

The remnant church

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The bride is the Israel of God

- Speaking to those who belong to the church, the apostle Peter explained, 'You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.' 1Pe 2:9-10.
- Peter was identifying his readers as the company of believers whom the Lord Himself nominated, through the prophet Hosea, as *His bride*. Hos 2:16-20. The Lord said, 'Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, and I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; then I will say to those who were not My people, "You are My people!" And they shall say, "You are my God!" ' Hos 2:23.
- Integrating this same statement with the prophetic declaration of Isaiah, the apostle Paul identified the Christians in Rome and, indeed, the whole Gentile church, as being part of a remnant drawn from the twelve tribes of the true Israel of God. He wrote, 'As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' there they shall be called sons of the living God." Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved".' Rom 9:25-27.
- We see that the bride of Christ is the true Israel of God. This group is a holy nation, and is also a royal priesthood. They are a remnant representative group called 'the church', whose history is part of the history of the nation of Israel, which began with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The church is now made up of Jews and Gentiles who have responded with repentance and faith to the word of the cross. This word calls them out of the world, making them 'the elect' of God. They believe the gospel, and choose to obey this message. Their sanctification, which is the fruit of obedience, defines them as 'the elect', the bride of Christ. 1Pe 5:13. 2Jn 1:1. 2Jn 1:13.
- The church is a community of believers who have been called out of the world. They are described by James, the Lord's brother, as 'the twelve tribes of Israel scattered among the nations'. As congregations, they belong to the true Israel of God. Jas 1:1. This company of believers are the redeemed remnant of Israel, gathered in lampstand churches. They are not scattered and lost as Ephraim was when they were conquered by the Assyrians under the judgement of God.
- Although, as a fellowship of churches, we are legally recognised as 'Restoration Fellowships International' (RFI), we identify as a lampstand church. What does this mean? Is our identification as a lampstand church merely a new, or novel, church designation? Are we any different from the multitude of denominated churches throughout the world?
- We believe that the Lord is sending messengers to us, and to all Christians. By the capacity of the Spirit, Christ's messengers proclaim the word of present truth. 1Pe 1:12. 2Pe 1:12. Through this ministry, we are being exhorted, and enabled, to

make our calling and election sure. 2Pe 1:10-11. In this regard, we are being called to choose the predestination that God has chosen for us before the foundation of the world. That is, we are choosing to become sons of God and part of a remnant church by election.

- I trust that, as we consider this subject today, we will be illuminated to see that our legitimacy as a Christian group is not based on any other validating enterprise, accomplishment, or historical expression. Rather, we believe in the initiative that God took towards Abraham, and in the extension of this promise to us. Gal 3:14. Abraham was called by God to become the father of new humanity. By faith, he believed the word of the Lord, who said, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them ... so shall your descendants be.' Gen 15:5. Abraham's children would be as the stars of heaven and would glorify God as His own special people.

The gospel that brings salvation

- Today I will speak from Paul's letter to the Romans, which explains that, as we respond to God's call, which comes to us through the word that is brought by His messengers, we are the elect who are established as part of the remnant church. Church congregations that are part of this remnant are the expression of the bride of Christ in every city.
- As a presbytery who is overseeing this fellowship of churches, we are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Paul introduced his letter to the Romans with this same confession, declaring, 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith".' Rom 1:16-17.
- This message is the gospel of sonship, which Paul proclaimed from the prophetic Scriptures. Even though the Roman church had already been established as a Christian community, they had not been grounded in the gospel of sonship. As He did with the Roman Christians, the Lord is delivering us from many other gospels. He is doing this so that we can receive and be established in the gospel of sonship. This is important, for the gospel of sonship is the only message that delivers salvation to those who believe. Rom 1:16. Paul's initiative was first to the Jews, and then encompassed Gentiles from every tribe and nation under heaven.

The calling of God

- Paul focused our attention on the implications of choosing our calling and election, writing, 'For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.' Rom 8:29-30.
- With this statement, Paul described the goodness of God toward us. It is manifest as a pathway upon which He has made every provision for us to be His chosen people. In Christ Jesus our Lord, we are kept and guarded in the love of God. As we have already considered, this is what it means to be the bride of Christ, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a 'called-out' people, the church. We are part of the history of Israel as the fruit of what He initiated in Abraham. Accordingly, as congregations, we belong to the Israel of God. We are part of a redeemed remnant gathered in lampstand churches.
- Before the beginning of creation, God foreknew every person. He foreknew and predestined each of us for sonship. Those whom He foreknew and predestined, He

also *called*. Calling gives to every person *the freedom of choice*. The freedom of choice expresses the very nature of God's own fellowship, which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are offering to us. The fellowship of Yahweh operates freely by love.

- Choice offers *freedom*. Love is then extended to us in the call to choose. Faith is the response that the call creates. Rom 10:17. We see, therefore, that the call introduces freedom, love and faith. Once we believe and trust, we are joined to the fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim*. The love of God is then poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit. Rom 5:5. The love of God gives to us the capacity to be godly. It wins our heart, causing us to respond to God because we believe in His love and His integrity; we believe that He is faithful. Our faith is now motivated by His love. Gal 5:6.
- When love is our motivation, how we live, and what we do, are an expression of the obedience of faith. Rom 1:5. This means that we are justified by faith. Rom 5:1. Faith is interactive as we make offering. By faith, we are able to join Christ's offering, and we are able to make offering. This is the expression of our love for God. It reveals our participation with Yahweh in the offering love that belongs to Their fellowship.
- When we believed, we were then adopted by Christ and are being glorified, progressively, with Him. Christ is not an adopted Son. He is Yahweh Son, the true Son, the Begotten Son. We are adopted by Christ and are glorified with Him and in Him, becoming members of His body through baptism.
- Our journey in this life is from mortality to immortality. We journey with Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings, which are entirely for our sake. We are being glorified together with Christ and, progressively, are receiving the full measure of His life, which is resurrection life. It is immortal life; the life of Yahweh Himself. 2Ti 1:10.
- Faith working by love is an accountable response of fellowship between Christ and every individual. This is the expression of the love between the Son and His bride. It is producing an accountable, honourable, holy and sanctified response, by which we are being delivered from all idolatry and every other love.

Predestination and destination

- *Before*, in the counsel of Yahweh, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit prepared a predestination for every person. This defined for us a unique expression as a son or daughter of man in the image and likeness of God. The predestination of each of us was then accomplished by Christ in His offering journey. It was completely fulfilled on the cross. The cross then becomes one of two things for us. If we choose sonship, it is the means by which we are glorified according to our predestination. However, the cross is hardening, judging and damning us if we reject our predestination to sonship.
- There is a pathway that is established by our choice, which becomes the destination that was prophesied by the prophets. That is, what a person chooses, becomes their destination, proclaimed by the word from the foreknowledge of God. God predestined Judas to sit on one of twelve thrones and to judge twelve tribes. Mat 19:28. However, Judas did not choose to believe the call to join the fellowship of Christ's offering. The prophet Zechariah then prophesied, not Judas' predestination, but his destination. This prophecy created for Judas the outcome of his choice.
- The specific predestination of every person is encompassed in the statement of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit when They said, 'Let Us make man in Our image and after Our likeness.' It is proclaimed and preached to us through the Scriptures. Those who receive this word are the elect. They are preserved to their predestination, which has

been prophesied to them through a messenger. In the Old Testament, the Lord's messengers were the prophets. In the New Testament, these messengers are the ascension gift ministers of Christ. Eph 4:11-12. However, the destination of the one who does not choose is also proclaimed by the prophets.

- A person's predestination is proclaimed, *before*. This is either confirmed by the prophets, or they proclaim another destination on account of a person's rejection of the word of their predestination. Consider, for example, the word of the Lord concerning Jacob and Esau. Their *predestination* was that the older would serve the younger. Gen 25:23. However, based on their response to the word of their predestination, their *destination* was then proclaimed, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated'. Mal 1:2-3. Rom 9:13. This was because of God's foreknowledge.
- In His foreknowledge, God addresses those who are departing from their predestination. Through His messengers, He warns them to cease from pursuing the destination they have chosen, and to choose, through repentance, His predestination for them. If they resist this word, it defines the outcome of the destination that they have chosen. This then locks them up to unrighteousness and unbelief, and this becomes their judgement.
- The word of a person's predestination is proclaimed from the foreknowledge of God, *before*. This is how God was able to raise up Cyrus before he was born, to be the one to aid the Jews as the exiles returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. Isa 44:28. Isa 45:1-5. The predestination of the Jewish nation was preserved by the prophetic word concerning Cyrus. Ezr 1:1-2.
- We could say that the predestination of Pharaoh was to submit his kingdom to Moses. If he had chosen this predestination, Pharaoh would have become the representative of the Lord. He would have submitted to, and supported, God's purpose for His people, Israel. This support may have included sending armies ahead of Israel to clean out the land of Canaan, ridding it of its idols. Pharaoh and his people would have then gone to Israel to worship the Lord.
- The prophet Zechariah noted that this is what will happen in the time of the end, writing, 'And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles ... if the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the Lord strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.' Zec 14:16,18.
- However, Pharaoh hardened himself time and again. It was not until the sixth plague - when boils broke out on man and beast - that the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh for the purpose of judgement. Exo 9:12. At this point, because of ungodliness, Pharaoh's predestination as a son of God ended. The word proclaimed judgement as the destination that belonged to his choice. Accordingly, he perished, with his army, in the Red Sea.

The adoption

- Jesus Christ is the One who adopts us. The Father has predestined us to adoption as sons, by Jesus Christ, to Himself. Paul explained this point, writing, 'Just as He [God the Father] chose us in Him [Jesus Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons *by Jesus Christ to Himself* [i.e. to become His sons], according to the

good pleasure of His [the Father's] will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.' Eph 1:4-6.

- Jesus Christ is the One who becomes the Everlasting Father of those whom He adopts. Isa 9:6. The Father does this work in Christ so that we might become joint heirs with Him when we join His offering journey. Highlighting this condition of the adoption, Paul wrote, 'For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.' Rom 8:15-17.
- This adoption gives us the right to journey with Christ so that we are able to obtain the inheritance of the divine nature. The Son has this inheritance, for He is the Firstborn among many brethren. Rom 8:29. This is what the Father has predestined, *before*. As we noted above, God the Father predestined us to adoption, and to be joined to the fellowship of offering that belongs to Christ, the only Begotten. By participation in Christ's offering fellowship, we receive the divine nature.
- Our adoption places us in Christ, where we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. This was God's choice, which we are then able to choose. Paul emphasised that this is all according to God's foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification and glorification. Rom 8:29-30.

A wild olive tree

- Paul asked the question, 'Has God cast away His people?' Rom 11:1. He was adamant that this was not the case! Significantly, Paul was not asking whether God had cast away the Jews. He was referring to all of the sons of God who had departed from Him following the flood. God has not cast them away forever, in the same way that He has not cast away the ten tribes of Israel, nor the nation of Judah.
- There was an election given to all those who walked by faith, even prior to Abraham. Job is an example of a person who walked in this manner. Making this point, Paul said, 'For as you [Gentiles] were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience.' Rom 11:30. The Gentiles had obtained mercy through the disobedience of Israel and of the Jews. Paul continued, saying, 'Even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy.' Rom 11:31.
- The jealousy of God, through the ministry of Paul to the Gentiles, was to provoke the Jews so that they would desire what God was giving to the Gentiles through faith. As they saw the life of God being revealed in the Gentile churches, they were able to recognise that they had failed to obtain the divine nature by pursuing the law of righteousness in their own strength. Noting this point, Paul wrote, 'But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: "*I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation*".' Rom 10:19.
- Paul then said, 'For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if by any means *I may provoke to jealousy* those who are my flesh and save some of them.' Rom 11:13-14. Echoing what we have already noted, Paul hoped that the life that was manifest in the Gentile congregations would provoke the Jews to jealousy so that some of them might be saved and would join the remnant church.

- Concerning the gospel, the Jews are enemies for our sake but, concerning the election, 'they are beloved for the sake of the fathers'. Rom 11:28. There is a love of God, for the sake of the fathers, all the way back through to Noah. It also proceeds back from Noah to Adam through the ministry of every believing father in the line of the sons of God. This point is made in Paul's epistle to the Hebrews, where he noted, 'By faith *Abel* offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was *righteous*, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.' Heb 11:4. Paul then listed a number of other men and women who, through the course of history, by faith, were the elect of God.
- Referring to the Jews, Paul noted that branches were broken off so that the Gentiles, who belong to a wild olive tree, could be grafted into the fatness of the root of the olive tree, through the cross. Rom 11:17. In this regard, mercy was shown to us. Through their disobedience, Christ was crucified. God has committed them all to disobedience, in the cross, so that He might have mercy on all. By this means, from the days of Noah, Ephraim, the Jews, and the Gentiles have the opportunity to be grafted into the olive tree. However, if we are disobedient, we will be cut off again. The Lord is saying this to all churches and Christians, as the end of the age approaches.
- This is the work of the cross. Through the word of the cross, those who believe and obey the word are being polarised, or grafted, into the kingdom. However, those who are disobedient are being polarised out; they are being cut off and discarded. In the place where He says, 'You are not My people', there is a word coming, declaring to those who receive it with repentance and faith, 'You are the sons of God'.
- There is a remnant in every generation who receive the proceeding word of God. This remnant has, in fact, been a preserving agent for the whole world. As the prophet Isaiah declared, 'Unless the Lord of hosts had left to us a very small remnant [or elect group], we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah.' Isa 1:9. There is a fatherhood that has proceeded through many nations that has now completely replaced Adam and Noah. This is the fatherhood of Abraham and his Son, Christ, in whom all the families of the earth will be blessed. God is able to graft them all back into the root, which is Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, through Christ.

Mercy on all

- The Lord has committed all to disobedience and judgement in the cross so that He might have mercy on all. Rom 11:32. This mercy is ministered through the word of the Lord. Drawing from the words of Moses, Paul wrote, 'For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.' Rom 9:15-16.
- Speaking to the Romans, Paul said that their disobedience came after the days of Noah, and opened the door for Abraham. That door continues forward from Abraham to his Seed, Christ. The promise to Abraham and his Seed is found in Romans Chapter 3. In this passage of Scripture, Paul observed that 'there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus'. Rom 3:22-26.
- Paul was highlighting that there would be a propitiation for the remission of sins that are past. The word that proclaims this mercy proceeds all the way to the end of the

age, where we now live. These are the mercies of God, by which Paul beseeched us to present our bodies a living sacrifice. Rom 12:1. Presenting ourselves in this manner means joining the fellowship of Christ's offering. This is the gospel that Paul proclaimed in the book of Romans, which we have not properly understood until this present time.

The elect

- In relation to the population of the world, since the establishment of the church on the Day of Pentecost, until the Father takes His seat at the end of the age, the elect are a very small group who hear the call, receive it and obey it. They become the elect, who are the Israel of God, because they receive the word of promise that calls them to become sons of God. First, by adoption, then by joining Christ's offering journey, they are brought to the Father, and they receive the inheritance of the divine nature, after which, by the working of the Holy Spirit, they are born as sons of God. All sons of God belong to Israel.
- The proposition that Paul made at the end of Romans Chapter 11 is that God has not cast away anyone, from the time of Noah onwards. However, the elect comprises 'one from a city and two from a family'. The Lord made this clear through the prophet Jeremiah, saying, ' "Return, O backsliding children," says the Lord; "for I am married to you. I will take you, *one from a city and two from a family*, and I will bring you to Zion. And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding" .' Jer 3:14-15. This shows how small the remnant group actually is.
- The Lord revealed this remnant group to Elijah in response to his claim, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. *I alone am left*; and they seek to take my life.' 1Ki 19:10. However, the Divine response was, 'I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.' 1Ki 19:18. If the Lord was referring to the ten tribes, it was 700 people per tribe; it was 600 people per tribe if He was referring to the twelve tribes. This was a very small group, yet they were called Israel! They were not cast away, because they were the elect who had not bowed their knee to Baal.
- As we considered earlier, Isaiah declared that, without the small remnant, the whole world would be a smoking plain like Sodom and Gomorrah. Isa 1:9. Rom 9:29. We note that the fire of judgement could not fall on Sodom until one man, Lot, was taken out. He was thrust out of the city with his wife through the ministry of two angels of the Lord. His wife left reluctantly, looking back to Sodom. For this reason she was destroyed. Lot was called a righteous man; he was 'one' who was taken from a city.
- Jesus warned that the coming of the kingdom at the end of the age would be like it was in the days of Lot. Specifically, He said, 'Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.' Luk 17:28-30. We see that, at the end of the age, when God's people have come out of the world, and the whole world becomes the New Jerusalem, there will be a number of smoking plains, here and there. Those who are the Lord's people will have been taken out, one from a city and two from a family, to become part of the New Jerusalem.

A preserving group

- Those who are called sons of the living God are adopted in Christ, and are a 'preserving group'. We note that Jesus called the elect, 'the salt of the earth'. Mat 5:13. They are adopted in Christ, and fellowship with Him in His journey, and they receive the divine nature and are born. We have imagined that, once we are born, we are no longer adopted sons. However, the adoption runs parallel to the three dimensions of being born of God – that is, born to see the kingdom; and born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom. Joh 3:3-5.
- We continue in the adoption until we receive our spiritual body in the resurrection. Paul called this 'the redemption of our body', writing, 'Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.' Rom 8:23. We see that the adoption is complete at the last trumpet, when everything of our humanity as a created son is completely brought all the way through to being new creation; that is, we have fully become a man in the image and likeness of God.
- We have to be born to *see* the kingdom first. Then, by water and Spirit, we *enter* the kingdom. A new heart and new spirit is given to an adopted person who still sins. The viability of our sonship, which does not sin but must mature, is contingent upon our regeneration and our renewing as an adopted son in the fellowship of Christ's offering and suffering journey. In this regard, the condition of our heart, which is 'the ground' that is being regenerated and renewed, needs attention. If the 'stones' of our other law and the 'thorns' that belong to our desires for other things are not removed from us through the circumcision of Christ, the seed of our sonship, which does not sin, can die. When this happens, our eternal sonship is lost.

Sons of the living God

- We began these notes with Paul's restatement of Hosea's prophecy, 'And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, "You are not My people," there they shall be called *sons of the living God*.' Rom 9:26. Hos 1:10. The term 'living God' does not just mean that God is eternally alive. Rather, it means that He is the One who *gives life*. Sons of the living God are sons who live by His divine life. This is more than sonship by adoption. It means that they are receiving and living by the divine nature.
- Paul drew attention to this implication of sonship, writing, 'Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should *live from the gospel*'. 1Co 9:14. This is the same point that Jesus made in response to the temptation of Satan who said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread'. Jesus responded, saying, 'It is written, "Man shall not *live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*".' Mat 4:3-4.
- Although it is not clear that Darius the Mede understood that the living God is the source of life for those who are born of God, he recognised that the life of God had protected Daniel when he was thrown into the den of lions. To this end, he declared, 'I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, and steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall endure to the end. He delivers and rescues, and He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.' Dan 6:26-27. He recognised that Daniel had been saved by the life of God.