

The Elijah ministry
in the Church
the work of the Spirit

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Preface

Preaching peace

The ministry of Elijah involves the proclamation of *the gospel of peace*. In essence, this is the message, 'All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.' Isa 40:6-8.

Messengers who are sent by Christ proclaim this message through testimony as those who are of 'like passions' with their hearers. Jas 5:13-18. They are able to testify in this manner because they themselves have responded to the gospel of peace. By faith, they have been born of God and joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings as a member of His body. In this fellowship, they are being delivered from living according to the flesh (upon which the judgement of God has already been proclaimed), and they are being established as part of a corporate new creation through obedience to the word of Christ. 2Co 5:16-17.

As a new creation in Christ, a believer has peace with God because they are being made one with Yahweh and with their fellow members of the body of Christ. Rom 5:1. 1Co 6:17. 1Co 12:13. That is, they are no longer an enemy of God through the pursuit of their carnal endeavours and self-definition. Rather, they are one of His ambassadors, ministering the peace that they are obtaining in Christ to those who receive their testimony. Mat 10:13.

The ministry of reconciliation

Through the ministry of this peace, their hearers are introduced to Jesus Christ, whom the prophet Malachi identified as 'the Messenger of the Covenant'. Mal 3:1. Christ's message, which is proclaimed from presbyteries in His right hand, is the *gospel of God*. Rev 1:20. Rom 1:1.

The gospel of God is the fundamental message of the Scriptures. It is the declaration of the covenant initiative of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to make us

in Their image and according to Their likeness. Gen 1:26. It details how a person is made in the image and likeness of God as a son of God, a son of man and a temple of the Holy Spirit, through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. The apostle Paul testified that he was not ashamed of this message, describing it as ‘the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes’. Rom 1:16.

Inasmuch as the gospel of God is the essential *message* of the Scriptures, the essential *ministry* of this gospel is reconciliation. That is, it is the ministry of the process through which we, who were created from the dust of the earth, can *choose* to become whom God *predestined* us to be – sons of God and sons of men in the image and likeness of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is a most significant and wonderful point for us to understand.

On account of our theological traditions, reconciliation has generally been viewed as a legal transaction. The prevailing understanding is that Christ died on our behalf to satisfy the requirements of God’s Law which, otherwise, condemns us to eternal death because of our sin. Rom 6:23. In other words, Jesus paid the price for our sin so that we could once again be acceptable to God the Father.

This understanding of the reconciliation that was accomplished through the offering of Christ is *completely inadequate*. In fact, dealing with sin was not even the primary focus of the reconciling work that Jesus Christ fulfilled on the cross. To truly understand the principle of reconciliation, we must be illuminated to who God is, and to His covenant purpose for mankind. Having detailed this work in Chapter 1, let us summarise this ministry.

God was made like us so we could be made like Them

The covenant initiative of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to make us in Their image and likeness is Their desire to *share Their life and fellowship with mankind*. This initiative was chosen in freedom. The freedom of choice is fundamental to giving, which reveals love. Love is who They are and reveals how They live in the fellowship of one Spirit. 1Jn 4:8. In love, each Person of the Godhead freely chose to give Himself to reveal the other two in order to share Their life and fellowship with us; that is, that we might abide in Them and They might abide in us. 1Jn 4:16.

Theologians have not understood that love is the ultimate statement of who God is, why He created us, and how we can be made one with Him. One prominent stream of theology views our creation and end as merely the expression of the sovereignty of God – some are predestined to salvation, while others are predestined to damnation. Another prominent view is that, within the sovereignty of God, mankind was created with a free will; however, this capacity was debilitated by original sin. Jesus, God’s Son, was punished in the place of sinners, satisfying the demands of justice and propitiation that belong to God and define how He lives. On account of this death, God can justly forgive the sins of those who demonstrate faith. These theologies are oblivious to the covenant initiative of God, revealing His love through offering.

The creation of man with a body, soul and spirit was a key step in the fulfilment of this covenant desire. However, the Scriptures clearly reveal that Adam's creation was *not* the full expression of the image and likeness of God. Paul explained that Adam was 'a *type* of Him who was to come'. Rom 5:14. That is, he was not the *substance*, or end, of God's creation. This means that although Adam had a relationship with God, he did not yet live by Their '*Zoe*' life as part of Their fellowship. We see that, even prior to the Fall, man was not yet 'at one' with God.

The Man who was to come, of whom Adam was a type, is Jesus Christ. He was to become the first Man 'at one' with God. To accomplish this end, God would need to come in the flesh and be made like us. Then, through offering, the Son would be glorified as a Man in the image and likeness of God, pioneering a pathway upon which we could choose our predestination and become like Him.

God came in the flesh when Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, for the Scriptures teach us that it pleased the Father that all the fullness of Yahweh should dwell in the Son of God. Mat 1:23. Col 1:19. Then, in the garden of Gethsemane, the offering of Father, Son and Holy Spirit from *before* was manifest. This offering was the provision for the fulfilment of Their Covenant. Within Their fellowship, each Person laid down Their life to a complete endpoint, or death, to share Their life with us and to include us in Their fellowship.

The Son was strengthened with Eternal Spirit from the Holy Spirit to drink the cup of sin according to the will of the Father. Luk 22:43. By this means, He was made an offering for sin. 2Co 5:21. Isa 53:10. As God in the flesh, *Jesus was now made mortal*. Being forsaken by the Father, He was fully identified with us, and we were all joined to Him. As Jesus began to sweat great drops of blood that fell to the ground, it revealed that the Godhead was torn and broken for the purpose of making Their life and fellowship available to us.

Having made the Son to be sin, the Father called the Son to author for mankind a pathway of salvation from the death of sin and separation from God, to eternal life and fellowship with Yahweh. As Jesus suffered on this journey, He was progressively glorified as a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek and was made a Man in the image and likeness of God.

When Jesus asked, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?', He was proclaiming to the Father that the work was finished; there was no longer any need for Him to remain forsaken by the Father. Mat 27:46. He had pioneered the pathway of salvation upon which those who obey His word can be made just like Him. Heb 5:8-10. Significantly, the breach in the Godhead was now a way that had been opened for us through Christ's flesh, into the life and fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim*.

In short, God became flesh and was made like us in all things to establish a pathway, or process, through which we could be made in Their image and likeness. As we obey the word proclaimed by our great High Priest, we are able to journey on

this pathway and become sons of God and sons of men who are of the substance of Christ and are established in the fellowship of Yahweh, forever! Eph 4:13.

Atonement is to be made one

This is the reconciliation. It is the means by which God is made one with us and we are made one with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit forever. Forgiveness of sins and cleansing by the blood of the Covenant are inherent in this offering. We receive this forgiveness and cleansing as we receive the word of Christ and walk in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. 1Jn 1:7. Each day, as we fellowship with Christ in this journey, we are obtaining our predestination as sons of men in the image and likeness of God. This is the true meaning of atonement, and is the fulfilment of Their love for us!

Jesus prayed for this outcome of His offering just prior to the commencement of His suffering journey. He said to the Father, 'I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; *that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us*, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.' Joh 17:20-23.

The apostle Paul summarised this amazing outcome of Christ's offering journey, writing, 'Now all things are of God, *who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ*, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.' 2Co 5:18-19. The word of reconciliation is the ministry of the gospel of God that is proclaimed by those who have become the *disciples of Christ*.

The importance of discipleship

A disciple is a son of God who, through obedience to the commands of Jesus, our great High Priest, walks on the pathway of salvation that He pioneered. This is possible only by the capacity of the Holy Spirit. As we journey with Christ on this pathway, we are delivered from sin and from living according to the flesh, and we are progressively changing from glory to glory into the image of the Son. 2Co 3:18. Importantly, discipleship is the only way through which a person can obtain eternal life in the fellowship of Yahweh.

Jesus was being unambiguous as He stipulated the conditions for discipleship. He said, 'If *anyone* comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever *does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.*' Luk 14:26-27.

The Lord must be first in all things pertaining to our life, even in relation to our families. However, as we embrace the way of the cross that belongs to discipleship, there is grace for reformation in our families. Mary, the mother of Jesus, found grace for change at the foot of the cross. From the cross, Jesus gave Mary a command regarding her motherhood and her household. As she turned to Christ and received His word, she was delivered from her carnal expectations, which had obligated her family, and she began to walk in a new way as a mother. This reformation was an implication of her discipleship, enabling her to minister reconciliation to her family. Joh 19:26-27. Act 1:14.

Teaching further on discipleship, Jesus then said, 'For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it - lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish".' Luk 14:28-30.

With this statement, Jesus was highlighting the truth that discipleship involves coming to Christ, the Chief Cornerstone, to build on Him. He warned us, as did the apostle Paul, to consider how we build on the foundation. 1Co 3:10-13. In this regard, we must accept the need to forsake our ambitions, projections and self-expression, which Paul likened to building with wood, hay and stubble. We will not be able to finish our building if they are the basis of its construction. Our offences and reactions when we are not being received as we would like or when our endeavours are being thwarted by the Spirit as He breathes on them, demonstrate our disobedience to the word of Christ. At this point, we are stumbling over Christ, and we are at risk of deviating from the pathway of discipleship as 'a castaway'. 1Co 9:27.

We all must heed this warning, regardless of how long we have been 'in the way of the Lord'. Act 18:25. Even the apostle Paul was mindful of the need for obedience to the word and application to discipleship. He testified, saying, 'But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified'. 1Co 9:27. The key to building with materials that endure unto salvation is *obedience to Christ*.

Importantly, we do not set the terms for our discipleship. These are established for us by Jesus, the conquering Slave and our great High Priest. Highlighting this reality, Jesus said, 'Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not *forsake all that he has* cannot be My disciple.' Luk 14:31-33.

Because of the Fall, the whole of mankind became a kingdom of darkness under the rulership of Satan. We became the enemies of God on account of sin. Jesus Christ came into the world as the King of another kingdom, which is not of this world. Joh 18:33-37. He had come down from above to proclaim this kingdom. Joh 8:23.

Through His offering on the cross, Christ triumphed over every principality and power. Col 2:15. For this reason, the first implication of the message of the cross is judgement upon all those who belong to any kingdom other than His kingdom.

We must all heed Jesus' instruction to send 'a delegation' to ask for 'the conditions of peace'. His 'conditions', which He makes known to us through His messengers, are that we must become a slave of righteousness or we will die in our sins. This is, in fact, the implications of the gospel of peace - all flesh is judged and perishing, but the word of the Lord to which we are being delivered as slaves endures forever. Although we are called to 'forsake all' to become a disciple, the inheritance that belongs to those who journey with Christ, yoked to Him, is far beyond what we could ever imagine!

With this in mind, we can make it our aim, whether we are experiencing 'the dying' or 'the living' of Jesus, to be well pleasing to Him. 2Co 4:10. We do this, recognising that we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, where we will receive recompense for the things that we have done in our physical, mortal body. 2Co 5:9-10. Let us, therefore, embrace the gospel of peace and be joined to the ministry of reconciliation which has been committed to us through the gospel of God.

Chapter I

The suffering great High Priest

There is no sin in God, *before*

In the publication, *The mystery of Christ and the Church*, we noted the work of Jesus Christ, our great High Priest. We understood that Jesus was made a mortal Man so that He could suffer death and then be perfected and glorified. During this process, He was 'in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin'. Heb 4:15. This was essential to the fulfilment of God's purpose *for us*. To comprehend this purpose more fully, and to understand how it was accomplished through the offering of Christ, we must give further consideration to the reason *why* Jesus Christ suffered and was tempted as *a high priest*.

Before the initiation of God's covenant purpose for us, there was only the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There was no sin in God, nor was He able to be tempted to sin, *for He is love*. 1Jn 4:16. Note that He did not become love, for He has no beginning nor end; He is I AM. God cannot be anything other than who He is. This does not mean that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have no choice. Rather, Their choice is revealed by the expression of Their love. They live in freedom, choosing to give Themselves to each other in constant offering. This is Their fellowship in one Spirit. Love is personified through this fellowship of offering, and reveals Their name 'Yahweh *Elohim*'. This love was acutely manifest by the covenant declaration of *Elohim*. In the fellowship of love that belongs to Their name, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit *chose*, saying, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.' Gen 1:26.

God's covenant initiative to make us in Their image and likeness is Their desire to share Their life and fellowship with mankind. Choice is essential to Their life and fellowship because it works by 'giving-love'. That is, without the dignity and accountability of choice, nothing can be given. Accordingly, the freedom of choice is fundamental to our creation and to God's plan for us. In the unfolding of God's plan, we are all given the opportunity to choose either what God has chosen for us

(to be made in the image and likeness of God) or to choose sin (any alternative to God's perfect will for us). Eternal life belongs to those who choose what God has chosen for them. Eternal death is the portion that belongs to those who choose sin. The offering of Christ on the cross established the place, and implications, of choice, for every person.

God in the flesh

By Eternal Spirit, Yahweh Son emptied Himself and was begotten by the Father as the Son of God. This established the beginning of God's creation. Through this process, the Son of God received a heavenly body. Even at this point, He was unable to sin or be tempted to sin. We know this, for the apostle John explained, 'Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and *he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.*' 1Jn 3:9. It was not until the Son of God *came in the flesh*, that He could be subject to temptation. This was necessary for the fulfilment of Their covenant purpose to make us in Their image and after Their likeness.

When Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, He was the Son of God in the flesh. Mat 1:23. *This was God in the flesh*, for it pleased the Father that all the fullness of Yahweh should dwell in the Son. Col 1:19. God came in the flesh to establish, for every person, the choice that belongs to His covenant purpose for them. He chose to become like us, and in doing so, subjected Himself to temptation to author the pathway upon which a person could choose to become like Him. Through this offering, He would also establish, forever, a sinless environment for a new creation. This happened, first, through Christ's earthly ministry as the Son of God, and then through His offering journey by which He was glorified as our great High Priest and as the Son of Man in the image and likeness of God.

Having come in the flesh, God was *now* able to be tempted. We note that, following His baptism in the Jordan River, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be *tempted by the devil*. Having fasted for forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. Targeting this aspect of His flesh, the tempter said to Jesus, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.' Mat 4:1-3. Jesus, the Son of God in the flesh, did not sin in response to Satan's enticements. Rather, drawing from the Scriptures, He exemplified the response of a son of God in the flesh to this particular temptation, saying, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." ' Mat 4:4.

Following another two failed attempts, Satan then left Jesus, waiting for a more opportune time to tempt Him. This opportunity arose for Satan when the Father made Christ an offering for sin in the garden of Gethsemane and He commenced the journey through which He was made a Man in the image and likeness of God and was crowned with glory and honour as great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

King of righteousness and King of peace

As the Son of Abraham and the Son of David, Jesus was born as a King-Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. That is, *as the Son of God in the flesh*, He was King of righteousness and King of peace. Heb 7:2-3. Although He was a King, His kingdom was not of this world. Joh 18:33-37. He had come down from above to proclaim the kingdom of heaven, and thereby reveal the Father to those who would receive Him. Joh 8:23.

Jesus' authority as *King of righteousness* was demonstrated as He revealed the Father through the works of obedience that He received from the Father. Joh 5:30. These good works included preaching the kingdom of God; the many miracles that He performed; the exercise of His authority over demonic spirits; and even His command over the natural environment. Joh 10:32. Mat 12:28. Mar 4:39. Act 10:38. Christ's authority as *King of peace* was expressed through the ministry of peace as He preached the gospel of the kingdom throughout the region of Judea, and ministered forgiveness to sinners. Joh 14:27. Luk 7:50. Act 10:36.

As the Son of God in the flesh, Jesus fully accomplished the works that the Father had prepared for Him to do. That is, He finished the 'kingly' work of proclaiming the kingdom of heaven and revealing the Father. Accordingly, just prior to the commencement of His offering journey, Jesus prayed to the Father, saying, 'I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.' Joh 17:4-5. This marked a shift in the priority of Christ's ministry. He would now be progressively glorified as the *Son of Man* to become a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. This process commenced in the garden of Gethsemane.

In the garden of Gethsemane, the offering of Yahweh was revealed in time and space. The Godhead was manifest as torn and bleeding, as each Person offered Themselves so that mankind could be made like Them and be joined to Their fellowship. The unique participation of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in this offering revealed the faith of each Person. They each obtained faith, which works by 'offering-love', from the word of Their Covenant. Rom 10:17. Gal 5:6. This was the word proclaiming Their initiative to make man in Their image and according to Their likeness. Gen 1:26. Let us now consider the faith of each Person in the Godhead that was expressed through Their participation in the offering that accomplished Their covenant purpose.

Made an offering for sin

We recall that when Jesus entered the garden, He withdrew from His disciples about a stone's throw. There, He knelt down and prayed, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.' Luk 22:41-42. This statement expressed the same faith that the Son exercised, *before*, when He emptied Himself, entrusting His intrinsic sonship glory to the Father, to be begotten as the Son of God. Php 2:5-7. As a Son, He was offering to

reveal the Father's will through obedience 'to the point of death, even the death of the cross'. Php 2:8. Praying, 'Not My will, but Yours, be done', Jesus entrusted Himself to the Father, believing that the Father would raise Him from the dead and glorify Him with the glory that He had *before*. 1Pe 2:23. Joh 17:5.

The Son's respect for the Father, and His godly fear, revealed the acceptability of His offering as the Lamb of God. Referring to Christ's offering in Gethsemane, the apostle Paul noted that 'He had *offered up* prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was *heard [accepted] because of His godly fear*'. Heb 5:7.

Significantly, Christ's offering was *not* progressively made perfect through the things that He suffered, for He was the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. Rev 13:8. That is, He was the embodiment of Yahweh's perfect offering. In this regard, the Father was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, as the Son offered Himself by the capacity of Eternal Spirit from the Holy Spirit. 2Co 5:19. Heb 9:14. By faith, the Holy Spirit had also given Himself to be the life of the Father, through which Christ would be brought back from the death of sin and progressively glorified as the Son of Man. Eph 3:16. 2Co 3:5-6. We could say that the Holy Spirit became the Spirit of *exanastasis* and glorification. Rom 8:11.

The Holy Spirit strengthened the Son with Eternal Spirit to drink the cup of sin according to the will of the Father. Luk 22:43. By this means, Jesus Christ, who had given Himself to reveal the reconciling initiative, or will, of the Father, was made an offering for sin. 2Co 5:21. Isa 53:10. As God in the flesh, *Jesus was now made mortal*, being fully identified with our separation from God on account of sin. Furthermore, we who were lost to God through Adam's transgression, were made members of His corporate body of sin. Rom 6:6. Explaining this point, Paul wrote that we see Jesus '*made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone*'. Heb 2:9. Having been fully identified with us, the Son of Man was forsaken by God the Father.

The faith of the Father was revealed when He forsook the Son who had become the body of sin. He had given His only begotten Son as an offering for sin, so that whoever believed in Him would have eternal life. Joh 3:16. When the Father gave the Son the cup of sin, He was *calling* the Son to *author* a pathway of salvation from the death of sin and separation from God, to eternal life and fellowship with Yahweh. To do this, Jesus Christ needed to learn obedience through the things which He suffered, as He, through Eternal Spirit, priested Himself a living sacrifice. Heb 5:8-10. This was a great cost to the Father. Not only had He already lost the whole of mankind through sin, but now, He had also lost His only begotten Son who was numbered with the transgressors. Isa 53:12. However, the Father trusted that the Son would proceed, by Eternal Spirit, to accomplish His will by becoming a Man in the image and likeness of God and a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

The rending of the Godhead was manifest, as Jesus, being in agony, prayed more earnestly. His sweat became like great clots of blood all over His body, which fell down to the ground. Luk 22:44. The suffering and bleeding of the Lamb of God revealed that the Godhead itself was torn and bleeding; and it remained torn and bleeding until the offering journey was completed.

Progressively glorified as High Priest

Inasmuch as becoming mortal was essential to being an offering for sin, it was also necessary for Christ's glorification as a High Priest. As Paul also observed, 'Therefore, in all things He had to be *made like His brethren* [in their mortal condition], that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation [atonement to God] for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.' Heb 2:17-18.

Suffering and temptation were fundamental to Christ's glorification as a High Priest, and the offering of Yahweh through which Their covenant purpose was accomplished. Significantly, from Gethsemane, Satan, again, endeavoured to tempt Christ to sin. Jesus acknowledged this enterprise when the chief priests, captains of the temple and the elders, came to arrest Him. He said to them, 'Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. *But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.*' Luk 22:52-53.

We see that the Son demonstrated His obedience as He was tempted and tried at all points as we are. Through this suffering process, He remained sinless. That is, He was acquainted with all of the alternatives to obedience, offered by Satan. Through the sufferings of death, He eternally satisfied God's judgement upon them, taking them out into the sea of God's forgetfulness. However, He also fulfilled all righteousness through His obedience to the Father; that is, He did not sin! For this reason, Paul wrote, 'For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was, in all points, tempted as we are, yet without sin'. Heb 4:15.

Through obedience, Jesus Christ was made perfect as a Man and was trained to become our great High Priest. This was Paul's point when he wrote, 'Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek".' Heb 5:8-10.

As He learnt the obedience of a priest, by the things which He suffered, He was also being made a Man in the image and likeness of God. This was the fulfilment of the priestly work to which God the Father had called the Son when He made the Son an offering for sin, resulting in the Son's separation from the Father. As Jesus learnt obedience through the things that He suffered, by the capacity of Eternal Spirit, He authored the pathway of salvation for each one of us. This was the only way that a

pathway into the holiest of holies could be authored for us. Significantly, prior to His offering pilgrimage, there was no priesthood in Yahweh, for it was not needed within Their fellowship, *before*.

Even though the focus of Christ's offering journey from Gethsemane to Calvary was on His glorification as High Priest, Jesus was still the King. He made this confession before Pilate, saying, '*You say rightly that I am a king*. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.' Joh 18:37. He was further manifest as the King of kings when He was invested with a crown of thorns in the Praetorium, and when the title, identifying Him as 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews', was fastened to His cross. Joh 19:19.

No longer forsaken

Christ's offering and suffering journey as the Son of Man, and as our High Priest, culminated in the breaking of His heart, as He cried out, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' Mat 27:46. With this cry, Jesus declared that there was no longer any need for Him to remain forsaken by the Father. He had atoned for us as God the Son in the flesh, and had offered Himself without spot to God as His Lamb. Through this process, He had been crowned with glory and honour as a High Priest. He had pioneered a pathway of salvation by which we could be glorified as sons of men in the image and likeness of God.

By stating that there was no longer any need for Him to remain forsaken, the Son was saying to the Father, 'Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given Me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells in Mount Zion.' Isa 8:18. This declaration revealed the glorification of the Son, as well as the glorification of the Father. Moreover, through this confession, the Father's confidence in the Son was vindicated. As we considered earlier, this confidence, revealing the faith of the Father, was expressed when the Father made the Son to be an offering for sin, effecting a breach in the Godhead. The Father did this in hope, that as the Son priested Himself as an offering, by Eternal Spirit, He would return to the Father proclaiming the obedience and salvation of a great multitude of sons.

Significantly, the breach in the Godhead was now a way that had been opened for us, through Christ's flesh, into the life and fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim*. This is now the pathway for us into the holiest of all! This was indicated by the rending of the veil in the temple, as Jesus declared His offering finished, and then committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father. Joh 19:30. Mat 27:50-51. The Father lifted Christ, and all of those who received Him, to His bosom. We, with Christ, through His priesthood and offering, were now eternally reconciled to God!

Summarising this outcome of Christ's offering journey, Paul wrote, 'Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, *through the veil, that is, His flesh*, and *having a High Priest over the house of God*, let us draw near with a true heart in full

assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water'. Heb 10:19-22.

The offering of Christ, which He completed alone, was, firstly, for the sake of Yahweh *Elohim's* name. That is, God had chosen to come in the flesh and to suffer temptation in the flesh, in order to pioneer a pathway of salvation upon which men could be made in Their image and likeness. This was the means by which Their covenant purpose would come to pass. The Lord God made this clear, declaring, 'I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went.' Eze 36:22.

The outcome of this journey was the establishment of a pathway upon which a believer, who obeys the word of Christ, can be cleansed, regenerated and perfected in love. Ezekiel further prophesied, saying, 'For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgements and do them.' Eze 36:24-27. Our salvation, as Christ priests to us a daily participation in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, *is still for His name's sake*. This is because our salvation is the fruit of Their offering and suffering. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are revealed as Their covenant initiative is fulfilled by this fruit.

Christ's ministry as a reconciler

Significantly, the quality of Christ's offering revealed the integrity of His obedience as a High Priest. *His obedience was essential to His ministry as a reconciler*. Why so? Because He was God in the flesh, who had been made like us, and to whom we had all been joined as part of the corporate body of sin. As High Priest, He offered Himself by Eternal Spirit, learning and fulfilling our obedience. Heb 5:8. Furthermore, He was bringing to nothing all of the alternatives to God's predestination for each person. Through this obedience, *God was atoning to God for us*. What do we mean by this?

By definition, a priest is a mediator between two parties. To fulfil this role, the priest must be fully acquainted with the position of both parties to whom he is ministering reconciliation. With this understanding in mind, we recognise that Jesus is much more than a human conciliator, like the Levitical priests who were appointed under the Old Covenant. They had to offer sacrifices on their own behalf and then on behalf of the people. Theirs was a ministry which was unable to effect change. In contrast, as our great High Priest, Jesus Christ provided atonement by *offering Himself*. Highlighting this distinction, Paul wrote, 'For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests

[under the Old Covenant], to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself'. Heb 7:26-27.

Jesus Christ offered Himself *as God* to Yahweh *Elohim* on our behalf. Equally, He made this offering *as a Man*, in the flesh. Through this offering process, He was pioneering the pathway by which man could be made in the image and likeness of God. As both God and Man, He was the *substance* of the atonement and the reconciliation between the Creator and the creature. Paul was highlighting this magnificent point when he declared that God was in the Man, Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. 2Co 5:19.

Without this understanding, the gap between the Creator and the creature *remains infinite*. This gap is eternal death, for it is an existence outside of God's purpose and plan for mankind. However, because we have such a great High Priest, the hope of eternal life is steadfast and sure. Through Christ's eternal priesthood, we are established in relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit because we are established, through the obedience that He learnt, in the process by which we are being made in the image and likeness of God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the eternal life that belongs to those who choose what God has chosen for them! Heb 9:15. 1Jn 5:20.

The ministry of choice

Paul explained that the glorification of the Son of Man as our great High Priest, who now ministers to us a fellowship in His offering, was *the main point* of his letter to the Hebrews. He wrote, '*Now this is the main point* of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, *a Minister of the sanctuary* [referring to the context of fellowship with Yahweh] and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man'. Heb 8:1-2.

The implication of Christ's priesthood toward us is initiated by the ministry of Elijah. This is the word that prepares the way before Christ, our great High Priest, who is the Messenger of the Covenant. It proclaims the message, 'All flesh is as grass ... but the word of our God stands forever'. Isa 40:6-8. Inherent in this message is the choice to continue to walk according to the flesh, or to turn in repentance and live by faith in obedience to the command of God, proclaimed by Christ. Describing this progression, the Lord said, 'Behold, I send My messenger [referring, in the first instance, to John the Baptist, who ministered in the spirit and power of Elijah], and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek [referring to Christ], will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming, says the Lord of hosts.' Mal 3:1.

Christ, our great High Priest, is the Messenger of the Covenant. His word, as King-Priest after the order of Melchizedek, is a *command* from the Father. This command is the word of our name. Anything less than this high calling is a

denigration of, or insult to, God's love. This is sin. It is to fall short of the glory of God. Rom 3:23. For this reason, inherent in the word of Christ, is the command to repent of the projections that are alternatives to what God has chosen for us, and to be cleansed of our rebellious, self-righteous iniquity that causes us to depart from the pathway that leads to life.

A person who is obedient to the command of Christ, proclaimed by His messengers, is established in the fellowship of His offering. As they are obedient to this word, He priests to them a participation in the pathway of salvation that He pioneered through His offering journey. As they journey with Him in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, they are delivered from the propensity to sin, and the love of God is perfected in them. The apostle John proclaimed this message, saying, 'But whoever keeps His word [the command of the High Priest], truly *the love of God is perfected in him* [he is being made into the image and likeness of God]. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.' 1Jn 2:5-6. When the love of God has been fully perfected in a believer, the expression of their choice in the fellowship of offering, is the same as that of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, forever.

An admonition

To prepare His followers for the time of the end, Jesus nominated some key markers that would signal its imminence. He said, 'Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because *lawlessness* [or iniquity] will abound, *the love of many will grow cold.*' Mat 24:9-12.

This great falling away is just before us. We are witnessing the beginnings of this decline, as false doctrines, promoting the acceptability of the flesh, proliferate in the broader church community, and the congregations of traditional denominations are diminishing. There are reports of many church leaders succumbing to corruption, battling addictions and depression, or departing the ministry altogether.

In short, within churches across the world, many are choosing sin and iniquity over and against the eternal priesthood of Christ, who has established the pathway of their salvation. Because they are choosing their own projections and expression, they have no access to the offering of Christ. He does not know them. As Jesus Himself said, 'Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practise *lawlessness!*" ' Mat 7:22-23. Even now, they are coming to His mercy seat in presumption, failing to recognise that this throne of grace is also His judgement seat, for He is Melchizedek, the King-Priest upon His throne.

We must all heed the admonition of the Spirit in this season. He is beseeching us, saying, 'Do not choose sin and iniquity'. If we continue, in rebellion, to choose our own way, we will go into blackness forever, being deceived, thinking that our darkness is light. Jesus said that this was great darkness indeed! Mat 6:23. We must receive and walk in the light of the word as it is ministered to us by Christ's messengers. Likewise, those who are called to be messengers of Christ, must proclaim the word by the Spirit.

The word is a two-edged sword

The word of Christ, proclaimed by His messengers, is described as a sharp two-edged sword. We note, in this regard, Paul's description of the word, when he wrote, 'Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.' Heb 4:11-13.

The key implication of this description of the word is that it has a polarising effect upon those who hear it. The ministry of the word is accompanied by prevenient grace. It makes a breach upon the heart of a hearer, exposing the thoughts and intents of their heart. At this point, they are granted the opportunity to choose the way that leads to life; that is, it calls them to obey the great High Priest and be delivered to the way of blamelessness and sanctification that leads to eternal life. This place of rest is the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for which we are made adequate as Christ priests to us a participation in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

Preaching for illumination

For many years now, we have been preaching the word for *illumination*. This ministry is only by the Spirit. It requires an accountable and deliberate departure from former, fleshly modes of communication, which include theological exposition, sensual appeal, and the promotion of righteousness through compliance. Marking the distinction between this ministry of condemnation, and a ministry that illuminates by the Spirit, the apostle Paul testified, 'For we are not, as so many, *peddling the word of God*; but as *of sincerity*, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God *in Christ*.' 2Co 2:17.

It is equally important for a messenger to receive and proclaim *the gospel of peace*. This is not the default message of those who are peddling the word of God. The gospel of peace is only known by those who have received, and responded with faith to, this message themselves. Paul was clear that the gospel of peace, which is also the gospel of God, is the only message that brings salvation. Rom 1:16. A messenger must have their feet shod with the preparation of this gospel. Eph 6:15. Accordingly, Paul said, 'How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not

believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!" ' Rom 10:14-15.

The word of God illuminates a hearer when it is ministered by the Spirit according to the grace that is given by Christ to a messenger. Eph 4:11-13. However, as we have noted from Paul's statement, the exercise of one's ministry gift must not be independent of their personal sanctification (of sincerity), and their relational submission within the fellowship of the presbytery (in Christ). Many gifted preachers have suffered personal shipwreck on account of their confusion and presumption on this point.

While illumination is necessary, it is not, in and of itself, sufficient for salvation. Illumination should lead a hearer to respond to the word in repentance and faith obedience. The confession of Job exemplified this response, saying, 'I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You [I have received illumination]. *Therefore* I abhor myself [my flesh], and repent in dust and ashes.' Job 42:5-6.

The word itself polarises a person who fails to respond with repentance and faith to the illumination that they have received. Their self-determined interpretations and implications of the word have a deluding effect upon them. Although they may have received illumination, they choose to walk in the darkness of their own understanding of its implications for their life, believing that their response is an expression of the light that they have received. Jesus described this as a great darkness. Mat 6:23.

Coming as the bread

In this present season, the Spirit has been urging us to move beyond the ministry of the word for illumination, *to be the bread to one another*. This is fundamental to our participation in the *agape* meal as part of the body of Christ. Paul highlighted this point, writing, 'Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.' 1Co 10:14-17.

We minister the word, as the bread to our hearers, *through testimony*. In doing so, we are not presuming to be the exemplars of the word that we preach. Rather, we are sharing our repentance and faith in response to what the Spirit is saying to the church. That is, we are bearing witness to the word as it processes us individually, in our marriages, and in our families. Paul often shared in this way. Instead of speaking as one who was successful, he described himself as the chief of sinners, as a man of weak speech, and as a wretched man who was finding deliverance and

life through fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings. 1Ti 1:15. 1Co 2:3. 2Co 11:6. Rom 7:24-25. Php 3:7-11.

Testifying in this manner is foundational to the ministry of Elijah in the presbytery and the church. Furthermore, it is a defining expression of eldership. Jas 5:13-18. As James, the brother of Jesus, instructed, 'Is anyone among you sick? *Let him call for the elders of the church*, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. *Elijah was a man with a nature like ours.*' Jas 5:14-17.

Rather than presuming to speak from expertise or accomplishments, true elders acknowledge that they are men of 'like passions' with their hearers. They are, themselves, joined to a process through which they are being enabled to walk blamelessly by the Spirit. Through their ministry, they extend this fellowship to their hearers. 1Jn 1:1-3.

It is important to recognise that the word, ministered as bread to a hearer, also has a polarising effect upon them. They are either joined to the fellowship from which the messenger is proclaiming their testimony, or they are appointed to another table. This is a table of demons. This was exemplified by the interaction between Jesus and Judas at the last Passover. Jesus identified His betrayer as the one who received the bread that He dipped in the gravy of the meal. Judas, maintaining his self-righteousness, received the bread from Jesus and immediately Satan entered him. He was no longer part of the fellowship established by the word of Christ; he was of another spirit, and his self-defined good works were to his destruction.

Washing another's feet

Foot washing is a further ministry application of the word, to which the Spirit is presently calling us. Having shared their testimony, as those of like passions with their hearers, messengers wash the feet of their hearers through the specific application of the word to their lives, marriages and families. This application is necessary because Jesus clearly stated that, although a believer is made clean by the word that is preached, they are only made *completely* clean as they participate in washing another's feet. Joh 13:10. This happens with the messenger, and with one another, through open-faced fellowship in the word that was preached.

A messenger can only wash the feet of their hearers if they are receiving this washing themselves. Presuming to wash the feet of another, without this application in their own life, is a great error. The feet of messengers are washed as they allow the word to be applied to their life through open-faced communication with their brethren in the presbytery. This cleansing work is apparent in their lives, marriages and families, and in relation to the work to which they have been called by God.

The word is a rod

Beyond foot washing, the word can be applied by a messenger as a rod. The apostle Paul noted this application in his letter to the Corinthians, writing, 'Now some are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power. What do you want? *Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?*' 1Co 4:18-21.

The word is administered as 'a rod' when messengers address persistent carnality in the church. A clear distinction is made between what is culturally aberrant, and what is of the Spirit. The purpose of this ministry is to join every hearer to the fellowship of Christ's chastening, through which they can be delivered from their carnality and rebellion and grow to maturity as sons of God, and as members of the body of Christ.

The word, as a rod, must not be exercised through frustration or in reaction to the carnal and rebellious responses of those who hear the word. When the word is 'weaponised' in this manner, the messenger, himself, is brought under judgement. We note that on account of his use of the word, that Moses failed to enter the promised land because he struck the rock twice in frustration, at the recalcitrance of the children of Israel. Num 20:10-11. The Lord had directed him to speak to the rock. The Lord said to him, 'Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.' Num 20:12.

Reiterating this point, the apostle Paul declared that, 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal [meaning, not exercised through emotive reaction] but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.' 2Co 10:4-6.

When the rod is received by a hearer, it becomes to them a shepherding instrument, leading them on the pathway of salvation that belongs to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Testifying of this implication of the rod, King David wrote, 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me'. Psa 23:4. However, those who continue in their rebellion after the word addresses them, are dashed to pieces, with the nations, by the rod of iron. Rev 2:27.

The word comes for judgement

In the course of His ministry, Jesus healed a man who was born blind. He did this by spitting on the ground, making clay with the saliva, and then crafting two physical eyes from the clay. He then directed the man to wash in the pool of Siloam, which means 'sent'. These were the waters of faith obedience. Joh 9:6-7.

The man was put out of the synagogue, by the Pharisees, for simply testifying of the sight that he had received from Christ as he had obeyed His word.

Upon hearing of his expulsion, Jesus found that man, asking him, 'Do you believe in the Son of God?' Joh 9:35. The man was illuminated to see that Christ was the Son of God, confessing, 'Lord I believe!' And he worshipped Him. Joh 9:38. Jesus then said to the man, 'For judgement I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.' Joh 9:39. By this, Jesus highlighted that, through the ministry of His word, a hearer was compelled to make a judgement. They would either respond with illumination, leading to obedience, or would choose the darkness of their own understanding, and be unworthy of the gospel.

As the Lord is ministering His word to us in this season, we must take heed to *how* we are hearing and responding to the word. Luk 8:18. This requires us to recognise how the word is being ministered, and to respond accordingly. The fruit of hearing in this way is that we are joined to the same expression of the word. That is, we are able to be the bread to others through testimony, and we are able to wash one another's feet. We are overcomers who keep Christ's works to the end, receiving power over the nations as He rules them with a rod of iron.

Chapter 2

The word of God stands forever

As a presbytery, we are applying ourselves to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Rev 2:7. Luk 8:18. Through His word, laid down in the fellowship of the presbytery, the Lord has been mercifully addressing our former, fleshly gospels and religious traditions, and has been restoring to us the gospel of God.

Rom 1:1,16. This restoration has not been merely our comprehension of a more exact theology. Rather, it has been evidenced by cultural reformation within the fellowship of the presbytery, and in our marriages and families. By this means, we are becoming worthy houses and are being entrusted with the gospel of peace.

This reformation has been progressively realised by those in the presbytery who have humbled themselves, received illumination by the Spirit, and have responded to the word of present truth with repentance and faith. This faith is demonstrated as we embrace our fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. In this daily fellowship at the tree of life, which is the cross, we are able to find deliverance from our carnal, religious ways of relating and conducting ourselves, which lead only to death; and we are finding reformation through *exanastasis* as we walk by the Spirit.

For this reason, the word that we receive, as it is laid down within the presbytery, is in our heart and in our mouth as a *testimony*. Rom 10:6-9. We minister this testimony as those of 'like passions' with our hearers so that they might be established in the same fellowship from which the word proceeds. Jas 5:13-18. 1Jn 1:3.

The recovery of the gospel of sonship and its eschatology is foundational to our establishment as part of lampstand churches who are making themselves ready for the marriage feast of the Lamb and His bride. As we are being found worthy through our response to the gospel, we are being joined to the work of its proclamation in the spirit and power of Elijah. That is, our feet are being shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, to minister this word in the spirit and power of Elijah among the unclean daughters of Zion and in the world.

Prepare the way of the Lord

The spirit and power of Elijah is a prophetic ministry that goes before the face of the Lord, ‘ “To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,” and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord’. Luk 1:17. This ministry was exemplified by John the Baptist, who was the final Old Covenant prophet to discharge this mandate. Luk 1:16-17.

The Gospel of Mark, which is widely recognised as having been penned under the direction of the apostle Peter, draws from the prophetic books of Malachi and Isaiah to describe John the Baptist’s ministry. Quoting these prophets, Mark wrote, ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You. The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “*Prepare the way of the Lord*; make His paths straight”.’ Mar 1:2-3. Mal 3:1. Isa 40:3.

Introducing his Gospel with these words, Mark was drawing from Chapter 40 of the book of Isaiah. Here, the prophet declared, ‘ “Comfort, yes, comfort My people!” says your God. “Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.” The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “*Prepare the way of the Lord*; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken”.’ Isa 40:1-5.

This prophetic passage provides a notable example of the threefold implication of the prophetic Scriptures. That is, they have an application that belongs to the time in which they were written; they were fulfilled during Christ’s ministry on earth; and they have a final fulfilment in the time of the end.

In this regard, Isaiah was first prophesying regarding the future return of the Jewish nation from Babylon following their seventy-year exile. Second, as we have already noted from the Gospel of Mark, this prophetic statement refers to the ministry of John the Baptist who prepared the way for Christ. It also refers to the ministry of Christ Himself as He pioneered the highway of holiness through His offering and suffering journey. Finally, this statement refers to the time when the Father will take His seat, initiating a great evangelistic ministry through which a numberless multitude will be brought into the kingdom of God in the time of the end.

All flesh is as grass

Isaiah himself was commissioned to minister in the spirit and power of Elijah. Like John the Baptist, he was directed by the Lord, ‘Cry out!’ Isa 40:6. Joh 1:23. In response, Isaiah asked, ‘What shall I cry?’ Isa 40:6. Isaiah was asking for the content of the message that he was to proclaim in the spirit and power of Elijah. Christ instructed him to proclaim, ‘All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the

Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.' Isa 40:6-8.

'All flesh is as grass ... but the word of our God stands forever' is the prophetic message that is given by Christ to His messengers as they prepare the way before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah. This message declares that the flesh is transient. Moreover, seeking to attain the righteousness of God through the endeavours of the flesh is futile. At best, this glory is as 'the flower of the field'. Only that which is born of the Spirit, through the living and enduring word of God, will endure and will inherit the promise of eternal life in fellowship with Yahweh.

Church religion is a great deception. Its accompanying gospels assert that the good works of men, particularly those who are deemed to serve and advance humanity, are righteousness. A case in point is the Anglican Church's veneration of the late Queen of England. Her service and comportment as the head of state, and as the head of the church, has been extolled by this church as the epitome of Christian virtue. However, the attributes and actions of the Queen, which are used to justify this claim, merely describe the glory of a notable 'flower of the field'. The reality is that only what is born of God and is established in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings enters the kingdom of heaven. Joh 3:3-5. This understanding is foundational to the prophetic ministry that brings salvation.

Jesus is 'the Lord God of the holy prophets [who] sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place'. Rev 22:6. Reflecting this reality, Jesus Himself testified that He was both 'the Root and Offspring of David'. Rev 22:16. That is, David received his prophetic grace from Christ, even though Christ came in the flesh as the Son of David. As the Root, Jesus *is the source of all prophetic expression*, for He is the Word from the beginning. Joh 1:1. Moreover, the Scriptures teach that 'the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy'. Rev 19:10.

The prophets were able to declare the gospel in the spirit and power of Elijah because they were branches who were connected to Christ, the fatness of the root of the olive. For example, we note this in the prophetic psalms of Moses and David. Accordant with the message proclaimed by Isaiah and by John the Baptist, Moses wrote, 'In the morning they [children of men] are like grass which grows up: in the morning it flourishes and grows up; in the evening it is cut down and withers'. Psa 90:5-6. Likewise, David declared, 'As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children, to such as keep His Covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them.' Psa 103:15-18.

The message proclaimed by John the Baptist

We have already established that John's message, proclaimed in the spirit and power of Elijah, was, 'All flesh is as grass'. This ministry was acutely demonstrated

as John addressed the Pharisees and Sadducees who came out to him to be baptised. Endeavouring to keep the Law through the flesh, and glorying in their genetic lineage as natural children of Abraham, these Jewish religious leaders exemplified 'the grass' and 'the flower of the field'.

John proclaimed the message, 'All flesh is as grass', to the Pharisees and Sadducees when he said, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father." For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. *And even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*' Mat 3:7-10.

John was highlighting that the Old Covenant that God made with the flesh, on Mount Sinai, was coming to an end; the axe was laid to the root of that tree. This Old Covenant, and those who lived according to its basic premise - 'all that You say we will do' - had not produced any good, enduring fruit. As we have already noted, its glory was of the flower of the field. In the same way that Isaiah proclaimed, 'The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the Lord blows upon it', John was declaring that any person who was not established according to a new covenant would, likewise, perish; they would be cut down and thrown into the fire. Isa 40:7. Mat 3:10.

Jesus was the substance of the message

It is important to note that the New Covenant of the Spirit, established by Christ through His offering on the cross, was not a new covenant that was given to the flesh. Remember, 'all flesh is as grass' - it withers and will inevitably die. The problem for the children of Israel was not the Law Covenant but, rather, their belief in their own capacity to keep the Law. The New Covenant of the Spirit is not given to the flesh, but to those who are new creation. 2Co 5:17. That is, it belongs to those who are born of God's *zoe* life and who are established on the pathway of glorification that Jesus pioneered for them through His offering and suffering journey. These believers receive the Covenant of the Spirit because they are born of the Spirit.

This was Christ's message to Nicodemus. Jesus distinguished between the flesh and the Spirit, stating plainly that only that which is born of God, and then born of water and the Spirit, enters the kingdom of God. Joh 3:3-8. Inherent in His explanation to Nicodemus was the fleeting nature of the flesh and the need to be born again. Significantly, Jesus said that the Spirit blows where it wishes. That which is not born of the Spirit is taken away by the Spirit; as King David observed, writing, 'Let them be like chaff before the wind [the Spirit]'. Psa 35:5. The chaff is taken away as the Spirit blows upon them through the ministry of the word of God by those who are born of the Spirit. The chaff is burned with unquenchable fire. Mat 3:12.

The ministry of Elijah passed from John the Baptist to Christ at His baptism. John himself testified of this succession, saying, '*He must increase, but I must decrease.* He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true. For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.' Joh 3:30-36.

Following His baptism, Jesus proclaimed the gospel that belonged to the Elijah ministry. The apostle Peter noted this when he spoke to Cornelius and his household. He said to them, '*The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ - He is Lord of all - that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.*' Act 10:36-38.

The preaching of peace is the message that belongs to the Elijah ministry. Peter's point was that this was the content of Jesus' message during His ministry. Unlike the ministry of John the Baptist, the declaration of the gospel by Jesus was accompanied by many miracles. Moreover, when John said that he must decrease and Christ must increase, he was not merely indicating that Christ was replacing him as the proclaimer of the word. Rather, he was highlighting that Christ was, in fact, *the substance of the message*. In this regard, Jesus was not merely declaring, 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God'. Rather, He testified, '*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*' Joh 14:6. Isa 40:3.

The twelve, the seventy-two and lampstand churches

During His earthly ministry, Jesus appointed the twelve, and then the seventy-two, to go before His face into every city and place where He was about to go. In this regard, they were commissioned to 'prepare the way of the Lord'. Isa 40:3. Luk 10:1. This was an upgrade to the ministry of Elijah, foreshadowing the ministry of lampstand churches following the Day of Pentecost. Commenting on this appointment, and on the future ministry of lampstand churches, Jesus said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.' Mat 11:11. They are greater than John because they are born of the Spirit and are, already, citizens of the heavenly city for which the Old Covenant heroes of faith believed.

In his discourse, which he delivered to the household of Cornelius, Peter testified that he had received, and continued to exercise, the mandate of proclaiming the

gospel in the spirit and power of Elijah. Specifically, he said, 'And He [Christ] *commanded us to preach to the people* [the message of peace that Christ preached], and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living [those born of the Spirit] and the dead [all flesh is as grass]. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.' Act 10:42-43.

We note this same focus in Peter's first epistle. He established that a person is born again by the incorruptible Seed (that is, the Spirit) through the word of God which lives and abides forever, contrasting this implication of new birth with the fleeting nature of the flesh. 1Pe 1:23-24. Specifically, Peter quoted Isaiah, writing, ' "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever." *Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.*' 1Pe 1:24-25.

Similarly, the apostle James introduced his epistle with the message that belongs to the ministry of Elijah. He exhorted his readers, saying, 'Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.' Jas 1:9-11.

The Elijah ministry is now found in the presbyteries of lampstand churches. Jas 5:14-18. This is the fellowship of the church. Every person and family who receives and responds to this message is a worthy house. They are part of a network, or fellowship, of houses that comprise a local expression of a lampstand church. That is, they are elect 'ladies' – the expression of the bride of Christ in that locality. Accordingly, they have a participation in the proclamation of the gospel in the spirit and power of Elijah. Let us now consider how this ministry works.

Peace through the Elijah ministry

Accompanying the Elijah ministry, which prepares the way for Christ, is the capacity to compel people to turn in repentance from their sin and to prepare themselves for the kingdom of heaven, which is at hand. The kingdom is at hand because the gospel is being proclaimed to these people in the spirit and power of Elijah.

The capacity to compel people in this manner was acutely observable in the ministry of John the Baptist. Even though he worked no miracles, the Scripture accounted that 'Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptised by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins'. Mat 3:5-6. Significantly, as the people did this, they were forsaking the Old Covenant temple, with its regime of offerings, as the means of obtaining peace with God in relation to their sin.

The capacity to compel people to turn in repentance from their sin is the dimension of peace that is given to a messenger who ministers in the spirit and

power of Elijah. Jesus emphasised this point when He commissioned the seventy-two, who were sent two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. Luk 10:1. Significantly, Jesus said to them, 'But whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house." And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you.' Luk 10:5-6.

From Christ's instruction, we see that a messenger is to first proclaim, 'Peace to this house.' This is the gospel message that they have been given to proclaim as part of the Elijah ministry - 'All flesh is as grass ... but the word of the Lord endures forever'. As we noted above, it was on account of this message that the whole nation of Israel came out to John the Baptist to be baptised as they confessed their sins. The compulsion to respond reveals the prevenient grace that belongs to the peace that is ministered through the proclamation of the gospel. For this reason, Peter opened his second letter, writing, 'Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord'. 2Pe 1:2.

A person is able to proclaim this message only if they are, themselves, a son of peace. That is, they are forsaking the way of the flesh and are being established in the culture of faith that belongs to the sons of God who are walking after the Spirit in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Their confession is that they are a person 'of like passions' with their hearers, and they are obtaining peace as they turn from their carnality and find reformation in their lives, marriages, and families. They are, themselves, a worthy house whose culture is increasingly an expression of the gospel of God. Their ministry is able to cause the hearts of the fathers to turn to the children, and the children to turn to the fathers, because this grace is apparent within their own household.

When Jesus said, 'And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it', He was explaining that a hearer who is compelled to respond with repentance and faith to the gospel of peace, is joining themselves to the same fellowship as the messenger. 1Jn 1:1-3. Having opened their heart to the messengers who have opened their hearts to them, they are now in each other's hearts to die together and to live together. 2Co 7:3.

Those who reject the gospel of peace, which includes the invitation to receive the New Covenant of the Spirit, are left with their carnality. Jesus was clear that we are not to pursue or embrace those who *choose* the glory of the flower of the field - be it in the world or in the church - over sonship, once the kingdom has come near to them. To this end, He said, 'But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, "The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you".' Luk 10:10-11.

As a person receives the gospel of God that is ministered in the spirit and power of Elijah, there is grace available for their establishment in the kingdom of God. They are able to forsake their religious idolatry as they take account for its fruit in their life, their marriage and family. They are then able to testify within their family,

including to prodigal children, of this reformation, proclaiming 'peace to this house'. By prevenient grace, each person is dignified with the choice to let the peace that a messenger brings to rest on them; or to continue in the way of the flesh. If they choose to continue to walk according to the flesh, the messenger no longer has any obligation to them, for they have chosen their own way and spurned what God has chosen for them. Rom 8:12.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of *exanastasis* within us

Explaining the implications of *exanastasis*, which is ministered to those who respond with faith to the gospel of peace, and come to Christ to be built into Him, the apostle Paul wrote, 'But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you'. Rom 8:11. This is the life by which we are to live as we forsake the way of the flesh and walk according to the Spirit.

Our mortal flesh is like the grass of the field. It grows old and will perish like the grass and flower of the field, unless it is changed from mortality to immortality; that is, unless it is made *new*. In the book of Revelation, the apostle John recounted hearing God the Father declare, 'Behold, I make all things new.' Rev 21:5. The implications of this statement were first manifest in the incarnation, when the Son of God became flesh. Christ was the first Son of God in the flesh of mankind. He was also Yahweh Son, 'God with us', in the flesh. Then, through Christ's offering journey for us, His flesh was changed from mortality to immortality. This happened through the process of *exanastasis*. In this process, the strength of God rested upon Christ in His weakness. Moreover, through His suffering, *His body remained a temple of the Holy Spirit*.

As Jesus suffered at each wounding event, causing His blood to be shed, the Holy Spirit was active within Him by the power of Eternal Spirit, making His blood effective as an atonement for all mankind. The life of Yahweh *Elohim* was in His blood, and it brought Him back from the death of each killing event that He suffered as He progressed to immortality. This continued until His heart was broken because of the love of the Father for Him. Through the love of God that was poured into His heart by the Holy Spirit, He was able, through faith, to deal with all of the 'whys' that we pose in our fallen condition. In the fellowship of His broken heart, we are able to be perfected in this love.

The love of God breaks our heart

As the word of the cross is proclaimed to us by the Spirit, we are able to meet Christ eye to eye and heart to heart. In this fellowship, the love of God breaks our heart, enabling us to become bankrupt in spirit. Note that God is not interested in, nor sympathetic toward, the emotions that belong to our unfulfilled expectations of life and others. This grief and broken-heartedness is not the bankruptcy of spirit that belongs to those who are forsaking the flesh and are obtaining their citizenship in the kingdom of heaven. Mat 5:3. Rather, it is the emotions of sin.

We observe this distinction in the responses of Jacob and Esau. The outcome of Jacob's protracted suffering and grief at the hands of Laban was the confession, 'I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant.' Gen 32:10. This was the testimony of a man who had learned the fear of Isaac. Gen 31:42. Evidently, Jacob was not the victim of his circumstances. He walked in mercy and illumination, believing for the inheritance that had been promised to him in the gospel. His testimony was the expression of a man who, by faith, had joined the broken heart of Christ. It was the confession of a man who was poor in spirit.

In contrast, Esau's grief was completely self-centred. He viewed himself as being the victim of Jacob's deception. In doing so, he rejected the word of his predestination. He was broken-hearted at the loss of his blessing, but this was not a connection to the broken heart of Christ. Esau's expression was full of misgivings and queries as to why this perceived injustice had happened to him. As Paul reminded us, 'For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.' Heb 12:17.

Significantly, the outcome of each man's response to their circumstances revealed the polarising effect of the gospel upon them. In this regard, the Lord Himself declared, 'Yet Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated, and laid waste his mountains and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness.' Mal 1:2-3.

The love of God inspires us to respect and to fear Him. Like Jacob, our confession in prayer is, 'We are not worthy of Your mercy or illumination which reveals Your love for us and who You want us to be in relation to You'. This same attitude was demonstrated by the centurion who entreated Jesus to heal his servant. He said to Jesus, 'Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.' Mat 8:8. Jesus described this attitude as 'great faith'. The disciple Peter also demonstrated a God-fearing attitude when Jesus called him to be a fisher of men. After putting the boat out at the direction of Jesus, and bringing in a catch that was so large that the net was compromised, Peter fell down at Jesus' knees and said to Him, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!' Luk 5:8. Jesus responded to Peter, saying, 'Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.' Luk 5:10.

Resurrection life in our mortality

The suffering journey of Christ is an event that we can join, which ministers the *exanastasis* life of Christ to us in our mortality. This reality was explained to us by the apostle Paul in his letter to the Philippians. He testified that he had forsaken all other gospels and endeavours of the flesh, 'that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead [live by resurrection life in my mortality]'. Php 3:10-11.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, he further testified that *exanastasis* in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings was the means by which he lived and also ministered as an apostle to the Gentiles. For example, he said to the Corinthians, '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.

The new creation of God is now available to us in our mortality as we walk each day with Christ. The old creation is passing away as our outward man is perishing and our inward man is being renewed and changed. It is for this reason that we do not lose heart in the context of our sufferings, particularly those associated with the weakness of mortality. 2Co 4:16-18.

Chapter 3

The body and the bride

The gospel of peace

The gospel of peace, proclaimed by messengers who are sent by Christ, ministers to its hearers the choice to forsake the way of the flesh, and to be established as part of a new creation through the word of God which endures forever. The apostle Peter demonstrated and explained this ministry during his encounter with the household of Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian Regiment, stationed in Caesarea. Act 10:1.

In the lead-up to this meeting, the Lord confronted Peter regarding his partiality. While Peter was praying on the rooftop of the house in which he was lodging, he saw the heavens open and an object, like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals, wild beasts, creeping things and birds. A voice came to him, saying, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' Act 10:9-13. Maintaining his allegiance to the Law and to the customs of his fathers, Peter responded, stating, 'Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.' Act 10:14. The Lord admonished Peter, saying, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.' Act 10:15. It is notable that this was done three times. Act 10:16.

When Peter entered the house of Cornelius, the centurion met him and fell down at his feet and worshipped him. Act 10:25. We will consider this response further in Chapter 4. Suffice to say that, through this action, Cornelius demonstrated that he was worthy of the gospel that Peter was bringing. Significantly, Peter's response to the reverence of Cornelius was emphatic! He said to him, 'Stand up; I myself am also a man.' Act 10:26.

Peter's statement indicated that he had come to the house of Cornelius in the spirit and power of Elijah. He was affirming to Cornelius that he was a man of 'like passions'. Jas 5:17. In saying this, he meant that he was a person who was embracing the process that was initiated by the gospel of peace *in his own life*. This is why he was able to minister peace to Cornelius. In fact, the very message that

Peter proclaimed to Cornelius came from the word that was *presently processing him* as a member of the body of Christ. Accordingly, he commenced his message, saying, 'In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.' Act 10:34. By ministering from testimony, the peace that Peter was obtaining through the processive implications of the gospel of peace in his own life could rest on the household of Cornelius.

The apostle Peter then proceeded to declare the gospel of peace to Cornelius and to all who had gathered to his house. He explained to them that this was the message that was introduced by John the Baptist, and then substantiated through the ministry of Jesus Christ and His messengers. Specifically, Peter said, 'The word which God sent to the children of Israel, *preaching peace through Jesus Christ* - He is Lord of all - *that word you know*, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.' Act 10:36-38.

Peter's statement, 'that word you know', is notable. It highlights that the message introduced by John the Baptist, ministered by Jesus, and then borne witness to by His messengers - the twelve and the seventy-two - was *widely known* throughout the whole region, even among the Gentiles. This message had a profound and compelling effect on the inhabitants of the land. For example, even without the witness of miraculous signs, 'all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem' went out to John. Confessing their sins, they were baptised by John as they were introduced to the gospel of peace. Mar 1:5.

John the Baptist, ministering in the spirit and power of Elijah, prepared the way for Jesus Christ, whom the prophet Malachi identified as 'the Messenger of the Covenant'. Mal 3:1. John's message, which Jesus advanced and then fulfilled through His offering on the cross, was, 'All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.' Isa 40:6-8.

The preparatory dimension of this message was exemplified through John the Baptist's interaction with the many Pharisees and Sadducees who came out to him to be baptised. He said to them, 'Brood of vipers! *Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?* Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father." For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.' Mat 3:7-10.

As we considered in Chapter 2, when John said, 'The axe is laid to the root of the trees', he was proclaiming the judgement of God on all flesh, which is 'as grass'. In particular, John was highlighting that the temple and offering economy that

belonged to the Law Covenant, which the Lord made with the flesh on Mount Sinai, was coming to an end. The promise of eternal life would no longer be afforded through physical circumcision and by the observance of the Law. With this message, John was preparing the way before Jesus, the Messenger of the Covenant. Mal 3:1.

At the commencement of His ministry, Jesus identified His physical body as the temple, making Herod's temple and its Old Covenant practices redundant. He said to them, 'Destroy this temple [referring to His body], and in three days I will raise it up.' Joh 2:19,21. The Jews understood that Jesus was saying that His body was replacing their physical temple and its administration of offerings. For this reason, they sought to discredit and destroy Him.

In the place where it was said, 'You are not My people'

Continuing his proclamation of the gospel of peace to the household of Cornelius, Peter said, 'And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, *whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day*, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.' Act 10:39-41.

Through Christ's offering journey, culminating in His crucifixion on 'a tree' at Calvary, the judgement of God was executed on all flesh. This principle of life, and its fallen righteousness, was destroyed. It was revealed to be as transient as the grass and the flower of the field, becoming chaff, the end of which is eternal burning. We see that the cross was the place where every person, because of the flesh, was no longer one of His people. Hos 1:9.

However, through the prophet Hosea, the Lord declared, 'In the place where it was said to them, "You are not My people," there it shall be said to them, "You are sons of the living God." Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and appoint for themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel!' Hos 1:10-11.

Likewise, the gospel of peace proclaims that in the place where all flesh is as grass, those who are born again through the enduring word of God are joined to a process through which they are made part of a new humanity, through the Spirit. Significantly, Hosea declared that the people who received this message - whether Jew or Gentile - would be gathered into one body, under one Head. Hosea was highlighting that sons of God would be established as part of the body of Christ!

Coming to Christ

In his first epistle, the apostle Peter detailed the implications of the gospel that is ministered in the spirit and power of Elijah. He identified this message as, '*All flesh is as grass ... but the word of the Lord endures forever*'. 1Pe 1:24-25. He then said that this is the word by which the gospel is preached to a hearer. 1Pe 1:25. Through the preaching of the living and abiding word of God, a hearer can be born

again of the incorruptible seed of the Father. The seed, which is the word of God, is germinated in the heart of a hearer by the Holy Spirit, who is the life of the seed. 1Pe 1:23. As Jesus Himself explained, 'It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.' Joh 6:63.

A person who is born again is joined to a process through which they are able to lay aside 'all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and all evil speaking'. 1Pe 2:1. The apostle Paul described this process as 'the circumcision of Christ'. Col 2:11. The circumcision of Christ is an implication of a believer's baptism through which they are established as a member of the body of Christ. A newborn son of God, who is choosing this fellowship, will desire the pure milk of the word by which they can grow, and will be departing from their carnality, to walk by the Spirit. 1Pe 2:2. 1Co 3:1-4.

A son of God who is being delivered from their carnality through fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings, as a member of His body, will be coming to Christ, the Chief Cornerstone, to be built on Him. 1Pe 2:4-8. The accompanying reformation in their marriage and family indicates that they are being brought forth from the body of Christ as part of the bride of Christ. Restored to the headship of Christ, they are receiving the grace of life to bring forth godly seed as part of the virgin bride of Christ. This godly seed refers to their own children who are endowed with the divine nature from conception. It refers also to those in the world who receive their ministry of the gospel and are born again. We see that a firstfruits' house is the manifestation of the virgin bride of Christ in the world, bringing forth sons of God.

You will follow afterward

The work of Christ is accomplished through His body, which is the temple of God. As we noted earlier in this chapter, the temple in Jerusalem was annulled when Jesus declared that His own physical body was the temple through which the righteousness of God was fulfilled. Through seven wounding events, from Gethsemane to Calvary, Jesus priested Himself as a living sacrifice. The full function of the temple, including its furniture, was manifest in His physical body through this offering. For example, through seven wounding events, as Christ's blood was shed, the altar and mercy seat of the temple were sprinkled seven times, fulfilling the true Day of Atonement.

Just prior to the commencement of this suffering journey, Jesus said to His disciples, 'Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward.' Joh 13:36. This is most significant. Jesus finished this journey and fulfilled all things, *alone*. When He declared His offering journey finished, He had been brought back from the death of sin, and His physical body was now immortal and incorruptible. Importantly, it was not yet a spiritual body, for He had not yet been clothed with His heavenly body from the Father.

Having yielded His Spirit into the hands of the Father, the Son remained in fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit, while His immortal and incorruptible

physical body rested in the tomb for three days and three nights. After this, the Father declared for a second time, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.' Heb 5:5. The Son returned to His immortal and incorruptible body, which was also clothed with His heavenly body from the Father. He was manifest as the glorified Son of Man in the image and likeness of God.

In the evening of the day of His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples, who had assembled together in a closed room. 'Jesus said to them again, "*Peace to you!* As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained".' Joh 20:21-23. Through this word, the disciples were born of God and were established as members of Christ's corporate body.

Significantly, the disciples were now able to join the journey that Christ had finished for them. What He had accomplished through His offering journey could now be fulfilled in them as they journeyed with Him as members of His body, *which was now corporate*. This is a key point: a person can avail themselves of the salvation that Jesus finished for them through His offering and sufferings *only* as they journey with Him, each day, as a member of His corporate body.

A case in point was the apostle Peter. Although Peter was with Jesus in the court of Caiaphas, and saw, in Christ's marred face, the grotesqueness of his own iniquitous self-righteousness, this fleshly propensity was not processed from his life through this encounter. Rather, Peter was *illuminated to see his true condition* and was enabled to become bankrupt in spirit. Jesus was able to process Peter only after he had been born again and been joined to Christ's body. This process was initiated by Jesus when He entreated Peter on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

As Peter communed with Jesus and his fellow disciples on the beach, the Lord began to address Peter's incapacity for love, and the failure of his own righteousness. At the same time, He spoke to Peter concerning the works that belonged to his sanctification as a son of God and as a member of the body of Christ. Importantly, Peter was established by the Lord in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, through which he could be delivered from his carnality and could fulfil the works that belonged to his calling. Joh 21:15-19. Noting this ministry, John recounted and explained the words of Jesus, who said, ' "Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger [carnal], you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old [mature, blameless], you will stretch out your hands, and another [the Holy Spirit] will gird you and carry you where you do not wish." This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God [that is, the fellowship of Christ's death]. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me".' Joh 21:18-19.

We must understand this point. The apostle Paul explained that, following His ascension, Jesus was seated at the right hand of the Father. However, this is not how we *presently* see Jesus. Rather, we see Him 'who was made a little lower than

the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone'. Heb 2:9. We do not see Jesus 'made a little lower than the angels' because of a personal revelation of Christ's offering and suffering on our behalf. We see Jesus made a little lower than the angels because we are joined to the fellowship of His sufferings as members of His body, *which is now corporate*.

We are the temple because of our connection to Christ's body, which is the Mercy Seat and the Altar. Establishing this point, Paul declared, 'We have an altar from which those who serve the [Old Covenant] tabernacle have no right to eat.' Heb 13:10. Christ's body is the Altar from which we eat. We eat from this Altar because we abide in His body. As Jesus Himself said, 'He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me [as a member of His body], and I in him.' Joh 6:56.

There is no redemption, no process, and no change in our life unless we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings as a member of His body. In other words, relational disconnection from His corporate body is disconnection from the process through which we are brought to glory as sons of God, and as sons of men in the image and likeness of God.

Members of the body and bride of Christ

Throughout the church age, Jesus, our immortal and great High Priest, is establishing us as members of His body by priesting to us a participation in His offering work on the cross. In particular, we are made members of His corporate body, as part of a new creation, in His third wound. Eph 2:14-18. As we continue to participate in every element of His offering journey, we are raised with Him. Eph 2:6. From this dimension of the temple, we find our dwelling place in the bride city as overcoming, blameless people. That is, we come forth from His body as His bride in local churches. This is true in every generation, and for every believer.

The work of Christ through His ascension-gift ministers in the presbytery is to bring forth the bride of Christ from the body of Christ so that it will become the administration of the throne of God and the Lamb in the new heavens and earth. In the time of the end, as the work of Christ is being *completed*, the temple will be moved into the throne of God the Father and the Lamb. This is a significant point. When this happens, the temple of Christ's corporate body will not be shut down or made obsolete. Rather, its expression will proceed from the throne of the Father, and will reveal the Father to the world.

As the will of the Father is progressively accomplished in the time of the end, the *processive work* of the temple is also progressively shut down, stage by stage. In this regard, we note that there will be no temple in the bride city when it becomes the throne room of the Father and the Lamb in the new heavens and earth. Rather, 'the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple'. Rev 21:22. That which is perfect will have come. 1Co 13:10. God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - will be all in all. 1Co 15:28. There will be no more sorrow or sighing; no more process or growing up to maturity. Rev 21:4. Time as we know it will be no more. Rev 21:5.

The ministry of the body of Christ, as the temple of God, will have been completed. All that the temple represented will have moved back into the throne of God and the Lamb. The new heavens and earth will be administered from the bride, the New Jerusalem, under the headship of Christ.

Progression from body to bride

We come into the body of Christ, through baptism, to join the offering of Christ. 1Co 12:13. Rom 6:3-4. As we are joined to the offering of Christ, we are made - whether man, woman or child - a particular member of Christ. 1Co 12:27. We then show forth His death and life in our mortal bodies until He comes. 2Co 4:10. 1Co 11:26. The body of Christ is the context in which we are processed, individually, and together, by the word of present truth that is being proclaimed to us by Christ, from the presbytery.

The focus of the body is our individual sonship. As we remain connected to Christ, like branches on a vine, we are sustained by His life and are able to bear the fruit of righteousness which He brought forth for us through His offering. Joh 15:5. Moreover, we are chastened by the Father to bring us to maturity as sons of God. Joh 15:2. This chastening and pruning happens as Jesus Christ *priests* to us a participation in His sufferings as members of His body, the *temple*.

The word of present truth is processed in our lives through communication; through testimony and prayer in *agape* fellowship; in public gatherings; in our families; and from house to house as we care for one another. When we live this way, we are walking in the light. As we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ delivers us, and cleanses us, from our sin and familiar ways. Furthermore, the effect of our former fallen way of living is being purged from our lives. 1Jn 1:7-8. We are then blameless in the sight of God because we are living sanctified lives. Php 2:14-15. Our sanctification has become our eternal life. Rom 6:22.

When we, as a local community of Christians, live together as a church in this way, we then emerge from the body of Christ into the world as the bride of Christ. Our homes become a context for bringing forth godly children. Moreover, they are a place for care and for the evangelism of others who do not know Christ. Whereas the focus of the body is our individual sonship, and the processive initiative of Christ our High Priest, the focus of the bride is the multiplication of life in families through submission to the headship of Christ, who is the Husband of the bride.

Overcoming the world

The bride of Christ is a blameless, sanctified community in the world. They are an overcoming people. They are overcoming the world, the flesh and the devil. Overcoming is a definitive characteristic of believers who are part of the bride of Christ. To this end, the apostle Paul exhorted his readers, writing, 'Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good'. Rom 12:21. Paul was not exhorting his readers to perform good works according to the flesh. This is not the righteousness of God. Rather, he was commending them to the good that belongs

to sons of God who are revealing the Father through fellowship in the offering of Christ, as members of His body. Accordingly, the apostle John noted, 'Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith [which works by 'offering love']. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?' 1Jn 5:4-5.

With this in mind, we recognise that no person, claiming to be a Christian, who is cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, a murderer, sexually immoral, a sorcerer, an idolator, or a liar, will be part of the bride of Christ. Rev 21:8. Rev 22:15. Anything that defiles or causes an abomination or lies shall, by no means, enter the bride city. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life have a place in this city.

Having obtained deliverance from slavery to sin, the citizens of the bride city are an obedient and undefiled people. Rom 16:19. They are a blessed people who have been given the right to eat of the tree of life in the *agape* fellowship of the body of Christ. This is a pivotal point which we must all understand. They are entitled to proceed forward from the body of Christ to enter through the gates of the city of God as a blameless, sanctified and overcoming people. They are part of the bride of Christ. Rev 22:14.

The body of Christ is a place of process

The body of Christ is where we are processed in or out of the kingdom of God. In this regard, Christ's body is the context in which the work of the cross is manifest through His seven wounding events. A person who is being established in the body of Christ is participating in the seven elements of His offering, suffering journey. There is no life through the cross apart from fellowship in the body of Christ.

We participate in the *agape* fellowship of the body of Christ in either a worthy or an unworthy manner. If we participate in an unworthy manner, we come under the judgement of Christ. 1Co 11:27-29. This judgement becomes a chastening that presses a person to respond in obedience to the word of present truth; or it becomes a polarising event, causing them to become offended at Christ and His messengers. Those who remain offended then depart from the body of Christ, which is the temple of God, the church. When a person departs from the body of Christ, they have their part in the lake of fire, which is 'the second death'.

Those who are members of the body of Christ are also described as being a temple of living stones who are built on *one foundation*. This foundation is Christ. 1Pe 2:4-5. As distinct from the body, the bride of Christ is built on *twelve foundations*. Rev 21:14.

The apostles Paul and Peter warned us to take heed as to how we build our lives, marriages, families and relationships *on Christ*. 1Co 3:10-15. 1Pe 2:4-10. If we build with fleshly elements, likened to wood, hay and stubble, then the fire of God will test our work, and we will suffer loss. However, when this happens, we are given the opportunity to become wise. We can cease from our immaturity and our foolish

ways, and can rebuild with spiritual materials, described as gold, silver and precious stones. If we continue in our folly, then, finally, a flood will come upon us, and we will be swept away; no place will be found for us in the bride city.

Satan is bruised under our feet only while we live and walk in obedience to the word of present truth. Rom 16:19-20. The apostle Paul, in his final address to the Corinthian church, spoke to them of an earlier letter that he had sent to them, addressing those among them who had sinned. Writing again, he said that he was coming a third time to address those among them who continued to sin. 2Co 13:1-2.

The apostle defined their carnality as 'sin'. He described it as contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults, uncleanness, fornication and lewdness. 2Co 12:20-21. Paul had already taught them that those who practise these things do not have eternal life. He then urged the Corinthians to examine themselves to see if they were, indeed, in the faith. In this regard, he was asking whether they were Christians at all. They needed to test themselves to see if Christ was in them. If they could not prove, by demonstration, that the life of Christ was in them, then they were reprobate and lost. 2Co 13:5.

We demonstrate that Christ is in us by manifesting the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Gal 5:22-23. This fruit belongs to those who are crucifying the flesh, with its passions and desires, through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ as members of His body. This reveals the faith of those who are being made worthy of the kingdom.

A worthy house walks in the light

A worthy house is part of the *agape* fellowship of a local church, participating in the house to house fellowship and care of the local community. A local church, as a fellowship, is walking in the light of the word of present truth that is being ministered to it from the presbytery as part of the administration of Christ.

The Lord has been addressing us on these matters for many years. Many people are now making changes through repentance and obedience to the word of present truth. They are becoming worthy Christians, living in worthy houses. Others are still in the valley of decision. The admonition to us all in this season is to respond in humility and with repentance and faith while the word is still coming to us. Jesus Himself exhorted us to this same response, saying, 'A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you.' Joh 12:35. Darkness will be our destruction if we can no longer hear the word of present truth that is being preached.

Chapter 4

Becoming a worthy house

When Jesus sent out the twelve disciples to preach the gospel to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, He said to them, 'Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. And when you go into a household, greet it. *If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it.* But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.' Mat 10:11-13. Evidently, a person or a household is worthy if they receive the gospel of peace.

The gospel of peace is the message that is ministered through the ministry of Elijah. It is the prophetic word that the Lord charges His messengers to proclaim in order to prepare their hearers to meet the Lord Himself. Outlining the effect of this ministry, the Lord said to the prophet Isaiah, 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.' Isa 40:3-5.

Dealing with valleys and mountains

We see that a fundamental implication of receiving the Elijah ministry in a worthy manner is that every 'valley' in a believer's life can be exalted and every 'mountain' can be brought low. Isa 40:4. The 'valleys' in our life refer to our identity flaws and frailties. These are the consequence of sin, of the influence of familiar spirits, and of the impact of historical hurts in our life. *Lameness* is the corollary of this identity dystrophy. In this condition, we are incapable of carrying the weight of our own identity and name as a son of God. We are, therefore, unable to walk in obedience to Christ on the pathway of salvation that He has pioneered for us as our great High Priest. Heb 5:8-10. A person who continues in their lameness will often view themselves as being a victim of their circumstances.

The 'mountains' in our life refer to our projections, and to the associated 'wealth' that we have accrued through trading within the economy of *Babylon*. Jer 51:24-25. These mountains hinder our participation in the *agape* meal of the Father, and are an impediment to our entry to the kingdom of heaven. As Jesus noted, 'It is easier

for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for *a rich man to enter the kingdom of God* ... with men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible'. Mar 10:25,27.

The 'valleys' in our life are 'exalted' as we receive the gospel of peace in a worthy manner. By hearing and receiving the gospel, we obtain faith for fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ as a member of His body. Rom 10:17. As we journey in 'the way of the Lord' that He pioneered through the seven wounding events of the cross, we can strengthen our lame hands and feet. We do this as we avail ourselves of the washing of regeneration in the fellowship of His sufferings, and bring forth the peaceable fruit of righteousness that He bore for us. Heb 12:11. Eph 2:14-18. We are able to stand in our name as a son of God and to walk in obedience to the word of Christ, because our lameness is being healed. Heb 12:12-13.

Likewise, as we receive faith for fellowship in the offering of Christ, we are able to command the mountains in our life to be removed! That is, *we* can put off our projections in the fellowship of Christ's circumcision. Moreover, we can cease from the trading behaviours that war against the culture of offering-love in the body of Christ. Jesus exhorted us to this expression of faith, declaring, '*Have faith in God*. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, "Be removed and be cast into the sea [of God's forgetfulness]," and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says [that is, the sanctification that he is choosing in response to the gospel].' Mar 11:22-23.

In his epistle, James, the brother of Jesus, addressed this implication of the ministry of Elijah, writing, 'Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation [valleys exalted], but the rich in his humiliation [mountains brought low], because as a flower of the field he will pass away. For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.' Jas 1:9-11. The 'rich' man glories in his humiliation because he is thankful that he is being rightly measured to the truth of his name as a son of God. The 'poor' man rejoices in his exaltation because the identity frailties and flaws that undermine his capacity to meet and to relate with others, and to express his identity according to his name, are being healed. He is no longer a victim of his circumstances and is able to make straight paths for his feet.

Serpents and scorpions

In addition to this ministry, Jesus gave His messengers the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions. He said to the seventy-two disciples whom He sent before His face, 'Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.' Luk 10:19-20.

'Serpents and scorpions' refer to demonic and familiar spirits within families. These spirits, or attitudes, are expressed by those who presume to control the

agenda of a household, bringing the occupants of the house into bondage to fear. On a broad scale, this influence was exemplified by the Pharisees, whom Jesus and John the Baptist identified as a 'brood of vipers'. Mat 3:7. Mat 12:24. Mat 23:33. The citizens of Judea were enslaved to fear through the influence of the Pharisees. Observing this point, John recounted, 'Even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.' Joh 12:42-43.

Characteristically, a household that is beset by serpents and scorpions is unable to fellowship from house to house with *open communication*. There are 'no-go' matters which, if broached, provoke a prickly reaction. Members of the household may become angry, reactive, inordinately weepy, or may withdraw from the messenger as the word is being ministered to their house. They are unable to hear and to meet the word of their God-given name which calls them to stand on their feet.

In this regard, those who are beset by these oppressing spirits are like thorns. They cannot be entreated by the messengers who are proceeding from the hand of Christ. King David noted this implication of those who resist the word, saying, 'But the sons of rebellion shall all be as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands. But the man who touches them must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear, and they shall be utterly burned with fire in their place.' 2Sa 23:6-7. The influence of serpents and scorpions, rendering a hearer to be 'thorny', chokes the messenger word so that the household is unable to bear the fruits of the Spirit, which are life and peace.

Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace

Thankfully, the Lord has given His messengers the authority to trample serpents and scorpions underfoot. In order to trample them underfoot, messengers must make sure that their own feet are shod with the *preparation* of the gospel of peace. Eph 6:15. This is true for us all. 'The preparation of the gospel of peace' means that we have applied ourselves to understanding the gospel of God. We do not continue to converse or to conduct ourselves from the basis of our old gospels. Equally, having our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace means that the gospel is at work in our life, bringing reformation personally, in our marriage, and in our families.

When we are prepared in this manner, our peace, which is obtained in the process that belongs to our fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings, is able to rest on those who receive our testimony. It brings healing and deliverance to those who receive us. Significantly, peace with God is not simply a legal position of reconciliation. It is a vital *connection* with God. It is fellowship with the Father and Son, through the Holy Spirit. This is what the messengers of Christ are bringing to houses. They do not bring merely a message of information; they bring *the substance of fellowship* to a house.

It is important to recognise that, as messengers walk in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, having their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, it is the God of peace Himself who crushes Satan under their feet.

Rom 16:20. This highlights the understanding that the ministry that Jesus has given to the order of seventy-two is from the Father; He is the God of peace. Satan is crushed, and his power over individuals, marriages and families is broken as the household receives a messenger whom Christ sends with the gospel of peace. The demonic and familiar spirits that control the agenda of the family are crushed, and are removed from the house.

The peace that accompanies the gospel that is proclaimed in the spirit and power of Elijah compels all that belongs to the kingdom of darkness to vanish. The fallen culture of the house is replaced with the fruit of the Spirit, which is the fruit of sonship. Faith, which replaces the fear of death that keeps a person in bondage, is demonstrated by relational obedience to the gospel. Rom 16:19.

Are you a worthy Christian?

At the beginning of this chapter, we noted that when Jesus sent out the twelve disciples to preach the kingdom to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, He directed them to inquire who was worthy. Mat 10:11. What are the indications that a house is worthy? Is your house worthy? To answer these questions, let us consider Jesus' interaction with the centurion in Capernaum, and the ministry of the apostle Peter to the household of Cornelius.

Jesus and the centurion

When Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, 'Lord, my servant is lying at home *paralysed*, dreadfully *tormented*.' Mat 8:6. The centurion knew that he needed healing in his house in relation to those who served. It appears that their inability to serve was because of their lameness and because of the torment caused, presumably, by serpents and scorpions. Jesus responded by saying to the centurion that He would come to his house to heal his servant so that this man could again serve in the house. Christ was the centurion's Messenger, coming to him with the gospel of peace, looking for a worthy house. If the centurion was found worthy, his house could become a unit, or context, for fellowship and service in the Father's kingdom.

The centurion responded to Christ, the Messenger, saying, 'Lord, *I am not worthy* that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority.' Mat 8:8-9. Jesus marvelled at the response of the centurion, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!' Mat 8:10. Jesus then explained that those who possess 'like faith' would sit and eat the Father's *agape* meal in the kingdom of heaven with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Mat 8:11.

Notably, Jesus warned that those who are not found worthy, even though they are born into the kingdom, will be cast into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Mat 8:12. This warning particularly applies to those who

have been born into covenant households and have been endowed, from conception, with the divine nature. To inherit eternal life as citizens of the kingdom of heaven, they must also demonstrate a worthy response to the gospel by choosing the sonship with which they have already been blessed by God.

Drawing from this account, we note that a worthy person is first illuminated to see that they are not worthy of the gospel. They do not presume to be the measure of the word; nor of the messenger. Rather, through obedience, they demonstrate the faith that comes by hearing and receiving the word of God. Rom 10:17. They are submitted to the authority of the messenger, as to Christ. As they walk in obedience to the commands of Christ, they obtain deliverance from the demonic spirits that undermine the capacity of those in the house to serve one another in love.

Peter and the house of Cornelius

This same worthy response was demonstrated by another centurion, Cornelius, who was stationed in Caesaria. When the apostle Peter entered his house, Cornelius 'met him and fell down at his feet and worshipped him'. Act 10:25. In so doing, he demonstrated the same faith as the centurion whom Jesus had first encountered at Capernaum. This man did not assess Peter's credentials; nor did he consider himself to be Peter's equal or superior. Rather, he considered himself to be unworthy of the messenger, and so, worshipped at his feet. This was a man who was rejoicing in his humiliation as the word was proclaimed to him. Jas 1:10.

As we considered in Chapter 3, Peter responded to Cornelius, saying, 'Stand up; I myself am also a man.' Act 10:26. Peter's statement indicated that he had come in the spirit and power of Elijah. He was affirming to Cornelius that he was a man of 'like passions'. Jas 5:17. His response to the word was the same as the response of Cornelius. Indicatively, when Peter was first commissioned by Jesus, he, also, confessed that he was not worthy to receive the Messenger. He fell at the feet of Jesus, and said to Him, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!' Luk 5:8. The Lord said to him, 'Do not be afraid. From now on, you will catch men.' Luk 5:10.

Following the Day of Pentecost, Peter continued to minister in the spirit and power of Elijah. This is the spirit in which he came to minister to the house of Cornelius. Accordingly, Peter's peace, which was the fruit of the Lord's process in his life, could rest upon the household of Cornelius. We note that the Lord was dealing with Peter, just prior to Peter receiving the centurion's request to visit his house. The Lord said to him three times, 'What God has cleansed, you must not call common.' Act 10:9-16. As Peter embraced this process, he was able to minister the gospel of peace, through testimony, to Cornelius and his family.

Our response to the messenger

A hearer is brought into contact with Christ through the unction of the life and peace that Christ has given to His messengers. It is given to Christ's messengers so that they can give it to those who receive them. When a messenger who comes from

Christ is received by a hearer, the peace that comes to them, and to their house, through the word that the messenger brings, makes them a 'worthy' Christian.

The illumination that this person receives from a messenger is that they are not worthy of God's mercy and the illumination that He is bringing to them. They, figuratively, fall at the feet of the messengers whom Christ has sent. They are able to become bankrupt in spirit and to turn in repentance from their own way and understanding, and to receive faith to obey the word that they are hearing. Rom 10:17.

It is important to note that the only Man at whose feet we fall is Christ Himself. Evidently, a person who responds in this manner recognises that they are meeting the face of Christ. Establishing this point, Jesus said to His disciples, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.' Joh 13:20. We see that receiving the messenger is receiving Christ and the Father.

However, when a person falls at the feet of a messenger who comes in the spirit and power of Elijah, the messenger will call their hearer to stand up and to meet their God-given name, affirming to their hearer that they themselves, as a messenger, are a person of like passions. They do not take dominion over the faith of the one who is receiving the message. That is, they do not adopt the attitude of Diotrephes, who loved to have pre-eminence among the people and did not, himself, receive the messenger in a worthy manner. 3Jn 1:9. Equally so, the direction to a hearer to stand on their feet is not an invitation to collegiality with, or among, the presbytery. Rather, a person is called to stand and to measure themselves to their name, which is proclaimed to them through the gospel.

Compelled to make a judgement

When the gospel is proclaimed in the spirit and power of Elijah, it compels a hearer to make a judgement concerning, or in response to, the word. Jesus Himself said that this was the reason why He came to minister on Earth. Specifically, He said, 'For judgement I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.' Joh 9:39. That is, through His ministry, He was forcing, or compelling, everyone to make a judgement. They were pressed by the word to respond with illumination; or to respond from the darkness of their own gospel understanding. Responding in this latter manner makes a person unworthy of the gospel.

Some households, through compromise in relation to their culture and to their connection with those who have become enemies of Christ, *choose to remain in the flesh*. They remain socially engaged in the fellowship of the church, yet continue to bear the fruit of the flesh. Their familiar and thorny expressions are indicative of their condition. In this state, they presume to bring forth sweet water, but their bitterness cannot be concealed. In his epistle, James explained that a person cannot bring forth both sweet and bitter water from the same spring, saying, 'Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?

Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.' Jas 3:10-12.

Within a marriage, one spouse may receive the word and proceed to build on Christ, while the other rejects the word and continues to stumble at Christ. In these instances, the house is sanctified by the one who responds in a worthy manner. Paul outlined this implication of a spouse's sanctified response to the word, explaining, 'For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.' 1Co 7:14-15.

Within the presbytery, collegiality is a notable impediment to the worthiness of a person's house and, therefore, to their capacity to proclaim the gospel. The collegial presumption of equality in the presbytery, and the avoidance of open-faced relationship concerning the impact of the gospel on their marriage and family, give advantage to Satan within their lives and in the presbytery. We note this dynamic in the examples of both Judas and Peter, whose engagement with Christ indicated their presumed equality with the Messenger. When Peter engaged Jesus in this manner, He responded by saying, '*Get behind Me, Satan!* You are an offence to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.' Mat 16:23.

The problem of collegiality

In His letters to the presbyteries of the seven churches in Asia, Jesus Christ identified four key expressions of collegiality. Jesus rebuked the presbytery and church in Pergamos, saying, 'But 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. A presbyter who holds to the doctrine of Balaam is seeking mutual empowerment and financial gain through their ministry of the gospel. This is a person who has shunned the gospel that calls the rich to be humbled.

Jesus further reprovved the presbytery and church in Pergamos for another expression of collegiality, saying, 'Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.' Rev 2:15. This doctrine is held by those who presume to exercise authority over others according to a perceived hierarchy. In the early church, this expression of collegiality was exemplified by a man called Diotrephes. Detailing Diotrephes' resistance to the word, and his presumed pre-eminence in the church, John wrote, 'I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the pre-eminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.' 3Jn 1:9-10.

The next manifestation of collegiality that Jesus identified was the ministry of Jezebel. Addressing the presbytery and church in Thyatira, Jesus said, 'Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.' Rev 2:20. The ministry of Jezebel is from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This ministry is not in the spirit and power of Elijah but, rather, operates through sorcery. It belongs to the spirit of Babylon. It promotes the harlotry of idolatry, epitomised by the pursuit of righteousness according to one's own knowledge of good and evil. This ministry, by those whose own sight has been distorted, presents an alternative gospel that appears as 'good for food ... pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise'. Gen 3:6.

Jesus rebuked the church in Sardis, writing, 'I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead'. Rev 3:1. It is apparent that, on account of this condition, they were 'unclothed' in relation to their priesthood. This is another key implication of collegiality that marks those who do not receive the gospel in a worthy manner. We know this because Jesus promised that 'he who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments'. Rev 3:5.

All of these expressions of collegiality are summed up in the Lord's letter to Laodicea. Jesus said to them, 'I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing" - and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked - 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 3:15-18.

This is what the Spirit is saying to us as a presbytery and a church in this present season. He is coming to address the culture of collegiality, which thwarts the ministry of Elijah both *in* the presbytery and *from* the presbytery. The word, bringing illumination, is first addressing every presbyter, asking the question, 'Who is worthy?'

Our response to this query requires a worthy response, which is possible only as we look into the mirror of Christ's face, presented to us through His messengers in the presbytery. This is the response that belongs to those who are willing to accept the lordship of the Spirit, and who acknowledge that Christ is knocking on the door of their heart through the ministry of the Spirit. By responding in this way, we are shunning the tendency to self-verify through our own repentance, in an endeavour to protect our own administration and expression in the presbytery and in the church. Unless we turn to the lordship of the Spirit, a veil will remain over our face. The gospel will not be effective in our life, nor in the lives of those who receive our message.

The Elijah ministry in contrast to Babylon

A presbyter's demeanour toward the word must be worthy so that they are joined to the ministry of Elijah. If it is not, they will, inevitably, function according to the principle of Babylon. That is, their ministry will be a means by which they make a name for themselves through trading. This is the way of the flesh, and it is unable to minister salvation to others.

Through the gospel, the flesh and the quest for empowerment is being done away with. It is 'chaff'. The grace that is given to the poor man who glories in his exaltation, and the rich man who glories in his humiliation, does not belong to the economy of Babylon. This grace belongs to the spirit and power of Elijah. As messengers testify, standing in this grace, grace and peace are multiplied and abound to their hearers, compelling them to respond to the word. 1Pe 1:2. It is important to recognise that the power to compel is not the compunction of law by the power of Babylon; it does not belong to the economy of trading. The power to compel a hearer belongs only to the spirit and power of Elijah.

Repentance for alternative cultures in the presbytery

As I have reflected on the revelation that I received concerning lampstand churches, almost fifty years ago, my repentance has become clear. I should not have assumed that those who joined themselves to the word that I was given to proclaim, regarding a better concept for a 'first love' church and presbytery structure, were worthy houses.

The reality is that most of those who connected themselves to this word had marriages and families that were in disarray. They were not worthy houses at all, and were, therefore, 'cleaving to me with deceit'. Dan 11:33-34. The manner in which they related to their congregations - particularly with respect to finances, and to their own assumed pre-eminence among the people - ultimately had a destructive effect upon them.

Some of these men had come from other church movements. Their judgements concerning the shortcomings of these movements were the basis of their 'righteousness'. Their demeanour of superiority over other churches was in contrast to the humility of those who viewed themselves as being unworthy of the mercy and illumination that was being shown to them. These, and others, who presumed upon leadership in the church, were not built upon the foundation of Christ. Instead, they remained collegial in church outreaches. This was an impediment to the proclamation of the gospel, for evangelism is from worthy houses; it is not from outreaches.

An enquiry must be made of every hearer, including those within the presbytery - 'Who is worthy?' Rev 5:2. That is, who is willing to lay aside their projections and theological predispositions in order to find their name as a son of God. Each person needs to find their name through face-to-face fellowship, as though looking into the mirror, which is Christ, through engagement with their brethren in the presbytery.

Cultural reformation in a worthy house

In the book, *Becoming the Israel of God*, Lorraine and I shared a testimony of a life-threatening medical emergency through which the Lord began to sovereignly address our marriage covenant. As we continue to apply ourselves to the reformation of our marriage in the light of the proceeding word, we are rejoicing that the Lord brought His word to us in our old age, commanding us to move our marriage covenant from a romantic covenant that belonged to the flesh, to the true romance of a marriage covenant in the Spirit.

We are learning, also, that we are only able to obtain a remnant of the Spirit, which is necessary for the multiplication of life in our house, as we first meet Christ, individually, in the cross, which is the tree of life. Then, by the capacity of the Spirit, we are able to meet and to relate with one another in offering. With this orientation to life and to each other, we accept that, through the physical and relational difficulties that we experience in a day, the Lord is processing us. That is, *exanastasis* life in the Son is available for the recovery of our marriage and family.

In Chapter 6, 'A presenting problem', we have noted that couples who stumble relationally with each other are stumbling at Christ, who has become to them a Stone of stumbling and a Rock of offence on account of their disobedience to the word of their name that is proclaimed by the Spirit. 1Pe 2:7-8. The basis of their marriage relationship is the knowledge of good and evil. However, a believing husband and wife can come to the tree of life to be built on the foundation Stone of headship, which is Christ. 1Pe 2:4. As they do this, the Holy Spirit, as their Lord, brings illumination to them, individually, from the face of Christ in relation to their name and works. As they proceed in obedience, they are able to meet each other in Spirit and in truth.

As written in the book of Malachi, the Lord called this grace which is ministered from the tree of life, 'a remnant of the Spirit'. Mal 2:15. This capacity of the Spirit is manifest as a compelling initiative and power that enables the will of God to be done in a family. Act 1:8. It disables the familiar spirits within the house as the couple are obedient and cease from their thorny exchanges. As we have considered already, Jesus likened these familiar spirits to 'serpents and scorpions' in the house. As a worthy house, in which healing and deliverance are being obtained, they can serve God in the church and in the world.

Lorraine and I have continued to reflect together on the compassion and mercy of the Lord in this season. Lorraine has noted that, prior to the Lord's intervention in the midst of the life-threatening medical emergency, she had spent the whole of her life trying to do the work of the Spirit herself. This had not produced the fruit of the Spirit. Gal 5:22. The carnal pursuit of 'good' in our marriage and household was indicated by the fatiguing effects of the emotions of sin. Rom 7:5.

However, in response to the Lord's initiative toward her and toward our marriage covenant, Lorraine has been illuminated to the process through which a woman can be delivered from a fallen and futile religious expression, and freed to walk after the Spirit. As a woman walks in this manner, she obtains healing from the physical,

emotional, relational and psychological dystrophy that can be caused by sin. These are simple steps, which can be negotiated only through repentance and faith:

- A woman must first be *willing* to accept the Holy Spirit as Lord in relation to the house, in relation to her husband, and in relation to herself. In doing so, she relinquishes control over her life and relationships.
- Once a woman is willing to receive the Spirit as Lord, the Spirit Himself *enables her to accept* His lordship. Note that she is unable to accept the lordship of the Spirit without *His enabling*.
- Then, with the Spirit as her Lord, a woman receives power to *choose* her own name and identity, and to stand accountable for herself, to her husband, to her family members, and to others.
- The woman's submission to the lordship of the Spirit becomes a *daily reality* for her. By this means, she finds grace each day, which is sufficient for the works that belong to her day.

As we have continued to share our testimony directly with other households, we have rejoiced with them as they have similarly found reformation and life personally, in their marriage and in their families.

The end intended by God for Job

The account of Job's trial provides a stark description of the way in which a religious, self-righteous believer can become 'a worthy house'. Job was a rich and great man. He was specifically identified as 'the greatest of all the people of the East'. Job 1:3. His wealth and the success of his business endeavours marked him as being 'a flower of the field' in relation to human endeavour.

Job, as the head of his household, used all of his advantages to serve God, holding his family together by providing for them. Furthermore, he regularly made offering to God for their sins and foibles, saying, 'It may be that my sons have sinned and *cursed God in their hearts.*' Job 1:5. With this in mind, it is notable that after Job lost all of his livestock, servants and children, and had been struck with painful boils, his wife said to him, 'Do you still hold fast to your integrity? *Curse God and die!*' Job 2:9.

Speaking of Job, God said to Satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on Earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?' Job 1:8. Job was blameless in his generation and in relation to the gospel that he had formerly received.

Job's gospel was his demonstration of 'righteousness'. His house was open and hospitable. To this end, he testified, 'My steps were bathed with cream, and the rock poured out rivers of oil for me!' Job 29:6. By identifying his steps as being 'washed with butter', Job was saying that his hospitality and communication were generous to everyone. It is notable that he described the rock as pouring out 'rivers of oil'. This was an abundance that belonged to a single portion of oil.

Although he demonstrated the righteousness that belonged to the gospel that he had heard, Job needed to be illuminated to a different gospel. He needed to know

that his Redeemer lives and will be revealed in the last days, as prophesied, upon the earth. Those who are joined to Him will have Christ's life revealed in their mortal bodies as *exanastasis*, and then as *anastasis* life when they receive a spiritual body.

This revelation was given to Job in the midst of his sufferings as he was persecuted by Satan because he trusted in God. By illumination, Job took hold of the hope of the resurrection to stand in his lot in the last days, just as Daniel did. In his sufferings, Job was joined to the offering of Christ. He was able to see God in all that had happened to him, and he received a double portion at the end of his trial. This double portion was part of the grace that Job received as he engaged in the conversation of faith, to which he was invited by the Lord. Job 38:2-3. Job was able to know God and to understand His way. James described this as 'the end intended by the Lord'. The initiative of the Lord toward Job to achieve this end revealed the compassion and mercy of God toward him. Jas 5:11.

The privilege of prayer

Prayer is essential to our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, through which we are able to 'walk worthy' of our calling as sons of God and as members of the body of Christ. Eph 4:1. Our reformation as worthy houses requires a departure from our former, carnal approaches to prayer. The Father declares to us, 'Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!' Psa 46:10. Instead of constantly petitioning the Lord for answers in relation to our fear-driven 'needs', we must heed this direction from God as we engage in the fellowship of prayer.

Prayer joins us to the travail of the Holy Spirit individually, as houses, and as church communities. He is travailing to bring forth the sonship defined for us in the seed of the Father that has been sown by Christ in our heart. Rom 8:26. The Spirit is the life of the seed that is germinated in our heart, causing us to be born of God. 1Pe 1:23.

Each day, the travail of the Spirit births us into the service of priesthood. Our service is to do the works that belong to our name. We must let the active travail of the Spirit do its work in our hearts as we travail together in prayer, praying in the Spirit. He then enables our obedience each day.

The fellowship of prayer, with the travail of the Spirit, is to bring us forth into the new creation, which is the body of Christ. In Him, all of our works have already been accomplished. We are then joined by the Spirit to our works, which Christ has already accomplished for us in time, and for eternity. Faith is connected to our works. Faith is expressed as active obedience to the word that defines our works. This way of living and serving is freely chosen, for it is the freedom of the sons of God.

Chapter 5

Washing one another's feet

Foot washing is foundational to the application of the gospel of peace. It is not merely a sacramental observance whereby the actions of Jesus at the last Passover meal are replicated, in some form, by church devotees. Such practices are no different from the religious activities of the scribes and Pharisees, of whom Jesus said, 'You are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, *but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.*' Mat 23:27.

As a fellowship of churches, we have shunned sacramental customs like these. Nevertheless, our understanding of washing one another's feet has been somewhat limited. We have drawn our instruction and understanding almost exclusively from the example given by Jesus at the last Passover. However, this was not the first act of foot washing recorded in the New Testament. In fact, the first record of a person having their feet washed was Jesus Himself. This was followed by several other occasions during His earthly ministry when His feet were washed, and He washed the feet of others.

These records reveal that the action of foot washing is not only for the purpose of cleansing. Obviously, Jesus did not need to be cleansed. The washing of His feet was an expression of *agape* fellowship and of worship toward Him. Through this action, His feet were shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Eph 6:15. Although we need our feet washed with the water of the word in order to be completely clean, our engagement in foot washing is also an expression of *agape* fellowship and worship. As we serve one another in this manner, we equip each other for participation in Christ's offering and suffering journey. As we then walk in the fellowship of this journey, the gospel of peace is able to be proclaimed in our homes and communities.

Washing one another's feet is a practice that belongs to those who are part of the body of Christ. As Jesus said, 'If I do not wash you, you have no *part with Me.*' Joh 13:8. Believers who receive and engage in this washing, as part of His body, continue to minister in this way to one another *in their houses*. Accordingly, washing one another's feet is an activity that also qualifies a house as

being 'worthy'. Through this washing fellowship, they are being established in the order of headship as part of the bride of Christ. Eph 5:25-26. Emphasising this point, it is notable that Jesus' feet were washed and His head was anointed with oil, by women. Evidently, this practice belongs to the bride of Christ. However, it is also an ongoing initiative that is typical of godly wives, mothers and sisters within Christian households.

Do you see this woman?

The first New Testament account of foot washing was recorded in the Gospel of Luke. Approximately a year into His ministry, Jesus was invited to dine at the house of a Pharisee named Simon. During the meal, a woman who was known in the city as a sinner came into the house with an alabaster flask of fragrant oil. As Jesus reclined at the table, she stood behind Him, at His feet, weeping. The woman began to wash Jesus' feet with her tears and to wipe them with her hair. She then kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. Luk 7:36-38.

Aware of Simon's misgivings with respect to the woman and her actions, Jesus addressed Simon and the guests at his table by relating the parable of the two debtors. Luk 7:39-43. He then asked Simon, '*Do you see this woman?*' Jesus was highlighting that Simon needed to be illuminated to this woman's expression of unfeigned *agape* and hospitality, which was in stark contrast to his feigned expression of love. 1Pe 1:22. Her love, demonstrated by washing Christ's feet, was the motivation of one who knew that she had been forgiven much.

After this woman had washed Jesus' feet, He said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven', and 'Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.' Luk 7:48,50. This means that she had been healed emotionally and spiritually. Essential to this healing was the love of God that had been poured into her heart by the Holy Spirit. She was now able to love and trust others, as one who was proceeding in peace. It appears that the woman, through the word of grace, also obtained practical provision for her deliverance from the way of life that was keeping her in bondage to sin. She had become a worthy house! We see that this woman was washed as she washed Jesus' feet. Likewise, we are washed as we wash one another's feet, having the same attitude as this woman who was forgiven much.

Jesus further reproved the Pharisee, saying to him, 'I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.' Luk 7:44-47. Significantly, this woman washed Jesus' feet with her *tears*, which belonged to her repentance. She was able to wash His feet in this manner because she was turning from her fallen feminine enterprise, and was ministering in weakness and by the faith that she had evidently received by hearing His word.

As we have already noted, the woman did not wash Jesus' feet because she observed His need for cleansing. Rather, the washing of Jesus' feet was her expression of love, submission and worship. It was an acknowledgement of the beauty of the feet that belong to those who bring good news. As the prophet Isaiah declared, 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!" ' Isa 52:7.

It is notable that Jesus connected the washing of His feet with the anointing of His head with oil, saying to Simon, 'You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil.' Luk 7:46. Evidently, washing another's feet is the initiative of a believer who is being rightly connected to the headship of Christ and is being established in a fellowship of one Spirit with Him and with their brethren. Psa 133:1-3.

A worthy house made clean

The next account of washing was the initiative of Jesus toward the house of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Through this initiative toward them, they became a worthy house that was *able to minister to Jesus*. The word of Christ sanctified and prepared them for their unique ministry as a household.

In his Gospel, Luke recorded that Jesus, and those who were accompanying Him, entered a village called Bethany, where Martha welcomed them into *her* house. Her sister Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. We recognise that she was washed through this encounter, for Jesus taught, 'You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.' Joh 15:3. This was not a word that was just 'preached' to Mary; it was *a relational engagement* through which Christ was able to apply the word to Mary's conduct. That is, He was applying the water of the word to her feet, addressing the way in which she walked, and expressed the gospel. Through Christ's initiative toward her, Mary was equipped to proclaim the gospel of peace to others, particularly in the town of Bethany.

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

Luke did not record any of the conversations that occurred between Jesus and Lazarus when He first visited their household; however, Jesus evidently developed a close relationship with Lazarus. The apostle John noted that Jesus loved Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Joh 11:5. When Lazarus became sick, the two sisters immediately sent word to Jesus, saying, 'Lord, behold, *he whom You love* is sick.' Joh 11:3.

Jesus replied, 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.' Joh 11:4. This is a remarkable passage. Lazarus had a mortal body and he had, evidently, contracted a terminal illness. His sickness was common to man. However, Jesus said that his sickness was not *unto death*. The death of Lazarus belonged to the fellowship of Christ's death, through which Christ would be revealed as the resurrection and life for every son of God.

The sickness and death of Lazarus was not for his own sake. It was not the outcome of time and chance. Nor was it the outcome of the Lord's judgement or chastening upon him. Rather, his death was *for the sake of another*. In this regard, Lazarus was given the privilege of a unique participation in the fellowship of Yahweh. We know that the fellowship of Yahweh is a fellowship of offering in which One reveals and glorifies the Other. Specifically, Jesus said that the death of Lazarus would *glorify* God the Father.

Jesus also said that *He would be glorified as the Son of God* through the death of Lazarus. We note that the death of Lazarus did not glorify Christ as the Son of Man. Christ was not revealed as the glorified Son of Man until the day of His resurrection. However, the death of Lazarus did precipitate all the events that led to Christ's crucifixion and glorification as the Son of Man. Referring to the Jewish Sanhedrin, John wrote, 'From that day on, they plotted to put Him to death'. Joh 11:53.

By the time that Jesus approached the town of Bethany, Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. When Martha ran to meet Jesus, He said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Joh 11:23. In response to this statement, Martha confessed her faith in the resurrection at the last day. She already believed in the *anastasis*. However, further to this, Jesus ministered to Martha the faith for *exanastasis*, saying, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.' Joh 11:25.

Both Martha and Mary believed that if Jesus had been in Bethany, Lazarus would not have died. However, we know that Jesus did not rush to Bethany to prevent Lazarus from dying. Rather, He waited until he was already dead, for the purpose of ministering faith for *exanastasis* to this household. The resurrection of Lazarus was the revelation of *exanastasis* because he was raised to mortality. He was not raised to immortality.

It is notable that when Jesus saw Mary weeping, He *groaned in the Spirit* and was troubled. Joh 11:33. This groaning was an expression of true empathy in the Spirit. It was not an expression of sympathy according to the way of the flesh. John recorded that, on the way to the tomb, 'Jesus wept'. Joh 11:35. The crowd assumed that Jesus was weeping because He had lost a man whom He loved. Joh 11:36. However, we know that this was not the nature of His grief, because Jesus knew that He would raise Lazarus from the dead.

Jesus wept because all of the pain and suffering that Lazarus had experienced during his sickness, and then all of the pain and grief that his death had caused his sisters, was *for His own sake!* That is, the death of Lazarus was for Christ's sake.

It was a ministry to Christ. Jesus wept with Mary and was thankful to their household because they had experienced this suffering for the sake of His glorification. As we have considered, Jesus was glorified as the Son of God through the death of Lazarus.

In the same way, Christ empathises with our suffering when it is for the sake of another in the fellowship of the body of Christ. The apostle Paul described this dimension of suffering for the sake of another when he wrote to the Colossians, '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'. Col 1:24. In a similar way, Peter and the other apostles 'rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name'. Act 5:41.

John recorded that, when Jesus came to the tomb of Lazarus, He *groaned in Himself a second time*. Joh 11:38. This was *a further phase* of Christ's groaning in the Spirit. Christ was now groaning in the Spirit to bring forth resurrection life in Lazarus' mortal body. He was groaning to bring forth *new creation*. In this regard, the groaning of Christ at the tomb, for the sake of Lazarus, was the harbinger of His travail for every son of God, in the garden of Gethsemane.

Following the resurrection of Lazarus, many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things that Jesus had done, believed in Him. However, some of the people went to the Pharisees to report these works. Joh 11:45-46. Rather than glorifying God, they plotted to put Him to death. They issued a warrant for His arrest, commanding that if anyone knew where He was, they were to report it so that He might be seized. Joh 11:53,57. For this reason, Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from Bethany to a city called Ephraim, in the country near the wilderness, where He remained with His disciples. Joh 11:54.

Anointed in the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus

The next notable account of foot washing occurred in the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Six days prior to the Passover, Jesus came from Ephraim to Bethany, where He lodged at the house of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Joh 12:1-2.

Interestingly, John referred to Bethany as 'the town of Mary and her sister Martha'. Joh 11:1. It was about two miles from Jerusalem, to where Jesus travelled each day and taught in the temple.

As we have already considered, Jesus had earlier washed the feet of Mary, Martha and Lazarus, enabling them to participate in the washing of His feet. At the meal table, Mary anointed Jesus' feet with very costly oil of spikenard, and wiped His feet with her hair. The value of this fragrant oil was 300 denarii - the equivalent of a year's wages.

Witnessing this expression of *agape* fellowship and worship, Judas was incensed. He vocalised his discontent, asking, 'Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?' Joh 12:5. The apostle John noted that Judas did not comment in this manner because of his concern for the poor,

but because he was a thief who stole from the moneybox which Jesus had given into his stewardship. Joh 12:6.

The response of Judas reflected his unbelief and his opposition to Christ's declaration that He would suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and would be killed, and then raised on the third day. Mat 16:21. The intensity of Judas' reaction to Christ's message seemed to be heightened as the group's money, which he had been misappropriating to service his alternative ministry and lifestyle aspirations, was being exhausted. It was coming to an end because Jesus' journey was almost complete – a reality that Judas refused to acknowledge or to accept.

Jesus responded to Judas' query, declaring, 'Let her alone; she has kept this *for the day of My burial.*' Joh 12:7. This is an amazing statement! By washing Jesus' feet, Mary had participated in Christ's preparation for His offering journey, which was to culminate in His burial. After three days and three nights in the tomb, He would rise from the dead as the first Man in the image and likeness of God. From this point, Jesus carried with Him, through the course of His triumphant offering journey, the fragrance of Mary's washing and anointing. The fragrance was still on His body when He rose from the dead and presented Himself to the Father in heaven as the Firstfruits of a new humanity. *This was the aroma of Christ.*

Washed in preparation for the fellowship of His burial

Jesus' statement connecting foot washing with His burial establishes foot washing as a specific element and daily application of our baptism. Explaining baptism, the apostle Paul wrote, 'Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? *Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death*, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.' Rom 6:3-4.

Christ's death was the seven wounding, glorifying steps of His offering journey. We are buried with Christ, through baptism, into this death. Foot washing prepares us each day for our burial with Christ. That is, it is a ministry of the washing of regeneration and of the anointing of the Spirit as we journey with Christ in the seven wounding steps of His offering journey. Significantly, Paul explained that regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit are necessary for us to become heirs of eternal life. Tit 3:4-7. This is the life that is obtained through fellowship in Christ's death. Rom 6:4. Prepared in this manner, we are enabled to walk in victory each day, trampling the opposing powers of darkness, and neutralising the power of these spirits in those who oppose us. 2Co 2:14. Rom 16:17-20. We will say more about this ministry at the conclusion of this chapter.

Anointed in the house of Simon the leper

Two days prior to the last Passover, Jesus dined at another house in Bethany. This house belonged to Simon the leper, who may have previously been healed of his leprosy through the ministry of Jesus. Mat 26:1-2,6. During this meal, an unnamed woman came to Him with an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil which she

poured upon His head as He sat at the table. Mat 26:6-7. The anointing oil ran down His beard and to the edge of His garment as it draped His feet. Psa 133:2. Through this action, His anointing for burial at the hands of Mary was extended to His whole body.

It is likely that this woman was the wife of Simon. Supporting this view, we observe that, in contrast to the other women who washed and anointed Jesus' feet, this woman had the liberty to approach the table and to anoint Christ's head with oil. Again, this was a ministry of *agape* fellowship and worship, which was activated by the *oil of joy* that she had obtained as the leprosy of her husband was healed and this couple's house was cleansed through the ministry of Jesus. Isa 61:3.

In this instance, *all of the disciples* were indignant at the perceived waste, saying, 'Why this waste? For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to the poor.' Mat 26:8-9. Jesus responded to their complaint, explaining that this woman had poured the fragrant oil on His body for His burial. Mat 26:12. Furthermore, Jesus declared, 'Wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.' Mat 26:13.

Jesus was not saying that this woman's undertaking would simply be remembered and recounted as part of the gospel narrative. He was explaining that her actions were characteristic of godly women who have been illuminated to the gospel of peace; that is, every godly woman would minister the gospel of peace to others in the same manner. This is the nature of their ministry in their houses, and from house to house.

It is notable that Judas, who had already communicated his discontent with Jesus' teaching, was further incited by this particular washing and anointing event. Matthew recorded, 'Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?" And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.' Mat 26:14-16.

Foot washing at the last Passover

The next act of foot washing occurred at the last Passover. Jesus rose from the supper table, laid aside His garments, and girded Himself with a towel. This was the attire of a slave in readiness for service. He then poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. Joh 13:4-5. After He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He directed them to wash one another's feet with the water of the word.

Later, Jesus explained to the disciples that they were clean by the word that was spoken to them. Joh 15:3. With this in view, the apostle Paul exhorted all believers, saying, 'See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven.' Heb 12:25. This admonition applied to the disciples at the last Passover meal as much as it applies to us.

It is important to recognise that the Lord speaks to us from heaven through the word that is preached by His messengers. Jesus does not speak to us apart from this administration. He said Himself, 'He who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.' Joh 13:20. Through the word that is preached to us, we are born from above and are established in a new and living way. 1Pe 1:23-25. Reiterating this fundamental point, the apostle Paul asked, 'How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "*How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!*" ' Rom 10:14-15.

Jesus further clarified that a person is clean through the word, but needs to have their feet washed in the fellowship of the word in order *to be completely clean*. Joh 13:10. '*Agape* foot washing' is the means by which a person becomes blameless and clean. Illuminated by the example of Jesus, we see that this happens as we fellowship together in the word that is proclaimed to us. Significantly, we are not completely washed by simply hearing the preached word. Rather, we are made completely clean as we wash one another's feet through open-faced fellowship together in the word that is preached. Jesus warned that those who are unwilling to have their feet washed *by their brethren* in the fellowship of the body of Christ *have no part in Him*. Joh 13:8. They have no part in His body, and He does not know them. Mat 7:21-23.

The need for washing in the presbytery

The twelve disciples needed their feet washed from the sin of pursuing greatness, or pre-eminence. This unclean countenance began to emerge after Jesus had ordained the twelve apostles, establishing them in the work of the ministry. Through the mandate that they received from Christ, they received power to preach the gospel of the kingdom; to heal the sick; to cleanse lepers; to raise the dead; and to cast out demons. As they ministered in this way to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, they also enjoyed abundant provision, where all their needs, including finances, were met. Mat 10:6-10.

The disciples discharged their commission successfully. However, as they returned to Christ, it became apparent that, in their estimation of themselves, they had 'graduated' beyond their station as disciples. A key indicator of this presumption was their rivalry and collegiality. They even became puffed up over and against Christ!

This impertinence was particularly evident when Peter took Jesus aside and rebuked Him for speaking about His impending sufferings, death and resurrection. Mat 16:21-23. It was also exemplified by Judas, through his discontent with the anointing and washing of Jesus' feet by Mary, and through the self-motivated ministry initiative that he took to connect Jesus with the Jewish council. Joh 12:5.

This puffed-up posture was assumed by all of the disciples, and was particularly marked when Jesus submitted Himself to having His feet washed and anointed by

the wife of Simon, the leper. Mat 26:8-9. By the time that the disciples had arrived at the last Passover, their collegiality had reached a climax as they disputed among themselves concerning which of them should be considered to be the greatest. Luk 22:24.

In their presumption, based on their commission and their ministry success, the twelve had ceased from being discipled by the ministry grace of Christ. Consequently, they were unable to reveal Him or each other, and could not participate in the fellowship of Yahweh. Jesus addressed this leaven among the disciples, saying, 'He who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.' Luk 22:26. They needed to learn how to serve one another in love. Gal 5:13.

To this end, the disciples needed to submit themselves to foot washing, and to wash the feet of others, as servants. If they resisted this relational engagement with one another, they had no part in Christ. They would inevitably betray their brethren through their self-righteous ministry endeavours. Judas, of course, epitomised this implication of resisting foot washing.

Although Jesus physically washed Judas' feet with water, Judas still refused to receive Christ's word, and to walk in open-faced communication with Him regarding the money that he had already received from the chief priests to deliver Jesus into the hands of the Jewish council. Jesus spoke to all of the disciples about this betrayal, and then specifically identified His betrayer as being the person who received the dipped bread. Judas was completely unclean. He had rejected the word of Christ concerning His offering and sufferings, and did not consider himself to be a betrayer. He believed in his own righteousness. As soon as he ate the bread, *Satan entered him*, and he immediately went out. Joh 13:18-30. The word no longer ministered salvation to him.

With the exception of Judas, the apostles were enabled, through foot washing, to cease from revealing themselves. They were enabled to reach beyond their own capacities, or abilities, to reveal Christ as they served each other in love. We see that foot washing is fundamental to the capacity to lay one's life down for another.

As the apostles participated in this essential practice, they revealed the fellowship of Yahweh, which they could then extend to those who received their message. The apostle John testified of this reality, writing, 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life ... 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 1:1,3.

Clearly, foot washing is a process that is necessary to deliver a person *from* empowerment and projection, and *to* their sanctification as a son of God in the presbytery and in the church. The practice itself distinguishes the fellowship of offering from what would otherwise be a collegial assembly. Through foot washing, a person can find deliverance from their self-verifying orientation to ministry,

and they can be equipped to reveal, as a servant, the identity and works of others. In doing so, they express the love and fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim*.

For those who are part of the presbytery, there is an imperative to participate in washing one another's feet. It is only as our feet are washed by our brethren that we are able to be sent with the gospel of peace. Collegiality, and other forms of presumptuous corruption, are the inevitable fruit that belongs to those within the presbytery who are unwilling to have their feet washed and to wash the feet of others. This is a leaven in the presbytery, to which the Spirit is directing our attention in this season.

The conversion of Jesus' mother

It is amazing that Jesus commenced His offering journey from the worthy house of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Jesus should have begun His offering journey from His mother's house. As a godly mother, Mary should have prepared Jesus for His offering journey by *anointing Him* for His burial. However, she could not fulfil this task because she did not believe in Him.

Like the entire Jewish nation, Mary and the broader family of Jesus were looking for a conquering Messiah. They knew that He was the Son of David, and they had witnessed many of His miracles. However, they did not believe His testimony regarding His offering journey. Having rejected His word, they had no faith to participate in the fellowship of Yahweh as a worthy household. Hence, they could not reveal Him, nor minister to Him.

For this reason, Mary, the mother of Jesus, had to be delivered from tending to her household according to her fallen maternal instincts. Only then could she be established in the same ministry of washing and anointing that Mary and the wife of Simon the leper had demonstrated. As we will consider in Chapter 7, Mary and Jesus' other relatives recognised that He was the Son of David. However, their expectations of Jesus and His ministry were confounded when He appointed the twelve disciples and began to speak of His impending death and resurrection. Instead of anointing Jesus for His burial, they sought to gather Him to themselves, concerned that He was 'out of His mind'. Mar 3:21. This assessment of Jesus was based on the discrepancy between their family culture, and His conduct and speech.

At the foot of the cross, the gospel of peace made a breach on Mary's heart, and on her fallen, familiar culture. Mary and the disciple John must have been in close enough proximity to receive Christ's direction, which He gave just prior to taking His final breath. Right at this point, the sword of the word pierced Mary's heart, enabling her to see that her motherly expectations, particularly during Christ's earthly ministry, had been at odds with God's will for her Son's life.

As her heart broke, and she began to mourn, her Son's feet were washed, whether literally or figuratively, with her tears. The anointing oil, which was already on His feet, was applied to her. It is evident that she was established in a new expression of motherhood, for John recorded, 'From that hour that disciple took her to his

own home'. Joh 19:27. In this house, Mary was able to express motherhood in a new way. Joh 19:26-27. Furthermore, she was able to wash her other children's feet so that they, also, could be established in the way of salvation. It appears that her ministry was effective, for Jesus' brothers were part of the company of newborn believers who were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Act 1:14.

Godly motherhood

As we have already noted, a godly woman participates in the ministry of the gospel of peace by washing and anointing the feet of those who are in her house. She washes the feet of her family members through intercessory prayer and through the word of motherhood. This is the law of kindness through which the wisdom of the cross is imparted to her children. Pro 31:26. In this regard, she teaches her children and grandchildren that there are no 'victims' in Christ.

Through this ministry, a godly woman is preparing her children and grandchildren with the gospel of peace. They are being established in the ministry of the gospel of peace for the whole of their lives. This gospel is expressed through the children's speech and conduct as they journey with Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. This daily participation is the implication of their baptism into Christ's death, burial and resurrection.

The anointing that a child receives through the ministry of a godly mother enables them to live as a Christian for the whole of their life. The word of grace which is always on her lips ministers this anointing from the Spirit. A woman's children and grandchildren are made sufficient by the Spirit for their participation in the seven wounding events of Christ's offering journey. By this means, they are able to live each day as overcomers until they physically die and are buried.

Their resurrection belongs to the work of the Father. They were raised with Christ when He was begotten from the dead on the day of resurrection to become the Head of His body, the church. Their personal physical resurrection is on the day of Christ's second coming, when the last trumpet sounds and they receive their spiritual body.

Committed to this ministry, a godly woman is able to identify the familiar spirits that assail a house, instructing her children to depart from them. She teaches her children and grandchildren to sanctify the Lord and the body of Christ before and above family matters, having learned and embraced this lesson for herself. By this means, she delivers them from the obligations that belong to fallen and destructive family loyalties. A wife, mother or grandmother who ministers in this way raises her children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord so that they do not grow up in her house as unblessed heathen. Eph 6:4. 1Co 7:14.

In this season, every Christian woman is being confronted by the Spirit regarding the mode of ministry within their house. It is timely to consider: 'Are you washing and anointing the feet of your family members for their burial?' 'How are you finding deliverance from the fallen maternal instincts that seek to preserve your children from the sufferings that belong to the way of salvation?'

The aroma of those who bring good news

Washing one another's feet is fundamental to having our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. This is true for every believer, including those whom God has set apart as messengers of the gospel. For example, the apostle Paul was anointed and washed by Ananias in preparation for his ministry of the gospel of peace. The Lord sent Ananias to Paul, saying, 'Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.' Act 9:15-16. He anointed Paul's feet through prayer, and by ministering the word through which Paul was then joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. As Paul journeyed on this pathway, until the day of his physical death and burial, he was equipped for the ministry of the gospel of peace.

This principle applies to every believer in every Christian house. The gospel of peace is proclaimed as we journey with Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. Accordingly, foot washing connects us to the daily implications of our baptism into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For this reason, it should be a daily expression of Christian parents to their children, as well as by siblings to each other, and by children to their parents.

Having our feet washed, and walking with Christ on the pathway that He pioneered for us through His offering and sufferings, we diffuse the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ in every place. This aroma accompanies us as we are led by the Spirit in triumph over the flesh. Detailing this implication of foot washing, the apostle Paul wrote, 'Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.' 2Co 2:14-17.

The polarising effect of the gospel of peace was nominated by Paul as a key implication of its ministry. The testimony of those who are walking with Christ, having had their feet shod with the gospel of peace, is an aroma of life to those who receive them. These hearers reveal themselves to be houses of peace because the peace of the messenger is able to rest on them as an anointing. In contrast, the messenger is the aroma of death to those who reject their testimony. They are left in their carnal condition, upon which the judgement of God has already been proclaimed.

Chapter 6

A presenting problem

Stumbling at the Chief Cornerstone

In this season, the Spirit is calling us to come to Christ, the Chief Cornerstone, elect and precious. As living stones, we are supposed to be built up together, on Him, as a spiritual house. 1Pe 2:4-5. Inasmuch as this call pertains to the corporate temple of His body and the church, it also applies to each Christian household, which should be spiritual.

To be built on Christ is to participate in the order of headship established by God the Father. This has been a cause of stumbling in many Christian houses. The offences and conflicts in marriages and houses, which are typical of stumbling, indicate a couple's disobedience to the word that is proclaiming the headship of Christ. Having identified Christ as 'a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence', the apostle Peter said, '*They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.*' 1Pe 2:7-8.

Peter then specifically focused on marriages regarding this point of 'building on Christ', writing, 'Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not *obey the word* [causing them to stumble], they, without a word [an alternative agenda], may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear'. 1Pe 3:1-2. The implication of Peter's statement is that a man's disobedience to Christ may well be due to the fact that he is looking into the face of his wife who is not submitted to him in the fear of the Lord. That is, his disobedience is an implication of their failure to be properly built together on Christ, their Head.

In the fellowship of God's headship order, a man is called to bring direction from Christ to his wife and family. However, for one reason or another, in his *natural*, or default, condition, he is unable to fulfil this work. In most cases, this shortcoming will not be the outcome of his disobedience or laziness, *alone*. As we have just noted from the exhortation of Peter, it is the *fruit* of the fallen relational dynamics between himself and his wife and within their household. Many families are

beginning to note these issues as they give heed to what the Spirit is saying to the church. There is grace in this season for illumination, repentance and faith. A person's faith will be demonstrated by obedience in relation to their appointment in the order and fellowship of headship.

The headship of Christ

The 'food' from the tree of life, which Christ gives to a man to bring to his wife and family, is *the will of God* that is to be done in the life of each member of his household. They fulfil the will of God as they do the works that are allocated to them each day by Christ. They are able to do these works by the capacity that is given to them by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the food for each member of this family is to do the will of God each day. Each person in a house is enabled to participate in the fulfilment of God's will only as they are established in the fellowship and order of headship.

The order of headship was established by God the Father. Mal 2:10. The Father gives a remnant of His Spirit to a believing man and a believing woman when they marry, enabling them to become one flesh and one Spirit as members of Christ's bride, the church. Mal 2:15. Eph 5:25-27.

The order of headship should be first manifest within a marriage between a man and his wife, before it is facilitated to each member of a man's household. A husband first gives the bread of God (which is His will) to his wife so that, together with him, she is able to distribute it to the members of their household.

Carnality within a marriage

However, the attempts to fulfil this calling uncover a problem in many Christian families which requires attention. *The presenting problem* is that a wife does not accept that her husband - the man whom she loves - is the face of Christ's headship to her. That is, she does not accept that he is speaking the word of God to her in relation to the works of God that belong to their marriage and their household.

In a family such as this, the wife does see herself as 'a helper comparable' and compatible with her husband. Yet, she seeks to serve her husband and family by offering solutions that she deems appropriate to the presenting circumstances. In dialogue with her husband, there is often conflict as they seek consensus regarding the best course of action to achieve an *acceptable* outcome.

The 'good' that the wife is seeking is not sourced in Christ; it does not come from the tree of life. We know this because Christ does not speak His word to her over and against her husband. This is true, no matter how much she prays and claims to hear from Christ in her personal devotions.

Coming to Christ

A wife needs to come with her husband to Christ in prayer at the tree of life. Their approach should not be an endeavour to find consensus by seeking conflict resolution through prayer. Rather, a married couple are to come to the tree of life in prayer so that they may first hear individually from Christ, whom the Father has made the Head of their family.

In this regard, the man lays down his claim to be the principal authority figure, or head, of his family by submitting himself to Christ as his Head. 1Co 11:3. Christ then enables and empowers him to become the head of his wife. The woman entreats the face of Christ by the Spirit. She receives capacity from the Spirit to submit to her husband as to Christ. Now able to meet in Spirit and truth, they become heirs together of the grace of life. 1Pe 3:7. They minister this grace to the members of their household, and to those with whom they relate in the church and in the world.

When a believing couple prays in this manner, their house is not divided. For this reason, it is able to stand. Mar 3:25. There is no room made, through division, for Satan to take advantage over them. 2Co 2:11. The advantage that Satan seeks is to devour their children by suggesting an alternative to the word that comes from the headship of God the Father.

Stumbling through unbelief

The emotions of sin that are aroused as a husband and wife interact with each other indicate a tenuous supply of the grace of life within their marriage. Rom 7:5. This conflict is often apparent when a man seeks fellowship through dialogue with his wife regarding a presenting situation or issue. His wife may perceive his approach to be lacking sufficient affection, warmth or sensitivity; or she may feel intruded upon as her existing agenda and pre-prepared plan to address the matter are overlooked.

In these circumstances, the wife often feels as though she is in a double bind. She has committed herself to her husband's agenda, believing it to be headship, but now feels abused in their relationship. She does not feel appreciated. The *romance* of their relationship requires that she be worshipped and not conquered. Consequently, the wife makes a heated, abused response. She may also then cite many other intrusions upon her integrity as a wife, and a mother, to substantiate her claims of mistreatment.

In this situation, a wife needs to come to understand that Christ has granted the grace of headship to her husband *for her sake*. Even though she is serving her husband as a member of Christ, she is unable to do this in the strength of her own wisdom and abilities. Her wisdom is what she brings from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Approaching fellowship with her husband from this basis leads only to oppression, weakness and sickness.

As we have noted in other publications, there are many illnesses and physical distresses that have no cogent biological basis, but are, rather, the fruit of spiritual oppression. Without a person receiving illumination leading to repentance and faith, these illnesses can become one's preoccupation. When this happens, a person's delusion is compounded, and their obedience, through which they could otherwise find deliverance, is inhibited.

Anxiety is often identified as the reason why a woman is unable to trust her husband and to relinquish control in her marriage and family. However, anxiety is not the *source* of her problem; rather, it is the *symptom* of *unbelief*. Evidently, she is bereft of faith. 2Co 4:13. This means that she is unable to obtain grace for life, which belongs to those who are participating in the order of headship. Rom 5:1-5.

A woman is enabled to serve in her family only by the power of the Holy Spirit. Her personal devotional life with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is so that she, by the capacity of the Holy Spirit, can serve each member of her family through grace. She is to serve in this manner, rather than through romantic preference.

In order to find deliverance from her carnal, romantic and fruitless condition, a woman needs to receive illumination from the Holy Spirit regarding how to come to Christ to be built on Him, together with her husband. Through prayer, she can receive illumination from the Spirit regarding her sin, her obedience, and her participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering as a wife and a mother. Once illuminated by the Spirit, she is able to turn from her fallen conduct and to lay hold of the faith that belongs to her appointment in her house. The Spirit ministers grace to a woman who humbles herself in this manner. She finds deliverance from her anxieties as she heeds the words of Christ who says, 'Be not faithless, but believing.' Joh 20:27.

Once illuminated by the Holy Spirit, a believing wife understands that her obedience to the heavenly Father's lordship in her life, marriage and family is given to her husband. By this means, it can become part of the fellowship of Yahweh's offering. That is, as Christ is obedient to the Father, and her husband is obedient to Christ, so she has joined the same fellowship of faith when she obeys her husband's directions for her family and receives them through him, from Christ.

Without a word

Significantly, even if her husband does not obey God's word, a wife, without a word, can conduct herself with virtue and chastity. Because of this, her husband may even be won by her comportment. 1Pe 3:1. Her virtue and chaste bearing is the expression of her obedience to the word that she is receiving from the face of Christ as an individual, God-fearing Christian.

A godly woman's conduct is 'without a word' on two fronts. First, she obeys the word of Christ without judging or badgering her husband. She dignifies him with his own accountability to respond to the word that is proceeding to him from Christ. Second, it is 'without a word' because her husband will be *unable to minister*

the word detailing the will of God for her and the family if he is disconnected from the headship of Christ himself. In this regard, through obedience to the proceeding word of God, she obtains grace to raise her children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord so that they can be established in their sonship. 1Co 7:14. Eph 6:4.

This does not mean that the woman is not obedient to her husband. As we have already established, she obeys her husband because of her submission to the headship of Christ and to the lordship of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, she respects her husband, and obeys him in all things, *unless* he demands that she forsake her discipleship or coerces her to engage in activities that will compromise her sanctification and her participation in the body of Christ. The apostle Paul was quite clear that, in these circumstances, a woman is not obligated to her husband. He does not have priority over her sonship or discipleship. Specifically, Paul wrote, 'But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases'. 1Co 7:15.

Patience is needed in every family as we learn to relate to one another *through grace*. These matters are not resolved in a moment. They take time as each person responds to the Lord in the season of His word. We must allow the Spirit to address each one personally, giving to them the dignity of their own accountable response to His initiative. We must not presume to be enforcers of God's word. This is a carnal action, and does not produce the fruit of life. Rather, each person is to take heed how they hear and respond to the word of God, which has a polarising effect on every hearer.

Fellowship and obedience

We do not step out of fellowship to facilitate obedience. This applies in the community of the church as well in our houses and marriages. Likewise, we do not enforce a command where there is no fellowship. In this regard, even a rebuke is given from fellowship, and in fellowship.

To admonish another person from any other basis is to succumb to the temptation of unbelief and carnality. Paul warned us against this relational approach, writing, 'Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.' Gal 6:1-3.

If we are motivated to address others from the emotions of our flesh, we demonstrate the very same carnality that we presume to reprove. Moreover, we come under the same judgement, as the Lord Himself warned, saying, 'And if the prophet is induced to speak anything, I the Lord have induced that prophet, and I will stretch out My hand against him and destroy him from among My people Israel. And they shall bear their iniquity; the punishment of the prophet shall be the same as the punishment of the one who inquired.' Eze 14:9-10.

We must not confuse compliance with obedience. A *compliant* person connects with those who are in authority for his own empowerment, and for the purpose of verifying his own projection. In their delusion, such ones cleave to the messenger with deceit, and 'lord it over' others on behalf of the church. Dan 11:34. As they presume, on account of empowerment, to address matters for which they have no real accountability, they may cause injury to those whom they have engaged, and may potentially bring the messengers, in whose name they speak, into disrepute.

What is the pre-requisite for fellowship? A *pre-requisite for fellowship is communication*. God Himself initiates toward us in this manner. First, He speaks from the fellowship of Yahweh. His word, proceeding from Their fellowship, is for the purpose of joining us to fellowship. 1Jn 1:1-3. Our connection to fellowship is the implication of prevenient grace. In other words, He does not give us direction for our life before He joins us to fellowship.

We note that fellowship leading to a word that proclaims His will for our life is the basis, or foundation, of the Father's *agape* meal. This is His provision that is offered to us. Fellowship is first offered as the basis for the facilitation of His word. We note that, in this regard, He prepares a table for us in the presence of our foes. Psa 23:5.

We are called to receive the word with understanding. This is the nature of *agape*. *Understanding* does not refer to our analysis of the word in order to determine where it fits in the antecedent schema of our lives. Rather, we receive the word, and apply ourselves to understanding, in *agape* fellowship. We do this so that we are able to walk in faith obedience as those who remain connected to this fellowship.

Agape fellowship is where we sit and digest the 'food' that is offered to us by God. His food is His will for us, as Jesus Himself confessed, saying, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.' Joh 4:34. The Father is sharing His will with us at a table. The food, then, is the provision and capacity to do God's will as we live and function together. We have seen that the remnant of the Spirit does come from the Father. Mal 2:10,15. This provision becomes the ground and basis of fellowship in the church and in every family and marriage.

Chapter 7

Reformation in families through the gospel of peace

The gospel of peace brings division

During His earthly ministry, Jesus commissioned the twelve disciples to preach the kingdom of God to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Luk 9:1-2. Mat 10:5-7. The writings of the twelve apostles, along with those of the Old Testament prophets, comprise the Scriptures. They are the foundation upon which the bride city is built; Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone. Eph 2:20.

After He had commissioned the twelve, Jesus then sent seventy-two disciples out before His face to proclaim the gospel of peace in every city and place where He Himself was about to go. Luk 10:1,5. The work of the seventy-two disciples foreshadowed the overseeing and evangelistic ministry of lampstand churches. The overseers are stewards of the house of God. Their work is to feed everyone in the house with the word of present truth. Luk 12:42-44. The evangelistic ministry belongs to firstfruits houses. These are *worthy houses* who have received the gospel of peace and are able to minister this grace to others through testimony.

Through the ministry of those who belong to the order of seventy-two in lampstand churches, hearers are able to be born from above, and they are exhorted to *take heed how they build on the foundation* that is Christ, and on the word of the apostles and prophets. As the apostle Paul declared, 'According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.' 1Co 3:10. The content of the message that enables a person to build on the foundation is contained in the pastoral epistles. These were written by Paul to equip Timothy and Titus for their ministry as part of the order of seventy-two, and by James and Jude, the brothers of Jesus.

Significantly, not long after the seventy-two returned from ministering in the cities to which they were sent, Jesus said to all of His followers, 'Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. *For from now on* five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three.' Luk 12:51-52. The implication of Jesus' statement is that the word proceeding from the orders of twelve and seventy-two will have this polarising impact in every household to whom the gospel is proclaimed. This effect of the gospel of peace was identified in Christ's description of the types of ground in the parable of the sower and the seed.

The grounds

The *first ground* that Jesus nominated is *wayside ground*. This refers to those who hear the gospel of the kingdom but *do not understand the word of their name*. Mat 13:19. They lack understanding because they refuse to relinquish their own understanding of themselves, of God, and of the gospel. Characteristically, they may hold on to former gospel traditions; they may fail to receive the fear of the Lord; they may reject the invitation to present themselves for fellowship on the ground of the presbytery; or they may resist Christ Himself when He comes to expose the thoughts and intents of their heart. The wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart so that their Christian expression is no more than a form of religion that has no power or *exanastasis* life. 2Ti 3:5.

Stumbling through disobedience

The *second ground* that Jesus identified is *shallow ground*. Explaining this profile, Jesus said, 'This is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word [preached by the Spirit], immediately he *stumbles*.' Mat 13:20-21.

'Shallow ground' refers to a person who receives the gospel of peace and is born of God. However, as they come to Christ to be built upon Him as a part of the temple of His body, they stumble, being *disobedient to the word*. The apostle Peter nominated this issue in his first epistle, writing, 'Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are *disobedient*, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the Chief Cornerstone," and "A *stone of stumbling and a rock of offence*".' 1Pe 2:7-8.

A son of God stumbles as they come to Christ because they are disobedient to the word of their name. That is, they prioritise their own ambitions, projections or personal expression over obedience to the word of present truth that is proclaimed by the Spirit, from the presbytery. The tribulations that arise because of the word are the effect of the Spirit breathing upon a believer, testing their works by fire. The emotions of sin that arise in these circumstances indicate that the carnal edifice of a shallow-ground believer is being brought to nothing. Unless they acknowledge this loss, and begin to build on Christ with gold, silver and precious

stones, through obedience to the proceeding word, they will fall away. 1Co 3:12-14. Their expression will be, at best, the fruitless and damnable religion that is characteristic of wayside ground.

Paul was referring to this reforming process which belongs to the crisis of shallow ground when he wrote, 'But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honour and some for dishonour. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.' 2Ti 2:20-21.

Note that no-one is born as a vessel of honour. We *all* begin as vessels of wood and clay, who need to embrace the process authored by Christ through which we can be cleansed and changed into vessels of honour. The apostle John summarised this process as *walking in the light of the word through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ*. 1Jn 1:7. The fruit of this process is the capacity for love. Love is demonstrated through obedience to the word of our name, and is the reason why we cease from stumbling. John emphasised this point, writing, 'He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and *there is no cause for stumbling in him*.' 1Jn 2:9-10.

The work of overseers is to ensure that the projections of a person do not hijack the agenda of the church. Often, a person whose ambitions are being thwarted will be provoked to the emotions of sin. At these times, a messenger must not respond in a carnal manner. 2Co 10:4-6. Rather, by the Spirit, they are to exhort a hearer to let the word of their name take root in their heart. The word can take root only as they embrace the cleansing process through which their ambitions and projections are being brought to nothing in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. In reality, their sufferings are actually the circumcision, or chastening, of God so that they might not be lost.

Choked by familiar spirits

The *third ground* described by Jesus is *thorny ground*. This refers to a person who is born again by the living and abiding word of God, but the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things choke the word, and the person becomes unfruitful. Mat 13:22. Mar 4:19. Luk 8:14. As we considered in Chapter 4, these thorny responses to the word indicate the destructive influence of familiar spirits on a person's fruitfulness as part of the bride of Christ.

Jesus likened these familiar, demonic spirits to serpents and scorpions. Luk 10:19. Their connection to thorny ground was highlighted by the Lord when He commissioned the prophet Ezekiel. He said to Ezekiel, 'And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their words, *though briers and thorns* are with you and you *dwell among scorpions*; do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks, though they are *a rebellious house*.' Eze 2:6. Clearly, familiar spirits are manifest by *people*. This was exemplified by the Pharisees, whom Jesus described as 'a brood of vipers'. Mat 23:33.

Thorny, familiar spirits are brought to bear on members of a family through the cultural attitudes, orientations or pursuits that are fostered within the household in competition with the word of each person's name. Parents, motivated by their knowledge of good and evil, may endeavour to reinterpret the word and its implications for their children; may endorse choices that they believe will lead to success and security; and may promote an approach to life that avoids suffering. When those in the house are bound to this conversation, they are unable to be disciplined by Christ in the fellowship of the presbytery. In fact, they resist discipleship, preferencing their familiar ways over the culture of godliness that is established through the ministry of the word in the body of Christ.

King David described those in the church who are bound by familiar spirits as 'sons of rebellion', specifically likening them to thorns, or tares. 2Sa 23:6-7. Having chosen Satan's word over the word of their name as a son of God, they themselves become a *tare*. To this end, they are manifest as a son of the devil. Gen 3:1. Rev 20:2. They may continue to grow among the wheat within their own household, as well as in the household of God, even though they are of a different fatherhood. Mat 13:24-30.

The progression from body to bride

The word of God will bring division within extended households as some respond to the word with repentance and faith, while others continue to stumble through investment in their projections, or through their unwillingness to deal with the familiar spirits that encumber them and their household. We see that, through the ministry of the word, a house reveals itself to be worthy or unworthy of the gospel. This process of establishing who is worthy or unworthy belongs to the temple of Christ's body.

In Chapter 4, we explain that the temple of Christ's corporate body is the context in which we are processed individually by the word of present truth which is proclaimed to us by Christ, from the presbytery. As we walk in the light of the word, the blood of Jesus Christ delivers us and cleanses us from our sin and from our familiar ways. Furthermore, the effect of our former fallen way of living is being purged from our lives. 1Jn 1:7. We are then blameless in the sight of God because we are living sanctified lives. Php 2:14-15. That is, our sanctification has become our eternal life. Rom 6:22.

When we, as a local community of Christians, live together as a church in this way, we then emerge from the body of Christ into the world as the bride of Christ. Our homes become a context for bringing forth godly children. Moreover, they are a place for care, and for the evangelism of others who do not know Jesus. Whereas the focus of the *body of Christ* is our individual sonship, the focus of the *bride* is the multiplication of life in families through submission to the headship of Christ, who is the Husband of the bride.

Let us now consider the implications of this process for a married couple and a family. In relation to the temple, each individual is to come to Christ to meet Him with unveiled face, and to be built on Him. On the Rock, in the body of Christ, each individual learns who they are from the face of Christ, which is the corporate mirror of the presbytery. By the proceeding word that belongs to the gospel of peace, they are learning what it means to be an individual son of God; a male son of God or a female son of God; a brother or a sister; a husband or a wife; a father or a mother. It is the word ministered by Christ to the body that gives us this definition.

Importantly, a man does not teach a woman how to be female, a wife or a mother; nor does a woman teach a man how to be male, a husband or a father. The curse of sin flourishes in a house where this is not understood. God said that this would be the relational dynamic of households that are in bondage to the flesh, declaring, 'Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.' Gen 3:16. It is through this fallen relational orientation of a married couple that familiar spirits thrive and are imparted from one generation to the next.

That which a person learns from the headship of Christ in His body should then be expressed by offering in the home. By offering, each person who is being personally reformed by the word that is proclaimed to the body is established in the order of headship. Headship is not a 'peck order' within a household. Rather, it is *a flow of life* that is multiplied as each person makes offering in the house according to their sanctification, which is obtained through the process that belongs to their membership in the body of Christ. This flow of life within one's house is part of the river of life that flows from the throne in the midst of the New Jerusalem, because the house is established through the culture of blamelessness, as part of the bride city. Rev 22:1.

The Lord, through the prophet Malachi, proclaimed the progression from the body to the bride through *the ministry of the gospel of peace*. He declared, 'But to you who fear My name [as one proceeding beyond wayside ground] The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves.' Mal 4:2. In this statement, the Lord was addressing those who come to Him to be built on Him. The word, shining as light from the face of Christ, has a regenerating effect upon a believer's identity, healing the fractures and frailties that prompt their self-verifying endeavours. This is the word that is proclaimed in the body, which, for example, establishes a person in their sonship, in their manhood, as a brother, as a husband and as a father.

The Lord then said, 'You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this, says the LORD of hosts.' Mal 4:3. The Lord was highlighting the fact that a person who receives the ministry of the word from the face of Christ will obtain authority to trample the serpents and scorpions – being figurative of familiar spirits – within their houses. Luk 10:19. They will no longer be encumbered by the traditions of the flesh, which become like ash as the Spirit Himself breathes upon them and their house.

The Lord concluded His exhortation, saying, 'Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgements. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.' Mal 4:4-6. The ministry of Elijah first addresses each individual so that they can be rightly related to each other within a house as part of the bride of Christ. We note in this regard that a father cannot turn to his children, nor children to their father, unless they are first established, individually, as sons in the body of Christ. It is for this reason that our priority as Christian households must be 'body' first, and then family.

The effect of fallen parenting

A key implication of the gospel of peace that is ministered in the spirit and power of Elijah is the reformation of relationships among parents, grandparents and their children. Luk 1:16-17. Clearly, this reformation is necessary for the deliverance of every family from the destructive effects of the curse upon mankind because of the Fall. Gen 3:16-19. Essential to the ministry through which such cultural change is achieved is *illumination* regarding the nature of fallen fatherhood and motherhood, and regarding its impact upon individuals within families.

Every parent needs this illumination, for no fatherhood, nor motherhood, is godly by default. Moreover, every person has been impacted by the carnal influence of their natural parents. The Lord likened the adverse consequences of fallen fatherhood and motherhood on the identity formation of individuals to lameness, and to the 'valleys' and 'mountains' that encumber their Christian pilgrimage. Heb 12:12-13. Isa 40:3-4.

Highlighting this point, we observe that some men and women are unable to receive, and to respond to, the grace of fatherhood in the church, because they did not learn this response within their own home during their formative years. This is likely to have occurred in contexts where their father himself had identity fractures or where the father was absent, either relationally or physically. Men, in particular, who grow up under these fallen fatherhood conditions often endeavour to 'find themselves' through what they do or through the approval of perceived authority figures.

Another notable expression of fallen fatherhood is exhibited by a man who seeks for identity verification through the reverence of his children. He may pursue this through the exertion of dominion over them, producing fear and causing offence. Alternatively, and with the same goal of his veneration in view, a father may patronise his children in an attempt to foster a friendship-like connection with them. This is confusing for his children, particularly at times when the father endeavours to bring correction to them. Having engaged with their father as a 'mate' in previous interactions, his expression of fatherhood toward his children now appears to be inordinate. Not only is this expression dismissed but, also,

it may provoke an angry reaction from the children as they presume to put their 'father-friend' in his place. Children who grow up under this form of fatherhood tend to display scarce genuine respect for those in authority in other contexts of life.

Children will also be deleteriously impacted by a mother who intervenes in a father's relational initiative toward their children. Often, in these circumstances, the mother draws the children to herself as she belittles their father. She may do this overtly through her comments about her husband; or subtly, by offering alternative pathways to the directions given to the children by the father, because of her perception of his inadequacies. Promoted and supported by their mother, the children are placed in a position of superiority over their father, which they begin to imbibe and then express toward him. In sons, anger, which may be overt or more suppressed, is a common fruit of this upbringing. In some cases, a son's lack of honour for fatherhood may progress to a rejection of his own masculinity.

Daughters may, likewise, be unhelpfully affected by the carnal expressions of fatherhood and motherhood within their home. This is particularly notable where a special daughter-father relationship has been cultivated and preferenced over the daughter's relationship with her mother. The daughter is the father's 'precious princess' who, in his eyes, can do little wrong. The father is revered by the daughter and becomes a reference point against which she measures other men. In these instances, the young woman's celebrated compliance becomes a form of expression that has the appearance of godliness, but becomes for her a means of control and self-verification. That is, it affords her the latitude to pursue her own carnal desires, while maintaining the appearance of acceptability and submission.

Even in families that are committed to cultural reformation in response to the word of God, children may grow up learning the behaviours that belong to Christian culture, without meeting Christ for themselves. Notwithstanding the wonderful truth that they were recipients of the divine nature from conception, every Christian young person must experience a lordship crisis where they meet and submit to Christ Himself. That is, they must have 'a second time' encounter with Christ, where they choose His lordship for themselves and embrace their discipleship in the body of Christ. This may be a confronting crisis for them, which parents should not undermine through their endeavours to intervene or to preserve their children.

This lordship crisis is especially important for a young woman to experience and to testify of, as she courts a man in preparation for marriage. The young woman may have grown up in a Christian home, and learned to serve and engage in the life of the church; however, unless she meets Christ as her Lord, she will be unable to submit to the headship of her husband, as to Christ. That is, she will remain uncovered in relation to the headship of Christ. She will be subject to all kinds of unclean spirits which will, unavoidably, torment the household and her children.

Reformation of relationships within a household

Jesus addressed the impact of the word upon households, saying, 'Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.' Luk 12:51-53.

In this statement, Christ identified one house as comprising three generations - grandparents, parents, and children. In some cases, where great-grandchildren are born into a household, it comprises four generations. This is the first and most fundamental reality of house to house fellowship in the body of Christ. It is within this context that the spirit and power of Elijah is ministered to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers. Every household requires reformation regarding the relationships across these three generations. It is a fundamental implication of receiving the Elijah ministry.

The carnal intrusion of in-laws upon a nuclear family, and the associated imposition of their familiar cultures, is a widely recognised dynamic within households. This, of course, requires *reformation*. However, what is less understood, but is arguably more profound and profuse within our congregations, is the resistance of nuclear families to the generations before them. This, too, is carnal, and is contrary to the culture of faith that belongs to a house of peace. This fallen dynamic within a household is often the implication of confusion between one's marriage and family.

When a Christian couple marries, they must leave their respective fathers and mothers in order to be joined together by one Spirit and to become one flesh. Mal 2:15. Gen 2:24. In this regard, their parents should not be the reference point for the relational dynamic of their *marriage*. Rather, each person within a marriage submits to the headship of Christ at the tree of life. Here, Christ enables and empowers the man, by the Spirit, to become the head of his wife. The wife receives grace, by the Spirit, to submit herself in obedience to her husband, as to Christ. By this means, they are able to minister the grace of life to their children and from their house.

While this is fundamental to a *marriage* relationship, this is not the basis for relationships across generations within a *family*. In this regard, when a Christian couple marries, particularly under the direction of the ministry graces of Christ, the man will become the son of his wife's parents, and the woman will become the daughter of his parents. They should be able to easily receive one another and to relate across these generations.

Sadly, this has not been the relational reality in most houses. Rather, many couples engage with their in-laws with caution, managing their interactions across the generations in an endeavour to assert and maintain the identity of their own nuclear family. This is carnal, because it is driven by fear. It is the response of a

person who has not received the gospel of peace, and hence has not found healing or deliverance from the effects of fallen fatherhood or motherhood upon them.

This orientation to in-laws is particularly notable in the households of men who were estranged from their own fathers. Unavoidably, and often subconsciously, the man directs this resentment and distrust toward his father-in-law as he endeavours to consolidate his own fatherhood and to define the cultural identity of his house. This is his house, and its distinction from the house of his in-laws must be maintained. He makes this assertion for the purpose of verifying his own identity.

The relationship between children and their grandparents is a notable indicator of the culture within a household. Children from houses that remain insulated from the older generation will often view their grandparents as being merely 'a resource' who endows them with treats or unique experiences. Being loyal to their parents, and informed by the cultural practices of their household, the children, as they grow through their teenage years, also receive the relational initiatives of their grandparents with caution, containing the instruction and expression of their grandparents toward them. This is quite disrespectful and dishonouring, and demonstrates that the children have not learned the culture of true Christian filial piety that belongs to the kingdom of God.

The word of the cross that is ministered in the spirit and power of Elijah is the sword that is brought to bear in every household. It does not affirm our default familiar practices. The evidence of receiving this ministry is *the conversation that belongs to repentance and faith*. That is, it is manifest in commitment to a new way of relating across, and within, the generations that comprise a household. This is an aspect of restoration to the God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Unless this reformation is active within our families, we will be unable to minister the gospel of peace to others.

Teaching children the way they should go

A man's approach to the discipline and instruction of his children will reflect his carnal condition, as well as the degree to which cultural reformation has been realised in his house. To demonstrate this point, the apostle Paul contrasted Christian fatherhood, through which one's children are established in the way of the cross, with carnal fatherhood, which is exercised as a means of identity verification. Specifically, he wrote, 'We have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect [lit: 'they made us ashamed'; meaning, promoted a projection to cover the shame of identity nakedness]. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them [for *their* profit], but He for *our* profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.' Heb 12:9-10.

The *way* that a child should go is the *way of salvation*, which is found in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Pro 22:6. Heb 5:7-8. It is the way of the cross, which is the wisdom and power of God. Instead of endeavouring to

preserve their children from difficulties and distress, Christian parents teach them to walk by the Spirit, and to embrace their unique and age-appropriate participation with Christ in His sufferings. Christian parents pray with their children and address, through discipline, the carnal and familiar responses that arise in the course of their day. Through this nurture and admonition, children learn from their parents to choose their sonship as they grow in their awareness of their heavenly Father, and of their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

In contrast, a father who disciplines his children according to his own sight and religious expectations derives identity verification from the compliance of his children. This is the profit that he seeks as he chastens the children 'as seems best to him'. The children become loyal (or pay respect) to the family culture. The word that they hear is mediated by the doctrinal perspectives of the family so that they are unable to receive direction and instruction apart from the family or from outside of the family. They embrace the project that belongs to the family fortress. Some children react against this culture, being provoked to wrath. In these cases, the children seek an alternative form of projection and verification through engagement with the spirit of the world.

Sanctification in our houses

The Lord, by the Spirit, has been speaking to the church regarding sanctification in our families. In particular, He has been addressing our engagement with family members who have rejected the gospel of sonship and chosen to make themselves enemies of God and His people. This admonition to every house has elicited a broad array of responses and emotions, depending on how it has been heard, received, discussed and applied. Many of these responses have been based in the knowledge of good and evil. Accordingly, they have not been of faith; nor have they produced life within the family.

Life and peace in relation to these matters are only obtained when we receive illumination by the Spirit, and respond to the word *in the cross*, which is the tree of life. It is only in the cross that we are able to obtain power for our salvation, and wisdom to answer these matters according to the Spirit. 1Co 1:22-25.

The beginning point for establishing our houses in sanctification is to receive the gospel of peace, and to respond to it with faith obedience as it is ministered by the Spirit, from the presbytery. The reality for most people is that the culture within their marriage and household has not been godly; it has been carnal. They have not been building together on Christ, the Foundation Stone; nor have they been established in the order and fellowship of headship.

As we considered in Chapter 6, relational disharmony and corruption within marriages and households indicate that couples have stumbled at the Stumbling Stone, being disobedient to the word and fellowship to which they were appointed. 1Pe 2:4-8. Children who are born in these households are unable to be raised

according to the culture of the kingdom. In many cases, their pursuit of the world is a somewhat predictable fruit of the carnal culture in which they were nurtured.

Mercifully and thankfully, the Lord has been restoring the gospel of God to us through the ministry of Elijah. Its proclamation is ministering grace and faith for recovery in families. In the first instance, as each person responds to the gospel, there is opportunity for repentance and faith in relation to marriages, so that couples can be properly established in the order of headship and can be built on Christ, the Chief Cornerstone. As individuals and couples repent of their former gospels, and are established as houses of peace, they have the opportunity to share their testimony with their prodigal children.

When this testimony is expressed in the *meekness of wisdom*, grace and peace are multiplied to their children. Jas 3:13. Through the gospel, the children are granted an occasion to choose whether or not they want to be recovered, with their parents, to the new culture of the cross. This may involve a whole season of discussion and connection. Note that parents who have been illuminated to the gospel will not seek the recovery of their family to its former state. This would be a return to the way of the flesh. Furthermore, having released their children to this choice, they will leave them to their choice, particularly if they choose to continue living according to the spirit of the world.

To further understand how to respond to issues of sanctification in our houses, we must give attention to Christ's instruction, and to the example of His interactions with the members of His family. Let us introduce, in a preliminary way, some of these lessons.

The prodigal son

The most direct instruction that Jesus gave concerning the response of parents to children who spurn their inheritance as sons of God is the parable of the prodigal son, outlined in the Gospel of Luke. Luk 15:11-32. It is important to remember that this parable addresses the responses of two sons *in a covenant house*; it is not only a lesson that pertains to children who leave the church and their Christian families.

The younger son said to his father, 'Give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' Not many days later, he took this portion to himself, journeyed to a far country and, there, wasted his possessions. This child had benefited from the resources and investment of his parents, including, for example, provision for his physical needs, his education, music, and other cultural opportunities. However, the son formed the view, perhaps through the spirit of the world at school or through the cultural practices of the home, that these resources were an entitlement. From his perspective, they belonged to his right to be the source of his own life and destiny.

This orientation to life indicates their rejection of the culture that belongs to the heavenly city. It is 'a departure to a far country', which we could call the culture of the administration of 'Babylon'. 2Ki 20:14. In doing so, the younger son sinned against the heavenly Jerusalem and against his father and mother. Luk 15:18.

Significantly, the father of the house did not pursue his son. To do this would have been to depart from the word and culture of the heavenly Jerusalem, to go to the far country, Babylon, with his son. In other words, the culture of his house would be a mixture, symbolised by Babylon. In this condition, for the prodigal son, the father's house would no longer be a gate, or doorway, back to the heavenly house of God.

To allow a child to depart from the house without pursuing them to a far country means that the parents dignify the child with their own choice. The parents cease from being a resource of support for the conversation and conduct that belong to the culture that their child has chosen. However, this does not mean that they are no longer able to communicate with each other. Rather, it means that if the child desires connection, the conversation is brought into the cross, which should be the ground of the parents' household and conversation. Any other conversation will be fruitless, and will produce death.

It is also important to recognise that endeavours by estranged children to control and orchestrate some connection for their own advantage, or for the advantage of the grandchildren, are not acceptable to us as Christians. In choosing to depart from our house and from the house of their heavenly Father, they have insulted God and us. Until they find repentance, we treat them with meekness, but are not open to their manipulations. In this regard, they must carry their own load and the accountability for their choice.

The older son remained in the house of his father. However, the return of his prodigal brother revealed the older son's own disconnection from the culture of *agape* that belongs to a covenant house in the New Jerusalem. He had set himself as the measure of his parents and their response to the situation. His carnal orientation was manifest in his emotional response toward his parents and sibling. Jesus noted that the older son was angry and would not join with the rest of his father's house to participate in the *agape* meal.

The self-righteous indignation of the older son was no more sanctified than his younger brother's prodigal living. It demonstrated a rejection of his calling as a son in the house, which was to serve his brother. Instead, the older son desired to be served and celebrated for his pious conduct in the house. He erroneously viewed this as a feature of his inheritance.

This carnal conduct has also been pervasive among families that belong to our congregations. These judgements are not the culture of *agape*. Those who respond in this manner do so from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Like the prodigal son, they also need illumination, leading to repentance and faith, to enable their actual participation in the *agape* meal that belongs to the culture of the New Jerusalem.

My mother and My brothers

Jesus Himself demonstrated the conversation and conduct that belongs to the culture of sanctification in households. Sometime after Jesus had commenced His earthly ministry, He specifically commissioned the twelve disciples. Mat 10:1-4. Mar 3:13-19. Luk 6:12-16. This was around the time that Jesus healed the man with a withered hand, on the Sabbath. Mat 12:9-14. Mar 3:1-6. Luk 6:6-11.

At this time, Mary and her other sons sought to speak with Jesus. Mat 12:46-47. It appears that they thought He was 'out of His mind'. Mar 3:21. However, Jesus answered the one whom they had sent to retrieve Him, saying, 'Who is My mother and who are My brothers?' Mat 12:48. He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers! For *whoever does the will of My Father in heaven* is My brother and sister and mother.' Mat 12:49-50.

Jesus was expected to be loyal to His natural family over and above the fellowship that was established through the ministry of His word. This was the word that revealed the will of God. His mother and brothers were demanding that the family be first, and the body of Christ take a lower priority. Because He did not succumb to this definition, He was considered by His family to be a danger to Himself and to others.

However, Jesus prioritised fellowship with His brethren, nominating those who were doing the will of the Father as His family - His mother and His brothers. Furthermore, He did not depart from this fellowship to satisfy the obligations and expectations of His family.

Scepticism regarding the ministry of Jesus as the Christ continued within the family. Moreover, the family's endeavours to impose upon Jesus' ministry escalated as He approached the commencement of His offering journey. Notably, John recorded that Jesus' brothers directed Him to leave Galilee and to enter Judea in order to prove His appointment as the Christ. Because they did not believe in Him, they said to Him, 'Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world [at the Feast of Tabernacles].' Joh 7:3-4.

Jesus was being invited by the family to the equivalent of a Christmas celebration! In this setting, as part of the family, they presumed to define the parameters, or setting, in which His ministry could be verified. However, Jesus did not join their family celebration, nor the obligations associated with their alternative gospels. Rather, He said to them, 'You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come.' Joh 7:8. We note that there was still a *conversation* between Jesus and His family. Furthermore, He did not condemn their initiative, even though they doubted Him; rather, He remained sanctified to the Father's will for Him.

Earlier, Jesus taught that He had come to bring a sword in the context of every family. He said, 'Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to "set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law"; and "a man's enemies will be those of his own household." He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.' Mat 10:34-38.

Following His seventh wound, but before He drank the wine, manifesting the new creation kingdom of God, Jesus said to Mary, from the cross, 'Woman, behold your son!', and to John, 'Behold your mother!' Joh 19:26-27. Through this ministry from His finished offering, Christ addressed the issue of dysfunction in Mary's family, and reordered the family in the cross. This was the only context in which the conversation leading to true reformation could happen. John recorded, 'From that hour that disciple took her to his own home'. Joh 19:27.

Mary and John witnessed the spear being thrust into the side of Christ. The spirit of grace and supplication was poured out upon them, causing them to look upon Jesus, whom they had pierced. Mary's heart was broken as she was illuminated to see that her familial expectations had not only been at odds with God's will but, also, had been a reproach laid upon Christ, causing Him to suffer. It is evident that this had been broken and circumcised from her heart, because John recorded, 'From that hour that disciple took her to his own home'. Joh 19:27.

Notably, following His resurrection from the dead, Jesus sought to restore His brothers, as well. In this regard, Paul highlighted the fact that Jesus appeared to James prior to His ascension into heaven from the Mount of Olives. 1Co 15:7. Wonderfully, it is evident that Mary and Jesus' brothers were born of God, for they were identified by Luke as being part of the company who were, with one accord, in prayer and supplication prior to the Day of Pentecost: 'With the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers'. Act 1:14.