Spirits of God is ministered through the proclamation of the gospel of God. The apostle Paul declared, '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 4:6. It is the light of the seven Spirits of God that illuminates the darkness of a person's heart, enabling them to see the hope of their calling as a son of God who will be conformed to the image of Christ, so that they can reveal the glory of God forever.

- Paul testified that the light that shines from the face of Christ had firstly shone into his own heart. He had been illuminated to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Then, as an *illuminated messenger* in the right hand of Christ, Paul proclaimed the word that revealed the same light to the Gentiles. He was assured that if a person believed the word that he preached, the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ would also shine into their heart. He recognised that it was only a person's unbelief that prevented them from receiving this illumination.

- In this season, the Holy Spirit is speaking to us *a second time* about what it means to be part of a lampstand church. He is calling every individual and household to believe for the fulfilment of the word that has previously been spoken to us. We are believing to see a lampstand church established in our generation on the foundation of worthy houses. As we are being recovered to the fellowship of first love in our marriages, households, congregations, and in the presbytery, then we will also see the ministry of the Spirit in a new and effective way.

Section Eight

Marriage in the image intended by God

- The covenant of marriage belongs to God's Everlasting Covenant purpose for man. Following Adam's creation, and his work of naming every living creature, a helper comparable was not found for him. Gen 2:19-20. The Lord took a rib from Adam and, from this rib, formed the spirit, soul and body of the woman and brought her to him. The Lord God made them male and female – two unique identities who were to be, together, one man in His image and after His likeness. Gen 1:27. Testifying of this first dimension of oneness, Adam said, '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.
- The capacity for relationship that belongs to Yahweh *Elohim* was brought down from heaven. It descended out of heaven from God to the tree of life. Marriage, which is God's holy institution that He loves, was established by this initiative. Mal 2:11. This covenant was instituted when the Lord God gave to Adam and the woman a portion, or remnant, of the sevenfold Spirit of God. Without this capacity, which belongs to the one fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a marriage can only remain natural and physical. The sevenfold Spirit was given to Adam and the woman by Yahweh, through the Holy Spirit, at the tree of life. It was an anointing upon their natural life.
- A remnant of the sevenfold Spirit from the Father, by the Holy Spirit, was received at the tree of life where Adam had already declared his wife to be bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. This remnant of the Spirit enabled these separate identities to be one Spirit together within the one-Spirit

fellowship of Yahweh. This then became their definition as 'man', and defined for them the culture of their relationship.

- When Adam and the woman disobeyed God and ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, another law was established in each person's heart. The outcome was enmity in their marriage, for each person was now self-centred. This is true in the relationships of every person who remains estranged from God's covenant purpose. Enmity, with its accompanying emotions and relational dystrophy, belongs to the infirmity that afflicts everyone who continues in bondage to the law of sin and death as they live by their other law. Rom 7:23.

Marriage in the New Covenant

- The New Covenant of the Spirit was established through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of Man. Through the ministry that belongs to this covenant, a person can be delivered from their bondage to the law of sin and death, and they can be recovered to God's predestination for them – they can be brought to glory as a man in the image and likeness of God, including in relation to their marriage.

- In the New Covenant, marriage in the image intended by God is between a man and a woman, each of whom has been born of the divine nature as a son of God. Each son of God has been *sanctified* as a particular member of the body of Christ. This reality was depicted by Jesus using the imagery of a vine and branches. Joh 15:5-6. In this regard, they have already been joined to Christ and to His immortal headship, which is ministered to them, in their mortality, by the sevenfold Spirit of God.

- The body of Christ is the context for the expression of the 'greatest love'. Joh 15:13-15. When they are established in this fellowship, an individual son of God's perception of others is not driven by self-centredness. Their primary orientation is the worship of Christ the Creator, rather than the creature (or the person they think will be ideal for them). Maturing from self-centredness, they are able to recognise and appreciate the unique godly expression of all their friends in Christ. In this context of friendship, romantic love, as a unique and specific affection for another son of God, emerges. Their emerging affection is a specific expression of greater love that belongs to a particular and chosen relationship.

- Having chosen to marry, a Christian couple will seek for counsel from Christ's messengers. They recognise that this counsel is not merely good advice or sage tips for a happy life; nor is it just a step in the 'protocol of courtship'. Rather, they are asking for living water that is being drawn

from the fountain of life. The source of this fountain is the throne of the Father, and it flows through the body of Christ, by the Holy Spirit. It is the water, blood and Spirit that flowed from Christ's side after His Spirit was received up to the throne of the Father and His physical body, which remained on the cross, was pierced with a soldier's spear. Luk 23:46. Joh 19:34-37. Zec 12:10.

- As we noted earlier, each person in a Christian courtship will already be born of God and established in Christ. This happens by receiving the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord that is ministered by the Holy Spirit through the word as it proceeds from this fountain. However, in the context of a Christian courtship, the water of the word now ministers to the couple a remnant of the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord from the Father *that is specific to their marriage bond*.

- We can liken the establishment of a marriage bond to the formation of 'one man' – male and female – from the rib of the man. A man who has been born again *has already received this rib*. It belongs to his name as a new-creation son of God.

Sanctification in the season of betrothal

- By the faith that the man receives as he hears the words of counsel, he orientates and sanctifies himself to Christ, his Head. Rom 10:17. 1Co 11:3. In doing so, he receives grace to sanctify himself to be the head of this particular woman. That is, he begins to love her as Christ loved the church, laying his life down for her by establishing the proceeding word as the ground, or basis, for their burgeoning union. Eph 5:25-26. He comes to rest, confident in the word that defines the nature of the union that he is offering to the woman. This is the rib that is being offered to her. It is to become the fellowship, order and culture of their marriage and house.

- By the faith that the woman receives as she hears the words of counsel, she orientates and sanctifies herself to the man. Rom 10:17. 1Co 11:3. She receives grace to sanctify herself further, laying down her life to be 'for the man' and to proceed 'from him'. 1Co 11:8-9. In this regard, the rib, which belongs to the man's sanctification as a new-creation son of God, becomes part of the substance of the woman's born-again identity as she is made to be a helper comparable to him.

- Christ Himself was reoriented and sanctified to the Father as His Head, praying, 'For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.' Joh 17:19. For this reason, in submission to Christ their Lord, a Christian man and a Christian woman in a courtship or marriage can choose to sanctify themselves for the sake of the other.

- For a courting couple, this sanctification happens in the season of *betrothal*. During this process, the couple are receiving the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord from the Father, to establish their marriage covenant in the one-Spirit fellowship of Yahweh. 1Co 6:16-17. Through sanctification, they are being made one as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one. Joh 17:21. They are able to move from a 'self-centred' orientation to each other to an 'other-centred' orientation. This means that they are 'centred' in Yahweh, I AM, by the Spirit of God. The I AM dimension of Yahweh is the access to Christ, the immortal Head of His body.

- Jesus declared that the capacity of oneness in the fellowship of Yahweh was given to believers as the name, the word and the glory of God, so that they could be one, just as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one. Specifically, He said, 'And the glory [or expression of life by seven Spirits] which You gave Me I have given them, *that they may be one just as We are one*: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.' Joh 17:22-23.

- This dimension of oneness in the fellowship and order of headship is revealed by the capacity of each person to make offering as an expression of true worship and fellowship in their marriage relationship. As a couple, their names have been written into the fellowship of Yahweh, and His name has been written into them and their covenant. Like their father, Abraham, and their mother, Sarah, they are able to walk *blamelessly* before the Lord. Gen 17:1,5,15.

- Those who are one Spirit with the Lord and with each other are a new creation. They are being delivered from the enmity within themselves, and with each other, of flesh versus Spirit and circumcision versus uncircumcision. 'For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.' Gal 6:15.

- A marriage can only be in one Spirit while in fellowship with Yahweh. This one-Spirit relationship works by offering, as the woman is of and for the man, and the man is through the woman, in expression and communication. This is possible because the Trinity is in each person. This fellowship, which enables the marriage to work, is *eternal*. The unity of two identities as bone of bone and flesh of flesh ends at death. Mat 22:30. However, their unity by one Spirit is raised to its fullest expression in the bride city. This is the perfection of 'greater love'. Joh 15:13.

- Joined in this manner, a Christian couple are able to bring forth godly seed, who are born according to the Spirit. Mal 2:15. Gal 4:29. The couple are not creators, in the sense that they are the origin of anything or anyone. Rather, through their union as one flesh and one Spirit in the order of headship under God the Creator, new identities are conceived and brought forth. They are sourced from the Father of lights and are already born of His life. Jas 1:17. 1Co 7:14.

The faith of a married couple in the New Covenant

- The word is preached to men and women who are, individually, sons of God. To be an heir of the grace of God, each person must choose to obey the word, and then respond with obedience in relation to the order of the family, *as to Christ*. On His offering and suffering journey, He fulfilled the works of obedience of a man in relation to his wife. He fulfilled the works of obedience of a woman in relation to her husband. Hence, a believing husband, who receives and believes the word of Christ, is able to exercise headship towards his wife, loving her as Christ loved the church, nourishing and cherishing her. Eph 5:25,28-29. Likewise, a believing wife, who receives and believes the word of Christ, is able to be submissive to her husband as a helper comparable, even if he is not, himself, obedient to the word. 1Pe 3:1-2.

- To understand the expression of a believing couple who are being restored to the image intended by God, we must recognise that there is one definition of man, even though a husband and wife are two unique identities. As the Scriptures so clearly reveal, 'God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.' Gen 1:27.

- In relation to marriage according to God's covenant purpose, Paul explained that the woman is of the man and was created for the man, and that the man is through the woman. 1Co 11:8-9,12. These are the implications of offering within the holy institution of marriage that God the Father loves and that belongs to Him. Mal 2:11. In this fellowship of love, the man should be the image and glory of God, while the woman should be the image and glory of her husband. 1Co 11:7.

- A woman in a marriage that is being recovered to the image intended by God, needs reflection from her husband to understand herself, her name and her image as a wife. This is necessary so that she can be the image and glory of her husband. The man is from and of Christ. He needs to see, in Christ's face, the reflection of himself, his name and image as a husband so that he understands who he is to be for his wife. This is a

conversation that is 'ordered aright' in the fellowship of offering. Psa 50:23. It is the antidote for the impact of the infirmity in our marriage, which is that we do not understand our own motives.

- A woman falls into confusion and reaction, leading to deception, without this connection to fellowship. This is oppression because of the angels. 1Co 11:10. Amazingly, even if her husband is not offering this connection to her, she can be rightly related to him without confusion, reaction and deception as she receives the word of her obedience as a wife from Christ. She obtains faith to be of, and for, her husband, having the symbol of authority on her head. This is the 'chaste conduct' to which the apostle Peter was referring, when he wrote, 'Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear'. 1Pe 3:1-2.

- A man falls into confusion and reaction, leading to deception, when he turns his face from the corporate mirror of Christ, which is extended to him through the word of the messengers proceeding from the fellowship of the presbytery. A man's frustration and wrath towards his wife, when her response does not accord with his expectations, reveals that he has turned his face from Christ, taking a hold of the word with the law of his mind as a resource to rule over his wife.

- We see that the proceeding word of God is addressing two desires of one man – male and female. These two desires, and their impact, belong to the human infirmity and are not understood, nor can they be bridged, by either the man or the woman without the illumination and conviction that the Spirit gives. The conundrum of the human infirmity is that, without recovery by the Spirit, the more a couple endeavours to attain cohesion through the appropriation of the word, or Law, in their relationship, the more they are subject to the curse resulting from the fall of mankind.

- The only communication that is unaffected by our infirmity is speaking from the fellowship of Yahweh. To join this fellowship, we must receive and respond to the word that proceeds from this fellowship. 1Jn 1:1-4. This is possible as a man receives the word of Christ pertaining to his obedience as a husband, and the woman receives the word of Christ pertaining to her obedience as a wife.

- The word of Christ is the Scriptures being proclaimed to a man and a woman by the Holy Spirit, through the ministry of messengers. When the Scriptures are speaking to a woman, they are not talking to a man about a woman. He should not, then, be taking hold of this word to demand her

response and compliance. Likewise, when the Scriptures are talking to a man, they are not talking to a woman about the man. She also must not take what is being said to her husband and impose it upon him. In both cases, to do so is to take hold of the word, or Law, as our own law and abuse the other, perpetuating and exacerbating the implications of our fallen infirmity.

The implications for our present day

- When a couple is restored to this image of marriage, the man is the image and glory of God and the woman is the image and glory of man. 1Co 11:7. Together, they are part of a corporate bride who is the image and glory of her Head, Christ. This highlights the importance of reformation, particularly in these present days, to the image of marriage intended by God.

- Eschatologically, the time of the end is almost upon us. Only those who are embracing the process of cleansing and purifying, as Christ comes among the unclean daughters of Zion in a spirit of judgement and burning, are being established, through faith, in this glory. They will find protection from the heat and storm that belongs to the great tribulation. This is because the tabernacle of the Father is spread over them. As Isaiah prophesied, 'When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgement and by the spirit of burning, then the LORD will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. *For over all the glory there will be a covering.* And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain.' Isa 4:4-6.

- As those who are experiencing the birth pangs that signal the time of the end, we can receive the word of faith that is addressing our marriages. This involves walking as disciples in the light of the word, having fellowship with one another in our marriages and as couples together. Having received faith, we have boldness to speak and confidence in the day of trouble. The Lord encourages those who live by faith and walk by the Spirit, saying, 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you.' Isa 43:1-2.

The woman at Sychar

- An 'other-centred' relationship in marriage is fellowship in one Spirit. Jesus revealed that the capacity for oneness in Christian marriage, and indeed as part of the corporate bride of Christ, is the seven Spirits of the Lord. He explained that this grace is ministered to a hearer as they drink living water. He outlined this principle in His discussion with the Samaritan woman at Sychar, saying to her, 'God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.' Joh 4:24. A married couple who receive the capacity to worship God in Spirit and truth, are able to worship each other in this manner.

- Jesus made this statement as He addressed the woman's fallen *marriages*. Before He raised the issue of her marriages, Jesus asked the woman for a drink of water. By doing so, He was asking about her and the source of her life and relationships, for He said to her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, "Give Me a drink", you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water [as opposed to the water you are presently living by, which is evident in your relationships].' Joh 4:10. *He was asking for a response from her, the natural person.*

- The woman asked for the water that Jesus was offering, and so Jesus directed her to call her husband. He knew that the man that she was with was not her husband, and He knew the reason for the failure of her five former marriages. It belonged to the type of 'water', or fallen orientation, that was informing her relationships.

- The woman immediately recognised Christ as a prophet who had discerned her problem and her need. Joh 4:19. That is, she heard the messenger word speaking to her relationships, and in particular, the basis of her connection or worship in her marriage. We know this, because in response to Jesus' identification of her past *marriage relationships*, she said, 'Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers *worshipped* on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.' Joh 4:19-20.

- By acknowledging that Christ was a prophet, or messenger, this woman was confessing that she had been illuminated by His word. She 'left her waterpot' and went into the city, saying to the men, 'Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?' Joh 4:29. They, too, went out of the city and came to Christ. The Scriptures record that 'many more believed because of His own word'. Joh 4:41. They confessed that they had not believed because of what the woman had said to them,

rather stating, '*for we ourselves have heard Him* and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world'. Joh 4:42.

- The word comes from Christ to each person in a marriage. When He comes to meet us through the word of a messenger, He does, figuratively, say, 'Give Me a drink'. That is, He asks for a response from the natural man. This is the Creator, as a Messenger, talking to the identity of a person. In this regard, when a messenger comes to us, they declare, 'O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD!' Jer 22:29. Through the word, the messenger is orienting and joining this person to their Creator. As a hearer receives and engages this word, they are joined to a dialogue from which faith and illumination come, for 'faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God [preached by a messenger]'. Rom 10:17.

- After a Christian couple has made covenant, their marriage is constantly refreshed and made new each day as they walk by the Spirit as disciples, doing the works that belong to them individually and as a couple. They are able to walk in this manner because they continue to drink from the everlasting fountain of the river of life. Each day, they walk in newness of life, for all things are made new through the water of the word. Revealing the connection between drinking from the fountain of the water of life and all things new, the apostle John recorded, 'Then He who sat on the throne said, "*Behold, I make all things new.*" And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. *I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.* He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son."' Rev 21:5-7.

Section Nine

The faith of the Son of God

- The crucifixion of Jesus Christ on the cross was the end of the Old Covenant and the beginning of the New Covenant. Prior to His offering on the cross, which brought the Old Covenant to an end, Jesus ministered on the earth for three and a half years. He ministered to people who were still living under the Old Covenant. During His Old Covenant ministry, many people were physically healed, and miraculously delivered from demonic power, because of *their faith in Christ.*

- There are many examples of physical healing and deliverance from demonic power that are recorded in the Gospels because of the person's faith. For example, when the woman reached out to touch the hem of His garment, Jesus said to her, 'Daughter, *your faith has made you well.* Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.' Mar 5:34. Likewise, when blind Bartimaeus cried out for mercy and then asked to regain his sight, Jesus said to him, 'Go your way, *your faith has made you well.*' Mar 10:52.

- Notably, the faith that enabled their healing still belonged to the dispensation of the Old Covenant. It was the same kind of faith that was demonstrated by all the heroes of faith. For them, faith was the substance of a hope that they had not yet received. Heb 11:1. In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul concluded his description of the heroes of faith, by saying, 'And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.' Heb 11:39-40.

- The promise of adoption and new birth as sons of God belongs to the New Covenant. When the Holy Spirit enables the incorruptible seed of the life of Christ to germinate in our spirit, we are born again as a new creation. At this point, we have received a completely new kind of life. It is the life

of the Son of God! And significantly, we have also received *a completely new kind of faith*. It is the faith of the Son of God. Referring to this new faith, Paul said, 'Before faith came, we were kept under guard by the Law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.' Gal 3:23.

- Having described the heroes of faith, Paul continued by saying that we now look to Jesus who has given us this new faith. He declared that we are 'looking unto Jesus, *the author and finisher of faith*, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.' Heb 12:2. In this regard, there is an important distinction between *faith in Christ* which belongs to the Old Covenant, and the *faith of Christ* which belongs to the New Covenant.

- Speaking about the new faith that belongs to the New Covenant, the apostle Paul testified, 'I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by *the faith of the Son of God,* who loved me, and gave himself for me.' Gal 2:20. We have not fully appreciated the implications of this verse. Even though we have recognised that faith comes from Christ, and does not originate in us, we have still been confused on the difference between faith in the Old and New Covenants.

- In the New Covenant, we live by Christ's life, and by the faith that He has authored for us on His offering journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. We live by the faith of the Son of God as we continue to receive 'the word of faith', for faith only comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God that is preached to us. Rom 10:17. Faith is both God's initiative towards us and our response to Him, which operates through love. Rom 5:5. As God initiates towards us, we are dignified with choice and are enabled to respond and then fellowship with Him, and with those who are, likewise, born of His life.

- The faith of the Son of God compels us to present ourselves for fellowship with one another, and to embrace our unique participation in Christ's offering and sufferings. We are connected to the power of the *exanastasis* life of God, in the fellowship of Christ's offering, through the intercessions of the Holy Spirit. The Lord has given us a more excellent way of living in the New Covenant. In the fellowship of Christ's offering, the grace of His resurrection life is given to us by the Holy Spirit, enabling us to do the works of our sonship that Christ has already accomplished for us.

- The resurrection life that we receive, as we are joined by the capacity of Eternal Spirit from the Holy Spirit to the fellowship of Christ's offering, is the evidence of God the Father's faith for us. By faith, He committed us all

to the Son so that we might be begotten again from the dead with the Son. Established in Christ, we are sons of the Father and sons of Abraham, for the apostle Paul explained, 'For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus … And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' Gal 3:26,29.

Walking in the steps of the faith of Abraham

- The apostle Paul described Abraham as '*the father of all who believe'* and 'the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also *walk in the steps of the faith* which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised'. Rom 4:11-12. The faith that belonged to each step of his pilgrimage was progressively obtained by Abraham. A believer is a person who, likewise, progressively obtains and walks in these steps of faith.

- Identifying the first dimension of faith that was demonstrated in the pilgrimage of Abraham, Paul wrote, 'By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.' Heb 11:8. Abraham received this dimension of faith in the call to *depart* from Ur of the Chaldeans, from his family and from his father's house, to enter a land that the Lord would show to him. Gen 12:1.

- The Lord promised to bless Abram, saying to him, '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 12:2-3. As we will consider in the points below, Abraham obtained this blessing, by signification, on Mount Moriah, marking the final step of his appropriation of the faith of the Son of God.

- Paul described the blessing that was promised to Abraham as 'the blessing of Abraham'. It was made available to every person through the cross of Christ. Paul explained this point, writing, '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 [those who are uncircumcised] in Christ Jesus*, that we might receive *the promise of the Spirit through faith*'. Gal 3:13-14.

- Significantly, the apostle John identified the blessing of Abraham as 'the right to become a son of God'; that is, a son of man who was born again of the Spirit. Joh 3:5. To this end, he said, 'But as many as received

Him [Jesus, the Son of God], to them He gave *the right to become children of God*, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' Joh 1:12-13. In short, a person who has received the blessing of Abraham has been born of the Spirit. That is, they have received the promise of the Spirit through the faith that Abraham received and demonstrated on Mount Moriah.

- The second dimension of faith that the apostle Paul nominated was the faith by which Abraham *dwelt* in the land of promise. This faith was extended to, and demonstrated by, those in his household – Isaac and Jacob – who became heirs of the same promise that God made to Abraham. Detailing this dimension of faith, Paul wrote, 'By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of *the same promise*; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God'. Hebrews 11:9-10.

- Following his defeat of the five kings and his liberation of his nephew, Lot, Abram met Melchizedek, who brought out to him the bread and wine of fellowship. Melchizedek blessed Abram, identifying him as the 'possessor of heaven and earth'. Gen 14:18-19. It was after these things that 'the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield [of faith], your exceedingly great reward" '. Gen 15:1. It is notable that Christ, the Word of the Lord, addressed Abram's fear by declaring that He was giving Himself to be Abram's faith and exceedingly great reward.

- Having been illuminated to see his children as a great multitude who had been brought to glory in the image and likeness of God, being likened to the stars of heaven, Abram believed the word of the Lord. This was accounted to Abram as righteousness. Gen 15:5-6. The Lord then revealed to Abram that he would obtain this inheritance through his fellowship in the cross of Christ, which was foreshadowed by the offering of a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove and a pigeon. Gen 15:8-17. This encounter marked a new step in Abram's pilgrimage of faith as he now journeyed to appropriate what had been promised to him.

Abram received a new name

- When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him, saying, 'I am Almighty God; *walk before Me and be blameless*. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.' Gen 17:1-2. Then, Yahweh wrote His own name into Abram and Sarai's

names so that it would, figuratively, become flesh in them. By writing His name into Abram's name, his name was changed to 'Abram-Y*ah*' or Abr*ah*am. By writing His name into Sarai's name, her name was changed to 'Sarai-Y*ah*' or Sar*ah*. They were to walk in the reality, or substance, of these names.

- Prior to his name change, Abram's name meant 'exalted father'. His name, Abraham, now meant 'father of many nations'. Prior to her name change, Sarai's name meant 'my princess'. The fullest statement of this name is 'struggling princess, given to strife and contention'. Now, as Sarah, her name meant 'princess mother of a multitude', or as Paul nominated, 'the mother of us all'. Gal 4:26. The Lord directed Abraham to circumcise himself and his descendants as the sign of the covenant that He had made with him. Gen 17:10-14. It is important to note that physical circumcision was the *sign of the covenant*; it was not the Everlasting Covenant itself.

- When the name of Yahweh was written into Abraham and Sarah, the faith of the Son of God *was now becoming their faith*. By this faith, they believed for, and walked by, the resurrection life of the Son. We know this because Paul wrote, 'By faith Sarah herself also *received strength to conceive seed*, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.' Heb 11:11-12.

- Sarah and Abraham were *strengthened,* in the same way that Christ, the Son of Man, was strengthened in faith to become our sin offering in the garden of Gethsemane. Luk 22:43. Evidently, they received the faith of the Son. We also must receive this faith by hearing and receiving Christ's word as it is proclaimed to us by His messengers. Rom 10:17. By faith, we can believe to join His offering for us. His offering is our journey of salvation, with its suffering and overcoming capacity, that He accomplished for us as He worked out our salvation for us. When we receive His faith, we are able to walk on this pathway and work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Php 2:12.

The blessing confirmed on Mount Moriah

- After Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah 'according to the Spirit', God tested Abraham. Gal 4:29. Gen 22:1. This was the Lord's initiative to prove in Abraham the faith of the Son of God that had become his faith when he received a new name. Notably, the Lord did not come to Abraham saying, 'Do not fear'; He simply addressed Abraham according to his new name. He said, 'Abraham!'. Abraham responded, saying, 'Here I am'. Gen 22:1.

- Abraham's response, 'Here I am', was his faith confession which belonged to his name, 'Abram-Yah'. He was saying to the Lord, 'I am in You and You are in me, and I live by Your faith'. This was the faith that the Lord was endeavouring to prove in Abraham so that Abraham and his household would *inherit* everything that the Lord had already *promised* to him.

- God said to Abraham, 'Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.' Gen 22:2. The mountain which God showed Abraham in the land of Moriah was a three-day, three-night journey from where they were residing. This mountain later became known as Mount Calvary. It was the place where Jesus was crucified.

- The three-day, three-night journey of Abraham and Isaac was symbolic of Christ's three-day, three-night offering, which Paul called 'the operation of God [the Father]'. Col 2:12. In the course of this 'operation', through His death, burial and resurrection, the Son of Man accomplished our redemption, our new birth, and our glorification as a son of God. Abraham and Isaac journeyed together in faith for their participation in this operation. We note, in this regard, that Isaac carried the wood for the sacrifice on his back, as he and his father ascended Mount Moriah. Gen 22:6. Likewise, Jesus carried the wood of His cross as He, with His Father, journeyed together in faith for Their offering on Mount Calvary. Joh 19:17.

- After Abraham had bound his son on the altar, and reached out his hand to pick up the knife, the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven. It was the Son of God who spoke to Abraham, through the angel, on the top of Moriah. The Son of God spoke on behalf of the Father because Abraham's offering was to God. He said to Abraham, '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.

- Hebrew scholars have recognised the inadequacy of the English word 'know' to convey the meaning of this statement, 'Now I *know* that you fear God'. The closest parallel is the statement that 'Adam *knew* Eve his wife'. Gen 4:1. The word is intended to describe *intimate fellowship* which produces the multiplication of life. The statement, 'Now I know that you fear God', describes an intimate fellowship of faith between the Son of God and Abraham. The faith of the Son of God is the fear of God.

- On the top of Mount Moriah, Abraham completed the journey that had delivered him from his own fear, and delivered him to the fear of God.

The fear of God is the respect and worship that belongs to the very fellowship of offering in Yahweh. It is the respect that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have toward one another in Their own fellowship of offering. The end of Abraham's journey of faith was an intimate knowledge of the fear of God, because he had received the faith of the Son of God to participate in the fellowship of Yahweh.

- Abraham journeyed to Mount Moriah with Isaac in the faith that God would raise his son from the dead. The offering that God called Abraham to make revealed the faith of the Son of God, and also revealed the faith of God the Father. The faith of the Son and of the Father were manifest in time when Christ, by Eternal Spirit from the Holy Spirit, offered Himself in obedience to the Father from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. Heb 9:14. The Father made His only Son an offering for sin so that we might become the righteousness of God in the Son. 2Co 5:21. Abraham and Isaac were invited to participate in this fellowship of faith.

- In this fellowship of offering in Yahweh, Abraham offered Isaac and received him back again, figuratively, from the dead. Heb 11:19. This *signified* both the faith of the Father and the faith of the Son. The apostle Paul explained that when Jesus was raised from the dead, He was begotten by God the Father *a second time* when the Father said to Him, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.' Act 13:33. Likewise, when Abraham received Isaac back from the dead, Isaac was, figuratively, begotten a second time.

- Isaac, in type, was begotten again from the dead by the faith of God the Father, which Abraham received and demonstrated. In this regard, the two fathers were joined in one faith in the fellowship of Yahweh. This is the faith for many sons of God to be begotten from the dead in Christ, whose own faith to offer Himself was demonstrated by Isaac. The Father and Abraham believed for our sonship to be realised in the resurrection of Christ. As we receive the faith of the Son of God for our fellowship in His offering, we are raised as a son of God and sons of Abraham. Gal 3:29. We are heirs of the glorious promise made to Abraham and his Seed, Christ. Gal 3:16.

- To understand the principle of signification, both of the faith of the Son and of the Father, it is helpful to recognise that the revelation of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God was *signified* by the angel of the Lord to Abraham on Mount Moriah, in the same way that the revelation of Jesus Christ was *signified* by the angel of the Lord to the apostle John on the island of Patmos. As the word was signified to him on Mount Moriah,

Abraham became a *participant* in the fulfilment of the will of God through the offering of Jesus Christ on Mount Calvary.

- After Abraham offered the ram, representing Christ as the Lamb of God, the angel of the Lord called to him a second time out of heaven. Again, it was the Son of God who spoke to Abraham, through the angel, on behalf of the Father. The counsel of God – which is the word of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit from before the foundation of the world – was confirmed by the immutable oath of God, assuring the fulfilment of the Everlasting Covenant that He had made with Abraham. This was the true circumcision. Abraham's descendants were to circumcise their children in faith for participation in this covenant reality.

- What was promised to Abraham, when he was earlier directed by the Lord to look toward heaven to see his descendants as numerous as the stars, was confirmed by the immutable oath of God proclaimed on Mount Moriah. Gen 15:5. The Lord declared, '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 all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice*.' Gen 22:16-18.

- Significantly, through this oath, the promise of sonship was made sure to everyone who is the seed of Abraham, because they have obtained the same faith that he received. As Paul declared, 'Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, *so that the promise might be sure to all the seed*, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to *those who are of the faith of Abraham*.' Rom 4:16.

- Having been blessed with the life and faith of Christ, it is incumbent upon us to be diligent to make our call and election *sure*. 2Pe 1:10. Heb 3:6. Paul exhorted us to be steadfast, in this regard, writing, 'For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast [lit: sure] to the end'. Heb 3:14. *This is our response to the word of God's oath*, which has established the hope of sonship as an anchor of our soul, both sure and steadfast. Heb 6:19.

Section Ten

Recovery to fellowship at the tree of life

Truth exchanged for a lie

- Adam, when he was created, was directed by God to become a multitude of nations, and to fill the whole earth. He was given power to subdue and rule over everything upon the earth. Gen 1:28. To fulfil this mandate, Adam received the wisdom and authority necessary to take dominion over the kingdom of God upon the earth, in fellowship with Christ as the Creator. As a man, he named and integrated every living thing that the Son created on behalf of the Father. Gen 1:26-28. Gen 2:19-20.

- Satan, the serpent of old, masquerading in the physical form of a seraph, sought, through deception, by sorcery, to take the mandate that had been given to Adam and the woman and make it substantial in relation to himself. He did this by becoming the origin and father of lies. Joh 8:44. In this regard, Satan masqueraded as the father of *an alternative word*. His aim was for his word to replace the word of God together with its corresponding faith and hope that came from the Father, through Christ.

- Eve was deceived and mesmerised, through enchantment, into believing that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, if she ate its fruit, would sustain her life apart from God. That is, she perceived its fruit to be good for food so that her life would not be dependent upon God. She also believed that it would give her power to fulfil her desires and expectations, being pleasant to her eyes. She, likewise, considered that the fruit would make her wise as a person who could judge between good and evil. Gen 3:6. She thought that this would become her role as the one who could make a difference between good and evil.

- In contrast to the woman, Adam was not deceived. 1Ti 2:14. Rather, in disobedience to the command of God, he departed from the continued *choice* of faith, hope, and love. This was the culture of fellowship that he had with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit at the tree of life. This daily choice had been the expression of his freedom.

- Mankind's wickedness was to *exchange* the truth of God for a lie. Rom 1:20-25. Specifically, man exchanged truth for Satan's lie. Through this exchange, Satan became the god of this world. 2Co 4:4. Evidently, Satan works by advantage through *trading*. Eze 28:16. This is one of his devices for taking advantage of us. 2Co 2:11.

- Through Adam's disobedience, 'another law' was established in the heart of every person who would be brought to birth through procreation. Rom 5:12. This law brings them into bondage to the law of sin and death. Rom 7:23. Sin-sickness, leading to death, became an '*infirmity'* afflicting every person who would ever be born. Even as Christians, as a result of 'the other law', our infirmity is to misappropriate the word of God for our own ends. It is the drive to covet what we believe will give us life, and then exchange the word of our sanctification for a projection. We do not understand why we do this, for what we will to do, we do not practise. Instead, we find ourselves doing the things that we hate, which brings us under condemnation. Rom 7:15.

- A notable indicator of this infirmity at work within us is the emotions, or passions of sin, that are aroused in our person when our way and expression, informed by the word of God, is not accepted by others. Rom 7:5. Significantly, these emotions and their expression are *enflamed* by the very law, or word, that we have misappropriated through the law of our mind. This happens because the word proceeding from the hand of Christ is likened to a *fiery law* and *flashes of lightening*. Deu 33:2. Hab 3:4.

- James, the brother of Jesus, explained that the tongue, as it expresses our other law, *is a fire*. He wrote, 'See how great a forest a little fire kindles! *And the tongue is a fire*, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; *and it is set on fire by hell.'* Jas 3:5-6. It is sobering to recognise that our bitterness, discontent, accusations and the venting that we do as a victim of others and of our circumstances, are the evidence that we have taken hold of the Law for our own ends. It is now enabling us to curse others.

Cursing and the Law

- In response to the Fall, the Lord God *cursed the serpent*. Gen 3:14-15. The Lord God also *cursed the ground* for Adam's sake, because he heeded the voice of his wife and disobeyed the command of God. Gen 3:17-19. However, it is notable that He did not curse Adam or the woman.

- However, once the Law was given as a covenant to the children of Israel, they were now able to be cursed. Deu 30:19. Significantly, the Law that was given at Mount Sinai was the *marriage covenant* between the Son of God and the children of Israel. Jer 31:31-32. This was an unhappy marriage, for the Son's bride was continually unfaithful. For those who lived by faith, the Law should have been a tutor to bring them to Christ. However, the majority of the people forsook faith. Deu 32:20. They had no desire for relationship with God. Deu 32:15-18. They misappropriated the Law in pursuit of their own life and expression, and repeatedly went after idols.

- The apostle Paul has warned that having received the great and precious promises of sonship, made available through the New Covenant of the Spirit, it is possible to exchange truth for a lie *again,* and thereby depart from the fellowship of Yahweh to which we were called. 2Co 11:3-4. Christ's first letter to the seven churches of Asia, recorded in the book of Revelation, reveals that the Ephesian presbytery and church had fallen from first love because of the very sorcery identified by Paul. Rev 2:4-5.

- The call to every presbytery and church is to remember from where we have fallen, repent, and do the first works. In this regard, we are being called back to the fellowship of faith at the tree of life, which Adam had with Yahweh prior to the Fall. Rev 2:7. This call to faith as kings and priests in the kingdom of God is not triumphalism. Rather, it is a call to be established as a son of God who is returning to the tree of life. In this fellowship, as sons of God, we are emptying ourselves to reveal the authority of the word of Christ, who is the King of kings and Lord of lords. This word is sourced from Christ; it is not an expression of ourselves through the works that belong to a projection. This would be sorcery, for sorcery involves exchanging the truth for a lie.

Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness

- The religious Jews endeavoured to establish their own righteousness by keeping the Law. Rom 10:3. Those who used the Law to establish their own righteousness stumbled at Christ. He was to them a stumbling stone and a rock of offence, as exemplified by the response of the Pharisees to His teaching. Rom 9:31-32.

- Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness. Rom 10:4. That is, He brought an end to self-righteousness through the Law, for the Law was taken out of the way when it was nailed to the cross in Himself. Now, when a person endeavours to be righteous according to the Law, it is being misappropriated from the cross. Those who do this forsake the blessing of the cross, and are cursed as part of the body of sin that was taken out to forgetfulness. This reveals that they are not of the faith of Abraham.

- When the Lord called Abraham to depart from the land of the Chaldeans, He said, '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 12:3. If we are those who are walking by the Spirit, we are not in bondage to the fear of death. We are people of faith, who belong to the household of Abraham. This means that we are not affected by cursing that is directed towards us by others.

- The protection that belongs to God's covenant people was exemplified by Balaam's inability to curse the children of Israel. We recall that Balak, the king of the Moabites, commissioned Balaam to curse the children of Israel as they made their way to the promised land. However, Balaam responded, saying, 'He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it.' Num 23:20. Balaam was unable to curse those whom the Lord had blessed.

- While it is true that those who belong to Christ cannot be cursed by another, we can be bewitched by sorcery if we succumb to the fear of death by setting our mind on the flesh rather than on the Spirit. We become vulnerable to cursing because we forsake the love of God, expressed in the fellowship of His offering, which would otherwise cast out all fear. 1Jn 4:18. We do this when we trust in ourselves and in our own understanding of the application and implications of God's word for us.

The doctrine of Balaam

- We also make ourselves vulnerable to cursing when we are sympathetic to, and engaged in, the conversations of those who are stumbling at the word of present truth. *This is the basis of the doctrine of Balaam.* Jesus identified this doctrine in His letter to the church in Pergamos. He addressed the presbytery as 'He who has the sharp two-edged sword'. Rev 2:12. He rebuked them, saying, 'I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a *stumbling block* before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.' Rev 2:14.

- The apostle Peter explained that Christ Himself becomes to us a stumbling stone and a rock of offence when we are *disobedient* to the word of present truth, exchanging this truth for the lie that belongs to our idolatrous projections. 1Pe 2:7-8. These projections are coverings to mask the *shame* of our nakedness as we live by the other law, seeking to define our own life and righteousness. Rom 9:33.

- Balaam taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel because he himself stumbled in relation to his gift and its expression. When Balak first sent dignitaries to Balaam, asking him to curse Israel, God expressly said to him, 'You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed.' Num 22:12.

- Balak then sent more noble princes to implore Balaam to curse the people, promising him great riches and to do whatever he said. Balaam responded saying, 'I will not go beyond the word of the Lord.' However, God had said, 'You shall not go.' Balaam invited them to stay with him while he waited to see if there was another word. Although Balaam knew what God had said, he hoped for another word because he coveted the riches and honour that Balak and the princes were offering. It was feeding his idol which was setting him at odds with God and His word.

- Significantly, God began to speak to Balaam through his idol, saying, 'If the men come to call you, rise and go with them; but only the word which I speak to you – that you shall do.' Num 22:20. Eze 14:4-5. God was still speaking to Balaam, and he was exercising his prophetic gift; however, it was now for his destruction because of his stumbling. Num 22:22-23.

- The doctrine of Balaam belongs to those with a gift who, themselves, stumble at Christ's word, which is a two-edged sword proceeding from His mouth through the ministry of Christ's *aggelos* messengers. Rev 2:12. These men may stumble because of their desire for gain or to maintain a ministry profile; or because of some discontent with the word direction in the presbytery; or because of a relational offence.

- The word that they speak may be true, but it is not the word proceeding from the fellowship of the presbytery on account of confession and testimony. It is a word that belongs to their own sense of ministry or purpose. They are ashamed of the gospel of God, on account of the shameful pursuit of their own expression. Unavoidably, they minister another gospel that promotes the idolatrous expression of self-righteousness and advances mixture with other religious cultures. In doing so, those who join their alternative conversation are caused to

stumble in relation to their sanctification revealed through the word of present truth.

Return to fellowship at the tree of life

- In Adam, we all died. 1Co 15:22. We were dead in trespasses and sins, separated from the life and fellowship of Yahweh. When the word of the Lord came calling to Adam to restore him, through atonement, to the pathway upon which he could obtain his predestination, it also came calling to each one of us. The call of God to Adam, and to humanity in Adam, was 'Where are you?' Gen 3:9.

- With this statement, Adam and Eve were given a choice. Likewise, we are given a choice. We are brought to the valley of decision. As the prophet Joel declared, 'Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.' Joe 3:14. In the valley of decision, the enslaving power of sin has been pushed back. We are free to choose, through repentance, to return again to Paradise and to the dominion that belongs to our predestination as sons of God.

- Making this choice begins with the acknowledgement of our sin and our departure from first love. Then, our repentance is to choose first love. This is the love and fellowship that man had with God at the tree of life. As we find repentance, God, through Christ, gives faith to us. By faith, we are able to obey from the heart the word of the kingdom that is being taught to us by Christ's messengers. We are now becoming a slave of this word. The word of which we have become a slave is the word of righteousness. We are, therefore, now also a slave of righteousness as we heed the proceeding word. Rom 6:17-19.

- The works that we do as a slave of righteousness are the works that belong to our name as a son of God. Christ has already accomplished these righteous works for us. Accordingly, to do these works of righteousness, we must, again, become His disciple-friend. Joh 15:15. In choosing repentance, we are again the friend of Christ, who is the King of kings and Lord of lords. Our confession is that Christ is our Lord and King, and that we have returned to the fellowship of the tree of life that is in the Paradise of God. Rev 2:7.

- In this fellowship, we are holding fast to the word that the Holy Spirit has delivered to us. He came to be our Helper, and our Deliverer from slavehood to sin and Satan. The Holy Spirit gives to us power to join the word of Christ, and to become obedient from the heart to the commands of Christ as the expression of our faith. The Holy Spirit accomplishes this

work within us by pouring the love of God, and the love for God, back into our heart. Rom 5:5. The love of God activates the faith of God within us, for faith in freedom, through choice, works by love. Gal 5:6. This is what it means to live in fellowship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We have returned to the fellowship of heavenly places, which is the New Jerusalem. We have come to Mount Zion and are eating from the tree of life! Heb 12:22-24.

Section Eleven

Faith for a lampstand church

- In the tabernacle of Moses, the lampstand was crafted from one piece of gold, using the symbolism that belongs to an almond tree. Exo 25:31-40. Notably, the symbolism of the lampstand does not depict an almond tree at a static point in time. Rather, it depicts a tree that is *growing*, and it particularly highlights the three stages of development that belong to the almond flowers. Recognising that a lampstand church *grows*, we need to understand *how it grows* to become the revelation of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh as the light of the world.

- The first point regarding the growth of a lampstand church is that it grows *from its root*. The apostle John identified the root of the lampstand when he declared, 'This is the message which we have heard from Him and declared to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.' 1Jn 1:5. When John said, 'God is Light', he was referring to the life and fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim*. The light that emanates from the fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim* is the light of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh.

- When we consider the life and fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim*, we note that the community of *Elohim* – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is the sum of all diversity. Equally, the fellowship of Yahweh is the sum of all unity. *Elohim* is Three and Yahweh is One. The sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh is the full capacity that belongs to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the fellowship of one Spirit, to multiply Their life and fellowship through offering.

- Before the foundation of the world, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit determined to make offering for the purpose of giving us Their life and including us in Their fellowship. They declared, 'Let Us make man in Our image and according to Our likeness.' Gen 1:26. The community of *Elohim does not grow*. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are, and will always be,

the only members of the Godhead. However, the fellowship of Yahweh *does grow,* as men are born of God's own life and are then taught to abide in the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

- It is important to begin with this fundamental understanding regarding a lampstand. The purpose of a lampstand church is to reveal the multiplication of the life and fellowship of Yahweh by offering. For this reason, the *light* of a lampstand church is the *light* of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh. The light of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh, which is revealed by a lampstand church, is the *light* of the world. Notably, the light of a lampstand church is *the only light* that shines in the darkness of this present world.

The need to buy the word

- In our present season, the Lord is proclaiming the word on lampstand churches to us for *a second time*. During this season of visitation, Jesus Christ is addressing every leader and household and asking us to '*buy' this word* on lampstand churches. A believer who is buying the word recognises that they are not the source of the word. However, once they have bought the word, it does belong to them. The word is in their mouth and in their heart. It has become their precious possession. In this regard, we must heed the admonition of the wise man to '*buy the truth*, and do not sell it'. Pro 23:23.

- Jesus admonished the presbytery and church in Laodicea by saying, '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. Notably, before we can buy gold and white garments, we need the light of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh that shines from the face of Christ, through the messengers in His right hand, to illuminate the eyes of our heart *so that we can see*. Without receiving this spiritual sight, we will not know that we need to buy gold and white garments.

- The Laodiceans were evidently part of the body of Christ, but Jesus warned them that He would spew them *out of His body* unless they turned from their religious mixture and arrogance. We note that lukewarm water is the mixture of hot and cold water. The result of a mixed Christian culture is often a tepid ambivalence to the word of present truth that is proclaimed by the messengers of Christ. This kind of ambivalence is symptomatic of the view that the word of present truth is a helpful resource, but it is not necessary for salvation.

- The testimony of the leaders in Laodicea was, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'. Rev 3:17. This was their deception. The apostle Paul addressed the same religious arrogance in the Corinthian church. He said, 'What do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings without us.' 1Co 4:7-8. Evidently, there were many leaders in Corinth who believed that they had graduated as messengers, and they no longer needed fellowship with Paul in a presbytery.

- The Latter Rain movement produced many preachers and teachers who claimed to be messengers of Christ to the wider body of Christ. Some men did have ministry grace, and their ministry was accompanied by gifts of healing, but they needed to be relationally connected and submitted to the revelation of the word of Christ in the fellowship of a presbytery. Their unwillingness to humble themselves to join the fellowship of a presbytery contributed to the fall of many of those men into financial corruption and sexual immorality. In many cases, it also led to the exacerbation of personality disorders and family dysfunction.

- In our own history, there have also been many leaders from various denominational backgrounds who have professed a willingness to join the fellowship of a presbytery, but they have related to the presbytery in a collegial mode, as if it is 'a ministers fraternal'. Some leaders have sought to mix the revelation of the word of present truth with their own theological background and personal interpretation of the Scripture. This mixture has resulted in *a lukewarm demeanour* toward the word of present truth, and a *lukewarm participation* in the fellowship of the presbytery.

Turning to see the voice that is speaking to us

- As the word on lampstand churches is being proclaimed to us a second time, it is necessary for every leader and household to turn in response to the word, *to see the voice* of Jesus Christ in the middle of His lampstand churches. The apostle John testified, 'I turned to *see the voice* that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands.' Rev 1:12. The action of turning is our accountable choice to respond to Christ's voice. We turn to the lordship of the Holy Spirit, who is the One who is speaking to Christ's lampstand churches through the messengers in the right hand of Christ. Rev 2:7.

- The apostle Paul declared that when we turn to the lordship of the Holy Spirit by responding to what He is saying to the churches, the veil that has

covered our eyes in relation to the written Scriptures is removed. 2Co 3:16. The removal of the veil enables our eyes to be anointed with the light of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh so that we can see. What do we see? We see what the apostle John saw! We see that Jesus Christ possesses the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh, and that He is ministering the power of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh to His lampstand churches in every nation through the presbyteries in His right hand.

- In addition to seeing the administration that belongs to the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh, we also see *the outcome* of the ministry of the Spirit. The outcome of the ministry of a presbytery in the right hand of Christ, to the households that belong to a lampstand church, is that people find freedom and liberty. This includes freedom from sin, freedom from bondage to fear, and freedom from the oppression of unclean spirits. The ministry of the Spirit that proceeds from the households that belong to a lampstand church, into the darkness of this present world, has the same impact – it brings liberty!

- The apostle Paul rejoiced that wherever the administration of the 'Spirit of the Lord is, *there is liberty*'. 2Co 3:17. Jesus Himself declared that freedom and liberty is the outcome of the ministry of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh. When He stood up in the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth, He declared, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, *to proclaim liberty* to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, *to set at liberty* those who are oppressed.' Luk 4:18.

- Jesus counselled the leaders in Laodicea to anoint their eyes with eye salve, because it is not possible to understand the fellowship of a presbytery and the fellowship of a lampstand church without this anointing. Jesus described the seven stars in His right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, as 'a mystery', because they reveal the life and fellowship of Yahweh and they can only be understood by the illumination of the Spirit. A lampstand church is the administration of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh. It is not a man-made organisation or denominational structure.

- Once we have been awakened from our spiritual slumber to see the administration of Christ's lampstand churches, we must proceed to buy 'the double portion' of oil that is necessary for us to become active participants in His administration. The necessity for a double portion of oil is the lesson of the parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins. This lesson is particularly relevant for us as we approach the time when the Father will take His seat to establish His kingdom on the earth. It is

only those who have purchased a double portion of oil, through their active participation in lampstand churches now, who will be part of the lampstand administration before the Father's throne in the time of the end.

- In this regard, Jesus addressed each leader and household in Laodicea as part of 'a foolish virgin'. He counselled them to buy gold refined in the fire and white garments to cover the shame of their nakedness. The gold that is refined in the fire is the gold that belongs to a lampstand church. We are reminded that the lampstand in the tabernacle of Moses was crafted from one piece of gold. And the apostle John saw Jesus Christ standing in the middle of seven *golden lampstands*. Rev 1:12. We have bought gold from Christ when our faith for a lampstand church has been refined and proven through the fiery trial. 1Pe 1:7.

The evidence of our faith for a lampstand church

- What does faith for a lampstand church look like? In the first case, it is the faith that Jesus Christ is speaking from heaven to His lampstand churches, by the Holy Spirit, through messengers in His right hand. Heb 12:25. In every generation of the church, the messengers of Christ proclaim the Scriptures, by the Holy Spirit, as a word of present truth. Speaking about the ministry of the word of present truth, the apostle Peter declared, 'So we 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 arises in your hearts.' 2Pe 1:19.

- Our faith for a lampstand church will be demonstrated by the way that we continue to give more earnest heed to the word of present truth. Furthermore, in the light of the word that we are receiving, our faith for a lampstand church will be demonstrated by our commitment to discipleship in relation to our own marriage and household. The reformation of the culture of our homes is an integral part of buying gold refined in the fire, because a lampstand church is composed of worthy houses that have been discipled to become firstfruits houses.

- In the second time of the word on lampstand, Jesus Christ is speaking directly to every household. Each household must possess faith to be part of a lampstand church. Jesus said to the church in Laodicea, 'Behold, I stand at the door [of every house] and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.' Rev 3:20. Jesus knocks on the door of every household, through the ministry of the messengers in His right hand who He has sent to look for

worthy houses. The blessing of peace is the fellowship of Yahweh that is extended to every worthy house.

- In addition to the gold that is refined in the fire, we must also purchase the white garments that are necessary to cover the shame of our nakedness. The white garments replace the projections that we have created for ourselves in relation to our own work and ministry. We are reminded that the unclean daughters of Zion want to be called by the name of Christ, but they insist on wearing their own clothing. Isa 4:1. In this attitude, there have been many preachers and teachers who have presumed to minister in the name of Christ. However, they have only proclaimed their own word as an expression of their own self-appointed ministry.

- For a leader to purchase white garments, he must be willing to present himself in the fellowship of a presbytery so that he can receive some reflection from his brethren regarding his sanctification as a messenger of Christ. The white garments belong to the expression of the sanctification of his unique name. Rev 3:4-5. Rev 19:8. When a leader has given himself to be sanctified in the fellowship of a presbytery, he can then be sent from the fellowship of a presbytery to do the work of the ministry. The apostle Paul highlighted that every messenger must be sent from a fellowship, by saying, 'And how shall they preach unless they are sent?' Rom 10:15.

- A messenger, who is clothed in white garments, will proclaim the word of present truth that has been laid down to them according to the sanctification of their own name. They will not speak in their own name or proclaim an alternative word. Jesus exemplified this mode of ministry when He declared, 'I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.' Joh 12:49. A messenger is not the source of their own word. However, at the same time, they must buy the word so that they exemplify and *own the word* that they are proclaiming.

- The evidence that a messenger has bought the word, so that they own the word, will be their willingness to suffer for the sake of the word. The prophet Jeremiah learnt this lesson. He testified, 'The word of the Lord was made to me a reproach and a derision daily. Then I said, "I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name". But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not.' Jer 20:8-9. Likewise, the Lord said to Ananias regarding Paul's ministry, 'I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake'. Act 9:16.

- There are many people who have bought this word on lampstand churches, and it is demonstrated by their willingness to suffer for it. However, there are also many who have associated themselves with a lampstand church for many years, and they are still unclear or ambivalent in relation to the word and its implications. In this season of the second time, the Lord is asking every leader and every household: 'Are you willing to buy the word on lampstand churches *so that you own it*?' The follow up question is: 'Are *you willing to suffer* as a messenger of this word on lampstand churches for the sake of the body of Christ?'