



Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

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NOVEMBER 2022

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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November 2022

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Satan uses sorcery

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

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

Our oppression by unclean spirits is proportional to our withdrawal from *agape* fellowship. When we withdraw from relationship with others in the church, we are not rightly discerning the Lord's body. The apostle Paul said that for this reason many are weak, and sick, and some even die before their time, under the effect of this oppression. **1Co 11:29-30**.

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

The power of sorcery

Our heightened emotional responses to our circumstances, or towards others who offend us, are distinctive indicators that we are in the flesh and are subject to oppression. The apostle Paul said, 'When we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.' **Rom 7:5**. The fruit of death reveals that we are living according to the other law, and have been brought into bondage to Satan. **Rom 7:23**. He feeds on the energy associated with the passions that are aroused within us, causing us anxiety, fatigue, and sickness.

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

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

The example of Nebuchadnezzar

The principle of sorcery was exemplified in the rulership of Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was described by the Lord as His servant, because the Lord executed judgement on the nation of Judah through him. **Jer 25:8-9**. However, Nebuchadnezzar obtained counsel for his conquests through divination and sorcery. As Ezekiel prophesied, 'For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the road, at the fork of the two roads, to use divination: he shakes the arrows, he consults the images, he looks at the liver. In his right hand is the divination for Jerusalem: to set up battering rams, to call for a slaughter, to lift the voice with shouting, to set battering rams against the gates, to heap up a siege mound, and to build a wall.' **Eze 21:21-22**.

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

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

Sorcery is deception

In the same way that Satan uses sorcery to take dominion over the sons and daughters of men, this way of relating belongs to those who are of the spirit of the world. **1Co 2:12**. Speaking of Babylon, which is representative of the nations of the earth under the rulership of Satan, the apostle John wrote, 'For your merchants were the great men of the earth, *for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived*. And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth.' **Rev 18:23-24**.

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

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

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

The use of teraphim

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

The Hebrew word for 'teraphim' is plural. Some commentators have suggested that this implies that the idols were arrayed and utilised in pairs. To this end, their use may have been an attempted *simulation* of worship at the gate of the garden of Eden, which was guarded by two cherubim. **Gen 3:24.** This is where, prior to the great flood, Adam, and the sons of God who followed him, worshipped the Lord and received His word.

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

Teraphim and sacramentalism

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

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

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

Mediums and familiar spirits

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

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

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

Familiar spirits in families

Although many commentators limit their explanation of familiar spirits to the activity of mediums and wizards, the language of the Scriptures reveals a much broader application of this principle. The Hebrew word that is translated as 'familiar spirit' is closely associated with the Hebrew word that means 'father, head of a household, ancestor'. It reveals that a familiar spirit belongs to a family, and can be passed on from generation to generation. **1Ki 15:26. 1Ki 22:52. 2Ki 17:41.**

This point further reveals that a family's susceptibility to an unclean, familiar spirit will depend upon their connection to the headship of Christ. **1Co 11:3. Eph 5:23.** Where the family is disconnected from Christ's headship, the familiar spirit becomes a key influence in the way that those in the family approach and understand life. Significantly, they are unable to receive the word of the Lord, and their participation in the *agape* meal is hindered.

Notably, the Hebrew word that is translated as 'familiar spirit' also means 'bottle'. For example, the young man, Elihu, said to Job, 'Indeed my belly is like wine that has no vent; it is ready to burst like new wineskins [Lit: familiar spirits]'. **Job 32:19. Mat 9:16-17.** Through the words of Elihu, we note that pent-up emotions, that eventually erupt as impassioned communication, are an indication that a person is speaking, or expressing themselves, according to a familiar spirit. This accords with the understanding that unclean spirits feed off the emotions of sin that are aroused within us as we walk according to the flesh.

Significantly, we can be delivered from the oppression of unclean and familiar spirits. In relation to this deliverance, the beginning point is to receive the word of the cross that is proclaimed by the messengers of God in the right hand of Christ. Through their ministry, Christ is publicly portrayed to us as crucified. **Gal 3:1.**

Deliverance from oppression

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

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

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

Satan is disempowered

We cease from striving to save our life and to define our own expression when we have been established in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. We also cease from viewing ourselves as being a victim of our circumstances or as a victim of others. This is because the other law is being circumcised from our heart. We are joined to the prayer of Christ Himself, who prayed on our behalf, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.' **Luk 23:34.**

In this prayerful statement, Jesus took the Law out of the way; and mercy triumphed over judgement. **Col 2:13-14. Jas 2:13.** Satan and His power were destroyed, and the other law, which he fathered within us, lost its power. **Heb 2:14-15.** We were given access to the heavenly places, and also given the work of casting Satan down from heaven. **Luk 10:18-20. Rev 12:10-11.**

We fulfil this work as we join Christ's offering, made available to us in the fellowship of His cross, from day to day. As we participate in the offering prayer that Jesus made from the cross, we find deliverance from our other law, which feeds power to Satan as the means for our destruction or sickness. **Rom 7:23.** We are able to bless those who curse us and, thereby, demonstrate that we are a son of our Father in heaven. **Luk 6:27-28. Rom 12:14.**

Satan, who would otherwise oppress us, is disempowered as we participate in the offering and sufferings of Christ. He cannot touch us, nor exercise any power over us. In fact, the Lord has declared to Satan that the sons of God will recognise his impotence, saying, 'Those who see you will gaze at you, and consider you, saying: "Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world as a wilderness and destroyed its cities, who did not open the house of his prisoners?"' **Isa 14:15-17.**

Overcoming Satan

The work of overcoming Satan through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ was exemplified by Stephen. **Joh 16:33**. Through his declaration of the gospel, Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified before the Jewish council. **Act 6:12-15**. They were cut to the heart by the word of the cross that was proclaimed by Stephen. However, instead of drawing near to Christ in godly sorrow, they gnashed at Stephen with their teeth. Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, cast Stephen out of the city and stoned him. **Act 7:54,57-58**. As they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, in fellowship with Christ, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.' **Act 7:60**.

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

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

The prayer of Stephen

Stephen fell on his knees and prayed for those who were stoning him, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them!' **Act 7:60**. Stephen received the grace to pray in this manner because he was joined to the fellowship of Christ's crucifixion. When the soldiers drove the nails through the hands and feet of Jesus, He prayed for us, and on our behalf, by saying, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' **Luk 23:34**.

The prayer of Stephen illustrates our threefold connection to Christ, who is 'the anchor of our soul' within the veil. **Heb 6:19-20**. He is seated in the mercy seat of the true tabernacle. The mercy seat is also the throne of grace. The threefold chord is the testimony of Christ that is being progressively confirmed in us as those who are overcoming Satan by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of our testimony, and by not loving our lives to the death. **1Co 1:4-8**.

Stephen washed his priestly garments in the blood of the Lamb as he participated in the offering of Christ. Furthermore, the works that belonged to Stephen's sonship and priesthood were enabled as he was anointed with the oil of the Spirit. This anointing upon his head enabled him to see Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of God. The oil also flowed onto his garments, enabling his priesthood. He was serving as a priest in the Father's temple.

Ministering as a priest, Stephen knelt before Christ in prayer, asking Him to forgive those who were stoning him to death. After Stephen prayed in this manner, he fell asleep as the Lord received his spirit by calling him up out of his body. **Act 7:59-60**. In this way, the stone that finally crushed his head did not take his life from him. His life ended in the fellowship of Christ's prayer.

From Stephen to Paul

Significantly, as Stephen prayed, and laid down his life in the fellowship of Christ's offering, Satan was cast from the heavenly places, and his power over the Gentile nations was broken. Specifically, the prayer of Stephen opened the door for the conversion of Saul. We know that Luke wrote the book of Acts on behalf of Paul. Paul ensured that Luke recorded an important detail about the death of Stephen. We read that all of the witnesses who were responsible for the stoning of Stephen laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. **Act 7:58.**

Saul was in hearty agreement with the death of Stephen. Having been cast from heaven, it appears that Satan then personally possessed Saul. The book of Acts recorded that '*from that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.*' **Act 8:1.** We also read that '*Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women*' and putting them into prison. **Act 8:3.** Manifesting the murderous spirit of Satan himself, Saul breathed threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord. **Act 9:1.**

Saul was not in Jerusalem to see the crucifixion of Jesus and to look upon Him whom he had pierced on that day. However, Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified before the eyes of Saul when he watched the stoning of Stephen, who died as a witness of Christ. Through the martyrdom of Stephen, the Lord began to lay hold of Saul by his heart. The offering of Stephen overcame and disempowered Satan in relation to Paul's ministry. Stephen's prayer was answered when Paul was converted and began his ministry to the Gentiles. The conversion of Paul was also the answer to Rachel's prayer concerning the loss of her children. He was 'the reward' for her travail. **Jer 31:15-16.**

Paul's conversion

We recall that Rachel died as the result of giving birth to Benjamin. Paul belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. **Php 3:5. Rom 11:1.** Notably, Jacob prophesied concerning Benjamin that he was '*a ravenous wolf*; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil'. **Gen 49:27.** This prophetic statement concerning the tribe of Benjamin was certainly an accurate description of Saul's carnal nature. Following the death of Stephen, Saul *ravaged the church* as he went from house to house, dragging off men and women and putting them in prison. **Act 8:3.**

Following his conversion, Paul was no longer a ravenous wolf. He became an ascension gift messenger in the right hand of Christ. Significantly, the prophetic meaning of the name 'Benjamin' is 'son of the right hand'. **Gen 35:18.** As the answer to Rachel's prayer, the Lord appointed Paul, from the tribe of Benjamin, to recover the tribe of Ephraim as the fullness of the nations. The ten northern tribes of Israel, under the leadership of the tribe of Ephraim, have been scattered among all Gentile nations. Paul testified that the Lord had made him to be a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the ends of the earth. **Act 13:47.**

It was the priestly ministry of Stephen that disempowered Satan in relation to the ministry of the apostle Paul. In turn, it was the priestly ministry of Paul that disempowered Satan in relation to the remnant of Ephraim who have been scattered among the nations. Paul ministered the gospel of God to the Gentiles as a priest in the Father's temple. He did this as a messenger in the right hand of Christ, who is seated at the right hand of God. The sufferings of Paul, as a witness of Christ, were for the sake of gathering a remnant from among the Gentile nations into lampstand churches. **Col 1:24-26. Act 9:15.**

No distinction between Jew and Gentile

At the end of Paul's first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch. They gathered the church together and reported that God had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. **Act 14:27**. Some time later, a group of men came from Judea to Antioch, and began to teach the believers that, in order to be saved, they needed to be circumcised according to the custom of Moses. **Act 15:1**. Paul and Barnabas had a major dispute with this group of Judaizers concerning this matter. It was determined that Paul and Barnabas should travel to Jerusalem to discuss the issue with the apostles and elders of the Jerusalem church. **Act 15:2**.

The sect of the Pharisees within the church of Jerusalem believed that it was necessary to be circumcised and to keep the Law of Moses. There was much dispute when the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. **Act 15:6-7**. However, the apostle Peter stood up among them all and proclaimed, 'Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and *made no distinction between us and them*, purifying their hearts by faith ... we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved *in the same manner as they*.' **Act 15:7-12**.

The apostle Peter proclaimed that there is no distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles in the body of Christ. Both Jews and Gentiles are saved by hearing the word of the gospel, believing, and then receiving the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. The statement of Peter's faith before the apostles and elders laid the foundation for Paul and Barnabas to share their testimony. They declared how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles. **Act 15:12**.

The tabernacle of David

When Paul and Barnabas testified about the salvation of the Gentiles, James declared that this was the beginning of the restoration of the tabernacle of David. He quoted the prophetic Scriptures from the book of Amos, by saying, ‘“After this I will return and rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; *so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name*”, says the Lord who does all these things.’ **Act 15:16-17. Amo 9:11.**

The tabernacle of David comprises all twelve tribes of the true Israel of God. **Rom 9:6-7. Gal 6:15-16.** The true Israel of God includes the remnant of the ten northern tribes who have been scattered among the Gentile nations. **Amo 9:9.** Prior to the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD70, the Jewish believers were also scattered among the Gentiles, in lampstand churches. For this reason, the apostle Peter addressed his first letter to ‘the elect sojourners of the dispersion’. **1Pe 1:1-2.** Likewise, the apostle James wrote his letter to all twelve tribes of Israel who were scattered abroad. **Jas 1:1.** The elect will be scattered abroad in lampstand churches until the time of the end.

We have considered that Stephen overcame Satan in relation to the conversion of Paul, and Paul overcome Satan in relation to the salvation of a remnant in lampstand churches, for the church age. In the same way, the overcoming remnant in lampstand churches, who belong to the last generation, will overcome Satan in relation to the harvest that belongs to the end of the age. **Rev 12:11.** The harvest in the end of the age will include a great multitude from every tribe, nation, people and tongue. **Rev 7:9.**

The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

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

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

From Christ's prophetic statement, it is apparent that the life and experiences of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob reveal the way of salvation that belongs to all of those who enter the kingdom through the narrow gate. The narrow gate is Christ. We enter this narrow way through fellowship in His offering and sufferings, wherein we are raised from the death of sin, to eternal life as sons of God.

The promise to Abraham

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

When Adam fell, all mankind was lost to God and His covenant purpose for them. However, their predestinations were reclaimed in Abraham, and then passed on to Jesus Christ, Abraham's Son after the flesh. This happened through *the word of promise*. **Gal 3:16.** Paul taught that the promise made to Abraham and his Seed is the immutable word of God's Everlasting Covenant. **Heb 6:13-14,17-18.**

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

Paul emphasised that a person is not a son of Abraham, and an heir of God's Everlasting Covenant promises, simply because they are natural sons of Abraham. He explained, 'They are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham ... that is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the *children of the promise* are counted as the seed'. **Rom 9:6-8.**

God's calling in Isaac

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

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

According to the word of God, Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah in their old age. He was born according to the word of promise. **Rom 9:8-9.** When Isaac was in his late teens or early twenties, God directed Abraham to sacrifice him on Mount Moriah. Because Abraham obeyed God and did not withhold his son, the Lord spoke to Abraham 'a second time', confirming this word of promise with an oath. **Gen 22:15-18.** This revealed two aspects of God's immutable word – the *promise* and the *oath*. **Heb 6:17-18.**

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

The word of the oath

The oath assuring that the blessing of Abraham would come through Christ, was the *same oath* through which the Son of God was begotten as the Firstborn from the dead, and was designated as a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek. Paul highlighted this point, noting that the Father, who declared, 'You are My Son', *also said*, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.' **Heb 1:5. Heb 5:6.** Paul was quoting the prophetic psalm of King David, who wrote, 'The Lord has *sworn* [an oath] and will not relent, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek"'. **Psa 110:4.**

Jesus Christ was begotten as the Firstborn from the dead by the Father when the Father drew Him out of many waters and established Him as the Firstborn of a *new creation*. **Psa 18:16. Col 1:18. Rev 1:5-6.** This was when Jesus Christ our Lord was 'declared [by the Father's oath] to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, *by the resurrection from the dead*'. **Rom 1:1-4.** The word of the Father, through which Christ was begotten from the dead, gave to Jesus 'the sure mercies of David'. **Act 13:33-35. Isa 55:3.** That is, the full provision for God's Everlasting Covenant was committed to, and finished in, Christ.

When Jesus was begotten from the dead by the word of the oath, He was also called by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. **Heb 5:6-10.** Significantly, Jesus was *progressively* glorified by God the Father through the wounding events that He experienced in the course of His offering journey from Gethsemane to Calvary. Through these sufferings, Jesus *learned* how to be a high priest in relation to every situation and human condition. For this reason, Paul said, 'We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.' **Heb 4:15-16.**

The fear of Isaac

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

Proclaiming this amazing truth, Abraham called the place of offering worship on Moriah, Jehovah Jireh, meaning 'The Lord Will Provide'. **Gen 22:14.** Yahweh's provision was that He, personally, had become their fear. **Isa 8:13.** By this fear, Isaac obtained his calling in Christ, having been bound, figuratively, to the death and resurrection of Christ. Yahweh's name became Isaac's possession; this dimension of Yahweh's name was now 'the Fear of Isaac'. **Gen 31:42,53.**

'The Fear of Isaac' is the motivational attribute of Yahweh *Elohim's* nature. It is the expression of love that springs from who God is as a fellowship. Accordingly, those who are called by the name, 'the Fear of Isaac', have the capacity to appreciate and to trust others in the fellowship of offering worship. It is, for them, the wellspring of faith.

Christ priested to Isaac a participation in His offering, ministering to him faith and the fear of the Lord. **Rom 10:17.** By faith, and in the fear of the Lord, Isaac was joined to the death of Christ as he was bound by Abraham and placed on the altar. When he was figuratively brought back from the dead, he was now an heir of the promise that God had made to Abraham and his Seed, Christ. **Heb 11:17-19.**

Further Study **GENESIS 22**

Two immutable things

Isaac was a son according to the word of promise to Abraham *before* the offering on Mount Moriah. However, he did not become an heir of the promise, as a son of God, until he was joined to the fellowship of Christ's death and resurrection. That is, his sonship was realised only as he was, figuratively, baptised into Christ's death. **Rom 6:3-4**. This is true for all who are 'called in Isaac'. Their name, or calling, as a son of God is activated through baptism. Through baptism, they receive a garment which mandates them for the priestly service that belongs to their sonship.

Paul explained that, because of these two immutable things – the promise and the oath – we can have strong consolation as we flee for refuge to lay hold of the hope that is set before us. **Heb 6:17-18**. A person 'flees for refuge' by coming to Jesus. Through the word of the cross, they are born again and are joined to Him by baptism. The strong consolation that they obtain in Him is the assurance of their name and life as a son of God, which they receive as a seed, making them alive from the death of sin. **1Pe 1:22-23**.

Paul described obtaining consolation as 'laying hold of the hope set before us'. **Heb 6:18**. *This hope is our calling as a son of God!* **Eph 1:17-19**. **Eph 4:4**. Our calling as a son of God is a hope because we must *choose* sonship and obtain it through patient endurance as we *embrace* our daily participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. **2Ti 3:10-11**. This choice reveals the principle of *election*. 'The elect' are not people who have obtained a special, religious position that is superior to those who are called. 'Election' refers to the process through which a person *chooses* and *obtains* what God has chosen for them – their inheritance as a son of God and a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Jacob and Esau

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

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

Although Jacob and Esau were blessed with the calling of sonship, the Lord received Jacob into His fellowship, while Esau was condemned to everlasting burnings. Paul highlighted this point, quoting the words of the Lord, 'Jacob I have *loved*, but Esau I have *hated*.' **Rom 9:13. Mal 1:2-3**. The Lord loved Jacob because Jacob loved and pursued the blessing of his inheritance as a son of God. In contrast, Esau despised his birthright, selling it for a bowl of lentil stew. **Gen 25:29-34. Heb 12:14-16**. He then refused to accept the word and blessing of his predestination as a son of God. He endeavoured, instead, to kill the man whom he was supposed to serve. **Gen 27:41**.

Election in Jacob

The Lord revealed, through the prophet Isaiah, that the principle of election was established in Jacob. **Isa 45:4**. The principle of election was established in Jacob because *he chose* the word of his predestination, by which he was called. His election was *made sure* through the pilgrimage of faith that he traversed by the Spirit and in the fear of the Lord. **2Pe 1:10-11**. This pilgrimage was the process by which he obtained his inheritance as Israel, Prince with God.

Furthermore, the Lord proclaimed through Isaiah, 'I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, and from Judah an heir of My mountains; *My elect shall inherit it*, and My servants shall dwell there.' **Isa 65:9**. The elect, who inherit the promises of God, and who dwell in the heavenly city that belongs to the everlasting kingdom of the Lord, *are the descendants of Jacob, the nation of Israel*. **Isa 65:9**. Helpfully, the apostle Paul made it very clear that 'they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham'. **Rom 9:6-7**.

How then, are we, who are not the natural seed of the patriarchs, part of Israel, God's covenant people? We find the answer to this question in the words of Isaiah, who declared, 'Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and have come forth from the wellsprings of Judah'. **Isa 48:1**. The meaning of this important passage of Scripture has confounded many commentators. How could Israel, the corporate Jacob, have come from Judah, if Judah was one of the sons of Jacob?

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

We are Jacob

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

Abraham saw the heavenly Jerusalem from afar and desired to enter it. It is the 'city *with* foundations, whose builder and maker is God'. **Heb 11:8-10,16**. The elect, who are being built on the foundation of the apostles, are being established as part of the *walls* of the heavenly Jerusalem. **Rev 21:14**. Why is this significant? It is because the walls have twelve gates, upon which are written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. **Rev 21:12-13**. In other words, the elect belong to specific tribes in the true Israel of God.

It is important to appreciate that those who are making their calling and election sure *are Jacob*. We are not merely 'like Jacob'; nor are we simply learning from his example. Jacob's pilgrimage *is our pilgrimage*. His journey to become Israel is the journey that belongs to those who are choosing their calling as a son of God, and who are embracing their fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ.

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



Restoring
my Soul