

Nearer To THEE

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Introduction

The purpose of the message in this book is simple: it is to draw us closer to the Father. It is to make us go on towards maturity in knowing God and His ways. Though we are constantly being directed back to the fundamental principles of the word, we are at the same time being led forward and upward to a higher and ever-increasing revelation of God's glory. The Word is the same and the Truth is the same yesterday, today, and forever. But if it is indeed the Word of the Almighty God, then it is inexhaustible and unfathomable, and there must be a continual revelation of that inexhaustible Word and of that Truth in our lives as God's people.

The Lord Jesus came for this singular purpose—to reveal the Father, to make Him known, and to thereby reconcile and draw humanity near unto God. He did not come to tell the world about the Father: He came rather to reveal the Father and make Him known.

He began this work of revealing the Father by purchasing total deliverance for us. The redemption He purchased for us through His blood on the cross is complete and total deliverance from death, sin, and Satan. Not only did He deliver us from all these, He also translated us into the Kingdom of God. The intent and purpose is to bring us to the Father.

And so, He took us out of slavery and placed us on the throne. He brought us out of darkness into light, out of defeat into victory, out of poverty into eternal prosperity, out of sickness into health, and out of the pit into the mountain of His inheritance.

God's purpose in bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt is to bring them into His Sanctuary and to plant them in the mountain of His inheritance. His plan is to bring them in to Himself and to make them a people for His possession. His prophetic word declares: *"Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. The LORD shall reign for ever and ever"* (Exo 15:16).

In the same vein it is abundantly clear that the eternal and immutable plan of God is to bring the Church of Jesus Christ into union with Himself. His desire is to make us His own, to dwell among us and have us dwell permanently in His inner Sanctuary. His purpose is to bring us into His Rest and to tabernacle with us. He brought us out of the world to bring us in unto Himself. He is the Almighty; His purpose will surely come to pass.

As we draw nearer unto God and become more acquainted with Him, we learn obedience, we learn faith, we learn trust. Yet, in the midst of these, we may, like Abram, experience some frustration and perplexity as the promises from God seem to linger unfulfilled. And, like Abraham, we must pitch our tents and erect altars of worship unto our God in the midst of it all. We must neither be discouraged nor settle down and become satisfied like Lot in the well-watered plains of Sodom, but we must move on and on, climbing higher and higher, drawing nearer and nearer to the mark of the high calling of God in Christ. We must keep pushing

forward, progressing from Mamre to Bethel, from Bethel to Horeb, even to new realms of higher dedication and commitment to God.

We must neither be complacent nor satisfied with our spiritual state at any time. There must be some uneasiness in us which should make us realize that there is much more in God to attain: *higher mountains to climb, deeper depths to explore, and wider horizons to cover*. As we draw closer and closer to God, we'll become more and more dissatisfied with our state and hungrier for intimacy with Him. He does not want us to become satisfied with our spiritual state, for this will lead to complacency; He will therefore continue to reveal Himself to us in degrees, drawing us closer and closer each time. This will cause us to keep moving forward and upward, nearer and nearer, until we're completely transformed into His image.

As many of us as hunger and thirst for God must understand that the reason we don't seem satisfied is because He does not want us to. He does not want us to become self-contented and complacent. There is more. There is much more He wants to bring us into.

Chapter 1

Out of Egypt

By a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved (Hos 12:13).

Why did the Lord God Almighty bring the children of Israel out of Egypt? What is His eternal purpose? What is His goal for delivering them with such an extravagant display of power and might at the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years? From what we know of our Lord God, there is always a fruitful purpose behind His investments and this too will bring forth a glorious return. He is the Almighty, the wise Husbandman. His plantation will always yield a hundred-fold in its appointed time. We must therefore ponder on this to see, even if as it were in *a glass dimly*, the eternal purpose of God. And by doing this, we shall understand why God so lavished His love toward us so much so that Christ died for us while we were yet miserable sinners.

It is important to establish that all Scripture—both Old and New Testaments—is applicable to us today, at least on a spiritual plane. The spirit of the Scripture is applicable to

every generation. The Apostle Paul in a letter to his son Timothy wrote:

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim 3:14-17).

We must be clear in our minds, therefore, that the Old Testament Scriptures, in type and prophecy, are applicable to the Church of Jesus Christ on a spiritual plane. For instance, there is no question as to what Passover signifies or the spiritual meaning of the *Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread*, which began on the night preceding the exodus of the Children of Israel from Egypt. It was a prophecy that has been fulfilled when Christ our Passover Lamb was sacrificed on the cross. And when we partake of this feast, we are delivered from the dominion of Satan, the proverbial Pharaoh, and translated from the land of bondage into the Kingdom of God. This application of Old Testament Scripture in type and prophecy is established beyond any shadow of a doubt. It is also well understood that the waving of the sheaves of firstfruit was fulfilled on the resurrection morning when the Lord Jesus rose from the dead. He became the firstfruit of them that slept (I Cor 15:20), the firstborn from the dead (Col 1:18), and the Lord of the New Creation.

The foundational truth taught in the gospels and the epistles was written and prefigured in the Old Testament long before its fulfillment. These representations of divine truth in type

and shadow appear everywhere in the Old Testament. The word of God is replete with portraits of Christ in types and shadows. For instance, we see Him in Genesis as the seed of the woman; in Exodus, He is the Passover Lamb whose blood is on the doorpost; He is the manna, the bread of life that came down from heaven. In Leviticus, He is the Great High Priest. In Numbers, He is the Pillar of Fire by night and the Glory Cloud by day. In Deuteronomy, He is the Deliverer and the Prophet like unto Moses. In the Book of Joshua, He is the Commander-in-Chief of the army of the Most High God. It doesn't matter where you look in Scripture— Christ is shown forth. The entire Word of God is a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Dear reader, before we go any further, let's pause and make sure everyone reading this book is starting on the same page. Let's ascertain that we are all at the same starting line. This is of utmost importance.

Man is dead in sin and trespasses, bankrupt, in prison and cannot deliver himself from the dominion of sin and the devil. This is akin to the children of Israel in Egypt. God, because of His inexplicable love, sent a deliverer, His own Son, to pay the price for man's redemption and to bring man back to Him. He sent His Son to pay the price: to die in our place, *for the wages of sin is death*. And so, God demonstrated His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, miserable offenders, Christ died for us. This indeed is the Gospel: *"That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures"* (I Cor 15:3-4).

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him should not perish, but have life eternal (John 3:16).

Here is the most important step that everyone must take. Because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, everyone is condemned and must accept the salvation God has provided through Jesus Christ His Son. There is only one way to be saved; there is only one Name given under heaven to men by which we can be saved: and that is the Name of Jesus. Dear reader, if you are not 100% sure that you have eternal life, this is what you need to do—and you can do it right this minute:

Recognize that you, like everyone else, are a sinner. *“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom 3:10); “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23); the soul that sinneth must die, “for the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23).*

Recognize that you cannot save yourself by your good works. *“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6); “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:8).*

The price has been paid. *“The wages of sin is death” (Rom 5:8). “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 6:23). Christ already died in your place and paid the debt. Salvation is a gift and is by grace. (Rom 6:23, Eph 2:8)*

So what do you need to do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom 10:9-10).* Repent, turn away from doing it your own way, and accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

When will you be saved? At the moment when you believe in your heart that Jesus died and was raised from the dead for you, and you confess with your mouth that Jesus is your Lord. At that moment, you will be saved.

Pray this prayer for your salvation now:

Dear Heavenly Father, I come to you in the Name of Jesus. Your word says "anyone that comes to you, You will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). So I know You won't cast me out. Thank You. You also said in your word that "...if I shall confess with my mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in mine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, I shall be saved," and that "whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom 10:13).

I believe in my heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; I believe He died on the cross for me and was raised from the dead for my justification; I accept Him this day as my Savior and Lord. I confess with my mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord and affirm that He is my Lord and Savior; Therefore, according to your word, I AM SAVED. Thank you, my Father, and thank You, my Lord, in Jesus' Name, amen.

That's all you need to do and God Almighty will do the rest. At the instant you genuinely accept the offer of Salvation that God provided through His Son, God will transform and translate you into His kingdom, you become a member of His family and a partaker of the Royal Priesthood. You instantly become a member of the *ekklesia*, the call-out ones. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet 2:9).

Now let's return to the children of Israel in Egypt and solemnly follow what the Lord wants to teach us. The Lord God Almighty, the I AM, and the Self-Existing One called Moses in the wilderness of Midian. Here, as Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro, the priest of Midian, the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in the burning bush. When Moses looked, *"behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed"* (Ex 3:2).

Moses turned to see this great sight and to examine how on earth a bush could be on fire and not be consumed. Just as Moses was approaching to see this wonder in the wilderness of Midian, God Almighty spoke to him out of the burning bush, saying, *"Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And He said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God"* (Ex 3:4-6).

To help us understand the context of this passage, we need to step back a little and find out who this Moses was and how he got to the backside of the desert of Midian.

It all started with Abraham the son of Terah of Mesopotamia. We'll go to the New Testament for a narration of this and have Stephen lead us step by step through these God-appointed events. The apostle Stephen, at his trial before the high priest, gave an inspired, concise, and accurate survey of Israel's history beginning with Abraham. This passage in the Book of Acts is really the Holy Spirit's interpretation of the Old Testament account. It is the most succinct and accurate survey of the history of God's people, given to us as only the Holy Ghost can.

We will therefore listen to the Holy Ghost as He leads us step by step along the journey with His people. Stephen began, saying:

“Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell (Act 7:3-4).

God called Abram while he was still in his native pagan land in ancient Babylonia, telling him to come out of his native country and go to a land that He would later show him. God promised him a child and a land. Though Abram had neither at the time and for several years afterwards, he still believed God. He came out of his native land as commanded, and was eventually brought to the land of Canaan. Because of his uncommon faith, he became a friend of God, with whom God made a covenant accompanied by several promises. One of these was that he would become a father of multitudes, even as his new name, Abraham, implied.

God then told Abraham a little about the future of his descendants, saying that *“his seed would sojourn in a strange land; and that they would bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years”* (Act 7:6). God told Abraham this before he had any child, while his wife was still barren. Abraham believed God and went around answering to the name Abraham, which means “father of multitudes.”

The Almighty continued His revelation to Abraham by telling him that He would, at the appointed time and by a strong hand, bring his children *out of bondage*. He said to Abraham:

“And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place” (Act 7:7). God Almighty told Abraham this about 430 years before the Exodus: that He would bring the Israelites out of Egypt and that they would serve Him in the location where He was speaking to Abraham.

When Abraham was 100 years old, after he had waited in faith for more than 25 years, God began to fulfill His promises and His plan and purposes began to gradually unfold. *“And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs” (Act 7:8).*

Stephen proceeds from Abraham to talking about the patriarchs. He speaks of the brethren of Joseph, who motivated by envy and hatred sold him into Egypt. But God was with him; God overruled them and used Joseph to prepare sustenance for them. In the next seven verses of our main passage, we meet Joseph, the beloved son of Jacob, whose life story takes the family of Israel to Egypt. .

And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.

Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance. But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph’s kindred was made known unto Pharaoh.

Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers (Act 7:9-15).

Now Stephen comes to a major milestone in the history of God's people. He begins to narrate the plight of the Israelites in Egypt after the death of Joseph, especially after a new regime came to power that did not know Joseph, at which time the Israelites became slaves in Egypt. This was when Moses was born.

But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,

Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph. The same dealt subtly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.

In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months: And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son.

And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds (Act 7:17-22).

We now come to the end of the first forty years of Moses' life. He was now a mature prince of Egypt, well educated and highly competent. He knew that although he'd been brought up in Pharaoh's palace, he had Hebrew origin. He also knew in his heart that God would one day deliver his Hebrew brethren from slavery through him.

And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.

And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:

For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not (Act 7:23-25).

Yes, Moses was well-bred, well-read, and mighty in words and deeds, but he was not ready to lead God's people. As a prince of Egypt, he had all the learning of the world of his day, but that was not sufficient to equip him to lead God's people. And as it was with Moses, so it is with us today. All the wisdom and knowledge that men acquire in institutions of learning today cannot equip them for understanding the things of God. This is because the natural man, by natural knowledge, cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God. *"They are foolishness to him and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned"* (1 Cor. 2:14).

And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?

But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday?

Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons (Act 7:26-29).

Although Moses was learned in the wisdom of his day, he was not ready to be an instrument of deliverance for God's people. He had not yet gone through God's boot camp at the backside of the desert. Because of his natural upbringing and quality training in Pharaoh's palace, he thought he was ready and the time was ripe for him to deliver his people, but he was running ahead of God—in fact, he was forty years ahead

of God. He thought he could begin the work of delivering the Lord's people through the arm of flesh. Yes, Moses was strong, capable, and mighty in words and deeds, but God has never depended on the strength or ability of any man to help him bring deliverance or salvation to his people. No one man has the ability to even save himself, much less someone else.

This may come as a shock to you, but God is not depending on your education, intelligence, or political power to bring deliverance to His people anytime or anywhere. He is not depending on your political party to move His gospel forward. *It is not by power nor by might but by my Spirit says the Lord (Zech 4:6).*

The Lord is trying to make it abundantly clear to us through the life of Moses that the deliverance of His people and the nations of the world is going to come from Him. It is all of Him and by Him. We are going to be used as instruments in the deliverance of God's people, but we must understand that it is by His Spirit and not by the reason of our education or political influence. It is important to remember that Moses was a prince in Egypt. He was the adopted son of a queen, and at 40 years old, he was the man *who would be king* and wielded great political power in the court of Pharaoh. Moses knew the kind of power that he had, and he knew that God had chosen him as the instrument to bring deliverance to his people. But he did not understand that God does not save by sword or spear, but by His Spirit.

God orchestrated the incident that drove Moses out of Egypt to the Midian desert to teach him (and us) that He does not depend on man's ability and political position to deliver his people. We, in this present generation, must ponder on this. *May the Lord God grant us understanding in these things.*

So, after completing the first of the three phases of his life, each forty years in length, Moses left Egypt, according to the plan of God, and went into the desert of Midian to be trained for the ministry ahead of him. He had to go there to learn a different lesson. It was part of the “*making of the man of God.*”

Here is the account the Holy Ghost gave through the apostle Paul in the letter to the Hebrews:

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them (Heb 11:24-28).

Out of the king's palace to the desert; there Moses would learn the art of being a shepherd. There he would learn brokenness and lose the superman-superpower attitude he acquired from his upbringing in the palace. There he would become weak, empty, and less self-reliant than he once was. And then, in his emptiness, God would fill him, and in his weakness, the Almighty would become the strength of his life.

It was this transformation that would make Moses into a man of God, ready to be sent to Egypt to bring deliverance to the people of God.

And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.

Now the second forty-year period of Moses' life was complete. He had spent forty years keeping the flock of Jethro and learning the way of a shepherd. He had become empty of self and was a completely changed man. It was at this point that the angel of God appeared to him in the burning bush. Moses had gone through the school of patience and become as meek as any man could be. He was now ready to begin the last phase of his ministry—becoming an instrument of deliverance for the children of Israel.

When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him,

Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold.

Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground (Act 7:30-33).

We have returned to the place where we digressed in the second paragraph of this chapter. We left off when Moses saw the burning bush; now we see Moses turning in amazement and walking toward the burning bush to examine this wonder in the wilderness of Sinai.

The Omniscient One was not only training Moses in the wilderness; He was also revealing, to him and to us, the supernatural nature of His people. Through the metaphor of the burning bush, *the bush that was on fire and yet never consumed*, God showed the indestructibility of His people. The Israel of God, in whom and through whom God speaks to the nations, is the burning bush that can never be consumed.

In the natural realm, the burning bush can be considered a symbol of the nation of Israel, but we will look deeper and further to see what the Holy Spirit has hidden in this for the

Church of Jesus Christ. It is a wonder of wonders that the small nation of Israel has existed through all these centuries, in spite of the fire of persecution and gruesome affliction that she has endured. Many mighty nations and powerful emperors have made it their dying ambition to wipe out any remembrance of Israel from the earth. She has passed through terrible and horrifying fires of affliction—the Babylonian captivity, the Romans, the Holocaust, and all the hostile nations that encompass her round about—and she is still alive today. Many other nations and empires have come and gone; Israel was at their cradles and has also attended the funerals of them all. Indeed, she is that burning bush and will never be consumed.

However, we must look deeper into the meaning of this burning bush metaphor, for we see in it a portrait of the Church of Jesus Christ. As pointed out in the previous paragraph, this burning bush is a picture, in the natural dimension, of the nation of Israel. However, the great Apostle speaking by the Holy Ghost said:

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Co 10:11).

Looking at the spiritual reality, the Church of Jesus Christ is truly the burning bush of which the natural olive tree, the nation of Israel, is a type. Moses as the deliverer sent by God to deliver Israel is a picture of the true Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was sent by God to be the Savior of the world. Israel is therefore a picture of the Church, that spiritual assembly of the redeemed.

Since she was born in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, the Church has been in the fire of persecution and has not been consumed. *God is in the midst of her; she shall*

not be moved. She has been under persecution and martyrdom since day one, from Stephen, the anointed preacher and the first martyr whose message we've been discussing in the earlier part of this chapter, to James and Peter, who were crucified; others were sawn asunder, some burned at the stake, some thrown to lions, many buried alive, and many tortured. For 2000 years, this bush has been burning in an intense fire, yet is not and will never be consumed. And God is speaking from within this burning bush, as He spoke to Moses, speaking His message of salvation to the world of humanity.

This burning bush that we're talking about, instead of being consumed, is actually shining brighter. The affliction and testing by fire is bringing forth the work of purification and refinement in her. She is becoming pure like tried gold and refined brass.

This must be the meaning of the revelation John the beloved received when He was on the island of Patmos and saw the Lord in His complete body from head to toe. The Head, of course, is Jesus Christ Himself, while the body is us the Church, the company of the redeemed. The feet of this body that John saw are the last generation who are still in contact with the earth. These ones are just coming out of the earth and are as the refined brass just coming out of the furnace. Here is what John the beloved saw:

And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters (Rev 1:13-15).

Down through the centuries, the Church which is His body has been persecuted, burned as it were in a furnace, but she overcame it all. She has come out of the furnaces looking like fine brass and remains an overcomer.

So Moses turned around and heard the voice of God speaking to him. Moses' superb education in the palace of the king of Egypt did not teach him how to approach the holy God. The Most High God had to educate him on how to approach His Presence. He was brought up in the court of Pharaoh, well-learned in the custom and the civilization of this world, but ignorant of how to conduct himself with reverence in the holy Presence of the Almighty. God said to Him, "*Don't come close. Take off your sandals from off your feet, for the place you are standing on is holy ground*" (Exo 3:5).

I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt (Act 7:34).

Then God told Moses of His intention to deliver His people from Egypt and the ministry to which Moses was called. Let's closely examine the three principal phrases that God spoke to Moses here and apply their meaning to our lives. In the Book of Exodus, this is the complete narration of what God said:

*And the LORD said, **I have surely seen** the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and **have heard their cry** by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;*

*And **I am come down to deliver** them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey;*

unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites (Exo 3:7-8).

Notice the key phrases in the message to Moses. *I have seen, I have heard, and I have come down to deliver.* It is important for you and I to understand the principle that God is setting forth here. God sees you when you are in need of help, but you need to cry unto Him. *“Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures (Jam 4:2b,3).*

To receive eternal life and become a child of God, an individual needs to ask God. To receive salvation and be delivered from the dominion of Satan into the glorious liberty of the children of God, an individual must ask God. To receive healing from Christ the Healer, the sick and afflicted need to ask Him; if they ask, they’ll receive.

Jehovah God Almighty saw the affliction of His people, heard their cries, and came down to deliver them. He sent Moses His servant and through the blood of the Passover Lamb He delivered them and brought them out of Egypt. Let’s sing this song with the Psalmist:

He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations. Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant:

Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance: When they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it. When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people;

He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproved kings for their sakes; Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. Moreover he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread

He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him. The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance: To bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom.

Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. And he increased his people greatly; and made them stronger than their enemies. He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtly with his servants.

He sent Moses his servant; and Aaron whom he had chosen. They shewed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they rebelled not against his word. He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish. Their land brought forth frogs in abundance, in the chambers of their kings. He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies, and lice in all their coasts. He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land. He smote their vines also and their fig trees; and brake the trees of their coasts. He spake, and the locusts came, and caterpillers, and that without number, And did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground. He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength.

He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.

Egypt was glad when they departed: for the fear of them fell upon them. He spread a cloud for a covering; and fire to give

light in the night. The people asked, and he brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven. He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river. For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant.

And he brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness: And gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labour of the people;

That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws. Praise ye the LORD (Psa 105:9-12).

Chapter 2

Delivered through the Blood of the Lamb

And he brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness (2 Sam 6:17).

In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: (Col 1:14)

Thirty-five hundred years ago, God brought plagues upon Egypt because of Pharaoh's refusal to release the children of Israel from bondage. Pharaoh was so stubborn that it took the death of all the firstborn in Egypt to force him to release the children of Israel from bondage.

The night that the firstborn of the Egyptian families died was a night of terror to all those who ignored the instructions of God. God provided a way of escape through the blood of the Passover lamb for those who would obey: He commanded them to sprinkle the blood of the lamb upon the doorposts of their houses. To all those who trusted in God and obeyed His

instruction, the night was one of hope for deliverance from slavery to freedom.

And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.

Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house (Exo 12:2-3).

The instruction given by God for the Passover night is clear and simple. The entire instruction is recorded in the first twenty-four verses of the twelfth chapter of Exodus. Each family must select a lamb. It must be a lamb without blemish, a male of the first year. And like the ram on Mount Moriah, this lamb must be killed. They must then take the blood of the lamb and sprinkle it on the lintel and on the two side posts of their door. Every member of the family must stay inside the house and not go outside the door until the morning.

By substitution, the lamb that was slain took the place of their firstborn sons, just as the ram had taken the place of Isaac their grandfather on Mount Moriah.

All these sacrifices are patterns or portraits of the true Lamb of God, the One John saw when he was baptizing by the river Jordan and said, *"Behold the Lamb of God, that took away the sins of the world."* This is the only Lamb without blemish: the Lamb slain from the foundation of the earth. Redemption from Egyptian bondage was wrought on that night when the lamb was slain, a figure of the day when the Lamb of God was slain on Calvary's tree. Apostle Peter wrote: *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of*

Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1Pe 1:18-19).

*For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, **the LORD will pass over the door**, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you*

And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?

That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses (Exo 12:23).

On that notable Passover night, **the God of Israel** broke the Egyptian yoke from the necks of His people. The Passover lamb took the place of the firstborn in every Jewish home. They were protected by the blood of the lamb. *“When I see the blood, I will pass over you,”* the Lord told the children of Israel. They were to eat the lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, with their loins girded and their shoes on their feet, ready to depart from Egypt. The eating of unleavened bread was to continue for seven days as they escaped from Pharaoh's slavery. God instructed Israel to have a yearly convocation commemorating this landmark event in their history as a nation. It is also a symbol typifying the great work of redemption that our Lord Jesus performed on the cross.

The Passover is when our freedom from slavery to sin (*typified by Israel's enslavement by Pharaoh*) was won by the death of Jesus Christ, the Passover Lamb of God.

Why did the firstborn of Israel not die along with those of the people of Egypt? They did not die because they accepted the way of salvation that God opened for them **through the blood of a lamb**. The truth of the matter is that we all deserve God's judgment. However, God, in His mercy, has told us that if we accept the sacrifice of the Lamb of God and apply His blood to our lives, we will be safe. But the Lamb must die, because the wages of sin is death. God is righteous and cannot simply overlook our sins. The Lamb is our Substitute and was sacrificed in our place, as Abraham sacrificed the ram instead of his son.

Dear friends, what we need to realize today is that, before God, all of Adam's descendants are like the firstborn sons of the people of Egypt and Israel. **God's holy law condemns every one of us** to die and face God's righteous judgment. That is what the Scripture says: "There is no difference, for ***all have sinned and fall short*** of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:22,23) The payment of sin is eternal condemnation, "shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power!" (2 Thes. 1:9)

The lambs which the Israelites sacrificed to escape the plague of death **symbolized the Redeemer** who had to come and pour out his blood to pay the debt of sin for the whole world. Our Redeemer, the Lamb of God, "died for sins once for all, ***the righteous for the unrighteous*** to bring us to God." (1 Pet. 3:18).

And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.

And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever (Exo 12:16 -17).

God commanded the children of Israel to *observe this event as an ordinance for ever*. It is a night to be observed and set apart unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt. They are to observe the night of the *Passover*, the seven days following as the feast of *unleavened bread*, and the morning after the Sabbath as the *“waving of the sheaf”* that symbolizes the resurrection morning when our Savior, the Lamb that was slain, rose up from the dead. The apostle Paul, admonishing the Church with reference to this feast, wrote: *“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our PASSOVER is sacrificed for us”* (1 Corinthians 5:7).

As we meditate on the ordinance of the Passover feast in Exodus and Leviticus, we can easily see that it is a type of our salvation experience. This feast was fulfilled in reality and made available to the Church in its real meaning when Jesus went to Calvary as the *“Lamb of God,”* shed His blood, and carried away our sins. The messages from Passover therefore are these: that we were ransomed from the dominion of death at Passover and liberated by the blood of His Son, the Passover Lamb; purged of sin, hypocrisy, and false doctrine during the days of unleavened bread to become a holy Temple of God; and celebrated the waving of the sheaf of the first-fruits before the Lord of the Harvest on the first day of the week after the resurrection of the Savior.

Still meditating on the blood, let's step back about 430 years and visit the call of Abraham, the miraculous birth of Isaac, and the formation of the people of God. Before the formation of the nation, there was an immutable covenant between God and Abraham, and the covenant and the nation were established by the shedding of blood.

The covenant between God and Abraham is recorded in the 15th chapter of the book of Genesis. The chapter starts with Abraham having a vision. God said to him, "*Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward*" (Gen 15:1b).

At this time, Abraham had no child. So he asked God, "*What will you give me, since I have no child?*" God replied by telling Abraham that the multitude of his descendants would be as innumerable as the stars, and that they would inherit the land he was standing on. Abraham, being a man, asked the Lord for an assurance that he would inherit the land. *Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?* he asked. God's response led to the covenant.

God then instructed him to take a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old she-goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon, and to kill these and divide them as God commanded him. This was the necessary preparation for the covenant that God made with Abraham later that day. It was consummated by the shedding of blood.

The Almighty God came through with His promise to Abraham and gave him a son when his wife had passed childbearing age and it was utterly impossible to conceive: Sarah gave birth to Isaac, the child of promise. Abraham had passed a severe test of faith, but he still had to learn that Isaac, the child of promise who belonged to God, could be truly surrendered to God only in death. Isaac had to die.

Yes, it's true, for Abraham, Isaac, and all of us, that only through death can freedom from the old-man or the self-life be obtained. It is important for us to keep in mind this spiritual principle that we conquer by yielding, we receive by giving, and we live by dying. There is no other way beside the way of the cross. The self-life must be laid on the altar, surrendered to die so that a new life in the spirit can be brought forth by the resurrection.

This is why the Lord Jesus said, *"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it"* (Mat 16:24-25).

Abraham had to offer Isaac on the altar. This was a divine revelation of the plan of God. But if Isaac were to die, it would be impossible for him to rise from the death on that day, for death would hold him fast on account of sin. Death would keep him until a qualified redeemer came to pay his debt. But, by the plan of the Omniscient One, his life was spared and a ram was offered in his place. This is substitution in action. As written in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews:

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from when also he received him in a figure" (Heb 11:17-19).

Four hundred years passed; Isaac produced a multitude of people, the children of Israel; and they were down in Egypt. God's people by covenant with Abraham and Isaac were in Egyptian bondage, and the means of their deliverance was *"not without blood"*. What the blood accomplished on Mount Moriah for Isaac, the child of promise and the father of the

nation of Israel, was then experienced by the whole nation in Egypt on the night of Passover.

In the same manner the saints of God have obtained redemption through the blood of the Lamb and the Church of Jesus Christ will overcome ultimately through the same.

“And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Rev 12:10 -11).

Blessed be God for evermore: there is redemption and victory in the blood of the lamb.

Chapter 3

Delivered from the Dominion of Darkness

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son. In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins (Col 1:13-14).

Here again is the good news: God has delivered us from the dominion of darkness. If you have received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you have been delivered from the lordship and dominion of the evil one. Neither sin nor Satan can lord it over you any longer unless you let them. You are no longer under the kingdom of darkness; you are a partaker of the kingdom of light and you possess the inheritance of the saints in light. You have a new spirit in you, the old is gone, and all is become new. A miraculous work of new creation has been performed in you. You are a new creation in Christ Jesus.

Now that you have been delivered from the dominion of darkness, you must begin to walk in the newness of life into which you've been transformed. Do not let the enemy through subtlety deceive you into looking back and subjecting yourself to the old bondage from which you've been delivered.

After God brought His children out of Egypt, He promised them that He would take them into the Land of Canaan. But many of them did not believe. These ones robbed themselves of entering into the rest He promised. They failed to believe His words, this unbelief gave way to fear, and fear led to defeat. We must understand that fear is one of the most potent weapons the enemy uses against us. If you begin to look at the physical circumstances around you instead of the Word, the enemy will begin to make suggestions, inferences, and logical prognosis to make you doubt the Word of God. And once you begin to walk in doubt and unbelief, he will attack you with fear. This is when you will begin to see your land of promise occupied by giants of insurmountable proportion. And it doesn't even end there: not only will you begin to see the giants and the monumental obstacles stacked against you, you may even begin to grow smaller in the face of these gigantic obstacles until you see yourself as a grasshopper before the giants arrayed against you.

Why did God keep admonishing Joshua as he was preparing to enter the Land of promise to be strong and very courageous? *"Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest"* (Josh 1:19). This is because fear is contrary to faith. Fear is a manifestation of belief in the power of the enemy at the expense of believing in the promises of the Almighty. Fear is

a proclamation of the might of Satan and declares that God is a failure.

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (Tim 1:7). Fear does not come from inside you; it comes from the outside, from the enemy. It is an attack by the evil one, trying to get you to succumb. He comes at you like a roaring lion, intending to cause you to fear and thereby devour you. Therefore, resist fear; do not confess fear, but instead confess the Word, the power of God, the love of God. Confess that you have a sound mind, an overcoming mind. Take on the shield of faith and quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

Fear is the evil one's weapon against the believer. When a believer entertains fear, he stops walking by faith. When fear is allowed to come in, faith goes out. Don't confess doubt; confess faith. Talk about who you are in Christ Jesus. Say it aloud, don't keep quiet. The enemy is constantly throwing bombs at you to create doubt and fear, so don't just stand there staring at him—throw your bomb back at him. Keep speaking the Word: *"He will never leave me nor forsake me .."*

Confessing your fear gives fear dominion over you. Fear becomes stronger and stronger as you meditate upon it or confess it. *When you confess your doubts and fears, weakness and sicknesses, inabilities and diseases, you are openly confessing that the word of God is not true or that God has failed to make it true.*

You must recognize fear when the enemy throws it at you in all its shades and forms. We are not to be ignorant of the devices of the evil one who comes at us in myriad ways to pull us down. You must keep these words before you at all times: *that God has not given you the spirit of fear, but of love*

and of power and of a sound mind. Fear is not from God; it is an attack from your enemy.

What kind of fear has the enemy been attacking you with? Is it the fear of failure? Is it the fear of not achieving what the world expects from you? Is it a fear of lack or of not being able to take care of yours? The Lord said: ***“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness”***(Isa 41:10). The Lord shall *“supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus”* (Phil 4:19).

Is the enemy attacking you with the fear of loneliness, of losing a loved one, or of being forsaken? The Lord says He will never leave you nor forsake you. If the Devil is lying to you and saying that God, like everyone else, will leave you or forsake you and that you’ll be alone, remember, the Lord said that He will never leave you nor forsake you.

“But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me” (Isa 49:14-16).

“He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation” (Psa 91:15-16).

“For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye” (Zec 2:8).

“But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed

thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isa 43:1-3).

Is it the fear of man he’s intimidating you with? Is it a fear of what people might say about you? Or is it the fear of isolation or calumny? Is it the fear of what they might do to you? Remember the word of wisdom from the Book of Proverbs: *“The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe”*(Prov 29:25). The apostle writing by the Holy Ghost reminds us of what God said in the book of Hebrews: *“For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me”* (Heb 13:6).

The Lord Jesus speaking to His disciples said: *“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”* (Mat 10:28).

Is it a fear of attack, a fear of sickness or of catching an incurable disease? Believe His promises, accept what He has done for you, and confess it.

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did steem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:4-5). He is your healer, your balm of Gilead, your resident physician.

Is it the fear of death? The Lord partook of death to deliver you from this fear. *“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part*

of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb 2:14-15).

Is it the fear of the unknown? Is it the crippling anticipatory fear of what tomorrow might bring? Fear not, only believe. Put your trust in He who holds tomorrow. Remember what Jehovah told Abram after he stepped out into the unknown: *“Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward” (Gen 15:1). “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went” (Heb 11).*

God is your shield, your buckler, your mighty fortress, and your high and mighty tower. He is your very present help in trouble.

“But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head” (Psa 3:3).

The sum of the message is that God has not given you the spirit of timidity or the spirit of bondage to fear. Instead, He has given us the spirit of love, of power and of a sound mind. *And There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (1Jo 4:18).*

Meditate on these words from God; let them not depart from your eyes nor from your mind until they become part of your system. Feed on these words until they become part of your being, until they are so absorbed into your spirit that you breathe them and act them without thinking.

No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt

condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD (Isa 54:17).

So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him (Isa 59:19).

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover (Mar 16:16-18).

For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock (Psa 27:5).

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early (Psa 46:1-5).

For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock (Psa 27:5).

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end (Jer 29:11).

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world (1John 4:4) .

For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee (Isa 54:10). Blessed be God our Father for ever more! Amen.

Chapter 4

In the Cloud and Through the Sea

“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ” (1Co 10:1-4).

“The LORD, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters” (Isa. 43:16).

When God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, bearing them, as it were, *on eagle’s wings* from the clutches of the enemy, He led them southward and brought them right up against the Red Sea. He did this on purpose to test their obedience, trust, and faith in Him. But they failed the test, because all they could see was the Red Sea in front and the menacing hordes of the Egyptian army behind them. God wanted them to behold His faithfulness

and His wisdom, and to know that the way of the sea would also become the way of victory.

God would have us know that every dead end in the pathway of obedience will lead us to a new highway of victory. He wants us to discover the secret of *standing still, and seeing the salvation of the LORD*. He also wants us to know that our encampment at the Red Sea in His will, where there is no place to go and no way to turn, is intended to bring about the defeat of our enemies, which we would not know without this nerve-wracking experience. He wants us to know that the place of our seeming defeat and dead-end perplexity can become our place of greatest victory.

He could have led the Israelites in some way other than the way of the Red Sea, and you and I would perhaps not have chosen the paths to which He has led us if we were in control. But somehow He led us this way, and the purpose is that He might be glorified.

How were the children of Israel baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea? We saw them leave Egypt after the Passover lambs were slain. God directed them southward towards the Red Sea, and there, they were caught between the sea and Pharaoh, who had had a change of heart concerning their release. They were perplexed more than ever before, and justifiably so, for they were between the devil and the deep blue sea.

Did they have faith that God who had brought them out so far would complete their deliverance from Pharaoh? Did they remember the plagues that devastated the Egyptians but did not touch them? Did they remember the promises and the oath that the God of Abraham their father had made to deliver them? Definitely not! Fear had overcome them and vaporized everything they had seen and had been told. If they

were going to be saved, it would not be on the merit of their faith in God. Their salvation had to come through the man Moses, who had heard from God and spent forty years in the wilderness of Midian being prepared for such a time as this.

This baptism unto Moses is identification. When they saw Pharaoh's army, they complained bitterly against Moses for putting them in this dilemma. The primary meaning of *baptism* is identification. Such is the baptism with water, which outwardly demonstrates the real baptism whereby we are identified with Christ in His burial and resurrection.

"By faith they passed through the Red Sea by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned" (Heb 11:29). It was "by faith" that the Israelites crossed the sea. Whose faith was it? It was not the faith of the children of Israel, because they did not have any until they crossed over the sea. They complained on one side of the sea, and when they crossed to the other side, they sang the song of Moses. They were identified with Moses. It was Moses' faith. It was Moses who smote the Red Sea. It was Moses who led them across. When they reached the other side of the sea, it was Moses who lifted the song of deliverance. They had seen the salvation of God; they were identified with Moses; they had been baptized unto Moses; and they were delivered through him.

Friends, this is what happens when you trust the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. He is the One who takes us out of the Egyptian bondage and the Egyptian darkness of this world. He leads us across the Red Sea. It is His deliverance and His salvation and His redemption. He brings us to the place where we can lift a song of redemption unto Him. Then, we are joined to Him: we are baptized into Christ. Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians Chapter 12 and verse 13 says, *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have*

been all made to drink into one Spirit.” The Holy Spirit is the one who joins us to Christ and causes us to become one with Him. It is a wonderful thing to be joined to Him!

Baptism in the Cloud

“And the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them” (Ex 14:19). The journey in the wilderness was very grievous to the children of Israel, but God knew what He was doing and led them all the way. The Pillar of Cloud that had been leading the way moved from the front of the hosts of Israel to the rear, passing through the host and immersing them in the Cloud of Glory. He who was their Guide now became their Protector and their Defense against their enemies. His glory became their Light throughout the darkness of the night; and that same glory became darkness and night to the enemies of God.

We need to remember this: in the night hours when the darkness is all around us, the Pillar of Fire is guiding us, giving us light. This Pillar of Fire also protects us from attack and from danger. It is our hiding place and the only defense that we need. The Light in which we dwell and in which we walk shall make us totally triumphant over all the powers of darkness in the world around us. God planned it this way, that in the hour of darkness, His glory would shine forth upon His people.

“For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee” (Isa 60:2).

Baptized into the Cloud of His glory, we the people of God shall radiate the very Light of God Himself. The Pillar of Cloud by day is our shield and protection from the scorching heat of the midday sun and the guide in the wilderness.

“And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence” (Isa. 4:5).

Chapter 5

Thou Shalt Bring Them In

“Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established” (Ex. 15:17).

God had a divine purpose for bringing the Children of Israel out of Egypt. As He brought them forth by the hand of Moses, His purpose was to bring them close to Himself. His plan was to bring them into the land of Canaan where they would become His people and He their God, and they would worship Him in His holy Sanctuary. His plan was not just to deliver them from the Egyptian but principally to bring them close to His own heart, that they might become His Royal Priesthood and His Holy Nation.

God had told Abraham that his descendants would be *“strangers in a strange land”*, that they would be slaves and would be afflicted for 400 years, but that He would bring them out with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm. This is exactly what happened. And God kept His promise to

Abraham and caused them to multiply. The more the Egyptians afflicted them, the more they grew, and at the appointed time the God of Abraham brought them out with signs and with wonders.

What a great day of victory that was when God brought Israel out of Egypt and parted the Red Sea before them and they crossed on dry ground to the other side! What a time of victory!

They had seen the host of Egyptian soldiers, the horsemen with their chariots chasing them as they crossed the Red Sea. They had heard Moses say: *“Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever, The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace”* (Exo 14:14). They also saw Moses lifting up his hand and the Red Sea returning upon the Egyptian army burying them with their chariots. They saw their enemies perished in the mighty sea. No wonder they did not hesitate to sing the victory song with Moses!

“Then sang Moses and the children of Israel sang this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him” (Exo 15:1 -2).

A few hours before, they had been singing a different song. That was before they crossed the sea, when they lifted up their eyes and saw Pharaoh and his host marching towards them. At that time, they sang the blues loud and clear. The words of their early song included these: *“Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the*

wilderness? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness” (Ex 14:11). They would be returning to these Desert Blues very soon as they traveled through the desert. But for now, blessed be God, they temporarily identified with Moses and enthusiastically sang the song of redemption.

However, we must not forget that Israel’s journey from Egypt to Canaan is an example for us. It is a picture or portrait of us and of our redemption. The way they behaved is an accurate picture of our behavior, including their unbelief, impatience, and ingratitude.

“Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1Co 10:8-12).

The parallel between the Exodus event and the Calvary event is obvious. God acted to deliver His people from Egyptian bondage under Pharaoh by sending Moses, a leader from among them, and led them across the sea of judgment in which God’s enemies perished, bringing them to the promised land of life and liberty. In a similar manner, God has acted to deliver us from the dominion of sin and death under Satan by sending us a Savior who has shared with us

our life in the flesh, led us across the sea of judgment in which God's enemies were defeated, and He translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son.

This song concerning the miraculous parting of the Red Sea is surely a response to an unparalleled Divine action. Moses led, and the people followed. They sang about the right hand of God, which is full of power and glory. They sang of His greatness and His excellency, and Miriam the prophetess led the women with timbrels and dances.

The beginning of the song presents the central theme of the celebration. It is about the glorious triumph of the Lord. It clearly shows us that God performed the work of deliverance and not Moses. All the glory belongs to him. It is His and His alone. His right hand and His holy hand *has brought Him the victory*.

Although many deliverance events and victory songs are described in Scripture, this one remains the model for the deliverance experienced by the New Testament believers. And finally, in the Book of Revelation, this song and its antitype will be sung by those who would win the victory over the beast and over his image.

"And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest" (Rev 15:3-4).

This celebration of worship and thanksgiving is worthy of emulation for us, the New Creation in Christ. Whenever we come before our God, we must always begin with praise. We

must enter His gates with thanksgiving; we must enter His courts with praise. He is the King of heaven and earth, He is our Deliverer, He is our Refuge and mighty Tower, and He is our King; great is the Lord our God.

“Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King” (Psa 48:2).

We should cultivate a habit of daily singing these songs of victory and worship unto God, who has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and translated us into His kingdom; for indeed, there is none like our God.

“Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” (Exo 15:11-12).

Suddenly, in the middle of these songs of victory, a remarkable prophecy emerged. In the seventeenth verse of the chapter, Moses began to prophesy in the Spirit. After testifying of the great deliverance, the destruction of Pharaoh and his host in the sea, and the majestic glory of God displayed on their behalf, the songs was interspersed with a prophetic revelation of things to come.

“Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance” was the beginning of the prophetic utterance. God is teaching here that even in the song of deliverance, there is a prophecy of something greater to come. As they celebrated the victory, God was informing them that there was a lot more. God was telling them that He had brought them out, not to leave them in the wilderness, but to take them into the Land of Promise. *He brought them out to bring them in.*

And for us also, who have been born again, God has brought us out of the dominion of Satan. And He will have us know that He did not save us to live a life of mediocrity. He did not even save us to live the life of commonplace people. Instead, He took us out of the prison and placed us on the throne. He brought us out of death into life, out of darkness into light, out of failure into brilliant success, and out of weakness into His mighty power.

He pulled us out of prison into liberty, out of the pit onto the mountaintop, and out of the miry clay onto the rock. He pulled us out of uncleanness into the holy priesthood, out of slavery into lordship over Satan, and out of poverty into His everlasting inheritance. He has not only delivered us from our former taskmaster, but has rendered double unto us placing us in a position above our former lord. Hearken to the voice of the prophet and turn to Him as your stronghold:

“As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto thee” (Zec 9:11 -12)

Yes, it’s true: by the Blood of the Passover Lamb, the Lamb of God, we have been set free, released, and sent forth out of the waterless pit. We now have redemption through the Blood of Jesus. Not only has He set us free by His Blood, He has rendered double unto us. In other words, He pulled us up out of the pit and placed us on the mountaintop. It would have been sufficient to bring us up from the pit to the ground level, but He rendered double unto us by catapulting us onto a mountain higher than the level of our former taskmaster.

No wonder the Scripture says that while we were dead in sin, He quickened us together with Christ, raised us up, and made us sit together with Christ in the heavenly places. This

position where He has placed us is far above all principalities and powers.

He took us out of the prison house and made us into royalty, and brought us out of idolatry into the royal priesthood.

Yes, it's true: He has taken former slaves and transformed them into conquerors who can trample over all the powers of their former oppressors. Hear the Lord speak to these former prisoners of hope saying: "*Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you*" (Luk 10:19).

"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mar 16:17-18).

This becomes the heritage of the believer who once was under the dominion of demons. He has now become their master, and by the authority vested in him or her by the Lord, he can cast out demons and set others free. In the Name of the Lord Jesus, the believer becomes the master, no longer to be bullied by satanic forces. The believer can recover everything Satan the thief has stolen, for Satan comes to steal, to kill, and to destroy. The tables have turned: the predator has become the prey, and the expropriator is being expropriated.

This is what we are learning here: When God redeems, He not only delivers *from* something, He always redeems *unto* something greater. We have been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's Son. You have been brought out of Adam and baptized into Christ. You have been brought out of death and into life. You have been brought out of darkness and into light. You have been

brought out of hell into heaven. The redemptive work performed by God is a complete one: He takes us out and brings us in. It is *out of, into*.

God had planned from the beginning to plant us "*in the mountain of His inheritance*." It was never His intention that we should take root, flourish, and die in Egypt. Neither was it His plan that we remain in the wilderness of Shur, and not even in Elim, the place of refreshing in the wilderness, where there were twelve wells of water and threescore and ten palm trees (Ex. 15:27). His desire and plan is to bring us into the Land of Canaan: the land of abundance, the place of fruitfulness, the land of rest, and the mountain of His inheritance.

This land has been prepared for those whom He has brought out and who would dare believe His promises. Like Caleb and Joshua, God will bring those who would believe into the land that flows with milk and honey. God's plan is to ultimately bring us into His holy habitation that where He is, there we may be also.

He has prepared a special place for His people. A place close to His own heart, where will be satisfied with plenty and refreshed with the fountain of life. But His people must enter in by faith.

The Almighty God has prepared a feast for the overcomer company in the land of abundance and is waiting for them to enter in. His plan is that these Caleb and Joshua Company will partake of the Feast of Tabernacles with Him in the mountain of His inheritance. Dearly beloved, let us therefore diligently seek to enter into that rest, lest any of us should fall after the same example of unbelief, for "*He brought us out from thence, that He might bring us in, to give us the land which He sware unto our fathers*" (Deut 6:23).

Chapter 6

Into the Holy City

There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early (Psalm 46:1-5).

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day (Psalm 46:1-5 NIV).

This chapter cannot begin with a better passage of Scriptures than these quoted above, written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost by David, the man of God. If any verses of Scripture were written to encourage us in times of trouble, the verses quoted above surely were.

This passage brings us a message of hope from the Throne of God to anchor our souls on the Rock of Ages, especially in this

stormy day and hour when the whole earth is being shaken. The hour foretold by Paul the Apostle is upon us, the hour when the voice of the Almighty God will shake both the earth and the heavens.

Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain (Heb 12:27).

Today, the earth and the kingdoms of men are beginning to shake, just as the Almighty spoke through the mouth of His holy prophets. But there is a more terrifying shaking ahead, the magnitude of which will cause the strongest of men to fear: a shaking which the Spirit says will affect the foundation of the earth to its core. David, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, wrote these verses for our benefit. The purpose is to admonish us to anchor ourselves in faith firmly to Christ. He is the only hope that is sure and steadfast and will carry us through the final upheaval about to be unveiled.

Writing both from a prophetic plane and drawing from his experiences of deliverance wrought by Jehovah, he asserted:

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof (Psalm 46:1 KJV).

David made the above statement with an unusual confidence: That though the earth is removed and the mountain shaken off their root and dumped into the sea, there will be no fear in them that take refuge in God.

How can a people stand sure and unmoved when such a cataclysmic event is taking place on earth?

David, by the Spirit of prophecy, revealed to us the secret. He continued the message saying: *We will not fear "though its waters (referring to the sea) should roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling and tumult"* (Psalm 46:3 Amplified). How can anyone stay calm in the midst of such chaos when almost everyone else would probably be in a state of panic? The Spirit, through David, gives us the answer: *"We will not fear"*, he said, because *"there is a River, whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the Tabernacles of the Most High."* (Psalm 46:4, Amplified Old Testament).

The people who have committed their whole way of life to God, who have plunged headlong into the River of God and fully committed their lives into the care of the Spirit of God, shall know the joy, the peace and the rest of the River of God when the heavens and the earth are shaken, and when the mountains are cast into the depths of the sea.

We do not understand all the implications of these statements made by the Holy Ghost, but we do know that when the heavens and the earth are shaken, and the mountains are dissolved in the sea there is going to be a people flowing in the River of God: a people that will be dwelling in the City of God and abiding in *"the Holy Place of the Tabernacles of the Most High."*

Let's proceed to the book of Ezekiel and begin to meditate on some of the visions given to him in the land of the Chaldeans. A few of these visions of the glory of the God of Israel and of His new Tabernacle, shown to Ezekiel, are going to be the central focus of meditation in this book.

But before proceeding, let's digress for a moment and begin this message from the life of Solomon, the son of David, who built the first Temple for the God of Israel. We very well know the details of that magnificent temple that Solomon built for Jehovah in Jerusalem with its glory and splendor. Sadly, Solomon, in his later years, forsook the God of his father, whom he had served so well. He went astray after false gods of the nations around him. His heart went after strange women who led him into idolatry and he erected high places for strange gods in Israel. Not long after his death, his kingdom was divided according to the Word of the Lord. National apostasy began, and idol worship became rampant in Israel and in Judah.

Yet through this time of apostasy God was faithful in sending His prophets, whose missions were to turn the nation back to God, and to point the people to the ancient landmark and bring them back to the faith of their fathers. Back and forth from the days of the judges to the reign of the kings, we see God's people repenting from idolatry and then turning away from God after they have been delivered and brought back. There were seasons of revival followed by a turning away from God. They were times when ungodly rulers succeeded over those whose hearts were right with God.

There were kings like Hezekiah who did what was right in the sight of the Lord, after the steps of David, and brought revival to the house of God (2Kings 18). And there were evil kings in Israel that followed the ways of Jeroboam, who caused Israel to sin. There were even worse kings who followed the ways of Ahab and Jezebel, the mother of harlots. For *"there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. And he did very abominably in following idols,*

according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel" (I Kings, 21:25-26).

Eventually judgment came, and God gave both Israel and Judah over to the empires surrounding them to harass and carry them into captivity. The two separate nations of Israel in the north, with its capital at Samaria, and Judah in the south, with its capital at Jerusalem, went downhill at separate rates.

Israel went into paganism first, reaching the crescendo of corruption under Ahab and Jezebel. God allowed them to be taken captive, in two separate waves, by the Assyrians. The Assyrians then took Gentile peoples to fill the cities of Israel. Israel never returned.

Judah worshipped God a little longer than their Northern brethren but they too went a-whoring after strange gods. God sent them prophets to warn them, but they would not hear. Therefore, God sent the Babylonians to carry them into captivity about 120 years after Israel had been carried away by the Assyrians. However, some Jews returned after 70 years, under Ezra, to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

There were numerous invasions and *carryings away* into captivity from both Israel and Judah before the final desolation of Jerusalem and the plundering of Solomon's Temple by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar.

It was during one of these *carryings away* that Ezekiel was taken captive from Judah to Babylon, and found himself in a slave camp with other captives by the river Chebar.

It was here, in the land of captivity, that God called Ezekiel the Priest and raised him up as a *watchman prophet* for the house of Israel. *"I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me" (Ezek.3:17).*

It was here that the "Word of the Lord" came unto Ezekiel, and God showed him several visions--one of which is the subject of this book. It was here in the land of captivity that Ezekiel saw the vision of the glory of the God of Israel.

The purpose of this book, Dear Saint, is to cause you to see visions of the Most High, to cause you to be enraptured by visions of the supernatural. Visions that will cause you to be numbered with them who are the voice of God to a nation in captivity.

The young man Ezekiel, just becoming thirty years of age, was just reaching the age when he could begin his ministry as a Priest in the temple when the Babylonians struck. How sad! He found himself not robed with the Ephod and burning incense in the Temple but working in the Babylonian field among the captives by the river Chebah. But Ezekiel was not bemoaning himself; rather, he was looking up, and despite his situation was still able to see the visions of God in the land of captivity.

The man Ezekiel, to whom God gave these end-time visions, is a type of a faithful remnant in the land of captivity. He himself had not sinned against God as the others, but he was there among them by God's appointment. He was the voice of God to the nation. God raised him up as a watchman and a sign to the nation to bring a prophetic Word to His people.

In the same manner, God is raising up an Ezekiel company in this hour that will be the voice of the Lord to His nation in captivity.

My desire, above anything else, is to be numbered with that company, numbered with the company that will be the "voice" preparing the way of the Lord and making His path straight; the "voice" that will lead a remnant out of captivity back to Zion; the company that will rebuild the old waste

places, that will raise up the foundations of many generations; the company *“that shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in”* (Isa 58:14).

In this great vision, Ezekiel saw the same River of God spoken about in the passage above by David, the man of God. This River, *whose channels gladden the city of God*, flows from the Holy place, carrying life and refreshing wherever it goes.

We shall, in this book, meditate on the revelation of this River of God unveiled to us through Ezekiel's visions. For these visions were given to him for our benefit in this day and hour.

At the time of this vision, Jerusalem was desolate and the glory of the God of Israel had departed from its place within the Cherubim in the old Temple. Yet in and through it all, Jehovah, our merciful God, made a promise. He promised that He would return in the fullness of time and take up His habitation in a new Temple not made by the hands of men; *a “true tabernacle that the Lord pitched and not man.”* He promised that from this new Temple He will send forth a "River of Life" that will bring healing to the nations (Ezek 47).

We see in the visions that God showed Ezekiel in the earlier Chapters of the book of Ezekiel how the glory of God withdrew from His place in the former Temple. Earlier on, the Lord had taken Ezekiel on a tour of the Temple area, and had shown him all the abominations that were being perpetrated by the priesthood and the elders of Israel (Ezek 8&9).

Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry. He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? Even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I

should go far off from my sanctuary? But turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations.

And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door.

And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about.

And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up (Eze 8:3-11).

In the passage above, when the Spirit brought Ezekiel to the door of the Inner Gate, he saw the glory of the God of Israel in His place (Ezek 8:4).

It was at that time that the Spirit of God took Ezekiel on a tour of the house of God and showed him all the abominations being perpetrated by the elders and the priests in the house of God. He saw the idols and the images erected in the holy place by the people of God to provoke Him to jealousy.

In the third verse of the ninth Chapter, Ezekiel reported how he saw the glory of the God moved “*from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house*” and witnessed the judgment of God on His people.

And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side;

And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the

foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary (Ezek 9:3-6).

When Ezekiel witnessed the judgment of God that fell upon the people, starting with the priests and the elders in the sanctuary, he fell on his face and cried unto God for mercy.

Sadly as he watched all these, Ezekiel saw the glory of God moved to the door of the house (Ezek 9:3-4), then to the Eastern Gate of the Lord's house (Ezek10:19), and lastly the glory of the Lord completely departed from the city (Ezek 11:23).

But the Almighty is a merciful God. Blessed be His name for ever and ever. For He, our God, *“is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy”* (Psalm 103:8). In the midst of this righteous judgment, which was long overdue, God brings forth the promise of a New Covenant: a more excellent covenant established on better promises, for the word of the Lord came unto Ezekiel saying:

Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. ...

And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh;

That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God (Ezek 11:17-20).

Ezekiel, like all the other prophets from Samuel and those who followed after, was actually speaking of *this present day* in which we live (Acts 3:24). The visions that God showed him contained a revelation of the wonders of God reserved for us. For *"Unto them it was revealed that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you; which things the angels desire to look into"* (1 Peter 1:10-12).

Yes, the Almighty, the gracious One, promised His people in those visions that He would return in the fullness of time and take up His habitation in a new *Tabernacle not made with hands*. This promise began to be fulfilled in the later vision described in the 40th chapter of the book of Ezekiel. Here God showed him the new Temple in the new City of God. It was from this new House of God from where the Water of life was springing forth under the threshold of the Temple, south of the altar. It is in this new City of God the heavenly Jerusalem that the Almighty will dwell with His people.

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God (Rev 21:2-3).

There is a River

Every river must have a source, a channel through which it flows, and an outlet into which it continuously pours its content. The river source, which might be on a mountain top, must be higher than both the channel and the outlet. The higher the source, the greater the flow potential; The deeper

the valley or outlet into which the river flows, the stronger the stream velocity of the river current.

A river is also a source of power. In many countries of the world, hydroelectric power is harnessed from flowing rivers as a source of energy. In others, the power of a flowing river is harnessed to carry logs of wood over great distances. A flowing river carries power along with it and this power can be tapped by those that have the proper insight. This is also true about the River of God.

The message of this book pertains to the life-giving River that flows down from the throne of God and from the Lamb. It is the River of power, the River of restoration, the River of fruitfulness, the River of blessing, the River of truth, the River of peace, the River of joy, the River of revelation, the River of wisdom, the River of life, and the River of Love that flows ceaselessly from the heart of God to humanity through the land of our inheritance.

This river, of which we speak, springs forth from the House of God located on His holy hill. The fountain-head of this spring of life is from mount Zion. As David sang in the Spirit: *“All my springs are in thee.”* Praise His holy Name forever more!

Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed. O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.

The LORD is great in Zion; and he is high above all the people. Let them praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy.

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

*The LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, **O city of God.** Selah.*

And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her. The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there. Selah.

As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there: all my springs are in thee (Psalm 48:1-2; 87:3-7).

“And in that day, when O Jehovah, Thou shall count
When Thou shall write the sum of them
My heart cries unto Thee Most High
That it may be said of me, even me
That **this man was born there**
And that the singers may this of me sing
That **all his springs are in thee,**
O’ Zion, the city of the Living God”

While Ezekiel, in the vision, stood there in front of the new House of God, he discovered the fountain-head of this precious water. He reported what he saw in the vision saying:

Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar (Ezek 47:1).

The River of God originates from the right side of the throne of God and is therefore full of power. It is loaded with right-hand blessings for all who would tap it for their needs. Its source is from Him who sits on the throne, even He, who is at

the right hand of the glory of God. *To Him who sits on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be glory and honor and power forever.*

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.

*And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto **him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb** for ever and ever (Rev 5:12-13).*

This River proceeds from its source described above, flows through the City of God, the Heavenly Zion, to the inhabitants of the earth below to meet the needs of humanity. *"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Revelation. 22:1).*

Ezekiel saw *waters issued out from the threshold of the house.* Christ is indeed the temple; He is the door. It is from him that those living waters flow even out of his pierced side. It is the water that he gives us that is *the well of water which springs up to eternal life.* And it is by believing in Him, the Source, that we receive *rivers of living water.* *"But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive" (John 7:38).*

Let's notice that the origin of these waters was not above-ground, but they sprang up from under the threshold of the house. How analogous to the fountain of life in a believer! It is from the Christ *within.* As we become filled with these waters, men begin to observe that out of us waters of life, of love, and of power begin to issue forth.

The waters sprang *from the altar*. This also speaks of Christ who is our altar. It is in and by Jesus Christ, the great altar who sanctifies our gifts to God, that God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. From Him, as the fountain head, flows this river which makes glad the city of our God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High (Psa 46:4).

This issue of life flows not only to the present and future generations but is also available for all, even for those gone before us. For the prophet Zechariah, speaking by the Holy Ghost, said:

But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.

And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.

And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one (Zech. 14:8-9).

Chapter 7

Nearer To THEE

And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD. (Gen 13:3 -4)

The journey begins with the call of God. This call, like the experience of Abram in Mesopotamia, or that of Peter, Andrew, James, and John at the Sea of Galilee, is the means by which the journey toward the heart of God is initiated. This, if you will, is a journey toward the center of the universe, for Christ Jesus is the true center of the spiritual and physical universes. And this is the destination that the pilgrims are journeying toward. We all begin as infants, without any experience on the Lord's highway, and must continue as *the people of the way*, drawing nearer and nearer unto the Father's heart.

The men and women who were alive while our Lord walked the shore of Galilee had the opportunity to fellowship with Him in the flesh. Many of them only saw Him afar; others came near to Him. A few even lived and traveled with Him. There were different levels of intimacy with the Man of Galilee.

First we see the multitude, pressing and thronging around him, seeking to see signs and wonders and to be healed. Many of them were genuine followers, and these came to hear His words with the intention of becoming His disciples, while others came to hear and be healed. While some followed Him because of the bread and fish that He often miraculously provided for them to eat, some actually followed for the bread that perishes not but endures to eternity. The group that followed because of natural bread never really became intimate with Him, but it remains true that all of them were touched one way or the other by the Master and were never the same again.

The multitudes saw Him as the healer, the miracle worker, and the compassionate provider. Yes, He was all that. These saw him from far off. They were the crowd that heard of his fame and came to see and to hear, but never really got closer. Others were standing along the pathway, located in the right place at the right time, and were touched by the radiant energy that emanated from His body as He walked by. These ones, too, were made every bit whole.

Some others were forever grateful to Him for coming around when their beloved sons were in the casket on the way to be buried and returning them to life by His resurrection power. To others still, He was the son of David, the king of Israel, whom the prophets spoke about.

Yes, He's all that and much more. However, only a few drew close enough to Him to really know who He is.

The second level of intimacy with the Lord is seen with the seventy. In the tenth chapter of the gospel of Luke, we read of the Lord appointing seventy of His followers and sending them out two by two to preach.

After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.

Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. (Luke 10:1-2, Luke 10:17-20)

He appointed these ones, equipped them with power over devils, and sent them forth to preach. As they went on their mission, they saw miraculous manifestations of His power. They even saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. However, these people were not very close to the Lord Jesus, either. They experienced the miraculous manifestations and marveled at the wonders done in His Name, but were not intimate with His ways. Like the children in the wilderness, *"they saw His wonders, but Moses knew His ways."*

As we get closer to the Lord, we see the twelve disciples. These ones, whom the Lord selected out of the seventy and ordained to be His closest companions, went with Him everywhere. The Scriptures tells us that He chose them *that they might be with Him*, and that He might send them out to preach. These ones were nearer to Him than the seventy that He sent out earlier. While some others had excuses, these ones, when called by the Lord, left all and immediately followed Him.

Nearer to Him still, we find the three: Peter, James, and John. These three disciples seemed to form the inner circle of the Lord Jesus. They were the most dedicated and were always in the forefront of attending to the Lord, always close around Him and at His feet, learning His words. They were among the first set of disciples that the Lord called. Peter, James, and John were busy with their profession as fishermen on the Sea of Galilee when the Lord found and called them, and they immediately left everything and followed Him.

Matthew tells us that He found Peter and Andrew his brother first: *And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.* (Mat 4:18 -19)

After this, the Lord called James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were in a ship with their father, mending their nets. They immediately left the ship and their father and followed Him. We can see that from the onset, these men were dedicated to the Lord and had forsaken all to follow Him. Yes, it was the Lord that chose them, but their hearts were already set to follow Him. The Lord sees the heart,

knows who is ready to receive Him, knows the stage everyone is at, and will reveal Himself to each one at the level that person is ready to receive.

Just as we recognize that not everyone we meet is ready to receive the message of salvation, and not everyone who has been converted is sufficiently prepared to receive the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, so also, even among the twelve disciples, only a smaller core group could be given these most intimate teachings of the Lord. Therefore, we see that the Lord would often pull aside Peter, James, and John and reveal more intimate things to them. We see Him take these three with Him to the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt 17,1; Mk 9,2; Lk 9,28), take them with Him to Jairus's house when He raised his daughter from the dead (Mk 5,37; Lk 8,51), and take them with Him into the Garden of Gethsemane (Mt 26,37; Mk 14,33). We hear of a couple of other outstanding disciples, namely Andrew and Philip, but these three—Peter, James, and John—were the ones to whom the Lord revealed more intimate things. Eventually, only John the Beloved was given the most intimate revelation of Jesus Christ, as recorded in the book of Revelation.

John was probably the closest disciple to the Lord while He was here, and, in my opinion, was probably the closest to Him even after He ascended to the right hand of the Father; for it was to him that the Son of Man gave the book of Revelation, the conclusion of the Holy Scripture, wherein is encapsulated the consummation of all things. He was also the last of the apostles, the survivor, who, though persecuted like the other apostles, "overcame" martyrdom. After the authority that was persecuting the Church attempted to kill him several times and failed, he was deported and banished

to the island of Patmos. This was where the Lord met Him and said *"Come up hither,"* and gave to him the Revelation of Jesus Christ to deliver to the Church.

As we draw nearer to God, our vision of Him gets clearer and clearer. This also makes our understanding of ourselves clearer, and we are better able to put all the things around us into perspective. Our vision gets better, our values and perspectives on life begin to align with His, and we become transformed into the likeness of Christ.

As we continue walking in God's way, we begin to see things as He sees them. We begin to reason in line with His words, we begin to talk and act like Christ, and we begin to carry out our everyday transactions as Christ would. As we endeavor to seek His way and to walk in it, we draw closer and closer to Him, and He is therefore able to reveal Himself to us. This, in essence, is what it means to draw nearer unto Him.

And as we draw nearer, He draws nearer unto us. It is true that He dwells in every born-again believer, for our bodies are temples of God, but the fact still remains that He can be that close to us and yet we can be as far from Him as possible. Not everyone who's born again is dedicated to His ways or eager about walking circumspectly in the Spirit. Many professed Christians, like His children who were brought out of Egypt into the wilderness, enjoy and desire His wonderful acts, but will have nothing to do with His ways.

Chapter 8

It Begins With the Call

And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; the God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,

And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.

Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. (Acts 7:2)

The word of the Lord came unto Abraham while he was still in his pagan home country, in the land of the Babylonians. God called him to leave the country of his nativity and go to another land, which the Lord said He would later show him. Abraham, still called Abram at the time of this call, believed God and set out to go to a destination he knew not. The book of Genesis records the call in the first verse of the twelfth chapter, as follows:

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee. (Gen. 12:1)

If you examine the tense of the verb used in this verse of Scripture, you will notice that it seems to look back to a previous communication between Jehovah God and Abram. And indeed, it does. God had earlier appeared and spoken to Abram before his family emigrated from Ur. From the account Stephen gave before his martyrdom, we understand that God called Abram while he was still in the Ur of the Chaldeans. God called him out from the midst of an idol-worshipping people to become a new nation that would be set apart unto Him. The words that God spoke to Abram were not fully written, but it suffices to know that Abram recognized the message as from the Most High God, and obeyed. Stephen clearly stated this in the Book of Acts, saying:

And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. (Acts 7:2-3)

While he was in Mesopotamia, before they moved to Haran, the *God of Glory* appeared unto Abram. The Holy Spirit, through Stephen, aptly chose this divine title to describe the appearing of the Lord to father Abraham. Oh yes, He is the God of our salvation, the God of heaven and earth, the God of love, the God of provision, and the God of creation—but He appeared to Abram as the *God of Glory*. This might explain why Abram was able to hold on through all the trials of faith that he went through. He had not only seen the glory of God, but had also seen the *God of Glory*. As you meditate on these words, *may the God of Glory appear to you and cause you to prevail over every trial you meet in your spiritual walk.*

In meditating on the life of Abraham in the preceding sections, one cannot but see the striking similarities to the

things we encounter in our Christian journey. It will benefit us tremendously if we carefully follow the life of this man of faith and see how in his journey he drew nearer and nearer to the heart of God, finally becoming a man God would call His friend. *I pray the Holy Spirit will help and inspire us to grasp the hidden treasures of truth in this message so that we can appropriate it in our lives and by it draw nigh unto God.*

First and foremost, it was God who made the first move. Abram received the call of God. This should not be strange to you and me. Our God is full of love and compassion. To put this more accurately, one should not say He is full of love, but that He is Love. *“God is Love, and he that dwells in love dwells in God and God in him.”* The ways of God are above us. His ways are higher than our ways. We see this in Genesis, for it was man that rebelled against Him. It was the earth that forsook heaven; it was man who committed high treason in Eden and disobeyed his Creator. Yet it was the God of heaven, the Creator of heaven and earth, who made the first move for reconciliation.

We did not read that Abram started the relationship by seeking after Jehovah the God of heaven, but that God called Abram. God chose Abram. We do not know what sort of person he was prior to the call; we can only speculate. We do not read about Abram praying to Jehovah God, but the Scriptures state that he received the call of God. The God of Glory made Himself known unto Abram.

In the same manner, the call of God brought you and me into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. We were lost, all of us, but God, who is rich in mercy, came down in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, sought us out, and saved us. We did not look for Him: He looked for us, found us, called us, and saved us through the Blood of the Lamb with so great a salvation.

The walk of faith begins not with man, but with God. It is His call of grace that leads to consecration and separation. Babel, the tower of confusion, originated from men's rebellious imaginations and made them begin saying to one another, *"Go to, and let us make us a name (Gen 11)."* The call and the walk of faith begin not with man, but with God Almighty, who Himself is the author and finisher.

This is in agreement with what the Lord told his disciples in the book of John, saying, *"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you"* (Joh 15:16). It was not man who initiated the search after God, and it was not the earth that looked to heaven for reconciliation: it was the heavens that came down to shake hands with earth. It was Jehovah God who came down to save and reconcile fallen humanity with Himself. As it is written, *"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation"* (2 Cor 5:19).

Let's return to Abram and watch him as he follows Jehovah God out of his country. At the close of the eleventh chapter of the book of Genesis, the Scriptures present the family of Abram and even step ahead in telling us about Abram's call and how he set out to obey God. This all happened around the time *"when men as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there"* (Gen 11:2).

While the earthbound men of Babylon were busy building the tower, saying to one another, *"Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth"* (Gen 11:4), God was searching for a man who would

hear and obey His call to come out from among them. God found such a man in Abram the son of Terah of Mesopotamia. This is the way it has been in every age. While carnal men are busy, laboring to build towers, striving to expand their territory and make names for themselves, God is busy looking for His men to call them out for His own purpose. Others can talk of their big achievements, their great progress, and their gain in the realm where they dwell, but the *called-out ones* continue to leave these earthly things behind and press on to higher places in God. And it is these earnest seekers after God who will bring to pass the move of the Spirit of God to bless humanity this end-time.

Abram was born about 4000 years ago in Ur of the Chaldees, a place north of the Persian Gulf, one of the richest parts of Asia at the time. His father, Terah, was a heathen who, like most people in ancient Babylonia, worshipped many strange gods. Out of the midst of this thick heathenism, God found and called the man Abram. In light of the evil and anti-God imaginations of the citizens of ancient Babylon, it is not surprising that God would call Abram and order him to leave his country, his kindred, and even his father's house.

With a father who worshiped many strange gods and a city devoted to wickedness and idolatry, Abram was not raised in the best of environments. Yet, when God called, he believed and followed God's instructions by faith. As it is written in the tenth chapter of the Book of Hebrews: *"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whether he went"* (Heb 10:3). By the word of God, he left the known to step into the unknown.

The very idea of leaving familiar territory and stepping into the unknown scares the living daylights out of some people. It is not easy to step out of the familiar into the unknown, but the call of the Christian life is a call of faith, a call to step into the realm of the spirit. It is a call to step from the visible realm into the invisible, from the mundane into the eternal, from the earth realm to the heavenly realm above.

In the eleventh chapter of the book of Genesis, we read about Abram's family and how he began to move out as God had commanded him.

And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.

And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there (Gen 11:26-28, 31).

The thirty-first verse of the eleventh chapter of Genesis tells us that Terah, the father of Abram, moved his family from Ur to Haran, a town about five hundred miles to the northwest in the direction of Canaan. Without a doubt, Abram's call had something to do with this migration of the family from Ur to Haran, which could be considered a partial obedience and a step in the right direction. Of course, Abram obeyed God by leaving his home, his business, and the familiar city of Ur, yet it was not complete obedience, because we read that some of his family members went along with him. The *call* of Abram demonstrates to us the *starting-point* of the life of faith. The first requirement *is separation* from the world. Abram was

called upon to leave his country, his *kindred*, and his father's house. God states the reason why Abram needed to separate himself from them in the book of Joshua:

Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac. (Josh. 24:2)

God had to move Abram out if He was going to raise a nation out of him and send a redeemer to save humanity out of that nation. Terah was an idol-worshipper, and since Abram had accepted the call by faith in the living God, it was expedient that he should be separated from his father's house, for *how can two walk together except they be agreed?* So, the instruction associated with the call was clear and specific: Abram was to get out of *his country, away from his kindred, and away from his father's house*. God's plan was to completely separate Abram from the idolatrous scenes of the Babylonian metropolis and draw him closer unto Himself.

In like manner, the Holy Spirit is speaking to you and me today, saying, *"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty"* (2Co 6:17-18). The message of the call has not changed.

Abram's life was changed. His trust in God set his life on a new course. It is that way for those today who receive eternal life by believing God and trusting in His Son. The believer is set on a new road, and the old road marked by a life of sin is abandoned. The new road is one of faith, obedience, serving God, and serving others. God's call to salvation is a call to a

changed life. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.”* (2 Co 5:17 -18)

God is still calling out a people for His name and setting them apart to draw them near unto Himself. They hear His voice, but the message is not an easy one, for it calls them to leave behind the opportunity for greater expansion in Babylon, to leave the place of comfort and security, and to step into a place of loneliness and uncertainty. And where is this call leading them? Like Abram, they do not know; He will not tell them yet. All they are told to do is follow the cloud of glory wherever it leads. Such is the plight of the called-out ones.

As noted in the preceding paragraph Abram heeded the call of God, set out from his hometown, and began his pilgrimage toward the land of Canaan, but he halted prematurely with his family in Haran. We did not hear that God spoke to him while he remained in Haran. God did not forsake Abram or rescind the call because of this incomplete obedience, but lovingly waited for him. Let us learn this important lesson. It’s possible that we are not hearing from God because of our partial obedience. When He says, *“Come out from among them,”* if we decide to come out but bring them along with us, we may not hear from God as we once did. What should we do then? Let’s learn from Abram.

So some others went with Abram out of the Ur of the Chaldees who themselves were not called. These ones, including Terah and Lot, must have heard from Abram that the God of heaven had given him a sure word, and they also wanted to partake in the blessings. These jolly fellow

travelers came along for the ride because of the prosperity promised by Jehovah. They loved the message and the supernatural anointing, and they were in it for the bounty, but would not share in the commitment or consecration necessary. Some would follow the Abrams out of Babylon with the ulterior motive of making a quick profit and winning names for themselves in the fertile plains of Canaan. These ones, like Terah, are not interested in the land of Canaan; they will settle in Haran and build a city there. They may have come out of Babylon, but Babylon is still in them. Others will join the pilgrimage with the Abrams and even cross Jordan into Canaan, but as soon as they reach the land promised to Abram, they will lustfully grab the fertile plains of Sodom for themselves. Sooner or later, the true called-out ones must be separated from these ones, and the pilgrims must press on unto the mountains of God.

And so Abram and members of his father's house traveled out of Ur, lived in Haran, and remained there until his father's death. Abram, seventy-five years old when Terah his father died, took the remnant of the family—his half-sister Sarai, who later became his wife, and his nephew Lot, the son of his elder brother Haran—and continued his journey to the land of Canaan.

And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came (Gen 12:5).

We must understand that the call itself was personal. It was directed to Abram, and to him alone. It was not for Terah, nor did it concern Lot. In the same manner, the call to the *ekklesia*

is not addressed to the old man or the outward man, but to the hidden man of the heart; and for this call to be beneficial, it must be personally felt and realized by the inner man. The outward man may hear the call, but cannot comprehend it. The senses may even witness the occasion, but cannot appropriate it, just as those who went with Paul on the road to Damascus saw him struck to the ground, but heard not the voice that spoke with him.

The instruction given with the call was, *“Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house.”* Abram indeed got out of his country, and even from his kindred, but not from his father’s house.

Indeed, there is a tremendous internal struggle associated with leaving one’s country and kindred and father’s house to step into the unknown. Like Abram, after we’ve heard the call in our spirits and set out as commanded, we still desire to take the *old man* with us into the land of promise. The message of the call is clear: *to put off the old man and its deeds*, to put on the new man, and to follow the spirit of truth into the realm above.

That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (Eph 4:22-24)

But the called-out ones still seem to want the company of the old man, and so they cling to it for a while more, hoping by some hook or crook to take the old man and its corrupt mind into the land of promise. At first it seems that the old man is ready to go along, and sets off in excitement on the spiritual journey out of Babylon toward Canaan. But the old man will never make it there. Like Abram’s father, *“they went forth to*

go into the land of Canaan, and they came to Harran and dwelt there.” Thus, the old man of the flesh cannot help us in the walk out of Babylon to Canaan. At first, in the period of excitement and infancy, the company of the old man seems to help us, for it is written not that Abram took Terah, but that *Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan.”* Often, at the onset, when the elect are called, there is some energy and enthusiasm from the old man, who is temporarily active in a good direction. But the old man will never go beyond Jordan; in fact, he will not proceed beyond Haran. And if the called-out one decides to cling to and stay with the old man, he too will not advance to the land of his inheritance.

God wants us to learn this lesson: that the old man of the flesh cannot enter into the realm of the inheritance. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. No matter how hard we try, the old life must die and be cast off. It cannot be brought into the heavenly places. If we are to go on with God into the realm of fullness, the old man must die and be buried. But it seems we are in a strait, for a new vision draws us up toward the high calling, but the old man still has claims on us and weighs us down. And in spite of the heavenly calling, we still privately desire that the old man might be saved or improved and taken with us.

And so Abram lived in Haran with his father until the death of the old man. After the old man died and was buried, Abram was able to resume his response to the call of God in total obedience. He gathered all he had and headed for the destination to which God had called him, *“And into the land of Canaan they came.”* He obeyed the call of God and arrived in the land which God said He would show him.

The very next verse after the record of Abram's obedience to the call of God tells us that God appeared to Abram. He had called and spoken to him at first when he was in his homeland, and was inadvertently quiet until now. Now, after Abram demonstrated his faith by obedience to the word of God, the Almighty appeared to him and reaffirmed His promises. *"And the LORD appeared to Abram, and said, To thy seed will I give this land: and there he erected an altar to the LORD, who appeared to him"* (Gen 12:7).

And so Abram looked for the land of promise, and longed to acquire it according to God's plan. He began his journey toward this earthly inheritance, but as he traveled along and drew nearer to God, he began to get a better understanding of God his Friend. He began to catch a glimpse of, not earthly real estate, but of the City which had enduring foundations, *"whose Builder and Maker is God."*

In a great trial of faith, he looked for a son, a seed, and a nation that would inherit the land; but instead he caught a vision of the Day of Christ, and rejoiced and was glad at what he saw. He would no longer occupy himself with the brass and dross of earthly promises; now he would partake of the gold. Even God Himself had become his *"exceeding great reward."* He had been changed from the younger Abram who was concerned about not having a heir to a man of faith whose desire was a heavenly one. He believed God, and He counted it to him for righteousness.

Abram entered the land that God had given him, walked through it, and acknowledged that it was good, yet something within him seemed to be left unsatisfied. Something inside him seemed to be saying, *"This is great, but there is something more; this is not it."* The promise of blessings and inheritance that God had sown in his heart brought forth a deeper spiritual desire for something much greater and more lasting

than what his eyes beheld. He probably could not describe in human language what he was looking forward to, could not put into words what would satisfy the hunger and desire that had been birthed by the seed of promise that God had sown in his heart, but he knew beyond any shadow of a doubt that what he had seen was not it. He walked through the land, moving from the north down to the south and back to where he had first pitched his tent and built an altar unto God, and he perceived that this was not it.

He had grown more mature, his eyes had shifted heavenward, and he was no longer passionate or interested in possessing the land of Canaan, but sought a heavenly one. He was being changed from Abram to Abraham, from glory to glory, and earthly goods had faded away and become as dross before the pure shining gold of heavenly treasures. The words of the devotional hymn below are so pertinent to this message:

*From glory to glory He's changing me
Changing me, changing me,
His glory and image to perfect in me
The love of God shown to the world
For He's changing, He's changing me
From earthly things to the heavenly
His glory and image to perfect in me
The love of God shown to the world.*

The Holy Ghost, speaking through the Apostle Paul in the Book of Hebrews, writes, *"By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."* (Heb 11:9-10)

So Abram decided to live as a stranger and a sojourner in the land that God had given him. The land was his to inherit, but he would not take it. His eyes were fixed on something more eternal, something much more glorious. All the long and wearisome journeying from his homeland in Mesopotamia had given God's word of promise time to mature and blossom in him, and now the intended purpose of Jehovah had been birthed in him. The seed of promise sown into the good soil had germinated and brought forth something vastly more glorious than just a piece of real estate in the land of Canaan. The promise of inheriting and building great cities and a kingdom in Canaan and of possessing the entire territory given to him by Jehovah was good, but Abram would have none of that. He had seen it now. In his spirit, he had seen something with everlasting glory and splendor. He was no longer after an earthly city or kingdom; he was looking up and beholding the glory of that *"City which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."*

At the beginning of his journey out of Mesopotamia, he was probably excited about the promise of inheriting the land of Canaan, but after he had become more mature and drawn nearer to God, his eyes saw better, and he shunned the earthly dross for the priceless eternal substance.

It is the purpose of God that as you and I draw nearer unto Him, we'll begin to see things more clearly, as He sees, and the dross of earth will have less and less grip on us. This brings to mind the words of a popular devotional composed by Helen Lemmel in 1992, which reads:

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.*

As we draw closer and closer to God, we'll become more and more dissatisfied with our state and hungrier for intimacy with Him. He does not want us to become satisfied with our spiritual state, for this will lead to complacency. He will therefore continue to reveal Himself to us in a step-by-step fashion, drawing us closer and closer to Himself. This will cause us to keep moving forward and upward, nearer and nearer. As we receive the revelation of Jesus Christ in degrees, each step will draw us closer to Him.

As many of us as hunger and thirst for Him must understand that the reason we don't seem satisfied is because He does not want us to. He does not want us to become self-contented and complacent. There is more. There is much more He wants to bring us into.

The Apostle by the Spirit tells us that we all, "*with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*" (2 Co 3:18). As we draw nearer and nearer to Him, the glass we are looking through becomes clearer and clearer, and we begin to look more and more like Him. This process continues and our path and nature become brighter and brighter, until we are so close to Him that we see Him face to face; then we know Him and know ourselves, even as we are known of Him.

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. (1Co 13:12)

Chapter 9

From Altar to Altar

And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.(Gen 22:9)

In every generation, while worldly-minded men are busy expanding their gains, building bigger barns, and making names for themselves; God has always kept for Himself a people after His own heart. He has always set a people apart whose hearts are set upon Him. Nimrod built Babylon, Terah built Haran, and Lot was judge and ruler at the gates of Sodom, but Abraham built altars unto God in Mamre, in Bethel, and in Hebron.

While the Lots are working hard at expanding their territories and possessions in the well-watered plains of Sodom, the Abrahams are pressing forward and upward toward the mark on the mountains of God. They are moving from place to place, drawing closer to Bethel, the house of God, and pushing forward toward Hebron, the place of communion.

Men of God are altar-builders. Whether in the Old Testament, when altars are made out of physical elements such as bricks, wood, and stone, or in the New when the altar is symbolic of prayer and worship through Jesus Christ, men and women of God are specialists. Men of God are not city-builders. They are not followers of Nimrod, who built the first cities and the first empire as the founder and ruler of Babylon.

And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. (Gen 10:7-10)

Nahor, Abram's grandfather, established himself in his father's country, built a city, and called it after his own name. Terah, Abram's father, clung to him for a while and traveled away from his kindred, but could only go so far. After about 120 miles of pilgrimage, he'd had enough, and he settled down and built a city that he named after his deceased brother Haran. But the man of faith, the called-out one, must continue on his journey of faith to the destination that God will show him. He must travel out of the realms of Babylonia and head toward the land of Canaan.

Thus Abram traveled from place to place on his way to the land of promise. He passed from Ur to Haran, then to Sichem in the plain of Moreh, and then to a mountain east of Bethel. And as Abraham moved from place to place, he built altars of worship to Jehovah, his blood covenant Friend. He was on his way to the Bethel, the house of God and the gates of heaven. Removed from his comfort zone, he passed from the known to the unknown, from the certain to the capricious, and from people of familiar tongue to a country of strange people and language.

This is the same course that God has mapped out for his elect in Christ Jesus. These ones who have been chosen and called out of the world are strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Pilgrimage is their appointed lot: they cannot settle and build cities, but must move from camp to camp. They are always on the move, progressing, moving forward and climbing higher on the mountain of God.

As they fix their eyes on their destination on the mountain and press nearer and nearer, they meet with tests and trials that other worldly men never experience. They stumble many times, and may even seem to fall and roll down from their upward climb or take several steps back toward Egypt, but they are ever itching to go forward and upward. The failed tests cause them to learn and come to grips with their weaknesses, and they help them discover how to draw strength from the Omnipotent One.

Those who remain in the well-watered plains, who do not heed the High Calling, have none of these trials. Saul the son of Kish, the ready-made king and the instant prophet, knew nothing about trial or the testing by fire, or the making of a prophet-king like David, the man after God's own heart. When had Saul ever needed to run from cave to cave to escape death from an angry master whom he was loyal to? When did he have to go down to Achish and pretend to be insane to escape being killed by the Philistines? He never needed to. But David, whom God was training and drawing nearer to His own heart, had to pass through these difficulties. The roads a man of God has to travel as he draws nearer to God are paved with such trials. If he remains in the comfortable plains, he will not encounter any of them.

As a man, Abram had stumbled a few times in taking his father's house with him, delaying at Haran, and going down to Egypt; but as he grew older in his walk, he began to draw

nearer and nearer unto Bethel and Hebron, the place of communion where he would have an intimate relationship with God.

So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. (Gen 12:4-5)

Abram's purpose in coming to Canaan was certainly not to better his lot. He came in obedience to God's command, out of a more advanced civilization in Mesopotamia. His obedience was not complete because he took members of his father's house with him and also stopped his journey prematurely at Haran. The time Abram spent in Haran can be considered a period of marking time and delaying the blessing of God.

Haran, where Abram temporarily settled with Terah his father, symbolizes a *place of delay*. God is, for all intents and purposes, issuing a clear warning to all of us who have been called to learn this lesson from the life of Abram: that while we tarry in Haran, the land of delay, we will not hear His voice and neither will He appear to us. We must set out and keep going and pushing forward, nearer and nearer to Hebron. So Abram, after his father's death, took his wife and his brother's son and proceeded on his journey of obedience toward the land of Canaan, "*and into the land of Canaan they came.*" It is important to notice also that Abram could not move forward until the other influence in his life competing with Jehovah had been removed. The old man, the old nature,

has to die, or it will hold the man of faith back from obeying God.

My dear friend, if this narrative of Abram's life seems to match your life experience in your walk with God, be comforted by the fact that you're not alone. You've got company. However, what God is saying to all of us is that we should put off the old man and his deeds, put on the new man, and resume our journey on the highway of obedience toward Bethel and Hebron, the place of the inheritance.

And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD who appeared unto him. (Gen. 12:7)

Now we see Abram getting back in line with the path God set before him. When he journeyed back to the land that God showed him and built another altar, the Lord appeared to Him again. While he was in Haran, the place of delay, God had neither spoken nor appeared to him. We see this in the language used in the first verse of the twelfth chapter of Genesis:

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee. (Gen. 12:1)

If you examine the tense used in this verse of Scripture, you will notice that it refers to the previous communication between God and Abram while he was in his home country. After Abram's obedience was complete and he was in the land where God told him to go, God reactivated the promises of blessing that He had made earlier. There was a break in their communication while he dwelt in Haran. Haran is the place of delay on our journey to the place of communion with God.

Now that Abram had moved out and resumed obeying God again, God appeared to him and began to reaffirm the blessings that He gave him at first. In fact, when Abram asked for a surety for the blessing, to assure Abram of the immutability of His promise, God proceeded to make a covenant with him.

And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, having Beth-el on the west, and Hai, on the east; and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD. (Gen. 12:8)

Abram was a real altar-builder. He always did two major things whenever he got to a new place: he pitched his tent and he built an altar. That was what Abram was known for. That was his testimony, and everywhere Abram went, he left this testimony behind—except when he went down to Egypt and when he waited on the *old man* in Haran. For what altar will you build unto the Lord in the land of Egypt? Will you sacrifice the abominations of the Egyptians before their eyes? And how shall you sing the Lord's song in a strange land? My friend, we know about Abraham, but what kind of testimony do we have? What kind of reputation do we leave behind us as we travel from place to place in this journey?

To have a testimony, you don't need to wear a T-shirt or attach a big bumper sticker on your car that says "Jesus Saves," nor do you need to shout on the street so that people will know you're a true disciple. All you need to do is let the light shine through you. Abram quietly worshiped God, and the Canaanites surely learned that he was a man of God and a prince among them.

A man of God told the story of a question asked by a thoughtful little girl. She had been to church with her parents and heard the preacher teach about God. One day, the little

girl came to her mother. “Mom, God is bigger than us, right?” she asked. “Right!” her mother replied. “God dwells in us, right?” the little girl continued. “That’s correct!” her mother replied again, looking at the little girl’s face and not knowing where she was going with her line of questions.

You know, the little ones are often wiser than us grown-ups in the things of God because they listen with innocent hearts. Their eyes and ears have not been dulled by religion, by rationalization, and by the corrupting influence of the world and the world system.

Then the little girl slammed in her concluding question: “Mom,” she said, “if God is bigger than us and He lives in us, won’t He *show through*? “

Oh, that He might show through in you and me today! That we might let our light so shine before men that they would see the good works and give glory unto our Father who is in heaven! That men may see that it is no longer I that liveth, but Christ that liveth in me!

I also heard of a missionary who lived among some village people in inland China. The villagers did not know anything about the Christian Bible, but they must have heard of a Jesus who was a miracle worker and went about doing good works. So, as they watched this missionary who lived among them, they admired him and were amazed by the life he lived among them, and they had no doubt in their minds about who he had to be.

It happened that another group of evangelists came to their village with the gospel and asked them, “Have you ever heard about Jesus?” These villagers, who had neither heard the gospel nor had the Bible read to them, answered with an enthusiastic and convincing “Yes.” They told the evangelists that “Jesus” had lived among them for many years, and that

they could even take these Bible preachers to the village where “Jesus” lived and worked.

The native people had examined the life of this unsung missionary hero and seen Jesus showing forth. They were sure beyond any doubt that he was Jesus because of his life and ministry. *Oh, that he might show through! That the Indwelling One might shine through and through in you and me today!* This is the desire of God for us: *To be glorified in His saints; to be admired in them that love Him.*

From Bethel to Hebron

And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD. (Gen 13:3-4)

Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee. Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD (Gen 13:17-18).

The man of God arrived in the land that God promised to give him. He had left all behind in Mesopotamia: he had left his country, his kindred, and his landed property; he had even left his father’s house. He had traveled on a long journey through strange territories, and had arrived in this foreign land as a pilgrim. After enduring all this, he finally reached the destination that Jehovah had promised him. One would think that all his troubles would be over and he could now rest in his inheritance, but it was not quite this way. In fact, he was faced with two new formidable difficulties.

He arrived in the land that God had promised him, but the first thing he noticed was that it was occupied by the Canaanites: the land of his inheritance was currently owned by someone else. The second problem was no less formidable: there was famine in the land. What to do? This, in a way, was Abram's first trial in the land, and he did not know where to turn.

And Abram journeyed, going on still towards the south. And there was a famine in the land; and Abram went down into Egypt to dwell there; for the famine was grievous in the land. (Gen 12:9-10)

Well, Abram did what a natural man would do. He probably looked around to see what the other inhabitants of Canaan were doing to survive. He had temporarily forgotten that he was not one of them. He lost his focus on the El-Shaddai who had brought him to the land, he forgot the promises that Jehovah had made to him, and, like the other ordinary people, he decided to move down to Egypt. Did he remember to ask counsel of the Lord his God? No! He was so preoccupied with the problem that he followed his survival instinct—just like we do sometimes: when the rubber meets the road, we forget the Lord God as we seek deliverance from the arms of flesh. Abram, just as we probably would have done, went down to Egypt for refuge. Why do we often forget the song of the Psalmist?

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is

in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early. (Psalm 46:2-5)

Now, Egypt is a type of the world, and it also represents those who are living in the realm of the flesh and the senses, those governed by the things of this outside world. It represents the home of idolatry and perversion and the ground of sense.

Egypt is the land of many rivers, watered not by the rain of the heavens, but by her many rivers, which the children of Israel remembered when they thirsted in the wilderness and desired to return. Indeed, not only to the Egyptians is Egypt an enchanting land; its charms even attracts the called-out ones making them want to return. Egypt's treasures and provisions, its well-watered gardens, its wealth, proudly accumulated through the years by its powerful empire, are always beckoning to the called-out ones and luring them to return.

There was famine in the land of Canaan, and Abram, just like the other Canaanites, migrated to Egypt for sustenance. Abram, being tried by difficult circumstances on the ground of the promises, went down to seek refuge in Egypt. In Egypt, he was faced with another situation where he denied Sarai his wife.

Let this be a lesson to you and me: that once we compromise in one thing, we make room for other failures. First, we see him succumb to the trial by going down to Egypt without asking the Lord's counsel; then he made an allowance for deceit with Sarai his wife; and of course, he went ahead and lied in Egypt. One error led to the next, as it is with us all: one wrong step leads to another. One lie, if it is not immediately corrected, requires another to cover it up, and so on.

Abram did not pass this test, but God is plenteous in mercy and gave him, as He gives us, several opportunities to retake

it. This must bring you and me much comfort and encouragement; even if we stumble in this race, it is not the end for us. We can get up, pick up the race where we left off, and continue. God's desire is for us to win, and He will exercise his supernatural patience upon us and watch us win. We must understand that the purpose of the tests, trials, and obstacles God allows in our way is not to break us, but to train us and build us to a point where we can scale over the obstacle as overcomers. When we fall under any obstacle, we begin to see our areas of weakness, and by His strength, to work on them. Like athletes preparing for a race, we confront the obstacle again and then overcome it, to the delight of our Lord, who is our coach and trainer. The tests and obstacles are training tools to make us grow and become more proficient. They make us better and prepare us to become champions and overcomers in the race set before us.

Abram went down to Egypt with all the members of his family. Not only that, but recognizing that the Egyptians might desire his beautiful wife, he made an agreement with Sarai to lie in order to protect himself from the possibility of getting killed for her. He again forgot the God of Heaven, who brought him out of Ur of the Chaldees and gave eternal promises. This was definitely a move in the wrong direction, yet the Almighty God his friend did not forsake him. God was with him, and even though he stumbled, He was there to pick him up.

The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he should fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.
(Psa 37:23 -24)

We must not forget that Abram fell into all these in the first place because he decided to obey the call of God. If he had remained like his father Terah or his grandfather Nahor, he

probably would never have been in this situation. Neither his father nor his grandfather left ancient Babylonia, and there, they were provided for. Even in the time of famine, he would not have needed to leave home. He would not have needed to pass through any test or trial to prove himself, for these tests are for the elect only: they are for those walking the upward path of faith toward the mountain of God. As we travel on this road and run this race that is set before us, let us be watchful and make it a point of duty to always ask for counsel from the Lord when we meet with an obstacle, because He always has a way of escape for us. Let us make every effort to lay our cares upon Him and not rush into trying to solve the problems ourselves or following the multitude.

God in His mercy was all this time carefully following Abram and watching over him, even as he went down to Egypt contrary to the word that God had spoken to him since he came out of Mesopotamia. The Almighty God, who brought him out of Ur, never said anything about his going down to Egypt, yet God was down there to defend him and would not let Pharaoh as much as touch Sarai his wife. Due to God's intervention, Sarai was not defiled, and Abram, being reproved by the pagan king Pharaoh, departed from Egypt to where God had originally brought him.

This is something the church of our day must understand, for we desire communion with the Holy One of Israel and at the same time seek fellowship with the world. We seem to be ignorant of the fact that the altar of the Lord cannot be erected in Egypt. While God is saying, "Come out of Egypt, my people, and be separate unto me and worship me on my holy mountains," it seems that the elders of the church in our day are compromising with Pharaoh, who told Moses that Israel could go and sacrifice to God in the Egyptian territory. He said, "*Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land.*" It takes the

resolve of the man of God to stand and say no. *“It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the LORD our God: Lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes.”* (Exo 8:26) The people of God must come out of Egypt if they truly wish to sacrifice unto the Lord God.

Moses said, *“How can we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes?”* Indeed, if the Israel of God desires to build a holy altar unto the Lord, and if she yearns to have communion with Him, she must come out of Egypt and not return there. The man of God cannot worship with the Egyptians, not erect the true altar of God there. There is no fellowship between the worldly and the holy. Here is what Moses is saying to Pharaoh: Israel sacrifices lambs and oxen to their God, while the Egyptians worship the ox. The ox is one of their gods. Shedding its blood and sacrificing an ox was an abomination to the Egyptians. So, if Israel wishes to sacrifice unto and worship her God, she must totally and completely come out of Egypt.

Dear fellow believer, the Holy Scripture is telling us clearly in this message that we cannot hope to have communion with the Lord and draw nigh unto him while we remain in fellowship with the world. The Lord’s altar cannot be erected in Egypt. We must separate and consecrate ourselves unto the Lord Most High.

Many in our day cannot see any difference between church organizations and the world, and indeed most of the time there is very little difference. Because of this, they cannot see why the church system and the world system cannot bind together to worship God. This is what Pharaoh was saying and Moses contradicted. Most religious and carnal Christians, including many modern-day preachers, cannot see why the church should not adopt the ways of the world in worshiping

God and in growing the church congregation. They cannot see what is wrong with Pharaoh's suggestion for the children of Israel to build their altar in Egypt and worship their God there. In the same manner, many today cannot see the difference between the kingdom of Egypt and the Promised Land, between the holy and the profane, between the world and the called-out ones, and between the earthly and the heavenly. God has always commanded His prophets of this concerning His people: *"And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean"* (Eze 44:23). This is what He said when He called them a "peculiar people" and set them apart as the "kingdom of Priests" unto Himself. They are holy, sanctified unto the Lord of Hosts. This is also true of us, the members of the true Church of Jesus Christ. We have been sanctified unto God and set apart to worship the Lord God on His holy mountain. There is no agreement between the temple of God and idols.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?

And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (II Cor 6:14-16)

In Egypt, Abram had no altar. There is no doubt that fellowship with the world mars our communion with God. Not only that, but Abram put himself in a compromising position where he had to walk in deceit with regards to Sarai

his beautiful wife, and he had to be reproved by Pharaoh, who even seemed to behave more uprightly in this situation.

And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? Why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Why saidst thou, She is my sister? So I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way.

What a reproof from an Egyptian! And so it is today. How unbecoming it is for those of us who profess to know God to do that which is unfair and deceptive, especially that which borders upon a lie. It will profit us if we learn from the mistake of this great Patriarch.

And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.

And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD. (Gen 12:20-13:4)

So we see Abram return to Bethel, where he had built an altar unto the Lord earlier. Once he returned to the place of his pilgrimage, his worship of God resumed. The altar was renewed, and the sacrifices and the offerings resumed.

Chapter 10

Teach Me Your Ways

After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. (Psalm 46:1-5)

In the spiritual training that our Father God has mapped out for us, it is His purpose that each of us will continue to grow in our faith until we learn to depend on Him alone. It is His plan to continuously draw us closer to Himself until we are so close that we stop doubting and struggling, carrying our burden and relying on our strength, and start living a life of total reliance upon His promises.

Though we know we have been justified and are learning to walk by faith, we find ourselves trying to fulfill God's plan ourselves by our own effort and strength. We find Abram in the same situation. Abram had an immutable promise from God: Jehovah said to him, *"I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered."* God first promised Abram that he would make him a great nation when he was

around 75 years old. He believed God and kept expecting, but nothing happened. His wife Sarai remained barren.

Years came and went, and Sarai, Abram's wife, was still barren. The man of faith, in desperation for the fulfillment of the promise of God, looked another way and to another for a seed: Abram took Hagar, hoping by her to obtain the promised seed. Hagar is the natural; Sarai is the spiritual. Hagar is the human self-will, while Sarai is the submissive spiritual will. Hagar symbolizes the law; Sarai is grace.

Hagar is very fruitful, but Sarai remains barren. God may allow the elect Abram to bring forth a seed through the labor and scheming of the flesh, but this seed cannot replace the promised one. We see this in ourselves, in connection with our faith walk. We, like Abram, start off well, walking in fellowship and communion with Sarai, longing and seeking for a seed through the free woman. Then, having looked so long in vain for a seed from Sarai, we turn to Hagar, hoping to accomplish the plan and purpose of God by the scheming of the flesh. But the Scriptures clearly sum it up: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, corruption cannot inherit incorruption, and the seed of the flesh cannot inherit the promises of God.

Hagar, the law, brings forth children unto bondage. Sarai, the freewoman, brings forth seed into the liberty of the children of God. The Apostle by the Spirit gave this allegory in the Epistle to the Galatians:

Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. (Gal 4:24-26)

We are the children of the freewoman and of the seed of Abraham through faith. But though we know that we are righteous through faith, we still trust our sense-knowledge, which compels us to walk by the law to attain it. Though we have embraced the sacrifice of the cross, though we talk about it and profess to believe in its power to deliver, we have not learned to distrust our sense knowledge and to put away the arm of flesh.

The truth is on our lips. We constantly profess it: that we will prevail not by power or human might; that when we are weak, then we are strong; and that by dying, we live. As far as head-knowledge is concerned, we have learned these things, but when it comes to actually living them, only a few even scratch the surface.

It is difficult for our natural minds to grasp that the death of the old man, the death of our strength, and the death of our will, even when they seem to be in the direction of serving God, can indeed be the right way. This seems impossible to the sense-knowledge mind, and so we seek to live rather than to die; we strive to develop our own human strength and strong will rather than submit to and rely upon the Spirit of God. We then earnestly desire that somehow our effort and the product of our self-will and fleshly arms could somehow be sanctified to bring forth the spiritual fruit and replace the promise of faith. Like Abram, we hope that we can cajole God into substituting Ishmael for the child of promise. And so, like Abram we pray sincerely, "*O, that Ishmael might live before thee,*" hoping to substitute the effort of the flesh for the fruit of the Spirit. Listen to God's reply to Abram:

And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac; and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. (Gen 17:18-19)

We still desire that our efforts be sanctified to bring forth the promised fruit of the spirit, forgetting that God has already spoken: *“In Isaac, not in Ismael, shall the seed be called.”* We become exasperated in waiting for the seed from the long-barren freewoman, and so turn to the bondwoman, forgetting that we cannot obtain the spiritual from the flesh or the fruit of faith from the work of the law.

And behold! Hagar brings forth a seed! She brings forth Ishmael, for she is not barren, but the son of the bondwoman cannot be heir of the promise and must be cast out. Unaware of this and hoping that we can present the product of human effort and of the flesh to God to fulfill His plan, we passionately pray for God to keep Ishmael. But God agrees with Sarai, who said, *“Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.”* (Gen 21:10) The work of the flesh must be cast out, for by it, we cannot attain the promises of God.

Is what the Holy Ghost is saying to us through this metaphor clear? God indeed has spoken and has made an unchangeable promise to you and me. He has declared, by His word spoken clearly and unmistakably to our spirits, concerning His plan and purpose and what He’s going to do in our lives and through us. He has even shown us the great fruit that will proceed from the mission. We heard His word, believed it, and thanked Him for it. We then proceeded with our business

and in faith began to wait for the promise. We started up truthfully and sincerely in faith, in expectation of the manifestation. At the beginning, we were on fire, looking forward to the manifestation and knowing that it would not be by our power nor by might that the promise would manifest.

However, we wait and wait and the promise doesn't show. We have been thanking God all this time; we've been believing, confessing, and walking in faith all the while; we've been praying and seeking His face all this time for the promise; but after all this, faith still seems to be barren, and the promised seed is not forthcoming.

Years after years in futility, it seems, we have waited for the promise to materialize, and our patience is now wearing thin. Our faith, which once was fervid, is now dwindling and wearing off. After waiting for the promise, like Abram, for several years, we are tempted to seek the fulfillment of the promise elsewhere. Faith is becoming worn out and the "freewoman" herself is now *well-stricken in age*, worn out, and her womb is as good as dead; all hope of her bringing forth the promise seed is lost. So we turn to the bondwoman, the arm of flesh, and the will of the flesh to produce the seed.

Before we continue in this meditation, let's closely examine who Hagar really is, so we have a good understanding of the message the Spirit of God is teaching us in this metaphor. Hagar, an Egyptian, was Sarai's bondmaid. She belongs to Egypt, and hence belongs to the world and the things of the world. In her, we see that which is worldly at its very core. She is a bondwoman, and as the Apostle declares, *gendereth to bondage*. Sarai is the freewoman, the true owner of the house, and the mother of the heir, though at the present time

she's still barren. Sarai is the spirit of liberty and of walking in faith. But after we have walked in faith and in the liberty of the children of God for a while without seeing the promised fruit, we look elsewhere, even to the flesh, seeking a solution; we use worldly means to accomplish the purpose of God, seeking and longing to bear the image of the heavenly through the law and the energy of the flesh.

And as we turn to the flesh, lo and behold! The flesh, like Hagar, is not barren, and she quickly brings forth Ishmael. Now, we can help God and substitute this seed of the flesh for the heavenly seed of promise—if only we can convince the Almighty to accept this in place of the promised seed of faith. And so, like Abram, we sincerely pray, *“O, that Ishmael might live before thee.”*

Oh yes: you have placed your request before God, you have trusted His word, you have been walking in faith and confessing what God has said, but nothing seems to be coming forth and your needs aren't getting met. Like Abram, you feel that you've been faithfully joined to Sarai, but Sarai is still barren. Yet you know that God has said a seed will come forth. You cannot reconcile the present reality with the word of God and the seemingly futile expectation. So, to reconcile this, you seek an alternative way to fulfill the promise and help God bring it to pass: you resolve to bring forth fruit through another fleshy means. And indeed, you're successful. You have taken Hagar, and she has brought forth Ishmael. Incidentally, the seed Ishmael is indeed a male, but he's the son of the bondwoman. And since he is a male, just like the promise seed, and also a seed of Abraham, you attempt to present this to God, urging Him to accept this as substitute for the divine promise. You urge Him to take the fruit of the flesh for the heavenly seed, the work of the law for the fruit

of the spirit, the worldly building made by defiled hand for the living Sanctuary of the Most High God.

As we draw nearer and nearer to God, we'll continue to see that His ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts are higher than ours. We will also continue to know that we cannot do things our way and bribe Him into adjusting His way to fit ours. We must all learn that we need to change our ways to match His, for He is the never-changing One. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever, but we must continue to change until we become like Him. We need to pray that He'll help us to become malleable in His hand, that we'll be teachable and easily entreated and molded to conform to His ways.

Suffered Thee to Hunger

And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live (Deut 8:2 -3).

Wait a minute! Let's pause and ask a question right here. *Who led the Children of Israel through the wilderness for forty years?* Someone once said, "I thought they wandered through the wilderness, gaining a day's distance each year." Well, the passage of Scripture quoted from the book of Deuteronomy above gives us the answer.

We must be cognizant of this important fact: although some may consider that the Hebrew children wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, the truth of the matter is that the Lord was leading them. He led them by day and by night. His Glory was with them, and the Ark of His Presence was in the midst of the camp. He was leading them, but because they did not know His ways, to them and to some of us, the whole episode was purposeless wandering.

God brought them out, safely landed them on the bank of the Red Sea in the wilderness, and shut the door behind them. He had them where He wanted them; then He shut the door behind them. There was no going back. Now they were out there in the wilderness, where He could prove them and prepare them for the Land of Promise.

Have you ever felt that way before? Have you ever felt like God led you out of a place, maybe a comfort zone, led you to where He wanted you, and then shut the door behind you so there was no going back? Now He has you where He wants you, and He's going to prepare you for the land of your inheritance. However, the preparation may not be pleasant, as we shall see in the experience of those beloved Hebrew children who came out of Egypt.

At the time of this message of Moses in Deuteronomy, the children of Israel had been out of Egypt for about thirty-eight years. The generation that originally came out of Egypt had passed on, and it was a new generation that Moses the man of God was addressing. This new generation, who were not yet born or below twenty years of age when they came out of Egypt, needed to have the Law re-echoed in their ears. So the book of Deuteronomy is a recapitulation, a reenactment of the law. God, through Moses, was re-emphasizing the law to instruct this new generation of people who were about to

enter into the land of promise. Moses was preparing them to enter the land.

He started his admonition by saying, *“And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness.”* Yes, you got it! Jehovah God led them all those forty years in the wilderness. He was right there with them, in the midst of the Camp of Israel. When they got up for the “journeying of the camp,” God went in front of them as the Pillar of Fire by night and the Cloud of Glory by day.

Moses charged this new generation to be obedient to the commandments of God, knowing that he had to leave them shortly. They must have received the ordinances of God from their parents, for God had told His people to continually teach, rehearse, and demonstrate the Law to their children. They were to celebrate the feast of the Lord, and in doing so, explain to their children all the wondrous works that Jehovah God did in bringing them out of the land of bondage.

This, by the way, is what the Lord expects from every Christian parent today. We are to teach our children the word of God, show them how to pray, exemplify the heart of worship, and lead them into the Presence of God. We are to talk to our children about the Lord continually, and give them His testimonies while we walk along the road and while we are at home. We are to teach them the statutes of the Lord our God. This is not the job of the schools, nor is it the responsibility of the church ministers.

In this admonition, Moses clearly presented the purpose of the wilderness journey to them and to us, the peoples of God. Many have wondered why, after the awesome experience of salvation with all its associated blessedness, they now find themselves in a miserable wilderness. It is indeed a shock;

they were expecting this new life in Christ Jesus to be a bed of roses, the road paved with gold and the skies above decorated with glitter. But when the euphoria of salvation has worn off, they suddenly wake up under the desert sun, surrounded by cactus and thirsty for water. That was exactly how the Hebrew children felt a month after leaving Egypt.

He told them that God wanted them to consider how He had been leading them and to perceive the purpose of His dealings with them. He told them that the purpose of the wilderness journey was ***to humble them, to prove them, and to know what was in their hearts.***

The tests and the trials in this wilderness are intended to reveal what is really in us. This explains why God puts you and me through the mill. The trial of our faith, which the Bible says is more precious than gold, is to prove us. Sometimes it seems like we are being passed through the furnace, and other times it feels like we are going through the grinding of the mill, but the purpose of it all is to test us and expose what we are made of. Man is proud, cocky, and full of himself; therefore, God must take His people and put them through the mill in order to humble them and to prove them.

As you know, testing proves a metal. Testing exposes the impurities in a metal and provides the opportunity for removing the impurities. This is especially true for precious metals like gold. Trials and tests will reveal what sort of a person the child of God really is.

This message is as true for us today as it was for them in the days of Moses. God wants us to remember all His goodness towards us. He wants us to remember all the training, the tests, and the trials that He has put us through or allowed us to come through. He wants us to know that the purpose of it all is to prove us, to expose what is in our hearts so those

impurities can be dealt with. And He wants us to be assured and “*confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*” (Phil. 1:6).

“*And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger...*” This was the next statement in Moses’ message.

Any time you feel satisfied and contented, you should check yourself; you may be in a place of complacency and need a revival. We must continue to seek after God and pray to hunger after Him until we are completely transformed into the likeness of Christ; until this mortality is swallowed up of life.

There is a spiritual hunger in the heart of every man. This hunger causes him to keep looking everywhere, seeking for some means of satisfying the hunger. He pursues money and worldly material things, yet the void remains. He seeks after pleasure and wallows in it, yet discovers that he is even more empty than at first. He then tries the occult or metaphysics, and still discovers that the core ingredient he needs to satisfy the hunger of his heart is utterly absent and the void seems to deepen. Man, being a spirit made in the image of God to fellowship with Him as a companion, will never find satisfaction until he returns home to his Maker. The heart-hunger in man will never be satisfied until he returns to his God and Maker, for that hunger was designed to be satisfied by communion with the God who made him.

There is also a spiritual hunger in every Child of God: a hunger and a thirst after God. This is the desire to be in the Presence of the Father and to abide there. It is a two-way desire, for the Father Himself desires His own to come and fellowship with Him; for the Father Himself loves them. The Father cherishes the time His own spend in communion with

Him, and is constantly bidding them to come. His ultimate desire is for them to abide permanently in His Presence. This spiritual hunger and thirst is necessary in every Child of God to cause us to seek after God.

It is common knowledge that a hungry man will not stop seeking until he has found food, and a thirsty man will keep seeking until he's filled with refreshing water. The amount of water a thirsty man will drink depends on the degree of his thirst; one who is not thirsty will probably not seek for water.

Can you see what the Holy Spirit is saying in this Scripture above? When we hunger and thirst for more of Him, we seek Him, we pursue Him as the deer pants after the water brook. But if we see ourselves becoming self-satisfied and complacent, contented with our spiritual condition or religious attainment, we should become wary, because that is a dangerous state.

I know the Lord said, "*Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for *they* shall be filled.*" Yes, the hunger and the thirst draw us to Him, the Water of Life, and we feed on the bread and are filled; we drink of the fountain until our bellies issue forth *rivers of living waters*. However, where we are today spiritually, we do not remain permanently in His Presence. We need to continually return to our Supply and Source of life; therefore, in this wilderness, we need this incessant hunger and thirst to continually pull us back to Him until we permanently dwell in His Presence and our mortality is swallowed up of Life.

Lord, I sincerely pray that You'll keep me hungry, give me an incessant hunger for the Bread of Heaven. Keep me thirsty, Dear Lord, thirsty for the Living Water. And draw me to that Rock that followed them, even to the Fountain of Life.

Keep me thirsting, Dear Holy Spirit, and fill me with the Water of Life. Keep my soul longing for You and my heart panting after You as the deer pants after the water brook

Keep me hungry, Dear Jehovah, and satisfy my longing soul, keep my heart panting after You and feed me with the Bread of Heaven. Amen.

For He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness (Psa 107:9).

So Moses began to remind them of how God had been good to them all those years. He also reminded them of their rebellion against Him and how they kicked against Him and His ways in the wilderness. Let's meditate specifically on the incidence in the wilderness of Shur. Soon after they had celebrated their deliverance from Egypt, when they sang, danced, and prophesied, they were faced with three days without water.

"..and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah."

After three days without water, they finally got to a place where they saw water, but alas! they discovered the water was bitter and they could not drink.

Who was leading the children of Israel? Was it Moses? No, it was not Moses; for both Moses and the children of Israel followed the *cloud of glory* by day and the *pillar of fire* by night. Jehovah, the Lord God Almighty, was their guide through the wilderness. Here are a couple of Scriptures to establish this statement:

*And I have **led you** forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon **you**, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot. Deu 29:5*

And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters.

Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go. Neh 9:10 -11

Can you therefore tell me why God would lead them out of Egypt across the Red Sea, and cause them to be without water for three days? And when they were thirsting for water, He led them to a place where there was water, but it was bitter and they couldn't drink? Why? There must be a purpose for this and something for us to learn. *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*

What was the purpose of God leading them to the waters of Marah? He did not lead them to Marah to destroy or to punish them. He did not bring them to Marah because He was mad at them, but to reveal the condition of their hearts, and that they might see His grace in turning the waters of Marah sweet. Let's hear what He told them in Deut 8:2-3:

And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or not.

And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy

fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

Here is God's answer to the questions above. He explained the purpose of the wilderness life. The passage stated that He passed them through times of thirst and hunger to prove them, to reveal what was in their hearts.

When God leads you and me to the waters of Marah, know that there is a purpose for it. You may ask, "What is the purpose in God giving me bitter water to drink?" The purpose is not for you to stoop down and drink the bitter waters; His purpose is that the bitter water would make you see His grace and favor in turning the bitter into sweet. But, unaware of God's ways, we stoop down and drink the bitter waters and complain bitterly against God and man. And like Naomi, we change our names and drink more bitter water, and of course become more and more bitter.

The purpose of God for Marah is revealed in the twenty-fifth verse of Exodus 15: *And he (Moses) cried unto the LORD; and the LORD showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them.*

God led them to Marah, not to cause them to drink bitter water, but to prove them and to show the miracle of turning the bitter water to sweet. The wilderness is intended for testing, for proving, not for destruction; it is not intended to frustrate us and bring murmuring and complaining. It is not intended to make us become so bitter, like Naomi, that we change our names to Marah.

In the tremendously meaningful and prophetic life story presented in the book of Ruth, we see a family that went through a tough time. This was the family of Elimelech of the

tribe of Judah, who at the start was living together with his family in Bethlehem of Judah. Bethlehem means “the house of bread”; no wonder that this was where the *Bread of Life* was born.

It came to pass that there was famine in the land. There was famine in *the house of bread*. Elimelech, therefore, took his wife and two sons, and went to sojourn in the land of Moab. But things did not get better; in fact, things got worse. In the course of time, Elimelech died, as did his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, who had married two women of Moab. The three widows were left mourning the loss of their husbands. You cannot imagine the kind of sorrow and grief that Naomi was going through.

So Naomi decided to return from Moab to her country and to her city, Bethlehem, for she *heard in the country of Moab how that Jehovah had visited his people in giving them bread* (Ruth 1:6). She heard that Jehovah-Jireh had sent bread to Bethlehem, the *house of bread*. Therefore she returned with Ruth, her daughter-in-law. When they got back home to Bethlehem, the whole city was moved by the news that Naomi was back. And the people began to say, “*Is this Naomi?*”

We must understand the meaning of her name before we can understand her reply and the revelation of the Spirit in this passage. The name Naomi means “pleasant, delightful, and lovable.” So when Naomi returned, the entire city was excited because the “pleasant one” was back home. However, when the people of Bethlehem were all talking about Naomi, *the pleasant, delightful, and lovable one*, Naomi herself had become very bitter. Hear what Naomi said to her relatives in Bethlehem:

Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me? (*Ruth 1:21*)

When her people said, “*Naomi is back!*”, she said “No, not Naomi anymore, but Mara, for the Lord has dealt bitterly with me, God has gone against me.” “Mara” means bitter. Dr Strong, in his Hebrew dictionary of Biblical words, rendered the meaning of the word *mara* (maw-raw, H4755) as “bitter,” an equivalent of the word *Marah*, found in Exodus 16 and discussed above. *Marah* is a feminine form of the root word meaning “bitter.”

But as we understand from the Scriptures, there was a divine purpose for the bitter situation that Naomi was passing through, for we see the beautiful end of the story of Naomi and Ruth. We see how this situation led to Ruth and Boaz the Kinsman Redeemer becoming part of the lineage of Christ the Redeemer. God turned *the bitter back to sweetness*; He turned *Mara* back to *Naomi*.

Like Naomi, you may have been going through a lot of sorrow, anguish and misfortune, and you may have become bitter, probably almost bitter against God. In my experience ministering to believers one-on-one, I’ve met some who have become like Naomi because of loss, hardship, and the difficulties of life. I have seen saints who love God and are following Him that have been going through really hard times, yet they know that God has been leading them.

God wants you to know that there is hope for you; for you have been born again into a “*living hope*” by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from death. In spite of the circumstances of life

that you are going through, there is a glorious hope for you because Christ, *The Hope of Glory*, is in you.

God said the purpose of the wilderness life and the manna was to humble them and to prove them; for God was preparing for Himself a special people, and God cannot walk with the proud and the scornful. He was testing them to reveal the inherent corruption of their nature, and at the same time, to show them His way for them and His own faithfulness.

The wilderness life is not meant to destroy us, the people of God, but to prepare us for the land of our inheritance. The grand reason for the Israelites being led into the wilderness was that they might receive training directly under the eye of God; and the first lesson He taught them was that of constant dependence on Him for their daily nourishment. This is the same with us. The bitter situations that we meet in this wilderness are not meant to make us bitter, but to prove us and to train us to become dependent on God.

Dear saint, the Spirit of God is without doubt speaking to you right now. Whatever bitter experience has come your way, go unto the Lord and cry unto Him. Ask Him what He might be trying to show you, and like He did for Moses, He will show you the “tree” that you can cast into the bitter water and it will become sweet. This will change your life, your character, and your nature from bitter into sweet. The Lord wants to rid us of every bitterness, every carnality, and prepare us for that land of union with Christ, the land of Canaan.

God is at work in our lives. He is leading and directing the affairs of the lives of His chosen ones on the earth. He is exposing what we are made of and what is in our hearts so that He might change us to become like Him. Therefore, be encouraged; whatever bitter and hard situation you are going

through, your name is still Naomi and not Mara. Remind yourself of His Love and His promise that He will never leave you. Remember, it is His *glory cloud* that led you to where you are, and His purpose is to show his grace and power on your behalf. Don't stoop down to drink the bitter water of Marah, for that will only cause you to grumble, complain, and grow in bitterness. Sometimes you might feel like changing your name and moving out of town to where nobody knows your name. Don't do it. Don't change the name He has given you. You are the *pleasant one*. Proceed to the next stage of receiving His miracles, of changing your situation from bitterness into sweetness. Speak His word and He will turn your wilderness into a flourishing garden of the Lord. Speak the words of faith and tell everyone to call you *Naomi, the sweet and pleasant one*.

After the Due Order

David the king learnt this lesson the hard when bringing the Ark of the Lord of Host into its place. Let's go back to the story of the Ark of God's Presence returning to its place in Israel. After seven months in the land of the Philistines, it returned to Israel by way of a town called Beth-shemesh and eventually stayed at Kirjathjearim in the house of Abinadab for several decades.

And so, the Ark was then in the house of Abinadab, the Levite, and his son Eleazar was consecrated to minister before the Ark of God. There it remained throughout the time when Samuel the prophet judged Israel, as well as the forty years of Saul's reign. At this time, the Tabernacle of the Congregation was still at Shiloh in Gibeon, but this Tabernacle was vacant: it had no Mercy Seat, no Cherubims of Glory, no Tablet of the Covenant. This was a tabernacle without the Ark and consequently without the Presence of God. But the priests continued their ministries unbothered. They continued

offering sacrifices at the Brazen Altar and burning incense in the Holy Place, but the Glory and Presence of God were missing. They continued with their religious activities as ordained by the Law.

When David became king, his heart was filled with a great desire to see the Glory of God return to the midst of Israel. His desire had always been to dwell in the presence of God, and so David's vision was to restore the Presence of Jehovah permanently into the city of David. He realized that the divine order had not yet come to Israel because the Ark of God had not been brought back to where it belonged. So David gathered all Israel together to bring the Ark of God to Zion.

And David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. And David arose and went with all the people that were with him from Baale-Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God which is called by the name, the name of Jehovah of hosts who sitteth between the cherubim. (2 Sam 6:1-2)

So David gathered all Israel for this great occasion of bringing home the Ark of His Presence, but he was so over-excited that he forgot to ask the Lord how the Ark was to be carried. He failed to seek God after the due order.

And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was upon the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart.

And they brought it with the ark of God out of the house of Abinadab which was upon the hill; and Ahio went before the Ark. (2 Sam 6:3-4)

Now, wait a minute, David: you brought the Ark of God out of the house of Abinadab, and set the Ark upon a new **cart** to be

carried and pulled by a set of dumb oxen? Why? What is the deal here? How did God say the Ark should be carried? Let's go back and ask Moses and Joshua to remind us how the Ark of God is to be carried during any move of God.

And thou shalt make staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the Ark, that the Ark may be borne with them. (Exo 25:13-14)

And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the Ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. (Jos 3:3)

And the priests that bare the Ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan. (Jos 3:17)

And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the Ark of the covenant of the LORD were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before. (Jos 4:17-18)

And it came to pass, when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns passed on before the LORD, and blew with the trumpets: and the Ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them.

After Joshua spoke to the assembly before the journeying of the camp, we see that the priests blowing trumpets led the way. Following the seven priests blowing seven trumpets came the Ark of God, carried on the **shoulders of the priests**. Then the assembly followed.

This is the divine order laid down by Jehovah God. Don't forget it. That same ONE who chose the trumpet blowers and the Ark-bearers laid down the ordinance of how the Ark was to be carried during the move.

As we step out into this next move of God, Dear Ones, we must be meticulous about following God after the due order. We must make sure we do not do things after the traditions of men, for the arms of flesh will fail us. We must not construct our own modern high-technology "cart" to carry the Ark of God, nor place the Ark on the backs of dumb oxen. The Ark must be carried on the shoulders of the anointed ones who are chosen by God for that office. It must be carried with staves by four priests, appointed and sanctified for that ministry after their order.

But David and the people built a brand *new cart*. If I may be rhetorical for a moment and put it in today's language, they built a new high-technology cart with superb suspension. They even chose a man of strength and valor, an experienced director named Uzzah (Uzzah means "strength") to take charge of things, direct the new machinery, and keep the new organization on track; while Ahio the brotherly gentleman led the way (Ahio means "brotherly"). Uzzah and Ahio were the sons of Abinadab the Levite. They were honorable men. We can say Uzzah was strong, good-looking, and solidly built, while Ahio was a personable gentleman, well-mannered, intelligent, and highly educated. These two had no problem getting ordained by the elders for this great ministry of bringing home the Ark of the God of Israel. Even David approved it.

Though the sons of Abinadab of Gibeah were Levites, they were no Eleazar, and it was Eleazar whom God appointed and set apart for this ministry. But don't misunderstand this. The Uzzahs and Ahios have their special assignment from

Jehovah, but everyone must minister and stay in their line of things. The eyes should not try to do the work of the hands, and the hands should not try to see. This will only create chaos and confusion.

They chose and ordained the strongest men for this job, just like they constructed a superbly engineered cart for the Ark; they got it figured out, but it was all done by the strength of man. How much like them are we today in our ministries? In our quest to keep the revival moving, we build a new cart and ordain the Uzzahs and the Ahios to bring in the Ark and keep the Ark of God from hitting the rocks.

And so the procession with the Ark of God went on smoothly, for the Bible says that *“David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.”* While the road was smooth, the dumb oxen—i.e., the organization and machinery of men—seemed to carry the Ark without much difficulty, and the revival went on until they reached the threshing floor of Nachon.

At the Threshing Floor

To thresh means: *to beat the stems and husks of grain or cereal plants with a machine in order to separate the grains or seeds from the straw.* God will no longer put up with this. He’s had enough and is ready to thresh the seed out of the garbage. On the threshing floor, He separates the useful from the useless, the holy from the profane, and the substance from the worthless.

The system had been tolerated this far, but it couldn’t go any farther. And so, as they came to the threshing floor of

Nachon, the oxen stumbled. No problem! They had this covered with a contingency plan included in the transportation model. It looked as if the Ark was going to fall, hit the rock, and probably break into pieces. Uzzah, the *man of strength* ordained of men to keep this revival on track, could not stand by and watch this happen, for that was why he was chosen as the man of the hour. If this move of God was to succeed, it was all up to him; he had to use his strength to keep things in order. He had to take charge; after all, he, the man of the hour, was ordained for this purpose.

And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.

What a sudden tragedy! Where did things go wrong? Where did we miss it? We thought we were doing all this great work for the glory of God. Wasn't God pleased with all this praise and pageantry and these glorious displays of adoration? Haven't we put our best brains, strongest men, ablest managers, and highest technologies to work promoting this move of God?

Well, God never ordained the "cart" for carrying the Ark of His Presence to begin with. The "new cart" is man's device to keep the move of the Spirit going and to keep the Ark of His Presence and Glory from hitting the rocks. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab the Levite (the man-ordained clergy), who drove the new cart, were strong, able, qualified men who knew exactly what to do if things went wrong. But God has an instituted order that must be followed. God blesses us as His people and still moves in our midst in spite of the "cart," the new structure and hierarchy that we've erected. He moves in spite of it, not because of it. But if we intend in

our hearts to go all the way with Him, we must change our ways and begin to do things after the due order that He ordained, for the threshing floor of Nachon is close ahead of us. There at the threshing floor, He will thresh out all the straws and the husks so that we may be the pure grains He's looking for.

Let's return to the threshing floor of Nachon, where we left David and his people all standing in amazement, staring at the dead body of Uzzah. The Bible tells us that David was afraid of God on that day and did not bring the Ark of God into Zion as planned, but kept it in the house of Obededom the Gittite.

Wise men may be guilty of oversights, but they quickly correct them as soon as they are aware of them. Repentance means to turn away from one's error and to begin to follow Jehovah and obey Him. David did not try to justify what he had done wrong, nor lay the blame on others, but held himself guilty of not seeking God after the due order.

After a few months, however, David got over this tragedy and called the Levites to sanctify themselves and prepare to bring the Ark of God into its place on Mount Zion:

And said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it. For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order. So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel.

Dearly Beloved, how then shall we bring back the Ark of God that dwelleth between the Cherubim into our midst? We know that the Ark signifies the presence and the glory of God

among His people. So how can we have Restoration Revival? Should we create a new cart to bring the Ark home? No. We are to learn from their example that nothing will work except to move with God and seek to know His way and His intention for His people in this present hour. We must seek him as David said, “after the due order.” For this is the only way we are going to bring the Glory of God and the Ark of His Presence to Mount Zion.

Teach us your ways, Lord, that we may know You and that we may submit to You and follow You all the rest of our days. Reveal Your way to us as you revealed it unto Moses and help us to walk in it.

Committed Two Evils

As we seek to know God’s way there is an important warning we must pay attention to. We must not be guilty of forsaking the living water that God has provided for us and be found seeking our own ways. The message given to Jeremiah in the second chapter of his book was a very serious one. As we examine the words that were used by God when sending Jeremiah to the tribe of Judah, we’ll begin to grasp the gravity of the situation.

But we must not become conceited and look down upon the people of God to whom Jeremiah was sent with this message, because we are no different from them. The Spirit of God wants us to examine ourselves for we are no better than them. If we would open our eyes, we would indeed see that the fingers are actually pointing at us. It was for us that these messages were sent.

As we meditate on the words of the Spirit of God in this passage, let us know for a certainty that these warnings and

rebukes were not addressed to Judah only, but to us also, even to the Church of this age.

The message began in the first verse of Jeremiah Chapter 2:

The word of the LORD came to me, saying: Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the LORD:

I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holy to the LORD, the first fruits of his harvest. All who ate of it were held guilty; disaster came upon them, says the LORD (Jer 2:1-5).

This important message from the heart of God began with an announcement from a loving God to an ungrateful people. “Go and cry in their ears,” God said, and “remind them of the days of their youth, their love, their zeal, and their pursuit of Jehovah in the wilderness.” After reminding them of the glorious days gone by, when they were “holiness unto the Lord,” Jeremiah was to then ask the children of Judah some serious questions.

“What unrighteousness have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?” asked Jehovah.

“Why have they forsaken me? Neither said they, Where is Jehovah that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought and of the shadow of death, through a land that none passed through, and where no man dwelt?” (Jer 2:6) is the cry he was to proclaim in the ears of the people.

In these verses of Scripture, Love was pleading His case with His people. He continued:

And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit of it, and the goodness of it; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination.

The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.

Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead (Jer 2:7-9).

Jeremiah was sent to Judah in a day when the people had turned away from the Living God to do their own thing. They had turned away from Jehovah to other gods. No longer were they devoted to the Lord as they once were. They had turned away from the Fountain of living waters and were looking everywhere else.

They have become prosperous, eaten the good of the land thereof and forgotten the Lord that brought them thence. Becoming spoilt they followed after personal gains and forsook Him whom they once served in holiness. In the days gone by, *"Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the firstfruits of his increase;"* but now they have defiled His land, and made His heritage an abomination.

Listen to the prophet speaking by the Holy Ghost saying:

Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.

Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD.

For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water (Jer 2:12).

Judah, just like the present day church system, was guilty of two evils. *“My people have forsaken me,”* is the first part of this cry given to the prophet to deliver to God’s people. This is the first of the two evils.

Is it possible that God is sounding the same message to us His people today? Could He be saying to this end-time Church:

“I have this against you--that you no longer love Me as you did at first. Be mindful, therefore, of the height from which you have fallen. Repent at once, and act as you did at first, or else I will surely come and remove your lampstand out of its place--unless you repent” (Rev 2:4-5 Weymouth Translation).

Are we guilty of the same evils that the people of Judah were in Jeremiah's day? Is it possible that we've left our first love and fervency towards Him and have become lukewarm? Is it possible that we have lost that initial zeal for Him? Could it be that we have lost our initial sincerity, innocence and simplicity of faith? Could He be saying about us that once we were *“holiness unto the Lord”* but now have *defiled His Tabernacle, and made His heritage an abomination?*

Is it remotely possible that God is directing this rebuke at us for committing the same atrocities Judah committed? Could He be saying that once in days gone by we were fervently devoted to Him and sought after Him, as it were, in the wilderness, but now that we have become prosperous we have left seeking the Spring of Living Water but have shifted our pursuit from Him towards riches and fame? Is this not true of the church system of this age?

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent (Rev 3:17).

My people have forsaken me, saith the Lord.

Has any nation ever exchanged gods? Yet, my people have exchanged their Glory for something that doesn't help them. Be horrified over this, heaven. Be terribly afraid, declares the LORD.

My people have done two things wrong. They have abandoned me, the fountain of life-giving water. They have also dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that can't hold water (Jer 2:11-14 God's Word Translation).

The Spirit wants us to return to Christ, the Source of Living Water, instead of putting our trust in the arm of flesh. We should worship in the Spirit and *glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:3)*. Our confidence should be in that River that originates from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

To emphasize the importance of this message, the Holy Ghost repeated this through the mouth of Ezekiel the prophet. We know by the revelation of the Spirit that the book of Ezekiel is an end-time book and has some resemblance with the book of Revelation.

Is it also possible that the same burden of the Spirit that Ezekiel prophetically delivered in the sixteenth chapter of his book was addressed to this Church age? The passage is

almost identical to the cry of the Spirit through Jeremiah discussed in the previous sections above. Let's go through it:

Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite.

And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all.

None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born (Ezek 16:2-5).

The sarcasm used in the prophetic message above is by no means a complimentary one. From examining the language; to say that God was not happy with His people will be an understatement. This sarcasm, which, by the way, accurately described the despicable behavior of God's people, may sound innocuous and may not be understood by the readers who are unfamiliar with what was said about the Amorite and Hittites in Scriptures. If you are not familiar with this, you may check this out in the book of the Kings of Israel and of Ezra the scribe (2Ki 21:11 Ezr 9:1); but we shall continue and not digress. The prophetic message continued:

And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.

I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare.

I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk.

I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck.

And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head.

Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom.

Now let's hear what God said of Jerusalem through this prophet similar to the message through Jeremiah.

But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was.

And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colours, and playedst the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so.

And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast polluted in thy blood.

That thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee an high place in every street.

The message is the same. *My people have forsaken me*, says the Lord. They have not *remembered the days of their youth and have done abominable things and become whores*. Whoredom which is used to describe sexual promiscuity was originally used by God to describe the unfaithfulness of His people. This is clearly dramatized by God in the life of prophet Hosea to depict their idolatry. A whore is one that

compromises his or her principles for personal gain and would readily sell his or her love for money, thereby exchanging his/her glory for worthless things.

They have exchanged their glory for worthless things and have sold themselves into slavery. *Are the people of Israel slaves? Were they born into slavery? Why, then, have they become someone's property?* (Jer 2:11-14 God's Word Translation).

Just to make sure we don't miss this important message, the Holy Ghost repeated the same message during the commissioning of Isaiah the prophet. Listen to the Word of the Lord that came to Isaiah the son of Amos in the vision:

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward (Isa 1:2-4). The message is clear: *My people have forsaken me,* says the Lord.

But we must move on. Let's consider the second evil that God said His people have committed. *"My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and dug out cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that can hold no water."*

In the previous verses we have looked through a few Scriptures and seen how the people of God have forsaken

Him the Living water. However, turning away from the Spring of Living Water was bad enough, but to proceed and construct an artificial reservoir instead of the Spring of Life was tragic! If the heathen ignorantly follow lifeless gods or pursue worthless things which cannot meet their spiritual needs, that may be pardonable because they don't know any better, but not for the people of God.

Invariably in the history of God's people we see this recurring, and yet we see the merciful Jehovah God pleading with them and bringing them back to Himself.

Shall we of this generation learn from the error of their ways and not walk in their footsteps? Shall we listen to the voice of the Spirit and obey? For with many of them God was not very pleased because they turned away from their Rock and forsook their King and would not have Him reign over them. Let me remind you of this passage:

And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them (1 Sa 8:5).

In the early days of Israel as a nation after they had become settled in the land of their inheritance their hearts became cold towards Jehovah. God had been their Lord and King from the time He brought them out of Egyptian bondage, and brought them into the land of Canaan. But now in the days of Samuel they began to grow weary of following the Lord, and desired a king, like the nations round about them. This grieved the heart of God.

They therefore came to Samuel and cried, "Give us a king, that we may be like the nations." This greatly displeased Samuel,

and it greatly displeased the Lord. Had not God planned a king for them? Yes, God's original purpose for them was that they were to be a *kingdom of priests, a special people, a people for His inheritance*. Right from the beginning, their very existence as a nation was by reason of the fact that God longed for an inheritance of His own in a people that were separate from other people, and very much *unlike* the other nations. But they wanted a king so they could be *like the other nations*.

It wasn't only their desire for a king that displeased the heart of God, but also the fact that they wanted to conform to the pattern they observed in the nations round about them. The desire for a human king was the rejection, the yearnings to conform to the way of life of the other nations was the second evil. God had planned that His people would have a king at the appointed time. He had even planned an everlasting kingdom for them under the Shepherd King, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. But they demanded a king, so He gave them Saul, who belonged to another tribe of which no one spoke of kingship.

Forsaking the Fountain of Living Water is the first evil; this is done when the people of God turn away from the rule or the leadership of the Holy Ghost in the Church and adopt the ways of man and of the nations around us. We thereby forsake Him and demanded for Saul to reign over us. We forsake the Source of Living water and have hewed for ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water. Such is our church system in the world today, which depends on the inventions of man and, sad to say, even thrive by the machination of men.

In Bible lands, a cistern was an artificial reservoir which was dug in the earth or hewn in the rock for the collection and

storage of water. Cisterns were very important in the land of Israel because of the long dry season and the relatively few natural springs. But a broken cistern was practically worthless. Cracked rock or crumbled masonry could hold only a small quantity of dirty water, or no water at all.

Why would the people of God do such a thing? Why would they forsake the Spring of Living Water and turned to broken cisterns? Could it be that they no longer want to live in dependence on Jehovah the Source of Living *water*? Maybe they were apprehensive that one day this Spring might fail and no water would flow and so they dug reservoirs to store the living water just in case?

Maybe if we can store or “can” some of the move of God then we’ll have something to fall back on, if the *glory should depart*? If we can build a structure around the move of God then we can cause the move to go on for as long as we want. In fact, if we are ingenuous enough, with our modern technology, we can automate this system and build a failure-proof structure that will cause the revival to continue without any need to depend on this “unpredictable” River of God. We can thereby keep the revival going even if the fresh water of the River stops flowing from the Throne. Such is the evil machination of the carnal mind that wants a share of the glory of God.

This is the interpretation of the cry of Jeremiah to this generation. And hear this, O man of God, *hearken diligently for this prophetic word is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.*

But the Spirit of God will have us know this: that no man can control the River of God; she cannot be *canned*, contained, or framed. She flows down from God’s holy mountain and her

course man cannot predict. He doesn't do things the same way every time and therefore man cannot manufacture the move of God, though we still ignorantly try to today.

Is it possible that we've wandered away from the Fountain of life and have foolishly gotten involved in constructing our own cisterns? Have we turned to our careers for fulfillment in life? Is our confidence in a religious system or the arduous labor that we're engaged in for our denomination? Is our trust in the arm of flesh and the great project that we are building for God? Have we turned to other gods or idols in place of Jehovah as our object of worship? God said: *My people have forsaken me and have exchanged their glory for the glory of little gods which do not profit.*

As it happened to Israel, so has it happened to us in the Church. Can't you see it? We started indeed in the Spirit and under the kingship of the Holy Ghost. But after a few generations we decided to setup our own kingdoms. The religious kingdoms started with the first Headquarters in Rome under the Papacy, under them the district hierarchy or College of Cardinals, and then the churches with their priests or preachers. When the Church ecclesiastical system was thus established and men set over them, God's people suffered the same fate as the people of Israel who wanted a king. The five fold ministries and gifts of the Spirit have since being under manipulation by carnally minded men who use them for personal gain or to the benefit of their denominations. Today it is essentially the same, but under different names.

The Fundamentalists and the Pentecostals, a true move of God, ruled and led by the Holy Ghost with visions of God are now governed by powerful men. They are now governed by

kings, or to state it more accurately, Sauls, whom these nations (or denominations) asked for.

Have you forgotten that the name Saul, though it stands for the flesh or the *arm of flesh*, means “asked for”? The people of God asked Him for a king and God gave them what they *asked for*. He gave them “asked for” to rule over them. He gave them one “head-and-shoulder” above them all. He gave them a powerful man, a king of the type their carnal minds desired. But that was not His perfect will for them. That was not what He had intended for them and He had tried to dissuade them through His prophet. He told Samuel to warn them and to tell them the nature of the kings that would rule over them.

He told them that their kings would take their sons and make them serve. That some of them would be commanders; others would plow his ground and reap his harvest. Their daughters will do menial tasks and serve. That he will take the best of their fields, vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendance. That he will also take a tenth of their wealth and they themselves will become his slaves. But they would not hear. They wanted it their way, so God told Samuel to give them what they *asked for*, a Saul (1 Sam. 8:21). “*There is a way that seems right unto a man*” (Prov. 16:25).

Tell me Dear Child of God, are we any different? The Lord Jesus our Master returned to the Father and sent the Holy Spirit to us, His Church. And by the acts of the Holy Ghost, the word of God grew, multiplied and prevailed and believers were added to the Church in astounding numbers under the Apostles. The world saw a new breed of God-seeker who worshiped the Father in Spirit and in Truth; Men and women who, in the face of death, followed God wholeheartedly. They

constantly drank of the Living Water and were fearlessly in the flow of the River of God.

However, like our forefathers who came out of Egypt into the land of Canaan, after the Church became powerful we rejected the rule of the Holy Ghost and began to build our own cistern in the place of the Living Water. We said to Him, "Give us a King to rule over us," so that we may be like the other nations around us. God warned us, His people, just as He did through Samuel the nature of the Kingdom that we've requested, but, like our forefathers, we must have it our way.

Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.

They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge.

A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land;

The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so (Jer 5:24,28,30-31).

Is it not sad that no sooner do a people who are totally led of the Lord in the realm of the Spirit and who had begun in the Spirit in a divine relationship as God intended, immediately reject the kingship of the Holy Ghost and begin to cry out for some great man other than the Holy Ghost to be their king? Seeking someone or some system that they can see and touch; someone famous who can make them great like the other (denomi)nations, some great man who can organize well and keep everyone in line. Of course what they seek,

they find, and when they ask, God gives them someone called “*asked for*”. Soon, under such a great Saul, the structure becomes great indeed and the leadership of the Holy Ghost is history. Soon the Owner of the Church is outside the door, knocking and seeking *to see if any man would hear His voice and open the door* to let Him in.

Many of our modern day ministers will probably disagree with me, and rightly so. But I say that there is a famine in our land. A famine not of bread or a thirst for water but of the word of the Living God. This is why many are wandering from sea to sea and from the north even to the south, seeking the Word of the LORD.

What do you mean? Someone might ask me, “How can there be a famine in these days of ours? We have sermons on multitudinous and disparate media and have succeeded in covering most of the free world with Bibles and Christian literature. We have sermons on tapes, radios, cable television, satellite broadcasting, and even the latest internet technologies. Yes, these are great media that we should continue to take advantage of, but these are not the substance in themselves. They are vehicles to carry the substance and are useless unless the genuine, the pure, or as Peter called it, the sincere milk of the word is flowing through them. These media will take life to the listeners only if the River of God is flowing through them.

Millions and even hundred of millions may be reached by these media; however, their spiritual needs will only be met if the supernatural waters of life are flowing through these media to reach the vastness of needy humanity. The early apostles, those handful of illiterates, did not have any of these, yet genuinely made a much greater impact on the world. Here we are, the rich, famous, and highly celebrated

Laodiceans, full of pomp and pageantry; our fame and notoriety without doubt have reached the ends of the earth. *But there is a famine in our land.*

No doubt there is an abundance of bread, but it is not necessarily the pure and sincere milk of the word that the spirit man needs to grow. Some are religion-focused and are based on attaining righteousness by good works. Many are strongly influenced by denominational beliefs and may have a tendency to promote the idea of some great man, while others, tinted by filthy lucre, preach the word for financial gain.

It is true that there is a plethora of great words in our land; full of superfluous and world-conforming entertaining words. We are full of them. No doubt about it--we are rich and have need of nothing, but the Spirit is beckoning on us to buy of Him *gold, tried in the fire.*

God's desire for His Children is that all should come into total union with Him. He wants to be your King and your Source in everything without any middleman. He must be your sole object of worship and trust, not any man or any system created by man, however good its intention. He wants you to walk in truth, in holiness, in patience, in long-suffering, in kindness, in mercy, and in love. He wants you to become one with Him in all things. He wants to rule over you Himself. He does not want to share this with any man or with any god, and He is jealous for His people. He specifically spoke to Israel about this, saying, "*Thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God*" (Exodus 34:14).

Therefore Beloved, take a break and ponder on these things. Listen to the quiet voice of the Spirit and hearken as you hear Him speak softly in your heart this moment saying: *My Child,*

give me your heart. My Child, seek my face. Look straight in His face, right now, and say with all your heart: "Thy face, O Jehovah, will I seek

Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day. (Psa 25:4 -5)

Chapter 11

That Men Might Seek After the Lord

Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood. We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool.

Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou, and the Ark of thy strength. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy.

It was a day of joy and great rejoicing. Priests were marching, trumpets were sounding, people were shouting and singing, children were leaping for joy, and the king himself, the chief ruler of the people, was leaping and dancing in the street. The entire nation was celebrating. What was the big occasion? The Ark of the God of Israel was returning home!

Israel had strayed away from God. The people and the priesthood had been defiled, and God judged His people by temporarily removing His Presence from their midst. His

glory had departed from the old order, but on this great day, He was returning home. The Ark of the Covenant, which represented the Presence of God in the midst of Israel, was returning to its new place.

Let's turn to the first book of Samuel and study the fourth chapter. It all started way back in the time of Eli. Israel had settled in the Land of Promise. At this time in their history, they had no king, no prophet, and Eli was their priest. But Eli had become old and fat, and his ministry practically feckless. His sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who were occupying the office of the priesthood in his place, were despicable sons of Belial. Eli was an indulgent father who shut his eyes to the horrific sins of his sons. They sank so low in gross immorality that they lay with the women who assembled to worship Jehovah at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

This incident occurred in the days of the last judges in Israel. The people and the priesthood were defiled, and Eli's sons were in the forefront, leading the Israelites into sin. "Like people, like priests" is an appropriate description. Eli was concerned about it, but didn't know what to do and didn't seem prepared to take any drastic action. He probably didn't want to say or do anything that might offend his sons or shake up the status quo. Therefore, God had to reprove him for his negligence.

God sent a prophet to Eli to say that He was finished with him and his family as far as the priesthood was concerned, and that God was going to raise up a priest-prophet for Israel. This anointed one, Samuel, would minister unto the Lord, and his office would also be that of a prophet.

And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? And did I

choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? And did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel?

Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?

Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. (1 Sam 2:27-30).

God rebuked Eli for making himself fat with the offerings of His people. Eli, like many of our modern-day ministers, had become literally fat with the offerings of God's people. How appropriate is this rebuke to us, the present-day priesthood? Is it not true that some of us have become wealthy and affluent from the chiefest of the offerings of the people of God? Instead of taking the due portion ordained by Jehovah, the Hophnis and Phinehas of our modern day have lustfully amassed portions that Jehovah has not given and called it scriptural prosperity. Like Hophni and Phinehas, they have used their position as "priests of the Lord" to rob the people of God and to steal the sacrifices and gifts being offered to God. It was so bad with the priesthood in the days of Eli that "*men abhorred the offering of the LORD*" (1 Sam 2:17).

Beloved minister, what should we learn from this? The Scriptures tell us that these things are written for our admonition, to warn us so we do not fall into the same error. The judgment of God came swiftly on Eli's priesthood, and therefore

we must take heed of the warnings. That corrupt priesthood received a severe judgment, as written in the book of Samuel.

What did Eli himself do wrong? He did not participate in the corrupt practices of his devilish sons in the days of his ministry, but he condoned the practices and did not correct them. The honor of his sons prevailed over the fear of God. This fear of disrupting the status quo and losing favor with the new generation in the ministry is very real in the church world today, and the older generation who were present during the early Holy Ghost movement are failing in their duty of pointing the young ones to the ancient paths.

But God has a new ministry in the making. There is a “Samuel company” being prepared of the Lord in this very hour. This company, fresh and new from the hand of God, is under preparation in the Tabernacle of the Most High. Yes, it’s true, God has kept for Himself “*seven thousand in Israel, knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and mouths which hath not kissed him*” (2 Kings). Let’s go on.

At the time of Eli’s ministry when his sons began to perpetrate their atrocities in Israel, the Ark of God dwelt behind the veil in the Tabernacle of the Congregation at Shiloh. But God was ready to close the chapter on this old order and to raise up for Himself a prophetic ministry.

Ichabod: The Glory is Departed

Then came the Philistines and arrayed themselves in battle against Israel. The battle became fierce, and Israel was losing. When the elders of Israel saw that they were losing the battle to the Philistines, in a last desperate attempt to save Israel from defeat, they quickly sent for the Ark of God: “*So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the*

ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the Ark of the covenant of God” (1 Sam 4:4).

They remembered that the Ark had always brought them victory against their adversaries in times past. They figured that bringing the Ark into the fray would force God to save them from their enemies. They were certain that God would be forced to protect His Ark and save His own face. Indeed, when the Philistines saw the Ark of God, they were frightened, but they did not flee; this made them fight all the more with fearful desperation and defeat the children of Israel. Not only did the Philistines win the battle, they killed the priests Hophni and Phinehas and captured the Ark of God. It was a gloomy day for Israel.

On the same fateful day that the battle was lost to the Philistines, a news courier from the tribe of Benjamin took the news concerning the battle to Eli. When the news that the Ark of God had been captured was relayed to Eli, he was dazed, fell backward off his seat, broke his neck, and died.

His daughter-in-law, Phinehas’ wife, was with child, near to be delivered: and when she heard the news that the ark of God was taken, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and brought forth; for her pains came on her. About the time of her death the women who stood by her said to her, Don’t be afraid; for you have brought forth a son. But she didn’t answer, neither did she regard it.

*She named the child **Ichabod**, saying, The glory is departed from Israel; because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father-in-law and her husband. She said, The glory is departed from Israel; for the ark of God is taken. (1 Sam 4:19-22)*

What a strange name to give a child! What a tragedy of immense proportion! "Ichabod" is a Hebrew word that means "no glory" or "departed glory." The name is significant in marking this unfortunate event in the history of God's people. This Hebrew word has also been interpreted as meaning "Where is the Glory?"

Where is the Ark of His Presence? Where is the Shekinah Glory that should cover the Mercy Seat? Where is the Urim and the Thummim? Where is the Pillar of Fire?

There is famine in Zarephath; where is Elijah? The axehead is fallen into the river; where is Elisha the prophet to make it float? The woman's only child is dead; where is Elisha to bring forth a revival? Jezebel and her prophets have taken over the land; where are Elijah and the God who answers with fire? The temple is corrupted, the moneychangers and the profiteers reign supreme in the sanctuary; where is He, the Messenger of the Covenant? Where is the Refiner's Fire to purify the sons of Levi?

But thus says Jehovah, the Lord your God: "*Whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.*

But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness" (Mal 3:1-3).

The Ark of Thy Strength

God began this work of judging the priesthood and preparing for the new order by suddenly removing His Presence from the old order. The Ark of God, which represents the Presence of God in Israel, dwelt behind the Veil in the Tabernacle of the Congregation before it was removed and departed from Israel. God allowed His Ark, the Ark of His Presence, to be captured by the Philistines and to be carried away to a heathen land.

However, the celebration of the capture of the Ark of the God of Israel was short-lived in the camp of the Philistines, for the Ark did no little damage to their gods and their people. In the first few days that the Ark spent in their land, the Ark of God destroyed their fish-god Dagon and decimated the inhabitants of Ashdod. On the morrow after the first night, they found their god, Dagon, fallen flat on its face before the Ark of God. Yes! *At the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow* (Phil 2:). The Philistines should have taken this hint as a warning to return the Ark to Israel, but no, they helped their god up and sat it up in its place again. What they found when they arose the second morning was terrifying. This time their god Dagon was not only fallen on its face, but its head and both palms of its hands were chopped off and only the stump of its body was left to it. The Ark of Jehovah beheaded their gods, just as Jesus beheaded Satan and his principalities and made a show of openly triumphing over them in their own territory. Then the Philistines realized they had to do something very quickly to appease the God of Israel and return His Ark to where it belonged.

I am sure some Israelite soldiers fought to the death defending the Ark of God while it was being captured by the Philistines. The ones who survived the battle must have lamented. What sorrow must have filled their hearts that they failed to defend and protect the Ark of God! But now

that the Ark of God is in the hands of the enemy, who is going to protect it? Who is going to defend it? So many preachers today, especially here in the rich nations of the world, talk as if they are the “defenders of the faith.” They imply that if they were not on the job and their powerful ministries were not around, the Word of God would fail, the gospel would not advance, and the will of God would never be brought to pass. My dear friend, that is a delusion.

How blind and ignorant can one get? Don’t we know that we cannot protect God’s Word—on the contrary, the Word protects us. The Presence of God will defend and protect us. We have no power to defend the Ark of God. We ignorantly think that we can defend the Word of God with our education, with our political lobbying, with our innovative propaganda on the airwaves, but it is not so. What we need to do is to present, put forward, exalt, and lift up the Ark of God on the shoulders of His anointed priests for the world to see, and then we’ll see the enemy vanquished right before our eyes. When we do this, we’ll see the Jordan River part and make way for the people of God to pass over on dry ground to the land of their inheritance.

The Philistines had the Ark in their possession for seven months, and it was nothing but trouble for them. They transferred the Ark from city to city, but the devastation followed it. After seven months of torment, the Philistines came to their senses, realized that they were being plagued because of the Ark, decided they’d had enough, and made arrangements to return the Ark of God to His place. They called their priests and diviners to see what to do, and here is what the priests and the diviners of the Philistines replied:

Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch-cows on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the cows to the cart, and bring their calves home from them:

And take the ark of the LORD, and lay it upon the cart; and put the jewels of gold which ye return to him for a trespass-offering, in a coffer by its side; and send it away, that it may go.

And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Beth-shemesh, then he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know, that it is not his hand that smote us; it was a chance that happened to us. (1 Sam 6:7-9)

The Philistines did as the priests and diviners advised and were glad when the Ark left them. The men of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley at the time, and when they lifted up their eyes and saw the Ark, they rejoiced. *The Levites took down the Ark of God, and the coffer that was with it, in which the jewels of gold were, and put them on the great stone: and the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed unto the Lord the same day.* And there was Revival on that day, but they also trespassed God's divine order and, against God's ordinance, peeped into the Ark, for which they were judged severely. So the Ark of God and His divine Presence passed on to another people: the inhabitants of Kirjathjearim. The Ark is on its way; the Ark of God is returning home.

The Tabernacle in the wilderness had an outer and an inner court. Worshipers entered the Tabernacle through the beautiful gate of the outer court with praise, singing psalms proclaiming the glory of God. It was also the place of repentance, where sins were confessed and blood was shed upon the brazen altar before God. The inner court of the Tabernacle was made up of two compartments. The first compartment of the inner court, called the Holy Place, contained the Golden Lampstand, the Table, and the Shewbread. Here the priests, the sons of Aaron, ministered to God and partook of the Shewbread. A heavy veil separated this chamber from the innermost compartment.

The innermost room was the Holy of Holies, also called the Most Holy Place, which contained the Ark of the Covenant, on top of which was the Mercy Seat, where once a year, atonement was made for the sins of the nation. There was no window or lamp in this innermost compartment but the Divine Presence; the Shekinah Glory of God filled and lit this most holy place. This was the glory of God, the weight of the significance of His Dwelling Place that He gave to the Israelites as the sign of their Covenant with Him; for He had said, *“My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest”* (Exo 33:14).

The Ark, which itself symbolizes Christ Jesus, represents the Presence of God in the midst of Israel. The first mention of this ark was in Exodus 25, when God took Moses to Mount Sinai and gave him detailed instructions on how to build it. It was a shadow, a physical representation of something that was already in existence in heaven. The way it was built, the materials that were used, and the purpose for which it was used make it very clear that this Ark was an earthly type of our Lord Jesus Christ in His humanity. God ordained one place, and only one, where He would meet with man: union of God and man could only take place at the Ark. Yes, only in Jesus can there be any hope of man coming into union with Almighty God. *“There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the Man Jesus Christ.”*

On top of the Ark were two cherubim looking down at the Mercy Seat where the blood was placed on the Day of Atonement, one at each end of the Mercy Seat. One looked forward to the blood, the other looked back at it, as if it were a picture of the Old and New Testament saints. No one can be saved without the precious blood of Christ. No one. The Old Testament saints looked forward in faith to when Jesus

would come and shed His blood; we look back to Calvary when the Lamb of God did it all.

Everything in the Tabernacle speaks of Christ. He is the beautiful Gate through which we enter with thanksgiving. He is the perfect Lamb slain on the Brazen Altar so that our sins can be forgiven. He is the Shewbread in the Holy Place, the Living Word giving to us. Our prayers ascends to the Father through Him, our Altar of Incense. He is the Light of the world, the Golden Lampstand, the Light who sent the Holy Spirit to illuminate our minds. The torn veil speaks of His flesh that was bruised and torn for us, giving us entrance into the the Presence of God. As the Scriptures say, *“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh”* (Heb 10:20). And as we pass through the veil, we finally enter into the Holiest of All. Here also we see Christ: He is the Ark of God and He is our Mercy Seat before the throne of the living God.

As the Scripture reveals to us and enumerated above, the Ark of the Covenant, also called the Ark of His Presence, symbolizes and represents the Presence of God. Unfortunately, because of the apostasy of His people, God had to forsake this first Tabernacle. The Presence of God departed from its place in the Holy of Holies of the first tabernacle. This was the glory that departed from the Temple (Ezek 10:18-19) and this would be the glory promised to return with the Messiah (Hag 1:8; Zech 2:10).

Ezekiel prophesied concerning this situation in the days of his ministry. He witnessed the judgment of God that fell upon the people, the priesthood, and the elders in the sanctuary for their abominations in the house of God. As he was shown all these things, he fell on his face and cried unto God for mercy.

Sadly, as he watched, Ezekiel saw the glory of God moved from its place in the Holy of Holies to the door of the house (Ezek 9:3-4), then to the Eastern Gate of the Lord's house (Ezek 10:19), and lastly, the glory of the Lord completely departed from the city (Ezek 11:23).

But the Almighty is a merciful God. Blessed be His name forever and ever. For He, our God, "*is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy*" (Psa 103:8). Even though He removed His Presence from the old Tabernacle, He left His people with a promise that He would return. Amos the prophet proclaimed this prophecy, which was echoed by Apostle James, that He would return and rebuild the fallen tabernacle:

In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old. (Amo 9:11)

Yes, the Almighty, the gracious One, promised His people in those visions that He would return in the fullness of time and take up His habitation in a new *Tabernacle not made with hands*.

The Holy Spirit is speaking to the Church in many different ways these days of the Lord's return in special visitation to His people with special signs and wonders. Our hearts must be full of eager expectation as we look up for a sign of the appearance of the Glory of God. As we hear all these trumpets sounding, we are eager to ask, What is the meaning of these trumpets? What does their sound signify? Does it mean that the Ark of His Presence is returning to His place on Mount Zion? Does it mean that the Glory Cloud that leads the Israel of God is about to translate her to the next level?

Can't you hear the sound of the trumpets? Can't you sense in your spirit the herald of His visitation? The trumpet is sounding

again, as it has through the mouth of His holy prophets since the world began. We must listen carefully in the spirit to what the Spirit is saying this hour to the Israel of God. Let us cleanse ourselves of all leaven as in the day of preparation, for the Head of the Church has sent His Words to us that He will return, in a mighty visitation, to the midst of His people.

I know most people in the church are very familiar with the first and second comings of the Lord Jesus Christ. These are monumental milestones in the plan of God for the Church. However, there are many visitations of the Lord to His Church in revival and many visitations *of God* to His own in restoration of Truth and of the miraculous, and of Truth and anointing, that we temporarily lost.

We see one of those glorious visitations of the Lord to the Church in the days of Martin Luther, when He restored to the Body the revelation that *“the just shall live by faith.”* We see another glorious visitation in the early days of the Healing Movement, when God restored gifts of healings and signs and wonders through Maria Woodward-Ether and John Alexander Dowie. We see the restoration of gifts of faith, healings, and working of miracles in the days of Smith Wigglesworth and in the Welsh Revival in the time of Evan Roberts. We cannot forget the mighty Move of God through John G. Lake’s ministry in Africa, Sister Aimee McPherson’s crusades and rallies, and at the turn of the twentieth century, the restoration of the Pentecostal gifts at Azusa Street in the days of William J. Seymour. We marvel at the spectacular prophetic anointing on William Branham in the days of “the voice of healing” with Gordon Lindsay, the extraordinary healing revivals of Jack Cole and A. A. Allen, *the man of faith and power*. How about many other visitations that time and space prevent us from discussing: revivals that shook countries, like Tommy Hicks in Argentina, T.L. Osborn in

Indonesia, others in West Africa, and many more that are still harvesting souls today.

Indeed, the Lord has visited His Church as promised through the mouth of His holy prophets. His mighty Presence, which at times departed from its place, is returning.

“I Will Return and Restore”

And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. (2 Sam 6:17)

The Tabernacle of the Congregation that Moses built in the wilderness was surely God’s order for the wilderness people. He instituted this ordinance as a means of putting His Manifest Presence in the midst of His people. *“And let them make me a Sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle”* (Exo 25:8-9). These were the words of Jehovah to Moses in the wilderness concerning the Tabernacle. It was a mobile temple that moved with the Children of Israel from encampment to encampment as they crossed the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land.

Jehovah God called Moses to the Mountain and showed him the pattern of the heavenly Tabernacle and charged him, saying, *“And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount”* (Exo 25:40). And so Moses obeyed God and built the Tabernacle of the Congregation with the Ark of God’s Presence in the Holy of Holies.

As stated in the previous chapter, when the Children of Israel entered the Promised Land, they settled the Tabernacle of Moses at Shiloh in Samaria. There, the sacrificial ceremonies were conducted for about 400 years during the period of the Judges. By the end of that period, the Children of Israel had forsaken God and lost His manifest Presence. Then came the Philistines, who defeated them and took the Ark of the Covenant away. After seven months, they had to send the Ark back to Israel on an ox cart. It finally came to rest eight miles west of Jerusalem in a town called Kiriathjearim, where it stayed for approximately 70 years until about 10 years into David's reign. During this period, the tabernacle of Moses was moved from Shiloh to Nob for a while (1 Sam 21:1-6) and then to Gibeon, where it remained until the Temple of Solomon was dedicated (2 Chr 1:3,4).

And so David, the man after God's heart, whose desire was to please God and to be in His Presence, inquired of the Lord and made preparation for bringing the Ark of God into Jerusalem. After his first attempt had failed, he called upon the priests to sanctify themselves and get ready to bring in the Ark of God. David, who was obviously walking in the will of God this time, erected a tent on Mount Zion as the new habitation for the Ark of God. This was not a mere whim on his part, but an action directed by God. He had made a disastrous mistake in the first attempt to bring back the Ark, which led to the death of Uzzah; this time, he was not going to be presumptuous.

But why? Why was David radically changing the order of worship in Israel? Why did he not return the Ark to Gibeon, where the Tabernacle of Moses was located with the empty Holy of Holies and where the priests were still carrying on their sacrifices and offerings? We learn later in Second Chronicles 29 that David set up this new order of worship of

God in obedience to God's commands through the prophets Nathan and Gad (2 Chr 29:25). God must have given David a prophetic glimpse of the glorious Church Age to come, when true worshipers would have direct access to God and worship Him in spirit and truth, offering sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving unto Him.

David brought the Ark to Jerusalem rather than returning it to the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle of Moses at Gibeon. He pitched a tent on Mount Zion in Jerusalem and placed the Ark inside. He then instituted a whole new order of praise and worship. Psalms of praise were written and sung continually before the Ark of God. He appointed priests to minister music before the Ark continually (1 Chr 16:6,37).

And he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, and to record, and to thank and praise the LORD God of Israel: Asaph the chief, and next to him Zechariah, Jeiel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Mattithiah, and Eliab, and Benaiah, and Obedom; and Jeiel with psalteries and with harps; but Asaph made a sound with cymbals; Benaiah also and Jahaziel the priests with trumpets continually before the Ark of the Covenant of God.

Then on that day David delivered first this psalm to thank the LORD into the hand of Asaph and his brethren:

Give thanks unto the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works. (1 Chr 16:4-9)

What a great departure from the old order of worship! The Presence and fullness of God had moved into a new Tent on Mount Zion, never to return to the old system in Gibeon. They could continue to carry on their religious activities, their ceremonial rituals, their organizational protocols, and their denominational dabblings, but they were never going to

bring God's Glory back into that old tabernacle. And indeed, the Tabernacle of Moses remained at Gibeon without the Ark, and sacrifices continued to be offered there even until the Temple of Solomon was dedicated.

So Solomon, and all the congregation with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon; for there was the tabernacle of the congregation of God, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness. But the Ark of God had David brought up from Kirjathjearim to the place which David had prepared for it: for he had pitched a tent for it at Jerusalem. (2 Chr 1:3-4)

Talk about ministering in a tabernacle without the Presence of God! Yes, the old tabernacle still had its Holy of Holies, but the Ark was no longer inside. The priests were still busy burning incense at the Altar. The lamps were still being trimmed and oiled, and the Shewbread was still being replenished on the table. The high priest most likely still continued performing his ministry on the Day of Atonement. But there was no Ark behind the Veil.

How could they continue to worship in the old tabernacle without the Ark of the Covenant? Without the Glory? Without His Presence? How could they continue the sacrifices and offerings when there was no Mercy Seat, no Tablets of the Covenant, no Ark of the Covenant? What was the High Priest doing behind the Veil on the Day of Atonement? On what did he sprinkle the blood of the lamb? Did he see the Cloud of Glory that should cover the Mercy Seat? What did he see in the Holy of Holies? Did he hear the voice of Jehovah from between the Cherubim upon the Mercy Seat? Of course not! The Mercy Seat was not there, and neither were the Cherubim. The Glory had departed. Yet the religious services continued uninterrupted and the ceremonial rituals went on

undisturbed! May the Spirit grant us understanding of these things in our days.

The first Tabernacle, therefore, served its purpose but belonged to an order that passed away. We know for sure that the Cloud of Glory rested upon the Tabernacle in Shiloh when they entered the Land of Promise. But the glory faded away like the glory that faded away from the countenance of Moses. And finally, when the people whom God had set apart for himself made themselves common like the heathen nations around them, His glory departed and "*Ichabod*" was engraved on their beautiful gate.

In the first Tabernacle, God's Presence was hidden behind heavy veils from the people, totally concealed and unapproachable. Only the high priest could, after some arduous cleansing, dare to approach His Presence, and that was once a year. But here in the Tabernacle of David, the Ark of His Presence dwelt in an open tent where people could approach and worship Him joyfully without fear and without any wall of partition. Clearly, this tent or tabernacle has prophetic significance for believers today; it points to when our Lord died on the cross and rent the veil, opening the way into the Holy of Holies for us. "*Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh*" (Heb 10:19-20).

Gone are the restrictions of the old tabernacle where only Jewish men were allowed in the Outer Court; where only the sons of Aaron were allowed in the Holy Place, and where only the High Priest was allowed in the Presence of God once a year. In this new Tabernacle, "*Whosoever will may come!*" (Mark 8:34,35) Whoever will may enter into the Holiest of All by the blood of Jesus, who has paved the new and living way into the Presence of God for all.

The experience of worship in the Presence of God in the first Covenant was associated with fear and trembling. Their very first encounter with Jehovah at Mount Sinai was so frightening that the people begged not to go through it again, and even Moses said, "*I exceedingly fear and quake.*" And the Day of Atonement brought fearful anticipation to the high priest, who might not have made it back alive out of the Holy of Holies if he did not follow the ceremonial rituals to the letter. But blessed be God our Father, who has made this new and living way for us through the blood of Jesus our Savior.

For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. (Heb 12:18,19,22-24)

This new order of worship brings the worshiper into the Presence of God. It is a worship initiated by relationship and intimacy, and David was one of the early men of God to understand this revelation. This is why he was intimate with God and desired to dwell in the Presence of God all the days of his life. No wonder he had such great intimacy with the Lord and was granted the opportunity to dwell before the Ark on Mount Zion. Not only was he the king of Israel ruling from the throne on Mount Zion, he was also a priest wearing the linen ephod and ministering before the Ark of Jehovah.

We clearly see from Scriptures that the worship inaugurated by David before the Ark of God was a foretaste of the New Testament worship. It was characterized by singing, dancing, clapping of hands, and musical instruments (Psa 47:1,6-7,149:3,134:2, 1 Chr 16:2). The worship in the Tabernacle of David was a drastic departure from the established worship in the old tabernacle.

For about 30 years of David's reign, two tabernacles existed in Israel. In Gibeon, there was the dead, ritualistic worship that characterized the Tabernacle of Moses; in Jerusalem, there was the lively, spontaneous worship that characterized the Tabernacle of David.

The worship in Gibeon was the performance of ceremonial rituals and could not approach the Presence of Jehovah, while the worship in Zion was an experience of the Presence of God. The priests on Mount Zion had access to the Holy One and dwelt in His Presence. On Mount Zion there was no Outer Court, no Holy Place, and no Veil of partition; the priests, the sons of Asaph, were right there in the divine Presence of Jehovah. At Gibeon, the priests offered the sacrifice of animals. On Mount Zion, the offering was the sacrifice of praise: *"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name"* (Heb 13:15). *"Come before Him with joyful singing... Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise"* (Psa 100:2,4).

In a way, from the Old Covenant to the New, the real function and purpose of the priesthood did not change. The priests are still commanded to **minister unto the Lord with sacrifices or offerings**. In the Old Covenant, the sacrifices were animals. Jesus' substitutionary death on Calvary's cross perfectly fulfilled and put an end to that. He became our Lamb without blemish, the Lamb of God. The sacrifice that

God desires from His priesthood today is the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to Him.

However, after the Temple of Solomon was dedicated, the ministry in David's Tabernacle ceased and the tent went into ruins. The attention shifted to the glamorous Temple and its form of worship, and no one heard of the Tabernacle of David any more until Amos began to prophesy concerning the end-time plan of God:

"In that day I will restore David's fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins, and build it as it used to be, so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name," declares the LORD, who will do these things. (Amo 9 :11-12)

Let's not forget that this is about the Presence of God. Of course, we know that God is omnipresent, but in the Scriptures we see different manifestations of His Presence. In this pages God is revealing His manifest Presence in the hearts of His Saints and in the congregation of His people. He's drawing them nearer so He can inhabit their praise. The Psalmist declares, *"But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel"* (Psa 22:3).

The Tabernacle of David, which was also the palace of the king, was built to reveal, as it were in a shadow, the manifest Presence of Jehovah. David, who had always desired to dwell in the Presence of Jehovah, was granted his heart's desire. As discussed in the earlier book (*My One Desire*), he said that his one and only desire was to dwell in the house of God all the days of his life. God Almighty granted that desire by leading him to build the Tabernacle of Praise on Mount Zion, which is also the place of the throne.

This new order of worship is revealed to us in the model of David's Tent on Mount Zion. The ministry of Praise and Worship in David's Tabernacle is a foretaste of the ministry of the Royal Priesthood, the general assembly and church of the firstborn on Mount Zion. As the Scripture declares: *"Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel"* (Heb 12:22-24).

When King David brought the Ark of the Covenant into the tent on Mount Zion, his motive was to restore the presence of the Lord to the center of his nation and the hearts of the people and to cause them to draw near unto Jehovah. This was a burning passion in the heart of David, for *he was the man after God's heart*.

And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. (Act 15:15-17)

The Ark of His Presence on Mount Zion

Let us pause and ask ourselves a very important question at this point. What is God's purpose for rebuilding this Tabernacle spoken of by the prophet Amos and quoted here

by James the Apostle? The answer to this question is of utmost importance, for we know God always does His things according to His divine purpose. There is always an eternal purpose in everything He does.

There was an eternal purpose in the crossing of the Red Sea; there was an eternal purpose in the wilderness journey; there was a divine purpose for the manna that He rained down on His children in the wilderness. He had an eternal purpose in allowing Shadrach, Mesach, and Abednego to be thrown into the fiery furnace and Daniel into the lion's den. He had a divine and eternal Purpose for sending His only Son to the brutal death of the cross, and there is a purpose for His promised return heralded by His holy prophets. He said: *"After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it."* Why? What is His intention for rebuilding this fallen tent? What is His goal?

Just as there is a purpose for the rain, there is a purpose for the rebuilding of David's Tent on Mount Zion. There is no doubt that the rain itself is not the end or the final goal, but is meant to produce a desired end. The harvest is the reason for the rain. But the rain must come first; then the earth can bring forth *first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear*. Needless to say, the harvest cannot come until the rain is done, but the harvest is the reason for the rain, and the Lord of the Vineyard will wait until the harvest-bringing rain has watered His vineyard. In the same manner, the Tent of David must be erected on Mount Zion, its ruins rebuilt in full restoration, and then the purpose of the Almighty will begin to manifest.

Let's ask for the last time: What is God's purpose for the return to restore David's fallen tent? The Lord Himself gave

the answer through the mouth of the prophet in the same verse of Scripture. The answer is in the second half of the verse: *“That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord”* (Act 15:15-17 KJV). The International Standard Version of the Scripture renders this verse as follows: *“After this, I will come back and set up David’s fallen tent again. I will restore its ruined places and set it up again, so that the rest of the people may search for the Lord, including all the gentiles who are called by my name, declares the Lord. He is the one who has been doing these things (Act 15:15-17 NIV).”*

Let us, therefore, keep our eyes on the goal as we seek to know the Lord and as we co-labor with Him in this great ministry of rebuilding.

The Ark on Mount Zion

And so the Ark of God finally came home—not back to the old order at Gibeon, but to its resting place on Mount Zion, to the tent which David erected for it. God has greater plans for it than ever before. One might ask, why a tent? Why did God lead David to put the Ark in a tent? This speaks of a mortal body. The Spirit of God seemed to give us an answer when He spoke through the Apostles referring to this mortal bodies in which we live as tents. It has pleased God to put *“this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us”* (2 Co 4:7).

But one would ask another question: why Zion? Why not Horeb, or Sinai, or another mountain? David, the prophet priest and king, prophesied saying:

For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.

I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. (Psa 132:13-16).

Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood. We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool. (Psa 132:6-8).

This prophecy from David reveals that Zion is not only God's habitation: it is His Tabernacle, it is His resting place, it is the place of His throne. This is the place of His desires, where He longs to dwell forever. This is where His kingly priests minister to Him with joyful adoration and He clothes them with salvation. Mount Zion is the City of our God; it is the Heavenly Jerusalem; it is the Mountain of His holiness and the Mountain of our Help. *"The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion"* (Psa 20:1-2).

Mount Zion is beautifully elevated and beautiful for all situations, the joy of the whole earth. This Zion, which is His Sanctuary, is also the place for His footstool, where we His priests fall down to worship at His footstool. Yet this is the place which He has purposed to make glorious. And this too agrees with the words of the prophets: *"The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my Sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious"* (Isa 60:13).

Our hearts should leap with joy as we prayerfully declare with David and say to God, *"Arise, O Jehovah, into thy resting-place; Thou, and the Ark of thy strength. Let thy priest be*

clothed with righteousness; And let thy saints shout for joy”
(Psa 132:8-9 ASV).

“Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King” (Psa 48:1-2).

Jehovah our God does everything according to His eternal purpose. There is an ultimate plan and a divine purpose for everything He does and a divine timing for every one of His purposes. *“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven”* (Ecc 3:1). Another translation renders this verse as saying: *“There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven”* (Ecc 3:1 New American Standard Version).

In the paragraph above, we asked ourselves an important question concerning the purpose of God in returning to rebuild the Tabernacle of David. We clearly found the answer in the prophecy of Amos, which James quoted during the first council meeting in Jerusalem. This prophecy from the ninth chapter of Amos states:

In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this. (Amo 9:11-12 NKJ)

But in the New Testament Church when the Apostle James quoted this prophecy, the Holy Ghost clearly revealed the deeper meaning of this passage to us by rephrasing the latter part of the verse. Here is the rendition of the prophecy as James quoted it, pointing out that this prophecy was beginning to be fulfilled right before their eyes:

And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. (Act 15:15-18)

In that first church conference, there was a serious issue about what was required for the salvation of the Gentile believers becoming members of the church of Jesus Christ. The Jewish believers were bent on requiring every believer to become a Jew. They taught that unless the Gentile believers became circumcised and started following the Law of Moses, they could not be saved. To them, the Messiah only belonged to the Jews, not to the whole human race.

Let's go to the Book of Acts and examine the context of the passage where this prophecy was quoted by the Apostle. It all began with the ministry of Paul and Barnabas to the Gentiles. They went from city to city preaching, teaching, discipling, strengthening, and establishing the souls of the Gentile believers. They spent time encouraging them to stand in faith, teaching them that we must enter into the kingdom of God through hardship and tribulation. When they returned from this great missionary journey, they testified to the disciples at Antioch of the power and grace that God demonstrated in their ministry in bringing salvation to the Gentiles.

And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. (Act 15:1-2)

These men from Judea confused the young Gentile believers by telling them that their salvation was not complete. Paul and Barnabas confronted these Jewish teachers, and there was great disagreement on the matter. The brethren at Antioch therefore sent Paul and Barnabas, along with some other brethren, to Jerusalem to confer with the Apostles.

And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. (Act 15:4-5)

So the Apostles gathered to deliberate on the matter, and there was great disputing among them as well. After a long debate, Peter stood up and reminded the Apostles how God in times past sent him to the Gentiles to choose a people from among them for His Name. He continued:

And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they. (Act 15:9-11)

After Peter testified to what God did through him in the early days of the ministry, the multitude became silent and attentive to Paul and Barnabas as they declared the miracles and wonders that God had wrought among the Gentiles.

After all this, James, who was the respected leader of the Church in Jerusalem, stood up and said:

Men and brethren, hearken unto me:

Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

“After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.” (Act 15:14-17)

James began by confirming what the Apostle Peter had said and then proceeded to quote from the prophecy of Amos. He was in the Spirit, asserting that what was happening fulfilled what had been spoken through the mouths of God’s holy prophets. He proclaimed that God had promised to return and rebuild the Tabernacle of David that was fallen, to set it up, mend the breaches, and restore it. The Holy Ghost, through the mouth of James, unveiled the real purpose of God in rebuilding the Tabernacle of David. The real purpose was not to set up a Jewish kingdom, nor was it something only for the natural Jewish people. The Holy Ghost stated it clearly here in the New Testament while these Jewish brethren who were so stuck on keeping the Mosaic Law were listening. God’s main goal in rebuilding the Tabernacle of David was so that the residue of men might seek after the Lord.

If the “*residue of men*” that God is talking about in the first part of the prophecy is not clear enough, God re-emphasized it by saying, “*And all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called.*” The Literal Translation renders this phrase as saying, “*So the rest of men may seek the Lord, even all the nations on whom my name is called, says the Lord who is doing all these things.*”

What the Holy Ghost is emphasizing here and unveiling to us is that the purpose of God in rebuilding the Tabernacle of David is not for any special group of people, but for the benefit of all nations. His first call was to the Israelites, the stock of Abraham according to the flesh, to whom belonged the circumcision, to whom *pertaineth* the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service *of God*, and the promises. But in this end time, He has extended the call and the invitation to the Gentiles, and to all the nations. The holy place will no longer be restricted to a natural tribe, but is accessible to all who would accept His only begotten son as Savior and themselves become the sons of the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. Even the way into the Holy of Holies is open to all.

Apostle James expounded this prophecy as a promise that when this fallen Tabernacle is restored, the residue of men would seek after the Lord, *even all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called*. Christ died to *gather together in one the children of God scattered abroad*, referred to in this text as those that are *called by his name*. The promise is to all that are *afar off*, and to them that are near, even to as “*many as the Lord our God shall call*” (Act 2:39).

It is indeed reassuring that this promise does not depend on man for its fulfillment. It did not depend on the Apostles, nor does it depend on us or on our faithfulness today. The last phrase of the Scriptural passage makes it crystal-clear that

God Himself is doing this work. He is the one who has planned it from the beginning and is bringing it to pass at the appropriate time according to His divine schedule. The phrase states, "*and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things,*" and the following verse reads, "*Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world*" (Act 15:18).

Yes, it is the Lord God Almighty who says this; it is He who planned it from the foundation of the world, who has determined to do it, and who, by His own might, will bring it to pass. Nothing concerning our world takes Him by surprise, for He planned all His works from the beginning of the world. Nothing that has happened in this world took him by surprise, and so He never needed to make an emergency plan and will never need to. All things are working according to His plan and purpose, for all things were known unto Him from the beginning and He planned them all.

There is another amazing revelation in this prophecy of Amos from the ninth chapter of his book, which reads as follows:

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. (Amo 9:13)

This is a remarkable word of prophecy. God is declaring in this passage that during this restoration, there will be such an overflowing fruitfulness that the harvest season will continue into the following planting season. There will be such a great harvest of blessings, harvest of souls, and harvest of spiritual and physical blessings that the "*the ploughman and the seed-sower will overtake the reaper*". This means, that there will be such a plentiful harvest that the

ingathering will last all summer, continue all autumn, and even when it is time to begin to plough and sow again, the reapers will still be busy gathering the harvest into the barn. And this harvest will bless not only the Jews but all who would come unto God by Jesus Christ.

After this, James who presided over the council in Jerusalem pronounced his sentence, and this was written and sent to the brethren in Antioch, in Syria, and in Cilicia:

And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:

For as much as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:

It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.

For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. (Act 15:23-29)

By this conclusion, James and the Apostles settled once and for all the dispute concerning what the Church is to follow. The question of whether the Church should be a Jewish sect or an global body open to all races and levels of society based on faith in the completed works of Christ was settled once

and for all. James settled the dispute by quoting Amos's prophecy that the Messiah would restore the glory of the fallen Tabernacle of David. The church of Jesus Christ was to be universal, not just local. The Old Covenant was with the nation of Israel; the New Covenant was to be available to all mankind. The Old Tabernacle was just for the Jewish race; in fact, only Jewish males could enter into the outer court, only the priests could enter the Holy Place, and only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies. In the New Covenant, all these restrictions are removed. Anyone who desires may enter all the way into the Presence of God. In the Tabernacle of David, the Ark of His Presence is not behind any veil, not hidden from view, but located right there in the midst of the tent that David pitched for it.

God has now extended His invitation, which was originally restricted to the Jews, to the whole of humanity. Apostle Peter at first also found this difficult to understand, but God finally got the message to him. James summarized this by saying, "*Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name*" (Act 15:14).

The ministry of this Tabernacle is that of grace, that has made the Ark realm accessible to all who would accept the invitation and come into the courts of the king. In the Ark ministry, the veil of separation is removed by the sacrifice of Christ once and for all, and all people can come up the Mount of God. The Ark takes care of all that separates by the Atonement of Christ, and all who will may come and live in the presence of God.

God has sought to tabernacle with His people from the beginning of creation, and this tabernacle is the revelation of this truth. His love will no longer be hidden in a few, but totally revealed so all might see and come to Him.

When the full manifestation of this ministry comes to fruition in the Church—and it will while we are in this tent—it will result in an ingathering to God of people from all tribes and tongues and peoples and nations, and people at all levels of society. This is the purpose of God in rebuilding the Tabernacle of David: *that the residue of men might seek after Him.*

This is in line with what the Lord declared through the prophet Jeremiah, saying, “*But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer 31:33-34; Heb 8:11). This is the hour of unveiling, when God wills his people to know Him and dwell in His Presence with the veil removed.

No longer will the people have to eat of the lower earth order that is available to them from the legacy of Adam; all can eat of the Bread of Heaven, drink of the Water of Life, and receive full restoration for their being. The ministry of the tabernacle of David is one of restoration of the whole man. It is a ministry of total restoration: a restoration of true worship, a restoration of the Glory of God, and a restoration of His glorious Presence.

Come, and let us return to the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day will he raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he will come to us as the rain, as the latter and former rain to the earth. (Hos 6:1-3)

This agrees with the words of the prophet Hosea, for the Tabernacle of David reveals that He will return and revive us and we shall dwell in His Presence. Notice that there is no outer court ministry in the tabernacle of David, and neither is there a Holy Place ministry. It is ministry in the Sanctuary, right before the Ark of His Presence and in the Palace of the King. Yes, it is ministry in the Holy of Holies, where we enter by the Blood of Jesus to offer sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to the King of kings and the God of Heaven. And these sacrifices and offerings are offered by the royal priesthood, for it is a ministry reserved for His kingly priests. We know, of course, that David was the king of Israel when God instituted the new worship in this tabernacle, yet he also wore the linen Ephod (1 Sam 6:14, 1 Chr 16) which the priests wore and ministered before the Ark of God. No longer are the ministries of king and priest separate; they have been made one, and God has now given birth to a new generation that constitutes “*a kingdom of priests*” (Rev 1:6, 5:10).

These priests are the same ones who constitute the general Assembly on Mount Zion, the City of the Living God. Mount Zion, therefore, is not only the place of His temple and the habitation of His priesthood, but also the place of His throne. This is where His anointed ones, the kings, lay down their crowns and worship at His footstool. “*Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood. We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool*” (Psa 132:6,7).

As members of the royal priesthood, we draw nigh unto God through our ministry of worship. He has promised to dwell in our praises, and we are therefore sure that the Shekinah

Glory will surround us as we worship (Psalms 22:3). Let us continually remember that praise and worship are not things we do only when we feel like it, but a privileged ministry that we should carry out continually, *for great is our God and He is worthy of glory and honor and praise.*

O, what an awesome privilege is ours to worship the King of Kings and Lord of Lords at the summit of Mount Zion! What a honor to join the songs of heaven with our earthly voices and to celebrate our King in His very throne room before the Ark of His Strength.

Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou, and the Ark of thy strength. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy.

Return O Lord and build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen, and build again the ruins thereof, and set it upright: that the residue of men might seek after You, and all the nations, upon whom Your name is called; for You are the Lord, who does all these things. (Act 15:18)

Chapter 12

Come Up Hither

After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. (Rev 4:1)

The book of Revelation presents the blessings, the prizes, and the privileges reserved for those described by the Lord as overcomers. God's purpose in sending us this awesome book with the rewards and prizes "*to him that overcometh*" is not to flash the glorious prizes before our eyes and then tell us we cannot win them, but to encourage us to press on toward the mark and obtain them. The purpose of the book is to reveal these to the members of the church, in order that as many as earnestly desire it may enter into the hall of fame of the overcomers, for "*it remaineth that some must enter therein.*"

But we must never forget this salient fact: that a *prize* is different from a *gift*. Salvation is a gift from God, but the package containing the glorious awards and blessings promised "*to him that overcometh*" is a prize.

In His letters to the seven churches sent through His servant John, the Lord enumerated seven sets of promises to "*him*

that overcometh" in each of the seven churches. These prizes began with the privilege of partaking in the Tree of Life and reached a crescendo with the promise of a place to sit with Christ at the Throne of God.

To the first Church, the one at Ephesus, the Lord wrote: "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*" And to the last Church, the one at Laodicea, He wrote: "*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*"

The purpose of the Revelation of Jesus Christ is to draw us unto God, from the Tree of Life to the Throne of God. It is to take us from salvation and redemption to reigning with Him on His throne. And to reveal this to us, God Almighty gave the Lord Jesus Christ the Book of Revelation to show to His servants the things which must shortly come to pass.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him, to show to his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel to his servant John:

Who bore testimony of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand. (Rev 1:1 -3)

The desire of God from the dawn of creation has been to bring man into a place of intimacy with Himself. He has therefore been approaching humanity in love and speaking, through signs and wonders, through visitations and appearances, through types and allegories, and through prophetic messages, for the purpose of revealing Himself to

man. His ultimate goal is that man, who, from Adam, has been dead in trespasses and sin, will be regenerated or born again, filled with the Holy Spirit, grow up spiritually to full maturity, and be *caught up* or translated into the realm where He, the Almighty dwells, that *where He is there man may be also*.

The Holy One of heaven has been trying to reveal Himself to man since the beginning of time. He began this through the prophets and perfected it at the first appearance of Jesus Christ, our Emmanuel.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself made purification of our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Heb 1:1 -3)

The reason for the coming of the Lord the first time was to reconcile humanity back to the Father and to reveal Him. He, *the express image of the Father*, came to show us the Father, to make Him known. He did not come to tell us facts about the Father; no, not at all! He came to make Him known. He is the express image of the Father's personality.

The Lord was never interested in telling us about Himself or in teaching us the science about God. He came rather to reveal the Father and to make Him known. He was the *Father revealed among us, God with us, and God revealed among us*. He, by sheer existence in human form, showed forth the Father walking the shores of Galilee. He was the Father made known unto us. When men looked at Him, they saw the Father, for He was the manifestation of the Father God. His

name is **Emmanuel**: God with us, God revealed to us, and God among us.

However, the ultimate plan of God is not to shine forth out of His only Begotten Son alone, but to be revealed and shown forth from a multitude of sons after their own order, similar to that of the firstborn who is their Lord. His goal is to be revealed and shown forth in all His saints. Paul the Apostle alluded to this fact in the book of Galatians, when he was talking about his ministry:

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood. (Gal 1:15-16)

God's plan and purpose is to reveal His Son in everyone of us. This will be an unveiling of the Christ who dwells within us. And as the Almighty God was revealed in His Son and was glorified by the Son, so shall Christ be revealed in the saints, who are His body.

Oh, that he might show through! That the indwelling One might shine through from within me! That He might be glorified in His saints and be admired in them that love Him!

God is at work in us, and soon there will be an unveiling of the Christ within, fully formed in us. God is putting the finishing touches on His work inside you and me, and the time of unveiling is at hand. It is not the outer man that we're talking about; it is not the natural man that God is working on; it is the hidden man of the heart. Yes, it is Christ in you, *the hope of glory*. The Apostle spoke in a similar metaphor in his letter to the Galatians: *"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you"* (Gal 4:19). May

the work He's doing in us reach perfection in due time, Amen.

As emphasized above, the Father is revealed by the Son, and we can only know God when the Son reveals or makes Him known unto us.

He said so Himself in the book of Matthew: *"All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him (Mat 11:27).*

These words from the Master are highly illuminating. We understand from this that no man can know the Father God except through the revelation of Jesus Christ. A man can hear the preaching of the gospel a thousand times, and it will mean nothing to him until the Holy Ghost brings that word into his spirit and reveals the truth to him. It is the Holy Spirit that opens the inner eyes of men and women so they can see the things of God.

Our eyes need to be opened in order to see the things of God and to see Jesus the risen Lord as He is. Consider the incidence with the two brethren after His resurrection:

And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto

him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? (Luk 24:14-19)

Indeed, He was only a stranger to them, for He walked and talked with them, but they knew Him not. They heard Him, looked at Him, and even spoke to Him, yet He remained a stranger to them, even though they had been His followers for about three years.

As He walked with them in the way, He expounded the Scripture to them concerning Himself. And as they came near the village where they were going, he acted as though he was going on further, but they persuaded Him to stay with them. While He was at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed it, broke it in pieces, and gave it to them. And it was at this instance that *“their eyes were opened, and they knew who he was.”* He had walked and talked with them all the way to Emmaus—about eight miles’ journey on foot—yet they did not recognize him until there was an unveiling of the Son of God.

Open my eyes, Dear Lord, I want to see Jesus.

In the same manner, the Lord Jesus said, *“No man knows the Father except the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal Him.”* The only people who can know God are those to whom the Son reveals Him. One can only know God by revelation. The disciple did not know Him while He lived with them here on earth for the space of three years. It was not until later that they were able to see Him in the spirit. They knew Him after the flesh, but did not really know Him. On one occasion Peter saw a glimpse of who He really is, and it was on this singular occasion that Peter, quickened by the spirit of revelation, spoke out saying, *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living*

God." No man can know the Father or the Son except by the revelation of the spirit.

The book of Revelation is the *Unveiling* or *Revelation of Jesus Christ* and reveals Him in all of His glory. The Lord God, wanting to unveil the Person of Jesus Christ to the church, gave this book to His servant John to deliver it unto us. John, the beloved brother, was on the Island of Patmos for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ when he saw these great visions. In the vision, he saw the Son of Man in His glorified Body. The One he saw was completely different from the Man of Galilee he used to know, for when John saw Him, he fell at His feet as dead. It was an awesome sight!

In this awesome appearing of Jesus Christ to John the Beloved, John heard the voice of the Son of Man as the sound of many waters and received messages from Him which he delivered to the seven churches. It was after this that John saw heaven opened and was *caught up* into the throne of God.

*After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, **Come up hither**, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.*

And immediately I was in the spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

And round about the throne were four and twenty seats; and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices; and there were seven lamps of fire burning before

the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within; and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. (Rev 4:1-9)

God's ultimate desire is to draw us nearer and nearer unto Himself until eventually we are caught up to His throne to be eternally close to Him. There we'll join the heavenly host and become partakers of the realm of light, full of the glory of His presence; we'll worship Him in spirit and in truth. We'll no longer be onlookers and watchers from afar; we'll become participators who have been translated and brought into the presence of the Father before the throne. The ultimate purpose of God is not for us to just be witnesses of the work and of the Word of God, but for us to become by nature and essence sons of God.

He wants to draw us from the earthly realm to the heavenly, from the temporal to the eternal, and from the outer court into the holy of holies.

Into the Holiest of All

God, in these last days, is raising up a people who will draw near unto Him and go all the way with Him. These ones will not stop at the outer court of the spiritual walk with God, but will heed His call and go all the way into His inner chamber, even into the Holiest of all. God's heart delights in a people whom He can bring into union with Himself. God cannot be

satisfied until the new creation in Christ Jesus is brought in to abide permanently in His presence in the Holy of Holies.

When He brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, He said that His ultimate purpose was to bring them into His Sanctuary, there to dwell. He brought them out to bring them in and to establish them on Mount Zion, the mountain of His inheritance. His purpose, which He spoke to Moses and demonstrated in the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, will come to pass. His plan is to bring the church of Jesus Christ in to where He is. His desire is to tabernacle with men. Ultimately, this will come to pass, and as we read in the prophetic book of Revelation, the triumphant declaration will come from heaven, saying, "*Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*"

All through the Scriptures we see God drawing man unto Himself. In the picture presented by the tabernacle, God's presence is between the cherubim above the mercy seat on top of the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. The Almighty God is in innermost court reaching outwards to draw man in. God's viewpoint is from the inside reaching outward, but man's perspective is opposite. The ark resides in the Holy of Holies, where God's presence is. Outside this is the holy place, and the outermost part is the outer court. If we approach this from man's viewpoint, we would come first to the east gate of the tabernacle, pass by the brazen altar and the laver, then pass through the first veil, which will bring us into the holy place. Here we come across the table of shewbread, stand before the golden lampstand, and experience the golden altar of incense before going through the final veil into the holiest of all.

God's desire is for all His children to pass through each of these realms and to ultimately draw us into the holiest of all, to abide with Him permanently.

The apostle, while meditating on these and praying for us, made a strong statement of faith, saying: *"I am convinced of this, **that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion** by the day of Christ Jesus"* (Phi 1:2-6).

The Almighty God began a good work in you and me when we were born again. The apostle Paul stated above that he was convinced that God, who has started a good work in us, will complete it. It was He who drew us to Christ Jesus and began the work of salvation in us, and He will surely bring us to perfection. The Lord Jesus said, *"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day"* (Joh 6:44).

We arrive first at the gate of the outer court. There is only one gate, one doorway to God through His Son Jesus Christ. We enter in and begin to partake of the blessing of the cross. This is the brazen altar, the realm of salvation by faith. And at the brazen laver, we experience the washing away of the filth of the world by the water of the Word. There is much activity here in the outer court, much service, much labor of the flesh. In this realm, however, these are necessary. There is sweat, and tears, and labor, and much outward service and religion. Souls are saved at the brazen altar, souls are cleansed of worldly filth at the brazen laver, and the gospel is preached. Here we are engaged in evangelism, baptism, the teaching of personal holiness, and the outward principles of New Testament living. Here God begins a good work in us. But we must not stop here or hinder God's people from pressing on to the next level of greater glory; for though there is a glory in the outer court, it is a fading glory. Its light comes from the sun, and as the Lord said, *"night comes when no man can*

work.” But there is a greater glory in the sanctuary that is not affected by the setting of the sun. This is where He wants us. His plan is to draw us into the innermost court, for He brought us out to bring us in.

As He draws us inward toward Himself, we pass through the outer veil and come into the inner court of the holy place. Here we encounter a glory that can never be seen by those that do not proceed beyond the outer court. The light from the seven golden lampstands shines and supplies light in this realm. The lamps burn continuously from the constant supply of oil into the lampstands. There is no outward light in this realm, for there are no windows there. This is the realm of the Spirit-filled Church, the oil-filled golden lampstand. The ministry in this place is Spirit-given, Spirit-revealed, and Spirit-operated. This is the place of ministry and of the ministry gifts that Christ sets in the body. Without the light from the candlestick, this place is in total darkness: and there is no darkness as great as a Pentecostal movement that lacks the presence and manifestations of the Holy Spirit. No one can depend on natural understanding to guide him in this supernatural realm. If anyone in this realm fails to remain full of the Spirit (oil), he/she will come into a darkness and confusion greater than anything found in the outer court. The darkness will be too great. By divine revelation was the Pentecostal movement raised up, and only by divine revelation will she be sustained.

Finally, the Almighty brings man in. He draws him through the final veil into the holiest of all. Here we find a glory that is beyond description, glory far beyond anything that mortal man has ever conceived of. There is no natural light of any form in this realm, yet we find a light far greater in glory than the light of any of the previous realms. It is not the natural light of the sun, for there are no windows; neither are there

any candlesticks in this realm. The light in this place is supernatural and inexplicable! It is not the natural light of human understanding, nor the flickering light of an imperfect Church that needs a daily supply of oil to keep the flesh from taking over. The glorious light in this realm is the Shekinah glory of God's Presence!

In this realm, there is no need for the light of the sun, nor of the moon, nor of the candlestick, *"for the Lord God and the Lamb are the light thereof."* Here is a light that never goes out, never grows dim, and never needs an oil refill or a wick trimming. It is not a temporary glory, like the glory on the face of Moses that passed away; it is the fullness of His glory and power of His presence. In this realm there is no limitation, no failure, no death, no defeat.

This is the ultimate realm where God desires to bring the Church. This proceeds beyond the realm of ministry and of ministry gifts and moves into the realm of fullness and into the full measure of the stature of Christ. When the Church enters into the holiest of all, she enters into the realm of the fullness of Christ, and this is God's objective: bringing her out of darkness that He might bring her into the realm of the fullness of Christ. *The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform it.*

Into His Holy Convocations

"Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation." (Lev. 23:24).

Man did not originate the idea of rest after labor: the idea came from the Almighty God. The book of beginnings tells us that *"on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work*

which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made” (Gen 2:2-3).

First of all, we must understand that the Sabbath, as described by God either in Genesis or in Exodus, is God’s rest. The passage does not say that the creature rested, but that God rested. He rested not because He was weary, but to show His satisfaction in the perfect work that He had done. It also teaches that the work was His and not the creatures’, and so is the rest; God Himself had joy and satisfaction in His perfect work and so rested. *“And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day” (Gen 1:31).*

Now God is speaking to us, that we can enter into His rest with Him. Think of it as God Almighty inviting you and me to a holy convocation, a holy vacation and a glorious Feast where He prepares everything and pays for everything. Having made everything ready, His plan is to bring us into His Feast of abundance and rest. The only requirement on our part is to honor the invitation and enter in by faith, trusting that He’s true to His word.

All the feasts and convocations of the God of Israel were in connection with the Sabbath, and all of God’s dealing with both the natural and spiritual Israel can be seen in His feasts. The seventh day was set apart and special, the seventh month was set apart and special, and so was the seventh year. The LORD said to Moses on Mount Sinai:

“Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and

earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it”(Exo 20:9).

The natural Israelite understands the Sabbath as a literal day of the week, the seventh day of the week, which corresponds to our Saturday. On that day, they strictly refrained from all work. This was a sign and covenant between them and Jehovah. The ordinance applies not only to the seventh day of the week, but also to the seven festivals of Israel’s calendar and to periods of seven and seven-times-seven years.

The book of Hebrews makes it plain that the ordinances associated with the Old Testament types are “*a shadow of good things to come and not the very image*” (Heb 10). The Sabbath observed by the natural Israel is a shadow of God’s Sabbath. The real meaning of the Sabbath is not a day of the week, nor is the natural land of Canaan the real possession and inheritance that God promised the seed of Abraham; these are pictures of the real and are not even the very image.

The Sabbath of God is a time when the people of God (*for which Israel is a type*) must cease their own works and rest in the work of Christ: *For there remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God and he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.* There must come an end to man’s struggles and an entering into God’s rest. This is the Sabbath, the rest that God is speaking to us about in the fourth chapter of Hebrews, and His ultimate purpose is to bring you and me into His rest.

The Sabbath embodies the gospel. Central to the whole gospel message is the revelation of God’s grace. Man cannot earn his salvation; it comes not by man’s strength or effort, but through faith in the work completed by Christ. God freely

gave His only Son to save man from the devil and from sin, just as He sent Moses to bring Israel out of Egypt.

To enter into God's rest is to relax in Him even in the midst of the storms of life. It is to relax in His everlasting Arms in the midst of economic recession, even when the gas price has risen to \$5 a gallon and there is panic all around. To rest is not to deny the presence of the storm; neither is it presumption, but an active obedience and total reliance on His words. It is faith. It is knowing that He is with us and will deliver us.

To enter into His rest is to enter into His convocation and enjoy the abundance He has made available in His Feasts. To enter into His rest is to cease laboring and begin enjoying His inexhaustible provision. The season of the Feast of the Lord is a time of rejoicing. It is the time when the children of God who dare to believe will leave their toil behind and begin to fully enjoy His bountiful supply.

The prophecy of Joel in the second chapter of his book announces the abundance associated with the Feasts of the Trumpets. After announcing the blowing of the Trumpet in Zion, the prophet began to speak words of comfort to the people of God: *"Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.*

And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed" (Joel 2:22-26).

The Lord will bring to pass His good intention concerning us. He will bring us in from the realm of lack into His abundance, from toiling into His rest, and from wandering in the wilderness into His holy convocation. Let's be clear in our minds and make no mistake about this; let the heavens and the earth understand, and let the gates of hell acknowledge this: God's purpose will come to pass. No work of man can prevent it from coming to pass. No action or inaction on the part of man can forestall or preclude His purpose. If the people to whom the promise is given should refuse to perform, God will bypass them and bring His purpose to pass through others. For when God promises a rest for His people, it remains that some must enter.

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his" (Heb 4:9-10).

He wants to draw us near to Himself, from the earthly realm to the heavenly, from the temporal to the eternal, and from the Tree of Life to the Throne of God and of the Lamb. He wants to call you and me down here and say, *"Come Up Hither, and see things which must be hereafter."*

In these last days, God is seeking out a people who will come to know Him, and in knowing Him, will surely manifest or reveal Him to the world, as He was once revealed in His only Begotten Son.

Draw me nearer to yourself, Lord; reveal yourself to me.

Draw me nearer to the Light, to the true Light that lights everyone that comes into the world; Light my candle and keep me burning and shining for You, O Light of God.

Draw me nearer, let me fix my eyes upon you, Jesus, and let the things of earth grow dim as wood before pure gold, in the light of Your shekinah glory.

*Draw me nearer to the ascended Lord in His glory in the heavens. Call me from up there, Lord, and let me hear Your voice commanding me to **Come Up Hither**, and show me wondrous things in your heavens, O Lord, my Savior and my Redeemer.*