

*Make your*  
election sure

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WITH PETER HAY AND DAVID BAKER

# MAKE YOUR ELECTION SURE

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# Make your election sure

## The prophetic ministry of Isaiah

- As Christ's earthly ministry drew near to its conclusion, its polarising effect was apparent, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy concerning the work of the Messiah. Although Jesus had performed many signs throughout the region of Judea, the Jews 'did not believe in Him'. Joh 12:37. Isaiah had foretold this outcome of Christ's ministry, saying, 'He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.' Joh 12:40. Isa 6:10.
- This outcome of Christ's ministry was both a fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy as well as a continuation of the prophetic mandate that Isaiah himself had received when he was ordained as a prophet, *a second time*. Isa 6:7. Isaiah received this commission after his iniquity was taken away and his sin was purged. Prior to this seminal event, Isaiah had already received grace to minister as a prophet. The first five chapters of his prophetic book attest to the earlier exercise of this ministry mandate.

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- However, in response to seeing the throne and its administration, Isaiah 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. Through the Lord's initiative towards him, Isaiah had become poor in spirit as he was illuminated to the iniquity in his heart and to his sinful condition. While this illumination did not invalidate Isaiah's prior ministry, he clearly recognised that he could not continue to minister in the manner in which he had previously ministered.
- Following Isaiah's confession, a seraph flew to him, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with tongs from the golden altar. He touched Isaiah's mouth with the coal and said, 'Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.' Isa 6:7. This process enabled Isaiah to hear and respond to the Lord's query, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Isa 6:8. Because he had been delivered from iniquity, and his uncleanness had been purged, Isaiah was able to respond to the Lord, saying, 'Here am I! Send me.' Isa 6:8.
- Isaiah then received the prophetic mandate to proclaim the word that would polarise those who heard it. The Lord said to Isaiah, 'Go, and tell this people: "Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive." Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed.' Isa 6:9-10. Those who received Isaiah's message would enter God's rest and obtain the inheritance of sonship that God promised to Abraham and his children. Isa 28:12. However, those who did not respond to his message with repentance and faith would progressively 'go and fall backward, and be broken and snared and caught'. Isa 28:13.
- In his Gospel, Matthew noted that the fulfilment of this prophetic mandate was the reason why Jesus spoke in parables. Making this point, Jesus said, 'Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled.' Mat 13:13-14. Because the Jews refused to be gathered by Christ, Isaiah's prophecy was being fulfilled in them. We note that, where grace is refused, it provokes resistance within the heart of a hearer and polarises them according to their refusal.

- The Lord explained to Isaiah that his prophetic ministry would continue until *all the cities* were laid waste and emptied of their inhabitants, as they were removed and forgotten by the Lord. Isa 6:11-12. Since the time that Isaiah received his mandate, this has been the progressive effect of the word of the Lord in the mouth of His messengers.
- Jesus Himself lamented this effect of the prophetic word, saying, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" ' Mat 23:37-39. Jesus then drew attention to the future destruction of the temple at the hands of the Roman commander, Titus, saying to His disciples, 'Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.' Mat 24:1-2.
- Notably, the Jewish historian Josephus recounted that when Jerusalem was destroyed in AD70, approximately 1.3 million people were killed. Furthermore, almost 100 000 Jews were taken captive by the Roman conquerors. Many of these slaves were condemned to circuses throughout the Roman kingdom, where their deaths as gladiators or as fodder for wild beasts served as entertainment for the citizens of the Empire. Truly the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants were laid to waste.
- In contrast, as we will consider later in these notes, the Christians who received the prophetic word of Christ directing them to depart from the natural Jerusalem, with its abominable loyalty to the customs of the Old Covenant, were preserved from this destruction. Significantly, Paul, Peter and James identified them as 'the elect' - citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem.
- The Lord explained to Isaiah that this polarising effect of God's word would continue until He 'makes the earth empty and makes it waste'; that is, until there is no longer anyone in the earth who is remembered by God. Isa 24:1-6. Jesus spoke of this 'end', asking, '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 eighth world kingdom. 'The last hour', which precedes the establishment of this kingdom, is the final period in

which the gospel is 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.

### Entering the kingdom from faith to faith

- While the sword of the word desolates those who reject it, those who receive the word of the Lord are delivered to a process through which they are able to progressively obtain their inheritance as a son of God and as a citizen of the heavenly kingdom.
- Jesus likened a person's entrance into the kingdom of God to the process of a seed growing to fruitfulness. Speaking to the multitude on the shore of Lake Galilee, Jesus said, 'The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.' Mar 4:26-29.
- The identification of these stages of a seed's maturation to fruitfulness - blade; head; full grain in the head; harvest and winnowing - indicates that there is a process, or progression, to attaining the sonship that is promised in the gospel. Each stage of this process requires a measure of faith, revealing that obtaining the fruit of eternal sonship, which means becoming the righteousness of God in Christ, happens 'from faith to faith'. Rom 1:16-17. A person's attainment of each measure of faith is demonstrated by *believing* and *obeying* the word. 2Co 4:13.
- There are some important implications of this reality. First, a person must obtain faith. Paul was clear that faith comes by hearing the word of God that is proclaimed by His messengers. Rom 10:17. A person believes in Christ, by faith, because they first receive the messengers whom He sends before His face. This principle was exemplified through the ministry of John the Baptist. The apostle John explained, 'This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, *that all through him might believe*. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear

witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.' Joh 1:7-9.

- When a hearer receives the messengers whom Christ sends before His face, they are then able to receive Christ, the true Light, who desires to make Himself personally known to them. Joh 13:20. If they reject the messenger, they will reject Christ when He comes to them, personally. Jesus said, however, that if a person receives and obeys His commands that are spoken by His messengers, He will come and manifest Himself to them. Joh 14:21. He then said that those who love Him will keep His word, and that the Father and Son will come and make Their home with them. Joh 14:23. Let us consider this progression further.

### *Believing the messenger*

- In contrast to the many people who were unable to believe in Christ because they would not receive Him, John noted that there were many others who did believe in Him. Joh 12:42. Addressing the subject of 'believing', Jesus said, 'He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.' Joh 12:44-46.
- *This is the first aspect of believing* by the faith that a person receives as they hear the gospel preached to them. They believe the messengers who proclaim the Father's great love for them. Moreover, they are exhorted to be saved from the kingdom of darkness by coming to Christ, the Light, whom the messengers are revealing.
- The apostle John noted that many of those who, initially, did believe in this manner, failed to progress in the pathway of faith because they were unwilling to confess their belief that Jesus was the Messiah who had been sent by the Father. They did not *confess* Christ, because they were afraid of being put out of the synagogue by the Pharisees. John noted that they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. Joh 12:42-43. *In this regard, they failed to progress beyond 'the blade' in the maturation process.*
- When a person's loyalty to the traditions and customs of a denomination, or theological tradition, impedes their capacity to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches 'today', they inevitably stagnate in the Christian pilgrimage. They may adhere in this way to

the creeds of the denomination because of the security they find in its customs; or because they fear the reproach of the religious establishment directed towards those who believe the word of present truth proclaimed by the Holy Spirit.

- Instead of the gospel causing them to believe for sonship, and to come to the light of fellowship with those who proclaim the good news of sonship, their understanding of the Christian life remains constrained to the dogma of a denomination. This is darkness, and fosters the uncleanness of envy. It is this uncleanness upon which demonic and familiar spirits feed, causing a person to become oppressed, and provoking in them the emotions of sin.
- This effect of the gospel was evident in the ministry of Paul. For example, in every place that Paul and Barnabas visited during their first missionary journey, they initially entered the synagogue and preached the word of present truth to the constituents of the prevailing religious 'denomination'. When their message was rejected, they turned their attention to the Gentiles.
- Significantly, Luke recorded that when the Jews in Antioch saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and contradicted, blasphemed and opposed the message that proceeded from the fellowship of two or three witnesses that Paul and Barnabas represented. They responded to the Jews, saying, 'It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; 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.

### *Believing to meet Christ, personally*

- The second aspect of *believing* is brought to bear when Christ makes Himself personally known to those who receive His faithful witnesses and continue to keep, or obey, their words. Jesus does not make Himself known to a hearer if they reject His messengers and do not keep His words which they proclaim. He declared, 'He who has My commandments [proclaimed by His messengers] and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.' Joh 14:21. *We can liken this aspect of believing to the emergence of 'the head' of wheat.*

- In His letter to the Laodiceans, Jesus described His initiative to manifest Himself to those who receive His word. He said, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.' Rev 3:20.
- A person stalls at this crisis of faith when they cling to the messengers for personal assurance and empowerment as an alternative to meeting Christ personally. They do this because they draw back from the eyes of Christ as He exposes the condition of their heart. Drawing back in unbelief, they remain ignorant of the true condition of their Christian life. Heb 10:39. As Jesus explained, 'Because you say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing" - and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked - I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.' Rev 3:17-18.

### *Believing to enter the kingdom as a son of God*

- A person progresses on the pathway of faith when they demonstrate that they love Jesus by keeping His word. He said, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.' Joh 14:23. When the Father and the Son make their home with them, *they have been born of God*. At this point, their body has become a temple of the Spirit of God. Their whole being becomes a context for the *agape* expression and fellowship of Yahweh.
- The fruit of this reality is the person's desire to abide in the fellowship of Christ, and to participate, themselves, in the *agape* meal. This desire for, and commitment to, the *agape* meal indicates a person's connection to a lampstand church. They have entered the bride city, the heavenly Jerusalem, and are partaking of the tree of life which is in the midst of her. *We can liken this aspect of believing to 'the full grain in the head'*.
- A person stalls in relation to this dimension of believing when their participation in the *agape* meal is in some way restricted. This may be the outcome of offence; or because a person is endeavouring to embrace other cultures and people who are, in fact, enemies of Christ.

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When this happens, the table of which we are partaking is no longer the Lord's. It is an alternative fellowship.

- In this regard, we note the words of Paul, 'O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections. Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open. Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?' 2Co 6:11-16.

### *Believing for the process of gathering and refining*

- The final crisis of faith is the harvest and winnowing of the wheat. John the Baptist spoke of this final aspect of believing, saying, 'I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He 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.
- The Lord's initiative to separate the wheat from the chaff emphasises the importance of our *continuing* to walk in the steps of faith revealed by the gospel that is proclaimed from the right hand of Christ. In the same way that chaff comprises aspects of the plant that are necessary for growing and multiplying wheat seeds, these points of believing are necessary for our maturing to fruitfulness. However, these waypoints of faith are not sufficient in and of themselves for our entry into the kingdom of God. They are, in fact, forgotten in the fire of God's judgement. The sobering point for us to grasp is that, unless we continue to reach forward, by faith, to lay hold of that for which Christ laid hold of us, we will fail to enter the kingdom. The chaff will not be removed from us as it should; rather, *we* will be removed from the house of the Lord because we are *like the chaff*.

### **Jacob's ladder**

- The apostle Peter exhorted the believers of the church age to make their call and election sure. He said that, if they did this, they would

never stumble; meaning that they would not fail to progress from the seed planted in the ground to the fruitfulness to which they had been appointed by Christ. More specifically, he said that an entrance would be supplied to them into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. 2Pe 1:10-11.

- It is noteworthy that the Lord described Jacob as His 'elect'. Isa 45:4. We understand, therefore, that the life of Jacob provides us with important waypoints concerning the nature of our calling and election, and how we make them sure. Let us begin our consideration of Jacob's life with the account of his vision at Bethel.
- Having obtained, by deceit, the blessing that belonged to the firstborn, Jacob was sent by Isaac to the house of Laban in the land of Padan Aram, Syria. Gen 28:1-2. Syria became the land of Jacob's affliction. Through this season of process, which culminated in his wrestle through the night with the Lord, Jacob found deliverance from his iniquitous deception and was cleansed of his sin. He possessed, by faith, the inheritance of his name as a son of God.
- 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.
- When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he acknowledged that Yahweh was in that place. And, being afraid, he said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!' Gen 28:17. We note that 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 them, individuals and families would receive the blessing of sonship. We see that the Lord was revealing to Jacob how he and his descendants would become 'the elect'. Isa 45:4.

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- 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. He 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; keep him in the way that had been revealed to him; feed him; clothe him; and restore him to his father's house in peace. Gen 28:16-22.
- The ladder that Jacob saw in his dream was the administration of the Son's throne in the house of God. The house, or tabernacle, established by Moses, under the angels, was a copy and shadow of the heavenly temple and its administration. Heb 8:4-5. The prophet Ezekiel had a vision of this administration, which He described as 'four living creatures' whose 'appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches going back and forth among the living creatures'. Beside each living creature was a wheel, the rims of which spanned earth and heaven and were full of eyes. Eze 1:13-21.

### The Son of Man is the ladder

- Jesus identified Himself as the ladder in Jacob's dream. Early in His ministry, Jesus said to Nathanael, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.' Joh 1:51. This ladder, or means of access to heavenly places, was established on the day of Christ's offering on the cross.
- As He spoke with the believing thief who was crucified with Him, Jesus indicated that this way was being opened as an outcome of His offering. He said to the thief, 'Assuredly, I say to you, *today* you will be with Me in Paradise.' Luk 23:43. Prior to this, those who died in faith rested in Abraham's bosom. Luk 16:22. When Christ's offering was finished, all those in Abraham's bosom, along with the thief, were brought to the Father as they were raised in the Son.
- The brazen altar, which is the first piece of furniture that belongs to the outer court of the temple, was manifest to the whole world when Christ was nailed to the cross and lifted up on Golgotha. After He declared that His offering journey was 'finished', He gave up His Spirit into the hands of the Father. His side was pierced with a soldier's spear and, immediately, blood and water and a spirit of grace and supplication began to flow from His heart. This fountain is

first for sin and uncleanness, symbolised by the brazen laver; and is also the river of life that flows from the throne.

- Jesus was raised by the Father to be seated on the throne in the sanctuary of the true temple. This is the throne of grace, represented in Moses' tabernacle by the ark of the covenant. From Christ's perspective, as He is seated on the throne, the golden altar of prayer is before Him, the table of showbread is at His left hand, and the lampstand is at His right hand. The light of the gospel shines from His right hand through the ministry of lampstand churches, to the world. The ministers of this light are proclaiming the word of the cross. By this means, they are enlightening their hearers to the pathway upon which they can be raised to the throne of grace as they are translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light.
- Christ's corporate body is now the administration of angels ascending and descending upon Him. This is expressed through the ministry of the bride of Christ. The Father fashioned the church from the body of Christ to become His bride. This work was foreshadowed by the formation of woman from the rib, or side, of Adam, to be his wife. Gen 2:21-24. The church is the bride city, 'the Jerusalem *above*', which was first manifest as descending out of heaven as a helper in Christ's work of bringing forth sons of God, on the Day of Pentecost. Paul described the Jerusalem above as 'the mother of us all'. Gal 4:26.
- The bride is descending through the ministry of the light of the gospel in the earth, which is ministered by the elect. They are citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, who go 'outside the camp, bearing Christ's reproach'. Heb 13:12-14. In doing so, Christ is 'publicly portrayed as crucified' among their hearers. Gal 3:1. Those who turn and receive this message in the world are invited to draw near to Christ and, in particular, to the brazen altar.
- As they do not draw back from Christ in unbelief, they begin to be washed by the water 'for sin and uncleanness'. Describing the effect of this fountain that flowed from Christ's pierced side, the prophet Zechariah 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. Obtaining this cleansing is the evidence that a person is entering the kingdom of God. They are

ascending to the throne as a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, where they are nourished through their fellowship in the Lord's *agape* meal at the tree of life.

## The heavenly Jerusalem

- The bride of Christ, formed from His body on the day of His crucifixion, is the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. Specifically identifying the bride as being the heavenly Jerusalem, the apostle John recounted, 'Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." And he carried me away in the Spirit to *a great and high mountain*, and showed me *the great city, the holy Jerusalem*, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.' Rev 21:9-11.
- The prophet Isaiah described the city as 'the mountain of the Lord's house', saying, 'Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "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." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.' Isa 2:2-3.
- Those who have been born of God and baptised into Christ are raised with Him to be part of this city. The apostle Paul emphasised this point, writing, 'But you have come to *Mount Zion* and to the city of the living God, *the heavenly Jerusalem*, to an innumerable company of angels, to *the general assembly and church of the firstborn* who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.' Heb 12:22-24.
- 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. Specifically, he wrote, 'Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow *citizens* with the saints and members of the household of God, having

been *built on the foundation* of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.' Eph 2:19-22.

- The apostle Peter similarly identified the new Jerusalem from above, which has foundations, as a temple, or spiritual house. A person is built into this house by coming to Christ, the Living Stone. He is the chief Cornerstone, 'elect and precious'. 1Pe 2:6. We come to Him by receiving His invitation to join the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. He says to us, ' "Come now, and let us reason together," says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool" .' Isa 1:18.
- Unless we come to Christ, accepting His provision for our cleansing from sin, we are not being built on Him. The Lord promises that if we are willing, and are obedient to His commands, we will obtain the inheritance that belongs to the citizens of His kingdom. However, if we refuse and, instead, continue to live iniquitously by the sight of our own eyes and according to our own understanding, we will be devoured by the sword that proceeds from His mouth. Isa 1:19-20. Peter explained that a person demonstrates that they are built into the Lord's house as a living stone by priesting themselves as a spiritual sacrifice who is acceptable to God. 1Pe 2:4-5. Rom 12:1-2.
- Significantly, Peter described those who are being built into this house as 'the *elect*'. He said, 'But you are a chosen [lit: *elect*] 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.
- Evidently, through their testimony, the elect proclaim the word through which a hearer can be delivered from the kingdom of darkness, into the light of the heavenly city. This is the same point that Isaiah declared when he said, 'For out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.' Isa 2:3. We see that the testimony of the elect, who are part of the bride city, is an evangelistic ministry to the whole world, including those in

traditional denominations who have an ear to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

- The apostle John identified the elect, who are built on the foundation of the apostles, as being *the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem*. He wrote, 'Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.' Rev 21:14-17.

### The ambit of the city

- The dimensions of the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem communicate aspects of the nature and expression of the elect. The first set of dimensions that John described were its length and breadth, which were 12 000 furlongs. In today's metric system, 12 000 furlongs is the equivalent of about 2 400km. Significantly, when referenced to natural Jerusalem, where the bride city was first manifest on the Day of Pentecost, the dimensions of the city encompassed much of the known world at that time, including regions belonging to six of the seven world kingdoms - Egypt, Assyria, Medo-Persia, Babylon, Greece and Rome. In doing so, it marked the beginning of the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy that the mountain of the Lord's house would be established on the top of all the mountains. 'All the mountains' are symbolic of the kingdoms of the world. Isa 2:2.
- In the book of Acts, Luke recorded that, on the Day Pentecost, there were Jews there who had travelled from '*every nation under heaven*'. Act 2:5. When the Spirit was poured out upon the 120 disciples, they began to speak in the tongues of those from all these nations: 'Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs.' Act 2:9-11. Three thousand souls from across the known world were saved on that day, and began to be built on the foundation of the apostles as part of the wall of the new Jerusalem.

- During His earthly ministry, Jesus warned His disciples that the temple and city of natural Jerusalem would be destroyed because of the Jews' rejection of His word. He said to them, 'But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her.' Luk 21:20-21.
- The abomination that caused this desolation of Jerusalem was the continuation of animal sacrifices in the temple, following the finished offering of Christ. His offering had brought an end to the Old Covenant and its customs, and had established the *agape* meal as the culture of God's house. Isa 66:3-4. However, not only had the Jews continued these offensive traditions, but many people who identified themselves as Christians engaged in these practices as well, being heavily influenced by the Judaisers. Paul and John identified these false messengers as 'apostles of Satan' who were part of the 'synagogue of Satan'. Rev 2:9.
- Seeing the forces of the Roman commander, Titus, approaching Jerusalem, and remembering the words of Jesus, Peter and James departed from the city with a company of believers who heeded their warnings concerning its impending destruction. From Peter's first epistle, it appears that he, with a notable company of believers, travelled to the region of Babylon. He wrote, '*She* who is in Babylon, *elect* together with you, greets you'. 1Pe 5:13. Importantly, Peter was indicating that this congregation of believers was a manifestation of the bride city, the heavenly Jerusalem, even though they were physically situated in Babylon.
- Writing from Babylon, Peter addressed his first letter to 'the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, *elect* according to the foreknowledge of God the Father'. 1Pe 1:1-2. Peter was writing to other 'elect' members of the bride city. Having departed from natural Jerusalem, they were now part of the lampstand churches throughout the Gentile world, which Paul had established through his missionary journeys. These churches were also composed of the elect. Col 3:12. 1Th 1:4. 2Ti 2:10. Peter directed those who were previously connected with him in Jerusalem to receive the word of his 'beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to

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understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures'. 2Pe 3:15-16.

- James, similarly, addressed his letter to 'the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad'. Jas 1:1. James was not referring to natural Israel. Rather, he was referring to 'the elect' who were part of the true Israel of God because they were being built on the foundations of the apostles and prophets. As the apostle John observed in the book of Revelation, the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written on the gates in the walls that were built on the twelve foundations. They were dispersed to the east, the north, the south and the west. Rev 21:10-13. They had now been scattered to the four winds.
- The apostle John addressed his second epistle, to 'the elect lady and her children'. 2Jn 1:1. John was not indicating that there was an elect class of believers who 'mothered' the rest of the church who were their figurative children. Rather, he was revealing that we are all to be part of the elect bride, and are also to be those who are nourished by the church, who is the mother of *us all*. Gal 4:26.
- John concluded his second epistle, writing, 'The children of your elect *sister* greet you'. 2Jn 1:13. Of course, there are not multiple bride cities. Rather, there is a 'seven', or fullness, of lampstand churches throughout the world. These churches may not be connected with each other, but are part of the one bride city if they are being restored to the pattern of fellowship and administration that was established by the apostles. We would expect that the presbyters of sister churches would be disposed to fellowship with one another, recognising that their presbyteries belong to the right hand of Christ as He ministers among the churches.
- Speaking of the destruction of natural Jerusalem, which precipitated the dispersion of the Jerusalem church throughout the world, Jesus said, 'And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles *until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled*.' Luk 21:24. In other words, the implications of this dispersion would continue until the time when the Father takes His seat. This means that the letters, written by the apostles to the citizens of the bride city scattered to the four corners of the earth, are instructions on how to be elect in preparation for the time of the end.

## *The lesson of the fig tree*

- Through the parable of the fig tree, Jesus nominated the signs that will herald the time of the end. The fig tree is symbolic of the tribe of Judah. As we considered at Easter, the twelve tribes of the true Israel of God come from the loins of Judah. Isa 48:1. These twelve tribes describe the innumerable company that is the new Jerusalem. Rev 21:10-13. Jesus said, 'Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.' Luk 21:29-33.
- The budding of the fig tree, signalling that the kingdom of God is near, specifically refers to the restoration and cleansing of Christ's bride. In particular, it is marked by the Lord's initiative to remove idolatry and unclean spirits from His house, and to purify His people. As we will consider later in these notes, Jesus explained that deliverance from demonic spirits is an action of the finger of God, indicating that the kingdom of God has come. Luk 11:17-20. In this season, the Lord is addressing the abominations in His house, and is calling those who will sigh and cry for these abominations to participate in the *agape* meal that belongs to His house. In addition to the fig tree, the budding of 'all the trees' symbolises the birth pangs which are increasingly afflicting the whole earth.
- Wonderfully, Jesus said that the generation in which these signals begin will by no means pass away before all things have taken place. It appears that we belong to this generation! Accordingly, we would do well to consider the enquiry of the apostle Peter, who asked, 'Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?' 2Pe 3:11-12. The answer is that *we are to be the elect!*

## **The measure of the elect**

- The next key defining dimension of the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem are its measure: one hundred and forty-four cubits.

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Rev 21:17. We recognise that this number is the measure of the elect, who proclaim the word through which a person can receive Christ, be born as a son of light, and be raised with Him as a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem. In this regard, the elect are both the children who are *born in the city*, and who *become part of her*.

- The numeric of one hundred and forty-four represents a double portion of seventy-two. We recall that Jesus sent out the seventy-two 'before His face' into every city and place where He was about to go. Luk 10:1. They were appointed, or elected, to this service. As lambs who were being sent out among wolves, they were not to carry a money bag, knapsack or sandals; nor were they to greet anyone as they journeyed to the cities where they were being sent. When they came to a house, they were to say 'Peace to this house', and if a son of peace was there, their peace would rest upon the house.
- Jesus said that they were to remain in that house, eating and drinking what was set before them. Notably, He said that they were to do this because 'the labourer is *worthy* of his wages'. The seventy-two were worthy of their wages because they, themselves, were worthy. Evidently, they had already demonstrated that they, themselves, received Christ's messengers and their message, and extended hospitality to them. Mat 10:11-14.
- The seventy-two were directed by Jesus to heal the sick, and to say to the people in the cities that they entered, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' Luk 10:9. These instructions differed from those that Jesus gave to the twelve disciples. He said to them, 'As you go [to the lost sheep of the house of Israel], preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons.' Mat 10:7-8. We note that while both groups were to proclaim that the kingdom of God was at hand, and were to heal the sick, the twelve disciples were also to cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out demons.
- Amazingly, the seventy-two returned to Jesus with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.' Luk 10:17. The Lord then commissioned the seventy-two, a second time. In doing so, He said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you,

but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.’  
Luk 10:18-20.

- As the seventy-two were commissioned a second time, they received, as it were, a double portion to their ministry. Significantly, this ministry involved the authority to deal with unclean and familiar spirits, symbolised by serpents and scorpions. They were not, however, to rejoice at this capacity but, rather, to rejoice that their names were written in heaven. In other words, they had been established as part of the walls of the Jerusalem from above. Having proven themselves worthy through obedience, they were now able to minister the word to others. Through this ministry, their hearers could be delivered from their uncleanness, and from the oppression of the evil one, and could enter through the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem as sons of God and members of the body of Christ.

### The abominations in the temple

- The prophet Ezekiel recounted a vision that he received as he sat in his house with the elders of Judah. 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’.
- It is significant that Ezekiel saw that these idolatrous abominations were being perpetrated in the temple and its courts. 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 idolatrous, religious practices were consistent with the customs of the temple. However, in reality, they 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.
- 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. This includes our day. So, what are these abominations?

### *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. Directed by the Lord, Ezekiel entered through the door. He found himself in a room with images of creeping things, abominable beasts, and the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed as pictures on the walls. In front of these images, seventy elders of the house of Israel, each having a censer in his hand, burned incense, symbolising prayer. The Lord described their idolatrous practices as the activities that the elders did in the dark, each one in the room of their idols.
- Ezekiel was being shown those who presumed to minister in the house of the Lord; but, in secret, participated in activities that were unclean. This practice was not only idolatrous but, also, invited unclean spirits into their houses. Not only were they avoiding the light of fellowship, but they also thought that the Lord did not see their personal defilement, and they believed that He had forsaken the land.

### *The worship of Tammuz*

- The Lord then directed Ezekiel's attention to even greater abominations. He brought Ezekiel to the north gate of the temple, where women were sitting and weeping for 'Tammuz'. In Babylonian mythology, Tammuz was the god of fertility who possessed powers for new life in nature, which were manifest in Spring. 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 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 empowered their capacity to bring forth children. Their expression of devotion towards this figure was a perverted love which, in other cultures, motivated sexual promiscuity. They believed in this 'god's' capacity to overcome death with new life and, in so doing, they would attain the romantic culture to which they aspired.

- The worship expression of these women was corrupt because they had not sought deliverance from the delusion that is associated with the Fall. As we considered at Easter, Eve, representing all women, coveted what belonged to God. She wanted God's unique capacity as the source of creation to be the basis of her motherhood. She ate the fruit that belonged exclusively to God, in order to become the *origin of multiplication*. This was the life that she coveted. A carnal woman believes that, in the family, she is like God. She views herself as the beginning of a house, and believes that a family is created from her. She covets this role as an expression of motherhood; and then she proceeds to live by this principle. This is her delusion and also the mark of her rejection of headship.
- In the course of His offering journey, Jesus encountered women whose weeping seemed to indicate such a delusion. Note the account of Luke, who wrote, '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 began to mourn for their own fallen condition and its effect on their children, their devotion to Christ would be 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 be the same as the city's and the temple's end.
- 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.

### *The worship of the sun*

- Again, the Lord directed Ezekiel's attention to 'even greater abominations than these'. He brought Ezekiel into the inner court of the Lord's house and, at the door of the temple, between the porch and the altar, were twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple and their faces set towards the east. Ezekiel saw that they were worshipping the sun.
- 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. In some cultures, such as that of the Egyptians, this notion of a divine hierarchy extended to the principle of a 'sacred kingship', where a ruler was considered to be an incarnation of a deity.
- This form of worship in the church is apparent in the rejection of the fellowship of headship as both the administration of the word, and the context in which we walk in the light. In this regard, we note that the sun worshippers were standing on the threshold of the temple, but facing east. They were not facing the throne, where the fellowship of Yahweh abides.
- We note this corruption of church administration and worship in the hierarchical organisations of many denominations. In fact, this understanding of authority, which is the rejection of the name of Yahweh, is enshrined in the doctrinal decrees upon which a number of churches are built. Consider, for example, this hierarchical view in the Westminster Confession - '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 the Westminster Confession 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. This perceived hierarchy in the Godhead is viewed as an unassailable implication of the inherent distinctions between the Father, the Son,

and the Holy Spirit. It demonstrates a fleshly blindness to the fellowship of offering that is fundamental to Yahweh *Elohim*.

### Identifying those who sigh and cry

- Having made known to Ezekiel the abominable practices of those who presumed to belong to the society of the temple, the Lord called out, 'Let those who have charge over the city draw near, each with a deadly weapon in his hand!' Eze 9:1. Six men, having battle-axes in their hands, drew near from the upper gate which faced north. One of the men among them was clothed in linen and had an inkhorn in his hand. Most commentators agree that this man was in addition to the six men wielding weapons. These seven men were *overseers* of the city, appointed by the Lord.
- Yahweh directed the man who was clothed with linen and adorned with an inkhorn, saying, '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.' While this man could 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. A person begins to sigh and cry when they do not hide themselves from their own flesh. Isa 58:7. That is, they respond with repentance and faith to the word of the Lord that is proclaimed by His messengers to them and their household. Because of this, they are able to mourn for the iniquity and sin that causes desolation in the church, in the same manner as Daniel mourned; that is, by the faith that comes by receiving the word of present truth. Dan 9:4-19.

- Those who mourn in this manner are known by the presbytery because they are *joined* to the fellowship of the presbytery. Describing the culture of this fellowship, the apostle 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.’ 1Jn 1:1. Those who are joined to the fellowship of the presbytery, likewise, have an ear to *hear* the proceeding word; they receive *illumination* that comes by the Spirit; they *look* upon Christ whom they have pierced, and mourn for their sin with the sorrow that leads to repentance; and they participate in the *expression* of the word, according to their sanctification.
- After giving His instructions to the man with the inkhorn, the Lord then directed the other men who had battle-axes in their hands, saying, ‘Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary.’ Eze 9:5-6.
- The ‘destroying weapons’ in the hands of these presbyters were also described as ‘shattering weapons’. The apostle Paul referred to these weapons in his second letter to the Corinthians, writing, ‘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 10:4-6.
- The word, which brings the judgement of God upon a person, is not wielded by overseers with malice or the intent to harm. Rather, 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.

- Jesus addressed these two effects of His word – the nomination of those who were part of His people, and the desolation of the disobedient – saying, ‘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. As we have already considered in these notes, the elect, who sigh and cry to the Lord day and night, are being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets as part of the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem. However, those who reject this message are devoid of faith, and are reserved for the judgement that belongs to those who remain outside the heavenly city. They are excluded because they continue in their uncleanness.
- After the killing was complete, Ezekiel noted that *he was left alone*. Eze 9:8. There was not one person left alive in the temple, nor in the city of Jerusalem. As we have already considered, this prophecy was graphically fulfilled when natural Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus in AD70. Aware of the magnitude of this desolation, Ezekiel fell on his face and cried out to the Lord, saying, ‘Ah, Lord God! Will You destroy all the remnant of Israel in pouring out Your fury on Jerusalem?’ Eze 9:8.
- In response, the Lord said to Ezekiel, ‘The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great, and the land is full of *bloodshed*, and the city full of *perversity*; for they say, “The Lord has forsaken the land, and the Lord does not see!” And as for Me also, My eye will neither spare, nor will I have pity, but I will recompense their deeds on their own head.’ Eze 9:9-10.
- The *bloodshed* in the land is the effect of the murderous and backbiting tongue that persists in the church. 2Co 12:20. This describes the communication of those who, motivated by envy and

self-seeking, speak evil of the church and its leaders, seeking their destruction. It gives rise to divisions, strife and relational reservations. Jas 4:1-2. The *perversity* describes all the behaviours, attitudes and expectations of those within a community of faith, that are contrary to the culture of godliness that is defined by sound doctrine. It is a great wickedness when these unclean practices are overlooked, and even embraced, in the church, under the guise of religious love and the presumption of God's unconditional forgiveness.

- While the Lord's eye does not spare in judgement upon the bloodshed and uncleanness of His holy city, His eyes are also the means by which deliverance and cleansing are obtained by those who do mourn and find repentance in response to His word. This was the promise that He made through the prophet Isaiah. Let us now consider this merciful initiative towards us.

### Cleansing the city

- The Lord, through Isaiah, addressed the way in which His heavenly city would be cleansed of depravity and bloodshed. He introduced this subject by making known the condition of His bride city which was in need of cleansing. He said, 'And 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.
- These seven women represent the fulness of what should be a chaste church, betrothed to one Man, Christ. 2Co 11:2. However, it is clear that these seven women had been deceived by Satan. They had been corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, because they had given their ear to other 'gospels'. 2Co 11:3. Accordingly, the leaders and congregants of their churches believed in their freedom to choose the word, or food, by which they would live. Furthermore, they presumed to be the origin of their own ministry expression, symbolised by the assertion that they would wear their own apparel. Yet, they expected Christ, their Betrothed, to *vicariously* deliver them from the consequences of their sin. Instead of the fullness of chastity as the bride of Christ, they had become the mother of harlots and one of the seven heads of the beast that represents the seventh world kingdom. Rev 12:3.

- The Lord then said, '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 - everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem.' Isa 4:2-3.
- This is an amazing statement. 'The Branch of the Lord' refers to a lampstand church. Those who belong to a lampstand church have been left in Zion and remain in the heavenly Jerusalem. They are called 'sanctified', meaning that they are sons of God who are born in the city and are finding deliverance from the uncleanness that would exclude them from the city. Significantly, their names are written in the tree of life, the substance of which is fed to them through the fruit of the tree of life as they participate in the Lord's *agape* meal.
- These believers have responded to the direction of the apostle Paul, who wrote to the church in Corinth exhorting those who believed his word to separate themselves from the alternative cultures that do not belong to a lampstand church. He described the conversation and conduct of these contrary cultures as 'lawlessness, darkness, and idolatry'. He implored those with an ear to hear, saying, 'You are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty".' 2Co 6:16-18.
- Through Isaiah, the Lord explained how those who belong to His holy city are delivered from the uncleanness and idolatry that would otherwise mark their connection to the harlot woman. He said that He would wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion and would purge the blood of Jerusalem 'by the spirit of judgement and by the spirit of burning'. Isa 4:4. This spirit of judgement and burning is the effect of His eyes, which are as a flame of fire.
- The apostle Paul directed our attention to this cleansing work in his letter to the Hebrews. He wrote, 'Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts

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and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.' Heb 4:11-13.

- To those who disobey His word, the eyes of the Lord initiate the judgement that excludes them from entering the rest that belongs to their citizenship in the heavenly Jerusalem. He swears in His wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.' Heb 4:3. These people come under the judgement of God because they are not marked as those who sigh and cry for the abominations that Christ's eyes reveal in their own heart and in the congregation of which they are part.
- In contrast, those who do not draw back from Christ's eyes when His word pierces their heart are made aware of the uncleanness associated with their iniquity and sin. They confess, as Isaiah did, '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. They are joined to the process through which they can find deliverance from their own iniquity, cleansing from their sin, and can bear witness to this process as those who are concerned for the sanctification of the Lord's house.
- John the Baptist identified this process, which is initiated by the eyes of Christ, as being baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire. He declared, 'He 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.

### 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. [We note the connection of this statement to the worship of Tammuz] 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. Therefore, the Lord directed Moses to turn water into blood. The magicians were able to turn water to blood with their enchantments, as well. Similarly, the Egyptian magicians were also 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 all 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 was highlighting 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 they 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. This finger of God is extended towards 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. 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 and into the light that is the fellowship of the heavenly city.

### The effect of the word

- The implications of how a person receives the messenger and his word are beautifully summarised in Psalm 1. The psalmist begins, ‘Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the Law of the Lord, and in His Law he meditates day and night’. Psa 1:1-2. The blessing that a person obtains through their delight in the word of the Lord is the blessing that was promised to Abraham. This is the blessing of sonship that belongs to those who are born of the Spirit. They are not deceived by the counsel of those whose own uncleanness brings them into bondage to Satan. Rather, their culture, as those who are blessed, is defined by the proceeding word. It is the food by which they live.

- The psalmist continued, 'He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper'. Psa 1:3. In the book of Revelation, John observed this very principle, writing, 'And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.' Rev 22:1-2.
- The sons of God are trees planted by the river of life. They are planted there because their sin and uncleanness is being washed away by this water. Being rooted and grounded in the culture of '*agape*', they are able to draw deeply from the water of the word, which is Spirit and life to them. Consequently, the fruit of their lips is a spiritual ministry of life to others. Through prayer, their figurative leaves minister healing to those who are responding to the call to come out from the kingdom of darkness and to be born as a son of light and a citizen of the new Jerusalem.
- The psalmist then warns, 'The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.' Psa 1:4-5. As we have considered in these notes, the ungodly, likened to chaff, include those who will not proceed from faith to faith to become the righteousness of God as His sons. Instead, they stall in the process and fail to come to fruitfulness.
- Concluding his reflection, the psalmist declared, 'For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.' Psa 1:6.