



Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

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JULY 2022

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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July 2022

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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 pivotal 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.

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**.

Isaiah's polarising message

The *cleansing* of Isaiah enabled him 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. **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.

Emptying the earth

Jesus lamented over the inhabitants of Jerusalem because they had rejected His ministry and they were unwilling to be gathered into the kingdom of God. **Mat 23:37-39**. He then explained to the disciples that the temple and the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed. **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, 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. **Luk 21:20-21**. Significantly, Paul, Peter and James identified them as 'the elect' – citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. **Rom 11:7. 1Pe 1:1-2. Jas 2:5**.

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.

From faith to faith

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 4:13-14.**

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.**

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. Eph 5:14-16.

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. **Act 6:14. Act 15:1-2**. They may adhere 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. Consequently, their understanding of the Christian life remains constrained to the dogma of a denomination.

Meeting Christ personally

The second aspect of *believing* is 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. **Joh 5:39-40**. 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

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. **1Co 6:19**. 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. **Heb 12:22-24**. *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. **Php 3:18-19**. 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?' **2Co 6:11-15**.

The harvest and winnowing

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 Ito walk in the steps of faith revealed by the gospel that is proclaimed from the right hand of Christ. **1Ti 6:11-12. Rev 1:20.** 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. **Php 3:12.** 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*. **Psa 1:4-6.**

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.**

Jacob's vision

It is noteworthy that the Lord described Jacob as His 'elect'. *Isa 45:4*. It highlights that the life of Jacob provides us with important waypoints concerning the nature of our calling and election, and how we make them sure.

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**. During 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 11:9-10,16**. 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*.

Jacob's ladder

The ladder that Jacob saw in his dream was the administration of the Son's throne in the house of God. **Gen 28:12-14**. 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'. Beside each living creature was a wheel, the rims of which spanned earth and heaven and were full of eyes. **Eze 1:13-21**.

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**.

When Christ's offering was finished, He was raised by the Father to be seated on the throne in the sanctuary of the true temple. **Eph 1:19-20**. 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. **Rev 1:20**. The ministers of this light are proclaiming the word of the cross. **1Co 1:22-23**. 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. **Col 1:13**.

The body and the bride

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 the 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 4:24-26**.

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. **Col 2:11-12.** 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.**

A temple of living stones

The heavenly Jerusalem is the city that Abraham saw from afar and desired to enter; a 'city *with foundations*, whose builder and maker is God'. **Heb 11:9-10,16**. 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.

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**.

The testimony of the elect

The apostle Peter described those who are being built into the heavenly Jerusalem 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. **Rev 21:16**. 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 of 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 2:8-11**.

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. **Act 2:41**. In contrast to this heavenly city, Jesus warned His disciples that the temple and city of the *earthly 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.' **Luk 21:20**.

The bride city in Babylon

The abomination that caused the 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 1:2-4. 2Ti 2:10**.

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.

The elect in the dispersion

The apostle John observed in the book of Revelation that the names of the twelve tribes of Israel are written on the gates that belong to the walls that are built on the twelve foundations. The gates are dispersed to the east, the north, the south and the west, because the elect have been scattered to the four winds. **Rev 21:10-13.**

The apostle John addressed his second epistle, to 'the elect lady and her children'. **2Jn 1:1-2.** 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. **Rev 1:20.**

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 21:22-24.** In other words, the implications of this dispersion will 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. Significantly, 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 belong to 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.' **Luk 21:29-31**.

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. 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. **Eze 9:4**

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. **Mat 24:32-35**. 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?' **2Pe 3:11-12**. The answer is that *we are to be the elect!*

The measure of the elect

The apostle John recorded that when the messenger measured the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem, the measure of the wall was one hundred and forty-four cubits. **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. 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**.

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.' **1Ti 5:18**. 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**.

Commissioned a second time

The initial instructions that Jesus gave to the seventy-two disciples differed from those that Jesus gave to the twelve disciples. He said to the twelve disciples, '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. **Rev 22:14**.



Restoring
my Soul