

Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light

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At this time, the Lord has announced by His messengers His cleansing initiative of His church. In His mercy, He is cleansing us from our personal propensity of feeding ourselves our own food and clothing ourselves with our own garments (which describes the condition of an unclean daughter of Zion). Is 4:1-3. To those who respond well to this merciful initiative, we will be among the overcoming and wise virgins.

And in this season we've been greatly helped by the recent ministry focus that has illuminated among us the attitude and practice of the wise and foolish virgins, highlighting the need for the foolish virgins to buy oil. So the question we will consider is 'what is this oil we must buy' and how do we buy it?

The need to buy oil

The oil is the grace for life and ministry coming to us in the fellowship of the word. It's not enough to say it's the word, because that could lead some to assume a constant supply of word (i.e., listening all day to the proclamation of the word) will equate to an adequate supply of oil and that is simply not true.

The word of present truth must first be proclaimed by Christ's messengers. The very proclamation of His word is an offering that invites our response. But not everyone answers the knock and not everyone who answers the knock responds in the proper manner. In fact Jesus instructed the seventy-two (messengers) on what response to look for 'And if **anyone of peace** (a son of peace) is there [someone who is sweet-spirited and hospitable], your [blessing of] peace will rest on him; but if not, **it will return to you**'. Lk 10:6. However, when the messenger is welcomed by a son of peace it connects them in fellowship with the messenger and the word they carry, which then joins them to the fellowship of the Father and the Son. 1 Jn1:3.

Our participation in this fellowship is then defined by some distinctive markers in how we speak and the way we behave. Moses described that our right response to the word will be evident because the word will be in our mouth (as a confession of our faith), because we have believed it in our heart (that is, the word the messengers have preached), 'so that we may obey it' (it's become our conduct and culture). Duet 30:14.

As we invite the messenger word and its fellowship into our homes, we are reminded that 'His word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path'. Ps 119:105. The central message of the gospel is that 'God is light and in Him there is no darkness'. 1 Jn1:5. Accordingly, Paul reminded the Ephesian church 'that you were once darkness (not just in the dark but practitioners of darkness), but now **you are light** in (fellowship with) the Lord. Eph 5: 11. Paul's proposition isn't that a believer just walks *in the light*, rather that we '**walk as children of light** (i.e., we are the light). Paul added 'for the fruit of the light *is* evident in all goodness, righteousness, and truth, proving what is pleasing to the Lord. Paul then

cautioned his audience writing 'have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*... because everything exposed by the light becomes visible. In other words, 'evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them'. Eph 5:13 (NLT). This is why it is said; "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." Paul then exhorts the Ephesian church to 'be very careful then how you live and walk, not as unwise (i.e. foolish) but as wise. Eph 5:8-15. It's remarkable that Paul connected the light bearing ministry of a son of light to the manner of how we live and walk, as either wise or foolish. The simple point is, our participation in this fellowship by faith, grants us access to grace for the purpose of **life and ministry in every season of life**. This is possible because we are those who have purchased the oil, enabling us to shine before men the good works (according to our sanctification) that glorify the Father in heaven.

Keeping with the theme of light, Jesus said, 'You are the light (singular) of the world. A city (collective) that is set on a hill cannot be hidden'. Mat 5:14. Jesus made it clear, that we are the light, and our proper abode is as part of the (bride) city on mount Zion for the whole world to see. Similarly, a lamp is intended to shine and give light. Therefore, it should not be placed under a basket (hidden), but on a lampstand where **it gives light to all** (collective) who are in the house. This giving of light from the lamp to the person speaks of the equipping of every individual son of light to shine in this dark world. Accordingly, Jesus said, 'Let your light (singular) so shine before men, **that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven**. Mat 5:14-16. The point is, only when a lampstand church is shining are individuals then equipped to shine their light before men. Remembering that it is the one light from the one fellowship that we shine.

The fear of the Lord becoming your possession

This connects us to the central point of this morning's meditation, and it's this; those who **buy this oil** will be first illuminated and the **fruit of true illumination** is the **fear of God** which we receive as we see our true condition and our inability to be the son the word is calling us to be. Remembering that 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'. Ps 111:10. And if you have any inclination to be part of a wise virgin, that is to be a part of the overcoming company of sons who are being made ready for His coming, then I commend you to sell all and to buy this oil in order that you are illuminated, even **awakened with the fear of the Lord**. Noting that the fear of the Lord lights the pathway of our recovery.

In his letter to the twelve tribes scattered abroad James wrote 'If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him'. Jam 1:5. The wisdom from above is a package that begins with the fear of the Lord. And this is exactly the lesson that Jacob had to learn; that all of His deceitful schemes amounted to nothing in relation to pursuing the blessing by his flesh. Only after deceiving his father, which provoked his brother Esau to murderous rage, did Isaac send Jacob to Laban's house. And it was on his way to Laban's that the Lord met Him with a dream. Upon waking from his slumber Jacob thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was unaware of it." And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven!" Gen 28:16-17.

The Lord was delivering Jacob from the motivation of the fear of death in order that he lay hold of the motivation of the fear of Isaac, which is the motivational attribute of Yahweh

Elohim's nature. And those who obtain the fear of Isaac as their personal possession have the capacity to appreciate and to trust others in the fellowship of offering worship. And this is a key for every person who desires to fulfil the call to be an overcomer. And we will only receive this when we **wake from our slumber!** That means we must awaken to our true condition? but as one's who are receiving the fear of Isaac, in order that we might appreciate and trust others in fellowship. Because if we continue to stand guard as the defender of our own (unclean and foolish) gospels and as the definer of our own (unclean and foolish) works then we're no different to the unclean daughters of Zion, who tried to broker a deal to continue feeding and clothing themselves so long as they could have his name.

We can only buy from Christ when we are prepared to sell all. **We buy oil through our obedience to the word of God ministered by His messengers.** To do this, we must first **sell all**, that is anything that impedes our obedience and undermines our participation in the culture of agape to which the word is calling us.

- This might be our religious and theological traditions.
- Our historical good works.
- The judgements that we make of the messengers and their message.
- Our lifestyle aspirations.
- Our vocational and career ambitions.
- And the cultural aberrations within families that we tolerate and even embrace in the deluded belief that this is love.

I will set an open door before you

As we sell all and buy this oil from those who sell it, we will know a progressive overcoming. And the Lord promises to those who walk as overcomers that He will set an open door before them. Jesus said to the Philadelphian church (and we'll refer to them as the overcoming church) 'I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have

(1) a little strength, **(by the blood of the lamb)**

(2) have kept My word, and **(by the word of their testimony)**

(3) have not denied My name' **(did not love their life unto death)** Rev 3:8.

Christ was commending them as overcomers! By the three-fold overcoming referred to in Revelations 12 and we're making the point that as we're being cleansed, Satan and those of His synagogue are being overcome and as we're overcoming, Satan is being progressively cast down from heavenly places. So, the very same actions that are our overcoming are also the evidence that we're being cleansed, demonstrating our obedience to His word.

- Let's now consider the implications of this word. In the season that is just ahead, the Lord will say to us and to you very personally '**see, I place before you an open door**'.
- And this is for those who have been refined by the judgement of God and walked the journey of restoration from a foolish virgin to a wise virgin or, from an unclean daughter to a beautiful and glorious branch that is fruitful. And we see this depicted in the interplay between the Laodicean church and the Philadelphian church.

- The basis of any other kind of evangelistic ministry can only be as a foolish virgin, which will be according to the precepts from the synagogue of Satan where idolatry and sorcery are the mode.
- Concerning the open door in this present season, it will be a door of faith among the unclean daughters of Zion and it is so that we can proclaim the gospel of sonship.
- And it is an open door among those unclean daughters or foolish virgins who respond to Christ's address; 'Behold I stand at the door and knock, if anyone opens to me I will come in and sup with him and he with me'. Rev 3:12.
- Those who open to us are those who have heard Christ knocking on the day of His visitation (just as we have responded to His knock) and in humility and poverty of spirit they will open and welcome their brethren and the word that they carry.
- This then becomes for the foolish virgins an opportunity to purchase the oil.

Today, we acknowledge that there is a cleansing initiative of the Lord and as we turn in repentance and forfeit our own food and our own clothing, we will be those poor in spirit who are able recognise our true condition, and in humility urgently submit ourselves to those whom we can buy the oil from. The Lord is setting an open door before the overcoming church. And that overcoming is in relation to us eating our own food and wearing our own apparel.

Exhortation to the Seniors

Let me now turn my attention toward the seniors and simply say none of us are free to ride off into the sunset and live out your days as an autonomous son of God having run your race and hung your priestly robes in the wardrobe! That's a dead man walking. If this is your mindset, please know that it is completely independent and disconnected from the supply of fresh oil. In fact, it's the gospel of superannuation; trusting in the accumulated wealth of your historical priestly service. The apostle Paul addressed this matter when he wrote 'Don't trust in the uncertain riches or treasure you've stored up on earth'. 1 Tim 6:17. Rather he exhorts his audience to store up for themselves treasure in heaven (which is the riches of good works). Noting, any kind of treasure other than that which is stored in heaven is subject to moths, rust and thieves (who can break in). And Jesus said, **if you're not awake (and joined to the conversation)**, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you. Paul confirming that only those in the darkness (of slumber) will be overtaken like a thief. 1 Thess 5:4.

No retirement for the sons of God

I want to encourage you to reconsider your concept of retirement. To be clear, retirement is a secular term that defines the season in life when a person finishes or concludes their secular employment. However, we must be careful that we do not presume that such a concept exists concerning the works of our sonship. There is no such concept of retirement for the sons of God. **Only when the Lord calls us home are we relieved of our earthly office.** Accordingly, retirement from secular employment should have no bearing on your offering works as a son of God. And neither are you relieved from being subject (or submitted) to those who watch over your souls. So, what are you supposed to do in retirement? Probably not a lot different to how you served in pre-retirement albeit age adjusted. But to be sure, you're service in the Father's house has not yet ended. In fact, your viability as a serving priest qualifies you for your ongoing participation in the wedding feast.

Said another way, your wedding garments which give you access into the agape meal are your priestly robes, which defines your mandate to serve in the house of the Father which is the body of Christ.

It's also worth noting that retirement isn't just an issue for those who have clicked over 67 years of age. It's the mindset of an independent person. It's where any one of us relieves ourselves of our reasonable priestly service which accords with our sanctification, for reasons only known to you. Who relieved you of your office?

Jesus said to the church in Sardis **'Wake up!** Strengthen what little remains, for even what is left is almost **dead**, **for I have not found your works complete** (they knocked off too early) in the sight of my God. Go back to what you heard and believed at first (the first works); hold to it firmly. Repent and turn to me again. This is where Jesus said, **If you don't wake up**, I will come to you suddenly, as unexpected as a thief. Rev 3:2-3. This word dead is the word nekros an adjective, derived from nekys, meaning a corpse, a dead body, which refers to anything that lacks life; or not able to respond to impulses, or perform functions, unable, ineffective, dead, powerless, unresponsive to life-giving influences or opportunities; inoperative to the things of God. We might even say, **unable to do the will of God! And I want us to hear today that this inability to complete our works is because we have not purchased the oil.** The evidence that you have purchased oil, is that you are illuminated and awake first to your true condition and then also to the call of the Lord upon your life. And as you turn in repentance and receive faith for your obedience, you will shine the good works of your priestly ministry, in every season of your life.

A case study: Caleb the son of Jephunneh

Let's now conclude by considering a case study. I want to look at Caleb the off sider to Joshua. Let's venture back to Egypt prior to the Moses led exodus. Imagine the great sense of excitement of their imminent deliverance from captivity after 400 years of enslavement. It must have been a moment of great rejoicing for the swelling nation of Israel under the Egyptians. But in a relatively short period of time this vast company realised that they were not being delivered to a life of self-determination where they could determine their own lifestyle and choose their own priorities. They were being freed from slavery to the Egyptians and in turn freed to serve the living God. For He had chosen them and was giving them the opportunity to choose Him for the next season of their journey. Sadly, not too far into their journey many said **'we'd be better back under the Egyptians than out here in the middle of nowhere under this clown Moses'**.

Recently, I heard someone remark that COVID was like our Passover; locked down in our own homes, eating the (live-streamed) word of God while His judgement landed upon the outside world. Certainly, death was part of the judgement but probably worse was the heightening of the fear of death in the whole world. But like the children of Israel in the time of the exodus, our Passover meal was our preparation and beginning point for our deliverance from the captivity and slavery that has oppressed so many of us in our marriages and in our families. And like the children of Israel, the Lord invited us to journey with Him in new and uncharted territory which has become our trial of faith. We would do well then to learn the lesson from history and remind ourselves that an entire generation of

those who departed under the leadership of Moses **fell straight into hell**. In fact, only two men of some 600,000 adult males **made it to the open door of the promised land**.

These are the words of Caleb:

'I *was* forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought back word to him **as it was in my heart (honest report)**. Nevertheless, my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt, but I wholly followed the Lord my God. So Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance and your children's forever, because you have **wholly followed the Lord my God**.' And now, behold, the Lord has kept me alive, as He said, these forty-five years, ever since the Lord spoke this word to Moses while Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, here I am this day, eighty-five years old. **As yet, I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me**; just as my strength *was* then, so now *is* my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in. Jos 14:7-11.

Those who are planted in the house of the Lord, Shall flourish in the courts of our God.
They shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall be fresh and flourishing. Ps 92:13-14.

That means only two of the original and entire adult population of men who departed Israel, overcame, having endured the trial of faith that was the wilderness. And they overcame according to the threefold statement from Revelation chapter 12.

1. **By the blood of the Lamb** – 'here I am this day, eighty-five years old. As yet I *am* as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me'. Jos 14:11.
2. **By the word of their testimony** – 'and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: "The land we passed through to spy out *is* an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.' Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they *are* our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord *is* with us. Do not fear them. Num 14: 7-9.
3. **And they did not love their lives even when threatened with death** – Caleb did not fear the reproaches from the congregation for standing in faith and proclaiming that they should be obedient to enter the land and not fear the giants that occupied the land. But there was a cost for his boldness; 'all the congregation said to stone them with stones'. Num 14:10.

It's clear that the fear of Isaac had become Caleb's personal possession and unless the fear of Isaac becomes our personal possession then we will be left with no other option but to harden our heart when we hear His voice. Praise the Lord, that as we purchase the oil the Lord is awakening us to our true condition and as He awakens us, it will be in the fear of the Lord, the only motivation by which we can participate in His cleansing initiative and to walk as overcomers.