

Becoming the
ISRAEL *of* GOD

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Contents

CHAPTER 1

The principle of the void	3
Making room for a new creation	3
The unfolding purpose of God	4
The dynamics of the Fall	6
The pressure to choose	7
Drawing from the void	8
Desire conceived	8
Implications of the curse for women and men	10
Deliverance at the tree of life	12
Recovery through offering	13

CHAPTER 2

The working of Satan	15
Idolatry	17
Sorcery	19
The example of Nebuchadnezzar	20
The teraphim	22
Unclean and familiar spirits	23
The finger of God	24
Deliverance from oppression	26

CHAPTER 3

The pilgrimage of the elect	29
The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob	29
The promise to Abraham and his Seed	30
God's calling in Isaac	30
Election in Jacob	33
We are Jacob	34
Seeking blessing according to the flesh	36
The house of God	37
Learning the fear of the Lord	37
Established on the foundation stone	38
Mercy and illumination	38
The land of Jacob's affliction - a trial of faith	39
Initiating reconciliation	40
Jacob wrestled with the Lord	41
Prayer in Gethsemane	41
Meeting the Lord in the darkness of the depths	42
Jacob bowed seven times	43
Reformation at Shechem	45

Becoming the Israel of God	46
Seventy-two entered Egypt	47
Jacob blessed his sons	48
CHAPTER 4	
Marriage reformation in the house of Jacob	51
Two marriages	52
Leah saved through childbirth	53
Seduction through trading	53
Fellowship in the afflictions of Christ	54
‘Attached’ through a remnant of the Spirit	54
An offering of praise	55
Blessed in fellowship	55
Spurning sorcery	56
Abiding in her inheritance	56
Rachel’s desire for Jacob	57
In the place of God	57
The culture of uncleanness	58
The repentance of Rachel	60
Benjamin, the fruit of repentance	62
Recovered through Paul	63
CHAPTER 5	
Cleansing the daughters of Zion	65
Seven women	65
The glorious and beautiful branch	66
A spirit of judgement and burning	67
The abominations in the temple	69
An image of jealousy	71
Abominations in the dark	72
The worship of Tammuz	73
The worship of the sun	74
The conduct of carnal Christian men	75
Carnal theologies	75
Sighing and crying	76
The destructive effect of the word	78
Appointed to wrath or mercy	78
ADDENDUM	
A testimony of a marriage being restored	81
Deliverance from control	82
Communication in marriage	83
Fellowship at the tree of life	84

Chapter I

The principle of the void

Making room for a new creation

Before the creation of the heavens and the earth, there was only the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They were active and fully satisfied in Their fellowship, for They are the sum of all diversity and expression. There was no 'emptiness' or 'nothingness' outside of Yahweh; nor was there room for any other expression within Their fellowship. This is because Yahweh, who is 'I AM', fills everything. Eph 1:23.

From Their own covenant fellowship, *Elohim* Father, Son and Holy Spirit said, 'Let *Us* make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.' Gen 1:26. This declaration marked the beginning of the Everlasting Covenant. It was the initiative of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to create and bring to glory a multitude of sons who are born of Their life and are participants in Their fellowship. Their love was expressed through this initiative, because it was pure giving. They did not extend Their covenant life to a new creation because of any lack in Their fellowship.

The statement, 'Let *Us* make man in Our image, according to Our likeness', encapsulates the dialogue of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit concerning the sonship predestination of every person who would ever live. The Scriptures identify *Elohim's* discussion as 'the counsel of the Lord', 'the whole counsel of God', and 'the counsel of His will'. Psa 33:11. Act 20:27. Eph 1:11.

From the Scriptures, we can identify two key aspects of God's counsel through which His covenant purpose is established and accomplished. The first is His knowledge of good and evil. This is the knowledge by which He creates all things. Isa 45:6-7. The second is the one Spirit and life of Yahweh, through which His righteousness and glory is expressed and multiplied. Joh 6:63.

The entire covenant purpose of God was *finished* in Their fellowship discussion before the beginning of creation. We note, for example, that *Elohim* said of Himself, 'I am God, and there is none like Me, *declaring [or manifesting] the end from the beginning*, and from ancient times things that are not yet done.' Isa 46:9-10. For this reason, Paul explained that the Lord's 'works were *finished* from [before] the foundation of the world'. Heb 4:3. They were conceived and finished in I AM before the beginning of the creation.

The counsel of God's will established the details of His *immutable* plan for the sons of God. Heb 6:17. The word 'immutable' means 'unchanging over time', or 'unable to be changed'. We see the principle of immutability in the life of a seed. In the natural creation, a seed follows a defined and invariable process in order to come to fruitful maturity. It begins with a figurative death as the seed falls into the ground and is buried. It then germinates, sprouts and grows. This process takes time, and its sequence is unchangeable. Notably, Jesus said that the principle of the seed revealed 'the mysteries of the kingdom of God'. Luk 8:9-10.

When *Elohim's* Everlasting Covenant purpose was declared, a 'void' was established, or created, in the midst of Their fellowship. Through the establishment of this void, or context of offering, the Godhead made room in Themselves for the fulfilment of Their covenant purpose. Identifying this context, Moses wrote, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was *without form, and void*; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.' Gen 1:1-2. Note that the establishment of this void was *not* the first day of creation.

The unfolding purpose of God

The void was the context in which the Everlasting Covenant of Yahweh, who is I AM, was finished. Significantly, the Holy Spirit was hovering over the waters of the void. This point focuses our attention on a key aspect of the unique offering of the Holy Spirit; that is, the sanctification of the Spirit. Rom 15:16. 2Th 2:13. 1Pe 1:2.

Through sanctification, the Holy Spirit separated the end (the Father's initiative) from the beginning (the Son's initiative). He did this by establishing time and space as the context in which *Elohim's* Covenant would come to

pass, through an immutable, or timely and ordered, process. Describing this unfolding of God's finished work, *Elohim* said, through the prophet Isaiah, 'Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it.' Isa 46:11. Here is a key. The immutable purpose of God comes to pass, and fills the void, *through His proceeding word*. When the Holy Spirit proclaims the word of God, saying, 'Today', that which was finished in the counsel of God is called into existence, progressively being revealed in the void. Heb 3:7. Rom 4:17.

The second stage in the progressive manifestation of God's Everlasting Covenant was the seven days of creation. In the void, the creation was brought forth and multiplied *by the word of God*. For example, bringing to pass the first day of creation, '*God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.*' Gen 1:3-5. Within this formative setting, man was created on the sixth day, and would multiply to become an innumerable company.

In contrast to the angels, and to all the living organisms of the earth who were also created by '*Elohim*', Moses explained that it was '*Yahweh Elohim*' who created man. He formed man from the dust of the ground, creating his fully functional biological body. Then, in a second action, the Lord God breathed 'the breath of lives' into the nostrils of man and, by this means, man became a living being, or soul. Gen 2:7. The identification of *Yahweh Elohim* as the Creator of man signifies that man's life and expression is dependent upon his connection to the fellowship of headship, which is revealed by the name *Yahweh Elohim*.

Pertaining to this destiny, the Lord God placed Adam in the garden of Eden. The garden was the context from which God's covenant plan would continue to unfold, according to the times ordained by the Lord. The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil were in the midst of the garden, revealing God's provision for the administration of His covenant purpose. Gen 2:9.

As we alluded to earlier, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil symbolises the creative initiative that belongs to the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The knowledge of good and evil belongs *only* to God. It belongs to His own mandate as the Creator. The Lord said of Himself, 'I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.' Isa 45:6-7. The angels are sustained by the fruit of this tree, for they were created to facilitate and uphold the creation of God. Note that they do not initiate this creation but,

rather, they are servants of the Lord and of His covenant purpose.
Psa 103:20-21.

The tree of life symbolises the one Spirit and life that belongs to the fellowship of Yahweh, through which Their life is multiplied. Mankind's predestination was to *multiply* the life of God to the creation, through offering in fellowship with Yahweh. The tree of life is the provision for this mandate. The fruit of the tree of life, which is the 'food' that belongs to Yahweh *Elohim* and to the sons of God, is light and life. Joh 6:63. Establishing this point, the apostle Paul wrote, 'Walk as children [or sons] of light (for the fruit of the Spirit [equally, 'the fruit of light'] is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is *acceptable to the Lord*'. Eph 5:8-10. Adam partook of this spiritual fruit through his daily fellowship with Yahweh, in the Spirit, at the tree of life. Gen 3:8. Through conversation with Yahweh, during this *agape* meal, he received grace and understanding regarding the works that were 'acceptable to the Lord' and pertained to his mandate as a son of God.

The Lord God blessed man, saying, '*Be fruitful and multiply*; fill the earth and subdue it; *have dominion* over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.' Gen 1:28. Furthermore, He charged man with the work of naming all the animals, and with the responsibility to tend and keep the garden. Gen 2:15. The Hebrew word for 'keep' in this passage of Scripture literally means, 'to hedge about; to guard'. Of course, Adam had dominion over the whole creation. The only entity that he needed to guard against was Satan, who had fallen from heaven and was now walking about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 1Pe 5:8.

To prepare a helper who was comparable to man, the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam. He took a rib from Adam's side, with which He formed woman to be his helper. Gen 2:18,21-22. When Adam saw what the Lord God had made, he said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' Gen 2:23. At this point, she was like a 'clone' of Adam, and was unable to bring forth children. According to God's immutable plan, woman was predestined to be the vessel through which identities would be multiplied. However, there was a delay between her formation as 'woman', and the Lord's initiative to establish her as 'Eve', the mother of all living. Gen 3:20.

The dynamics of the Fall

In his second letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul indicated that we should not be ignorant of Satan's devices, lest he take advantage of us and rob us of our inheritance as sons of God. 2Co 2:11. To understand the working of Satan, and how we overcome him, we must again direct our attention to the details of the fall of mankind.

The pressure to choose

In the first instance, it is apparent that Adam's insufficient application to the work of guarding the garden of Eden opened his marriage to the deception of Satan. Through Adam's disobedience, the woman was exposed to Satan's devices. Having gained access to the garden, Satan transformed his appearance to that of a seraph, or flying serpent. That is, he presented himself as 'an angel of light'. Paul revealed Satan's capacity to do this, saying, 'Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.' 2Co 11:14. The Devil positioned himself *in* the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. By implication, he claimed ownership, or possession, of this knowledge, communicating as though he had a *right* to speak from there.

The serpent addressed Eve, asking her, 'Has God [*Elohim*] indeed said, "You shall not eat of every tree of the garden"?' Gen 3:1. The woman responded, saying, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God [*Elohim*] has said, "You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die".' Gen 3:2-3.

In previous publications, we have noted that it was 'Yahweh *Elohim*' who said that man was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; it was not '*Elohim*'. Gen 2:16-17. Satan falsely declared that the Father's creative initiative was the expression of His own identity and life, apart from the fellowship of Yahweh. He challenged the reality that the fellowship of headship is the order of life through which mankind have their expression.

Significantly, as the woman gave ear to Satan's overtures, she, too, identified God, rather than the Lord God, as being the source of the command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The woman's response indicated a lack of clarity and conviction regarding the fellowship of headship, and signalled that she was *yet to choose* this fellowship as the context and provision for the expression of her life.

As was the case for Adam, the woman's ambivalence to what God had chosen for her was manifest under the pressure that was brought to bear by the alternative way of life proposed by Satan. We note that Adam's choice was not whether or not to exercise dominion over the creation; it was whether he would believe and accept the call to be a son, and to reveal Christ and the Father, by the Spirit, through this work. Likewise, the woman's choice was not whether or not to be the vessel of multiplication but, rather, whether she would accept her call to be a son of God and, by the Spirit, reveal her husband, as his helper. In doing so, she would reveal Christ and the Father.

Drawing from the void

Satan said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and *you will be like God*, knowing good and evil.' Gen 3:4-5. Of course, this was a lie. However, it is important to understand the nature of Satan's lie. Having positioned himself in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Satan *drew from the void* to offer alternative possibilities for the expression of the woman's life. He proposed that these alternatives could be realised by the woman through her possession of the knowledge of good and evil.

This is the basis of Satan's fatherhood. As Jesus said, 'When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.' Joh 8:44. The point is, *Satan cannot father anything in anyone*. Rather, he fathers, or generates, alternative possibilities *from the void*, with which he tempts mankind. These are alternatives to the immutable will of God, through which the righteousness of God is being progressively and increasingly revealed in the void. A person is drawn away by the desires that are aroused within them as they give heed to Satan's lies.

Satan himself drew from the void to define a destiny for himself. This presumption was motivated by envy. He said in his heart, 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, *I will be like the Most High*.' Isa 14:13-14.

Eve was receptive to Satan's lie because of her tenuous connection to the fellowship of headship, indicating that she was yet to apprehend the faith that comes by hearing the immutable word of Yahweh. Rom 10:17. 2Co 4:13. The Lord God had already declared that Adam and Eve were to be fruitful and multiply, but she was barren. The season of delay between the proclamation of the word and its fulfilment, 'at the right time', was a trial of faith for Eve. The word of the Lord was testing her until it came to pass according to the immutable purpose of God. Psa 105:19. Satan was able to exploit the woman's lack of clarity and conviction concerning God's will for her life. Drawing from the void, Satan proposed that, through the knowledge of good and evil, the woman could become like God; that is, *she could become the origin of multiplication*.

Desire conceived

As Eve gave her ear to Satan's lie that she could be like God the Father, she began to desire His capacity to be the source of life. The desire to have something that belongs to another person is the definition of *envy*. It is based on a perceived lack in oneself. Eve's envy demonstrated that Satan's lie, which he had drawn from the void, *was becoming a void within her*. She desired to

fill the void with the life and capacity of God the Father, which she coveted, but could never obtain. How did this happen?

The Scriptures recorded, 'So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.' Gen 3:6-7.

Having heeded Satan's word, the woman began to see the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil from a different perspective. For almost four thousand years prior to this encounter, the fruit had not been appealing to the couple. In fact, Adam and Eve had viewed the fruit as being dangerous. The woman knew that she was not even to *touch* this food. Gen 3:3. Now, however, it had become beautiful in her sight; that is, she saw that it was good for food.

The term, 'pleasant to the eyes', means that the fruit became an object of desire. Significantly, the Hebrew word that is translated as 'pleasant' in this passage is OT8378: *ta'avah*. This word means 'a longing; by implication, a delight (subjectively, satisfaction; objectively, a charm)'. Once Eve's perspective became deluded, the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil became a spiritual 'charm' that Satan used, *through enchantment*, to provoke the desire within her for this food. By this means, the woman was 'bewitched' by Satan. Gal 3:1-2. 2Co 11:3-4.

Through enchantment, the fruit also became to the woman 'desirable to make her wise'. The Hebrew word that is translated as 'desirable' in this instance is OT:2530: *chamad*. It is a verb meaning 'to take pleasure in, to desire, to lust, to covet, to be desirable, to desire passionately'. At this point, the lie that Satan had propagated from the void and had proposed to the woman, *became a void within her*. She *coveted* the wisdom that belongs to God, desiring to multiply identities and to cultivate life in her own image. Evidently, desire had been conceived in her, giving birth to sin as she took and ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Significantly, another law, or principle, of life was established within the woman's heart as a consequence of eating the forbidden fruit. Rom 7:23. Not only was she driven to be like God the Father, but she also directed this desire towards her husband. Now, through her speech and conduct, she endeavoured to use her knowledge of good and evil as an enchantment to solicit others to serve her agenda. As the Scripture recounts, 'She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate'. Gen 3:6.

Driven by covetousness, and having taken and eaten of the fruit, the man and the woman transgressed God's Royal Law, which declares, 'You shall not covet' and 'You shall not steal'. Exo 20:15,17. Consequently, they began to die. Gen 2:17.

The apostle James summarised this process, writing, 'But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed [deluded; allured, beguiled]. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.' Jas 1:14-15.

Using James' framework, let us reiterate the key dynamics of the Fall. Adam and Eve were drawn away by another word sourced from Satan, which aroused desire within them and beguiled them. Desire was conceived within them as they began to covet what belongs to God's mandate and capacity. This sin was fully manifest when, motivated by covetousness, they endeavoured to lay hold of, and to exercise, the knowledge of good and evil. In doing so, they transgressed God's Law, and received the wages of sin, which is death. Rom 6:23.

Implications of the curse for women and men

Explaining the implications of eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the Lord God said to the woman, 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.' Gen 3:16.

Note in this passage that the Lord God distinguished between the multiplication of the woman's sorrow, and the pain associated with bringing forth children. The sorrow that was greatly multiplied under the curse of sin includes the anxiety and depression that is associated with a woman's romantic endeavours to cultivate life in her image and likeness. This sorrow is distinct from the pain of childbirth.

The Hebrew word for 'desire', which the Lord used to describe the nature of a fallen woman's orientation to her husband, is OT:8669 *teshuwqah*. It is different from the word used to describe the desire that Satan provoked within Eve to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. *Teshuwqah* means 'to stretch out after; or a longing'. It is a desire motivated by envy and a sense of loss.

The Lord's statement reveals that the woman's desire, or longing, which is directed towards her husband, is the fruit of Satan's lie. Because a lie has no substance, the drive within her to be like God is a vacuum, or 'black hole', which can never be satisfied. Fearing being lost to this black hole of identity obscurity, the woman is driven to control her environment. In this regard, a woman's 'desire for her husband' is a yearning for him to provide, or to be,

for her, what she needs for identity verification. As we will consider in Chapter 3, this was exemplified in the demand that Rachel made of Jacob, saying, 'Give me children, or else I die!' Gen 30:1. This desire, driven by envy, is a powerful imposition upon others. Describing the power of envy, King Solomon noted, 'Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?' Pro 27:4.

This same void was established in the hearts of men when Adam ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. However, the Lord explained that a man's desire would be expressed differently from a woman's desire. Reflecting the purpose for his creation, fallen man is driven by the desire for identity verification, through the exercise of dominion over his life and over others. The Lord said to the woman, 'He shall rule [have dominion] over you.' Gen 3:16. He does this through the subordination of others or through empowerment by association with those who possess the authority, capacity or charisma that he covets for himself.

The Lord said to Adam that, because he heeded the voice of his wife and disobeyed His command, the ground would be cursed for his sake. Specifically, the Lord declared, 'Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.' Gen 3:17-19.

The thorns and thistles that a man experiences in the context of his life and work refer to the incidents and interactions that *frustrate* his endeavours for dominion and rulership over his life and over others. This frustration typically produces anger in a man. He reacts in this manner either to take dominion over something that is challenging his authority or because of the loss of authority and dominion. This anger, or wrath, can be explosive or internalised, resulting in the vengeful isolation of oneself or others in a family, in the church, and in other social settings.

Psychological distress is another common effect of thorns and thistles in the life and work of a man who lives by the other law. Under pressure, many men pursue all manner of sensual enchantments in an attempt to escape the torment that they are experiencing. These endeavours reveal only that they are in bondage to the law of sin. Rom 7:23.

Notably, Jesus described thorny ground as 'the *cares of this world* and the deceitfulness of riches' which choke the word in a person's heart so that it becomes unfruitful. Mat 13:22. Paul taught that this principle equally applies in the context of marriage, writing, 'But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord - how he may please the Lord.

But he who is married *cares about the things of the world* – how he may please his wife. There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married *cares about the things of the world* – how she may please her husband. And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction.’ 1Co 7:32-35.

Paul was not saying that marriage is undesirable or that it is better if Christians do not marry. Rather, he was drawing attention to the fruitless culture in marriages that are not reformed in the cross of Christ. These marriages operate by the principles of the world which were established in the fall of mankind.

A man who is married and cares about the things of the world has turned his face from the headship of Christ, which is expressed by the word from Christ, through the presbytery. He either endeavours to uphold and serve the romantic culture that his wife aspires to cultivate in her own image or he is provoked in reaction against the obligations that she places upon him. Either way, the direction for his life and the family is driven by his responses to his wife; it is not sourced from the word of the Lord.

A woman who is married and cares about the things of the world is focused on cultivating a romantic, or ideal, family context according to her own perspective. Motivated by the other law within her, the woman imposes this desire upon her husband and family as being ‘the best thing for him and the family’. It comes from her, and not from the fellowship of headship, through offering.

Deliverance at the tree of life

Romance in a marriage relationship that is based on the expression of these desires is *uncleanness*. This is because it provokes jealousy and envy within, and beyond, the relationship, resulting in the emotions, or passions, of sin. Because of this uncleanness, this marriage and family will be unavoidably oppressed by unclean spirits, as they continue to live by the desires fathered within them through Satan’s lies.

Unless a couple is engaged in a process through which they are being cleansed, the dynamics of sorcery, manifesting as seduction and domination, will be apparent in their marriage. That is, a Christian couple must be delivered from their conversation at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, to a conversation at the tree of life.

The emotions of sin that arise in a marriage relationship are the evidence that one, or both, of the spouses is endeavouring to be known through the

expression of their fallen desire, or envy. However, this way of living is under the judgement of God. This judgement belongs to His jealous love. His jealousy is expressed from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. By implication, a couple will remain under the curse of sin and the judgement of God, while ever their interactions continue to be informed by their knowledge of good and evil.

A spiritual couple recognise the fallen desires within themselves and within their relationship. As emotions arise over a particular issue, they are able to stop; to take heed to themselves; and to acknowledge the contention for what it is. In doing so, they can 'draw a line' under the matter, forget it, and move on with the works that belong to the day. In fact, this conversation is how a spiritual couple commences their day. Practically, they communicate with one another regarding the works that belong to their sonship as part of the household. Moreover, they consider how to walk in the love of God, 'today', fulfilling the will of God as they avail themselves of the remnant of the Spirit that belongs to their marriage covenant. *Agape* at the tree of life is the source of their romance, for it is based in their appreciation of each other as they each lay down their life to reveal the other, by the capacity of love that the Spirit pours into their heart.

Recovery through offering

After the Lord God had communicated the implications of the curse for mankind, Adam received grace from the Lord to name his wife 'Eve', meaning 'mother of all living'. Gen 3:20. Through this word, which he received from Christ, the Lamb of God, Eve was enabled to bear children.

It is somewhat alarming to recognise that Eve had succumbed to the temptation to make herself the source of multiplication, only a day before the Lord was coming to endow her with grace, through His immutable word, to bring forth a multitude! Instead of bringing forth godly seed, she was now the source of children who, unless they found recovery to their predestination through the obedience of faith, were children of wrath, destined for damnation. Eph 2:3.

Thankfully, in His mercy, the Lord God recovered Adam and Eve to fellowship with Himself, by sacrificing an animal. Gen 3:21. Through this sacrifice, the efficacy of Christ's offering on the cross, where He was revealed as I AM, was extended to them. He was 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world'. Rev 13:8. 1Pe 1:19-20. Adam and Eve were redeemed by the shedding of blood. Moreover, the fig leaves, representing the projections that they manufactured to cover the shame of their nakedness, were replaced with garments which the Lord fashioned for them. By this means, they were being made adequate for their participation in His will for their lives.

BECOMING THE ISRAEL OF GOD

The Lord then sent Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden to fulfil the works that He had defined for them. This was in the context of the curse. Significantly, the Scriptures record that the Lord placed two cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, as well as a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life. Gen 3:23-24. The gate of Eden, at the feet of the cherubim, was now the context for Adam's fellowship with Yahweh. His connection to the Lord was by offering, which he now understood involved the sacrifice of a lamb. This was the context of grace in which he was to stand. Rom 5:2.

The Lord spoke to Adam from the tree of life, which is the cross, through the cherubim. As Adam made offering on this ground, and received the word of the Lord through His messengers, he maintained his connection to the headship of Christ. Through this connection, the thorns representing the curse on mankind, because of disobedience, *were for His sake*. Failing to discern this connection to the headship of Christ, the curse was the foretaste of eternal death under the judgement of God.

The mark of Adam's relationship with Christ was his application to tilling the ground according to the word of the Father, as well as his acceptance that the thorns in the context of this work were for his sake. Through this *package* of offering and sufferings, which Adam participated in by faith, he was overcoming the Devil by the blood of the Lamb; through the expression of his testimony in word and conduct; and by ceasing to preserve his life or to find life in any other way than in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Rev 12:11. It appears that Adam did enter Christ's rest after he died, because he was identified by Luke as a son of God in the genealogy of Jesus. Luk 3:38.

Chapter 2

The working of Satan

When we were born again as sons of God, and baptised into Christ, we were delivered from slavery to sin, and were raised and seated in heavenly places with Christ and with the other members of His corporate body. Eph 2:4-6. Rom 6:17-18. As citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, we have the right to participate in the *agape* meal of the Father's house. The food for this meal is the fruit of the tree of life which is in the midst of the heavenly city. Rev 22:14.

The tree of life was manifest to the whole world when Jesus was crucified on the cross. 1Co 1:23-24. Pro 3:18. The fruit of the tree of life, which is Christ's body and blood, is fed to us by the Spirit through the ministry of the members of His body. Eating this food joins us to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. 1Co 10:16. Php 3:10-11. In this fellowship, we are being progressively delivered from the other law, and are being cleansed from our sin. Moreover, we are fulfilling the works that belong to our predestination as a son of God.

Nevertheless, the apostle Peter exhorted us to be sober and vigilant, warning, 'Your adversary the Devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.' 1Pe 5:8. The implication, of course, is that it is possible to spurn our participation in the Lord's love feast, and to return to the way of life that belongs to the sons of disobedience. Significantly, the apostle Paul said that Satan is at work in the sons of disobedience. Eph 2:2.

When Satan is at work in a person, their conduct is driven by the desires of their flesh and of their mind. Eph 2:3. We know that this way of living and thinking is not restricted to those who are in the world. Isaiah prophesied that in the church age many people who identify as belonging to Christ will live in a manner that reflects the demand, 'We will eat our own food and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by your name, to take away our reproach.' Isa 4:1. The conversation and conduct that reflects these expectations of the Christian life is contrary to the fellowship of the *agape* meal. It is, in fact, the basis of *idolatry* in the house of the Lord.

A person in whom Satan is at work is not only driven by the desires of the flesh; but, also, the way in which they *relate with others* will be according to the working of Satan. Seeking to engage others for the purpose of satisfying their self-centred desires, they will instinctively employ the techniques that Satan used to gain advantage over mankind. In other words, *sorcery* and other demonically-inspired practices will be the means by which they relate with others, including in their marriage and household.

This principle is epitomised by Antichrist, the ruler of the eighth world kingdom in the time of the end. Highlighting this point, Paul taught, 'The coming of the lawless one is *according to the working of Satan*, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish.' 2Th 2:9-10. From this passage, we understand that the exercise of power, the use of signs, lying wonders and unrighteous deception are the workings of Satan. They describe, therefore, the techniques of sorcery that are employed by those who choose to walk after the flesh rather than according to the Spirit. Rom 8:1,5-6.

With this understanding in view, Paul exhorted the lampstand church in Rome to be established according to the gospel that he had declared to them. Rom 16:25-26. Specifically, he exhorted the believers to note and to avoid those who caused divisions and offences in the church, through cultural practices that were contrary to the doctrine that he taught. Rom 16:17. He noted that those who behave in this way do not serve Jesus Christ, but, rather, serve their own belly. They *deceive* the hearts of the simple 'by smooth words and flattering speech'. Rom 16:18. Paul was drawing attention to the sorcerous, enchanting communication of those who are, by implication, messengers of Satan.

Concluding his exhortation, Paul wrote, 'I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.' Rom 16:19-20. Through obedience to this command from Paul, the believers in Rome would have participated in the fulfilment of God's judgement upon Satan, which was proclaimed following the fall of mankind.

At that time, the Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.' Gen 3:14-15. It is noteworthy that the very first prophetic statement of the Scriptures was directed toward Satan, proclaiming his demise.

'The seed of the serpent' refers to everyone who continues to live by the principles of the flesh, under the dominion of Satan. Paul described Satan as 'the god of this world', and he is identified by Jesus as 'the ruler of this world'. 2Co 4:4. Joh 14:30. Accordingly, his seed are of 'the spirit of the world'. 1Co 2:12.

In contrast, the Seed of the woman is, first, Christ. Her children are also the sons of God who are in Christ. We know this because Paul said that the God of peace will *crush Satan under our feet*. Rom 16:20.

We 'crush Satan under our feet' as we are delivered from the fallen way of life that he fathered in mankind through deceit and sorcery. Repentance and faith in response to the word of the cross are fundamental to this deliverance and to overcoming Satan. In the light of the word, we are able to see and renounce our fallen fleshly practices, and to grow in our capacity for *agape* fellowship as sons of God.

Let us now consider the principles of idolatry and sorcery that we are to turn from as those who are entering, and being established in, the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. 2Pe 1:10-11.

Idolatry

The knowledge of good and evil belongs to the Lord God, alone. This is the knowledge by which He creates all things. Isa 45:6-7. We were created in His image and likeness through this knowledge. Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in an endeavour to 'be like God'. Gen 3:5. That is, they desired to create for themselves a life and destiny in their own image and likeness.

Instead of obtaining the capacity for creation when they ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve's eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked. Gen 3:7. Their 'nakedness' was not just the absence of clothing. It means that they each lost the mandate for life and expression that belonged to their name as a son of God in fellowship with Yahweh. This mandate belonged to them while they maintained their connection to fellowship with Yahweh at the tree of life. They rejected

Yahweh *Elohim* and His predestination for their lives when they chose to become the origin of their own life and expression.

Adam and Eve's first response to the realisation of their nakedness was to sew fig leaves together as garments to cover their nakedness. Gen 3:7. This represented an attempt to 'tailor' a name, or expression, for themselves. Their 'clothing' was a projection of their self-defined image, which was sourced in what they viewed as being good or evil for themselves. Significantly, clothing themselves in this manner revealed their idolatry.

Idolatry means that we are replacing God with a projected image of ourselves that we *create and worship*. This image is our own idea of what it would be like to be a creator. Gen 3:5. In this regard, the idol that a person creates and worships is really a reflection of who they want to be and the life that they want to live. This is the desire of their heart. It is a rejection of the life and sonship expression that God the Father has predestined for them.

This point reveals that idolatry is iniquity. The connection between idolatry and iniquity was established by the Lord through the prophet Ezekiel. He declared, 'Everyone of the house of Israel *who sets up his idols in his heart, and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity*, and then comes to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him who comes, according to the multitude of his idols, that I may seize the house of Israel by their heart, because they are all estranged from Me by their idols.' Eze 14:4-5.

Iniquity means that we are living and walking according to our way. Making this point, Isaiah the prophet declared, 'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.' Isa 53:6. *Turning to our own way* means that we are walking according to the dictates of our own heart and by the sight of our own eyes. Jer 18:12. Pro 21:2. We prove to be *stubborn* when we insist upon our own way, despite hearing the word of the cross which reveals our iniquity and proclaims the works of obedience that belong to our sonship. It is notable that Samuel addressed the disobedience of King Saul by saying, 'Stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry'. 1Sa 15:23.

Of course, the most overt expressions of idolatry in the Scriptures are the worship of crafted images representing deities that supposedly bestow particular blessings upon their followers. In our western society, we do not tend to worship deified effigies. However, we do bestow worth, through attention and time, to practices that we believe will give us life. Moreover, we idolise those who exemplify the life and expression that we covet.

As we will discuss further, in Chapter 5, the most insidious forms of idolatry are the religious practices that we presume belong to the Father's house, but are, in fact, motivated by our fallen desires. For example, the Lord described

the worship of Jesus by women who persistently reject the process for deliverance from their romantic expectations of life, as being the abominable practice of weeping for Tammuz. Eze 8:14.

Choosing iniquity and idolatry is a rejection of God's fatherhood toward us. Living this way brings us under the fatherhood of Satan. By continuing to presume upon the right to create a life and expression for ourselves according to our knowledge of good and evil, we remain under his dominion. Ultimately, the worship of idols is the worship of Satan himself, which he promotes through sorcery.

Sorcery

Earlier, we noted that the Lord cursed Satan, saying, 'You shall eat dust all the days of your life.' Gen 3:14. Evidently, Satan is no longer sustained by angels' food; he does not have access to the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He now feeds on fallen mankind, of whom the Lord God said, 'For dust you are, and to dust you shall return.' Gen 3:19. *He feeds on fallen mankind through sorcery.*

Satan used sorcery to provoke, by deceit, covetous desire within Eve. Sorcery is the mesmerising action of Satan's word upon one's senses, rousing within them the emotions of sin. When sin has fully grown, a person is in bondage to the law of sin and death. Then, under the dominion of Satan, and the spiritual hosts of wickedness, they are tormented and oppressed by unclean spirits. Eph 6:12-13.

Our oppression by unclean spirits is proportional to our withdrawal from *agape* fellowship. When we withdraw from relationships with others in the church, we are not rightly discerning the Lord's body. The apostle Paul said that for this reason many are weak, and sick, and some even die before their time, under the effect of this oppression. 1Co 11:30.

Withdrawal from *agape* fellowship in Christ Jesus, which brings us under the oppression of unclean spirits, is the consequence of *condemnation*. We know this because Paul said that there is no condemnation for those *in Christ* who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. Rom 8:1. Condemnation means that a person is under God's judgement because they have transgressed the Law of love. Their conduct is an expression of their self-centred expectations of life, rather than being an expression of love motivated by the Spirit.

Our heightened emotional responses to our circumstances, or towards others who offend us, are distinctive indicators that we are in the flesh and are subject to oppression. We note, in this regard, the words of Paul, who said, 'When we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law

were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.’ Rom 7:5. The fruit of death reveals that we are living according to the other law, and have been brought into bondage to Satan. Rom 7:23. He feeds on the energy associated with the passions that are aroused within us, causing us anxiety, fatigue and sickness.

The apostle James described how Satan feeds, through sorcery, on those who are unclean. He began by saying that a person with bitter envy and self-seeking in their heart is lying against the truth. Jas 3:14. Bitter envy and self-seeking are the fruit of the void that was established within the hearts of men and women as a consequence of the Fall. Those who live by this fleshly principle lie against the truth because they endeavour to craft and project an image of themselves that is contrary to God’s predestination for them. Evidently, they are idolatrous. James explained that ‘where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and *every evil thing are there*’. Jas 3:16.

‘The spirit of the world’ is the power of sorcery. The wisdom that belongs to the spirit of the world stokes the desires of the flesh. This wisdom ‘does not descend from above [i.e. it is not the fruit of the tree of life], but is earthly, sensual, demonic’. Jas 3:15. The self-righteous wisdom that belongs to the spirit of the world is based on one’s knowledge of good and evil. It is the basis of the counsel of the wicked. Psa 1:1. As a person speaks from this wisdom, their conversation quickly becomes sensual, or emotive. The outcome of continuing to converse in this manner is demonic oppression.

Those who are under the sway of the wicked one are unable to receive the things of God. Characteristically, they are in opposition to God’s word and to those who proclaim it, having been taken captive by Satan to do his will. Paul warned Timothy of this dynamic, writing, ‘But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes [with those of the spirit of the world who cannot know the things of the Spirit of God], knowing that they generate strife [the passions of sin]. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting *those who are in opposition*, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the Devil, having been *taken captive by him to do his will*.’ 2Ti 2:23-26.

The example of Nebuchadnezzar

The principle of sorcery was exemplified in the rulership of Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was described by the Lord as His servant, because the Lord executed judgement on the nation of Judah through him. The Lord declared, ‘Because you have not heard My words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, says the Lord, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, *My servant*, and will bring them against this land, against its inhabitants, and

against these nations all around, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, a hissing, and perpetual desolations.’ Jer 25:8-9.

However, Nebuchadnezzar obtained counsel for his conquests through divination and sorcery. As Ezekiel prophesied, ‘For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the road, at the fork of the two roads, to use divination: he shakes the arrows, he consults the images, he looks at the liver. In his right hand is the divination for Jerusalem: to set up battering rams, to call for a slaughter, to lift the voice with shouting, to set battering rams against the gates, to heap up a siege mound, and to build a wall.’ Eze 21:21-22.

Through his use of sorcery, Nebuchadnezzar had submitted himself to Satan, the ruler of this world. To this end, Nebuchadnezzar had become the vassal of the Devil. While Nebuchadnezzar presumed to draw power from these demonic sources to establish his kingdom, Satan was feeding off the mandate that Nebuchadnezzar had received from God for the purpose of His judgement upon Judah. This is how Satan maintained dominion over the nations. Through this trading dynamic, Satan weakened the nations. Isa 14:12-14.

Significantly, the Devil directed this sorcerous project towards Christ after He had fasted for forty days and forty nights. Luke recorded, ‘Then the Devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the Devil said to Him, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.” And Jesus answered and said to him, “Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve’.” ’ Luk 4:5-8.

In the same way that Satan uses sorcery to take dominion over the sons and daughters of men, this way of relating belongs to those who are of the spirit of the world. Speaking of Babylon, representative of the nations of the earth under the rulership of Satan, the apostle John wrote, ‘For your merchants were the great men of the earth, *for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived*. And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth.’ Rev 18:23-24.

In summary, sorcery is *deception*. We succumb to Satan’s sorcery when we preference our own understanding and sight over the wisdom and power of God that is revealed through the word of the cross. Once Satan is at work within us because of our disobedience, sorcery becomes the way that we relate to others. It includes the strategies that we use to deceive others into believing and affirming the idolatrous projections that we craft for ourselves.

The teraphim

A notable form of sorcery, described in the Scriptures, is the use of teraphim. This practice had a particularly religious hue, which was first apparent in Jacob's family. We recall that when Jacob made his flight from Laban's house, Rachel stole her father's teraphim, or household idols. Gen 31:30-35. It appears that the teraphim were an important element of Rachel's deluded and fruitless entreaty of God for children.

Rachel's reliance upon teraphim demonstrated that she was *bewitched* in the same manner as Eve had been. To this end, the teraphim was a religious *charm*, or practice, through which unclean spirits were able to stir up desire within her, motivating her to act according to her knowledge of good and evil. Empowered in this manner, she then endeavoured to enlist others, including Jacob, to serve her agenda. Gen 30:1. As we have outlined in Chapter 4, this had a profound effect upon her marriage and upon her children.

Although Rachel believed that her observance of these practices was 'of God', the longing desire, and enduring delusion that tainted her life reveal that she was, in fact, worshipping another god. That is, her employment of teraphim, through which she believed she was engaging God, was the worship of Satan and his spiritual host of wickedness. Paul highlighted the connection between delusion and the god of this world, writing, 'But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them'. 2Co 4:3-4.

The Hebrew word for 'teraphim' is plural. Some commentators have suggested that this implies that the idols were arrayed and utilised in pairs. To this end, their use may have been an attempted *simulation* of worship at the gate of the garden of Eden, which was guarded by two cherubim. This is where, prior to the great flood, Adam, and the sons of God who followed him, worshipped the Lord and received His word.

Although household idols were engaged for various reasons, it appears that teraphim were particularly utilised for the purpose of *divination*. For example, as we noted earlier, the prophet Ezekiel observed that King Nebuchadnezzar used teraphim to divine whether to attack Judah and Jerusalem or Rabbah of the Ammonites. Eze 21:20-23. Although this was a practice that belonged to the spirit of the world, the Lord caused this 'vain divination' to direct Nebuchadnezzar towards Jerusalem for its destruction, under His judgement. Eze 21:22-24.

In Israel, those who crafted and consulted teraphim believed that, because these objects were dedicated to the Lord, He spoke to them through the teraphim. For example, during the era of the judges, a man named Micah set

up teraphim in his house. They were crafted from silver, which his mother had *dedicated* to the Lord for the *purpose* of making a carved image and a moulded image. Jdg 17:3-5. The author of the book of Judges noted that this form of worship reflected the culture of the nation at that time, saying, 'In those days there was no king in Israel; *everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*' Jdg 17:6. In other words, the employment of teraphim reflected a life lived according to the sight of one's own eyes. It was a deluded and abominable religious practice.

Notably, Micah's delusion regarding the legitimacy and acceptability of this practice was only exacerbated when he secured the service of a Levite to minister as a priest in his house. He claimed, 'Now I know that the Lord will be good to me, since I have a Levite as priest!' Jdg 17:13.

In our present context, we can liken the employment of teraphim to sacramentalism. A 'sacrament' is a Christian rite that is said to endow a participant with divine grace. It is an outward, visible sign or activity that supposedly conveys, or bestows, an inward spiritual grace from God. For example, early church leaders taught that when the bread and wine were consecrated and ministered by an ordained priest, these elements were transformed into the actual body and blood of Jesus within those who ate them. Sacramentalism denies, and even wars against, fellowship, because it promises that a person will receive blessing from God *apart from* participation in offering as a member of Christ's body.

Unclean and familiar spirits

The Lord, through His servant Moses, commanded the children of Israel, saying, 'Give no regard to mediums and *familiar spirits*; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God [Yahweh *Elohim*].' Lev 19:31. In this statement, the Lord identified engagement with mediums and familiar spirits as being an approach to navigating life which is an alternative to walking according to the will of God through fellowship in the name of the Lord.

Some commentators have suggested that a familiar spirit was the spirit of a person who was conjured from the dead by a medium, or witch, through a form of magic known as necromancy. Through this process of 'consulting the dead', they claimed to obtain revelations regarding the future. This wicked practice is related to the broader custom of ancestral worship which persists in some cultures, today. This, and other forms of demonic ritualism in the church, brings those who participate in them under the severe judgement of God. Lev 20:6.

To better understand familiar spirits, consider the example of the witch of En Dor, whom King Saul consulted in order to enquire of the deceased prophet, Samuel. The Scriptures recorded, ‘Then Saul said to his servants, “Find me a woman who is a medium [lit: has a familiar spirit], that I may go to her and inquire of her.” And his servants said to him, “In fact, there is a woman who is a medium [lit: has a familiar spirit] at En Dor”.’ 1Sa 28:7. This woman was known among the people by the works that she performed because of her familiar spirit. Significantly, the familiar spirit was not the spirit of an ancestor, as some commentators have proposed. Rather, it was an unclean spirit that enabled and inspired her witchcraft.

Although many commentators limit their explanation of familiar spirits to the activity of mediums and wizards, the language of the Scriptures reveals a much broader application of this principle. The Hebrew word that is translated as ‘familiar spirit’ is OT:178 *owb*. This word is closely associated with the Hebrew word OT:1 *awb*, meaning ‘father, head of a household, ancestor’. It reveals that a familiar spirit belongs to a family, and can be passed on from generation to generation.

This point further reveals that a family’s susceptibility to an unclean, familiar spirit will depend upon their connection to the headship of Christ. Where the family is disconnected from Christ’s headship, the familiar spirit becomes a key influence in the way that those in the family approach and understand life. Significantly, they are unable to receive the word of the Lord, and their participation in the *agape* meal is hindered.

Notably, the word *owb* also means ‘bottle’. For example, the young man, Elihu, said to Job, ‘Indeed my belly is like wine that has no vent; it is ready to burst like new wineskins [Lit: familiar spirits].’ Job 32:19. Through the words of Elihu, we note that pent-up emotions that eventually erupt as impassioned communication are an indication that a person is speaking, or expressing themselves, according to a familiar spirit. This accords with the understanding that we considered earlier, that unclean spirits feed off the emotions of sin that are aroused within us as we walk according to the flesh.

The finger of God

Addressing the subject of uncleanness and demonic oppression, the apostle Paul drew Timothy’s attention to Jannes and Jambres – two of the sorcerers who resisted Moses as he ministered God’s deliverance to the children of Israel, from their captivity in Egypt.

Paul said to Timothy, ‘But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving,

unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!' 2Ti 3:1-5. Paul was describing those who were unclean in the church, who were demonically oppressed, and were driven to evangelise others to the worship of their idols.

Paul then continued, saying, 'For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.' 2Ti 3:6-9.

In their first interaction with the Egyptian magicians, Moses directed Aaron to cast his rod before Pharaoh, where it became a serpent. Jannes and Jambres cast their rods to the ground, whereupon they also became serpents. Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods that belonged to the magicians, revealing the authority and priority of Moses and Aaron over the magicians and their sorcery. Yet, Pharaoh hardened his heart against them. Therefore, the Lord directed Moses to turn water into blood. The magicians, also, were able to turn water to blood with their enchantments. Similarly, the Egyptian magicians were able to bring up frogs on the land of Egypt by their enchantments.

However, when Moses directed Aaron to stretch out his rod and strike the dust of the land so that it became lice throughout the land of Egypt, the sorcerers were unable to bring forth lice through their enchantments. They said to Pharaoh, 'This is the finger of God.' Exo 8:19. Then, with the fourth plague, the Lord distinguished between the children of Israel and the nation of Egypt.

Jesus referred to 'the finger of God' during His own ministry. In response to the claim that He cast out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of demons, Jesus said, 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls. If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? Because you say I cast out demons by Beelzebub. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.' Luk 11:17-20.

What is the point that we must understand? Jannes and Jambres ministered by the power of enchantments, enabled by demonic spirits. Paul highlighted the reality that those in the church who are lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, etc, are

similarly beset by unclean and familiar spirits. These spirits feed upon, and are energised by, a person's uncleanness. Unless these people receive the ministry of the finger of God, through which they can be cleansed of their bloodshed and perversity, they have no access to, or part in, the kingdom of heaven. In fact, they are outside the city and are enemies of Christ. The finger of God is extended toward a person in this condition through the ministry of messengers who are part of a presbytery in the hand of Christ.

The Lord extends this cleansing initiative to all of His people, and we are all in need of His mercy in this regard. Those who receive the word that brings this deliverance are those who sigh and cry for the abominations that are in their lives, in their families, and in the church. Eze 9:4. Sons of God who are illuminated in this way will not endeavour to embrace those whose conduct reveals their uncleanness. Rather, in humility, and by taking heed to themselves, they will testify of the process through which a person can be delivered from the kingdom of darkness, into the light that is the fellowship of the heavenly city.

Deliverance from oppression

How do we avail ourselves of this deliverance from the oppression of unclean spirits? The beginning point is to receive the word of the cross that is proclaimed by the messengers of God in the right hand of Christ. Through their ministry, Christ is publicly portrayed to us as crucified.

Under the spirit of grace and supplication, as the word of the cross pierces our heart, we are caused to look on Him whom we have pierced through our sinful rebellion. Zec 12:10. Our heart is laid bare before the fiery eyes of Christ, and we are able to see ourselves as He sees us. Heb 4:12-13. That is, we are able to see the iniquitous condition of our heart, and the effect of the judgements and assessments that we have made about ourselves and about others, from the basis of our knowledge of good and evil. Desire, fed by this knowledge, has brought us into bondage to Satan.

When we meet Christ in this way, we have a choice. We can either draw back to destruction or we can draw near to Christ in repentance and with faith towards God. Joe 3:14-16. Heb 6:1. As we draw near to Christ in repentance and faith, we are cleansed by the water of the word, and our hearts are sprinkled clean from an evil conscience so that we are able to serve God. Heb 10:19-22. This cleansing by water and blood is the application of 'the fountain for sin and uncleanness' that was opened for us when Christ's side was pierced with the soldier's spear. Zec 13:1. Joh 19:34-37.

Referring to the day of His offering on the cross, the Lord declared, 'I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered. I will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land.' Zec 13:2. Evidently, as we avail ourselves of His cleansing provision, and join the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, the idols in our heart are cut off, and the unclean spirits that oppress us are caused to depart from us.

We cease from striving to save our life and to define our own expression when we have been established in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. We also cease from viewing ourselves as being a victim of our circumstances or as a victim of others. This is because the other law is being circumcised from our heart. We are joined to the prayer of Christ Himself, who prayed on our behalf, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.' Luk 23:34. In this prayerful statement, Jesus took the Law out of the way; and mercy triumphed over judgement. Col 2:14. Jas 2:13. Satan and His power were destroyed, and the other law, which he fathered within us, lost its power. Heb 2:14-15. We were given access to the heavenly places, and also given the work of casting Satan down from heaven. Luk 10:18-20. Rev 12:10-11.

We fulfil this work as we join Christ's offering, made available to us in the fellowship of His cross, from day to day. As we participate in the offering prayer that Jesus made from the cross, we find deliverance from our other law, which feeds power to Satan as the means for our destruction or sickness. Rom 7:23. We are able to bless those who curse us and, thereby, to demonstrate that we are a son of our Father in heaven. Luk 6:28. Rom 12:14.

Satan, who would otherwise oppress us, is disempowered as we participate in the offering and sufferings of Christ. He cannot touch us, nor exercise any power over us. In fact, the Lord has declared to Satan that the sons of God will recognise his impotence, saying, 'Those who see you will gaze at you, and consider you, saying: "Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world as a wilderness and destroyed its cities, who did not open the house of his prisoners?" ' Isa 14:16-17.

The work of overcoming Satan through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ was exemplified by Stephen. Through his declaration of the gospel, Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified before the Jewish council. Act 6:12-15. They were cut to the heart by the word of the cross that was proclaimed by Stephen. However, instead of drawing near to Christ in godly sorrow, they gnashed at Stephen with their teeth. Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, cast Stephen out of the city and stoned him. Act 7:54,57-58. As they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, in fellowship with Christ, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.' Act 7:60.

BECOMING THE ISRAEL OF GOD

Through his fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ, Stephen exemplified the way in which the elect of God overcome the Devil. Summarising this process, the apostle John recorded, 'And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.' Rev 12:11. Stephen did not overcome Satan only *in his own life*; also, through Stephen's ministry, Satan was cast from the heavenly places, and his power *over the Gentiles* was broken. Notably, his offering prayer brought the opportunity for salvation to Saul, who would later be known as Paul.

We have been called to join this same ministry! As we continue faithfully in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, we overcome Satan as the blood of the Lamb washes us clean from the filth of the flesh; as we speak to one another and to those outside of the church by the faith that we receive as we hear the word of God; and as we lay down our lives for others in the fellowship of *agape* love.

Chapter 3

The pilgrimage of the elect

The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

After healing a lame man in the name of Jesus, the apostle Peter addressed the crowd that assembled to him in Solomon's Portico. He declared to them, '*The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers*, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go.' Act 3:13. Why did Peter emphasise that it was 'the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob' who glorified Jesus?

To answer this question, let us consider the words of the Lord Himself. During His final journey to Jerusalem, a person asked Jesus, 'Lord, are there few who are saved?' Luk 13:22-23. In reply, Jesus exhorted His hearers, saying, 'Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.' Luk 13:24. At the conclusion of His exhortation, Jesus spoke of those who will remain outside of the Father's house when, in the time of the end, the door will finally shut. He said, 'There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see *Abraham and Isaac and Jacob* and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God.' Luk 13:28-29.

From Christ's prophetic statement, it is apparent that the life and experiences of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob reveal the way of salvation that belongs to all those who enter the kingdom through the narrow gate. The narrow gate is

Christ. We enter this narrow way through fellowship in His offering and sufferings, wherein we are raised from the death of sin, to eternal life as sons of God.

Significantly, Jesus explained that our fellowship in His death and resurrection is the reason why Moses called the Lord, 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'. Luk 20:37. Exo 3:6,15. This name reveals that 'He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him'. Luk 20:38. Jesus was highlighting the reality that the pilgrimage of the patriarchs, in which they were established as they received and obeyed God's word, is the way that leads to life in Christ, for all believers.

The promise to Abraham and his Seed

When Adam fell, all mankind was lost to God and His covenant purpose for them. However, their predestinations were reclaimed in Abraham, and then passed on to Jesus Christ, Abraham's Son after the flesh. This happened through *the word of promise*. Gal 3:16. Paul taught that the promise made to Abraham and his Seed *is* the immutable word of God's Everlasting Covenant. Heb 6:13-14,17.

The immutability of God's counsel proclaims the promise of sonship and eternal participation in Yahweh as members of the body of Christ. This is the gospel of sonship that is preached to us! Significantly, Paul explained that we are all sons of God *through faith in Christ Jesus*, having been born of God and baptised into Christ. Gal 3:26-27. He further asserted, 'If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' Gal 3:29.

Paul emphasised that a person is not a son of Abraham, and an heir of God's Everlasting Covenant promises, simply because they are natural sons of Abraham. He explained, 'Those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the *children of the promise* are counted as the seed. For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son".' Rom 9:8-9. Of course, the son who was born according to the word of promise was Isaac.

God's calling in Isaac

We see that the children of Abraham are those who receive and believe the word of promise. However, Isaac's response to this word reveals *how* we become children of the promise. Explaining this point, Paul reminded his readers of God's word to Abraham, saying, 'In Isaac your seed shall be *called*.' Rom 9:7. Gen 21:12. The calling of God refers to the unique sonship name that was predestined for each identity who would be brought to birth from Adam. We note this principle in the words of the Lord, 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have *called you by your name*; you are Mine.' Isa 43:1.

The word of promise was first proclaimed to Abraham when the Lord called him to leave his country, his family, and his father's house, for a land that He would reveal to him. The Lord said that He would bless Abraham and make him a great nation and that, in him, 'all the families of the earth shall be blessed'. Gen 12:1-3.

According to the word of God, Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah in their old age. When Isaac was in his late teens or early twenties, God directed Abraham to sacrifice him on Mount Moriah. Because Abraham obeyed God and did not withhold his son, the Lord spoke to Abraham 'a second time', confirming this word of promise with an oath. Gen 22:15-18. This revealed two aspects of God's immutable word - the *promise* and the *oath*.

Heb 6:17-18. Significantly, Paul explained that Abraham's offering on Moriah was when the word of promise was made to 'Abraham *and* his Seed'. Paul specified that this Seed did not refer to all of Abraham's descendants, beginning with Isaac; Abraham's Seed was Christ! Gal 3:16.

The oath assuring that the blessing of Abraham would come through Christ was the *same oath* through which the Son of God was begotten as the Firstborn from the dead, and was designated as a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek. Paul highlighted this point, noting that the Father, who declared, 'You are My Son', *also said*, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.' Heb 5:6. Paul was quoting the prophetic psalm of King David, who wrote, 'The Lord has *sworn* [an oath] and will not relent, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek".' Psa 110:4.

The word of the oath through which the Son of God was begotten from the dead and was designated as High Priest, was proclaimed *after* Jesus was forgotten by the Father in the lowest parts of the earth. Paul identified the Son's cry, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' as being the vehement cries and tears of the Son in the days of His flesh. Significantly, Paul said that Jesus was heard by the Father *because of His godly fear*. Heb 5:7. Through the things which He suffered, Jesus Christ became the author of salvation for all who believe, having learned the obedience that belongs to our sonship.

Jesus Christ was begotten as the Firstborn from the dead by the Father when the Father drew Him out of many waters and established Him as the Firstborn of a *new creation*. Psa 18:16. Col 1:18. Rev 1:5. This was when Jesus Christ our Lord was 'declared [by the Father's oath] to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, *by the resurrection from the dead*.' Rom 1:4. The word of the Father, through which Christ was begotten from the dead, gave to Jesus 'the sure mercies of David'. Act 13:33-35. That is, the full provision for God's Everlasting Covenant was committed to, and finished in, Christ. The prophet Isaiah declared this wonderful truth, saying, 'Incline your

ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you – the sure mercies of David.’ Isa 55:3.

As we noted earlier, when Jesus was begotten from the dead by the word of the oath, He was also called by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Heb 5:7-10. Significantly, Jesus was *progressively* glorified by God the Father through the wounding events that He experienced in the course of His offering journey from Gethsemane to Calvary. Through these sufferings, Jesus *learned* how to be a high priest in relation to every situation and human condition. For this reason, Paul said, ‘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 4:15-16.

Jesus Christ is Abraham’s Seed. *Isaac obtained his calling in Christ*. This happened for Isaac when he was joined to the offering of Christ on Mount Moriah. Abraham explained to Isaac that the Lamb of God would be the provision for his participation in this offering worship. Gen 22:5,8. It was evident that God had provided the Lamb for Abraham and Isaac when Abraham *feared God* and did not withhold his son, and Isaac submitted himself to Abraham *in the fear of God*, to be joined to the offering of Christ. Gen 22:12. That is, the Lamb was ‘the Fear of God’, whom Abraham and Isaac received for their participation, by faith, in the offering fellowship of Yahweh.

Proclaiming this amazing truth, Abraham called the place of offering worship on Moriah, Jehovah Jireh, meaning ‘The Lord Will Provide’. Gen 22:14. Yahweh’s provision was that He, personally, had become their fear. Isa 8:13. By this fear, Isaac obtained his calling in Christ, having been bound, figuratively, to the death and resurrection of Christ. Yahweh’s name became Isaac’s possession; this dimension of Yahweh’s name was now ‘the Fear of Isaac’. Gen 31:42,53. ‘The Fear of Isaac’ is the motivational attribute of Yahweh *Elohim’s* nature. It is the expression of love that springs from who God is as a fellowship. Accordingly, those who are called by the name, ‘the Fear of Isaac’, have the capacity to appreciate and to trust others in the fellowship of offering worship. It is, for them, the wellspring of faith.

Christ priested to Isaac a participation in His offering, ministering to him faith and the fear of the Lord. Rom 10:17. By faith, and in the fear of the Lord, Isaac was joined to the death of Christ as he was bound by Abraham and placed on the altar. When he was figuratively brought back from the dead, Isaac was established as a son of God the Father, as well as Abraham’s natural seed. Heb 11:18-19. Through resurrection, he was now an heir of the promise that God had made to Abraham and his Seed, Christ. Importantly, this ensured that the DNA of Christ’s incarnate body would come from Abraham through Isaac.

Isaac was a son according to the word of promise to Abraham *before* the offering on Mount Moriah. However, he did not become an heir of the promise, as a son of God, until he was joined to the fellowship of Christ's death and resurrection. That is, his sonship was realised only as he was figuratively baptised into Christ's death. This is true for all who are 'called in Isaac'. Their name, or calling, as a son of God is activated through baptism. Through baptism, they receive a garment which mandates them for the priestly service that belongs to their sonship.

Paul explained that, because of these two immutable things - the promise and the oath - we can have strong consolation as we flee for refuge to lay hold of the hope that is set before us. Heb 6:18. A person 'flees for refuge' by coming to Jesus. Through the word of the cross, they are born again and are joined to Him by baptism. The strong consolation that they obtain in Him is the assurance of their name and life as a son of God, which they receive as a seed, making them alive from the death of sin.

Paul described obtaining consolation as 'laying hold of the hope set before us'. Heb 6:18. *This hope is our calling as a son of God!* Eph 1:18. Eph 4:4. Our calling as a son of God is a hope because we must *choose* sonship and obtain it through patient endurance as we *embrace* our daily participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. This choice reveals the principle of *election*.

Election in Jacob

The first sons who were identified as being 'called in Isaac' were his natural children, Esau and Jacob. We read in the book of Hebrews, 'By faith Isaac blessed Jacob *and* Esau concerning things to come'. Heb 11:20. Both sons were blessed with the word of their predestination, or calling, as sons of God. This word was first proclaimed to their mother, Rebekah. In response to her query regarding their struggle within her womb, the Lord said, 'Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger.' Gen 25:23.

The blessing with which Isaac blessed his sons was consistent with the prophetic word that Rebekah received from God. Even though Isaac thought that he was speaking with Esau, he, by faith, blessed Jacob according to the word of promise, saying, 'Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you.' Gen 27:29. Likewise, Isaac later blessed Esau, saying, 'Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above. By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother.' Gen 27:39-40. Significantly, he also prophesied concerning Esau, 'And it shall come to pass, when you become restless, that you shall break his yoke from your neck.' Gen 27:40.

Although Jacob and Esau were blessed with the calling of sonship, the Lord received Jacob into His fellowship, while Esau was condemned to everlasting burnings. Paul highlighted this point, quoting the words of the Lord, 'Jacob I have *loved*, but Esau I have *hated*.' Rom 9:13. Mal 1:2-3. The Lord loved Jacob because Jacob loved and pursued the blessing of his inheritance as a son of God. In contrast, Esau despised his birthright, selling it for a bowl of lentil stew. Gen 25:29-34. Heb 12:16. He then refused to accept the word and blessing of his predestination as a son of God. He endeavoured, instead, to kill the man whom he was supposed to serve. Gen 27:41.

Jacob and Esau's contrasting orientations to the blessing of their calling reveal the meaning of Jesus' words, 'For many are called, but few are chosen [lit: elect].' Mat 22:14. 'The elect' are not people who have obtained a special, religious position that is superior to those who are called. Election refers to the process through which a person *chooses* and *obtains* what God has chosen for them - their inheritance as a son of God and a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem.

The Lord revealed, through Isaiah, that the principle of election was established in Jacob. This happened through the process by which he obtained his inheritance as Israel, Prince with God. The Lord declared, 'For Jacob My servant's sake, and *Israel My elect*, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me.' Isa 45:4. Furthermore, He said, 'I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, and from Judah an heir of My mountains; *My elect shall inherit it*, and My servants shall *dwell there*.' Isa 65:9. The principle of election was established in Jacob because *he chose* the word of his predestination, by which he was called. His election was *made sure* through the pilgrimage of faith that he traversed by the Spirit and in the fear of the Lord.

We are Jacob

In the introduction to his second epistle, the apostle Peter exhorted believers in every generation, saying, 'Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to *make your call and election sure*, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' 2Pe 1:10-11.

Earlier, we read in the book of Isaiah that the elect, who inherit the promises of God, and who dwell in the heavenly city that belongs to the everlasting kingdom of the Lord, *are the descendants of Jacob, the nation of Israel*. Isa 65:9. Helpfully, the apostle Paul made it very clear that 'they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham'. Rom 9:6-7. How then, are we, who are not the natural seed of the patriarchs, part of Israel, God's covenant people?

We find the answer to this question in the words of Isaiah, who declared, 'Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and have come forth from the wellsprings of Judah'. Isa 48:1. The meaning of this seminal passage of Scripture has confounded many commentators. How could Israel, the corporate Jacob, have come from Judah, if Judah was one of the sons of Jacob?

The answer is that Jesus Christ, Abraham's Seed, is the Son of King David, of the tribe of Judah. And as we noted before, if we are Christ's through new birth and baptism into His body, then we are children of Abraham and heirs of the promise of sonship, which is obtained through calling and election. Gal 3:29. This is true for the Jews as well as for the Gentiles. 1Co 12:13.

Significantly, on the day of Christ's crucifixion, God the Father fashioned a bride for Christ from His body. The Lamb's wife is the New Jerusalem that descends out of heaven from God. Rev 21:9-11. The prophet Isaiah described the bride city as 'the mountain of the Lord's house', and revealed the gospel invitation, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the *God of Jacob* [My elect]; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' Isa 2:2-3.

This is the city that Abraham saw from afar and desired to enter; a 'city *with foundations*, whose builder and maker is God'. Heb 11:10,16. Paul described the city as a temple of living stones built on the *foundation* of the apostles and prophets. This 'temple in the Lord' is a dwelling place of God, in the Spirit. Eph 2:19-22.

From the apostle John's observations in the book of Revelation, we further learn that the elect, who are being built on the foundation of the apostles, are being established as part of the *walls* of the heavenly Jerusalem. Rev 21:14. Why is this significant? It is because the walls have twelve gates upon which are written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Rev 21:12-13. In other words, the elect belong to specific tribes in the true Israel of God.

Our key point is that those who are making their calling and election sure *are Jacob*. Confessing this amazing truth, King David wrote, 'Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully [through sorcery]. He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. *This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face.*' Psa 24:3-6.

We are not merely 'like Jacob'; nor is he a picture to us of something else; nor are we simply learning from his example. *We are Jacob*. His journey to become Israel is the journey that belongs to those who are choosing their calling as a son of God, and who are embracing their fellowship in the offering and

sufferings of Christ. Let us now consider these steps in the life of Jacob, God's elect.

Seeking blessing according to the flesh

Isaac married Rebekah when he was forty years old. They remained childless for twenty years, after which time, Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife. The Lord granted his plea, and Rebekah conceived twins. As we noted earlier, the children struggled together within her womb. The Lord declared to her the word of their predestination, identifying them as two nations. Notably, He said that the older would serve the younger.

When it came time to give birth, the first child came out red and hairy all over, and they called him Esau. Moments later, his brother was delivered and took hold of Esau's heel. For this reason, the child was named Jacob, meaning, 'supplanter, or deceitful; the one who takes the heel'. Gen 25:25-26.

Jacob was a man who pursued God's will for his life. His understanding of God's will was based on the word and culture of his parents, particularly Rebekah, who recognised that the priority would belong to Jacob because he was delivered after Esau. Jacob, however, found himself disadvantaged in the natural setting of his family because of the order of his birth. That is, the birthright and blessing belonged, according to custom, to the natural firstborn. Although he was motivated by the Spirit toward the birthright and blessing that had been prophetically promised to him in the womb, he pursued the blessing in a carnal manner, first by stealing the birthright from Esau, and then by obtaining the blessing from Isaac by deceit.

We see that Jacob was a fighter who refused to be discriminated against. Consequently, he did not initially pursue the blessing by faith, but in the flesh. This fruitless approach to obtaining the blessing was no different from the efforts of the Jews who endeavoured to be righteous through the works of the Law. Explaining this point, the apostle Paul wrote, 'But Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness [the life of sonship], *has not attained* to the law of righteousness. Why? *Because they did not seek it by faith*, but as it were, by the works of the Law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offence, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame".' Rom 9:31-33.

The failure of pursuing the blessing of Abraham through the works of the flesh was evident in Jacob's life by the fact that he did not receive a change of nature after Isaac laid hands on him and blessed him. Rather, the events surrounding this blessing only served to further reveal his deceitful nature. As his brother Esau asserted, 'Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times.' Gen 27:36. Jacob was blessed by Isaac, yet it

was clear that he would have to overcome the propensity to deception in order to obtain the blessing that belonged to his predestination.

The house of God

To preserve him from the murderous intent of Esau, Isaac sent Jacob to the house of Laban, in the land of Padan Aram, Syria. Gen 28:1-2. In the course of his journey, Jacob came to a certain place where he decided to stay the night. He took a stone and put it at his head and lay down to sleep. Gen 28:10-11.

As Jacob slept, he dreamed of a ladder that was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven. The angels of God were ascending and descending on the ladder. Yahweh stood above the ladder, and beside it, and said to Jacob, 'I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' Gen 28:12-14.

Learning the fear of the Lord

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he acknowledged that Yahweh was in that place. And, *being afraid*, he said, 'How awesome [fear-provoking] is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!' Gen 28:17. Jacob's response demonstrated that, through this encounter, he began to learn the fear of the Lord. Significantly, an initial implication of the fear of the Lord was his awareness of, and connection to, the house of God. Jacob later described this fear as 'the fear of Isaac'. Gen 31:42. It was the reverent fear that his father Isaac demonstrated when he was figuratively bound to the offering of Christ, as Abraham prepared to sacrifice him on Mount Moriah. Gen 22:9-10.

The fear of Isaac was not merely a disposition that Jacob had acquired, it was the Lord Himself. 'The Fear of Isaac' is a name that belongs to Yahweh, who promised to be with Jacob as he commenced this next season of life. He said, to Jacob, 'Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.' Gen 28:15. At the conclusion of his time with Laban, Jacob testified, 'Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham and *the Fear of Isaac, had been with me*, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed.' Gen 31:42. In this statement, Jacob called the Lord, who said that He would be with him, 'the Fear of Isaac'.

We note that, in this encounter, Jacob saw the heavenly 'bride city' that has foundations, which his grandfather, Abraham, had earlier seen and desired. Heb 11:10,16. It would become a city of inhabitants that would spread to the

west and the east and the north and the south. Through the testimony of these believers, individuals and families throughout the earth would receive the blessing of sonship. Evidently, the Lord was revealing to Jacob how he and his descendants would become 'the elect'. Isa 45:4.

Established on the foundation stone

In response to this vision, Jacob rose early in the morning, took the stone upon which he had laid his head, and set it up as a pillar, anointing it with oil. Gen 28:18. The stone was symbolic of Christ. Instead of continuing to stumble in his pursuit of the blessing through the flesh, Jacob was now committing to walk in a different manner. He was beginning to be built on Christ, who had formerly been to him a stumbling stone, and to walk by faith. He, through the Spirit, would now eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness (meaning the blessing of sonship), *by faith*. Gal 5:5.

Jacob's reorientation to faith through the Spirit was signified by the pouring of oil upon the rock. As Jacob proceeded to walk by faith, in the fear of the Lord, he and his descendants would be built on Christ, the foundation stone and capstone of the heavenly city. Zec 4:6-10. They would, themselves, become pillars in the house of God. Jesus Christ promised this to the *aggelos* and the church in Philadelphia, who overcame the synagogue of Satan and who kept the command to *persevere*. He said, 'He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.' Rev 3:12.

Jacob called the place Bethel, meaning 'house of God'. Furthermore, he vowed to give to the Lord a tithe of all his possessions if the Lord would be with him; would keep him in the way that had been revealed to him; would feed and clothe him; and would restore him to his father's house in peace. Gen 28:16-22. Clearly, Jacob was committing himself to walk in fellowship with Jehovah Jireh - 'Yahweh will provide' - whom Abraham had introduced to Isaac. In doing so, he would maintain the same fear that his father, Isaac, had learned and demonstrated on Moriah. Gen 22:8,14.

Mercy and illumination

Although Jacob's approach to the birthright and blessing had formerly been carnal, he found *mercy* and received *illumination* at Bethel. He continued to walk in this mercy and in the fear of the Lord which he had obtained through illumination. We know this because, at the conclusion of his season of affliction in the house of Laban, *before* he wrestled with the Lord, Jacob prayed, 'O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord who said to me, "Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal

well with you”: I am not worthy of the least of all the *mercies* and of all the truth which You have *shown* Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies.’ Gen 32:9-10.

The land of Jacob’s affliction – a trial of faith

Jacob travelled from Bethel to Padan Aram, where he resided in the house of his uncle, Laban, for twenty years. During this time, Jacob married Laban’s daughters, Leah and Rachel. Gen 29:18-28. He also took their maidservants, Bilhah (Rachel’s maid) and Zilpah (Leah’s maid) as wives. Gen 30:4,9. By the time that the Lord directed Jacob to return to the land of his fathers, these marriages had produced eleven sons and a daughter.

After the birth of his eleventh son, Joseph, Jacob desired to depart from Laban’s house. However, his uncle insisted that he remain in his house. The Scripture recorded that Laban had *divined* that the Lord had blessed him for Jacob’s sake. Gen 30:27. Jacob agreed to stay for wages comprising all the spotted and speckled sheep and goats from Laban’s flocks. Although assenting to this arrangement, Laban cheated Jacob by removing all the pertinent beasts from his flock before his nephew was able to take possession of them. Laban gave the animals to his own sons, and they promptly put three days’ journey between themselves and Jacob. Gen 30:34-36.

Jacob remained in Laban’s employ, enduring the injustices of his uncle’s wage changes, by the fear of his father Isaac. This season of suffering was a *trial of faith* for Jacob. Having personally received the promise of blessing at Bethel, Jacob was being grieved by various trials so that the genuineness of his faith, being more precious than gold, would be found to praise, honour and glory at the revelation of the Lord. He was being tested in this manner so that he would receive the end of his faith, which was the blessing of a new name. 1Pe 1:6-9. He obtained this blessing at the conclusion of the trial of faith, when he met the Lord a second time, wrestling with Him at Jabbok.

In the meantime, as Jacob continued to labour in the land of his affliction, the Lord provided for him, causing him to become exceedingly prosperous. This was despite Jacob’s inclination to employ various artifices, such as rods of green poplar, and of the almond and chestnut trees, in an attempt to enlarge his flocks. At the conclusion of his time in the household of Laban, Jacob became aware of, and acknowledged, the fact that his prosperity was not the fruit of his cunning devices but, rather, was the provision of God. Gen 31:9-12.

Because Jacob had increased in wealth, the countenance of Laban and his sons was no longer favourable toward Jacob. Gen 31:2. Marking the end of Jacob’s trial of faith, the Lord said to him, ‘Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you.’ Gen 31:3. Jacob took the opportunity to

steal away from Laban's house while his uncle was otherwise occupied in shearing his sheep.

In the course of Jacob's departure, Rachel stole the idols (teraphim) that belonged to her father. This signalled her loyalty to the familiar culture of her father's household. She had taken this initiative upon herself, entertaining an alternative word in the household without any reference to Jacob. Her familiar practices had a detrimental effect upon the culture of the household. We will consider this further in Chapter 4.

Initiating reconciliation

Having separated from Laban, Jacob was sent on his way. At the place where he camped, the angels of God met him. Notably, Jacob called that place, Mahanaim, meaning, 'double camp'. Gen 32:1-2. In this encounter with the angels of God, Jacob acknowledged that he had emerged from the season of his affliction as *two companies*.

It appears that the angels of God directed Jacob to engage with Esau because, from Mahanaim, Jacob *then* sent word to his brother, saying, 'I have dwelt with Laban and stayed there until now. I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favour in your sight.' Gen 32:4-5.

Jacob had defrauded his brother when, through deceit, he secured the blessing of Isaac. Consequently, Jacob was directed by God's messengers to reconcile with his adversary. In doing so, Jacob was observing the command of Jesus, 'Agree [lit: reconcile] with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there 'til you have paid the last penny.' Mat 5:25-26.

Esau responded to Jacob's entreaty by gathering four hundred men to accompany him as he came to meet Jacob. This impending confrontation caused Jacob considerable consternation. It was at this point that he prayed to the God of Abraham and Isaac. As we noted earlier, in this prayer, Jacob confessed that he was not worthy of the multitude of God's mercies, nor of the illumination that he had received, noting that, because of mercy and illumination, he had become 'a double portion' household. Jacob humbled himself, casting all his cares upon the Lord, and he prayed according to the word of his sonship. He said, 'Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children. For You said, "I will surely treat you well, and make

your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude”.’ Gen 32:11-12.

Jacob wrestled with the Lord

Having already sent all of his possessions and his household over the ford of Jabbok, Jacob was ‘left alone’ in the night, and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Gen 32:22-24. This Man was a theophany of Jesus Christ for, after this wrestle, Jacob noted that he had seen God ‘face to face’, and lived. Gen 32:30. Through this interaction, Jacob received a new name, which was the knowledge of the glory of his sonship from the face of Jesus Christ. 2Co 4:6. 2Co 3:17-18.

In the first instance, Jacob did not choose this wrestle. Rather, the Angel of the Lord had come to resist Jacob’s entry into the promised land of his inheritance. The Lord would not allow Jacob to enter the land of promise while his fallen carnal propensities to deception remained a motivating influence in his life. Of course, as we noted earlier, Jacob was a fighter, and he was determined to lay hold of the promises of God.

When the Lord saw that He did not prevail against Jacob, He weakened Jacob’s natural strength by touching the socket of his hip, causing its dislocation. Of course, the Creator of the universe did not need to weaken Jacob in order to prevail over him. Rather, Jacob needed help to overcome his own fleshly propensities. His carnality was undermining his capacity to obtain the blessing of sonship that was predestined for him. Until he was helped in this manner, Jacob was cleaving to the Lord with deceit, for his name was still ‘Deceiver’.

Now unable to prevail by the strength of his flesh, Jacob clung to the Lord by the Spirit! He declared to the Lord, ‘I will not let You go unless you bless me!’ Moreover, he *confessed* that he was a deceiver. Gen 32:26-27. In response, the Lord said to Jacob, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel [meaning ‘prince with God’]; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.’ Gen 32:28. By this means, Jacob was blessed by the Lord. Paul described this blessing as ‘the promise of the Spirit through faith’. Gal 3:14.

Prayer in Gethsemane

Jacob obtained the blessing because, through this night of wrestling, he was personally connected to the fellowship of Christ’s offering and sufferings. In the first instance, he was connected, by the Spirit, to the prayer of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane. Rom 8:26. We recall that the Son of Man began to pray in the garden of Gethsemane at about *midnight*. This fellowship of prayer with the Father and the Holy Spirit revealed the altar of incense in the

true tabernacle of God. As Jesus was praying, He was strengthened with Eternal Spirit from the Holy Spirit. Being in agony, and enabled by Eternal Spirit, Jesus began to pray more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great clots of blood falling to the ground as He overcame the will of our flesh, and began to fulfil the obedience that belongs to God's will for our lives.

Luk 22:41-44. He did this as an offering for sin.

As Jacob was connected to this fellowship of prayer at the altar of incense, he was able to acknowledge his fallen nature. Answering the Lord's query, 'What is your name?', he confessed that he was Jacob, a deceiver. This was possible as he received, from the Spirit, the capacity of Eternal Spirit, joining him to the travail of Christ. The confession of his iniquitous nature was not dissimilar to the response of Isaiah who, having seen the Lord, confessed, 'Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.' Isa 6:5.

We recognise that this was 'a second time' experience for Jacob. He had first met the Lord in Bethel, where he began to receive mercy and the illumination that was necessary to endure his trial of faith in the house of Laban. Now, however, in order to continue to obtain the promised blessing of his sonship, Jacob needed deliverance from the desires associated with his fallen nature, and to begin to walk blamelessly before the Lord.

Meeting the Lord in the darkness of the depths

The blessing of Eternal Spirit which enabled Jacob's confession joined him to the second aspect of darkness associated with Christ's offering and sufferings. This was the depths of the lake of fire that Christ endured on the cross during the three hours of darkness from midday until three o'clock.

Gal 3:13-14. Jesus endured the judgement of God that belonged to Jacob on account of his deceitful nature. However, at the same time, 'in the lowest parts of the earth', Jacob's sonship was being fulfilled by Christ and recorded in the book of life. Psa 139:15-16.

When Jacob, by the Spirit, confessed that he was a deceiver, he was acknowledging that he was with Christ under the judgement of God. However, having become poor in spirit, he was able to choose to suffer with Christ. In doing so, he was redeemed by God, and was joined to 'the circumcision of Christ'. Col 2:11. In the same way that Abraham received a new name with circumcision, Jacob received the name that was authored and finished for him by Christ in the lowest parts of the earth. Jacob's limp became for him a daily connection to the sufferings of Christ. In this regard, they were his 'momentary and light affliction' through which he was now obtaining the

blessing of his sonship as ‘an eternal weight of glory’. 2Co 4:16-17. This is the true blessing of God that Jacob desired.

Jacob bowed seven times

After crossing the ford at Jabbok, which Jacob named Penuel (meaning ‘face of God’), he lifted his eyes and saw Esau coming towards him, accompanied by four hundred men. Gen 32:31. Gen 33:1. Jacob divided up his household, putting the maidservants and their children at the front of the company, followed by Leah and her children, and then Rachel and Joseph. Gen 33:2.

Jacob went before them, *bowing himself to the ground seven times* until he came near to Esau. Gen 33:3. This action was prophetically significant, revealing the circumstances in which Jacob’s descendants would be established and perfected as the corporate Israel of God.

We recall that the Lord said to Rebekah that the two sons in her womb would become two nations. Esau became the nation of Edom, whose dwelling place was the region of Seir. Gen 32:3. Eze 35:15. In the prophetic Scriptures, Edom is ‘a code word’ to describe the nations of the world. For example, the prophet Isaiah wrote, ‘*Come near, you nations*, to hear; and heed, you people! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, the world and all things that come forth from it. For the indignation of the Lord is against all nations, and His fury against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to the slaughter ... for My sword shall be bathed in heaven; *indeed it shall come down on Edom*, and on the people of My curse, for judgement.’ Isa 34:1-2,5.

Jacob’s bowing to Esau revealed that God’s covenant people would be subject to seven world kingdoms – Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the present world kingdom. Under the oppression of these kingdoms, God would establish and refine a people for Himself. At the same time, He would judge the nations of the world.

When they met, Jacob said to Esau, ‘If I have now found favour in your sight, then receive my present from my hand, inasmuch as I have *seen your face as though I had seen the face of God*, and you were pleased with me.’ Gen 33:10. Making this statement, Jacob acknowledged and accepted Isaac’s prophecy concerning the two sons. When Isaac blessed Esau, he declared that Esau was predestined to serve his brother. However, he also prophesied that Esau, or Edom, would break this yoke of service from his neck, indicating that Esau would presume upon the blessing that belonged to Jacob, and would endeavour to rule over him. Gen 27:40.

The Scriptures describe the enmity between the heirs of promise, represented by Jacob, and the children of the flesh, represented by Esau, as ‘the ancient hatred’. Eze 35:3-5. This enmity was first evident between Isaac, the son of

promise, and Ishmael, who was born according to the flesh. Gal 4:28-30. In viewing Esau's face as the face of God, Jacob understood that God would use the consequences of this enmity to process Israel, and to bring to pass His word concerning their inheritance.

The presumption of Edom prophesied by Isaac was acutely manifest through the establishment of the Herodian dynasty. This was instigated when Antipater, an Idumean by descent, was installed as procurator of Judea by Julius Caesar in 47 BC. Idumea is the Greek name for Edom. This means that the Herodians were descendants of Esau. They were also descendants of Ishmael through Ishmael's daughter, Mahalath, who married Esau. Gen 28:9. Antipater's son, Herod the Great, was eventually appointed as king of Judea. He was the ruler who attempted to eliminate Jesus by having all the male infants from the region of Bethlehem put to death. Mat 2:16-18.

Herod Antipas, one of the sons of Herod the Great, was the ruler of Galilee and Perea during the earthly ministry of Jesus. As Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem in preparation for His offering, some Pharisees came to Him, saying, 'Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You.' Luk 13:31. Interestingly, they came to Him in the very hour that He taught the people, 'There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.' Luk 13:28.

In response, Jesus said to the Pharisees, 'Go, tell that fox, "Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.' Luk 13:32-33. With this statement, Jesus warned Herod that He was coming to fulfil the word of the Lord concerning the destiny of Jacob and Esau.

In the course of His offering journey from Gethsemane to Calvary, Jesus was set before Herod, who desired to see a sign from Christ to support his claim over Jerusalem and the temple. Luk 23:8. If Herod's kingship and temple had been validated by Christ, the yoke of Jacob would have remained broken off the neck of Esau and his descendants. However, Jesus answered him not a word. Luk 23:9. His only resolve was, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up'. Joh 2:19.

As Herod mocked Christ's kingship, and sent Him to the Romans to be abused and crucified, Herod's authority was removed from him. He was disempowered and conquered by Christ, the obedient Slave of the Father. Php 2:8-11. In this way, the right of the Arabs and Edom to the blessing of Abraham was removed from them and was established in the true Israel of God. Moreover, the principles of calling and election were realised in Christ.

Christ was established as the only door through which Jews and Gentiles could obtain the blessing of eternal life.

Reformation at Shechem

Separating from Esau, Jacob then travelled with his household to Shechem. At Shechem, Simeon and Levi brought great trouble upon Jacob when they deceived and then slaughtered Hamor and Shechem, and all the males of their city, in retribution for the defilement of their sister Dinah. On account of their deceit and cruelty, Jacob said of his two sons, 'Let not my soul enter their council; let not my honour be united to their assembly; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they hamstrung an ox. Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel!' Gen 49:6-7.

Following this incident, God again directed Jacob to return to Bethel and there to make an altar to God. In response, Jacob commanded his entire household, saying, 'Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone.' Gen 35:2-3. Accordingly, everyone in his household gave Jacob the foreign idols that were in their hands, and the earrings that were in their ears, and he hid them under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem. Gen 35:4.

Through this command, Jacob took an initiative toward the culture of his house. He destroyed all of the idols that his children had embraced and imbibed through the familiar influence of Laban's household. In purifying themselves, they had to turn from even appearing to be like the world; hence forsaking the earrings in their ears.

Significantly, Shechem was the place where the Lord first promised the land of Canaan to Abram. Gen 12:6-7. Later, Shechem was the place where Joshua made his final address to the children of Israel. During this discourse, he commanded them in the same manner as Jacob had commanded his household, saying, 'Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, *and put away the gods which your fathers served* on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord! And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.' Jos 24:14-15.

It is important to recognise that Jacob's family had no access to, nor participation in, the house of God, represented by Bethel, until they repented of their uncleanness and idolatry. They were not recipients of God's blessing

simply because they were under Jacob's roof. Jacob was God's messenger to them. As he proclaimed the word of the cross, Christ was publicly portrayed before them as crucified. They were caused to look on Christ whom they had pierced through their idol worship and worldly conduct.

It is apparent that each person in the household began to mourn with godly sorrow under the influence of grace and supplication, because they all turned from their idolatry and from their familiar conduct. They figuratively availed themselves of the fountain for sin and uncleanness that was opened for everyone when Christ, who was manifest as I AM on the cross, was pierced with the soldier's spear. The blood and water that flowed from His side was a fountain for sin and uncleanness. Speaking of this provision, the Lord declared, 'In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. It shall be in that day, says the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered. I will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land.' Zec 13:1-2.

The family then journeyed from Shechem to Bethel. At Bethel, God appeared to Jacob again, and blessed him, saying, 'Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name.' Gen 35:10. Jacob had already received a new name when he wrestled with the Lord at Jabbok. God was now addressing a corporate Jacob, consisting of the inhabitants of his household, who were to become the Israel of God. We know this because God then said to Jacob, 'I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land.' Gen 35:11-12.

Becoming the Israel of God

The prophet Hosea summarised the initiative of the Lord toward Jacob to establish him as Israel. He declared, 'The Lord also brings a charge against Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his deeds He will recompense him. He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and in his strength he struggled with God.' Hos 12:2-3. In this passage, Hosea noted that Jacob's action of taking his brother by the heel, for which he was named Jacob, was the same trait that was initially evident when he began to wrestle with the Lord. It revealed his natural propensity to pursue the blessing of God through the works that belonged to his own strength.

However, as we noted earlier, Jacob began to weep and mourn, and to obtain the favour of the Lord, which is resurrection life, through his connection to the offering and sufferings of Christ. This was by the Spirit! Making this point,

Hosea further proclaimed, 'Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed; he wept, and sought favour from Him.' Hos 12:4.

Hosea then noted, 'He [Jacob] found Him in Bethel, and *there He spoke to us* – that is, the Lord God of hosts. The Lord is His memorable name.' Hos 12:4-5. This is an amazing passage of Scripture. It identifies God's covenant people – those who have been born again and baptised into Christ – as belonging to the corporate Jacob. It specifically refers to the house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel and have come from the loins of Judah, through Christ. Isa 48:1. Hosea was declaring that the Lord speaks to those who have come to Bethel, and who call themselves after the heavenly Jerusalem.

However, as we have considered through the steps of Jacob, we are unable to arrive at Bethel and to receive the word that ensures our election, until we negotiate the issues of idolatry and uncleanness that Jacob raised with his household at Shechem. Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord was clear on this point. 'Therefore thus says the Lord, who redeemed Abraham [at Shechem], concerning the house of Jacob: "Jacob shall not now be ashamed, nor shall his face now grow pale [as it did through the deceit and cruelty of his sons at Shechem]; but when he sees his children, the work of My hands, in his midst, they will hallow My name, and hallow the Holy One of Jacob, and fear the God of Israel. These also who erred in spirit will come to understanding, and those who complained will learn doctrine".' Isa 29:22-24.

We are affirmed as the children of Jacob, and our citizenship as the Lord's elect is made sure, as the work of the Lord's hand is effective in our lives – individually, as households, and as churches. The work of the Lord's hand is through the ministry of the word from the star presbyteries of lampstand churches. By receiving these commands, we are delivered from iniquity, and are cleansed of the filth of our idolatry and familiar ways. We learn the fear of the Lord and are affirmed, symbolically, at Bethel, as part of the Israel of God. This is where He continues to speak to us and to establish us in the fellowship of His name.

Seventy-two entered Egypt

Journeying from Bethel, Jacob and his household made their way to Ephrath (the primitive name for Bethlehem). Not far from this town, Rachel went into labour. Her labour was traumatic and she died not long after giving birth to a son whom Jacob named Benjamin. Gen 35:16-20. This was a significant moment in the salvation of Rachel and in the prophetic destiny of Jacob's house. In Chapter 4, we have detailed this event and its implications for Rachel and her children.

Rachel's passing was a great grief to Jacob; however, more grief was to follow. We recall that Joseph, the son whom Jacob favoured, was sold into slavery by his brothers. If it were not for the intervention of Reuben, his brothers would have killed him. Instead, they cast him into a deep pit in the wilderness, figurative of the land of forgetfulness. Joseph's brothers killed a goat, dipped Joseph's coat into its blood, and reported to Jacob that a wild beast had devoured him. Gen 37:12-36.

Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for Joseph many days. He refused to be comforted by his children, saying, 'For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning.' Gen 37:34-35. We know, of course, that Joseph's 'death' was the beginning of the trial of his faith. As the Scriptures recorded, 'Until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the Lord tested him'. Psa 105:19.

Through Joseph, the Lord provided for Jacob's household in the midst of a severe famine that had come upon the whole region. When Joseph made himself known to his brothers in Egypt, he said to them, 'God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.' Gen 45:7. He directed his brothers to bring Jacob and the rest of the household to Egypt, where they would be preserved during the five years of famine that still remained. Significantly, Jacob and his household entered Egypt as a company of seventy-two people, being the firstfruits of a whole nation that would eventually be delivered from Egypt and would inherit the land that God promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Jacob blessed his sons

At the end of his life, Jacob called his sons to himself, saying, 'Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days: gather together and hear, you sons of Jacob, and listen to Israel your father.' Gen 49:1-2.

Jacob passed on the blessing, with which he had been blessed, to his twelve sons. He did this through the prophetic word that he proclaimed to them as he laid his hands upon them before his decease. That is, he declared to them the promise of the Spirit that would enable them to receive the change of nature that was necessary for them to inherit the blessing that belongs to the elect. Significantly, he said to them, 'Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days.' Gen 49:1.

The blessing with which Jacob then blessed each of his sons revealed the carnal propensities from which they would need deliverance in order to inherit the blessing of sonship that was promised to Abraham. Referring to this inheritance, the apostle Paul noted that Abraham sojourned in the land of

promise, 'dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God'. Heb 11:9-10.

From this passage, we recognise that the inheritance of sonship is a person's citizenship of the heavenly Jerusalem. As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, this is the bride city that the apostle John observed in the book of Revelation. In his description of this great city, John observed that the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written on the gates of the walls of the New Jerusalem. Rev 21:12. Earlier in the book of Revelation, he listed the tribes of Israel that belonged to the city - Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin. Rev 7:4-8. We note that Dan was missing from the sons whom Jacob addressed, and that Joseph was identified as a tribe in the place of Ephraim.

Being built into the walls of the New Jerusalem as the elect of God is the blessing that Jacob proclaimed to his sons, as he told them what would befall them 'in the last days'. Why did Jacob bless his sons by describing their nature and their carnal propensities? He did it because, in order to obtain the blessing of this inheritance, Jacob's sons would need to experience a change of nature in the same way that Jacob did when he wrestled with the Lord at Jabbok. That is, each son would need to receive the promise of the Spirit through faith, enabling them to confess their particular fallen nature, and to join the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. In this fellowship, they would find deliverance from their uncleanness, and would be able to fulfil the works that belonged to their sanctification as a son of God.

Every person is *called* to be a son of God and is predestined to *election*, in Christ. Those who accept their call, and who make their election sure, as part of the true Israel of God, are built into the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem as part of one of the tribes of Israel. Jacob's descriptions of his sons identify the particular carnal dispositions that the elect must overcome in order to obtain the blessing of their inheritance in the heavenly Jerusalem.

Chapter 4

Marriage reformation in the house of Jacob

Commitment to reformation in one's family and, where applicable, in their marriage, is a defining characteristic of those who are part of Jacob, the generation who seek the Lord. Psa 24:6. Accordingly, the familial and marital issues that every Christian couple must negotiate in order to obtain the blessing of the Lord, are detailed for us in the account of Jacob's pilgrimage and, in particular, in his relationships with his wives, Rachel and Leah.

Both of Jacob's marriages were affected by the dynamics of the Fall and required significant restoration. Jacob himself needed to forsake his 'cherub-like' expression toward his wives, which is typical of fallen men. Likewise, Rachel and Leah needed to be delivered from the sorcerous practices of seduction and manipulation within their marriages, stemming from the other law within their hearts.

As we considered in Chapter 1, desire, motivated by envy, is the fruit of the Fall within the heart of a woman. Gen 3:16. This basic drive within a woman has an unavoidable impact upon her relationship with her husband and even in her interactions with other women. This was true for Rachel and Leah. For example, Rachel's demand for children from Jacob was driven by her envy of Leah's motherhood. Similarly, Leah's betrayal of Rachel on her wedding night was driven by her envy of Rachel's betrothal to Jacob. Both women needed to

meet the Lord, individually, and to embrace His process for their deliverance from these basic fallen desires.

Two marriages

Jacob encountered Rachel when he first arrived in the land of the East and came upon a well that was used by the herders of that region to water their livestock. Rachel was a shepherdess who had brought her flock to the well for this purpose. Having learned that Rachel was Laban's daughter, Jacob rolled the stone from the mouth of the well and watered Laban's flock for her. He then kissed Rachel and lifted up his voice and wept, being overwhelmed at having reached his destination. Gen 29:9-12.

After residing in Laban's house for a month, Jacob was asked what his wages should be for his service. Jacob offered seven years of service for Rachel's hand in marriage. She was a beautiful woman in form and countenance, while her older sister, Leah, was less appealing, being described as having 'weak eyes'. Gen 29:17. Jacob had quickly developed a romantic affection for Rachel, and his seven years of service seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her. Gen 29:15-20.

At the conclusion of these seven years, however, on the evening of Jacob's wedding, Laban deceived him, giving to him Leah, rather than Rachel. It is unlikely that Jacob's marriage to Leah happened against her will. It is more probable that Leah, as the firstborn daughter, demanded this of Laban, and that Laban deceived Jacob at her behest. From this perspective, Jacob and Leah's marriage was the fruit of her exertion of feminine *eros*. What do we mean by this?

Eros is the Greek word for sensual, or passionate, love. It is the romantic love that springs from desire. Feminine *eros* is not merely a woman's longing for a romantic relationship with a man. For her, romance has a much broader application. It describes her desire for identity verification through the realisation of a life that she has envisaged for herself. The actions that she takes to attain these romantic aspirations are informed by her knowledge of good and evil. In relation to marriage, a woman directs this longing toward a man, expecting him to provide, or to be, for her, what is necessary for the fulfilment of the romantic life she is cultivating in her image and likeness.

The romance of being married, and of having a family, was the object of Leah's desire. Driven by this romantic ambition, she took the matter of marriage to Jacob into her own hands. This exertion of control included the recruitment of Leah's father to her cause. Laban's support for, and participation in, Leah's enterprise indicated that it was energised by a familiar spirit within his household.

Although incensed at this deception and manipulation, Jacob agreed to observe the ceremonial week pertaining to his marriage to Leah. Following this week, he married Rachel, for whom he served Laban for another seven years. Gen 29:21-28.

Leah saved through childbirth

Leah's marriage to Jacob was founded upon deception and manipulation. Nevertheless, the Lord had mercy on Leah. He met her in the season of her childbearing. As Leah responded to the Lord's initiative toward her, she found deliverance from the carnal expectations of life and marriage that motivate fallen women, and she was able to be joined in one Spirit with Jacob. 1Ti 2:15. Instead of viewing her husband as a contributor to her romantic agenda, Leah was reoriented and submitted to Jacob's headship. 1Co 11:8-10. Consequently, she was able to proceed from him to become a great multitude of elect sons of God. Let us now consider the details of Leah's reformation.

Seduction through trading

Leah's love for Jacob, particularly in the early phase of their marriage, was unrequited. The emotional distress that this caused her was only exacerbated by Jacob's overt preference for Rachel. Moses, the author of the book of Genesis, noted that the Lord 'saw that Leah was unloved'. Gen 29:31. Notably, the Hebrew word that is translated as 'unloved' in this passage actually means 'hated'. Seeing that Leah was hated by Jacob, the Lord opened her womb. She conceived and bore a son whom she named Reuben, meaning 'see, a son'.

Leah knew that the Lord was aware of her anguish, for she said, 'The Lord [Yahweh] has surely looked on my *affliction*.' Gen 29:32. However, instead of turning to the Lord to receive the word of her sanctification from Him, she continued to seek identity verification through Jacob's affections. To this end, Leah believed that bringing forth a son would be pleasing to Jacob, increasing her appeal in his eyes. When she conceived, she said, 'Now therefore, my husband will love me.' Gen 29:32.

Leah's view of her life and marriage was driven by the void of fallen desire within her. Gen 3:16. Consequently, her thoughts and actions were fundamentally carnal; they were based in *trading*. Leah sought romantic favour from Jacob in return for bringing forth something from herself which she believed that Jacob desired or would appreciate. Leah's approach to him was a form of seduction that reflects Satan's own *trading* nature. Eze 28:16. This fallen endeavour to secure the favour of a man is conveyed, albeit crudely, by the colloquialism, 'the way to a man's heart is through his belly'.

Fellowship in the afflictions of Christ

Clearly, however, this approach to her relationship with Jacob did not have the effect that Leah intended for, when she conceived a second time and bore a son, she recognised that she was still unloved. She said, 'Because the Lord has *heard* that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also.' Gen 29:33. Accordingly, Leah named her son Simeon, meaning 'heard'.

The Lord heard Leah because her affliction was now a point of fellowship with the Lord. He had come alongside her in the suffering that was associated with her loveless marriage. Through His 'once for all' offering, Christ had tasted the sufferings associated with her grief. Heb 2:9. He was now inviting her to receive these sufferings as her fellowship in His sufferings. Php 3:10.

It appears that Leah joined the conversation of faith that belongs to fellowship in Christ's afflictions. Heb 11:25. In this fellowship, Leah was beginning to find deliverance from a way of life that was driven by self-centred desire, to a new way of living and relating with others. Instead of being driven by the desire for identity verification through Jacob's romantic interest in her, she sought connection with him on a new basis.

'Attached' through a remnant of the Spirit

This change in Leah's orientation to her relationship with Jacob was reflected in the birth of a third son, whom she named Levi, meaning 'attached'. She said, 'Now this time my husband will become *attached* to me, because I have borne him three sons.' Gen 29:34. The Hebrew word for 'attached' means 'to twine; by implication, to unite'. To be entwined, or united, was the marriage connection to which Leah was now giving herself.

Leah's reorientation to Jacob exemplified the marriage culture commended by King Solomon. He said, 'Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. *And a threefold [or entwined] cord is not quickly broken.*' Ecc 4:9-12.

Leah was beginning to understand that the viability of her marriage was not found in the realisation of her romantic aspirations but, rather, that her marriage to Jacob needed to be established on a new foundation. The words of Solomon reveal that when a husband and a wife are, individually, connected to the lordship of Christ, their marriage can be like a *threefold*, or entwined, cord that is not easily broken. They are able to meet one another in a new way; that is, they can be united, or made one, by receiving a remnant of

the Spirit. God gives a remnant of His Spirit to a believing couple because He desires godly offspring. Mal 2:15.

An offering of praise

Leah conceived a fourth time and bore another son whom she named Judah, meaning 'praise'. Having personally come to something new in the Lord, and also in her relationship with Jacob, Leah declared, 'Now I will praise Yahweh.' Gen 29:35. The Scriptures teach that the Lord is enthroned in, or inhabits, the praises of His people. Psa 22:3. Leah's offering of praise marked her submission to the Lord and, by implication, to her husband, within the fellowship of headship. Judah, the seed brought forth from the one-Spirit marriage covenant of Jacob and Leah, was the son through whom Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would come in the flesh.

Significantly, the praise offered by Leah demonstrated that she feared the Lord. He became her fear as she embraced her participation in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. Her testimony exemplified the confession of King David, who wrote, 'You who fear the Lord, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, and fear Him, all you offspring of Israel! For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; nor has He hidden His face from Him; but when He cried to Him, He heard.' Psa 22:23-24.

Blessed in fellowship

For a season, Leah ceased bearing children. During this time, she witnessed the births of Dan and Naphtali via Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant. Because Leah herself had stopped bearing children, she gave her maidservant, Zilpah, to Jacob as a wife, so that he might have more sons from her. Leah did this because she had been illuminated to Jacob's predestination as a great nation and she was supporting the fulfilment of this destiny.

We know this because Zilpah bore Jacob a son, whom Leah named Gad, saying, 'A troop comes.' Gen 30:9-12. In doing so, Leah revealed her understanding of God's plan for Jacob and his household. Gad's name indicated that this child was part of a firstfruits troop belonging to Jacob. It would become 'two troops', signifying a double-portion blessing which Jacob obtained as he emerged from his season of affliction in Laban's house. Gen 32:7,10.

Zilpah conceived and bore a second son, whom Leah named Asher, meaning 'happy'. Leah proclaimed, 'I am happy, for the daughters will call me blessed.' Gen 30:13. This confession marked her departure from a fallen mode of relating with her sisters, which was typified by comparison and assessments. Instead of viewing the other women in the context of this household of faith

as *rivals*, Leah was able to rejoice with them in the blessing of fruitfulness which was for the sake of the elect.

Spurning sorcery

As we will consider further in the next section, Rachel, who presumed to be the head of the harem, traded the right for Leah to lie with Jacob, for a bouquet of mandrakes which the young lad, Reuben, had collected for his mother. While Rachel believed in the enchanting properties of these plants, Leah readily surrendered them to her. Such superstitious practices were no longer part of Leah's culture. Enchantment was not the basis of her relationship with Jacob, nor the source of her fruitfulness; she now engaged him face to face. When he came out from the field in the evening, she said to him, 'You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes.' Gen 30:16.

Remarkably, as the Scripture recorded, '*God listened to Leah*, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son.' Gen 30:17. God was able to listen to Leah because her conversation with Jacob was, figuratively, at the tree of life! Leah called her son Issachar, meaning 'wages', saying, 'God has given me my wages [or reward], because I have given my maid to my husband.' Gen 30:18. Leah was confessing that she had given her maidservant to Jacob for his benefit. It was not motivated by a self-centred need to have her own children. She had given her maid to Jacob so that he would be fruitful through her.

The principle of envy, through the exercise of the other law, was no longer the basis of her relationship with Jacob, nor with the other women in the house. *Agape* love at the tree of life was her culture. Her fruitfulness in bringing forth Issachar was the wages, or reward, of her labour of love. She ministered to Jacob by giving herself to him and by laying down her life to reveal him. The apostle Paul drew our attention to this labour, writing, 'For God is not unjust to forget your work and labour of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister'. Heb 6:10-11.

Abiding in her inheritance

Amazingly, Leah brought forth two more children: a son named Zebulun, meaning 'dwelling', and a daughter named Dinah. In total, Leah had personally given birth to seven children. When she delivered Zebulun, Leah confessed, 'God has endowed me with a good endowment [gift]; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons.' Gen 30:20. The gift that Leah had received was *entering Christ's rest*, as one who was now fully established on the ground of fellowship that belonged to her sonship. Leah and her marriage had been set upon Christ, the Rock, and He had built

her house. She had not laboured in vain. Psa 127:1. Truly, this was a good endowment!

Rachel's desire for Jacob

The genesis of Rachel's marriage to Jacob was quite different from Leah's. Rachel's striking appearance and charming personality quickly captured Jacob's attention and drew his affection. She presented to him as being a source of fruitfulness and fulfilment. Jacob's grand undertaking for Rachel's hand in marriage was a gesture that conveyed his 'cherub-like' qualities. These were key ingredients in the establishment of their romance, and they came to define the chemistry of their marriage. Under favourable circumstances, Jacob and Rachel's relationship appeared enviable. However, under the pressure and distress of unfulfilled expectations, the deficiencies in their marriage became readily apparent.

Unable to bear children, and being envious of Leah, who had already given birth to four sons (Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah), Rachel said to Jacob, 'Give me children, or else I die!' Gen 30:1. The demand that Rachel made upon Jacob, which was driven by envy, was the expression of desire that belonged to the curse on the woman, following the Fall. The Lord said to the woman, 'Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.' Gen 3:16. Through this interaction, it was clear that fallen desire had always been Rachel's orientation toward her husband.

Rachel's envy surfaced as she compared herself with her sister. Her response in this situation exposed the corruption and uncleanness of her heart. King Solomon described this corruption as 'rotteness', writing, 'A sound heart is life to the body, but envy is rotteness to the bones [or the very structure of a person's identity]'. Pro 14:30.

In the place of God

Unlike Rachel, over the course of the years that followed their nuptials, Jacob found deliverance from his fallen approach to marriage. This change was manifest through the reformation of his relationship with Leah. We recognise, for example, that Leah could not have testified of being 'united' to Jacob in the manner of a threefold cord, if he had not given himself to the Lord, and to meet her in a new way. Gen 29:34. This reformation happened in the season of his affliction as he availed himself of the mercies of the Lord and walked in the light of illumination that he evidently received during this time. Gen 32:10.

Jacob's transformation was demonstrated by his response to Rachel's demand, 'Give me children, or else I die.' His anger was aroused against

Rachel, and he responded to her ultimatum, saying, '*Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?*' Gen 30:2. In contrast to his previous 'cherub-like' initiatives toward Rachel, Jacob did not attempt to placate her; nor did he seek wisdom and power from God to service her desires. Rather, he asserted that he was not 'in the place of God', and that Rachel was accountable for her own response to the Lord.

Jacob's refusal to comply with Rachel's expectation that he would serve her 'in the place of God' was also demonstrated some time later by his son, Joseph, with regard to his brothers. Following the death of Jacob, Joseph's brothers were afraid that he would repay them for the evil that they had done to him. Motivated by fear, they sent messengers to Joseph with a fraudulent communication from their deceased father, saying, 'Before your father died he commanded, saying, "Thus you shall say to Joseph: 'I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you.' Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father".' Gen 50:16-17. Their deceit and their implied repudiation of his commitment to first love fellowship with them was a great grief to Joseph.

After sending their message, the brothers also went and fell down before Joseph's face, saying, 'Behold, we are your servants.' Gen 50:18. Although the Lord had set Joseph over them, he refused to assume a cherub-like demeanour toward them. He did not presume to take dominion over their faith. 2Co 1:24. Instead, Joseph comforted his brothers and spoke kindly to them, saying, 'Do not be afraid, for *am I in the place of God?* But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.' Gen 50:19-21.

The culture of uncleanness

Despite Jacob's confrontation, Rachel continued to approach life and her relationships through her romantic desires. She was driven by this uncleanness and the oppression that it invited. First, Rachel followed the example of Sarai, and gave her maid, Bilhah, to Jacob as a wife. This initiative was not for Jacob's sake; Rachel did it to obtain a child *for herself* through Bilhah. She said to Jacob, 'Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, and she will bear a child on my knees, *that I also may have children by her.*' Gen 30:3.

Jacob went into Bilhah, and she conceived a son whom Rachel named Dan, meaning 'judge'. Rachel believed that God had judged her case, heard her voice, and given her a son. Gen 30:6. In so doing, she mistakenly supposed that God's thoughts regarding her actions were the same as her thoughts, and that His ways were the same as her ways. Isa 55:8. Interestingly, Dan is the

only son of Jacob who is not listed in the book of Revelation as part of the twelve tribes of the true Israel of God. Rev 7:5-8.

Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob another son, whom Rachel named Naphtali. Rachel asserted that she was prevailing in her jealous wrestle with her sister, Leah. She pronounced, 'With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and indeed I have prevailed.' Gen 30:7-8. This was a delusion. Her contention with Leah was in her own mind. Leah herself had been delivered from this way of relating and was by no means competing with Rachel. Rachel's reference to Leah served only to highlight that she was continuing to live by her own law, comparing herself with others and commending herself. She was not wise. 2Co 10:12-13.

Rachel's uncleanness was on display when she traded time with Jacob for the mandrakes that Reuben had picked for Leah during the days of the wheat harvest. Rachel, of course, was the woman whom Jacob had chosen to marry. And, because of this, she presumed to preside over the harem and to moderate the access of the other women to Jacob. This assumed role, informed by the dynamics of envy, established a relational pecking order among the women. They should have been a community of faith, who were serving one another by love. Gal 5:13. Furthermore, Rachel exercised this authority without reference to Jacob, depreciating the expression of his headship within the household.

Mandrakes are a fruit-producing plant with dark green leaves and small purple flowers. The yellow fruit of the mandrake is small, sweet to taste, and fragrant. The root of the plant has hallucinogenic and narcotic properties. According to oriental superstition, the mandrake is supposed to possess the virtue of conciliating love and promoting fruitfulness. Interestingly, in some cultures, the root of the mandrake was sculpted into amulets, or charms, which were believed to endow a person with good fortune and to cure sterility.

It is not clear how Rachel intended to use the mandrakes - whether she viewed it as a natural remedy for infertility; whether she intended to supply it to Jacob as an aphrodisiac; or whether she deployed it as charm to enhance her chances of conception. Irrespective of her intent, her investment in this therapy marked her lack of faith. It was an expression of *sorcery* through which she endeavoured to secure Jacob's investment in the objectives associated with her romantic desire. This was a source of significant uncleanness that produced for her only further delusion and oppression.

Rachel's religious professions of God's agreeable bearing toward her during this season were complete imaginations. God was not involved in her schemes; nor was He answering her demands. We know this because,

after Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah had finished bearing children, the Scriptures recorded, ‘*Then God remembered Rachel*, and God listened to her and opened her womb.’ Gen 30:22. Evidently, prior to the Lord’s initiative to open her womb, Rachel had been *forgotten* by God.

Sadly, as Rachel continued in her religious uncleanness, perceiving herself and others through the dullness of an unsound mind, she was unable even to appreciate or to enjoy the miraculous birth of her son, Joseph. Instead of giving thanks for this provision, she named him Joseph, saying, ‘The Lord shall add to me another son.’ Gen 30:24. In other words, at the moment when she received her heart’s desire, she was immediately looking toward the birth of her next child. Her inability to rejoice in the blessing of the Lord was a fruit of oppression, which remained a weight upon her because of her self-centred unbelief.

Rachel’s uncleanness was epitomised by her worship of teraphim, or household idols. We have detailed this form of worship in Chapter 2. The teraphim were such an orienting influence in her life that she stole them from her father when Jacob and his household made their flight from Laban’s residence. Gen 31:34. Although Rachel believed that her observance of these practices was ‘of God’, the longing desire and enduring delusion that tainted these years of her life reveal that she was, in fact, worshipping another god. That is, her employment of the teraphim was the worship of Satan and his spiritual host of wickedness. Paul highlighted the connection between delusion and the god of this world, writing, ‘But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, *whose minds the god of this age has blinded*, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them’. 2Co 4:3-4.

The repentance of Rachel

At the conclusion of her life, the weeping of Rachel for her children finally changed from the grief of envy to true intercession for her children. This happened as she laboured to bring forth Benjamin, just outside of Ephrath (the former name of Bethlehem). Rachel’s labour was very difficult. In the course of this trauma, the attending midwife said to her, ‘*Do not fear*, you will have this son also.’ Gen 35:16-17. Through this word, Rachel obtained the fear of the Lord that was necessary for her participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. In this fellowship, she was made alive from the death of sin and was established, finally, in her sanctification as a son of God.

As Rachel was dying, following the delivery of the child, she named him Ben-Oni, meaning ‘Son of My Sorrow’. Gen 35:18. Rachel did not name the child this way because he had caused her grief. Rather, having found deliverance from the fear that enslaved her to the flesh, she was lamenting the

impact of her fallen nature upon her household and, in particular, upon her children. The statement 'son of my sorrow' was part of her *prayer of repentance*.

The Lord, through the prophet Jeremiah, answered Rachel's penitent prayer. First, He acknowledged her supplications, saying, 'A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, *Rachel weeping for her children*, refusing to be comforted for her children, *because they are no more*.' Jer 31:15. Yahweh acknowledged that Rachel's grief was not for herself, but for her children who would be lost. She was grieving on account of the destruction among the children of Israel because of uncleanness and bitter envy, which she, herself, had exhibited in her marriage and family.

To this end, Rachel wept for the loss within her family, which she was prophetically foreseeing. This prophecy was fulfilled at multiple points. As we will consider in the next section, the weeping in Ramah was first triggered by the annihilation of the whole tribe of Benjamin on account of the depravity of the citizens of Gibeah, a township belonging to the tribe of Benjamin. Jdg 19-20. The Scriptures recorded that Israel 'wept bitterly' near Ramah because one tribe was missing in Israel. Jdg 21:2-3.

The second great mourning occurred not long after the birth of Jesus. Herod the Great, seeking to kill Jesus whom he considered to be a threat to his kingship, sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years of age and under. Mat 2:16. Concerning this event, Matthew recorded in his Gospel, 'Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, *Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more*".' Mat 2:17-18.

Returning to Jeremiah's prophecy, we note that, having acknowledged Rachel's lamentation, the Lord said, 'Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope in your future, says the Lord, that your children shall come back to their own border.' Jer 31:16-17.

Jacob also acknowledged the recovery of Rachel, setting up a pillar on her grave. Gen 35:20. This signified that Rachel, through repentance and faith, had been established on Christ, upon which Jacob's house had been established. Honouring his headship, she had become a pillar in the temple of God. Moreover, Jacob changed her son's name from Ben-Oni to Benjamin, meaning 'son of my right hand'. This name was prophetic of his role in the recovery of Rachel's children according to the word that the Lord proclaimed

to her as she found repentance before her decease. Let us consider this marvellous recovery.

Benjamin, the fruit of repentance

Benjamin's nature was *wolfish*. Jacob noted this character trait when he blessed Benjamin, saying, 'Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.' Gen 49:27. Because of his edacious nature, the tribe of Benjamin was almost wiped out from among the tribes of Israel through a war of annihilation and excommunication.

This devastating incident happened when a Levite and his concubine sought lodging in Gibeah as they journeyed to their home in the remote mountains of Ephraim. While they were being hosted by an old man of the city, 'perverted men' surrounded the house and beat on the door. They demanded that the Levite be brought out to them so that they might know him carnally and then kill him. Jdg 19:22. Jdg 20:5. Instead, they ravished his concubine, leaving her to die.

The phrase that is translated as 'perverted men' in this passage of Scripture, literally means 'sons of Belial'. 'Belial' is a term that designates a person as being godless or lawless (i.e. iniquitous). It is sometimes used as a name that is applied to a demon or to Satan. These 'sons of Belial' were unclean and iniquitous men who were subject to demonic spirits. They actively sought the destruction of the innocent.

Repulsed by the lewdness of the Benjamites from Gibeah, and provoked by the refusal of the rest of the tribe of Benjamin to deliver these ones up to death in order to remove such evil from the nation, the men of Israel were united together as one man against Benjamin. Jdg 20:11-13. They went up to Bethel, the house of God, to inquire which tribe should go up first to battle against the children of Benjamin. Yahweh replied, 'Judah first!' Jdg 20:18.

On the first day of battle, Benjamin's army, which numbered 26 000 plus the 700 select men of Gibeah, killed 22 000 men of Israel. Yet the Lord directed the Israelites to go up against them again. On the second day, the Benjamites slaughtered another 18 000 men of Israel. Again, coming before the Lord at Bethel with weeping, prayer and fasting, the people inquired of the Lord. On their behalf, Phineas asked, 'Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of my brother Benjamin, or shall I cease?' The Lord responded, 'Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand.' Jdg 20:28.

On the third day, the Lord delivered Benjamin into the hands of his brothers. The number of Benjamite soldiers who were killed was 25 000. Additionally, the men of Israel turned against the rest of the children of Benjamin from

every city, striking them down with the edge of the sword – men and beasts – and setting all their cities on fire. Moreover, they swore an oath that no tribe would give their daughters as wives to the surviving remnant of Benjamin.

Following the rout of Benjamin, the children of Israel came to the house of God and remained there until evening. They lifted up their voices and *wept bitterly*, saying, ‘O Lord God of Israel, why has this come to pass in Israel, that today there should be one tribe *missing* in Israel?’ Jdg 21:2-3. Their weeping was the fulfilment of Rachel’s prophetic grief. It was ‘a voice heard in Ramah’, a key city belonging to Benjamin, which was, for all intents and purposes, ‘no more’.

Recovered through Paul

However, as we noted earlier, the Lord declared that there was hope in Rachel’s future, and that her children, through Benjamin and Joseph, would return and would obtain the blessing of an inheritance that belonged to them in Jacob. This blessing would be fulfilled in the church age. Significantly, this prophecy was, in part, realised through the apostle Paul, who was of the tribe of Benjamin.

Prior to his conversion, Paul exhibited the same wolfish trait as that of his forebears. In the book of Acts, Luke noted that Saul ‘*made havoc of the church*, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison’. Act 8:3. Paul himself testified, saying, ‘For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how *I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it*. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the *traditions of my fathers*.’ Gal 1:13-14. The word that Paul used to describe his destructive intentions is *portheo*. According to Vine, it is another word for ‘havoc’, meaning ‘to destroy, ravage, lay waste’.

Following his conversion, Paul was called by Christ to establish lampstand churches for the church age. Through the ministry of these churches, Jews and Gentiles would be gathered into the true Israel of God as members of the body of Christ. To this end, Paul said, ‘Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, ‘It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first [the Jews]; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us: “I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth”.’ Act 13:46-47.

From Jesus’ perspective, as He is seated on the throne in the true tabernacle, the lampstand is at His right hand. To this end, the establishment of lampstand churches, through Paul, marked the fulfilment of the name that Jacob gave to Benjamin. Truly, Paul had become a ‘son of the right hand’.

Chapter 5

Cleansing the daughters of Zion

Seven women

An essential condition of our citizenship in the heavenly Jerusalem is our participation in the process through which we are delivered from our sin and uncleanness. Zec 13:1. Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord revealed how the heavenly city is cleansed from her filth and bloodshed. He opened His address, declaring, 'In that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, "We will eat our own food and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by your name, to take away our reproach".' Isa 4:1.

The seven women identified in this prophecy are the seven churches to whom Jesus Christ directed His letters in the book of Revelation. Rev 2-3. We note the association of churches, with women, in the writings of the apostles. For example, the apostle John addressed his second epistle to 'the elect lady and her children'. 2Jn 1:1. Similarly, the apostle Peter concluded his first epistle, writing, 'She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you'. 1Pe 5:13.

These seven women represent the fullness of what should be a chaste church, betrothed to one Man, Christ. However, their insistence upon 'eating their own food' and 'wearing their own apparel' reveals that they have been deceived by Satan in the same manner as Eve, who also presumed to eat her own food, and who fashioned together fig leaves to cover the shame of her nakedness and fear. Gen 3:6-7.

Writing to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul expressed his concern regarding this church's susceptibility to such deception, stating, 'For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband [one man], that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted - you may well put up with it!' 2Co 11:2-4.

Isaiah's prophecy reveals that, in the church age, there are many people who are deceived by Satan through alternative gospels. These gospels are epitomised by the expectation, 'only let us be called by your name, to take away our reproach'. Isa 4:1. Those who remain loyal to these doctrines spurn the word of the cross which invites our participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ as the means by which we are able to become the righteousness of God. 2Co 5:21. They prefer, instead, a 'vicarious only gospel'. Accordingly, they live under the presumption that the reproach of God's judgement upon them because of their sin has been taken away and has been suffered, on their behalf, by Christ.

The desire of a person, household, presbytery or church to 'eat their own food' describes their fundamental belief in the freedom to choose, and even to generate, a word that appeals to them; and to interpret the implications of God's word according to their own understanding. When a person approaches the word in this manner, their food is not the fruit of the tree of life. Instead of hearing and receiving what the Spirit is saying to the churches, they live by a word that has been generated from, and mediated by, *their* knowledge of good and evil.

In the Scriptures, 'apparel' represents a person's mandate for a priestly service through which life is expressed. A person clothes themselves in an endeavour to be the source of their own life and Christian expression. Motivated in this way, their expression is not the communication of faith according to their sanctification as a son of God. Rather, their 'own clothing' is a projection of the idolatrous and shameful image that they have created for themselves.

The glorious and beautiful branch

Returning to Isaiah's prophecy, we read, 'In that day the Branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious; and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and appealing for those of Israel who have escaped. And it shall come to pass that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy

[sanctified] – everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem.’
Isa 4:2-3.

In the first instance, the Branch of the Lord is Christ. As the prophet Zechariah declared, ‘Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, and He shall build the temple of the Lord.’ Zec 6:12. Jeremiah described this branch as ‘an almond tree’. Jer 1:11. Significantly, the lampstand of Moses’ tabernacle was fashioned in the form of an almond tree. Exo 25:31-40.

Christ ‘branches out’ as we, who are living stones, are being built together into the temple of His body. Joh 2:21. Eph 2:19-22. His body is the church, which is depicted in the book of Revelation as seven golden lampstands. Col 1:18. Rev 1:20. Importantly, those in the seven churches who receive Christ’s initiative to cleanse them from the presumption of eating their own food and wearing their own apparel are obtaining their sanctification as those who are left in Zion and are remaining in the New Jerusalem. They are being established as part of a lampstand church. It is described as ‘beautiful and glorious’, manifesting the fruit of light, which is the sevenfold Spirit of God, in the whole world.

Notably, the Lord said that those who ‘have escaped’ are ‘recorded among the living in Jerusalem’. This means that their names are recorded in the book of life, which is the tree of life in the midst of the heavenly city. Rev 22:19. The substance of their sonship, written in this tree, is fed to them by the Spirit through the fruit of the tree of life as they participate in the Lord’s *agape* meal. The apostle Peter summarised this point, explaining that, through the word of God, a person *escapes* God’s judgement upon the corruption in the world, as they choose to participate in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Because of this, they have the right to eat from the tree of life as *partakers* of the divine nature. 2Pe 1:2-4. The reality that some people escape and are *left in* the heavenly Jerusalem implies that others are *taken out* of the city. As we will consider further in this chapter, this reveals the polarising effect of the word of the cross in the church.

A spirit of judgement and burning

Identifying how Christ comes to His church to deliver them from their sin and uncleanness, and to establish them as part of the bride city, Isaiah declared, ‘When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, *by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning*, then the Lord will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be

a covering. And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain.' Isa 4:4-6.

The first point to note is that the filth and bloodshed of the daughters of Zion is the fruit of Christian practices that the Lord described as eating one's own food and clothing oneself. 'Filth' encompasses all manner of uncleanness resulting from disobedience to the word of Christ. That is, it describes all the behaviours, attitudes and expectations of those within a community of faith, which are contrary to the culture of godliness that is defined by sound doctrine. 'Bloodshed' is the effect of the murderous and backbiting tongue that persists in the church. As the Lord declared through the prophet Ezekiel, 'In you are men who slander to cause bloodshed.' Eze 22:9. 'Slander' is making false or uninformed statements for the purpose of causing damage to a person's reputation. It particularly refers to speaking evil of the Lord's messengers and their message.

The Lord washes away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purges the blood of Jerusalem by the spirit of judgement and by the spirit of burning. He comes to His church in a spirit of judgement and burning through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, as the word of the cross is proclaimed from presbyteries in the right hand of Christ. This word, which is accompanied by a spirit of grace and supplication, pierces our heart so that it is exposed to the fiery eyes of Him to whom we must give an account. Heb 4:12-13.

Under the conviction and capacity of the Holy Spirit, as we turn from our own way, we are able to *choose* fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. In the midst of the fiery trials that belong to this fellowship, the judgement upon us because of our sin is commuted to chastisement. Heb 12:5-11. In this process, we are delivered from the way of life that is contrary to the culture of the kingdom of God, and we are able to fulfil the works of obedience that belong to our sonship in Christ.

However, those who resist the Holy Spirit when the word of the cross is proclaimed find no deliverance from their iniquity and sin. Instead, they begin to depart from the lampstand church in which the Father placed them. The Lord, through His word, is appointing them to the place of their choice, which is outside the New Jerusalem. How is this evident? Fundamentally, their participation in the *agape* meal becomes *progressively tenuous; or contrary to the culture of fellowship*. This is manifest in various ways. For example, some people maintain their former conversations and conduct, despite the Lord granting further illumination and instruction concerning the *agape* meal. Others draw back from serving in the church, and may even begin to relationally isolate themselves and others in their families and in the church.

The separating, or polarising, effect of this ministry is a key implication of baptism with the Holy Spirit. Highlighting this point, John the Baptist said that Jesus Christ 'will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly *clean* out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will *burn* up the chaff with unquenchable fire.' Mat 3:11-12. Those who walk according to the Spirit are joined to the process of refining through which their carnality is being removed from them. Those who choose to continue to live according to the flesh are being taken out of the church by the same refining process.

We need to accept that this cleansing initiative is part of our Christian experience as those who have *chosen* to be part of a lampstand church. Making this point, the apostle Peter wrote, 'Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the *fiery trial which is to try you*, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy ... for the time has come for *judgment to begin at the house of God*; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not *obey the gospel of God*?' 1Pe 4:12-13,17.

This period of washing and purging through a spirit of judgement and burning *belongs to the age of lampstand churches*. Isaiah revealed that it continues until the Father takes His seat and spreads His tabernacle over His people. Rev 7:15-17. It is a great comfort to understand that when the Father takes His seat and spreads His tabernacle over His people, every believing household, and every restored assembly of faith will be protected from His judgements in the earth. Our houses and churches will be preserved from God's judgement because we have already received and responded to His word as He has come in a spirit of judgement and burning. 1Pe 4:17. We will be washed and purified, and able to gather and care for the great multitude that comes into the kingdom in the time of the end.

The abominations in the temple

Disobedience to the word of the Lord is the beginning point of all uncleanness. The Lord deals with the uncleanness of His people through the principle of *sending away*. This principle was exemplified through the Lord's judgement upon the nation of Judah because of their disobedience to the word of the Lord spoken through His prophets.

The prophet Jeremiah declared that the nation of Judah would be exiled to Babylon as captives for seventy years, and that Jerusalem would be destroyed. Jer 25:8-11. Explaining the reason for this judgement, the Lord said, ' "You have not listened to Me," says the Lord, "that you might provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt".' Jer 25:7.

The exile and destruction of Jerusalem occurred in three primary waves. The first deportation of Jews to Babylon occurred in 605BC. This wave of exiles included Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. The second deportation occurred in 597BC. Among these exiles was a young man named Ezekiel, who was commissioned as a prophet after he had arrived in Babylon. The third wave was the destruction of Jerusalem during the reign of Zedekiah, in approximately 586BC.

Prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, the prophet Ezekiel recounted a vision that he received as he sat in his house with the elders of Judah, and the hand of the Lord God fell upon him. He wrote, 'Then I looked, and there was a likeness, like the appearance of fire - from the appearance of His waist and downward, fire; and from His waist and upward, like the appearance of brightness, like the colour of amber'. Eze 8:2. Ezekiel's observation of the appearance of fire reveals that the Lord was coming for the purpose of cleansing and purging His people. He was coming in the same spirit of judgement and burning that Isaiah described in his prophecy. Isa 4:4.

The particular Hebrew word that is translated as 'brightness' in this passage is used in only one other instance - in the book of Daniel. The prophet Daniel wrote, 'Those who are wise shall shine like the *brightness* of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever'. Dan 12:3. The Hebrew word for 'brightness', used in these two passages, means 'to admonish, shine, teach, give warning'. Evidently, the Lord comes in judgement through the ministry of His word by those who shine like brightness as stars in His hand. This refers not only to the presbyteries, likened by the apostle John to stars in the right hand of Christ; it also includes all of the sons of God who are joined to the fellowship of a presbytery in a lampstand church. Rev 1:20. Gen 15:5.

The hand of the Lord God took Ezekiel by a lock of his hair, and the Spirit lifted him up between heaven and earth, bringing him, in a vision, to Jerusalem, and to the door of the north gate of the inner court of the temple. Here, the Lord showed Ezekiel the abominable idolatry of 'the house of Israel'. Eze 8:3-4.

Of course, many years prior to this vision, the nation of Israel had been divided. The ten northern tribes, which were identified as being the nation of Israel, were conquered by the Assyrians, and dispersed throughout the known world. It was the nation of Judah that was taken captive to Babylon. Why, then, did the Lord call these practices 'the abominations of *the house of Israel*'? By lifting up Ezekiel between heaven and earth, and identifying these practices as belonging to 'the house of Israel', the Lord was drawing attention to the practices of every person who identifies themselves as being part of the

heavenly Jerusalem, the true Israel of God, from that time forward, until the time of the end.

It is significant that Ezekiel saw that these idolatrous abominations were being perpetrated in the courts of the temple. The people were not building new sites for the worship of idols; nor were they worshipping in foreign sacred places. The implication is that the people presumed that their religious practices were consistent with the customs of the temple. However, these were practices about which the Lord said, 'I did not command, nor did it come into My heart.' Jer 7:31. In reality, their religious customs were no different from the rituals that marked the idolatry of the Gentile nations. In other words, these citizens of 'the house of Israel' believed that their darkness was light. Mat 6:23.

An image of jealousy

The first abomination to which the Lord directed Ezekiel's attention was 'the image of jealousy' that was set at the entrance of the altar gate. Ezekiel recounted, 'So I lifted my eyes toward the north, and there, north of the altar gate, was this *image of jealousy* in the entrance.' Eze 8:5. The Hebrew word for 'image', that is used in this passage is OT:5566 - *cemel*. It means 'to resemble; a likeness'. The use of this word is quite unique. In fact, it is used in only two other passages of Scripture.

The first use of this Hebrew word for 'image' was by Moses, in the book of Deuteronomy. He warned the children of Israel, saying, 'Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image [*cemel*] in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that is in the water beneath the earth. And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the Lord your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage.' Deu 4:15-19.

The second use of this word is in the account of the reign of Manasseh, the wicked king of Judah. Manasseh's evil was unprecedented in Judah. He raised up altars to the Baals, and made wooden images. He worshipped all the host of heaven, building altars for them in the two courts of the house of the Lord. He caused his sons to pass through fire; practised soothsaying; used witchcraft and sorcery; and consulted mediums and spiritists. Notably, having outlined the wickedness of Manasseh, the Scripture recorded, 'He set a carved image [*cemel*], the idol which he had made, in the house of God'. 2Ch 33:7.

The implication is that the corruption in the nation was denoted by this image.

The idols and altars that Manasseh set up in the courts of the Lord's house were removed and destroyed by the subsequent reformer, King Josiah. 2Ch 34:3-7. That is, they were not actually in the temple that Ezekiel was shown. Rather, the religious practices of the house of Israel were reflective of the image of jealousy referred to by Moses and set up by Manasseh. What were these practices, described as 'the image of jealousy', which provoked the Lord to jealousy?

The Lord drew Ezekiel's attention to the worship of an image that was in the *likeness* of something else. As we considered in Chapter 1, Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, having been bewitched by the Devil to covet the creative capacities of God. Motivated by the strong desire of jealousy, they ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, endeavouring to become '*like God*'. They had replaced God with a projected image of themselves, which they had created and now worshipped. The references to this image in the books of Deuteronomy and Chronicles highlights that the worship of an image of oneself in the likeness of God *is the basis of all idolatry*. It gives rise to all other abominations in the house of the Lord, which become increasingly detestable.

Abominations in the dark

The Lord brought Ezekiel to the door of the court and instructed him to dig a hole into the wall, where he found another door, through which the Lord directed him to enter. Recording what he saw, Ezekiel wrote, 'So I went in and saw, and there - every sort of creeping thing, abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed all around on the walls. And there stood before them seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel, and in their midst stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan. Each man had a censer in his hand, and a thick cloud of incense went up. Then He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the room of his idols? For they say, 'The Lord does not see us, the Lord has forsaken the land.'" ' Eze 8:10-12.

Ezekiel was being shown those who presumed to minister in the house of the Lord but who, in secret, participated in activities that were unclean. The creeping things and abominable beasts were classes of fauna that God specifically identified as being unclean, and unsuitable for consumption. Lev 11:41-47. Ezekiel perceived this consumption as viewing images that were portrayed, or carved, on the walls of the habitation of this leadership group.

The prayers of these leaders were affected by the variety of unclean images and media that they consumed. The content of their prayers was the

expression of their imaginations, which were informed by these images. In our context, we can view this dynamic from two perspectives. First, the images which a person is consuming through a variety of media are unclean, yet they presume to participate in the *agape* meal as though that which is done in secret has no bearing on this fellowship. Second, what they consume becomes what they worship and the lifestyle that they yearn for and pray for.

The worship of Tammuz

The Lord then directed Ezekiel to turn again and to see greater abominations than those that were done in the dark. Recounting his observations, Ezekiel wrote, 'So He brought me to the door of the north gate of the Lord's house; and to my dismay, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz'. Eze 8:14.

In Phoenician mythology, Tammuz was a god of fertility who possessed powers for new life in nature. It was believed that he died annually and was reborn year after year, representing the yearly cycle of the seasons and the crops. Tammuz is one example of what some anthropologists have categorised as 'dying-and-rising gods' that are represented in many civilisations. Several Bible commentators have associated Tammuz with the worship of the Greek mythological figure Adonis, who has also been categorised in this manner. The women's worship of these idolatrous figures was a perverted love that was often accompanied by sexual immorality.

The women whom Ezekiel observed at the door of the gate of the Lord's house evidently identified themselves as belonging to the house of the Lord. They were weeping for a 'dying and living god' whom they believed would empower their capacity to cultivate life in their own image and likeness. In this regard, their weeping reflected the sorrow that God said would be the portion of fallen women. We recall that, following the Fall, the Lord said to the woman, 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.' Gen 3:16. This was the same sorrow that Rachel demonstrated when, because of envy, she demanded of Jacob, 'Give me children, or else I die!' Gen 30:1.

The point to note here is that such women are not joined to a process through which they are being delivered from this basic carnal drive. Consequently, they endeavour to engage the Lord as the One who will bless them by satisfying their romantic aspirations for their lives and families. In other words, the practice of a carnal Christian woman who rejects the process of refinement that Christ offers through fellowship in His offering and sufferings, is the abominable worship of Tammuz.

In the course of His offering journey, Jesus encountered women whose weeping seemed to indicate such a delusion. Luke noted this in his account of

Christ's journey from the Praetorium to Calvary, writing, 'And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning to them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?" ' Luk 23:27-31.

Unless these women had begun to mourn for their own fallen condition and its effect on their children, their devotion to Christ would have been little more than an idolatrous expression belonging to the abominations of the natural temple and city, upon which condemnation had already been proclaimed. Their end would have been the same as the end of the city and the temple; that is, desolation.

In His letters to the seven churches, recorded in the book of Revelation, Jesus described this fallen feminine influence in the church as 'the teaching of Jezebel'. He rebuked the presbytery in Thyatira, saying, '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. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.' Rev 2:20-21. Clearly, weeping for Tammuz is an issue that the Lord is bringing to an end in His churches.

The worship of the sun

The Lord then showed Ezekiel a fourth abomination that was even greater than the abominations He had earlier identified. 'Then He said to me, "Have you seen this, O son of man? Turn again, you will see *greater abominations than these*." So He brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house; and there, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east, and they were worshipping the sun toward the east.' Eze 8:15-16.

While it is quite possible that these men were actually worshipping a pagan sun god, it is more likely that the *way* in which they presumed to worship God was no different from the worship of solar deities in other cultures. Sun worship is a form of idolatry that was featured in most ancient civilisations. A common characteristic of this pagan worship was the sovereignty of the sun god over the other nominated deities. That is, the solar deity was the supreme figure in a *hierarchy* of deities.

The conduct of carnal Christian men

At the most fundamental level, the worship of the sun represents the expression of carnal Christian men who are not being delivered from the fundamental desire that is within them because of the Fall. This is the fallen desire for dominance and rulership through one's own wisdom and power, be it in a family, in the church, or in the context of the world. It is the expression that belongs to a man who has become like a fallen cherub, presuming to be 'in the place of God'.

A carnal man seeks identity verification through the subordination or, at least, affirmation, of others, or through empowerment by association with those who possess the authority, capacity, or charisma that they covet for themselves. Comparison, and assessment of oneself and others informs their self-verifying endeavours. As we considered in Chapter 1, wrath, or anger, is a notable and distinguishing fruit of this way of life.

Carnal theologies

The fallen, hierarchical mode of relating in the church, which the Lord likened to sun worship, is an outcome of unhelpful theologies, particularly in relation to the existence and expression of the Godhead. Significantly, an hierarchal view of the Godhead is enshrined in the statements of belief that inform the doctrines and practices of the major church denominations. These statements include the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed and the Westminster Confession. For example, the Westminster Confession, which is the fundamental regulatory and doctrinal statement of one of the major church denominations, declares, 'The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.'

A fundamental implication of this trinity theology is that the Son's existence depends on, and is sourced from, the Father; and the Holy Spirit's existence depends on the Father and the Son, implying an hierarchy in the Godhead. This theology is ignorant of the fellowship of offering that is fundamental to the name Yahweh *Elohim*. An hierarchical perspective of the Godhead, whether overt or implied, informs the administration of many churches. In these settings, a person's authority, and the nature of their participation in the church, reflect their place within an hierarchy.

The gospel, however, proclaims that authority belongs to one's name as a son of God. Luk 19:17. We receive this authority when we are born again. The authority of our name as a son of God is activated through baptism into Christ. This is the authority to serve one another by *agape*. Gal 5:13. It is the right to participate in the *agape* meal at the tree of life, according to our sanctification.

The perversion of *agape* fellowship in the church has been reinforced by gospels that deny that a person can be literally born of God's life and can know the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, themselves. A classic and overt gospel understanding that reflects this form of worship in the church is Calvinism. For example, John Calvin wrote, 'Christ calls Him His God, in so far as, by taking upon Him the form of a servant, He humbled Himself (Philippians 2:7.) This is, therefore, peculiar to His human nature, but is applied to His whole person, on account of the unity, because He is both God and Man. As to the second clause, in which He says that He ascends to His Father and our Father, there is also a diversity between Him and us; for He is the Son of God by nature, while we are the sons of God only by adoption.' Accordingly, Calvin considered man's identification as a son of God to be an allegory, or picture, of his relationship with the Creator. With this in mind, Calvin likened one's relationship with God to a flower's dependence on the sun for its life and expression.

Sighing and crying

Having made known to the prophet Ezekiel the abominable practices of those who presumed to belong to the society of the temple, the Lord initiated His judgement. 'Then He called out in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, "Let those who have charge over the city draw near, each with a deadly weapon in his hand." And suddenly six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his battle-ax in his hand. One man among them was clothed with linen and had a writer's inkhorn at his side. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar.' Eze 9:1-2. These seven men were *overseers* of the city, appointed by the Lord. We note the connection of 'seven men' to 'seven stars in the right hand of Christ', which give the lamp light to the seven lampstand churches that are nominated in the book of Revelation. Rev 1:20.

'And He called to the man clothed with linen, who had the writer's inkhorn at his side; and the Lord said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it".' Eze 9:3-4. While the man with the inkhorn may have been a theophany of Christ, it is also possible that he was part of the overseership of the city. Linen clothing was worn by the high priest on the Day of Atonement; however, it was also the attire of the priests for their daily service in the temple. Furthermore, we note that it was Yahweh who spoke to the man with the inkhorn. Christ was the embodiment of Yahweh, making it less likely that the man with the inkhorn was a theophany of Christ, whereupon Yahweh would have been addressing Himself.

Alluding to the work of overseers marking those who sigh and cry, the apostle Paul wrote, 'Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, *as those who must give account*. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.' Heb 13:17. We also note that, in his letter to the Romans, Paul listed the names of those whom he considered to be *approved in Christ*. Rom 16:3-15. Significantly, Paul distinguished these firstfruits brethren from those who caused divisions and offences through their preference for doctrines that they had not learned from Paul. He said that they 'do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple'. Rom 16:17-18.

A person does not 'sigh and cry over the abominations' in the house of Israel by pointing out, or even lamenting, what they perceive to be the inadequacies of the presbytery or of the church. The Lord described this behaviour as 'the pointing of the finger', and identified it as a characteristic of those who are transgressors and slaves of sin. Isa 58:1,9. Rather, we begin to sigh and cry when *we do not hide ourselves from our own flesh*, in response to the light of the word. Isa 58:7. That is, we respond with repentance and faith to the word of the Lord that is proclaimed by His messengers. Because of this, we are able to mourn for our iniquity and sin, which causes desolation in the church.

Sighing and crying is not being pathetic. It is an expression of faith that comes by hearing the very word that reveals to us our carnality. This communication of faith is enabled by the Holy Spirit, and begins with the fellowship of prayer. As Paul taught, 'The Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with *groanings* which cannot be uttered.' Rom 8:26.

Through this prayer, we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, each day. Evidently, sighing and crying encompasses the pain associated with the sufferings that we experience with Christ. In this fellowship, our carnality is being circumcised from us, and Christ's blood is sprinkling our hearts clean from an evil conscience. This is also how the life in His blood is becoming our life, and we are fulfilling the will of God that belongs to our sanctification as the elect. We see that sighing and crying is the culture of those who are blameless! The 'blameless' are those who are overcoming Satan individually, in their families, and in the church.

The speech of faith that characterises those who walk blamelessly equally involves fellowship with the presbytery. This is how we are known and marked by the presbytery. Importantly, this does not mean talking with a presbyter every time that the word brings conviction. Rather, it means that our conversation and conduct in response to the word is the same as those who are part of the presbytery.

Describing the culture of this fellowship, John testified, '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. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.' 1Jn 1:1-4. (cf. Heb 13:17.)

Fellowship with the presbytery means that we *respond to the word and testify* in the same manner as those who care for the church. We have an ear to *hear* the proceeding word; we receive *illumination* that comes by the Spirit; we *look* upon Christ whom we have pierced, and mourn for our sin with the sorrow that leads to repentance; and we participate in the *expression* of the word according to our sanctification.

The destructive effect of the word

The 'destroying weapons' in the hands of the presbyters who were sent to bring destruction were also described as 'shattering weapons'. The apostle Paul referred to these weapons in his second letter to the Corinthians, writing, 'Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ - who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you ... for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal 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 10:1,4-6.

The word which brings the judgement of God upon a person is not wielded by overseers with malice or with an intent to harm; we just read that the messengers of God minister in the meekness and gentleness of Christ. In obedience to the Father, they speak the word of truth that makes a distinction between darkness and light, and between what is unclean and clean.

The effect of this word depends on how a person receives it. Those who receive and believe this message are connected to the process through which they can be delivered from their iniquity, cleansed of their sin, and established in their sanctification *as part of the body of Christ*. However, those who reject the word are polarised *out of the heavenly city*, where they are forgotten by God. This is the desolating effect of the spiritual weapons of warfare in the hands of the presbytery.

Appointed to wrath or mercy

Importantly, this was not the first time that the Lord had addressed His people concerning their idolatrous practices. However, His persistent entreaty

of the nation had now come to a climax. This was the final opportunity for them to turn from their idolatry, and to be restored to the culture of worship that belongs to His house. Notably, when the seven men came through the upper gate which faces north, they went in and stood *beside the bronze altar*. It is as though this was an 'altar call' where the Lord was giving His people a final opportunity to respond in repentance and faith to the word of the cross.

The polarising effect of the word does come to a conclusion 'on a day' and 'at an hour' when it is least expected. Luk 12:40. At this point, the Lord comes and finally appoints a person to the place and expression that they have progressively chosen for themselves. When this happens, there is no longer any remedy, or salvation, available for them. King Solomon noted this principle, writing, 'He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy'. Pro 29:1. Solomon further elaborated this principle, explaining, 'A worthless person, a wicked man, walks with a perverse mouth; he winks with his eyes, he shuffles his feet, he points with his fingers; perversity is in his heart, he devises evil continually, he sows discord. Therefore his calamity shall come suddenly; suddenly he shall be broken without remedy.' Pro 6:12-15.

This dimension of God's judgement was exemplified in Pharaoh's response to the word of the Lord through His messengers, Moses and Aaron. Pharaoh repeatedly hardened his heart to the word and direction of Moses, until the time that the Lord Himself hardened Pharaoh's heart. When the Lord did this, Pharaoh was no longer able to heed the word of the Lord that was spoken by Moses. Exo 9:12. He had been appointed as a vessel of God's wrath so that the Lord might make known His glory to the Israelites, who were vessels of mercy.

Explaining this principle, the apostle Paul asked, 'What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?' Rom 9:22-24.

Paul was not saying that some people were created by God to be vessels of wrath so that He can vent His anger on them, while He shows kindness to those who were made for mercy. On the contrary! He desires that every person obtains the precious inheritance of sonship that He predestined for them. 2Pe 3:9. 'Vessels of wrath' are people who, in response to the polarising word of the cross, *persistently* and *accountably* choose their own way. Eventually, the Lord appoints them to their choice, and they become 'a vessel of wrath'. This appointment is so complete that it is as though they had been created for this purpose.

BECOMING THE ISRAEL OF GOD

Conversely, those in whom the foundations of repentance and faith toward God have been laid are being delivered from the sin and iniquity that would otherwise separate them from the love of God. Heb 6:1. Rom 8:35-39. They are able to present themselves for this fellowship by the mercies of God, which are new every morning. Rom 12:1. Lam 3:22-23. This is what it means to be 'a vessel of mercy'. God reveals the riches of His glory to them as they mature as the sons of God whom He predestined them to be.

Jesus addressed the two effects of His polarising word, declaring, 'And shall God not avenge His own elect *who cry out day and night to Him*, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?' Luk 18:7-8.

Jesus was referring to His physical return to earth, at the conclusion of the coming eighth world kingdom. 'The last hour', which will precede the establishment of this kingdom, is the final period in which the gospel will be preached as an evangelistic initiative in the earth. At the conclusion of this period, not one person remaining in the world will be a believer. It is for this reason that, when Jesus appears a second time, He will not find faith in the earth. All those who are of faith will no longer be in the world; they will be citizens of God's kingdom.

Addendum

A testimony of a marriage being restored

Presently, the Spirit is addressing us on the culture of our marriages and families. We are being called to give attention to the matters of uncleanness in our relationships, and to be restored to the daily conversation of faith that belongs at the tree of life. In this fellowship, believing couples are established as 'heirs together of the grace of life', as they avail themselves of the remnant of the Spirit that is unique to their marriage covenant. This grace is necessary for the cultivation of the divine nature in a Christian household. 1Pe 3:7. Mal 2:15.

The proclamation of this word is possible only through *testimony*. Those who minister in this manner reflect the pattern exemplified by the apostle Paul, who used his own experiences to communicate the culture of faith that belongs to God's word. 2Co 11:16-19. Accordingly, in this present season, I have endeavoured to share from the journey of our reformation, by confessing the faults that the Lord has addressed in our marriage.

The purpose for this approach is to prompt others to reflect on their marriage culture, and to invite ongoing fellowship in the light of the word that is present among us. For this reason, we have included in this publication a testimony from Lorraine and myself. As you read our testimony, I encourage you to reflect on the nature of your marriage covenant. Take time to consider

how the culture of your marriage is being reformed from a perpetual engagement at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, to fellowship each day at the tree of life.

As we give consideration to these matters, it is important to recognise that the redress of our marriages is not simply a matter of resolving incompatibilities or of conflict resolution. In the natural, Lorraine and I are favourably compatible as a couple. Yet, we have to understand that compatibility is insufficient for a fruitful Christian marriage. In this regard, our matrimonial journey has been marked by three significant encounters with the Lord. Each of these points of visitation and response has been essential to the restoration of our marriage to the image that was intended by God.

Deliverance from control

Early in our marriage, just following the birth of our third child, the Lord spoke to Lorraine regarding her propensity toward control in our marriage and family. A particularly poignant manifestation of this disposition involved Lorraine itemising and communicating my failings as a husband, as a father, and even as a minister. Further to her own law, Lorraine's expectations and assessments of me were informed by her 'knowledge and training' which, in this case, was as a graduate of Bible School.

Lorraine's drive for control was exacerbated at this time by her anxieties, which were heightened as the Lord began to reveal to her that domestic and international travel would become a feature of my ministerial work. This impending change in my program challenged her expectations of family life in the ministry. Interestingly, the Lord was speaking to her about this change in my program *before* He revealed it to me.

Through a dream, the Lord addressed Lorraine's propensity for control. In this vision, she saw me as a dishevelled drunk, sitting in the gutter, attired in an old army coat. Despising what she saw, she asked the Lord, 'What is he doing there?' The Lord responded, saying, 'You put him there.' He further revealed that her assessments of my inadequacies, which were based on her romantic expectations of our life together, were the source of the cultural degradation that she was observing in the vision. This was the impact of her control upon our marriage and family.

On account of the Fall, every woman inherited, from Eve, the desire for control. The woman was created by God as a helper to man, and to become a vessel for multiplication. However, the woman ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, desiring to become the *source* of this expression. Consequently, a woman, particularly in the context of marriage and a

household, will seek the verification of her identity through the cultivation of life in her image and likeness. We will say more on this later in these notes.

A woman's *deliverance from control* is necessary for the restoration of every Christian marriage. However, this is impossible in the flesh. Because a carnal woman seeks for identity verification through the cultivation of life in her image and likeness, relinquishing control, for her, is like falling into 'a black hole'. She believes that, as she loses control, she will, herself, be completely lost. As she begins to lose control within the context of her life, anxiety grips her, driving her to assert herself upon the situation or upon family members. Through her actions and their effects, she obtains some sense of personal validity.

The assessments, accusations and interventions of a wife can dishonour her husband. When this happens, she dishonours Christ, who is the Head of her husband. Moreover, she dishonours the Father, who is the Head of Christ and the source of her name as a son of God. 1Co 11:3. Disconnected from this fellowship of headship, a wife will be bereft of grace, and will be driven by her increasingly conspicuous emotions.

A Christian wife can find deliverance from this inherent drive for control, *only* through a personal encounter with Christ. As the Lord's word makes a breach upon her heart, and she is illuminated to the effects of her carnality upon her husband and family, she can begin to mourn in a godly manner. 2Co 7:7-11. This sorrow leads to repentance as she relinquishes control and ceases from her assessments. Letting go in this manner, she realises that she is not being lost in a black hole. Instead, she obtains *deliverance from the fear of death* as she receives faith for life as a God-fearer.

Deliverance from the urge for control, motivated by fear, is marked by a change in a woman's conduct toward her husband, even if he is not obedient to the word. This is because she is secure as a son of God in Christ, within the order of headship. To this end, the apostle Peter exhorted Christian women, writing, 'Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear'. 1Pe 3:1-2.

Communication in marriage

In my early forties, I was hospitalised following what was thought, at the time, to be a heart attack. After my condition had stabilised, and the diagnosis of my ailment had been clarified, I was advised to take some time to recuperate. Additionally, the specialist who treated me explained that my heart was

functionally sound, and that engagement in physical activity would be beneficial to my recovery.

My ready return to physical activity, combined with my tacit dismissal of Lorraine's concerns about the risks of engaging in activity, was a point of contention between us. During this season of recuperation, we were staying in the country with an older ministry couple. This senior woman noted the tension, and admonished me for my treatment of Lorraine. She explained that I was frightening my wife, because Lorraine perceived my enthusiastic engagement in physical activities as being cavalier and she was concerned for my wellbeing. In contrast, I was confident because of the doctor's advice, and unintentionally dismissive of Lorraine's misgivings. Evidently, we neither appreciated nor understood each other's perspectives on the issue.

Through this experience, I recognised that the distinction between the perspectives of a husband and a wife necessitate open and deliberate communication between them. When contentions arose in our relationship, I set aside time to discuss with Lorraine how we were viewing and interpreting a matter, in order to come to a shared understanding.

I preached on this subject, wrote numerous sets of notes and books, and conducted marriage seminars promoting the importance of relational commitment and communication in marriage. This spawned 'the vanilla slice culture', as I often encouraged couples to sit down together over a culinary delight, such as a vanilla slice, to meet and discuss the issues at hand. Engaging over a meal marked the deliberate nature of the interaction.

While open and effective communication is essential to a fruitful marriage, through this most recent season of cultural reformation we have come to understand the importance of this conversation happening at *the tree of life*, rather than at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Fellowship at the tree of life

Almost three years ago, Lorraine was hospitalised as a consequence of a life-threatening medical emergency. This was the climax of a protracted season of health difficulties, which included the severe and enduring symptoms of an autoimmune condition that afflicted her whole body. In the midst of this emergency, the Lord spoke to Lorraine and myself, separately. His addressing of us, individually, has had a profound impact upon our marriage.

At the height of the emergency, with Lorraine's condition still being critical, the doctors sent me home, saying that they would have to wait until morning to operate on her. I arrived home from the hospital at about midnight and began to pray for Lorraine. As I was praying, the Lord spoke to me quite

strongly, saying, 'I am not happy with your marriage covenant. Why are you *between* Lorraine and Me? She is a son of God. Stop presuming to stand between her and Me as an expression of your headship.' The Lord was directing me to cease from operating like a fallen cherub. He was naming her; she is not named by me. Although I knew the Lord's sharp rebuke, I instantly found peace. I recognised that if the Lord was dealing with Lorraine, she was not going to die.

Meanwhile, in the hospital, Lorraine's condition had deteriorated to the point where the operation could no longer be delayed. However, due to technical issues concerning Lorraine's medication, even though the operating theatre was on standby because of the urgency of her situation, the operation did not proceed until about midday on the following day. By then, the surgeon said that the situation was precarious, and proceeded with the operation without fully resolving these matters with his anaesthetist. As the doctors operated on her, Lorraine left her body. She was above her body looking down upon it, wondering why they were endeavouring to revive her body, which had deteriorated so markedly.

Then, behind her, a cone of light appeared. Lorraine turned and saw the Lord in the light. He had white, priestly garments in His hands, and on top of the garments was a white stone. He gave to her the white stone, and a garment, directing her to clothe herself with the garments. As Lorraine dressed herself, she returned to her body, and then slept for two days.

Lorraine had met the Lord face to face. Her experience reflected the promise that Jesus made to the church in Pergamos. He wrote to them, saying, 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no-one knows except him who receives it.' Rev 2:17.

In giving Lorraine a white stone, the Lord was speaking to her about the name and works that belong to her sonship. The garment that she received mandated her for a priestly work. She was to wash and make this garment white in the blood of the Lamb through her personal fellowship in His offering and sufferings. Of course, Lorraine was already born of God and joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering as a member of His body. This visitation was, for her, a 'second time'.

Prior to this encounter, Lorraine had faithfully served the Lord as 'the pastor's wife'. While she was submitted to the agenda of my work, there were clear lines of demarcation regarding our individual roles and responsibilities in relation to this agenda. At times, tensions arose, and emotions were provoked, when I assumed some of these roles and responsibilities, particularly as her

health deteriorated. This was because her identity was, in some way, being assailed by her inability to fulfil her role. Furthermore, I objected to her comments about how I performed these duties.

In reality, the agenda of our household has not changed since the Lord's visitation. However, the *conversation* through which we serve this agenda has changed. We have repented of 'the vanilla slice culture', where the workload is divided according to our knowledge of good and evil. Our conversation has had to shift from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to the tree of life.

Only at the tree of life are we able to obtain a remnant of the Spirit which is necessary for the multiplication of life in our house. Our conversation at the tree of life is ongoing. We accept that, through the physical and relational difficulties that we experience in a day, the Lord is processing us. I am able to turn from the propensity to function in the house as a fallen cherub. Lorraine is learning to stand in the new name that the Lord has given to her.

Part of this conversation is the recognition that emotional contentions are the evidence of a conversation that is based in our knowledge of good and evil. They are the passions, or emotions, of sin that are aroused within us through the exercise of the other law. Rom 7:5. Rom 7:23. We are learning to let go of the emotions of sin, and to dismiss the issues that provoke them.

Importantly, we have learned to 'draw a line' at the end of each day, consigning the difficulties and responses of the day to 'the sea of God's forgetfulness'. They belong to the trouble that was sufficient for that day, and do not belong to the day to come. Mat 6:34. In the morning, we awake and avail ourselves of the mercies of God that are new 'today'. Lam 3:22-23. By these mercies, we present ourselves for participation in the works that belong to our fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ, as individual sons of God. Rom 12:1-2. That is, we begin our day together at the tree of life, receiving our works for the day from the Lord. We live simply, accepting that we will not understand all of the issues that we will face, yet we remain confident in the Lord's faithfulness to establish us according to His will.

Physical healing has been an amazing implication of this reformation. As we turned from our previous way of relating and began to walk in obedience to the way that the Lord was illuminating to us, Lorraine was miraculously delivered from the autoimmune condition that had so severely afflicted her whole body. This miracle demonstrates that, as we deal with the uncleanness in our lives, marriages and families, we obtain deliverance from the unclean spirits that cause these infirmities.